Lesson 1

The Voice From Heaven

Surveying the Source
Gen. 1:28; 3:8, 9; Num. 22:2; 2 Sam. 12:1–7; Isa. 59:2; Jer. 38:14–19; Ezekiel 4; Amos 3:7; Heb. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 3:1.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand that God’s Word breathes life into our souls.
► Learn how to listen for God’s voice through His Word.

Preventing to Lead
In our century, we seem to have mastered the science of communication. Emails; instant messaging; blogs; Internet phones; cameras and video devices; PDAs and cell phones that link us to the Internet—all keep us in constant touch with each other. Almost anyone on the planet can have a virtual global network of friends. Satellites, from their positions in the heavens, link us to each other wherever we are in the world; and they also keep us from getting lost with GPS technology. Yet our chatter is so obsessive, it can easily drown out the Voice from heaven that whispers hope, meaning, and purpose, connecting us to eternity.

Getting Started
A. Ask the students how many of them have their cell phones. Discuss how dependent we are on these devices and how we feel crippled without them. Point out that with all of the “chatter” in our lives, we are in danger of squelching the voice of God. We need to deliberately shut out everything and come into God’s presence with our hearts and our minds open to His Word and ready to listen for His Voice.
B. Use the reproducible activity on page 31, giving it only to the volunteers who will act out the skit. Once the skit is over, explain that while we laugh at this exaggeration, we can all relate. We know the frustration of being with someone, yet yearning for their intimacy even though they are with us. But even more poignant, the skit represents the way we treat God. We pride ourselves in searching for Him, but in reality, we do not really seek Him. Yet He still pursues us, holding out the invitation for us to know Him.

Delving into the Word
A. Ask someone to read aloud Hebrews 1:1–3. Facilitate discussion with the following questions:
1. How did God speak to people during Old Testament times?
2. How does God speak to people today?
On the chalkboard, draw a T chart. Write “Prophets” on one side and “Jesus” on the other. Using Hebrews 1:1–3 as the

Materials
flipchart or chalkboard; chalk or felt tip pens; a small display of communication devices of all types, including the Bible—both the book, and if possible, a PDA that can connect to Scripture, and a computer set to Biblegateway.com; see the reproducible activity for other props.
hour every day. Encourage them to listen for the Voice from heaven.

Suggest that they keep a journal of their prayers and Bible study time to observe over time how God has spoken to them and to witness the deepening of their relationship with Him.

Close with prayer.

Jean Kellner, Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A.
Dramatization: The Date

This skit can be done as an ad-lib with words, or as a silent comedic drama done to music with characters using extreme body language to communicate the message.

Characters: Two main characters—a male and a female (John and Beth); one waiter; one hostess. Option: include one or two other groups as “extras.”

Setting: Café or restaurant—two people getting together for a date.

Props: Set up a small romantic table for two. Insofar as possible, make the area look like a cozy corner in a café. If you choose the option of including another couple or two, have the room preset to accommodate two more tables. Have the “extras” seated already at the tables, or have a hostess seating them or a waiter handing them menus or taking their orders. Ask the main characters to go out of the room and reenter one at a time.

Scene: John enters first and looks around to see if Beth is there. He then checks his reservation with the hostess. He waits; checks his watch; adjusts his clothes, and stares at the door.

Beth enters. They greet each other, and are seated by the hostess.

Plot: John and Beth have had many dates. On this date, John plans to propose to Beth. They begin with small talk about their day. Then John leans in toward Beth. As he does, Beth jumps to answer her phone. (Someone in the class can support this scene by dialing her number.) She answers the phone and talks for a few minutes. John is left to stare at the menu and look around the restaurant at other diners enjoying each others’ company. Beth gets off the phone and apologizes. Once again, they prepare to enjoy their evening. They discuss the menu options, and just as the waiter comes to take their order, Beth’s phone rings again. Both John and the waiter wait impatiently for her to get off the phone. Additional characters at other tables act annoyed with the phone ringing or with her loud conversation. Finally, the scene ends with Beth having to excuse herself to go deal with her friend who keeps calling. John is left alone without having had the opportunity to ask her to marry him.
The Final Word

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand the relevance of the Bible in their lives.
► Study different truths found in the Bible.
► Seek to value the Word of God as a personal treasure, indispensable in their journey toward heaven.

Preparing to Lead
The Bible is much more than words on a page. It contains history, science, geography, philosophy, theology; but it is far more than that. It is the very essence of God revealed to us. Throughout history, the Bible has withstood fierce attacks, yet it stands unchanged today as the vehicle God chose to express His love and unveil His character to His children. Still today, the authority and authenticity of the Bible are challenged in our secular society. Even many Christians choose to live their lives outside its pages.

Getting Started
A. As they arrive, write each student’s name on a piece of paper. Fold and mix the papers in a box. Ask a volunteer to pick five pieces of paper. Call on the names chosen to share an experience they’ve had with the Bible and what that experience has meant to them.
B. The National Bible Association has celebrated National Bible Week every year since 1941. Their slogan for 2005–2006 was: “It’s There for a Reason.” They wanted to encourage people who already owned Bibles to read them. Ask students to come up with a slogan for the National Bible Association’s next campaign. Give them the following Bible themes to choose from: (1) the Bible’s life-changing power; (2) the Bible as a love letter; (3) the Bible as a foundation; (4) the Bible as words to live by.

Delving Into the Word
A. The Bible answers many of the questions raised about its authority within its very pages. Divide the students into six groups and give each group one of the following Bible texts: (1) Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18, 19; (2) Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 119:89; (3) Isaiah 55:11; (4) John 1:14; (5) 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; (6) 2 Peter 1:19–21. After each group has discussed their text(s) for about 5 to 10 minutes, ask them to share with the rest of the students the truth about the Bible found in that verse. Write the answers on a blackboard or a piece of cardboard.
B. Make a copy of the reproducible activity on page 32 for each student. After the students fill out their sheets, discuss with the entire class the following questions:
1. Why did God include scientific facts in the Bible?
2. What does that tell me about God?
Discussing the Ideas

1. What makes the Bible an authority?  
2. How do I know if the Bible is trustworthy?  
3. What can I say to someone who doesn’t believe in the Bible?  
4. How do I rely on the Word of God?  
5. Do I need faith to believe in the Bible? Why or why not?  
6. The Bible is an ancient document, so how can it still be relevant today?

