

LEADER'S GUIDE



BIBLE BASICS 101



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MOPS International, Inc. ■ 2370 South Trenton Way ■ Denver CO 80231-3822 ■ 303.733.5353 ■ mops.org

Dear Leader:

Welcome to Bible Basics 101 for MOPS moms and leaders.

This study is designed for any woman who is curious about the Bible but may be intimidated by church, or has negative baggage from previous church experiences, or who can't remember what she learned in her Christian church during childhood. Some moms may have become active in the church but have "holes" in their Bible knowledge. Some come to MOPS from another faith or from no faith and have never opened a Bible before. Still others spent time running away from a Christian heritage and are now considering returning to it.

All of them need to be met where they are. Their questions are legitimate, their concerns real, and their misconceptions generated sometimes in the heat of difficult moments from their past.

But ... if they are willing to open God's word and be open-minded enough to consider that it might be the truth, that is a huge step. As they read the words of scripture and wrestle through what these words might mean, God Himself will meet them and the Holy Spirit will do the work. Each woman will have her own journey. Some will get it right away. For others, it may take months or years to process this idea that her sins are forgiven and she can come to Him and He will walk beside her from here on.

Your job is to be faithful to gently speak the truth in love, to show them what the book says, to calmly with grace answer their questions, to love them in the midst of those questions and struggles, and to pray for their hearts to experience Him while their minds wrestle with the questions that are barriers to their faith. Trust the Bible to speak its own truth.

You should take some time to skim the entirety of the leaders notes before you offer the study so you have a sense of where we are heading and what is covered/not covered in these eight weeks. These teaching notes are extensive. Use them as much as needed to extend your own knowledge base.

Each of you will do it differently and teach from your own strength. If you get stuck, seek counsel from your MOPS resources, from your own pastoral staff and from the wise women in your congregation. You know who they are.

May Christ's riches blessings be yours as you spend this time opening God's word to those who have never understood it before, and may the time you invest be multiplied back to you in ways you can't imagine.

In His Service,
Cathy Peshorn and the MOPS Team

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WEEK ONE

- What is the Bible?
 - What does it say about God?
-

LEADER PREP

Go through the lesson on your own to become comfortable with the key points and questions that they generate and scriptures to use.

WELCOME

Open with introductions: name, kids/ages, how long in city, favorite dessert. Name tags are a good idea for the first two weeks.

Be sure all moms have their kids settled and that they know what time we will end, and what the protocol is from childcare if they are needed by their child.

Have a Bible available for every person in the group. Do not assume they will bring one.

PURPOSE OF THIS GROUP

To start at the very, very, very beginning of understanding the Bible and some of the basic claims of Christianity, to understand both better. We are going to focus on the Bible and look at what it is, how it is put together and some of the basic ideas surrounding its authenticity. For this class, we are going to assume that ALL of us in this room are starting from scratch on what we know about Jesus and Christianity and the Bible and we are looking at it with fresh eyes and minds. So we ALL have ideas and questions, but not necessarily the answers yet. We are here to be open-minded about what we might discover together.

What this is not: This is not a “join the church” class, a “stump the band” class of trick questions or putting you on the spot, or a “here’s how you should vote in the next election” class. None of that will happen in any of our sessions or afterwards. So you can put any of those fears to rest.

We will meet for eight weeks starting today, and our last day to meet will be _____.

(Clarify starting time and note if there are any calendar breaks or weeks you are not meeting, let them know that too.)

CLASS DISCUSSION

TODAY'S TOPIC: WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

How is it the same/different than other books? Why are there so many different kinds?

The Bible is actually a collection of documents all put together into one book, like a set of short stories. There are history sections, letter sections, poetry and song lyrics sections, future predictions sections, and narrative first-person-accounts.

What determined whether or not a document is included in this collection?

Old Testament was generally accepted by the early Jewish culture as coming from God. So it was established already as a divine group of documents.

New Testament criteria was established after several hundred years, which was several generations, to sort through the new amount of stuff written about that era.

- Was it authored by someone who knew Jesus during His ministry?
- Was it recognized by the early church as authentic?
- Was it consistent with the teaching of the early church and Jesus Himself?

Decision made in 397 by a council to confirm the current 66 books as divinely inspired.
Canon = inspired by God and having His authority

As the Bible has been translated, all translators have gone back to the original documents and brought fresh eyes to the new version, so all versions are revised based on the original, not a revision of a revision. Rather a new knowledge updating the assumptions about the original language and/or a new reach into a particular cultural bent (such as the Good News Bible trying to reach those with limited literacy. Its mission was purposefully less precise in order to be more far-reaching. A "translation" is word-for-word. A "paraphrase" just summarizes ideas with less precise language.)
History of some of the English translations of the Bible:

- 1611..... **King James Version (KJV)** Authorized by King James of England
- 1880s..... **Revised Standard Version (RSV)** Written to remove obsolete words and phrases found in the KJV and correct mistranslations.
- 1970 **New American Standard (NASB)**
- 1971..... **Living Bible (LV)** The paraphrase Bible was helpful for capturing overall meaning and was "easy to read" with its conversational style of writing. Is not useful or accurate for individual word study.
- 1976..... **Good News Bible** Written for people with limited English proficiency.
- 1973, 1978 **New International Version (NSV)** Compiled by 100+ scholars from around the world put together this translation.
- 1982..... **New King James Version (NKJV)** Retains much of the phraseology from 1611 minus the archaic and obsolete language.
- 1993..... **The Message (MSG)** A newer paraphrase using conversational tone and language. Sometimes only the New Testament and the poetry books are included.

