

LESSON 1.1: APOLOGETICS

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:1-41

SUMMARY:

We aren't skipping a beat with this first lesson of the year. Our focus for this week was to set the stage and expectations high, as we will hit on a ton of heavy topics throughout the year. We introduced apologetics and looked at the apostles as models for how to engage culture in humble dialogue about truth. As Christians, we are commanded to be ready to explain the reasons for our faith (1 Peter 3:15). We call this practice "apologetics." We learned from the apostles that, as we engage in

conversations, the goal is to let the Spirit lead us, find common ground, and use evidence to lead someone to the knowledge of Jesus' saving act of His death and resurrection. If we are humble and prepare ourselves to defend the faith, we will be equipped for the good work of apologetics.

CORE VERSES	CORE CONCEPTS
<p><i>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.</i></p> <p><i>1 Peter 3:15-16</i></p>	<p>Christians need to be ready to share the reasons for their beliefs.</p> <hr/> <p>APOLOGETICS: The practice of defending one's beliefs</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What questions do you and your friends have about God and Christianity?
- Where do you seek answers for questions about your faith?
- How confident are you in sharing your faith with someone who disagrees with you? Explain.
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 1.2: FAITH
SCRIPTURE: JOHN 20:19-31

SUMMARY:

To many, the Christian faith is a blind faith. They think Christians are supposed to believe in spite of, or even against, evidence. However, this idea of faith is not the biblical model. In the Bible, there are many times where we see that to have faith is to place one's trust in Christ because of what we know, not in spite of what we know. Thomas is one example of this and was the focus of our study this week. Thomas believes in Jesus' resurrection because he meets and sees the risen Lord (vv. 24-28).

Jesus gives the disciples and Thomas good reasons to believe. This is why Jesus appears to the disciples (vv. 19-20).

The biblical model of faith is to investigate what people have claimed about God and test it against the evidence. It is not a wishing belief or a blind hope. Instead, a true seeker will be blessed by looking at the evidence and trusting in God based on what they know.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Is there an area of your life where it is difficult to trust God?
- Of the Christians you know, whose faith is the most impressive to you?
- What are your reasons for believing in God?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 1.3: TRUTH
SCRIPTURE: JOHN 3:1-21

SUMMARY:

Take a minute and think back to when you had an ah-ha moment, a moment of sudden realization or insight that you didn't have before. This is exactly what happened with Nicodemus when he encountered Jesus. He recognized the power of Jesus and knew there was something special about Him. In this brief interaction, Jesus is inviting Nicodemus into a new and fresh knowledge of the truth, truth that is meant to set Nicodemus free.

John 3 is about the importance of understanding truth. Today people claim that truth is relative, or that everyone is entitled to their own version of the truth based on their personal experiences. With so many different ideas about truth we can often have more questions about it than we have answers. Fortunately, the Bible is not silent on the subject. As we conform our lives to the truth of God's Word, we will experience the freedom of God's design for our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Are there any areas of your life where you feel stuck or frustrated?
- What are the most difficult truths for you to follow?
- How would your life be different in five years if you lived your life completely according to truth?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 1.4: LOGIC SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 22:15-45

SUMMARY:

Worship is often a deeply emotional experience which deepens our faith and relationship with Christ. The lesson this week takes a look at Jesus’ command to have more than an emotional response to Him. Our love involves our heart, soul, and mind. Mature faith requires clear, logical thinking. As we grow in Christ, we should also cultivate our minds to think logically.

the tricks of the Pharisee and Sadducee skeptics. In verse 37, Jesus implores the Pharisees to use their minds. Beginning at verse 23, students were introduced to an argumentative strategy used by the Sadducees called *reductio ad absurdum*—an argument that, when drawn to its logical conclusion, is ridiculous. But they underestimated Jesus’ wisdom. In both cases, Jesus modeled the importance of careful, logical thinking. He clearly loved God with His mind, and He calls us to do the same.