Closing the Activity

Say: Many people have given their lives in defense of the Bible and what it stands for. Some have been persecuted, and some have been called upon to defend their beliefs. We may not be the subject of such dramatic developments today; but in the classroom, or with friends, we may face ridicule and criticism for relying on the Word of God. On the paper I’m about to give you, write your personal statement of defense on behalf of the Bible.

Sandra Araujo-Delgado, Apison, Tennessee, U.S.A.
Read the following verses. Then connect each verse with its corresponding scientific fact.

The shape of the earth  
Genesis 15:5

The earth is suspended in nothing  
2 Samuel 22:16

The stars cannot be counted  
Job 36:27, 28

The existence of valleys in the seas  
Job 26:7

The earth’s water cycle  
Isaiah 40:22
Bible Prophecy Fulfilled

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Describe the qualities of a trustworthy source of information.
► Understand and personalize the purpose of Christ’s suffering and death.

Preparing to Lead
Put yourself in Isaiah’s shoes. It was his responsibility to prophesy the coming of the Messiah. He would not live to see the prophecies fulfilled, but he wrote with conviction, trusting in the One who gave him the message. He knew that what he was writing was the truth, because he trusted the Source. Think back to when you were a child and just learning about the world around you. Did you ever second guess the answers your parents gave you? Well, at least until you were 9 or 10 years old? No, because you trusted the source. You might not have known everything about this world, but you knew you could trust your parents to give you the right information. So it is with God.

Getting Started
A. Ask for eight volunteers to split into four pairs. One person in each pair will be blindfolded. Give the other person in each pair a paper cup containing four small food items. The persons designated to wear the blindfold will need to step out of the room while you instruct the other members of the pairs as follows: “You will give to your blindfolded partner each of the four food items one at a time. As you give each item to your partner, tell them what they are going to get. When you get to the fourth item, tell them they are getting something other than what it really is. Watch for their reaction as they feel that the item really isn’t what you said it was.”

After you have given these instructions, bring in the other members of the pairs and blindfold them. After the exercise, ask those who were blindfolded how they felt as they were getting the items. Was trust in their partner growing? How was their trust affected when they received the fourth item?

End by saying, “God doesn’t ask us for blind faith. He has shown that His Word has proven true again and again.”

B. Have the students write down four friends that they’ve had for longer than five years. Next, have them write down qualities they look for in relationships. Finally, have them write down an instance when one of those friends was there for them. Then ask the following questions: (1) What effect does history and dependability have on our relationships? (2) In what ways has God shown that He is dependable? (3) Does He ask for a blind faith, or has He proven His worthiness through the ages? If the latter is so, then how?

Materials
Bibles, pens/pencils, paper, paper cups, 16 small food items (for example, jelly beans, pretzels, etc.); 4 blindfolds
Delving Into the Word

A. Have students read Daniel 2, and put in order the steps he took when he was called to action: (1) Heard the call. (2) Responded with humility and confidence. (3) Asked God for help. (4) Immediately praised Him for the answer. (5) Reported the results in public and witnessed.

Ask: ●“Think of a time when your faith was challenged. What was your response? ●How could you have acted differently? ●What is the purpose of being challenged? ●Is our life the only one at stake when presented with these challenges?”

B. Go back to Isaiah 53. As you reread it, make a list of all the things that happened to Jesus when He came to earth. As you list each one, have the students think of times in their lives when they were treated the same way. Or have them think of times when they have treated someone in this manner. Ask: ●“If Jesus came today, would He still be treated like this? ●Do we have it worse or easier than the people in Bible times? Be able to defend your answer.”

Discussing the Ideas

1. Whom do you admire most? What qualities do they possess that cause you to look up to them?
2. If Noah, Isaiah, or Daniel were alive today, how would they be treated?
3. How can we have confidence in the Bible? What evidence do you need to believe that the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God?
4. Since all of Isaiah’s predictions about Christ came true, we accept him as a true prophet. On the other hand, what if only half of his predictions had come true? How would that affect your opinion of him?
5. How important is prophecy to our daily walk with Jesus? In what ways does it affect our faith?
6. “He who loses money, loses much; He who loses a friend, loses much more, He who loses faith, loses all.”* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Closing the Activity

Reread the passage in Isaiah, one verse per person. After every verse, put in the words “For Me.” Emphasize to the students that even if they were the only people in the world, Jesus would still have gone through each of these ordeals for them (John 15:13). Ask: “Who would you lay down your life for?”

Jason Cork, Kissimmee, Florida, U.S.A.

### Whom or What Would You Believe?

Think about all the ways we receive information. Are they trustworthy? Rate each of these on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the least trustworthy and 5 being the most trustworthy.

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<td>1</td>
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<td>Politicians</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Your church</td>
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The Bible Is Reliable

Surveying the Source
Mat. 5:17, 18; 24:35; John 10:34, 35; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:6, 12–19; Gal. 3:22; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:25.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Have a deeper understanding of God and His Word.
► Strengthen their faith in God and His Word.
► Explore practical applications of faith in real-life situations that they have faced or are likely to face.

Preparing to Lead
Read James 2:23. It’s not that Abraham didn’t have his doubts. After all, the “Father of a Great Nation” and the “Mother of a Multitude” were way past the age of conception. Frankly, it was just too difficult for them to talk about their family multiplying like the stars. That conversation with God seemed so long ago. Now, on good days, it seemed like a silly illusion. On not-so-good days, it was one more painful memory.

It sounds so easy: Just believe and God will count you among His righteous friends. But it’s not that easy. A Christian poet, novelist, and inspirational author, Madeleine L’Engle, suggests that those “who believe they believe in God but without passion in the heart, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, and even at times without despair, believe only in the idea of God, and not in God himself.” Abraham chose to believe in God Himself. He chose to take Him at His Word.

Getting Started
A. Natural versus Special Revelation.
Natural revelation refers to things we can know about God from nature. Special revelation is God’s revealed Word through which we learn additional things.

On the chalkboard/flipchart, draw a line down the center. Label one side “Natural Revelation” and the other side “Special Revelation.” Ask students to list things about God they can learn from the natural world. Then list the things they learn through Scripture.