Use your resources at church or the internet to find several versions to bring to class. Find a verse to compare in several versions.

WHAT DOES THIS COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT GOD?

And why should we believe it to be true? Let's start by looking at some of what it says this week, and we will ask questions like "Is it verifiable?" and "Is it true?" in the coming weeks.

Also, we are going to start with the premise that there IS a God. We will touch on the evidence for a God in other sessions. And I am glad to set up a time to have that conversation with you one-on-one right away if that is important to you to explore before we meet again as a group.

LEARN TO LOOK UP A VERSE

[In these next few weeks we will be looking up Bible verses, in a group and then on our own at home. It's okay if you haven't done this before — it's easy.]

Hand out Bibles to everyone. If anyone has brought their own, give them the choice of using the one they brought (which might be their own or might be borrowed) or the one you are supplying.

The first word is the name of the book. It can be found in the table of contents in your Bible and we have listed them below for easy access.

- The first number is the chapter # (large print in the Bible)
- The second number is the verse # (small print in the Bible)

Old Testament is the front 2/3 of the Bible.

New Testament is the back 1/3 of the Bible.

The books are arranged by genre, by type. This is why they are not in alphabetical order. Additionally, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek, so they were never meant to be in alphabetical order because there was no "order" until the canon was created. They are also not in chronological order.

[Make a copy of this table of contents to hand out for people to keep in their Bibles as a bookmark]

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
I Samuel/II Samuel
I Kings/ II Kings
I Chronicles/II Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
I Corinthians/II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
I Thessalonians/II Thessalonians
I Timothy/II Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
I Peter/II Peter
I John/II John/III John
Jude
Revelation

So, for example, if we were asked to look up ...

Genesis 1:1, we would look at the above list, find Genesis, see that it is at the beginning of the Old Testament, and we would turn to the front of the front. (Have everyone turn pages of the text in front of them along with you. Do this leisurely so that everyone has time to look around the text as they find it. Generally, don't ask them to read aloud yet but if someone jumps in, that's fine.)

Then we might want to find Proverbs 1:8 ... (read this aloud)

Or John 14:27 (read this one too)

So, let's practice finding verses while we get back to the question ...

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GOD?

(Look up these seven verses together. Guide the class to find these sections and you read yours. Ask if anyone else wants to read with slightly different vocabulary/version. Ask for a short answer to the above question at each passage. Remember, they will be slow to find these passages since they are unfamiliar with the book order.)

1. Genesis 1:1 (In the beginning ...) God started it.
2. Psalms 19:1-6 (The heavens declare ...) nature gives evidence of a creator.
3. Psalms 139:1-6 (Lord, you know me ...)
4. Mark 1:9-11 (This is my beloved Son ...") Note that this event was in a public place with a crowd around, not in a private place with no witnesses. Note also that your group may not agree with the idea that Jesus is God's son, but our job is to simply point out what the Bible says and doesn't say. We are not asking them to agree with it but to investigate it in its entirety and to be open-minded about that information.
5. Romans 1:20 (describes God as having eternal power and a holy/perfect nature, which are two bedrocks of our understanding about God. These two things are believed by many religions and reinforced all through the Bible). Note that just because something is invisible doesn't make it untrue. Example: cell phone signals ... can't be seen but we know they are there because the phones work.
6. Romans 8:38-39 (God is love ...)
7. I John 1:5 (God is light ...)

SUMMARY

Bible says God is _____ (ask them to offer ideas about what they just read. If they don't want to answer, move ahead.)

- Is Creator
- Is An eternal power
- Is Divine/Holy
- Is Sender of Jesus
- Loves us
- Is Light
- Knows us each individually

APPLICATION STATEMENT

The Bible can give us the guidance we need as moms, such as the Proverbs verse gives us a reminder that our children are to obey us, and the John verse reassures us that Jesus can give us peace when our hearts are afraid. He can help us be brave.

Close by walking them through the follow up questions that are next in their book, as well as the scripture look-ups for the week.

Before you dismiss, offer a short prayer for the group and for understanding as we explore this book together.

Out of class work for group:

FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION

What place did the Bible hold in your home as you were growing up? _____

What are you most curious about in regard to the Bible? _____

What makes the Bible feel hard to get into? Its length? Its age? Its connection with God? Other? _____

Did anything in this week's teaching surprise you? _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no "right" answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

PSALMS 25:1-10 (OLD TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7 (OLD TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

II TIMOTHY 3:16 (NEW TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

What are the four things that these written scriptures are designed to do? _____

What reason does it give for me to believe what the Bible says? _____

I CORINTHIANS 2:1-5 (NEW TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

Do you view God as good or bad or neutral? What factors from your life shape that view? _____

What are some of your questions about God? _____

WEEK TWO

- How do I find my way around the Bible?
-

LEADER PREP

Go through the lesson on your own to become comfortable with the key points and questions that they generate and scriptures to use.

