TO MY PARENTS. THANK YOU FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST AND LOVING GOD WITH ALL OF YOUR HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND STRENGTH.
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WHAT IS THE DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE WORKBOOK?

The Discipleship Challenge Workbook is an investigative Bible study developed with the purpose of helping you become an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ. It is ideally suited for use in a one-on-one or small group setting, recognizing that spiritual growth cannot take place apart from continuous interaction with God’s people. The entire manual, including each of the twenty-six sessions, is designed to help you cultivate the following:

- A deeper relationship with God
- A greater understanding of God’s Word
- A stronger connection with God’s people
- A lasting commitment to God’s plan

These four objectives will begin to take shape in your life as you develop the three foundational disciplines of an authentic disciple:

- Daily Interaction with God
- Direct Involvement in the Local Church
- Deliberate Investment in the Great Commission

As you begin to use this guide, along with your discipler or with a group of fellow disciples, the Word of God will come alive. You will soon realize that every aspect of your life is connected to what you believe about God, His Word, His people, and His plan for your life. You will be amazed as you uncover the rich treasures of the Bible, and begin to find yourself more eager to accomplish the kingdom agenda than anything else.

Remember, this is just the beginning of your lifelong journey to become an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ. You don’t become a disciple when you arrive at a predetermined destination or finish a prescribed curriculum, but only when you are eagerly on the path with Christ, engaging in His work and accomplishing His mission.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook has been written and designed for you to search, investigate, and discover the essential truths of the Christian faith as they are revealed in Scripture. One of the foremost goals in the entire discipleship process is to equip you to equip others. And there is no better way to become a reproducing leader than to become familiar with the only completely reliable disciplemaking manual—the Word of God. Every other discipleship resource, including this one, is flawed, because finite human beings have developed them. The Bible is the entirely trustworthy, fully inspired Word of God. Our intention throughout this workbook is to build your confidence in the absolute authority of God’s Word. “How is this accomplished?” you might ask. It’s accomplished most effectively through the following four strategies:
1. **Scripture memory**—built into each of the twenty-six sessions of this workbook is a memory verse that deals directly with that week’s study. Every time you get together, you will be accountable to either your discipler or another small group member to have this verse memorized and ready to quote. Memorizing portions of Scripture is a mighty weapon in your spiritual arsenal.

2. **Scripture lookup**—because of the investigative nature of this manual, you will need a Bible and pen or pencil handy throughout your study. Each question is built around looking up a particular verse or series of verses in the Bible and answering the question related to those verses. This will allow you to become familiar with the structure and flow of God’s Word.

3. **Scripture reading**—a key component of the discipleship process is to understand that your daily, personal relationship with God is the essential component of your spiritual growth. If you are not in God’s Word, reading, studying, and delighting in its truths, then God will not be able to fully reveal Himself and His will to you. You are encouraged to make daily Bible reading a top priority.

4. **Scripture discussion**—one of the most exciting by-products of reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on the Word of God is the opportunity to discuss what God has taught and revealed to you with another follower of Christ. Throughout this study, you will be encouraged and challenged to share your questions, comments, and experiences in God’s Word with your discipler or within the safe environment of your small group.

**OPTIMIZING THE DISCIPLEMAKING TIME**

**PRAY**—In order to develop a balance between information and interaction, we would encourage regular and informal times of prayer and communication within the discipleship time. Prayer should not be thought of as the bookends for each meeting. There should be regular times of prayer scattered throughout each session. When you pray, you voluntarily recognize your complete dependence on God.

**TALK**—There should also be an ongoing dialogue about life. One of the greatest gifts of disciplemaking relationships is the ability to connect life experiences with Life himself—Jesus Christ. As one of His followers, you will soon recognize that a radical shift has taken place, and you now look to Christ, rather than yourself, as the center of everything. This fundamental change in your perspective develops as you engage in regular discussions with other followers of Christ about what is happening in your life.