B. Doubt versus Faith.
Faith is persevering through one’s doubts rather than constructing a hermetically sealed, doubt-free zone. Ask students to briefly describe a time when they felt close to God and faith seemed spontaneous. List on the board key elements of these experiences. Then ask students to share a time in their lives when doubt was present and faith seemed elusive. List key elements of these experiences as well.

Delving Into the Word
A. Have participants read Psalm 19:1–6 aloud. Facilitate a brief walk outdoors with these verses in mind. When you return, ask the following questions:

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did you experience that related to Psalm 19:1–6? ●Why might the sky be a good place to look for God’s glory? ●How universal is the knowledge attainable through natural revelation? ●What are some limitations of nature as a source of understanding God? ●How can you apply what you learn about God and about yourself from your time in natural surroundings? Be specific and practical.

Read the rest of Psalm 19 aloud. Note that the “law of the Lord” (verse 7) is the entire Scripture (Torah), not just the Ten Commandments. Summarize the responses to the following questions on the board: ●Why does the psalmist call the Torah “perfect”? ●What do you make of the use of the words statutes, precepts, and the fear of the Lord? ●Why are these things commended to us? ●How many benefits do you count in verses 6–11 that are attributable to the special revelation of God in Scripture? ●What are the psalmist’s values and desires? ●How can the Scriptures help you be who you most want to be?

Discussing the Ideas

1. What kind of objections do you encounter in others who are struggling with faith and trust in God?
2. What ideas, interactions, and activities help strengthen your faith?
3. What things do you think are detrimental to faith? Why?
4. What are some helpful things you can say to someone who is struggling to believe?
5. Where do you go in the Word when you’re struggling and need encouragement and/or assurance?
6. What resources could you recommend to others to strengthen their faith in God and His Word?
7. What spiritual disciplines do you find most conducive to healthy faith?

Closing the Activity

Read Hebrews 4:15, 16 to the class. Then distribute the activity on page 34. Give them time to do the activity. When most seem to be finished, close with a brief prayer, thanking God for hearing our prayers and for answering the doubts we might have.

John Cress, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.

3. Ibid., p. 236.
In the space below, write the thoughts that form in your mind as you pour out your prayer on paper. Because it’s the Holy Spirit’s job to translate your prayers into the language of heaven (Rom. 8:26), don’t try to make your prayer perfect. Simply make it authentic—what you’re happy about, what makes you sad, what the desires of your heart are, what you want God to do for you, what specific grace you need right now. God hears and answers every prayer presented in the name of Jesus.

Take this prayer journal page home; and if you aren’t already engaged in this positive spiritual discipline, consider this the first page of your new prayer journal. Keeping such a journal will strengthen your faith and keep you close to God.
When the Rocks Cry Out

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Gain a better understanding of Jesus and His symbolic representation as their Rock.
► Realize the importance of faith as a guide in decision making.
► Learn how we can become rock-like Christians.

Preparing to Lead
To see different types of rocks or pictures of rocks, visit a local park or library. Make a note of properties that the various rocks have in common. How does the dictionary define the term rock?

Getting Started
A. Give each student an index card. Have them write on the top of their card a time when they were facing a difficult situation. Below that, have them write Bible texts that helped them get through that time. On a flipchart, record the different texts they thought of. Ask them to think about their greatest strength/weakness. ● How does each strength/weakness impact their faith? ● How do these strengths/weaknesses help or hinder their ability to follow God’s will?

Say: “When faced with life’s tragedies, we often fail to rely on the strength God has given us to cope with such times. Instead, many of us seek the impartial judgment of our peers. God has provided His guidance for us in the Bible to be a source of strength under our most trying circumstances. Above all, He offers His only Son as a rock on which we can build our faith when we are tried and tested.”

B. Distribute index cards, and ask each member to write a definition for the word rock on their card. Allow each student to share their definition. Record each definition on a flipchart.

From your dictionary search, find a definition you can share with the class. Be prepared to share your own interpretation of the term if asked.

Say: “Rocks are naturally occurring aggregates of minerals. They are classified by mineral and chemical composition, the texture of the constituent particles, and also by the processes that formed them. These indicators separate rocks into igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic groups. Likewise, the way we handle the elements of life separate us into distinct ‘rock types.’ We can be hardened, refusing to believe and accept Christ unless we have evidence, or we can be beautiful, having faith like Moses and Abraham. Ultimately, the decision rests with us as to what type of rock we become.”
Delving Into the Word

A. Share dictionary definitions of the term rock. Then have a volunteer read Revelation 6:15, 16. Ask: “Who does the Bible say will choose to hide in the physical rocks? Why should we as Christians be guided by such a warning?”

Next, read Matthew 7:24–27. Ask:
● “How does the Bible describe those who choose to build on the rock? How does it describe those who do not?”

Have volunteers read aloud the following: Matthew 16:18 • Exodus 17 • Luke 8:6 •Psalm 31:3 •Psalm 62:7. Then discuss why a rock would have been the most suitable object to offer as an illustration in each instance. Determine how each text can teach us how we can better understand God’s divine plan of salvation to make us followers of Christ.

Have someone read Romans 1:2. Say: “As a Christian, God expects us to display similar attributes of a Christlike character. It is only through so doing that we are set apart as a chosen people.”

B. Distribute the activity sheet on page 35. Give them 5 to 10 minutes to complete the exercises. Then discuss each item in relation to the Logos portion of the lesson. Ask: “In what ways can having a rock-solid faith transform our lives?”

Discuss the Bible character mentioned in the Testimony portion of the lesson. Ask: “Did this person depict rock-solid faith? Why or why not?”

Discussing the Ideas

1. God never promised that the path will be easy, but He promised that He will be there through our most trying circumstances. What can we do to keep faith even though we are tempted with what the world has to offer?

2. What if we choose not to have a rock-solid faith?

3. What can we gain by being a spiritual rock?

4. When your faith is challenged by disturbances or detractors, how high is your confidence level: at rest on a solid limestone foundation, or holding on for dear life as the mud and rocks erode from beneath you?