This week’s passage tells of how Jesus uses logic to avoid

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How does clear and logical thinking help you to understand your faith?
- Have you ever felt trapped by an argument against your faith? Tell me about it.
- What areas of your faith do you need to learn more about to help you understand and think logically about truth?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 2.1: WORLDVIEW

SCRIPTURE: 2 KINGS 22-23:25

SUMMARY:

Sometimes a single moment can completely change the way we think. Consequently, a change in thinking leads to a change in behavior. King Josiah experiences this in 2 Kings 22-23:25. In response to hearing the book of the Law for the first time, Josiah repents and completely renewed his kingdom’s respect and devotion to God. The standard for behavior no longer rested in false idols, but with the one true God.

This week students are introduced to the concept of a worldview. Worldviews are powerful. Because Josiah found the scroll with the Law, he became known for his heart and desire to live in covenant relationship with God. It transformed the way he related to all of life. This lesson sets up the next few weeks of discussions about different worldviews students will encounter in their interactions with nonbelievers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- What is most important to you in shaping how you see and respond to the world?
- How do your friends influence how you see the world?
- How do you discern what is pleasing to God?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 2.2: NATURALISM

SCRIPTURE: ECCLESIASTES 1-2

SUMMARY:

This week students are beginning to consider the consequences of different worldviews. First we look at naturalism. According to naturalism, everything that exists can be described through the five senses. But what are the consequences of seeing the world this way? Considered the wisest of Israel's kings, Solomon gives us a glimpse of what a life denying the existence of God would look like.

Without God, everything becomes meaningless. Solomon explains that even living a good life is meaningless without God (Ecclesiastes 2:12-26). The consequences of naturalism are meaninglessness and vanity. Our lives have purpose and meaning only in a universe made and sustained by God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How does a naturalistic worldview try to explain or give meaning to friendships and pain?
- How do you find meaning in friendships or pain?
- How would you explain hope to someone who lives with a naturalist worldview?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 2.3: PANTHEISM

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 17:16-34

SUMMARY:

In this week’s lesson, we find Paul in Acts 17 face-to-face with a pantheistic worldview. In this chapter, Paul meets the Epicureans, who thought the gods to be so remote that they had very little influence, and the Stoics, who acknowledged the existence of a supreme being in a pantheistic way. Paul masterfully argues that the Stoics and their pantheistic worldview are misaligned with reality.

Students are learning that pantheism holds a dangerous view of god. It limits our worship to material objects or unworthy concepts in our minds and therefore dethrones God and puts humanity in His place. Paul’s interaction with the Athenians is a stark reminder that although many things in nature may point us to Him, there is no substitute for the all-powerful Creator of the universe.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How do you react when you hear things in the media or conversations that sound like pantheism?
- How do you talk to your friends about our divine Creator who is distinct from His creation?
- What are your favorite Bible verses to remind you that God created and loves you?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 2.4: MONOTHEISM

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 1:18-32

SUMMARY:

From the very beginning of the Bible we see that there is a creator and there is creation (Genesis 1:1). This week students are studying about the destructive consequences of living outside of the truth. Nowhere are these consequences clearer than in Romans Chapter 1 and Paul's case for monotheism. Despite God making Himself known, humanity's desire to turn from Him has revealed His wrath against generations of godlessness and wickedness.

It is hard to see any hope for us in the early stages of Romans. However, Paul gives great hope throughout the rest of the letter. We can be changed to live with a right worldview. Christianity reveals God the Father, who graciously offers us the chance to repent and to live in covenant relationship with our Creator. Only monotheism sets the stage for the gospel to be in full view.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- When you reflect on your actions and thoughts about the world and situations you might be facing, do you think and act according to a biblical worldview?
- What is most inspiring to you or reminds you most that God is a loving creator?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 3.1: SCIENCE

SCRIPTURE GENESIS 1:11-12, 1:20-25, 8:22; JOB 36:27-28

SUMMARY:

We all assume that the laws of nature will work today the exact same way they always have. Why? God specifically created the world and promises to sustain it (Genesis 8:22). Many skeptics think there is a conflict between faith and science. But science does not contradict faith. Instead, science lays a crucial foundation for understanding the world. Despite what many skeptics claim, science should lead us to God instead of away from Him.

