



3

God's Word Guides Us

Key Themes

- The Bible is inspired by God.
- God's Word is the foundation for our lives.

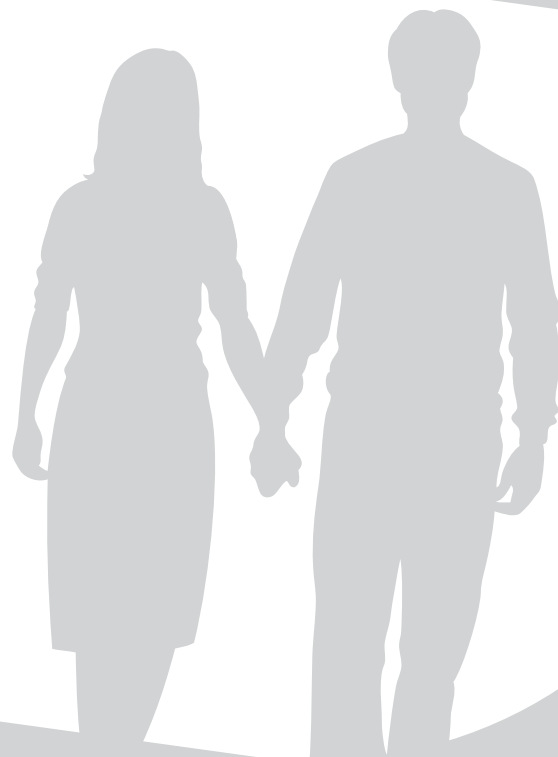
Key Passages

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:13–18

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that God's Word is true because He cannot lie.
- Describe the roles of God and men in writing the Bible.
- Distinguish among the four ways God's Word guides us.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

As students come into the classroom, have the letters O, I, and A written on the board and ask them to try to remember how those relate to last week's lesson. Use this as a springboard into reviewing the inductive Bible study method from last lesson.



Studying God's Word

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All Scripture is inspired by God, who cannot lie. It is useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Impossible for God?

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Students will examine two passages that support the truthfulness of the Bible and the character of God.

- Print one Impossible for God? worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare your heart and mind, study these passages: 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul stated, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is the inspired (“breathed out”) Word of God, transmitted not by the will of man, but through holy men of God as they were directed by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20–21). These men, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote all that God instructed without error. It is the only inerrant, infallible Word of God, and we can trust it to guide us in all things.

How does it guide us? Paul tells us that it is useful for doctrine—teaching Christian truth; reproof—telling us when we are wrong; correction—showing us how to correct our wrong actions; and instruction in righteousness—teaching us how to obey God (2 Timothy 3:16–17). These are the general guidelines—they are expounded on again and again throughout the Bible.

God has spoken to reveal His plan for history, His purpose for mankind, and His will for us. More than 2,000 times the Old Testament states, “Thus says the Lord,” or something similar, claiming that God Himself is the author. In the New Testament we observe that Jesus preached the Word of God (Luke 5:1), the early church preached the Word of God (Acts 4:31), the Word of God was preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1), and Paul preached the Word of God throughout all of his missionary journeys (Acts 13:5, 18:11, 19:10).

The Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), given to us by God Himself—to teach us the principles of our faith, to reveal our sin, to show us how to deal with sin, to instruct us how to live in a manner that pleases Him, and ultimately, to reveal to us how we can be redeemed into everlasting life through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—the lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As Christians, we believe by faith that God’s Word is His true revelation to us and the foundation upon which we base our lives. Consequently, we have no need to “prove” its authenticity to others. We know that God’s Holy Spirit prompted select men to write the words of Scripture, and these words are inspired by a God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).

However, we would expect a book that came

from God to meet certain criteria, including historical, prophetic, and scientific accuracy; a tone of authority; and a life-changing message.

Having said that, we can offer the following evidences to skeptics who ask us why we believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God.