5. How can we become a Gibraltar-like Christian?

Closing the Activity

Have a few volunteers share how they can be like “rocks” in the week ahead. As a group, repeat Psalm 18:2, which you have printed ahead of time on the flip-chart or chalkboard. You or a volunteer should offer a word of prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit’s guidance for the week ahead.
The Bible and Science

Surveying the Source

Gen. 1:1; 2:1, 2; 7:11-24; Deut. 4:32; Ps. 100:3; 139:14; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; Jer. 33:22; John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1, 2.

Plotting the Course

The students will:
► Learn to defend their belief that God created the world.
► Explore basic biblical support for Creation.
► Understand how God created the world.

Preparing to Lead

For those who have grown up in a Christian home, it is difficult to believe evolutionary theories. Often, those theories are laughed off because of a strong belief in Creation. Likewise, for someone who has grown up in a home where religion was not prevalent, it may be difficult to believe there is a supreme God who created the world, but who at the same time chooses not to be seen visibly by the people who inhabit His creation. Whichever theory one believes in, that belief must be by faith. And that faith must be strong enough and knowledgeable enough to endure.

Getting Started

A. Sometimes our friends are our own worst enemy. If you have access to the popular TV show Friends, show a brief clip from Season 2, Episode 3; 4:25–5:46; 7:03–7:49; and 15:24–17:26 (you don’t have to use all of them). Ross, a scientist, can’t believe that Phoebe doesn’t believe in evolution. But when Phoebe questions him, he admits that evolution is possibly just a theory. Ask the following questions: ● Why did Ross abandon his beliefs so quickly? ● Why is it that Phoebe doesn’t respect Ross anymore? ● Why did she respect his beliefs before? ● What does Phoebe believe? ● Have you been in a situation like this in your school or work?

Some people just like to argue for the sake of arguing, and not necessarily to win. To close your opening discussion, ask students how good they are at defending what they believe in while still being respectful of the other person’s belief. They may not have a response.

B. Ask your students the following questions. Some may have the answers, and some may not. ● Why are the oceans filled with salt, while inland lakes and rivers are not? ● When the Flood occurred, were all the continents together and somehow shifted to create what we have today? ● Why is it that some apes have “evolved” into humans, while others have not? If apes evolved into humans why haven’t they evolved into anything else yet?

Materials
Play-Doh©; whiteboard and markers
Delving Into the Word

A. It is important to be able to defend Creation from the Bible. Divide your class into groups, and give each group one of the following texts: ● Genesis 1–2:3 (God said) ● Deuteronomy 4:32 (Is there anything greater?) ● Psalm 104 (God’s wisdom) ● John 1:1–18 (God was) ● Hebrews 1:2 (Faith understands).

Have each group discuss what the text and the statement after it say about God and Creation. Then have each group report to the class as a whole. Ask: ● “How does each text prove God and Creation? ● How does each one build upon the other to prove God and Creation?”

Have the students put the texts in an order that would help them give a short Bible study to a friend who may not believe in Creation.

B. Say: “God created the earth with such loving care. Just imagine all the little details and complexities that God put into it.” Have your students list some of these details and complexities. Write their responses on the board. Say: “Isn’t it amazing how creative God is? So why did He destroy it all?” Read Genesis 6:7 and 7:17–24. Say: “We know God instituted the plan of salvation in the Garden of Eden. So why did He choose to destroy the people who lived at the time of the Flood? [Seek responses.] Why didn’t He just destroy Adam and Eve? [Seek responses.] If people were so evil at the time of the Flood, why didn’t God destroy everything? [Seek responses.]”

Read Genesis 7:23. Ask and seek responses: “Why did He save Noah’s family and some of the animals? What does the Flood tell us about God and Creation?”

Give each student a copy of the poem on page 36. Arrange ahead of time to have a class member read it aloud. Ask: ● “How does the author of this poem view God’s creation?” ● “What does he suggest about our treatment of what God has created?”

Then discuss why we should better care for God’s handiwork, and how we can do so.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Why is being able to defend your beliefs important?
2. How do science and the Bible work together to prove Creation?
3. What is the difference between knowing God is the Creator and just having “faith” that He is the Creator? Or is there no difference?
4. What Bible stories can you think of that show God is the Commander of the universe?
5. Does God have to prove He created this earth to the other worlds? Why or why not?
6. Which is more important: The argument or the information? Why?

Closing the Activity

Hand out Play-Doh© to each student. Have them just feel it at first—it’s weight, its temperature, its texture. Then have them slowly begin to mold it into a shape. Have them note its resistance and its receptivity. Say: “God molded us in the beginning, and He continues to mold us as we grow spiritually with Him. Not only does spending daily time with God mold us spiritually, but the more time we spend with Him, the better witnesses we are to His Creation—those who believe and those who don’t.”

Marklynn Bazzy, Bangkok, Thailand
THE WORLD is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod? Generations have trod, have trod, have trod; And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil; And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent; There lives the dearest freshness deep down things; And though the last lights off the black West went Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs— Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins
The Word in Our Lives

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand the purpose of God’s Word.
► See the results of allowing the Word of God to impact us.
► Commit to spending time each day with the Word.

Preparing to Lead
A wise leader recognizes that “the pen is mightier than the sword.” The sword is an instrument of violence and coercion, used to overwhelm enemies and render them powerless. But the pen is an instrument of logic and persuasion, used to convince the mind and achieve voluntary, lasting change. Amazingly, God’s Word combines the power of both the pen and the sword. The Word transforms our lives and functions as a weapon in our struggle against sin and Satan. God, the wisest leader of all, has equipped us well to deal with life’s challenges.

Getting Started
A. Ask if anyone has heard the saying, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Say: “Even if we don’t like to admit it, words have a powerful effect on our lives. A few words can change a person’s life forever.”

Ask the students to think of some life-changing sentences or questions from different areas of life: relationships, work/school, etc., and write the sentences on a flipchart. Help them with a couple of examples, such as: “You’re pregnant.” “There’s been an accident.” Discuss what impact each sentence can have on a person’s life.