**PREPARE**—While we would encourage you to experiment in your use of *The Discipleship Challenge Workbook*, weekly sessions are most effective when you work through the lesson in advance. Coming to your discipleship gathering inadequately prepared may lengthen the meeting and leave little or no time for discussion, prayer, and practical application.
Will You Take The Discipleship Challenge?

One of the most exciting adventure races in the world was the Eco-Challenge, a grueling three hundred mile event that touted itself as the toughest race on the planet. Every year, four-member teams converged at a pre-determined location to face off in what proved to be the ultimate battle of physical and mental endurance. As you might have already guessed, this was not a race for the faint of heart.

What set the Eco-Challenge apart from every other competition like it was that each team member understood that for the next six to ten days he would be required to sacrifice every conceivable comfort for the good of the team and for the chance to complete the exhausting trek. Just finishing the contest was a huge victory for even the most well trained team, because in order to finish the Challenge, each member of the four-man squad had to stay in the race or risk the entire group’s disqualification. There were no injury “time outs” or excuses. In fact, many teams went days on end with little or no sleep. Why? The Eco-Challenge was a twenty-four hour a day race. From the moment you started the race until the time you completed the three hundred mile adventure, you were in a war against time, the other teams, and your collective ability to remain focused on the primary objective—the finish line.

From 1995 to 2002 I enjoyed watching the television shows that highlighted this extraordinary event. My admiration for the intensity and drive of the competitors increased on an annual basis. I could tell, just by looking at each contestant’s face, that this race was the toughest thing they had ever done. They were tired, muddy, scratched, bruised, scuffed, and usually soaking wet. I often wondered, “What keeps them going? Why will these teams sacrifice everything to finish the race?” I certainly don’t have all the answers to these questions, but I know that there are at least three things that motivate each of the participants—an incredible desire to reach beyond themselves, a powerful commitment to their team’s overall success, and an uncommon sense of purpose.

Now, let’s talk about discipleship. Are you beginning to see some very strong similarities between the Eco-Challenge and The Discipleship Challenge? We, too, are in a race, a battle. We are running in a spiritual marathon with very serious consequences for those who are unable to finish well. Just like the Eco-Challenge, the discipleship process is not a journey for the faint of heart. Life-on-life discipleship will cost you something. It will require personal sacrifice. And above all, it is a group effort. When one person bails out or comes up lame, it costs the whole team. Your spiritual growth is never
self-achieved. It is, in large part, the result of your lifelong interaction with those who also belong to Jesus Christ.

How ironic that almost two thousand years after Jesus issued His final command to go and make disciples we would find ourselves admiring the intensity and drive of a group of athletes as they compete in one of the most difficult races in the world. This workbook is actually a proposal to recover what we’ve lost since the days of the early church, when nonbelievers looked to Christians to find lasting commitment, total surrender, self-sacrifice, and a bold mission to help people become authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.

No matter what the cost, let’s begin to reclaim the rich legacy of disciplemaking that permeated church life nearly two thousand years ago. And while others look to athletes and competitions to find their inspiration, may God look down from Heaven and find His joy in our renewed efforts to take The Discipleship Challenge seriously.

WHAT IS AN AUTHENTIC DISCIPLE?

When we talk about the qualities of an authentic disciple, remember that we are always talking about the ideal, understanding that our humanity will always undermine our most noble efforts to follow Christ. Until heaven, we will never be perfect, but until heaven we must always strive to be like Someone who is. “An unattainable goal,” you might say. True. But should that stop us from attempting, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to be like Christ? Think about it. What baseball pitcher who threw thirteen strikeouts wasn’t trying to strike out every batter he faced? What Christian employer who lost his temper a few times with his employees wasn’t attempting to keep his composure at all times? What craftsman worth his salt isn’t endeavoring to build the perfect house every time he picks up a hammer and nails? Becoming more like Jesus is a daily pursuit that lasts for an entire lifetime. It doesn’t just happen. It is happening. Recognizing the difference will prevent you from becoming frustrated and defeated in the process.

SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AUTHENTIC DISCIPLE

The following characteristics of authentic disciples are centered on principles, not performance standards or well-defined lists of do’s and don’ts. Each one represents a fundamental quality that Jesus was attempting to forge into the lives of His first disciples. As you review these traits, it would be especially helpful to read the corresponding Scripture given with each characteristic. This will allow you to experience the heart and mind of the Master, as He casts His vision for what should typify the life of an authentic disciple.


Authentic disciples allow God to be God, constantly relying on Him for physical and spiritual nourishment; forgiveness and the power to forgive; leadership and strength to complete their life’s mission (Luke 11:1-13).

Authentic disciples strive for integrity in every area of their lives, faithfully demonstrating the wisdom and discernment to manage all of their God-given resources and relationships with excellence (Luke 12:1-12; 16:1-13; 17:1-10).

Authentic disciples live with a sense of vision and hope for the future, confidently awaiting their Leader’s return while aggressively keeping His Great Commission their primary passion (Luke 21:5-36).


WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Throughout the New Testament, discipleship emerges as the primary catalyst for spiritual formation. Jesus Christ modeled a lifestyle of both witness and withness (Mark 3:14). He knew that in order for His mission to continue after He was gone, He would have to proclaim the Good News. But Jesus was even more keenly aware of His responsibility to be with a group of eager learners, mentoring, motivating, and mobilizing a small army of Kingdom-minded soldiers to continue the all-important task of making disciples. After all, the future of the Church depended on their complete and total understanding of the discipling process.

Christ knew, and He wanted His disciples to know, that spiritual reproduction would never take place if making disciples was regarded as a low priority item on the early Church’s to-do list. And just in case the disciples had plans to replace the Church’s primary mission with another less important activity, Jesus once again reiterated the objective when He left them and us with His discipling manifesto—the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

But perhaps most obvious about the discipling style of Jesus is the noticeable lack of a prescribed curriculum. Apparently, Jesus was making a point that wherever discipling—
ing efforts are going to flourish a workbook would not be in the foreground. Jesus’ unstat-
ed goal in discipleship was to complete the person, not the curriculum. He was far more
concerned with people, than He was with programs. Spiritual maturity was at the center of
His disciplemaking strategy. Materials were secondary.

Always keep in mind that workbooks like this one and others merely serve as supplements
to the help given by the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God. When
completing the material takes priority over completing the person, needs go unmet; hearts
are left unchanged; and unhealthy disciplemaking patterns emerge that will impact future
generations of disciples.

The heart of discipleship is based on an interactive relationship with Jesus Christ. It focus-
es on a profound commitment to the Master, not just a passive conversion. During His
earthly ministry, Jesus knew that in order to distinguish the spectators from the players He
would have to make some demands that would begin to separate His true followers from
those who were just along for the ride. Christ had no time for half-hearted devotion. As
far as He was concerned, it was all or nothing. His greatest passion was to turn eager
learners into reproducing leaders that He could personally entrust with His disciplemaking
mission.

Christ wants all of you. Ninety-five percent is not enough. Ninety-nine percent still falls short. What are you holding
back from Christ? What do you still have in your grasp that keeps you from living a life that is fully devoted to Him? He
has sacrificed everything, including His life, so that you might experience all the fullness and joy of living as one of His fol-
lowers. Discipleship begins when you fully relinquish all that separates you from Jesus
Christ. Therefore, authentic, biblical discipleship is the ongoing process of developing a
lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He:

- lovingly restores your broken relationship with God,
- supernaturally indwells you with His promised Holy Spirit,
- graciously connects you with others who follow Him,
- radically transforms your character and values,
- eagerly involves you in His disciplemaking mission.

