

# explore

books

**1&2** Leader's Guide





# explore

A Discipleship Series for Preteens

## books

Uncover the Truth about God

**1&2**

Discover Your Place in God's Plan

# explore leader's guide

Copyright © 2009 by Wesleyan Publishing House  
Published by Wesleyan Publishing House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250  
Printed in the United States of America  
ISBN: 978-0-89827-418-9

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

### Contributors

Executive Editor: Colleen Derr  
Authors: Angie Young and Andrew Bush  
Art Director/Designer: Kory Pence  
Illustrator: Daniel Swartz

[www.wesleyan.org/wph](http://www.wesleyan.org/wph)

**book 1** ..... **Uncover the Truth about God****Page**

<b>9</b>	<b>God</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>The Bible</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>Sin</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
<b>29</b>	<b>Salvation</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>Baptism</b>

**book 2** ..... **Discover Your Place in God's Plan****Page**

<b>43</b>	<b>The Trinity</b>
<b>48</b>	<b>Temptation</b>
<b>54</b>	<b>Bible Study and Prayer</b>
<b>60</b>	<b>Holy Living</b>
<b>66</b>	<b>Worship</b>
<b>71</b>	<b>Membership</b>



# introduction

*Explore* is a discipleship resource for your church's intentional ministry to preteens—those who may no longer consider themselves children but are not yet teens.

Your preteens are on the verge of becoming teens and embarking on a culture that is in need of an infusion of followers of Christ. Intentional discipleship as provided in *Explore* will help ground them in their faith, establish routines that will move them in their spiritual formation, and prepare them to face a world desperately in need of the Savior.

The *Explore* discipleship series is written in a small group format to provide opportunity for deeper, relational connections. It's progressive in design, moving students from an internal confirmation of their faith, to a commitment to a fellowship of believers, on to service within the fellowship, and finally to personal ministry outside the doors of the church. It's intentional in that it combines personal teaching moments that are highly interactive and reflective with corporate celebrations.

*Transition* is a key word to describe the life of preteens. Their bodies are transitioning as they move from child-size to adult-looking bodies. Their minds are transitioning as they move from concrete to abstract thinking. They are developing the ability to reflect, interpret, and assimilate. Socially, preteens are moving from being family centered to being friend centered. Spiritually they are moving away from the borrowed faith of their parents and teachers to a personalized faith that they own.

## This Time of Transition

"What you believe by the time you are 13 is what you will die believing . . . most people's minds are made up and they believe they know what they need to know spiritually by age 13. Their focus in absorbing religious teaching after that age is to gain reassurance and confirmation of their existing beliefs rather than to glean new insights that will redefine their foundations" (George Barna).

This time of transition is a prime opportunity to instill biblical truths and to give your preteens an opportunity to confirm their faith. Preteens are capable of powerful commitment and have the ability to process deep spiritual insights, if given the opportunity and motivation. Here are some key things to remember when sharing biblical truth with preteens:

- They desire authentic relationships with adults who are transparent.
- Boys often respect male leaders greater than female, while girls usually respect either equally. Make sure you have male volunteers as part of your preteen ministry.
- They need you to answer the question "So what?" so they can understand why.
- They are active and loud as they sort out who they are and where they fit in.

- They are very self-conscious and desire a great deal of attention.
- They need routine and clear guidelines, but seek independence.
- They need to talk and question.
- They have drastic mood swings and waffle between levels of maturity.
- Girls are all about friends and are into make-up, fashion and appearance.
- Boys want to play and care little about personal appearance.

## What Is the *Explore* Discipleship Series?

The *Explore* series is comprised of four student books, each containing six weeks of discipleship lessons for preteens, for a total of twenty-four weeks worth of material. Each set of six lessons culminates in a celebration. There are also two leader's guides, one for student books 1 and 2 and one for student books 3 and 4.