This week students took a look at Job’s life. In the midst of tragedy, Job was reminded that there is so much of God that cannot be explained and remains a mystery. Yet what we do know only points to Him with a much greater awe and wonder. It is God who creates, controls, and provides. The role of science is discovering all that God has done to order creation, which allows us to live in this world.

CORE VERSES

Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; You established the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve You.

Psalm 119:89-91

CORE CONCEPTS

Science does not contradict faith, but lays a crucial foundation for understanding the world.

SCIENCE:

The search for truth about the natural world

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- Do you feel pressured in school or by society to choose between science and your faith?
- What have you learned in science that amazes you about God’s creation?
- Has Scripture helped you understand science better? How?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 3.2: UNIVERSE
SCRIPTURE: PSALM 148

SUMMARY:

This week we get down to the details. After each day in Genesis 1, God declared His newest creation good. But after creating mankind, He said it was *very good*. All of creation was preparation for one thing: us! And science confirms this. Recently, scientists have observed what they call the fine-tuning of the universe. There are many constants that govern nature, values for specific forces within the universe that, if even slightly different, wouldn't support any life at all! So what is the best explanation for this fine-tuning? The universe is perfect for life because it was designed that way by God.

The psalmist was in awe that God would care about such seemingly insignificant creatures as us. Yet He does. And as amazing as our universe is, it's even more amazing that God, the one who made it, would come down, live among us, and die for our sins, all because He loves us.

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CORE VERSES	CORE CONCEPTS
<p><i>When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him?</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Psalm 8:3-4</i></p>	<p>The fine-tuning of the laws that govern the universe is best explained as the product of intelligent design.</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">FINE-TUNE: Make small adjustments to (something) in order to achieve the best or a desired performance</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you see God's precise hand on your life and how He's created you?
- How does God's precision and consistency impact your trust in Him?
- What questions about science and your faith do you have at this point in your study?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 3.3: DNA
SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:1-5

SUMMARY:

We might think words are simply the building blocks for language. But the Greek word for word, *logos*, used at the beginning of John’s Gospel, also means intelligence, rationality, and information. These verses imply that there is intelligence at the heart of all creation. God is rational, and so the entire universe is flooded with this rationality. And we see this everywhere.

This week’s lesson compares the information found in our DNA to computer software. Each strand of DNA consists of billions of letters of code which must be aligned perfectly to function correctly. The probability of our DNA randomly forming the way that it has is impossibly small. The incredible biological information formed by our DNA requires a divine programmer. He is the Word, the *Logos*, through which all things were made.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How is God’s design and the complexity of it a pointer to His intentionality and care for it?
- Where else do you see Scripture point to God’s intentional design of His creation?
- Did this lesson impact the way you think about intelligent design? How?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 3.4: DESIGNER

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 19:1-6

SUMMARY:

Psalm 19 explains how nature speaks to us about God. If something is designed specifically, the best explanation is that there is a designer. This week students looked at the complexity and specificity of God’s design. One way of recognizing design is by something called irreducible complexity. Many natural things exhibit irreducible complexity. We looked at one example, the bacterial flagellum, a motor-like piece of biological machinery consisting of many different parts.

The bacterial flagellum is comprised of 40 parts, making it an intricate and complex system.

The bacterial flagellum shows all the signs of having been designed, and this is just one tiny piece of biological machinery. Our bodies are composed of various intricate systems, like the nervous system and respiratory system. So while creation brilliantly proclaims the glory of God, to see the greatest example of God’s design just look in the mirror!

CORE VERSES

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

Psalm 19:1-2

CORE CONCEPTS

The complex patterns of the universe are best explained as the work of an intelligent designer.

DESIGN:

The intentional plan or purpose behind a creation

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- Where is your favorite place to see God’s creation?
- What have you learned about God by just looking at His creation?
- How would understanding and believing in intelligent design cause you to think and act differently toward creation?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 4.1: MORALITY

SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 2:1-16

SUMMARY:

Today's passage teaches that the Gentiles, who did not receive the Law from God as the Jews did, were still able to follow His Law. Why? Because everyone has God's moral code written on their hearts. This week students consider the atheist claim that people don't need God to be good. We walk through the argument to its logical conclusions and learn that morality isn't always relative and decided by human constraints. Sometimes things, like murder, are universally wrong across all time and places.