WHAT DOES THE DISCIPLEMAKING PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

Disciplemaking is the work that Jesus Christ has entrusted His Church to accomplish
(Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 15:58). It encompasses the four-fold responsibility of
every Christ follower to evangelize, establish, edify, and equip people to finish the task
that Jesus Christ began during His earthly ministry (John 17:1-18). Jesus Christ made it
crystal clear that disciplemaking is the responsibility of every child of God, and that in
order for Him to return, the gospel would first have to be proclaimed to the entire world
(Matthew 24:14). Christ’s job is to obediently return for the Church when His Father
gives the go ahead. In the meantime, our job is to obediently offer ourselves as servants of
the Great Commission—to fulfill Jesus’ final command with all of the strength we can
muster.
At the center of all of our disciplemaking efforts is God. Without Him our most well con-
ceived strategies and plans for making disciples would fail. We cannot and should not
enter into any disciplemaking union, whether as a discipler or disciple, unless we have
fully surrendered the entire process to God. As mentioned earlier, curriculum does not
complete a person; God does.

Ultimately, it is God, through His Word and His Spirit, who brings salvation, stability,
support, and strength to every disciple. Fortunately, He uses us as His instruments in evan-
gelizing, establishing, edifying, and equipping people to become reproducing leaders for
the furtherance of His kingdom. Just to be included in this worldwide redemptive drama
should fill our hearts with joy. The God of heaven has chosen to use us as His catalytic
change agents in the hearts and lives of all who would believe in His Son.

God knew the significance that caring, disciplemaking relationships would have on the
entire spiritual development process of a new disciple. If you are a parent or close to
someone who is, consider the maturing process of a human being. When a new life enters
the world, this infant demands the attention of a capable adult—one who is able to
protect her, feed her, wash her, dress her, and meet every conceivable need that she may
express through her crying and tears. And until the day when the child can adequately care
for herself, a provider-parent is always present. The goal is to invest ample amounts of
love, time, energy, and training into the life of the child, so that one day she will flourish
in adulthood.

Spiritually speaking, the parenting metaphor is very significant (1 Thessalonians 2:1-11).
New spiritual life requires constant care from spiritual parents. Jesus’ own investment of
three years into the lives of His disciples is the earliest New Testament example of a
Father nurturing His spiritual children. His commitment to their growth was absolute and
unfailing. In fact, His parenting continued through the permanent indwelling of the Holy
Spirit. If new Christians do not have undivided spiritual care provided by compassionate
spiritual parents, they will shrivel up and die in their development.

Throughout the growth process, from birth to adulthood, the child learns, labors, and will
eventually lead his own children. The greatest joy for any parent is to become a grandpar-
ent. When new life enters the world through the process of reproduction, the family is
expanded, life is celebrated, and love is expressed in a myriad of ways. This should also
be true within the family of God. Spiritual reproduction should be taking place all of the
time as a normal function of disciplemaking relationships. Spiritual parents should be cel-
brating the births of their spiritual grandchildren on a continual basis.

In order to help you fully understand the disciplemaking process, a diagram has been
created to assist you in visualizing your own spiritual development. It is conveniently
arranged in the shape of a baseball diamond. However, our intention is not to encourage
you to think that once you have reached home plate as a reproducing leader, you have
arrived as an authentic disciple. In fact, just the opposite is true. We want you to under-
stand that once you have made it to home plate, you are just beginning the most
significant phase of your discipleship challenge—spiritual reproduction. Without ques-
tion, this will be the most rewarding part of your discipleship journey.
THE DISCIPLEMAKING PROCESS

GOD

EDIFYING
An Eager Learner
Luke 6:40
Ephesians 4:11-14
Colossians 2:6-7

STABILITY
SUPPORT

STRENGTH

SALVATION

EVANGELIZING
A New Life
2 Corinthians 5:17-18
Mark 16:15

EQUIPPING
A Kingdom Laborer
Matthew 9:36-38
Mark 3:14-15

A Reproducing Leader
2 Timothy 2:2
Why are the three foundational disciplines of an authentic disciple such an essential part of the spiritual growth process? How would you evaluate the implementation of these key disciplines in your life right now? *(The back of this workbook (Appendix A) contains a discipleship inventory that may help you answer this question more accurately.)*

Why should the Word of God have such a significant place in the discipllemaking process? In what ways has the Bible helped you grow spiritually? Do you think a new Christian can grow apart from the truth of God’s Word (1 Peter 2:2-3)?