- The Scriptures themselves proclaim to be God’s Word and true as noted above (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1–2).
- The Bible’s message contains life-changing power. It transforms sinners into new creatures by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Neither man nor Satan has been able to destroy God’s Word—“. . . but the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8).
- Archaeological finds continue to confirm biblical truth. A renowned Jewish archaeologist once claimed, “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference.” Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (New York: Farrar, Strous, and Cudahy, 1959), p. 136.
- The books of the Bible were written over a period of 1,600 years by 40 authors (from very different walks of life), writing in different places, times, moods, on different continents, in three languages, covering hundreds of controversial subjects—and yet they present absolute harmony from beginning to end.
- Old Testament passages give more than 50 prophecies of the birth, life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and every prophecy (written more than 400 years before His birth) came true.

For those of us with faith to believe, these findings serve as confirmation that we worship a mighty God who does not change. He speaks to us through the consistently preserved Scriptures so we can know Him, His character, His purpose, and His plan to redeem a people to Himself for all eternity.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Bible is God’s very Word to us. It will guide us through everything we encounter as we rely on it (Proverbs 30:5–6; Psalm 73:24, 119:133; 2 Peter 1:3). Because of this promise, His Word has been precious to believers throughout history. It has been copied and translated more than any other book, as it continues to guide people around the world.

The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Tes-

tament was used, along with hand-written manuscripts of the New Testament gospels and epistles, in the early church. However, as the gospel spread, it became important to provide the Scriptures in other languages.

In 405 AD Jerome translated the Old and New Testaments from the original Hebrew and Greek into Latin. This became known as the Vulgate. This text was understood only by the elite, most of whom were priests. They were determined to keep the Bible from the ordinary people. Translation into common languages was discouraged and often severely prohibited.

Beginning in the fourteenth century, a new desperation developed to make the Scriptures available to the common man. For too long the Roman church had shackled the Scriptures, but they were about to be unleashed. God's Word would not be restrained—He intended for it to guide us through life.

The following represents some of the history of the Bible and when it became available.

- c. 1400 BC—The first written Word of God—the Ten Commandments
- c. 500 BC—Original Hebrew manuscripts completed
- First century AD—All original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were completed
- 1382—The Wycliffe Bible; a middle English translation from the Latin Vulgate
- 1526—The Tyndale Bible; a modern English translation from the original Greek and Hebrew
- 1534—Martin Luther's German Bible is published from the Greek
- 1539—The Great Bible; the first English transla-

tion to be authorized for public use; commissioned by Henry VIII

- 1560—The Geneva Bible; the first study Bible published and the first English language Bible to include numbered verses to each chapter
- 1611—The King James Bible was printed and became the main primary Bible of the English language for the next 300 years

Today, the Bible continues to be the most translated book in the world. As of 2005, portions of the Bible had been translated into 2,400 languages. God is continuing to guide us with His Word as He continues to make His Word available to every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, thank you for the precious treasure of your Word. How I long to know it better and know you better. Please forgive me for the laziness and indifference I so often demonstrate toward Bible study. Help me Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to convey to the students in my class a love for your Word. Use your Word to lead them to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior through faith—a faith that can only come by hearing your Word. Make me genuinely enthusiastic about this lesson and allow that enthusiasm to ignite in the hearts of my students.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Review

Last week we talked about a method of studying the Bible. Can anyone tell me the name of that method or name the three basic steps we talked about? *Inductive Bible study method; it involved observing, interpreting, and applying the text.*

We will be using this method to look at the Bible passages we will be studying throughout this curriculum, so if you don't have it down quite yet, we will continue to practice it.



► As students come into the classroom, have the letters *O, I,* and *A* written on the board.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Today, we are going to look at several questions: where the Bible came from, how it came to us, and what it is useful for. We will examine several passages of Scripture that will help us answer these questions and assure us of God's goodness in revealing Himself to us in the pages of the Bible.