But why is that? If some things are really right and wrong, if there is a moral law that is binding on all people across all time and cultures, then there must be a moral lawgiver. We discuss in this lesson that the best explanation for objective morality is God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How do you determine what's right and what's wrong?
- Are there any generally accepted behaviors in your group of friends that you know are wrong? How do you handle that?
- Is there anything that you're unsure if it's right or wrong?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 4.2: BEAUTY
SCRIPTURE: REVELATION 21

SUMMARY:

The Bible ends the same way it begins—with a picture of beauty. In Genesis, we begin with a beautiful picture of creation and this final moment in Revelation is a picture of heaven and earth becoming one. This idea of beauty can point us to God. The best possible explanation for the origin of beauty is God. God was the originator of beauty in Genesis and He delivers the final act of beauty in creation in Revelation 21.

God wants us to enjoy and appreciate beauty. He created the world and called it good. Likewise, humans have a desire to create beautiful things because we were created in the image of the Divine Artist. If beauty is objective and not merely in the eye of the beholder, then the best explanation for it is God.

CORE VERSE	CORE CONCEPTS
<p><i>Your eyes will see the King in His beauty and view a land that stretches afar.</i></p> <p><i>Isaiah 33:17</i></p>	<p>Objective beauty points to a divine artist.</p> <hr/> <p>BEAUTY: A combination of qualities that pleases the aesthetic senses</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- If you were looking at creation as a work of art, how would you describe the artist?
- What is the purpose or value of beauty and finding things beautiful?
- How is beauty and the enjoyment we find in beautiful things a reflection of its creator?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 4.3: AGENCY
SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 5-7

SUMMARY:

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 is packed full of great commands and also some stern warnings. However, behind it lays an important implication: people are agents who can act and make their own decisions. God has given humanity the ability to make genuine choices. This week students consider what their ability to choose means for their faith and the character of God.

God has created us with the ability to make free choices and He wants us to genuinely choose to obey Him. Jesus reminds us that making the right choices—based on God’s standard—is like building a house on a rock, a firm foundation. So when the storms of life come, we will not fall because we have our foundation firmly in place on the Rock.

CORE VERSES	CORE CONCEPTS
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Matthew 7:24-25</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Human agency points to a supreme agent.</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">AGENCY: The ability to think and act</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- Do you think carefully about your own choices in regard to your faith?
- How does choosing to love God freely impact your responses to Him?
- How much are your decisions influenced by what you know about God and the Bible versus what your friends and society try to tell you?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 4.4: STORY
SCRIPTURE: PSALM 78

SUMMARY:

In this week’s reading, we see the story of God’s people from beginning to end. The psalmist declares that he will pass on the stories that his ancestors told him about God. He will tell the next generation of God’s greatness, so that they will not forget what God has done.

all of us into the grand story that God is writing throughout history. At the heart of story is purpose and meaning and we, created in His image, have a deep desire for purpose and meaning, a meaning we can only find by being part of God’s story.

Jesus, too, knew that we learn best through stories. He told His followers parables. They were stories that His hearers could identify with at the time, and they invite

CORE VERSES	CORE CONCEPTS
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old – what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power, and the wonders He has done.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Psalm 78:2-4</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Human storytelling points to a creative author.</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;">STORY: An account of real or fictitious people and events written or told to amuse, interest, or instruct</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- What is your role or part in God’s story to advance the kingdom of God?
- What are the plot and characters of your story?
- What does your story teach you about God and His purpose for your life?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

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LESSON 5.1: MIRACLES
SCRIPTURE: 1 KINGS 18

SUMMARY:

The Bible is packed full of miracles. This is one of the reasons why people reject the Bible, because it contains miracles. But the real issue is that many skeptics automatically assume that miracles cannot happen, simply because miracles cannot fit into their worldview. But what exactly is a miracle? A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature. The best explanation for the uniformity of nature and the laws of physics is God. And if God made the laws of nature, can't He suspend them whenever He wants?