What are a few of the similarities that you recognized between the Eco-Challenge and discipllemaking? Do you think the author paints an unrealistic picture of the discipleship process by using this analogy? Why or why not? *(Consider the Apostle Paul’s intensity in the following verses: Colossians 1:9-10; 28-29; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20; Galatians 4:19; Colossians 2:6-7.)*
Why do you think the author spends such a great deal of time stressing the fact that discipleship and disciplemaking is a process? Has this changed your view of what becoming an authentic disciple is really all about? How?

Did you find yourself trying to “measure up” to the six characteristics of an authentic disciple? Why do you think we, as human beings and even as disciples, have a natural tendency to compare ourselves and others to the ideal? Is it unrealistic to think that we’ll ever reach perfection as a follower of Christ? Why? How are these traits different than a man-made list of do’s and don’ts?

Do you agree with the author’s claim that true discipleship is always centered on your life in Christ? Why or why not? In one sentence or less, how would you describe discipleship?

What “base” are you currently at or approaching in the disciplemaking process? Do you understand the importance of moving around the diamond and becoming a reproducing leader? Explain.
THE DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE
COVENANT

I will strive to make attendance at all disciplemaking sessions a top priority.

I will strive to incorporate, with God’s help, the following six characteristics of an authentic disciple into my life:


• Authentic disciples allow God to be God, constantly relying on Him for physical and spiritual nourishment; forgiveness and the power to forgive; leadership and strength to complete their life’s mission (Luke 11:1-13).

• Authentic disciples strive for integrity in every area of their lives, faithfully demonstrating the wisdom and discernment to manage all of their God-given resources and relationships with excellence (Luke 12:1-12; 16:1-13; 17:1-10).

• Authentic disciples live with a sense of vision and hope for the future, confidently awaiting their Leader’s return while aggressively keeping His Great Commission their primary passion (Luke 21:5-36).

• Authentic disciples treasure the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, joyfully accepting His role as Counselor, Comforter, Teacher, and Guide (Luke 24:44-49).

I will strive to make the following three disciplines a vital part of my life as a follower of Jesus Christ:

• Daily Interaction with God

• Direct Involvement in the Local Church

• Deliberate Investment in the Great Commission

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ________________
INTRODUCTION

What is the final authority in your life? Where do you turn when everything around you seems to be turned upside down? When the reality of life hits you right between the eyes, and you are forced to face it, what do you find yourself leaning on?

Hold on! Before you answer prematurely, take a moment to think about it. How do you determine your moral and spiritual values? What points you to true north on your ethical compass? How do you find the distant shore in a windswept sea of fear and frustration? I know what you must be thinking—too many questions. But for just a moment consider the life you have already been allowed to live; whether your life has been good or bad is not the issue. The important thing is to carefully reflect upon what foundation your life has been built. Who was the builder and what materials were used?

Okay, now imagine that you are getting a fresh start. And no matter how weak and poorly built your first foundation was, you are getting a second chance to lay a brand new foundation—a sure foundation. May I suggest that the most rock-solid absolutely reliable foundation in the world is the Bible. Building your life on the Scriptures is by far the most worry-free way to go. You never have to be concerned about the credibility of the Builder, because the Builder of the life you’ve always wanted is God, and the foundation of that life is His Word.

Memory Verse: Hebrews 4:12

WHAT IS THE WORD OF GOD?