WELCOME EVERYONE BACK

Try to start on time even if everyone not there. This encourages promptness the next time. Have everyone re-introduce themselves with just their names and where they were born, City/State. If you want to do name tags again you can.

Review Follow Up Questions in this workbook from last week's discussion. Take no more than 10 min for this.

Review Scripture readings. Was there anything that stood out? Was it hard? Easy? Questions that came from it? (Don't push for participation here. If no one shares, then keep going. They will share more as the weeks go on.) Take up to 20 minutes.

CLASS DISCUSSION

TODAY'S TOPIC: FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THE BIBLE

Have everyone turn the pages of their Bibles as you walk through it so that they get a sense of length and position within the book. The more they open and turn pages, the more comfortable they get. Encourage them to put sticky notes/dividers on the beginning of each book if they want to, or they can buy the tabs at a Bible bookstore.

Is the Bible really God's word?

The goal for today is to turn the pages of the whole book. Start with Genesis. Have them turn through the pages with you as you tell them what kind of information/some of the stories that are in that book of the Bible. As you go, you will want to group books together in your explanation. Feel free to spend more time on your favorites! We suggest grouping the prophets together and not spending much time on them in this setting. Watch your time so that you get to the New Testament books and give them focus as well.

By the end of class, each mom should have flipped through the entire Bible, stopping/starting and reading/skimming as you teach and guide them through. She should have a grasp of the styles of writing and identity of writers in both Old and New Testaments, as well as the types of content in both.

EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER

There is a single theme woven throughout individual pieces: God interacting with humanity and humanity's response to Him. In contrast, if we took this many authors over this time frame who didn't know each other, and asked them to write about their experience with one topic in life, they are not likely to say the same thing. But if we took this many people who all knew the same person, and asked them all to write about that one person, the collection would give us a picture of that person. If you all described your high school principal, you would get different answers ... unless you all had the same principal. Then the answers would create a 3D picture of one person.

- Evidence to consider: Scripture claims to be from God. Find and read 2 Tim 3:16-17.
- Evidence to consider: Jesus appeared to view OT scripture as God's word.
Find/Read John 10:31-38, Luke 4:16-21.
- Evidence to consider: Fulfilled prophecy. Deuteronomy 18:21-22

SUMMARY

- Bible is a collection with two main divisions
- Variety of literary styles and multiple authors
- Evidence for God's influence in directing the message is in
 - United Theme
 - Jesus' attitude toward it
 - Internal claims
 - Fulfilled prophecy
 - Historical details and accuracy

APPLICATION STATEMENT

Different parts of the Bible meet our needs on different days. As we learn where they are, we can gain their comfort. James 1:5 says "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

Close with prayer. Ask for any specific prayer concerns but do not ask others to pray yet.

Out of class work for group:

FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION

What book or books of the Bible particularly interest you? _____

What new thing did you learn about the Bible in this discussion? _____

Did anything surprise you? Is there anything you want to learn more about? _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no “right” answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

MICAH 5:2 (OLD TESTAMENT) WITH LUKE 2:4-7 (NEW TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage set seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

ISAIAH 55:6-12 (OLD TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

MATTHEW 26:52-56 (NEW TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

WEEK THREE

- Looking at the backstory ...
 - Are these documents reliable?
 - How do I know this is real and not a fake?
-

LEADER PREP

Go through the lesson on your own to become comfortable with the key points and questions that they generate and scriptures to use.

WELCOME

Greet everyone and start on time.

Review Follow-up Up Questions. (No more than 10 minutes)

Review Scripture readings. (20 minutes) Make notes of any questions that you can't answer and take time this week to find answers for them through your resources, pastor, MOPS Mentor, etc.

CLASS DISCUSSION

TODAY'S TOPIC: ARE THE BIBLE DOCUMENTS RELIABLE?

The detail of copies and new copies.

Old Testament scribes were very, very careful.

Archeological discoveries of the early 19th century unearthed items and places with Biblical references.

25,000 archeology sites show connection with Biblical times. Copies of lists of events and people dating back to almost 2000 B.C. have been uncovered in a variety of places in the Middle East. A reference to the "Third Dynasty after the Flood" is found in historical documents. This gives more credence to Biblical events. While there are still mysteries to be solved, to date no historical statement in the Bible has been refuted by archeological evidence.

The Dead Sea Scrolls.

Found in 1947, these confirmed the consistency of Old Testament writings with the writings before it. All copies found everywhere are the same. This find is 1,000 years older than all previous finds. Still, manuscripts are the same. Not made up. Not altered.

New Testament copies abundant.

New Testament all written during the lifetimes of the people involved.

All contemporaries of Jesus. Public knowledge, publicly read, so all would know if the letters were true or false. Last one written about A.D. 90 as these men realized that they might die before Jesus returned and they needed to be sure all they knew was written down.

Historical details in New Testament are consistent with non-religious historical data.

Really no dispute at this point that the writings are authentic from the people/places they claim.