Let's read 2 Peter 1:19–21 together. *Divide the passage for members of the class to read aloud.*

2 Peter 1:19–21

EXAMINE THE WORD

Now that we have read the text, let's take some time to observe what it is saying. Looking back in this epistle, we know that the author is Apostle Peter and that he is writing to his fellow Christians (1:1–4). This epistle is filled with encouragement for a people who were being persecuted and threatened by false teachings. Peter is explaining how he has seen Christ and has a desire for the purity of the message he is proclaiming (1:15–18). Not only that, but Peter clearly describes where the Bible came from— one of the questions we are trying to answer today.

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? What does Peter call the readers to “heed” in the passage? *The prophetic word.*
The prophetic word has been confirmed in the events of Christ's life and death— the events Peter witnessed.

- ? **What word or idea do you see repeated in this passage?** *Prophecy is repeated three times.*
- ? **Knowing that this was an audience in the first century, to what would they equate the references to prophecy?** *They would have understood this as a reference to the Old Testament writings.*
- ? **Who are the “holy men of God” Peter refers to?** *Prophets from the Old Testament.*
- ? **Verse 20 starts with the phrase “knowing this first.” Is this intended to be a reference of the message’s order?** *Not necessarily timing, but a reference to its importance. The NIV translates this phrase as “above all.”*
- ? **In verses 20 and 21, two untrue qualities of the prophecies are given. What are those two qualities?** *The prophets did not record their personal ideas about God (private interpretations), and the prophecies were not from their own human will.*
- ? **Were men involved in the writing of Scripture?** *Yes, according to verse 21.*
- ? **Was God involved in the writing of Scripture?** *Yes, according to verse 21.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about the Holy Spirit?** *The Holy Spirit was actively involved in the delivery of the prophecies that were spoken and recorded.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let’s talk about the main ideas that are communicated. We are trying to answer the question of where the ideas in the Bible came from, and this passage should give us a great starting point to understand the answer.

- ? **If the Holy Spirit was the Bible’s author, would we expect it to contain errors of any sort?** *Since the Holy Spirit is God and God is perfect, the original proclamations and writings would have had no errors.*
- ? **How does this passage answer the question about the source of Scripture?** *It gives us two sources: men and God the Holy Spirit.*
- ? **How could we summarize the main point of this passage in a simple phrase?** *Scripture is not simply a product of man, but by God through men.*

If we think about the Bible in its full scope, it was written by some 40 different authors over a period of roughly 1,600 years. Yet, it contains a consistent message that progressively reveals the truths God has for us and points to the only way of salvation—Jesus and His finished work on the Cross. This confirms that this book is indeed the Word of God.





Impossible for God?

MATERIALS

- Impossible for God? worksheet for each student
- Bibles

INSTRUCTIONS

The students will be looking at two passages that teach it is impossible for God to lie. Many people think God can do anything, but they really haven't thought this issue through. God cannot do anything that is inconsistent with His character. They will also see that in any line of reasoning, there must be an absolute standard. Since God has given us the Bible and God cannot lie, what is contained in the Bible must be true.

People often say that you can't use the Bible to prove the Bible. But, that's what we just did! We looked inside the Bible for confirmation that the Bible is true. Many would say that this is circular reasoning. I want us to look at two passages of Scripture to help us decide if that is really the case. Take a few minutes to fill out this worksheet in small groups, and we will come back and talk about it in about five minutes. *Pass out the worksheets and have the students work in small groups to complete them.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Now that we have gone through the questions on the worksheet, let's talk about what we found.

? Why is it reasonable for God to swear by Himself when we would not accept the same from any of us? *Because God is the ultimate standard, He can swear by nothing greater than Himself. Man is not greater than God, so man often swears by God or something greater than himself to confirm the sincerity of a pledge.*

Any time we reason, we make claims based on information that has various sources. If I asked you how you know Venus is a planet, you might say because it is called a planet in an encyclopedia. But how do you know the encyclopedia

is correct? Ultimately, we must come to a final authority in determining truth. The Bible should be that standard in everyone's life—it is the very Word of God. That is why it is not unreasonable to use the Bible to support the Bible. We can appeal to no higher standard. Everything that the Bible affirms is truth.