B. Ask: “Have you ever tried to talk with someone who couldn’t speak your language?” Allow them to briefly share experiences. Then ask: “Were you able to understand each other? How did you feel?” (Most will express frustration.) Discuss these questions: • What purpose do words have in our lives? • Why do we place such importance on understanding one another? • What purpose does God’s Word have in our lives? • Would we be able to understand

Delving Into the Word
A. Divide the class into groups. Say: “The writers of the Bible compare God’s Word to familiar objects. We are going to study some of those comparisons to find out what they can teach us about the purpose of God’s Word in our lives.”
Pass out the following items (one per group) along with the instructions. (Write the instructions, including the text for each group, on separate pieces of paper).
Scalpel/sharp knife—Heb. 4:12; Lantern/flashlight—Ps. 119:5, 105; Car manual—2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Bread—Matt. 4:4

**Instructions:** In your group, discuss the function/purpose of each object: What is it used for? What benefits do we gain from it? Why do we need it? Then read the texts, and write next to each one the appropriate object.

Bring the groups back together. Discuss the similarities between the function of the object and the function of God’s Word in our lives. ■ Are there any differences? ■ Why did the writer choose to compare God’s Word to this object? ■ What does the comparison help us to understand about the purpose of the Bible?

B. Ask the groups to share their conclusions with the rest of the class.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. Who do we understand most when we read God’s Word: God or ourselves? Explain.
2. What is it about hearing God’s Word that gives us more faith?
3. Is change a natural and unconscious result of “hearing” the Word of God, or do we have a part to play in being changed? Explain.
4. Why is change, even positive change, often so painful?
5. In what circumstances does the Word function as a pen of persuasion? As a sword? (See Preparing to Lead.)
6. What place should God’s Word have in our daily lives?
7. Besides Bible study, what suggestions do you have for incorporating God’s Word into your life?

**Closing the Activity**

Read Romans 10:17 to the class. *Say:* “We often long for greater faith, and the solution is to ‘hear’ the Word of God.” Pass out the reproducible activity (see page 37). Tell the students to write three texts (one per section) that they would like to memorize. *Say:* “Since it takes about 21 days to form a habit, work on memorizing these verses during the next three weeks (one per week). Put the text where you will see it every day—on the mirror or refrigerator—to remind you to make God’s Word a part of your life.”

**Liane Edlund, Ekebyholm, Sweden**

Revelation of Hope

Surveying the Source
Ps. 34:7; 91:4; Rom. 3:21, 26; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:13; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 1:9; 2:12.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand what it feels like to have hope.
► Discover Bible characters who had hope.
► See how God provides hope to His children.

Preparing to Lead
What does hope look like? I see hope in the face of my cat every morning. We have three cats, two who live indoors and one who lives outside. The outside cat is very old, and sometimes we give him canned cat food to bolster his nutrition. Every morning, he comes to our front door and jumps up and looks in the screen door. I can see his little pinched face and wide eyes watching me as I walk around, doing all the morning chores. When I head toward the door, his mouth opens in silent cries, and his little paws scrape furiously on the glass. His world revolves around the hope that I’ll soon appear with a can of cat food in my hand. What does hope look like to you?

Getting Started
A. In order to help students experience the feeling of hope, bring a tasty snack to Sabbath School and put it in a place where everyone can see it. You might bring doughnuts and orange juice or a nicely arranged fruit tray.

If students ask if it is for them, put them off with a statement like, “We’ll talk about that later.” Then have the students get involved in another activity. After a few minutes, bring out the snack and let them eat. Ask: ●“Did you have the feeling of hope that you would get the snack? ●How does hope feel? ●If I had told you that the snack was not for you at the beginning of class, would you still have hoped that you would get some?

●What types of things do we hope for in our lives?”

B. Ask: “What types of things do you hope for?” Make a list of the answers on the chalkboard. Pass out paper and drawing materials to each student. Say: “Draw a line down the middle of the paper, dividing it in half. On the left side, draw a picture or write the words to a poem or song that show what your world would be like without hope. On the right side, draw a picture or write words to a poem or song that show what your world is like with the hope of Jesus’ soon return.” Have the students share their artwork or poetry with the rest of the class.

Materials
a tasty, tempting snack—enough for each student; drawing materials; paper, pens, colored pencils or markers; whiteboard, chalkboard, or flipchart; chalk or felt-tip pens; Bibles and Bible concordances; hymnals or copies of hymn number 214—“We Have This Hope”
Delving Into the Word

A. The Bible is full of stories about people who showed through their lives that they were either full of hope in God’s promises and message or so tuned into Satan that they had given up all hope. Divide the students into groups of four to six. Using the reproducible activity (see page 38), have the groups look up the stories of some of these Bible characters and write down the actions that show whether these people had hope or were hopeless. After they have completed the activity, have each group discuss at what point in each character’s life did they make the choice to either be hopeful or to give up hope. Have students share their conclusions with the whole group.

Discuss: ●Did the hopeful people have more or fewer problems than the hopeless people? ●Do you believe the characters made a conscious choice to be hopeful or hopeless? ●What gave them hope? ●What strengthened their hope or made them give up their hope? ●What does God do today to give us hope? ●Do we have a choice about whether to be hopeful or hopeless? Explain.”

B. Angels are God’s messengers, and often the messages they bring are messages of hope. Divide the students into groups. Assign each group one of the following stories in the Bible that includes a message of hope from an angel:

3. Mary’s news of her pregnancy: Luke 1:26–33
5. Joseph’s dream: Matthew 1:20, 21
6. The women at the tomb: Matthew 28:5–8

Have them spend a few minutes planning a skit based on the story, making sure to highlight the words of hope given by the angel. Make time for each group to present their skit. Ask: ●“Why do you think God uses angels to send messages of hope? ●What kinds of messages do you think angels bring today? ●How can you be a messenger of hope to people around you?”

Discussing the Ideas

1. How does hope help us in our spiritual journey?
2. When do you feel the most hopeful?
3. What aspect of Jesus’ life gives you the most hope?
4. Why do you think hope is listed with faith and love in 1 Corinthians 13?
5. What is the difference between hope and trust?
6. Do you have a responsibility as a Christian to bring hope to other people? Explain.
7. How can you bring hope to other people?

Closing the Activity

Seventh-day Adventists are filled with the hope of Jesus’ second coming. Number 214 in the The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal was written for one of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference sessions that meets every five years. Sing “We Have This Hope” together or read the words aloud. End by pledging to keep the hope of Jesus’ soon return alive in our hearts.