READ THESE HISTORICAL REFERENCES TOGETHER (20 MINUTES)

I Chronicles 1-10. Have everyone go to these pages and flip through them, noting the genealogies, the details, the historical records “chronicles” of the Jewish nation. These details give it authority.

Daniel 1:1-2, Daniel 2:1, Daniel 8:1; Read and notice the little details about who was king and when during his reign the following account happened.

Luke 2:1-1-5 Read and notice details.

This historical accuracy is in contrast with many texts referenced by other religions. They don't have the same 3D-approach or verifiability.

CLOSING DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES)

Discuss ... Why does it matter if the Bible is accurate?

If it's a lie, it isn't worth following. If it is true, then it IS worth following.

If it's a lie, then it has no authority over us, even if we like some of the ideas.

If it's true, then it DOES have authority over us, even if we don't like some of the ideas.

Discuss ... Why does it matter if Bible is from God?

If it is from Him, then it carries His authority for what is best for us, even when we don't like it or it is hard. (It is hard to love some neighbors, etc)

There are things in it that are in direct contrast from other religious teaching. We need to know what is from God and what is from man.

There are things in it that morph into tradition within the church. We need to know what is in the Bible and what is simply tradition. (Women wearing fancy hats, taking communion, going to church on Sunday morning vs another time.)

Need to be able to discern cultural context clues to apply to our culture. (getting married vs living together)

Discuss ... What is faith? What is the role of faith in other parts of our lives?

Eating at a restaurant

Sitting in a chair

What is important in faith is the object of our faith, not the amount of faith we have.

APPLICATION

We need to know that believing this book is a rational thing to do. It is not just a step of faith, but a REASONED CONCLUSION based on research and intellect, not emotion and second hand information. Even though there are parts that we might not yet understand, it is rational when read in context. Galatians 6:9 says “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Seeing what the Bible is about, is “doing good” for our families. Let's stick with it for a few more weeks and see where it takes us.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Ask for any specific prayer concerns but do not ask others to pray yet.

OUT OF CLASS WORK FOR GROUP

FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION

What earns your trust to have faith in something? Someone? _____

What confirmation of the authenticity of the Bible is important to you? _____

What new thing did you learn about the Bible in this discussion? _____

Did anything surprise you? Is there anything you want to learn more about? _____

Follow up questions to ask: _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no “right” answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

GENESIS 3 (OLD TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

JOHN 1:17-18 (NEW TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

PSALMS 37:1-8 (OLD TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

LUKE 2:8-20 (NEW TESTAMENT)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

WEEK FOUR

■ Who was Jesus?

LEADER PREP

Go through the lesson on your own to become comfortable with the key points and questions that they generate and scriptures to use.

WELCOME

Review follow up questions from last week's discussion. (10 minutes)

Review only the first two scripture "homework" passages completed during the week. (10 minutes. We are keeping this discussion shorter today, because today's class time is a long lesson.)

CLASS DISCUSSION: TODAY'S TOPIC: WHO IS JESUS?

Outside of the Bible we know:

- The calendar was changed to align with His birth. Thus we live in the year 2014 A.D.
- Great works have been done in His name, including art, music, deeds, explorations.
- Some harm has also been done in His name.
- Much has been written about Him! To the point there is agreement that He lived in the Middle East, was indeed a historical figure, was Jewish by heritage, was probably a carpenter by trade. Not dealing with a "pretend person" that never really existed, but like Confucius and Buddha, Jesus was indeed a real person.

We have seen in Bible passages already read, that He:

- was claimed by God to be God's son
- was born in Bethlehem
- fit the description in prophecy
- claimed to the Jews to fulfill prophecy

What else are we told in the Bible? (Have the class look up each verse and read)

- Matthew 7:28-29 — Taught with authority
- Mark 14:60-64 — High priest asking Are You the Christ?
- Mark 2:5-12 — Healing of paralytic brought down through roof
- John 10:22-30 — I told you who I am and you do not believe me.

In all these moments (and there are many others), He taught that He was the Son of God and that He and the Father God were One Being.

To take this seriously, we have to conclude that He was one of the following:

- 1. Crazy = Mentally ill.
- 2. Lying = Taking people for a ride just to gain fame and a following.
- 3. A Legend = Wild stories based on a historical person.
- 4. Speaking the Truth = Truly God on earth.

So what evidence is there that He was mentally ill or lying?

- Can you think of any historical info that would support this?
- Calendar reference to Him and His birth? Would that have happened if He were considered crazy?
- How did He interact with people? What were His actions like?
- Was His teaching rational?

Let's look at some scriptural scenarios and see. We will read these just like any other biography of any other historical figure.

LOOK UP AND READ

(You may want to assign these around the table to save time, depending on the dynamics of your group. It will be faster to have seven different people each look up one verse and read it aloud, but if you feel your group needs the exposure of doing more looking up, then have everyone look it all up.)

- John 8:1-12
- John 9:1-12
- Luke 19:1-9
- Luke 6:27-36
- Mark 3:1-6
- Mark 9:14-27
- Matthew 8:5-13
- Matthew 8:23-27

What do you observe about Him?

What about His character? His personality? His motivation? His interaction with people? His interaction with natural forces/nature?