The outline of lessons for the entire 24-week course is:

### book ①

#### *Uncover the Truth about God*

1. God
  2. The Bible
  3. Jesus
  4. Humanity
  5. Salvation
  6. Baptism
- Celebration: Baptism

### book ③

#### *Experience God's Power in You*

1. Bible Study
  2. Prayer
  3. Evangelism
  4. Fellowship
  5. Service
  6. Stewardship
- Celebration: Student Leadership

### book ②

#### *Discover Your Place in God's Plan*

1. The Trinity
  2. Temptation
  3. Bible Study and Prayer
  4. Holy Living
  5. Worship
  6. Membership
- Celebration: Student Membership

### book ④

#### *Encounter Your Mission for God*

1. Fruits of the Spirit
  2. Spiritual Gifts
  3. Spiritual Disciplines
  4. Compassion
  5. The Call
  6. Missions
- Celebration: Mission Experience

Christian character development is a lifelong process. No one is too young or old to start or stop growing deeper in their life with Jesus. It is a privilege to disciple every person intentionally. If we want our youth, young adults, parents, grandparents, and culture to behave like Jesus, now is the time to explore the truths of God and His Church with our children.



## note to leaders

*Explore* is a small group discipleship tool for the students in transition between your children's ministry program and youth group. The material provides for twenty-four weeks of teaching and four weeks of celebrations. This can be done by using two of the books in the fall semester for twelve weeks of programming and two of the books in the spring semester for another twelve weeks. It can also be used over two years providing a six week program each fall and spring for two years.

This small group can meet during the traditional Sunday school hour, during a midweek programming hour, or on Sunday evening. The books are also an excellent resource for setting up a time of independent programming—a time set apart from the typical ministry schedule for the purpose of intentional discipleship with preteens. Establishing a unique time of discipleship for preteens also allows flexibility in finding a time frame and location that works best for the group.

The Leader's Guide for each lesson contains the following elements in this order:

**Thesis:** A single sentence that summarizes the entire content of the lesson into one thought.

**Main Points:** Three sentences that summarize the primary teaching points for each lesson.

**Lesson Preparation:** Provides leader instructions for what to do prior to teaching each lesson.

**Connect:** Helps create a relational environment, giving the students and leader an opportunity to catch up on life.

**Warm Up:** Provides a "hook" and introduces the concept for the lesson to gain the interest and attention of students.

**Engage:** Presents the Bible teaching component, including biblical background.

**Relate:** Provides the real life application, answers the "so what?" question and makes the theme personal.

**Question:** Launches the group into asking interactive and exploratory questions about the content and relational elements of what was presented so that they can process and internalize.

**Prayer:** Offers a suggested prayer to pray with the students.

**Unwind:** Creates group connection and lightens the atmosphere before sending them home.

**Challenge:** Provides a tangible outcome that practically relates the concept to the students' real world. Also includes a challenge verse to study each week with the goal being they will commit the verse to memory.

Additional resources to enhance each lesson can be found at [www.wesleyan.org/explore](http://www.wesleyan.org/explore).

Of these elements, *Engage*, *Question*, and *Challenge* appear in the student book. The students are asked to use their book as a reflection journal, completing the content and following the challenges.

There is enough material provided in each lesson for a full 90 minutes of programming. If your time is shorter than that, pick and choose the elements that work best for your group and fill your time allotment. The elements that parallel the student's book—*Engage*, *Question*, and *Challenge*—would be the foundational elements you would begin with and build the rest of your teaching time from.

The Bible verses referenced throughout *Explore* are quoted from the *Live Bible*. We strongly encourage you to make available for each student a copy of the *Live Bible* so that you and your preteens can be literally on the same page. In a small group it is a challenge to have a Bible study with a leader and students using different Bibles and especially different translations. The Leader's Guide contains the corresponding page number for each biblical reference to help you find the verses quickly. The *Live Bible* is written in the New Living Translation which is most appropriate for this age level, providing easier readability and comprehension for preteens.

book 1

# Uncover the Truth about God

Leader's Guide



explore

*In this book students will learn—*

- How you can believe in God even though you can't see Him.
- God's Word, your instruction book for life.
- Who Jesus is and what He did for you.
- Why God forgives us.
- How being baptized marks the start of a whole new life.