Further, if God exists, then all of the miracles in the Bible are at least *possible*. There is no reason to reject the Bible outright simply because it contains miracles. But while God igniting a water-soaked burnt offering, as students read about in this week's lesson, or even creating the universe is an amazing miracle, it is still not the greatest. That is the subject for another lesson: the resurrection of Jesus.

CORE VERSES

Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your power among the peoples.

Psalm 77:13-14

CORE CONCEPTS

Miracles are both possible and verifiable.

MIRACLE:

A violation of the laws of nature

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What have miracles in the Bible or ones you've seen or heard about taught you about God?
- How do you know if you've seen a miracle?
- How do you respond to miracles you've read about or seen?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 5.2: RESURRECTION

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 15

SUMMARY:

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Paul teaches with what is popularly known as the resurrection creed. It can be broken down into four key components: Jesus *died*, He was *buried*, He *rose*, and He was *seen*. The fact that Jesus died by crucifixion is nearly indisputable by ancient historians. And it is widely accepted that many of His followers encountered Him after His death, leading them to turn their lives around and boldly proclaim Christ's message.

If Christianity is false, then we're the greatest fools on earth. However, if Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, we have true hope for life after death. We don't have to fear death since Jesus conquered it. Following Christ isn't easy. Paul knew this firsthand. But remember, Jesus has already won! He rose from death and death has no power over us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What do you know about the resurrection of Jesus?
- Why is the truth of the resurrection so critical to understanding your faith?
- How often do you think about or talk about the resurrection?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 5.3: DEITY
SCRIPTURE: JOHN 8:12-59

SUMMARY:

John 8 records an interaction between Jesus and the religious leaders of His day, the Pharisees. In verse 58, when Jesus said, “... *Before Abraham was born, I am!*” the Pharisees took up stones to kill Him because they knew exactly what Jesus was saying. Jesus was directly referencing a quote from Exodus 3, thus claiming to be God, an offense deserving of being stoned.

He repeatedly expressed how He was sent from the Father to do His will. Jesus clearly did not consider Himself a mere prophet or just some nice guy. He claimed to be God. In Mark 8, Jesus asked His disciples who people thought He was. They responded with many answers until Peter finally responded with “... *the Christ.*” This week students consider these claims and answer this question for themselves. Who is Jesus?

Jesus alluded to His divinity all throughout John 8 and

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How do you explain who Jesus is?
- Why is it so important that we understand who Jesus is?
- How does the deity of Jesus change His message or teachings for you?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 5.4: APOSTLES

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 5:17-42

SUMMARY:

This week’s passage shows the amazing commitment the disciples had to sharing the gospel. However, Christians aren’t the only people who suffer for their religion. What makes the disciples any different? Because the disciples followed Jesus for three years, witnessed the crucifixion, and claimed to have encountered the risen Christ. The apostles didn’t merely believe in some religion. They were convinced that what they had experienced was true (Acts 4:20).

Many people will die for something they think is true. But who will die for something they know is a lie? History tells us that many of Jesus’ followers suffered, were persecuted, and were killed. Their willingness to suffer and die for the Christian cause with absolutely nothing to gain in this life gives us great reason to believe that their message was in fact true.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How far would you go to convince others of something you knew was a lie?
- Why is the death of the apostles a convincing reason to believe what they said is true?
- Are you willing to meet the same fate as the apostles in order to share your faith?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 6.1: TEXTS
SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:1-4, ACTS 1:1-3

SUMMARY:

Luke tells us that sharing accurate information about the life of Jesus is a priority (Luke 1:3). He states that all of his information came from eyewitnesses (v. 2) so readers would know that he was relaying true, carefully-investigated, historical events. But how do we know, thousands of years later, that our Bible contains the same teachings that Jesus passed on to His disciples or the same letters that Paul wrote?