- His moral character coincided with what He taught. No one was able to criticize Him as ever having erred. Even His enemies could not name what He had done wrong.
- He was compassionate toward everyone, regardless of their position in society or current belief in Him or not. He gave the centurion's servant help when the centurion believed. He gave people a chance right where they were.
- His personality was all the good things we know—(Name character qualities here ... patient, strong, kind, giving, understanding, having leadership, loving others, etc.)
- He demonstrated power over natural forces that were not human, but God-like. Miracles such as feeding 5,000 people with limited food, turning water to wine,
- He demonstrated power over sickness and disease.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Did He act like He was mentally ill or 2. lying? 3. Is there enough evidence to think He was just a legend? Or that these accounts are simply legend written down? 4. Could He have been telling the truth?

APPLICATION

Life has difficult moments, when we question God's design and control and if He is even paying attention. Reminding ourselves of Jesus' life on earth and His attributes gives us the courage to trust His teaching when it is hard.

SUMMARY

Next week — More of what He taught plus the resurrection.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Ask for any specific prayer concerns but do not ask others to pray yet.

**OUT OF CLASS WORK FOR GROUP:
FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION**

Which of Jesus teachings make sense to you so far? _____

Which ones are hard to understand? Or hard for you to do? _____

What conclusions are you coming to about Him at this point? _____

How does that change or confirm where you are on your spiritual journey? _____

Other follow up questions you want to discuss: _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no “right” answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

MATHEW 16:13-20 (WHO DO PEOPLE SAY I AM)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

JOHN 5:37-47 (JESUS TEACHING ABOUT THE FATHER SENDING HIM)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

JOHN 11:1-48 (LAZARUS)

(read over two days)

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

WEEK FIVE

■ What did Jesus teach?

LEADER PREP

Go through the lesson on your own to become comfortable with the key points and questions that they generate and scriptures to use.

WELCOME

Make time to be sure the women are connecting with each other, getting to know one another's children, sharing mothering stories. As you notice commonalities, point those things out and encourage them to get better acquainted (i.e. You both have three year olds, you should hit Chick-Fil-A on the way home and let them play some more while you visit, or meet at a park tomorrow.)

REVIEW OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

REVIEW OF SCRIPTURE READINGS

CLASS DISCUSSION

TODAY'S TOPIC:

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH? HOW DID THE RESURRECTION HAPPEN?

GOD LOVES THE WORLD!

And Spiritual birth — John 3:16

Turn to this passage and read aloud together the entire scenario from John 3:1-21

TEACHING HIGHLIGHTS

The role of Nicodemus, the concept of natural birth (born of water) and of spiritual birth, the concept of God being a loving God, the concept of God not condemning us via Christ but saving us via Christ.

This passage may be hard reading for some. It may be truth they have not heard before or don't want to believe. Give them time and space to absorb it. Pray for tender hearts. Be gentle with them as they sort it out. Acknowledge that this is a different message than "be good and all will be well." The problem with "be good" is "How good is good enough?" and how do we know? Christ teaches that none of us are as good as God so therefore we can't be in God's presence. But He has fixed that by sending Christ, because in Christ we ARE good enough. He has made us good enough by taking our consequence. Have them hang on to the "rest of the story" because the power of the Holy Spirit is important! This passage here tells us that Christ sets us free from striving and presents us to God. The Holy Spirit then empowers us to live life in ongoing freedom through His help, which we will discuss next week.

You may get a question about baptism from verse 5. Try not to get bogged down in that. Short answer, the tradition of baptism stems from Christ's baptism by John and various churches around the world celebrate it in different forms. You can reference Matthew 28:19 that baptism was accepted by the early church as a symbol of belief and discipleship, not a required step for entrance into heaven.

Handle questions. Feel free to say "I don't know but will find out," and then do so before next week.

ROMANS 3:23-24 AND 5:8-9

What are the two key messages here?

- All have sinned (erred, are imperfect)
- God provided Jesus as the intervention for that

Give context to the next three passages. Jesus is in the Upper Room with His disciples, preparing to be arrested. But they don't know that. He washes their feet, and then teaches these things:

READ JOHN 13:33-38

What are the two key messages here?

- I am leaving you
- Love one another

READ JOHN 14:1-6

What are the three key messages here?

- I am preparing a place for you
- Belief in God becomes belief in Jesus
- I (Jesus) am the only way to God (We will see later that this is a stumbling point to those who say all religions go to God. Jesus said otherwise.)

TEACHING HIGHLIGHT

Again, this is going to rub against some preconceived ideas. If you have those in class that are offended, give them grace, acknowledge that this is hard teaching to process at first, ask them to step back and think about it and to hang with you as you keep going to the "rest of the story."

READ JOHN 16:25-33

What are the key messages here?

- Jesus answering questions plainly
- God loves us
- God sent Jesus
- Disciples will be scattered
- Jesus will provide peace better than world's stress
- Jesus has overcome the world's stress

Summarize what happens next: Jesus is arrested, taken before the local governor, swapped out for a local prisoner, condemned for crucifixion, beaten, nailed to a cross next to two prisoners to die. Pick up the story in John 19.