How do you begin to understand a book like the Bible? A quick overview will at least provide you with a framework from which to begin to build your understanding. Here are a few of the really important facts about the Bible:

- The Bible is a library of 66 individual books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation. (The word Bible actually means “the Book.”)
- The Bible took over 1,500 years to produce.
• The Bible was written by 40 different authors.
• The Bible unfolds God’s redemptive purpose and plan for humanity.
• The Bible has five recurring themes:
  1. The character of the triune God (Malachi 3:6)
  2. The penalty for sin and disobedience (Romans 6:23)
  3. The eternal rewards for faith and obedience (Ephesians 2:8-9)
  4. The Son of God and His sacrifice for sin (John 3:16)
  5. The second coming of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:14)

Now that you have seen these facts about the Word of God, list one or two of your questions or comments:

As you deepen your understanding of the Bible, it is very important to know the structural makeup of the Bible itself. The Word of God is composed of two Testaments, the Old and the New. (The word Testament actually means “covenant” or “agreement.”) Each Testament shares equal significance and tells the continuing story of God’s redemptive purpose and plan for humanity.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The first major division of the Bible, the Old Testament, tells us the story of the creation of the universe and ends about four hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Below are a few highlights:

• The Old Testament has 39 individual books (beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi).
• The Old Testament has 3 different kinds of books:
  1. History books (17 books)
  2. Poetry books (5 books)
  3. Prophecy books (17 books)
• The Old Testament majors on the history of Israel and the promise of the coming Messiah.
• Upon completion of the Old Testament, there were 400 years of silence during which God did not inspire any Scripture. (The word Scripture or Scriptures actually means “sacred writings.”)
THE OLD TESTAMENT AT A GLANCE

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THE NEW TESTAMENT

The second major division of the Bible is the New Testament. The New Testament records the story from the birth of Christ to the culmination of all of history. A few of the highlights are listed below:

- The New Testament has 27 individual books (beginning with Matthew and ending with Revelation).
- The New Testament has 3 different kinds of books:
  1. History books (5 books)
  2. Teaching books (21 books)
  3. Prophecy books (1 book)
The significance and importance of the Bible to impact your life should never be underestimated. But the Word of God, like anything in life that is worth loving and appreciating, must be something that you are familiar with, that you believe in, and that you are ready to apply to your life. God has given you a wonderful resource and treasure chest of practical application in His Word.

What seven words does the Psalmist use to describe the Word of God in Psalm 19:7-9? What four benefits are derived from God’s Word (verses 7-8)?

Why Was the Word of God Written?

The most popular book of all time is the Bible. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. Throughout history it has stood innumerable assaults from cultural, political, and even religious leaders. Yet in the end, it continues its worldwide dominance as the most important piece of literature ever recorded.
and reproduced for people to read. It is the very words of God, and it was written as a guidebook for your life—a divinely inspired instruction manual.

THE FOUR PURPOSES OF THE BIBLE

1. To reveal the triune God to people

The Bible is God’s self-revelation. Throughout the Word of God He has chosen to reveal Himself to people through various means.

In the Old Testament He revealed Himself through:

• Creation—man, who is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
• Angels (Genesis 18:1-3; Exodus 3:2)
• Signs, wonders, and miracles (Exodus 10:1-2)
• Visions and dreams (Isaiah 6:1-5)
• The spoken word of prophets and others (Jeremiah 1:9-10)
• The Old Testament writings

And in the New Testament He revealed Himself through:

• Creation—Jesus Christ, who is the very image of God (Colossians 1:15)
• Angels (Luke 1:26-33)
• Signs, wonders, and miracles (Luke 7:10-17)
• Visions and dreams (Acts 9:1-6)
• The spoken word of apostles and others (Acts 2:14-17)
• The indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:38)
• The New Testament writings

Read Isaiah 40:8. According to this verse, how long will the Word of God endure? Do you really believe this is true? Explain.