You are on an amazing journey of faith—let's *Explore* it together!



# 1. God

**We can believe in God even though we can't see Him.**

## Main Points

We can see the effects God has on nature.

We can see the effects God has in Scripture.

We can see the effects God has throughout history.

---

## Lesson Preparation

Background: Read Genesis 1:1—2:4 and Psalm 19:1–6.

Items needed: *Live Bible* (one for each student), balloons (one for each student), play dough, paper, and pens. For the egg drop activity (per student): egg, two sheets of paper, a sandwich bag, tape, and four pieces of yarn.

## Connect

What is the first picture that comes to mind when you hear the word *journey*?

Where was the last place you journeyed to?

*Begin the conversation with a story of your last journey.*

What was the best part of your trip?

**Today we are going to begin our journey of faith together.** During these next six weeks we are going to *Explore* key truths about our faith in God. Our starting point in this journey as we *uncover the truth* is God.

## Warm Up

How can we believe in something we can't see?

Do you believe in air?

How do we know air exists?

plan

ask

# God

Let's do an activity to prove air exists even though we can't see it.

*Give the preteens a balloon. Have them blow it up and pinch the end. Don't tie the balloons.*

**We know air exists even though we cannot see it because we can see the effect it has on our balloons.**

*Count to three and have them release their balloons.*



## Engage

There are so many things that we believe in even though we can't see them. We believe in gravity, wind, and air. We believe in these things, because we can see the effects they have on the world around us. Just like each of these things we can believe in God because we can see the effects that He has had on nature, in Scripture, and throughout history.

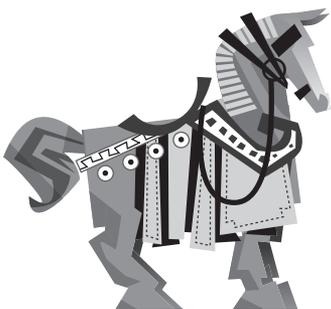
**say**

### ***I Can Know It Is True***

1. We can see the effects God has on nature. Nature didn't happen by accident. Nature is creative and organized. Nature points us to an intelligent creator, God. We can read about the effects God has on nature in Genesis 1:1—2:4 and Isaiah 44:24.
2. We can see the effects God has in Scripture. Even though humans wrote the Bible, God inspired each word. Scripture helps us know who God is and how to have a relationship with Him. We can read about the effects God has in Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16.
3. We can see the effects God has throughout history. The course of history has been affected by the many miracles that God has performed. Moses, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Peter, and Paul are just a few people who witnessed God's power through miracles. As a result of these marvelous acts, their faith in God was strengthened. God still performs miracles and is changing lives every day! Read about the effect God has throughout history in Exodus 4:1–17; Daniel 6; and Acts 16:16–34.

*These verses are extensive. If time does not permit the full reading of all three, ask preteens if they can summarize the stories by giving prompts. Exodus 4:1–17 is God's sending of Moses to free His people from Egypt. Daniel 6 is the story of Daniel's faithfulness to God. Acts 16 is the story of Paul and Silas being freed from prison.*

**Even though we may not be able to physically see God today, He reveals himself to us through nature, Scripture, and history. Take a look around you and begin to discover what an amazing and powerful God we worship!**



## Check It Out

Romans 1:20 says, “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God” (p. 1110, *Live*).

➤ What are some of God’s invisible qualities that are revealed in nature?

*His power, love, creativity, gentleness, humor, justice, and forgiveness.*

Matthew 22:29 says, “Jesus replied, ‘Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God’” (p. 973, *Live*).

➤ How is the power of God shown in Scripture?

*His power in creation, over death, over enemies, and over Satan.*

Job 5:9 says, “He does great things too marvelous to understand. He performs countless miracles” (p. 504, *Live*).

