

The Bible: God Speaks to Us

Objective: Students will be able to 1) explain that the Bible was written by people inspired by God and 2) identify the two parts of the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

For the Catechist

Lesson 3 is the first of three lessons that introduces the children to the Bible. This lesson identifies the Old and New Testament, but the emphasis is on the New Testament. As part of the lesson, the children will receive formally their own copy of the New Testament. This is an essential component for this year's lessons because the students will use their New Testament in every subsequent lesson. Having your priest or you present the Bible to the children is one way to show them they are being given the Word of God.

Even though Bible passages have been discussed in the earlier grades, this is the first year in the God With Us series that the children are asked to find and read the passage in their own New Testament. The importance of these lessons cannot be overemphasized. For some children this is the first time they are reading from the Bible. This is the year to "plant the seed" for the children to learn to grow in their love of God through reading the Bible.

One valuable resource for helping the children learn how to read the Bible is the book *Finding Your Way Through the Bible: A self-instruction book for middle and older elementary students*. *Finding Your Way through the Bible* is meant to be used by each student on his or her own. Children find it easy and fun to complete the exercises and grade themselves. The frequent repetition in the book is an excellent aid in fostering retention. Students may be given their own copies of this book to use as an alternate activity over the next weeks or to use at home for independent study. Some of the activities in lessons 3 through 5 are based on ideas presented in this book.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Heavenly King

Introduction: Discussion of silence
Need: a bell

Read Text Aloud: Have the students volunteer to read the text aloud or have the students read sections silently.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity (detailed on the pages that follow) to reinforce the lesson.

- *Basic:* The Bible
- *Group:* Books in the New Testament
- *Craft:* "New Testament" Book Covers
- *Alternate:* *Finding Your Way Through the Bible*

Closing: "We have seen the true light. . ."

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord:
The Four Evangelists

Teaching Pics

Gospel Reading (DL10)

Inspiration. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Sacred Scriptures have been written. The Holy Spirit guides the Church and leads us in reading the Scriptures to learn to accept God's divine plan for man's salvation and belief in Jesus as the Son of God. The word inspiration means "a breathing in, as of air into the lungs." In the beginning" the Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). We need to learn to read the Scriptures slowly and attentively as we "breath in" the Word of God.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

The Bible

"Our English word Bible comes from the Greek word *Biblia* which means *Books*. Although it is common to speak of the Bible as **the** Book, it is actually more accurate to speak of the Bible as a collection of Books, more like a library than a single work" (*SLW* 17).

The Bible: God's Creative Work

"Eventually, some people skilled in writing began to commit these stories to literature, again under the driving urge of the Holy Spirit. These texts were, in turn, revised and edited to clarify that wonderful initiative taken by God and the benefits humanity derived from it. In short, we believe that the Holy Spirit drew these writers to record the events, and then drew others to collect them and edit them, as part of the on-going creative thrust. Because God in a special way as a special favor (or grace) accomplishes this formation of the Bible, He is the true author. Just as God is the creator of all things, He is also the sustainer of His creation. Sometimes, we must add, God intervenes more strongly or more directly to accomplish a very special development, thus demonstrating-in a striking way-His Creative presence. The Bible is such a demonstration of God's creative work. Without disrupting the natural manner in which such literature is produced, God organized the process with a special vitality to address some of the most important elements in life. Thus the Apostle Paul could advise Saint Timothy: 'All Scripture is inspired and useful for teaching, refuting error, guiding people's lives and teaching holiness.' (2 Tim. 3: 16)" (*SLW* 18).

The Bible and the Church

"The Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in and through the community of believers, the Church, recounting that community's growing awareness of God working in its life. Hence, it is the diary of the Church, and only the Church can properly understand it. While an outsider can pick up a family's album or scrapbook and recognize the figures as people, and perhaps even discern the nature of the event being recorded (a wedding, a graduation, etc.), the casual observer cannot re-experience the nostalgia of the original, shared event unless he or she has an emotional bond with the people depicted. In the same way, the Bible arises from the Church; it must be experienced within the Church to impart its meaning fully.

"When we leave the boundaries of the Church in dealing with the Bible we can fall victim to two very dangerous extremes: a watered-down view of the Bible as pious folklore or else a type of idolatry in which the Bible itself is worshiped" (*SLW* 16).

Reading Scripture Prayerfully

"The way in which we read is what determines the fruitfulness the reading may have in our lives, Begin by placing oneself in the presence of God and calling on the guidance of the One whose Word it is. Many people in the Byzantine Church begin their reading by praying the invocation to the Holy Spirit, 'O Heavenly King'.... Follow the reading time by reflecting on how God may be speaking in these words to you. Pray for direction and the strength to carry out what the Lord may be guiding you to do" (*SLW* 24)

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Begin with the prayer, "Heavenly King." [Compliment the students who have memorized this prayer and encourage the other students to do so.]