The Israelites safeguarded the original Hebrew Scriptures in the temple and when they were eventually copied, it was done with utmost care. We can be even more confident of the transmission of the New Testament because of the sheer number of existing copies. We also know the process by which the Bible was transmitted was a sacred duty that required strict oversight. Therefore, we can have utmost confidence that the Bible we have today was transmitted accurately and reliably.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- What is the process of the transcription and translation of Scripture?
- How convinced are you of the reliability of Scripture?
- How does the reliability of Scripture impact your life and faith?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 6.2: ARCHAEOLOGY

SCRIPTURE: 2 KINGS 20:12-21, 2 CHRONICLES 32:24-33

SUMMARY:

These passages merely include a record about the reign of Hezekiah, discussing his wealth and the storehouses he built. Why does this matter? Because these details lend credibility to the Bible. We have sufficient documentation to know that the Bible is a historical record containing information that allows us to fact-check for accuracy and demonstrate its historical reliability. And over the centuries, archaeologists have made discoveries to corroborate many events from the Bible.

For centuries, skeptics have doubted the historicity of the Bible but archaeology has been confirming the people and places within it. With each discovery, we can gain more confidence that the biblical authors have relayed true facts about God’s work throughout history.

CORE VERSES

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:1-3

CORE CONCEPTS

The archaeological record helps establish the historicity of Scripture.

HISTORICITY:

Historically genuine and authentic

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- What was your favorite archaeological find you learned about this week?
- How does what you learned this week help you understand the Bible?
- What questions did the lesson bring up for you?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 6.3: PROPHECY
SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 52:13- CHAPTER 53

SUMMARY:

This week students take a look at many of the prophecies about Jesus. The Old Testament points to the character and coming of Jesus through prophecy. This passage from Isaiah describes the suffering Servant—whom we know to be Jesus— that would give His life for the sins of the world. Students read about prophecies pointing to Jesus’ birth and ministry.

Even the method of Jesus’ death was also prophesied

in the Old Testament. The Messiah would be mocked, spit upon, and beaten (Isaiah 50:6, Psalm 22:7-8). Soldiers gambled for His clothing (Psalm 22:18) and when He was thirsty, He was given vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21). The Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16), but His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20).

Old Testament prophecy demonstrates that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and also helps show the divine nature of the Scriptures.

CORE VERSE

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5

CORE CONCEPTS

Fulfilled prophecy helps establish the divine nature of Scripture.

PROPHECY:

A divinely inspired declaration, instruction, or foretelling of what’s to come

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- Why did God give us prophecy about Jesus?
- Which prophecies are the most convincing to you that Jesus is who He says He is?
- How do the prophecies impact your level of trust in Jesus and the Scriptures?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 6.4: AUTHORITY

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 19:1-12

SUMMARY:

People were always astounded by Jesus' teachings. In this passage, the Pharisees try to test Jesus by asking Him questions about divorce and He responds by citing the Old Testament. Likewise, when Satan tested Him in the wilderness, He responded to each of the temptations with Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). Many times when Jesus was questioned, either by His disciples or the Pharisees, He asked why they didn't already know the answer from the Old Testament (Matthew 12:3, 22:31). Jesus continually reaffirmed the power and authority of the Old Testament.

Today the entire Bible carries this same authority *for us*. We are to conform our entire lives to biblical teaching.

Jesus held the Old Testament in high regard and affirmed the entire Old Testament as Scripture from God containing the utmost authority. He also selected disciples who would continue His message and go on to write the New Testament. These messengers included Paul, who would affirm that the entire Bible comes from God in 2 Timothy 3:16.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Do you have the same respect or regard for Scripture as Jesus did?
- How has Scripture helped you make decisions in your life?
- Is there anything in Scripture that you have a hard time accepting? If so, what is it?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

ADVOCATES

PARENT GUIDE

LESSON 7.1: EVIL
SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3

SUMMARY:

If God created everything and evil really exists, then did God create evil? This is a common question for Christians, which has a simple answer: God did not create evil because evil is not a thing. Evil is a corruption of good, the way rust corrupts metal. However, God did make evil possible by creating the world and giving humans free will. Genesis 3 teaches us how evil entered God’s good world.