READ JOHN 19:33 - JOHN 20:21

Take turns and have everyone read 10 verses or so.

Discuss as needed.

Return to historical analysis from last week:

WHAT INDICATIONS DO WE HAVE THAT THE RECORD ABOUT HIM WAS NOT FABRICATED OR BASED IN LEGEND?

(Primarily that the written record was composed within the lifetimes of those who witnessed His life. Both supporters and enemies concluded that He was without error in His life. There were hundreds of people who knew who He was, who watched Him during three years of teaching, who would have contradicted the New Testament writings as soon as they were circulated if they were not true.)

WHAT EVIDENCES DO WE HAVE THAT HE WAS INDEED GOD'S SON?

(Most obvious indicator is the resurrection itself. The quality of His life as lived in front of people and recorded, not a private person with private experiences that claim spiritual meaning. His changing of lives when He encountered individual people –Lazarus, the Centurion, the woman at the well, us!!! We will look at resurrection evidence and Paul's conversion next week.)

Remember, not everyone is going to believe this or agree with it. But God will work in their hearts away from class time too. We are inviting them to see what the Bible says.

APPLICATION

Jesus taught that He was the answer to the universal problem of discord on earth. Romans 3:23 says "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 5:8 says "But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This is the question that all religions are trying to answer ... how can mankind overcome our tendency to do the wrong thing? How can we overcome evil? And Jesus says ... You can't. But I can and did when I died on the cross. And since I am resurrected, when you follow Me, you can get through life with joy in the midst of pain.

TO CHOOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS MEANS TO

- Acknowledge/agree that I am imperfect, flawed.
- Believe that He is God's Son who came to earth.
- Claim His death and resurrection on my behalf as total payment for my imperfections.
- Decide to follow Him, to have His active presence in my life.

You can make this choice with a simple prayer, in your own words, at any time.

Remember that reading the Bible is a tool for understanding and instruction and wisdom, not a mandate or ritual that gains us favor with God. It's like rereading the last letter that your grandmother wrote you when you needed her advice about life. You reread it because you know she loved you and you trust her words to you.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Ask for any specific prayer concerns but do not ask others to pray yet. Pray especially for clarity for those who are thinking about deciding to follow Jesus, that they may be assured of His love for them and presence with them.

Make note of any theological questions that have come up that you need to research. Be available to talk with anyone who has additional questions today.

**OUT OF CLASS WORK FOR GROUP:
FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION**

Which of Jesus' teachings had you heard about before? Did you learn anything new? _____

Which of His teachings reviewed today stuck with you the most? Why did this one stand out? _____

What conclusion are you drawing about Jesus at this point? Do you have any interest in becoming His follower?
What hesitations do you have about that? _____

Other questions for the group leader: _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no "right" answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

MATTHEW 27:1-31

The summary of this passage is: _____

Which details are most interesting to you? Most surprising? Most painful? _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

Before I read this, I didn't realize: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

MATTHEW 27:32-66

The summary of this passage is: _____

Which details are most interesting to you? Most surprising? Most painful? _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

Before I read this, I didn't realize: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

MATTHEW 28:1-10

The summary of this passage is: _____

Which details are most interesting to you? Most surprising? Most painful? _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

Before I read this, I didn't realize: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

MATTHEW 28:11-20

The summary of this passage is: _____

Which details are most interesting to you? Most surprising? Most painful? _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

Before I read this, I didn't realize: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

WEEK SIX

■ Was the resurrection real?

LEADER PREP

Go through the lesson on your own to become comfortable with the key points and questions that they generate and scriptures to use.

WELCOME

REVIEW QUESTIONS

These may take longer than usual.

Review Scripture readings and discuss: These may also take longer than usual. This is the passage from Matthew about the last 24 hours of Jesus' life and the resurrection, so it is an easy transition into today's conversation.

CLASS DISCUSSION

TODAY'S TOPIC: WAS THE RESURRECTION REAL?

READ I CORINTHIANS 15:3-14

Explain that this was written by Paul shortly after Jesus' death and that it voiced a legitimate question being asked then and now. The letters of Paul were written within 25 years of Jesus death and probably before the gospels.

EVIDENCE THAT THE RESURRECTION WAS REAL

1. The existence of the Christian church, dating to A.D.32. The resurrection was the crystallizing event that pulled people together to speak of Jesus and tell others about Him and their experience with Him.
2. The shift of the day of worship from the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday to Sunday at the first of the week. The first Christians were Jews, so this would have been a big deal to change this worship day.
3. The writings of the New Testament, circulated within a short time after the resurrection, when those who witnessed it (followers and non-followers of Jesus) were still alive and present to dispute the accounting of events.
4. The empty tomb. This is a big deal. The tomb was empty. All the theories on how that could happen *without a resurrection* fall short.
 - If the soldiers or Jewish leaders had stolen the body, they would have simply produced it when the disciples claimed Jesus was risen and that would have solved it.
 - If the disciples had stolen the body in spite of the tomb being heavily guarded, they would have had no ministry to further, no purpose in promoting a continued following of Jesus, and they would not have died as martyrs. Take note that many people will die for something they believe is true, but no one will die for something they KNOW is a lie. The fact that they DID preach Jesus as alive, and DID die as martyrs means SOMETHING happened.
5. The appearances of Jesus after His resurrection in multiple settings to multiple people, not in secret. Ten distinct times/places recorded.