Deuteronomy 10:21 says, “He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes” (p. 187, *Live*).

➤ What can we learn about God through the miracles He performs?

*He loves us, He has power over nature and His creation, and He’s still active in His creation.*

## Relate

Earlier in the lesson, we saw the effects of air. Now, we are going to see the effects of another one of God’s invisible creations—gravity.

*Hand out the egg drop materials to each preteen. Allow five minutes for each one to create a protective covering to shield their egg from the effects of gravity.*

Check out the effects gravity has on this egg.

*Go to an area where they can toss the eggs in the air. Permit each preteen to throw his or her egg in the air. After each egg has landed, examine the eggs to determine the effect gravity has on them.*

# God

## How is not being able to see gravity like not being able to see God?

*We know it exists because we can see the effect it has.*

It's great to know we can believe in God even when we can't see Him.



## Question

Read Job 38:1–12.

What verse sticks out to you? Why?

Nature is full of amazing and complex things. Think about the sun. If it were located any closer to the earth, we would not be able to survive because of the intense heat. If it were located any farther from the earth, we would not be able to survive because of the extreme cold. God, in all of His wisdom knew how large the sun needed to be, exactly where it needed to be located, and how fast the earth needed to rotate around it in order for us to live here on earth. Creation is no accident.

➤ Think about the world around you. What are four other parts of creation that you think are too complex to be an accident?

*The human eye, the oceans and all their life forms, the various species of dogs, a flower, the way a bee pollinates, and the four seasons.*

Take a moment and thank God for creating each of those things.

Psalm 106:2 says, “Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him enough?” (p. 593, *Live*).

➤ See how many miracles you can list in three minutes!

Deuteronomy 4:32 says, “Now search all of history, from the time God created people on the earth until now, and search from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything as great as this ever been seen or heard before?” (p. 181, *Live*).

In this passage, God was challenging the Israelites to look at their history and remember what God had done for them.

➤ Think about your life. List two or three things that God has done for you.

## Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank you for showing Yourself in Your creation and history. Thank you that we can read about You in the Bible. Help us believe in You and see You during our journey this week. Amen.



## Unwind

God knew what He was doing when He created all of creation. From the simple yet complex blade of grass to the creative uniqueness of the duck-billed platypus, all of creation points us toward God. Let's take some time to create our own fun creature.

*Give each preteen some play dough, a piece of paper, and a pen.*

I will give you five minutes to mold the play dough into your very own unique creature. Use the paper and pen to write down the name of your creature, what it can do, where it lives, and any other interesting facts about it.

*After five minutes, have each one give a brief presentation to the class about their creature.*

## Challenge

As you *Explore* through the week, your challenge is to uncover five different ways God is at work around you. Make a list in your book of the effects of God you see and hear. At the end of each day take time to praise God for each one you have written down.



Don't forget to bring your list to class next week so we can compare what we have seen and heard.

## Explore

Romans 1:20 says, "For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God" (p. 1110, *Live*).

See if you can learn this verse in one week! I challenge you to do it!

***For additional electronic resources, go to [www.wesleyan.org/explore](http://www.wesleyan.org/explore).***



# Student Membership Celebration

**The student membership celebration is a significant milestone in the spiritual life of your preteens. It is crucial to make it a meaningful celebration that includes the preteen's family and entire church fellowship. The following pages provide an outline of preparation for the celebration, a sample celebration ceremony, and ideas on making the day memorable.**