2. To teach people how to live

Not only is the Bible God’s self-revelation, but it is also life’s survival guidebook. It teaches you how to live with a total and complete dependence on God and His Word. In the Bible you find a sense of direction and purpose. In the Bible you find inspiring stories of hope and survival that empower you to continue on in the journey. And in the Bible you are reminded of the compassion of a loving God who taught the greatest lesson of surrender and sacrifice that you will ever know through His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16).
According to Romans 15:4, why was the Bible written? And what do the Scriptures give you according to this verse?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What four things do these verses tell you that the Word of God is useful or profitable for?

3. To show God interacting with people

All throughout history God has been in constant contact with the human race. From Adam and Eve in the Garden to the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, God the Creator has chosen to interact with the people He has created. He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. He teaches us and guides us throughout the pages of Scripture, and He interacts with us through His Holy Spirit, as well as through other revelations that are recorded in the Bible. He is a God of interaction and connection to a group of people that He longs to be in relationship with.

Read the following accounts of God interacting with people:

- Enoch—Genesis 5:23-24
- Abram—Genesis 12:1-3
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—Daniel 3
- Saul—Acts 9:1-9
- Peter—Acts 10:9-23

What other biblical accounts can you recall where God interacted with people?

In Hebrews 1:1 you find that God interacted with people in other ways. According to this verse, in what way do you find God speaking to people in the past?
4. To show people the way back to God

One of the most important purposes of Scripture is to bring people back to God. The redemptive story that unfolds throughout the Bible’s pages is a constant reminder that God desires to be in relationship with people. He is not some cosmic force who has chosen to leave behind His creation. But instead, God chose to reveal Himself through His Son Jesus Christ so that all men who receive the Son might be reconciled to the Father. The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is a record of people being shown the way back to God, followed by God’s gracious and loving acceptance back into that eternal relationship that He originally intended (John 14:6).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**SESSION ONE**

Who is the person in your life that you turn to when everything around you seems to be turned upside down? What makes you so dependent on this person?

Why do you think the Bible should be the book you turn to when everything in your life is crazy or calm? Who is revealed in the Bible?

What story unfolds throughout the pages of the Bible? How has this story intersected with your life?
What does the word *Bible* actually mean? What does the word *testament* actually mean? What does the word *Scripture* actually mean? What do these definitions reveal to you about the Word of God?

What are the four purposes of the Bible? What significance do these four purposes have in our daily lives?

Why is it so important for the Bible to show God interacting with the human race? What does this truth reveal to us about God?

What is one thing about the Bible that you learned as a result of studying this lesson?
When we begin to think of the Bible’s reliability, we are drawn to Paul’s second letter to Timothy, specifically, 2 Timothy 3:16, where it speaks of Scripture being inspired or literally—“God-breathed.” This is a startling truth that all of Scripture, every writing of God, has been “breathed out” by God. Therefore, all Scripture is inspired because it has been miraculously “God-breathed.” That is inspiration.

Now we can begin to understand that “revelation occurred when God gave His truth. Inspiration occurred when the writers of Scripture received and recorded His truth. Today, when we understand and apply His truth, that’s illumination.” You should make every effort to know the three terms just given above as well as the corresponding meaning. These key words will be referred to again and again throughout your Christian walk.

Based on what you just read, define the following words:

- **Inspiration:**
- **Revelation:**
- **Illumination:**

As a Christian, you can “affirm the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible…because God is incapable of inspiring falsehood, His word is altogether true and trustworthy.” The Bible that you hold in your hand, inspired by God and communicated through the Holy Spirit to human writers, cannot contain errors based on the nature and character of its source—God. That means that you can be completely confident that the Word of God that you rely and depend on is true and trustworthy. It cannot lead you down the wrong path or in the wrong way. Its very words are life.