? It is often said that God can do anything, but we must be careful with that claim. What impossibility did you find in the passages we looked at? *It is impossible for God to lie.*

It is impossible for God to do anything that is inconsistent with His character. God cannot lie, and we can trust what He has revealed to us. If He could lie, He would cease to be God. This should give us great comfort as we use the Bible to guide our lives.

We must be careful with this argument: "The Bible is true because it says it is true." If we stop there, we would be making a vicious circular argument. We need to add another component. The Bible is the Word of God because it says it is *and* it allows us to make sense of the world. No other system of thought provides a consistent, rational explanation for our world. The Bible is true because it says it is, and any other explanation for the universe's existence is illogical in some sense.

This concept may be new to many of you. This form of reasoning is called presuppositional apologetics. It is a bit different from the approach most Christians use where they use evidence to build up a case. If you're a bit confused, don't worry; we will explore these ideas as we move forward with the lessons.



READ THE WORD

2 Timothy 3:16–17

There is another passage of Scripture that many of you may have been thinking about at various points in this lesson. It affirms that God is the author of Scripture and gives us more detail about how we can use Scripture in our lives. Let's read 2 Timothy 3:16–17 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

I think you can see how this passage parallels what we have been talking about so far.

Observe the Text

- ? What is the main subject of this passage? *Scripture.*
- ? What is the source of Scripture according to this passage? *God.*
- ? The KJV and NKJV use the phrase “inspiration of God” to describe the transmission from God to man. How do other translations describe this? *ESV: breathed out by God; NIV: God-breathed; NASB: inspired by God.*
- ? What is Scripture profitable for? *Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (other versions will use slightly different words).*
- ? From verse 17, what is the goal of inspired Scripture? *Scripture makes every child of God complete—equipped for every good work.*
- ? How does this passage connect to the 2 Peter passage we looked at earlier? *Both identify the source of Scripture as God.*
- ? What promise do we find in this passage? *We can be complete and equipped by studying and applying Scripture.*
- ? What does the passage tell us about God? *He is the source of Scripture.*

Discover the Truth

There are two ideas from this text that we are going to examine more closely. Thinking back to last week's lesson, we talked about a three-step process for understanding Scripture—observe, interpret, and apply. We have just made observations about the passage, and now we are going to interpret the ideas to understand them better. Then, we will be able to apply these truths to our lives.

- ? The Greek word that is translated “given by inspiration of God” is a very important part of understanding the source of Scripture. Does anyone know what that word is? *Theopneustos; theo=God, pneustos=breathed out.*

That word literally means “breathed out by God,” so Paul is reminding Timothy that Scripture comes directly from God.

? **People often talk of works of art or music as being inspired. Is this the same sense we use when talking about the inspiration of Scripture?** *No. Artistic inspiration is generally understood to come from within the person. Prophetic inspiration comes from God, who cannot lie and cannot contain anything impure. We might better think of Scripture as expired—coming out of God Himself. It is not the writer of Scripture who is inspired, but the original writings (autographs) that are inspired.*

Understanding that God used the prophets to breathe out His words onto the scrolls they were writing on and through the words they proclaimed, Paul moves on to the usefulness of those words and truths. He tells us that every person who is in Christ (the man of God) may be complete through using Scripture to shape his thinking and actions. This is supported by Paul in Romans 8:28–30 (*Stop and read this passage if time allows.*) when he tells us that we are to be conformed to the image of Christ—the very definition of completeness. Our sanctification, growing in holiness, is bound to our understanding and application of Scripture as well as the Holy Spirit’s work in us.

So, as we seek to apply the truths of Scripture, we have four distinct ways to accomplish that: doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. These four ideas can provide us with a clear way to look at a section of Scripture and understand how to apply it to our lives—the third step in our Bible study process (hermeneutics).

Let’s briefly examine each of these four words to understand the distinctions. The first is doctrine. Doctrine is the body of truth laid out in the Old and New Testaments. The understanding of doctrine has become quite unfashionable in the majority of churches, but doctrine is what helps us understand the difference between true and false ideas. If we do not have a grasp on doctrinal truths from Scripture, we will be unable to recognize the false ideas masquerading as truth. The lack of doctrine has led to compromise within the professing church: marrying evolution to the Bible, the redefinition of marriage, homosexual clergy, etc.

