



Sixty-Six Books. How Can I Read the Bible to Better Understand God's Word to Me?

Luke 24:13-35



Session Objective

Participants will learn that the Bible tells how God has sought his people in the past and today.

Faith Statement

The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written . . . God's word is spoken to his church today where the Scriptures are faithfully preached and attentively read in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and with readiness to receive their truth and direction.

—Confession of 1967 (9.27, 9.30)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and discuss:

- What is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God?
- What's the difference between knowing about the Bible and knowing the Bible?
- What skills would help us read the Bible to better understand God's Word to us?



Explore

Read Luke 24:13-35 and discuss:

- What were "the scriptures" at that time? (Old Testament)
- What is the importance of the Scriptures in this encounter?
- How will Jesus come to be known by future disciples? When will their hearts be on fire and when will their eyes be opened to know Jesus?
- In what ways do you hear the story differently if you read the passage and insert your name in place of the unnamed disciple?



Express

Discuss:

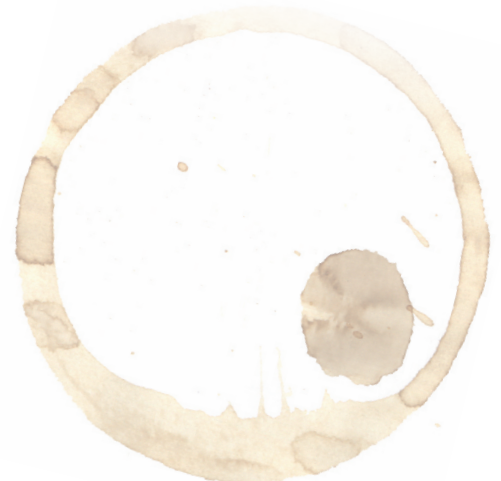
- How would you express the feeling of being moved when hearing words of Scripture? How does God's Word speak to, and even warm, your heart?
- What are some crucial things that the Bible has told you?

The Bible is not confined to the church. Discuss where the youth have discovered the Bible outside of church. Ask when they have heard the Bible quoted in a movie or a television show. See if there is a contemporary song that refers to a story in the Bible, or a book that has been inspired by the Bible



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together talking about God's Word.





Four Gospels. Why Do Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John Tell the Story of Jesus in Different Ways?

Mark 10:17-31;
Matthew 19:16-26



Session Objective

Participants will consider the similar and distinctive ways the four Gospels convey good news about Jesus.

Faith Statement

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We reject the false doctrine, as though the church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

—Theological Declaration of Barmen (8.11–8.12)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- The word *gospel* means “good news.” What is the good news of Jesus Christ?
- What is one of your favorite stories either about Jesus or told by Jesus?
- Where in the Gospels do you hear Jesus’ call to you?
- What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What is something you have learned about the cost of discipleship?



Explore

Read Mark 10:17–31 and explore these questions:

- How is the person who asks the question identified?
- What does Mark add to the commandments?
- What is Jesus’ response?
- What is the response of the one who asked the question?
- How do the disciples respond?

Read Matthew 19:16–26 and explore these questions:

- How is the person who asks the question identified?
- What commandment does Matthew add?
- What is Jesus’ response?
- What is the response of the one who asked the question?
- How do the disciples respond?



Express

Use the following questions to help the youth express what they’ve learned:

- Do the differences change the meaning of the story? In what ways?
- If you were teaching or preaching on this story what might you highlight?
- What is one of the earliest stories of Jesus that you remember hearing?
- What was it about the story that captured your attention?
- Do you remember thinking about the story later on?
- What parts did you remember?

Reflect on these questions by suggesting that every story is told through the voice, personality, gestures, and vocabulary of the storyteller. Parts of the story are sometimes added to amplify the meaning of the story. A story depends upon words, and each story uses its own words to express the point of the story. In considering the differences within the written stories in the Gospels, we are paying attention to gifted storytellers, those inspired by the Spirit to focus the reader’s attention on God’s profound truths.