Introduction

Let's close our eyes for a moment. Now open them. Let's do that again. Now open them. What do you think about when your eyes are closed? How many of you are anxious to open your eyes? Why? [Let the children share for a few minutes.] *Now we are going to do the same thing with our ears. Let's close our ears by putting our hands on them. Before you do that, look at me so that you know when to take your hands away from your ears. When I take my hands away, I want you to do the same. Okay, let's begin.* [Do this again.] *What was the first thing you heard when you opened your ears?* [You could greet them with the liturgical greeting for your jurisdiction as they take their hands away from their ears.]

Now I am going to ask you to be as quiet as you can. Let's try that for 5 seconds. Was that difficult? Why? Do we have to sit perfectly still very often? When? [Encourage the children to share.] *Let's try being quiet again. This time think about not moving any part of your body. Let's try that for 5 seconds. What happened?*

One more time I am going to ask you to be quiet for 15 seconds. Begin. [This time ring the bell at every 5 seconds.] *What happened? Were you waiting for the bell to ring again? Did you want it to ring again?*

We are practicing being quiet. Our world does not ask us to be quiet very often. What are some noises we hear almost the whole day? (Television, radio, talking, car horns, barking) That is why we have to practice being quiet. We are learning to be quiet so that we are able to think about God being with us. Just as we heard the bell, sometimes we even hear God with us, especially when we pray. God is with us in many ways, but we have to be willing to be silent and to listen.

Let's turn to our lesson and read about how God talks to us through the Bible.

3

The Bible: God Speaks to Us

Long before Jesus was born and before any books were written, God was at work among His people. God spoke to them in special ways and showed that He cared for them. He told them how He wanted them to live.

The stories of God's deeds and laws were told by parents to children for many years. When a system of writing was developed, God inspired certain people to write about all these sacred events.

These writings are contained in the Book called the Bible. The word Bible comes from a Greek word that means a collection of books. There are 73 different books in the Bible. The Bible was written by many different people in different languages and at different times, but God is truly the One who inspired the writers. When we read or listen to someone reading the Bible, we are listening to God's Word.



The writers of the Bible were filled with the Holy Spirit to guide them in understanding God's message. When God fills people with His Spirit to guide them, it is called inspiration. These men were inspired to write down just what God wanted to tell us about Himself. Because of this inspiration, we can refer to the Bible as the Word of God in human words.



11

Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

The Bible: God Speaks to Us

What do you think this title means? (God is present in the words we read in the Bible.) Just as we stop and listen to anyone who talks to us, we must stop thinking about anything else and start listening to God when we read the Bible or listen to anyone reading from the Bible.

When we read or listen to someone reading the Bible, we are listening to God's Word.

What does the Greek word from which the word Bible was taken mean? (Collection of books) How many books are in the Bible? (73) Who is speaking to us through the words of the Bible? (God)

Because of this inspiration, we can refer to the Bible as the Word of God in human words.

What does the word inspiration mean? (When God fills people with His Spirit to guide them, it is called inspiration.)

Presentation of the New Testaments

[This service for the presentation of the New Testaments is in the middle of the lesson because it is a very important part of the lesson: the children are receiving their own New Testament from which they will read God's Word. Having parents present for this lesson would emphasize the importance of receiving the Word of God.]

Today is a very important day: You will receive the New Testament that our church is giving to you to keep. Let's start with the prayer we have been saying for our opening prayer.

[If your priest is present, have the children thank him for being with them on this important day. A follow-up thank you note from the class would be nice.]

Presentation of the New Testament

All sing [in the version used in your parish]: O heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of truth, You are everywhere present and fill all things: Treasury of Blessings and Giver of life! Come and dwell within us. Cleanse us of all stain and save our souls, O gracious Lord.

All pray: O Gracious Master, open the eyes of our mind that we may understand the teachings of Your Gospel.

Leader: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew:

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

All sing [in the version used in your parish]: Glory be to You, O Lord; glory be to You!

Leader: That we may profess our belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and our belief in the Word of God, let each of you come forward to kiss the Bible and receive your copy of the New Testament.

Prayer of a priest: receive from the Church the New Testament of Jesus Christ. May it be for you light and life.

All Pray: We thank You, O Lord God of Powers, for having deemed us worthy to stand, at this time, before Your Word. Amen.

12

Our Church honors the Gospel Book in many ways.

What are some ways? (The priest raises it high at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy and when he carries it in a procession; we stand to listen to the Gospel reading; the altar servers hold candles on both sides of the Gospel Book as the priest reads from the Gospel; beautiful icons and precious metals are on the cover of some Gospel Books.)

What are the two parts of the Bible?

(The Old Testament and the New Testament) What does the word testament mean? (A covenant or agreement, especially one between God and man.)

... so that we can read God's Word often.