## ***Preparation for the Celebration***

- 1.** Have individual interviews with the preteens. Review what they have written in their church membership application. Review their testimony and reflections on their baptism celebration. Review their response to the responsibilities and benefits of church membership, making sure they understand both fully, as well as any specifics that relate to your local church.
- 2.** For the preteens who indicate they're not ready for church membership, encourage them to write a thank-you note to a significant church member. Continue to pray and lead them.
- 3.** If you have questions about the readiness of any of the preteens, meet with the pastor and their parents or caregivers. Discuss your concerns to determine the preteen's readiness.
- 4.** Meet with your pastor to discuss the details of the membership celebration:
  - a.** When it will take place?
  - b.** Who will participate?
  - c.** Which preteens will be welcomed into membership?
  - d.** What will be said and done?
  - e.** What will be the format and expectation for the preteens and their parents or caregivers?
  - f.** How the entire church will participate in the celebration?
- 5.** Meet with the preteens who are ready for membership and their parents or caregivers.
- 6.** Explain the details of the membership ceremony and how it will be a celebration. Go over the specific order of the ceremony. If the preteens will be given an opportunity to share, review in advance what they will say. Make sure all the preteens and parents or caregivers are comfortable with the celebration. They will want to know:
  - a.** What should they wear?
  - b.** Where should they stand?

# Student Membership Celebration

- c. When should they come forward and where do they go afterward?
  - d. What do their parents or caregivers do?
  - e. What will they be expected to say?
  - f. Who should they invite? (You can design invitations to share with friends and families.)
7. Create a keepsake for the preteens. A keepsake is important for them to have as a tangible reminder of this milestone in their spiritual journey. The size or cost is not as important as the memory it represents. Ideas can include:
- A video recording of the celebration. These can include words of encouragement from their pastor, teacher, and friends.
  - A picture of the preteens with their new “team” of other student members and pastoral leadership.
  - A team jersey—this can be the t-shirt the preteens designed during the final class, or a shirt designed to show their membership to this community of faith.
  - A Bible with the date and occasion listed in the front.
  - A devotional book and prayer journal.

## ***Before the Ceremony***

1. Before the ceremony, make sure each preteen has met with the pastor to talk about membership. Go over the responsibilities and benefits of being a member of the church. Review any guidelines the students must follow as a member.
2. Present the names of the preteens who are applying to become a student member to the local board of administration. Each preteen must be voted on and approved by the local board of administration before becoming a student member of the church.
3. Practice what the preteens will say when they are asked why they want to become a member. Try to make it short, to the point, and biblical.

## ***The Ceremony***

Have the preteens who are going to become a member present themselves to the congregation by coming forward. Give each preteen a chance to share why they want to become a member of this church.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 says, “The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part” (p. 1137, *Live*).

It is important to be a part of God’s team—the Church. Even at a young age it is important to realize that you have a role in God’s body.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27 which says, "All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." Children are no more or less important than adults in the body of Christ. That is why we offer them membership today.

**Minister:** *The Church desires to embrace within its care and nurture those who are converted to Christ early in life and who desire to know more about Jesus and His will for themselves. These have come for reception as student members so they may be disciplined by the Church and may, at the proper time, assume a greater place of responsibility and leadership in the Church. To these we address these questions.*

**Minister:** *Does the Lord now forgive your sins?*

**Candidate:** *Yes, He does.*

**Minister:** *Is it your purpose that you will grow in your knowledge of Jesus Christ and His will for you, to study daily in private devotions and regularly at the church, so you will mature in your faith and be prepared to serve as the Lord may direct you?*

**Candidate:** *Yes, it is.\**

Have the local board of administration come forward and lay their hands on the preteens. Say a word of prayer for each preteen. Once accepted into membership, have the congregation offer the hand of fellowship to them.

### **Following the Celebration**

Provide an opportunity for the entire church fellowship to congratulate the preteens for taking such a bold step. Have church leadership welcome each preteen into the fellowship of faith. Provide a refreshment fellowship, pitch-in dinner, or luncheon for the new members and their families following the celebration service.

Allow the preteens to put the date they became a member on the team jerseys they made in class. They might ask the other preteens who became members that day to sign their shirts.

Give each preteen a certificate with the date and proof of membership. Celebrate with your preteens on their decision.

#### **Note**

\*"Reception of Student Members" in *The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church*, (Indianapolis, Ind.: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2008), 368.

# Leader Notes