LUKE 24:36-43

6. The changed lives of the disciples themselves, from frightened followers into bold men embarking on a mission. The changed lives of people you know, who have experienced forgiveness and power to deal with the broken pieces of life because of Jesus in their lives.

READ ACTS 2:29-39 AND ACTS 4:13-20

DISCUSS QUESTIONS THAT HAVE COME UP SO FAR

APPLICATION

Jesus as a resurrected Lord who is our advocate with God is a different approach than other belief systems. Following Jesus isn't about one more homage to pay, but about having Him to lean on when we are exhausted and not sure what to do about squabbling siblings. Romans 12 tells us, "as much as it depends on you, be at peace with one another," and "be kind to one another." This is the kind of practical teaching that we moms with preschoolers need! If He is resurrected, He is here for us to lean on in our difficult moments.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Ask for any specific prayer concerns but do not ask others to pray yet.

**OUT OF CLASS WORK FOR GROUP:
FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION**

What is your biggest question about the authenticity of the resurrection? _____

How does that impact what you believe about Jesus at this point? _____

What next steps do you want to take in your spiritual journey? _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no "right" answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

JOHN 8:1-12

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

JOHN 15:1-8

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

JOHN 15:9-17

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

JOHN 15:18-25

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

**GOING DEEPER (OPTIONAL READING)
READ MARK 15-16**

WEEK SEVEN

- What's the deal with the Holy Spirit?
-

LEADER PREP

Review the notes below and ask for help from a mentor mom or pastor if you need more understanding yourself before teaching this.

WELCOME

Plan a final get-together if you want to do that before you end next week. Keep connecting them to each other.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

These may take longer today.

REVIEW SCRIPTURE READING

These may take longer today than on some other weeks.

CLASS DISCUSSION:

TODAY'S TOPIC: WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

READ

- John 14:25-27
- John 15:26-27
- John 16:12-18
- Acts 1:1-11
- Acts 2:1-8
- Acts 10:34-48
- Romans 8:1-4
- I Corinthians 2:12-16

Galatians 5:16-26

- Make note here of verse 21, that “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” This is a reference to those specific actions being known as things that dishonor God, therefore by breaking “the law” those things would disqualify most of us from receiving God’s blessing if we were still under the law. In contrast, the following verses point out that when we receive the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ, He works in us the following fruits which are not our natural behaviors but reflect His influence and our new life in Him. These behaviors don’t “earn” us His favor but reflect His presence in our life and confirm that we are no longer under the law of the old way as we stand before God.

I Corinthians 5:17-21 (If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature ...)

SUMMARY

- Jesus told the disciples ahead of time, there would be a helper.
- Jesus left the Spirit as a helper and guide to us.
- He is active and present today. (Note: Concept of the Trinity is God in three forms, just like H₂O can be ice, water, steam. Not three gods as some other religions translate Christianity, but one holy God in three personifications. This has the potential to derail conversation but can also be good, so check your watch and limit the time taken on this discussion if it comes up so that you can move on to the rest of lesson.)
- He produces in us the outcome of His presence, just like water being wrung out of a sponge.
- We can lean on Him, talk to Him, stop and ask for His influence in a situation.
- He is invisible but present (just like the wind, sonogram waves)

PRAYER

Prayer is a conversation between you and God. Jesus taught that we can talk to God the Father directly, and that the Holy Spirit gives us leading when we don't know what to say.

Read Matthew 6:6-15 (Lord's prayer)
Also Romans 8:26-27 (Spirit leads us)

Teach a prayer acronym that you are familiar with as a framework for becoming comfortable with prayer, such as

ACTS

Adoration..... Telling God that we recognize His holiness
Confession..... Telling God where we have erred
Thanksgiving..... Thanking God for His forgiveness
Supplication..... Asking God to intervene for us

This can be a useful tool for getting past the "How do I start praying? What do I say?" nervousness. Encourage the women in your group to speak to Jesus as they would speak to a trusted friend.

Talk about times to pray, such as when it works for you as a regular set aside time. Brainstorm other times that might work for an exhausted mom of preschoolers.

APPLICATION

The idea of the Holy Spirit is one of the coolest aspects of daily living of the Christian life, because it means we are not alone. We have a guide to direct our thoughts and decisions, and the Bible functions as a tool to verify that guidance against our emotions because the Spirit will not lead us to actions that oppose the teaching in the Bible. When we don't know what to do, when we feel desperately alone or afraid, we can find direction and comfort in the Spirit.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Ask for any specific prayer concerns. Still be guarded about asking anyone else to pray. If someone volunteers, that's fine, but assume for this entire eight weeks that no one will be comfortable with that step.

**OUT OF CLASS WORK FOR GROUP:
FOLLOW UP FROM GROUP DISCUSSION**

What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit? _____

What thing in your life are you fighting with that you need the Spirit to help you with? (you will not be asked to share this with the group) _____

What do you think about the idea that there are many forms of spirituality and that they might not be from the same source or God? _____

What is your next step in becoming comfortable with praying? When in your day is the best time to do this?