Kris Stevenson, Mt. Vernon, Ohio, U.S.A.
# HOPEFUL or HOPELESS

Look up the stories of the Bible characters listed. Write the actions that show whether they were hopeful or hopeless.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bible Character</th>
<th>Text Reference</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Hopeful/Hopeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman healed of blood disease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abram and Sarai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Wise Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary, Mother of Jesus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich Young Ruler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bible and Health

Surveying the Source
Exod. 15:26; Matt. 4:23; 8:16, 17; Luke 4:16–21; Rom. 6:4, 9–11; Phil. 4:4–9; Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8–10; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3 John 2.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
▸ Distinguish between clean and unclean foods.
▸ Understand how faith and diet are related.
▸ Learn how the foods they eat affect mental and physical health.

Preparing to Lead
My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!—“It Is Well With My Soul” by Horatio G. Spafford, 1873.

In the Lord lies the answer to true and total healing and a renewal of life.

Getting Started
A. Using a chalkboard or flipchart, create two columns. Label the first column “Food/Physical” and the other “Food/Mental.” Have the students list types of foods under both columns and brainstorm the physical and mental affects of foods on the body. After five or ten minutes, discuss which foods out of the ones listed are the ones God desires us to consume on a daily basis.

B. Give each class member a copy of the Clean and Unclean handout (see page 39). After allowing time for completion, call on volunteers to share their answers. Ask the class which foods are from God’s original diet.

Delving Into the Word
A. Have volunteers read the following passages:
● Romans 6:4
● Colossians 1:20, 21
● 1 Peter 2:24
Then ask the following questions:
● In what way do we as Adventists show our trust in the Lord?
● What are the requirements for us once we claim Jesus as our Savior?
● What changes do we make in our lives?
Explain that in order for us to be faithful to Jesus, we must take care of ourselves, so we can be effective witnesses to the rest of the world, able to serve Him without any physical or mental hindrances.

B. Divide the class into groups of five or six, and have each group record their answers to the questions pertaining to Exodus 15:26, Philippians 4:4–9, Colossians 3:8–10, and 3 John 2.
● How are the passages similar to each other?
● What are the blessings of keeping
God’s laws?
● What happens when we take care of our bodies—both physically and mentally?
● What characteristics describe how we are to live?

Have volunteers share their results with the class. Explain that as we are joyfully worshiping the Lord in every aspect of our lives, there is no room for exhibiting negative behavior, and that Christ has called us to a higher purpose. Therefore, we serve Him daily by taking care of ourselves so we can be of service to others in need.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Are we able to worship Jesus and follow His commands if we don’t have a healthy lifestyle? Why or why not?
2. How can we use our health message as a way to reach those who don’t know Jesus?
3. When are we more receptive to hearing God’s commands for our lives? When we’re healthy or unhealthy? Explain.
4. Why is encouragement from family, friends, and the church important when trying to break unhealthy habits/lifestyles?
5. What secular professions advocate some of the laws stated in the Bible by which we are to achieve God’s plan for living?
6. How can you use whatever gifts you have to show others how to live by God’s moral and health commands?

Closing the Activity

Pass out index cards to each class member, having them write down ways in which they would like to improve their physical or mental well-being. Allow volunteers to share their thoughts, if desired.

Pray over the class, asking the Lord to touch each of their lives, helping them to conquer whatever is keeping them from worshiping the Lord more fully.

Natasha Polak, Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.
Clean and Unclean

Place the foods in the word bank in the correct column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sheep</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Shellfish</th>
<th>Bread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>Rabbits</td>
<td>Figs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>Vultures</td>
<td>Ostriches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clean Foods

Unclean Foods
The Bible and Happiness

Surveying the Source

Luke 21:36; John 8:32; 1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:12, 13; 1 Pet. 3:15; 4:12–14; 1 John 1:4.

Plotting the Course

The students will:
► Learn that God is the source of true happiness.
► Understand that there is happiness
and apparent happiness in this life.
► Come to realize that our happiness is
often an outcome of our own choices.

Preparing to Lead

Where the people have a choice, every
government in every country is elected
because the electors believe they will be
happier under their government. Often,
however, it does not take long before
things start to go wrong and the most ardent
supporter loses confidence. The govern-
ment might change policies and intro-
duce new laws to keep the people happy,
but often such things fail to deliver, and a
new government with new policies is
elected. God is the ultimate Prime Min-
ister of this world. His rules and policies in
the Bible are there for our happiness.
They do not change and are always rele-
vant. Why then is there so much unhappi-
ness amongst us?

Getting Started

A. Make a two-column table on the
chalkboard or flipchart with the headings
“Happiness” and “Unhappiness.” Then
ask the class to volunteer words or
phrases to illustrate each. If needed, se-
lect examples from the following:
low self-esteem, confident, criticizing, compli-
mentary, dishonesty, thoughtfulness.
Write their responses under the appropri-
ate heading.

After about 10 entries in each column,
say to the class: “You have associated unhappiness with (read the entries) and
happiness with (read the entries).” Dis-
cuss why they made these associations.

B. Divide the class into five groups and
distribute the newspapers among them.
Ask them to find as many happy and unhap-
sy situations in their newspaper as
they can and to list them on the flipchart
or chalkboard. After about 10 minutes,
bring the class together again and note
the differences between the two lists.

Now ask the class to eliminate any
happy situations from the list that are not
in agreement with God’s will. For exam-
ple, a gambler celebrating his or her win.
Ask for comments on the findings of this
activity.

Delving Into the Word

A. Divide the class into pairs and di-
vide the following texts between them:

• Prov. 3:13 • Prov. 15:13 • Matt. 5:1–
14:6 • John 17:3 • 1 Cor. 10:13 • Phil.
looks immediate problems and depends on the Holy Spirit to keep it active. Happiness is doing what we know is right. It is God’s wish for us in this life as we prepare for eternity.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved/happy. (Read Acts 4:12 from a modern translation.)

Share the following with the class:

Obedience to God’s Word leads to a knowledge of His purpose for each one of us. We learn of His truth and develop a freedom of spirit that makes us happy. Happiness is therefore of the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). It is based on knowledge, and it engenders confidence and security. It over-

Discussing the Ideas

1. How can one be certain that true happiness is the outcome of an honest relationship with God?

2. Discuss the following statement: “I have a choice. God always respects my decision.”

3. Discuss this statement: “I can only obtain eternal life by obeying God’s commands.”

4. Is it often difficult to distinguish between Satan’s imitation of happiness and true happiness in Jesus? Explain.

5. Why is it possible for a person who is happy in Jesus, but who is experiencing difficulties and criticism, to remain “free” on the inside?

