

God Speaks, Part 1

Topic

The Bible

Theme

God speaks to humanity through the Bible.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will value God's Word and study it concertedly and consistently as a result.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 8
- Cell phone (optional)

Scripture Focus

Gen. 3:15; Prov. 2:6–15; Rom. 5:8; Phil. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12, 13; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21

Summary

The Bible is more than a book we are supposed to read in order to be a good Christian. It really is the Word of God. As such, it is living and powerful. As we read it, we will find it is sufficient for us.

Outline

I. The Bible Really Is God's Word

- A. The Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21)
- B. The Bible is living and powerful (Heb. 4:12, 13)

II. The Bible Is God's Message to Humanity

- A. The Bible is a loving message (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 5:8)
- B. The Bible is a sufficient message
 - 1. It provides doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - 2. It reproves us (2 Tim. 3:16)
 - 3. It corrects us (Prov. 2:6–15; Phil. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16)
 - 4. It gives us instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

Memory Verse

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"
(Hebrews 4:12).

GETTING STARTED

Open It, or Delete It?

Have the learners indicate which e-mail they would open based on the following subject lines. They should indicate their answers with their arms, making an “O” over their heads for “open” and an “X” over their heads for “delete.” Add your own subject lines to make the activity fun and personal. Or, have your phone with you and read random subject lines from your own e-mail account.

- Save 50 Percent Off Appliances at Sears!
- Donations needed
- Julia Smith invites you to join Pinterest
- Cool & Casual. Save \$20 Off All Denim and Casual Pants.
- Catching up
- Urgent request!
- Last Day for Free Shipping!
- Bonus Deals + Electronic Steals
- Message from the Lord

God will never send us an e-mail, text message, or tweet. But if He did, all of us would certainly open it with great eagerness. Yet we aren’t always that eager to open the message He has sent us. The Bible really is God’s Word. And we really should be interested enough in it to open it every day. After all, He wrote it for us!

This lesson will help us understand the reality of the Word of God.

Special Delivery

A truck driver for a cola company pulled into Mount Pleasant, Iowa, to make his delivery. As he pulled up to the address, he was a little confused. When he asked about delivering the cola, the man at the address pointed out that he needed to be in Mount Pleasant, *Michigan*. That is about 350 miles from Mount Pleasant, Iowa. The man was lost and didn’t even know it.

ASK: When have you been lost without even knowing it? (Q1)

ASK: What helped you realize you were not on the right road? (Q2)

This lesson will help us understand the reality of the Word of God and its value in giving us direction in life.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The previous lesson presented the important ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. An important aspect of His ministry is the Bible, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). This lesson will give us a full appreciation for God’s Word.

I. The Bible Really Is God’s Word

Some Christians consult the Bible only when they need a lift or when they want inspiration for making a decision. But the Bible is neither a Hallmark card nor a

Magic 8 Ball. To treat it as either is insulting to God the Father Who inspired it, the Son Whose story of redemption it contains, and the Spirit Who empowers it. We ought to treat the Bible with the utmost respect, for it is highly valuable. The Bible really is God's Word. That is a Biblical reality to which we must awake.

A. The Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21)

Perhaps no doctrine in all of theology is as important as the inspiration of Scripture. If we cannot be sure the Bible is inspired, then we can't be sure of anything it says. That's why God made it clear in the Scriptures that they are indeed inspired.

The Greek word for "inspiration" (2 Tim. 3:16) literally means "God-breathed." The idea is that the very words of Scripture originated with God. He is the sole source of Scripture.

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16a. **ASK:** Why is it important to know that "all" Scripture is inspired by God? Consider the authority of Scripture. (Q3) *Since all of Scripture is inspired, no one has the right to claim authority over it or to relegate parts of it as less authoritative or not authoritative.*

Theological liberals deny the inspiration of Scripture so they can claim authority over the Scriptures. They mold passages to say what they want them to say, or they dismiss passages altogether. This is because they view the Bible as a witness of God instead of the Word of God. Specifically, they focus on what Jesus says about peace, justice, fairness, compassion, and love. They ignore other passages on God's judgment of sin and the Lake of Fire.

Peter discussed the theological liberals of his day. He warned believers to be wary of the "unlearned and unstable" who take the Scriptures and "wrest," or "twist," them (2 Pet. 3:16). Some even used the Scriptures to satisfy their greed (2:3). "Destruction" was the end for such apostates (3:16). Peter told the believers to "beware" lest they be led away by the same error (3:17). This is the background of Peter's important teaching considering the origin of Scripture (1:20, 21).