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together talking about God’s Word.



Twenty-One Letters. How Can I Grow in Faith and Discipleship by Reading Other People's Mail?

Galatians 5:16–26



Session Objective

Letters sent to the scattered churches were not only the principal way of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, but they also equipped and strengthened the followers of Christ with words of guidance, encouragement, and comfort. It is impossible to enter fully into the life of those faith communities and understand their concerns and challenges. But the words from those ancient handwritten letters, especially those offering guidance and direction, continue to provide strength and inspiration to Christ's disciples today.

Faith Statement

Scripture teaches us fully all godliness. We judge, therefore, that from these Scriptures are to be derived true wisdom and godliness, the reformation and government of churches; as also instruction in all duties of piety; and, to be short, the confirmation of doctrines, and the rejection of all errors, moreover, all exhortations according to that word of the apostle, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof," etc. (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Again, "I am writing these instructions to you," says the apostle to Timothy, "so that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God," etc. (1 Tim. 3:14–15).

—Second Helvetic Confession (5.003)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Where do you find guidance in how you are to live today as Christ's disciple?
- What challenges you in living out your faith in Christ?
- What are some of the difficulties in reading an ancient document, especially one of the letters in the New Testament?
- Are there letters that have been saved within your family or been saved for you?
- Why do you value them? Why are the Bible's letters valued?



Explore

At the beginning of his letters Paul usually writes, "Grace and peace to you."

- What do grace and peace mean for you?
- At the end of his letters, right before adding his signature, Paul often concluded with words of instruction for the church.

Read Galatians 5:16–26 and explore these questions:

- What do these closing verses tell us about Paul's purpose in writing?
- Focus on the verbs. What type of behavior is Paul expecting of Christ's disciples?
- What guidance, encouragement, and comfort does Paul give?
- In what ways do you read these verses as God's word to you?



Express

In his letter to Corinth, Paul writes, "You are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are Christ's letter, delivered by us. You weren't written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. You weren't written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." 2 Corinthians 3:2–3 (CEB)

Use the following questions to guide the youth in expressing what they hear in Paul's words.

- You are Christ's letter. Where are you being sent?
- Who will receive good news in Christ through you?
- In what ways do you hope others will see Christ in you?



Exit

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One Final Vision. Why Is Revelation So Difficult To Understand?

Revelation 1:1-5, 9-11;
Revelation 21:1-3



Session Objective

God wins! The Revelation to John was given to Christ's church as a powerful declaration of God's ultimate victory. In their struggles and persecutions, the followers of Christ were involved in a cosmic battle. Symbols, words, numbers, sounds, and sensations were used to picture God's ultimate victory in Jesus Christ. It was a vision understood by those who received it, and not a cryptic message only to be uncovered by a later generation. As distant as we are from its format and symbolism, we are still able to hear, understand, and embrace powerful words offering comfort and hope.

Faith Statement

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

—Westminster Confession of Faith (6.009)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What is it about Revelation that makes it so difficult for you to understand?
- In what ways do you think "God Wins!" could be the perfect summary of Revelation?
- When do you remember hearing Revelation read, taught, preached, or sung?
- Why do you think people today are fascinated with such things as what is going to happen at the end of the world? What does the Bible say?



Explore

Read Revelation 1:1-5, 9-11 and explore these questions:

- What answers can be found from reading the opening words of the vision?
- Where is John and what has happened to him?
- What was John doing on this Lord's Day? How does that influence what God communicates through the vision?
- Who is speaking to John in the vision? Who does John see?
- What is about to take place?
- What is the time frame for the vision? When will this vision be fulfilled?
- How is this vision to be shared within the churches? What was the expectation for the seven churches?



Express

Use the following questions to help the youth express what they've learned.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them.'" Revelation 21:1-3

- What surprises you as Revelation ends?
- Where will we need to look to find the home of God?
- What directions will guide us to the new Jerusalem, the Holy City?
- What changes would you like to see in God's new heaven and new earth?



Exit

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