6. Why will anyone who pursues wealth for its own sake never be truly happy?

Closing the Activity

Share the following with the class: Obedience to God’s Word leads to a knowledge of His purpose for each one of us. We learn of His truth and develop a freedom of spirit that makes us happy. Happiness is therefore of the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). It is based on knowledge, and it engenders confidence and security. It over-

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GOD CREATED A FORMULA FOR WHOLESOMENESS:

SATAN CREATED A FORMULA FOR DESTRUCTION:
Daily Wisdom

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand the importance and rewards of studying Scripture.
► Feel the living power of Scripture to touch the needs of individual hearts.
► Make a decision to encounter God on a daily basis through Bible study.

Preparing to Lead
“The mind occupied with commonplace matters only, becomes dwarfed and enfeebled. . . . As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. . . . He who with sincere and teachable spirit studies God’s word, seeking to comprehend its truths, will be brought in touch with its Author; and, except by his own choice, there is no limit to the possibilities of his development.”

“We content ourselves with momentary flashes of spiritual illumination, when we might walk day after day in the light of His presence.”

Getting Started
A. Give each member a special (colored, lightweight, velum, etc.) piece of paper cut to bookmark size. Offer colorful pens or markers to choose from. After reading Psalm 119:98–105 silently, have the students journal on their bookmark something described in these verses that they value on a personal level. It might be worded as a prayer or simply copied as a quote from the text. Facilitate each individual who is willing to share with the class what part of Psalm 119:98–105 they value and why. Students may store this page marker in their Bibles.

B. Read aloud the gutsy statements in “Preparing to Lead.” Ask the class if anyone knows of someone who has experienced the truthfulness of these claims. If someone has, encourage them to share the details. If no one speaks up, explore the following:

● How can we define “commonplace matters”?
● What does it mean to have the mind become “dwarfed and enfeebled”?
● How can the Bible possibly offer greater intellectual training than “all other books combined” (bearing in mind the Bible does not examine all complex sciences possible)?

Delving Into the Word
A. Distribute the lyrics, and listen to and/or sing as a group, the song “Psalm 19 (The Law of the Lord).” Next, have members of the class read Psalm 19:7–14 and Psalm 119:98–105 aloud. On a whiteboard or flipchart, draw two columns. As the heading for the first column write “The Resources.” At the top of the

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second column write: “The Results.” Next, begin a systematic examination of the Bible verses read in class. Guide class members in identifying characteristics of the “resources” and corresponding “results” in each text. Document below the appropriate column those characteristics identified. An example might be found in Psalm 119:98: “You, through Your commandments” (NKJV) might be listed under the “Resources” column while “make me wiser than my enemies” (NKJV) could be entered beneath the “Results” title. Discuss how each entry under the first heading can become an authentic part of one’s personal life. Finally, analyze the specific benefits described in the “Results” column. Discuss the presence or absence of daily Bible study and the implications for receiving those spiritual outcomes.


Apply the Bible study skills used above to a pertinent problem. Reinforce the idea expressed in this week’s lesson that the study of Scripture can give us “wisdom and the understanding we need to face the challenges of life.” Choose a problem shared in class by a member, and challenge the others to search the Bible for guidance on how to relate to that issue. Highlight the depth and power of God’s Word in addressing everyday concerns.

Discussing the Ideas

1. What condition of heart and mind should we be in as we approach the study of God’s Word?
2. How can we know if we are studying the Bible for the purpose of supporting our predetermined opinions?
3. What guidance might you offer a friend who is struggling to find the Bible relevant?
4. What is the Bible’s central theme and how should that influence daily life?
5. What, if anything, is keeping you from meeting with God on a daily basis?

Closing the Activity

Distribute a pencil and ¼ size slip of paper to each student. Invite them to fill in the blank: The deepest need of my heart is _______. Instruct members to tuck that paper away in their Bibles for a quiet moment alone with God. Urge them to find time daily to search the Scriptures—even giving God permission to address needs they may be unaware of. Read several promises about God answering prayers. Conclude by praying that God will hear and answer the questions of each heart as they study His Word.

Lisa Eisele Poole, Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S.A.

1. Education, pp. 124, 125.
4. CQ [Collegiate Quarterly], June 11, 2007 “Testimony.”
Understanding Matthew 13:22

The Word

Cares of this World

Deceitfulness of Riches

Unfruitful

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Growing Through the Word

Surveying the Source

Prov. 11:30; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:14, 15; Heb. 4:2; 5:12–14; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:19.

Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Examine and compare the stages of growth in a relationship with Christ.
► Become aware that spending time with God’s Word is the foundation of the growth process.
► Become aware that the process of spiritual maturity involves prayer and witnessing.

Preparing to Lead

“The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible spoken of as birth. Again, it is compared to the germination of the good seed sown by the husbandman. In like manner those who are just converted to Christ are, ‘as new-born babes,’ to ‘grow up’ to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”

“Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace.”

Getting Started

A. Call attention to a healthy plant, and discuss the components needed to help it grow. Compare a healthy plant with an unhealthy plant, and discuss what components were lacking in the care of the healthy plant. If possible, have an avid gardener share an experience.

B. Explain to students that we never stay the same in our spiritual experience. We either go forward or backward. Just as any living plant is growing daily, so do we grow in our walk with the Lord. Pass out the activity sheet (see page 42), and allow students time to complete it.

Delving Into the Word

A. Show a seed. Then ask someone to read Matthew 13:3, 4. Ask what the seed represents. Allow students to guess, then direct them to verse 19, which explains that the seed represents the Word of God. Appoint someone to draw a seed at the bottom of the chalkboard. Explain that every seed has in itself a germinating principle. “In it the life of the plant is enfolded.”

Emphasize that “He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.”

Continue with the roots—Ephesians 3:17. Roots are associated with depth of character, faith, and love. Appoint someone to draw roots. Continue drawing upward each tree part as you compare the growth of a tree to the growth of our spiritual life. You may use the verses given below, or find your own.