? **The second is reproof. What is meant by reproof or rebuking someone?** *This means to point out a sinful attitude, action, or thought pattern that is not in line with the truths of Scripture.*

? **Is it possible to reprove someone in the absence of doctrine?** *No, there must be a standard of action to be compared to. Right action can only come from right thinking (orthopraxy comes from orthodoxy).*

The third term is correction. Pointing out an error is of little use to someone unless the goal is to make a correction. If we are driving from Alabama toward Canada and you notice the compass in the car says south, you can rebuke me for driving in the wrong direction, but it does neither of us any good in getting to Canada unless you help me correct my mistake. This is one of the important parts of being part of a body of believers. If someone is off course, we can help correct them. Galatians 6:1

says “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

The final idea is instruction in righteousness. As we mentioned before, the goal of our Christian life is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Scripture provides us instruction for growing in righteousness. The Bible contains positive examples and commands of behavior and thought. Just like we train children by giving them positive examples to follow, Scripture gives us the same—that we “may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). The life-changing truths we find in Scripture are evidence that supports the claim that the Bible is from God.



Applying God’s Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

So let’s think about the three issues we have talked about so far today and try to solidify them in our minds.

- ? What is the ultimate source of Scripture and what passages can we use to support this idea? *All Scripture is from God: 2 Peter 1:19–21 and 2 Timothy 3:16.*
- ? How were the Scriptures delivered to us? *Through men/prophets guided by the Holy Spirit.*
- ? Why can we trust the Scriptures? *They are given by God, and God cannot lie.*
- ? According to 2 Timothy 3:16–17, in what four areas is the Bible useful? *Doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.*

GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

None of this head knowledge matters if we don’t intentionally put it into practice. We can observe and interpret the text, but we cannot be conformed into Christ’s image if we don’t apply it to our lives.

- ? It is likely that you know people who doubt the truth of the Bible. They might say things like, “We can’t trust the Bible; it was simply written by men.” How would you go about discussing this idea with them? *Hopefully, the students will talk about using Scripture to explain the origin of the Bible to a skeptic. However, many have been trained to pile up evidences and leave the truths of Scripture out of the discussion. The next question may be helpful to draw out this idea.*
- ? Is it wise to leave the Bible out of the discussion about the Bible? *No, it is the only source of truth that we can ultimately appeal to. Setting the Bible aside is like a soldier setting his weapon aside when entering battle.*

We can use evidence in many valuable ways to support the claims of the Bible, but we can never have the attitude that piles of evidence can prove that the Bible is true. If the evidence proves the Bible, then the evidence becomes the ultimate standard, not the Bible. If you have never thought about demonstrating truths in the Bible that way, I would encourage you to pray and meditate on that this week.

? As we look to apply the four uses of Scripture we discussed, let's think about your personal devotion time or family Scripture reading. **How could you put these four guiding principles into practice?** *After reading a passage and understanding the main ideas, ask yourself, or your family, the following questions: What fundamental teachings have I learned (doctrine)? Where do I fall short of any commands given in the passage (reproof)? What can I do about my errors (correction)? What steps can I take or imitate from the passage in order to make this teaching a consistent part of my life (instruction in righteousness)?*

All of these are practical ways that we can put the ideas from the text we have studied into practice. I sincerely hope that this has energized you to think about God's Word as the absolute standard we should look to in our lives. It promises that we can be complete by studying it and applying it to our lives—and we can trust that promise.



MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 19:7–9

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

? We have been working on memorizing this passage for two weeks now. Is there anyone who is getting close yet?

I trust that as you memorize this passage, it will become a great source of encouragement.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Pray for understanding of the passages and of how to put them into practice.
- Praise God for His faithfulness.
- Thank God for giving us His Word and for guiding us into all truth.