READ: 2 Peter 1:20, 21. **ASK:** What is the clear teaching in this passage concerning the origin of the Scriptures? (Q4) *Scripture did not come from wise men who wrote according to their own will. Instead, the Spirit moved the men along as they wrote. The end result is the inspired Scriptures.*

The Scriptures are not of "private interpretation" (1:20). "Interpretation" is translated from a word that means "unloosing." The idea is that the Scriptures were not unleashed by any of the human authors. The Scriptures all came from God. So no one has the right to twist the Scriptures by yanking them out of context.

God inspired the Scriptures, but He did not physically write the Scriptures Himself. He used people to write His words. The human authors each wrote from their own personalities and according to their personal styles. So, for example, the apostle Paul's writings are uniquely his, while Peter's are distinctly his. Some people have a hard time getting past that fact. Perhaps it could also be a reason people feel free to use the Scriptures as they wish.

But God purposefully preserved the writers' personalities and styles as they

wrote. He wanted them to write with their own personal flavor. When we consider that God gave the writers their personalities, seeing evidence of their personalities in the books they wrote should not be a problem for us. The end result is the inspired Word of God. It is word for word what God intended it to be.

So the God we learned about in lessons two and three wrote a book for us. That is amazing to consider. We should treasure our Bibles.

ASK: What would constitute treasuring our Bibles? (Q5) *Reading it faithfully; studying it; memorizing it; telling others what it says; teaching it; praising God for it.*

B. The Bible is living and powerful (Heb. 4:12, 13)

Not only is the Bible God's very word, but it is also alive!

ASK: What are your thoughts when you hear the Bible is "living"? (Q6)

The writer of Hebrews called the Word of God "living" (Heb. 4:12). That means God's Word is active in our lives. It makes a difference when we read it and digest it. The Holy Spirit is the One Who makes the Bible active and "powerful." He uses the Scriptures to penetrate our hearts much like a sword would. It cuts to the very core of who we are. It reveals what is real about us. God's Word shows us reality.

The meaning of the division of "soul and spirit" and "joints and marrow" is not particularly clear. But the phrases do point to the degree to which God's Word penetrates who we are as a person—*nothing* is left uncovered.

READ: Hebrews 4:12. **ASK:** What does the Word of God reveal about our hearts? (Q7) *It reveals our "thoughts" and "intentions," which includes our attitudes, motivations, and intentions.*

We could hide our attitudes, motivations, and intentions from people, but God's Word always reveals them.

READ: Hebrews 4:13. **ASK:** To what degree are our lives exposed by God, the author and power behind the Word of God? (Q8) *Nothing about our lives is hidden from God's sight. Our lives are completely exposed before Him.*

The God Who sees all we are uses the Word of God, activated by the Spirit of God, to expose us to the reality of who we are. We should be convicted of any sin in our lives as we read and study God's Word, even sins of attitude, motives, and intentions. But we should also be encouraged by God's offer of forgiveness and the fact that as we serve Him in His power He will one day reward us (4:13).

The Bible is alive! It is astonishing that a believer would ever treat it like just another book or an annoying e-mail. We should cherish it and devour it!

Lesson 11 covers the reality of reward in Heaven in detail.

II. The Bible Is God's Message to Humanity

God inspired the Bible for a purpose. He had a vital message to convey to humanity. That message is both loving and sufficient.

A. The Bible is a loving message (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 5:8)

The Bible is a love letter to humanity. Just imagine the hopeless chaos without the

special revelation of the Bible. The love of God is replete throughout the Bible. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, God lovingly provided for Adam and Eve's sins and promised a permanent solution would come (Gen. 3:15). That solution came in the Person of Jesus when God showed His love toward us by sending Christ to die for us (Rom. 5:8).

ASK: Which of the many passages on God's love are particularly meaningful to you? (Q9)

READ: Romans 6:23a. **ASK:** How could Bible passages that speak of eternal judgment be part of God's loving message? (Q10) *God reveals in detail what eternal separation from Him in the Lake of Fire will be like so we will be motivated to tell others the gospel. God also uses those descriptions to help people understand the seriousness of their sin and their need for a Savior.*

God is clear on the consequences of dying without trusting in Jesus as Savior. He tells us that message to motivate us to share the gospel and to motivate the lost to trust in Christ as their Savior.

Perhaps we could summarize the Bible with the phrase "for God so loved the world" (John 3:16). If we truly appreciate the love of God, then we ought to be concerned about what He in His love has revealed to us in His Word.

B. The Bible is a sufficient message

God in His love made the Bible sufficient for us. There is nothing lacking. God didn't forget to add a section. It is perfect and complete.

Studies like this one help you understand the Bible, but the power for a course like this comes from God's Word. As a matter of principle, we as believers ought to choose Bible study materials that are centered around God's Word rather than around a particular personality or philosophy. Some popular writers might make us feel better or believe we can handle life more effectively, but popular writing alone will have little effect on our lives or on eternity.