There are also clear benefits of relying on the Bible. We find these benefits in Psalm 119:98-100. Read this short passage and then answer the following questions:

- In Psalm 119:98, what is the first benefit of relying on the Bible?

- Verse 99 records a second benefit of relying on the Bible. What is it?
Finally, in verse 100 we find a third benefit of relying on the Bible. What is it?

What questions or doubts do you have as you begin to understand and trust in the reliability of the Word of God?

WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD SAY ABOUT ITSELF?

The Old Testament writers claim to be writing or speaking God’s words over 2,600 times. And then when you arrive in the New Testament, you find the writers referring back to these men on many different occasions (2 Peter 1:19-21). Jesus alone quoted from over 22 Old Testament books during His time on earth. In fact, Jesus was the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. Consider the following prophecies and their corresponding fulfillment:

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED

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<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>O.T. PROPHECY</th>
<th>N.T. FULFILLMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Place of Birth</td>
<td>Micah 5:2</td>
<td>Matthew 2:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Virgin Birth</td>
<td>Isaiah 7:14</td>
<td>Matthew 1:18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Triumphant Entry</td>
<td>Zechariah 9:9</td>
<td>John 12:13-14</td>
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<td>Jesus’ Betrayal</td>
<td>Psalm 41:9</td>
<td>Mark 14:10</td>
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<td>Jesus’ Rejection</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:3</td>
<td>John 1:11</td>
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<td>Jesus’ Crucifixion</td>
<td>Isaiah 53:12</td>
<td>Matthew 27:38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Resurrection</td>
<td>Psalm 16:10</td>
<td>Acts 3:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus’ Ascension</td>
<td>Psalm 68:18</td>
<td>Acts 1:9</td>
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What do the following authors in Scripture say about the source of their words?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
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<td>David</td>
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<td>Ezekiel</td>
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<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>Isaiah 43:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>I Corinthians 11:23</td>
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According to Mark 12:24, what happens as a result of not knowing the Scriptures?

To what is the Word of God compared in the following verses?

- Jeremiah 23:29:
- Matthew 4:4:
- Hebrews 4:12:
- James 1:23-25:

What words does the writer of Hebrews use to describe Scripture (Hebrews 4:12)? Which one is the most significant to you?

What did the Psalmist say about the truth of God’s Word in Psalm 119:160?
WHAT ABOUT THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Certainly the witness of the writers and the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Jesus give you ample evidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but what about the work and influence of the Holy Spirit? You can be sure that believing that the Bible is the perfect Word of God is not simply an intellectual decision, but it is an evidence of the influence of the Holy Spirit on your life (John 14:26). In other words, you will not believe the Bible until the Holy Spirit has done His work of convincing you.

Part of the Holy Spirit’s work is to reveal God to you, and this is done primarily through God’s Word. Remember, you will never be convinced of the Bible’s ultimate authority and validity apart from the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul understood the importance of the Holy Spirit in convincing us that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. In his first letter to the Corinthians he talks about the Holy Spirit’s critical work in revealing God to us. Read I Corinthians 2:9-16 and then answer the following questions taken from Paul’s letter:

• According to this passage, how is God revealed to us (vss. 10-12)?

• Who knows the thoughts of God according to verse 11?

• Can non-Christians understand the things of God according to verse 14?

• According to verse 16, you have the mind of _______________.

The Holy Spirit is the final witness for the proof of the Bible’s authority and validity. You can now begin to understand what Paul was talking about in I Corinthians 1:21 when he said that people who don’t accept the truth of God and His Word consider the preaching of the Cross foolishness. It is foolish to them because they are unable to receive the things of God (I Corinthians 2:14).

So you must allow the Holy Spirit to do His work of convincing you and influencing you that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, while at the same time praying for Him to work in the lives of those without Christ, the spiritually lost. Your greatest desire should be for the entire world to share in the message of the Gospel and the truth of God’s inspired Word.