The tree trunk grows toward the light, representing our daily walk with God—Proverbs 3:6, 11, 13, 18; branches—John 15:1–6; leaves—Psalm 1:3; fruit—

Materials

visuals relating to growth in nature, such as an apple seed and an apple; a healthy plant and an unhealthy plant; markers and flipchart or chalk and chalkboard; pencils; Bible concordances

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Apply this week’s lesson by asking students to make a list of activities they can omit from their schedule that will give them more room for Bible study and witnessing. Separate into prayer groups of twos and threes, and pray for power and purpose to honor their commitment.

B. Using the “Your Spiritual Growth Chart” from the Getting Started section, discuss what made the difference in the students’ growth or lack thereof. Depending on the size of your class, divide students into groups. Have one group look up Bible texts on the importance of Bible study with prayer. The second group should study the importance of witnessing. If you have enough students for a third group, ask them to find texts dealing with growing in grace. After 15 minutes, have them report their findings. Make sure the students understand that a balance of Bible study, prayer, and sharing their faith will enable them to grow to spiritual maturity. Use the following texts: Bible Study and Prayer—Psalm 119:11; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:19; Witnessing—Proverbs 11:30; Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:46, 47; 4:13; 4:33; Growing in Grace—Mark 4:28; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:14, 15; 2 Peter 1:5–10; 2 Peter 3:18.

Discussing the Ideas

1. What components make a relationship healthy?
2. How does a relationship go from a mere acquaintance to maturity?
3. Explain how the process of growing in Christ is like a plant or a tree.
4. Why is it impossible to form a solid, loving relationship with God without Bible study?
5. How does witnessing promote spiritual growth?
6. Define what it means to walk with God.
7. How do we become rooted and grounded in faith?
8. How do we keep our faith from stagnating?

Closing the Activity

Read this quote from The Great Controversy, page 519: “Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures will be overcome by his attacks. Therefore he invents every possible device to engross the mind.”

Apply this week’s lesson by asking students to make a list of activities they can omit from their schedule that will give them more room for Bible study and witnessing. Separate into prayer groups of twos and threes, and pray for power and purpose to honor their commitment.

Crystal Earnhardt, Adairsville, Georgia, U.S.A.

2. Ibid., p. 69.
4. Ibid.
Your Spiritual Growth Chart

Are you satisfied in your relationship with Christ? Reflect on your pattern of Spiritual Growth for the last five years, and compare that with what you’d like to be five years from now.

Are you having a GROWTH SPURT?

5 years from now

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Now

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

1 year ago

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5 years ago

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Key Words to describe Spiritual Growth:
Bible Study, Prayer, Faith, Witnessing, Love, Forgiveness, Steadfastness, Sound in Doctrine...
The Word of God Endures

Surveying the Source
Mic. 6:8; John 3:14–17; 10:10; Rom. 4:20, 21; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 4:6, 7; 2 Pet. 3:9.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Understand the importance of solid Bible-based Christian living.
► Explore ways in which to grow in the study of Scripture.
► Consider strategic planning for spiritual growth time with class members and self.

Preparing to Lead
Many people have questioned whether the Bible has been changed, if mistakes have crept in, or even if its message is relevant to us. First, God has promised that His Word is flawless (Ps. 12:6, 7); and if God can hold the universe together, surely He can preserve the Bible. Second, the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls proves that over nearly two thousand years, no changes took place in the manuscripts, revealing that God has indeed preserved His Word. We can be assured that God’s Word will stand the test of time, and that it is relevant no matter what the date (John 1:1).

Getting Started
A. Have the class sit in a circle. Have a scribe write on a flipchart the following heading: “The Bible Is . . . ” Then have the class members share their ending to this phrase.
B. Give every class member a small piece of paper and a pen. Have each of them write either their favorite Bible verse, story, or book on the paper. Then allow members to share their stories.

Delving Into the Word
A. Divide the class into groups to read and discuss the following passages and questions:
► John 3:14–17. In practical ways, how can I, like Moses, lift up Christ to people I live/study/work with?
► John 10:10. How can we measure a believer’s life in terms of living an “abundant life”?
► Psalm 12:6, 7. In light of God’s desire to see our characters transformed into His, how does this passage relate to areas in our lives where we need to be purified seven times over?
B. 2 Timothy 3:14–18. In general, people find it difficult to face constructive criticism. Yet God’s Word exposes and challenges every area of our lives. How can we search the Scriptures and resolve to accept God’s reprimands and high standard of living with a heart of service and humility?
B. Divide the class into a few groups, and have each group read Acts 17:10–15. In light of the witness of the Bereans, we are called to search and share scriptural truths with each other. Have groups prepare and share a three-to-four-minute wit-
ness of their faith in God and His Word as if they were presenting it to a close non-Christian friend.

Say: “God calls us to put all of our faith and hope in His Word, for it is the only way in which to commune with Him and by which He can transform us. Every believer should be prepared to give an answer for their belief in Jesus and His Word.” Read 2 Timothy 4:2.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. What do you enjoy most about reading the Bible?
2. What is difficult for you about making Bible reading a regular part of your day?
3. Why do you think the world considers Christ’s teachings irrelevant?
4. In what ways have you seen an increased interest in “spirituality” in your society?
5. Can you see yourself starting on a spiritual journey journal with an accountable trusted Christian friend this week? What would hold you back?
6. If you had 60 days left to live, what would you do differently in terms of your spiritual goals and journey?

**Closing the Activity**

Distribute copies of the reproducible activity (see page 43). Have a class member read the Ellen G. White quote from *Steps to Christ*. Then discuss ways to make more time for daily Bible study. Urge the class to check out the Web sites listed in the activity page. These are sites that offer a variety of daily Bible reading plans, including ones that can be downloaded to PDAs. Prepare to follow up every week and share stories on what God has revealed and done for members during the week as a result of their daily Bible study.

*John-Pierre Martinez, Strathfield, Australia*
The Benefits of Daily Bible Study

“God speaks to us in His word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men ‘subject to like passions as we are.’ (James 5:17). We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptation as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God; and, beholding, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a flame of holy emulation in our hearts and a desire to be like them in character—like them to walk with God.”—Steps to Christ, pp. 87, 88.

Check out the following Web sites to find a daily Bible reading plan that interests you. Keep this sheet where you will be reminded to study your Bible every day.


http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/readingplans/


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