1. It provides doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16)

The apostle Paul wrote to a pastor named Timothy about the sufficiency of the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). He said all Scripture is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16.

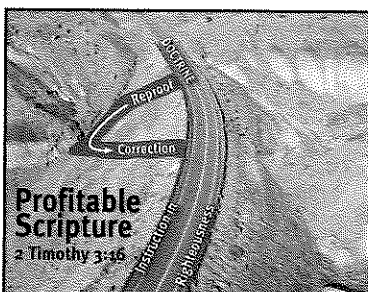
RESOURCE: Display resource 8 as an illustration of 2 Timothy 3:16.

"Doctrine" is what the Bible says is right. It is the Bible's teaching oriented toward application. So it is more than heavy systematic theology. It is highly practical too. If we follow the Bible's doctrine, we will stay on the road God has for us. But none of us is perfect. All of us eventually leave the road to drive into the wilderness. Even the apostle Paul admitted his struggle to stay on the road (Rom. 7:14-23).

2. It reproves us (2 Tim. 3:16)

As we begin to drive into the wilderness, the Bible will give us "reproof" to

The majority of the courses in the Truth for Living scope and sequence are Bible book courses. The rest of the courses cover Bible doctrines and topics, but even those courses are organized and developed on the basis of God's Word.



show us where we have gone wrong (2 Tim. 3:16). Sometimes God uses a pastor's message or a challenge from a friend to reprove us with His Word. Other times it comes as we read or study God's Word for ourselves. And if we have memorized God's Word, the Holy Spirit will use those verses to reprove us.

ASK: What means has God used to reprove you and show you your sin? (Q11)

3. It corrects us (Prov. 2:6–15; Phil. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16)

“Reproof” is not an end in itself. “Correction” is needed to point the way back to the road God wants us to be on. The word “correction” comes from a root word meaning to “set up straight” that which is crooked. Solomon talks about the crooked way of the wicked in Proverbs 2:6–15.

READ: Proverbs 2:6–15. **ASK:** Summarize the description of the path of the wicked. (Q12) *It is perverse, devoid of light, characterized by evil deeds, crooked, and devious. It is a path that leads to destruction.*

“Correction” shows us how to get back on the path of the upright. The Epistles in particular are helpful for correction. Ephesians 4:17–24 is a clear “correction” passage. It even uses the walking metaphor. The main passages in lesson one of this course are also passages with “correction” in them (Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Cor. 15:30–34; Eph. 5:3–17).

Philippians 2:15 tells us we are to shine as lights in the midst of the crooked generation around us (cf. Eph. 4:17, 18). The path of the upright is light, while the crooked path of the wicked is “darkness” (Prov. 2:13). As we stay on the path of the upright, we shine the hope of the gospel to the wicked.

4. It gives us instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

“Instruction in righteousness” keeps us on the path of the upright. On the road it serves as the white lines and guardrails. “Instruction” means “training” or “guidance.” It is similar to the teaching process a parent takes his child through. In order for us to benefit from “instruction in righteousness,” we need to admit we need the training. That takes humility.

The result of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness is becoming a man of God who is “perfect,” or “complete,” and “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17). In other words, the Bible is a sufficient message. It has all we need to become what God wants us to be.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

My Message about the Bible

ASK: How would someone describe the value of the Bible based solely on your use of it? (Q13)

Ask: How would their description compare to what you know to be true of the Bible's value? (Q14)

Value God's Word

ASK: What are some reasons believers might give for not valuing the Bible as God's very words? (Q15) *They don't understand it; they aren't disciplined enough to read it; they already know what it says; they are too busy to study it; they don't think it relates to their lives.*

ASK: What should characterize our approach to God's Word? Should we just see it as something we are supposed to read? (Q16)

ASK: Based on what you've learned about God's Word, what results would you expect from a concerted, consistent effort to know God's Word? (Q17) *A renewed heart and mind; victory over sin; a life of obedience that glorifies God; an increased capacity to help others understand God's Word; a joyful heart and a peaceful mind.*

Encourage your learners to be concerted and consistent in their approach to God's Word. Reviewing the lessons and passages in this study book would be a good place to start if your learners have not been concerted and consistent in their study of God's Word.

Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 7 or use the following: Value and study the Bible as God's very words.

Encourage learners to memorize Hebrews 4:12. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

Living in the Real	
1. Wake up to reality!	8.
2. Live in response to Who God is.	9.
3. Live in response to God's person.	10.
4. Walk in newness of life as God's redeemed.	11.
5. Boldly approach the throne of grace.	12.
6. Live in the power of the Spirit.	13.
7. Value and study the Bible as God's very words.	