God gave us the capacity to choose Him or reject Him. You can’t have both free will and coercion—this is a logical contradiction. The concept of evil is a really big conversation with a lot of complexities. But the existence of evil—*real* evil—is not a defeater of Christianity. It is actually evidence for it.

CORE VERSE

Far be it from You to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from You! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Genesis 18:25

CORE CONCEPTS

Properly understood, evil implies an objective moral order grounded in a good God.

EVIL:

The corruption of good

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How do you explain the existence of evil in the world?
- How do encounters with or seeing evil in the world affect your faith or relationship with Jesus?
- How is the existence of evil evidence for a good God?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 7.2: FALSEHOOD

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:2-18

SUMMARY:

Much of the pain and suffering in this life is a result of humans abusing their free will. While free will enables a great amount of evil, it also allows true love. God wants us to freely choose to love and obey Him.

It is easy for us to blame God, or dismiss Him altogether, when we experience suffering. However, in this week's reading students learned that ... *God cannot be tempted by evil ... (James 1:13)*. God is not merely all-powerful

(omnipotent). God is also all-good (omnibenevolent). For God to *be tempted by evil* would contradict His holy and perfect nature, which is impossible. He also cannot tempt humans with evil. That, too, would contradict His character.

Thus, just as the notion of an all-good, all-powerful God committing evil is a logical contradiction, so is an all-powerful God preventing free humans from committing evil, which in turn causes suffering.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Where or when have you experienced or seen others experience suffering?
- What has the suffering you've seen or experienced taught you about God?
- What other logical inaccuracies have you heard about the character or existence of God?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 7.3: SUFFERING

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 37:12-36, 39, 41, 50:15-21

SUMMARY:

Joseph’s story is a prime example of how God can use suffering to bring about a greater good. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, but through a series of remarkable events was ultimately put in charge of all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. It is an incredible account packed with some important lessons.

But God is always faithful to us. Second, God uses suffering for the greater good. Although it was difficult, the circumstances of Joseph’s life brought him and his family to Egypt where he would help them through a great famine. God was with Joseph and his life served God’s ultimate plans.

First, sometimes we will suffer for doing what is right. Faithfulness to God may cause us trouble in this lifetime.

Likewise, we may never know why we face certain difficulties. But we can trust that God is in control and that He will use our harm and suffering for good.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- How have you seen God help you grow through suffering?
- Has suffering ever changed or impacted decisions you’ve made? Why or why not, and how?
- How have you been encouraged in times of suffering?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

ADVOCATES

PARENT GUIDE

LESSON 7.4: HELL

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 13:23-30, MARK 9:42-48, MATTHEW 22:1-14

SUMMARY:

Is hell real or just a Christian scare tactic? It's undoubtedly one of the most difficult of Christian doctrines to accept. However, Jesus makes it clear that those who believe have eternal life and those that do not stand condemned (John 3:18).

considered just or good. Hell accomplishes both, safeguarding the kingdom of God from evil and punishing sinners. Rejecting God is the greatest sin one can commit. Therefore, sinning against an infinite God merits an infinite punishment.

This week we compare the function of hell to that of jail in our society. First, it protects law-abiding citizens from criminals. Second, it punishes wrongdoing. A society that didn't protect its citizens or punish evil could hardly be

Hell is not an easy doctrine to accept. But, as difficult as it may be to understand, hell must be real. So let this lesson be an even greater motivation to go out and share the gospel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How would you describe the purpose and existence of hell?
- What is your motivation to share the gospel with others?
- How has this unit impacted the way you think about God?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

ADVOCATES

PARENT GUIDE

LESSON 8.1: LOVE
SCRIPTURE: LUKE 10:25-37

SUMMARY:

Love is an essential part of the human experience. And it's also the core of Christianity. In this week's reading, when Jesus was asked how to receive eternal life His response was to love. Love God and love your neighbor. The important aspects of this story are who ignored the man and who helped him. Now, the phrase "good Samaritan" is well-known and used in our culture, but most probably don't know who the Samaritans actually were. These people were despised by the Jews.