What other questions has this discussion prompted in your mind? _____

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Spend a few minutes a day reading through the passages below, ideally one passage each day. Record your thoughts in the spaces following. There is no “right” answer. Be honest in your response and include questions, ideas, confusions and understandings, however they might flow out.

I CORINTHIANS 13:1-13

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

I CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

I CORINTHIANS 12:12-22

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

II TIMOTHY 1:3-7

The message of this passage seems to be: _____

This passage tells me the following about God/Jesus: _____

This relates to my life in the following way: _____

**GOING DEEPER
READ ACTS 13**

What else is important to you right now in your spiritual journey? _____

WEEK EIGHT

- Paul's conversion and
 - How does the Bible affect my life?
-

LEADER PREP:

This is your last meeting together. Encourage moms to exchange contact information with new friends they have made in class. Also save some time to have women complete the evaluation form about the class before you depart today.

Spend time tackling the specific subtopics that your group came upon during the eight weeks that you think are worth going back to. This might be adding clarity to the role of baptism or communion, or other questions that were raised. Bounce your teaching preparation for this off of another mature believer prior to teaching this material to catch pieces of information that might be obvious to you but not to someone else.

Avoid controversial cultural topics that are going to be divisive. If these topics come up anyway, stick to finding specific verses in scripture that address these and seek out the backing of your MOPS leadership to handle difficult topics. MOPS has a statement of faith and values that might be helpful to you in addressing some of these. There is no doubt that scripture is clear on some issues and vague on others. And clarity doesn't always mean easy-to-do. We have to trust that where there is specific instruction there are specific reasons behind it.

If your group has become open with each other, you can also celebrate your last time together with a meal and/or with a reflection time at the end, asking each woman to share one or two things she is taking away from the class. Plan your time for this inclusion.

WELCOME

REVIEW OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

REVIEW OF SCRIPTURE READINGS

CLASS DISCUSSION

TODAY'S TOPIC:

PAUL'S CONVERSION AND HOW DOES THE BIBLE AFFECT MY LIFE?

Who was Paul?

- Read Acts 7:57-Acts 8:3 (Background on Paul)
- Then Acts 9:1-22 (Paul's conversion. Take turns reading this, every 10 verses or so)
- Then Acts 13:9 (Paul describes himself)

Paul was about the same age as Jesus, a responsible Jew, defending his faith from these new trouble-makers, just as we would defend something we were/are invested in from the latest fad that opposes it. If there was anyone who could poke holes in this new fad of Christianity, it was he. He was "top of the class" in all the Jewish traditions and heading toward becoming a rabbi. He upheld all of the laws. He was outspoken and strong in personality. Yet he had a dramatic conversion. He probably would not have believed anyone else but the Lord Himself. Sometimes the more stubborn of us have to encounter the Lord in a dramatic way. Others of us are more likely to believe the testimony of a friend and enter our new faith in a more subtle way, embracing the teaching and belief system before we have an encounter with Jesus ourselves.

- Read I Corinthians 15:1-11 (Paul describes crux of message and his role in the church)

HOW DOES THE BIBLE AFFECT MY LIFE?

Share BRIEFLY how the Bible impacts your life, the guidance you gain from reading it, the comfort. Do not give your full spiritual journey here, just pick one or two examples of when your Bible reading was relevant to you recently.

If you have reason to believe that others are also actively reading the Bible now and would be comfortable sharing what it has meant, you can open it to them to share as well.

Depending on your group, take about 10 minutes to have each woman share what she has gained from the time together if she wants to. Pose a question such as “What comes to mind as the overall thing you have learned or gained from our time together?” or, “If someone asks you next week why you kept coming to this class, what would you say?”

(Sometimes people get stuck with the “name one thing” question, so if that stalls them, amend the question to be 2-3 things that stand out about the time together.)

APPLICATION

John 8:32 says “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” We have many decisions to make as moms, and we can’t make a good decision without knowing what is really true and what isn’t. Having the truth of the Bible in our mind on a regular basis will help us discern what is truth and what isn’t and free us to be the best moms we can be.

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Ask for any specific prayer concerns.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR FUTURE

As you leave our study, continue to spend a few minutes a day reading through scripture passages. Below are some suggested places to continue. You can journal along the same framework that we used here, or simply record your thoughts as they come. Any way you do it, God’s word will bless your day and give you the guidance and comfort that you need. It is helpful to have someone reading with you, as we have been doing, so grab a friend, your husband or jump into another Bible study group.

PROVERBS

Read one chapter per day following the calendar day for 30 days.

This reading offers practical advice for moms.

GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS

One chapter a week will get you several months down the road.

This reading offers practical advice for interacting within your community.

LUKE 1-2: IN ANTICIPATION OF CHRISTMAS

Read it in pieces to help your family learn about the role of Jesus in Christmas.

Encourage attendees to pursue a one-on-one meeting with you, another group leader or the church pastor to discuss more specific questions that they still have. Thank attendees again for their participation, and provide your email address and phone number if you have not already done so, as well as contact information for the pastor or another group leader you have offered as a contact point for questions.