What does this teach us about love? Well, love *doesn't* ignore people in need. True love reaches across religion, race, culture, and social status. True love, exemplified by Jesus, goes beyond our friends and families to strangers, outsiders, and even our enemies. We are called to have empathy, show kindness, and treat others with dignity. Ultimately, as we demonstrate sacrificial love to others, they will be drawn to the love of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- How did this lesson challenge you?
- To whom do you need to demonstrate love, even if it's difficult?
- What are the needs of the people around you? How can you help them?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

LESSON 8.2: QUESTIONS
SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 16:13-20

SUMMARY:

We learn by asking questions. In Matthew 16, Jesus asks His disciples who other people think He is. After they respond, He then asks them: “Who do you say I am?” Genesis 3 tells the story of how Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. God proceeds to ask Adam a series of questions about what happened. The same occurs between God and Cain in the following chapter.

But why would an all-knowing God need to ask what had happened? Asking questions creates a more intimate relationship between people. Asking questions shows interest and concern for others, that you genuinely care what they think and feel. Questions also help start spiritual conversations. All throughout the Bible, questions were used as an effective means to engage and understand others. Students this week have been challenged to ask questions to spark spiritual conversations.

CORE VERSE	CORE CONCEPTS
<p><i>The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.</i></p> <p><i>Proverbs 20:5</i></p>	<p>Good questions open the door for meaningful spiritual conversations.</p> <hr/> <p>QUESTIONS: Expressions or sentences used to draw out a response and learn information</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- What questions have been catalysts in the growth of your faith?
- What question that Jesus asked is the most interesting to you?
- Do you see asking questions as a strength or a weakness? Why?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?

ADVOCATES

PARENT GUIDE

LESSON 8.3: DOUBT
SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11:1-19

SUMMARY:

John the Baptist’s responsibility was to prepare the way for the Messiah. In Matthew 11, John sends his followers to ask Jesus if He really is the Messiah or if the people should expect someone else. This week we look at why John doubts that Jesus is the Messiah.

It’s unfortunate, but many of us have been taught that it is wrong to doubt or raise difficult questions. Everyone has doubts about God’s goodness or existence from time to time, especially when facing difficult circumstances.

Church needs to be a place where people can share their doubts openly and honestly and get answers to difficult questions.

Students may have doubts, even many doubts. And that’s fine. But don’t let doubts consume them. Engage them. Help your students seek answers. However, understand that there are some questions that won’t be answered this side of eternity. But that shouldn’t stop us from trusting that God knows best.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week’s lesson.
- What doubts do you have?
- What do you know about God with complete confidence?
- How do doubts affect your faith or confidence in God?
- Describe your next steps based on what you’ve learned. How can I help?

LESSON 8.4: CHALLENGES

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:1-42

SUMMARY:

Students have learned a lot through this study! Knowing the answers to defend Christianity is one thing. Communicating them in a loving manner is another. Jesus exemplifies the perfect intersection of grace and truth in this week's lesson. Jesus offers the woman at the well eternal life but He also exposes her sin. Jesus didn't criticize her sinful past. He merely put it out there and left it up to her to resolve on her own.

After this, Jesus let the woman change the subject. This should be a lesson to us not to press others too hard. If conversations naturally flow to spiritual things, great. Otherwise, we will end up alienating the people we want to lead to Christ.

Just as Jesus personally reached out to the woman at the well, so should we reach out to others and accept the various challenges they offer. And we must always strive to be filled with grace and truth, just like Jesus.

CORE VERSES

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Colossians 4:5-6

CORE CONCEPTS

God calls us to lovingly speak the truth that transforms lives.

HUMILITY:

Seeing ourselves in an accurate light before God and others

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Talk to me about the most interesting thing you learned from this week's lesson.
- Are there still questions you have about your faith?
- How do you prepare before engaging in spiritual conversations?
- How can prayer help you in your conversations?
- Describe your next steps based on what you've learned. How can I help?