Where will you put your New Testament at home? (Icon table, night stand) [If the New Testaments are kept in the classroom for the year, ask them to think about where it will go when they do take the New Testament home.]

Words to Remember: [Read the words together, and use them to introduce, summarize, and/or review the lesson.]

Activity Tracks

Basic: The Bible

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

After you complete the first part of our activity today, you will need to open your New Testament to do the second half. Turn to the Table of Contents to find the right answers. [Help the students find the Table of Contents.] Today we learned that there are many books in the Bible. Our activity asks us to write the name of the first five books in the New Testament.

The two main parts of the Bible are called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The original definition of the word testament is a covenant or agreement, especially one between God and His people.

The Old Testament tells us what God said and did for His people to prepare for Jesus' coming. In the Old Testament we read about God's love for His people and about God's promise to send them a Savior.

The New Testament tells us about the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and about the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Gospels, the first part of the New Testament, are in the Gospel Book that we see on the Holy Table. Our Church honors the Gospel Book in many ways.

We read the Bible to learn about God and about what God expects of us. God's Word tells us what we should do, warns us of what we should not do, and shows us ways to follow Him. We listen to readings from the Bible during the Divine Liturgy and other services. Also, we can read the Bible at home in our private prayer time. Our New Testament that we just received should be kept in a special place so that we can read God's Word often.

Words to Remember:

Bible: The word Bible comes from a Greek word that means a collection of books. There are 73 different books in the Bible.

Inspiration: When God fills people with His Spirit to guide them, it is called inspiration.

Testament: A covenant or agreement, especially one between God and His people.

The Old Testament: The part of the Bible that tells us what God said and did for His people before Jesus came.

The New Testament: The part of the Bible that tells us about the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

13

The Bible

I. Name the two main parts of the Bible and state something about each part.

1. **Old Testament — tells what God said and did for His people before Jesus came.**

2. **New Testament — tells about the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and about the coming of the Holy Spirit.**

II. Look at the Table of Contents in your New Testament. Read and learn the names of the first five books in the New Testament. Then close the New Testament. Using the names listed below the books on this page, write the correct word order on the binding of each of the first five books.

Gospels



Words to Use:

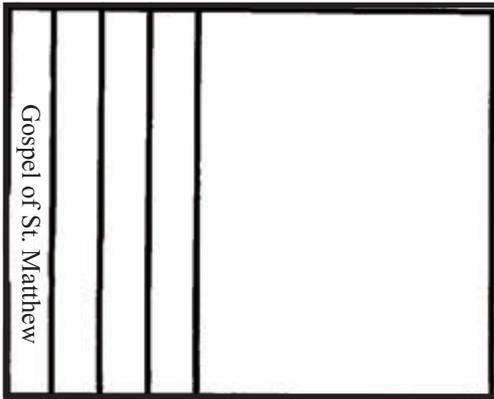
Luke Acts of the Apostles Mark John Matthew

14

Group: Books in the New Testament

Materials: Books of the New Testament worksheet, construction paper, scissors, and glue

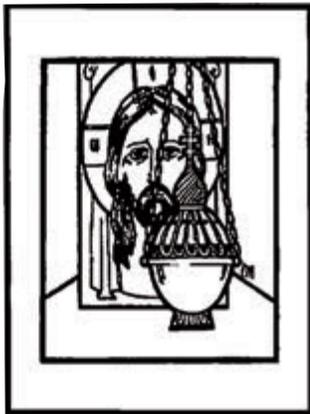
Today we are going to set up the books of the New Testament as if we are looking at the books in the library. [Have the names cut out in advance and place them randomly on the table or have the students cut them out.] On the table are the names of the books and construction paper. Using the table of contents of our New Testament, we will put the books in order and glue them onto the construction paper as if we are placing the books on a shelf in the library.



Craft: New Testament" Book Covers

Materials: Felt or other material cut to the New Testament book size, glue, gold braid or gold ribbon, the icon print worksheet or use another icon from a bulletin cover

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Today we are going to cover our New Testaments to show that they are special. We will glue the material to the cover and place the icon on the front. With the gold ribbon we will decorate around the icon and the corners.*



Alternate: *Finding Your Way through the Bible*

[This book can be purchased from
God With Us Publications, TBS,
P.O. Box 509
Barnhart, MO 63012
Phone: 877-484-1600]

Distribute copies of this book and review the procedure for reading and self-correcting given in the book. Allow each student to proceed at his or her own pace through the book during the time allotted. You may allow the children to take the books home and complete it on their own or keep them in the classroom for use in the next weeks' activity time. If you allow them to complete the book at home, you may offer a prize to the children who bring back their completed book for you to see.

Closing:

Let's pray a prayer we learned last week: "We have seen the true light. . . ."

Bible

Inspiration

Testament

*The Old
Testament*

*The New
Testament*

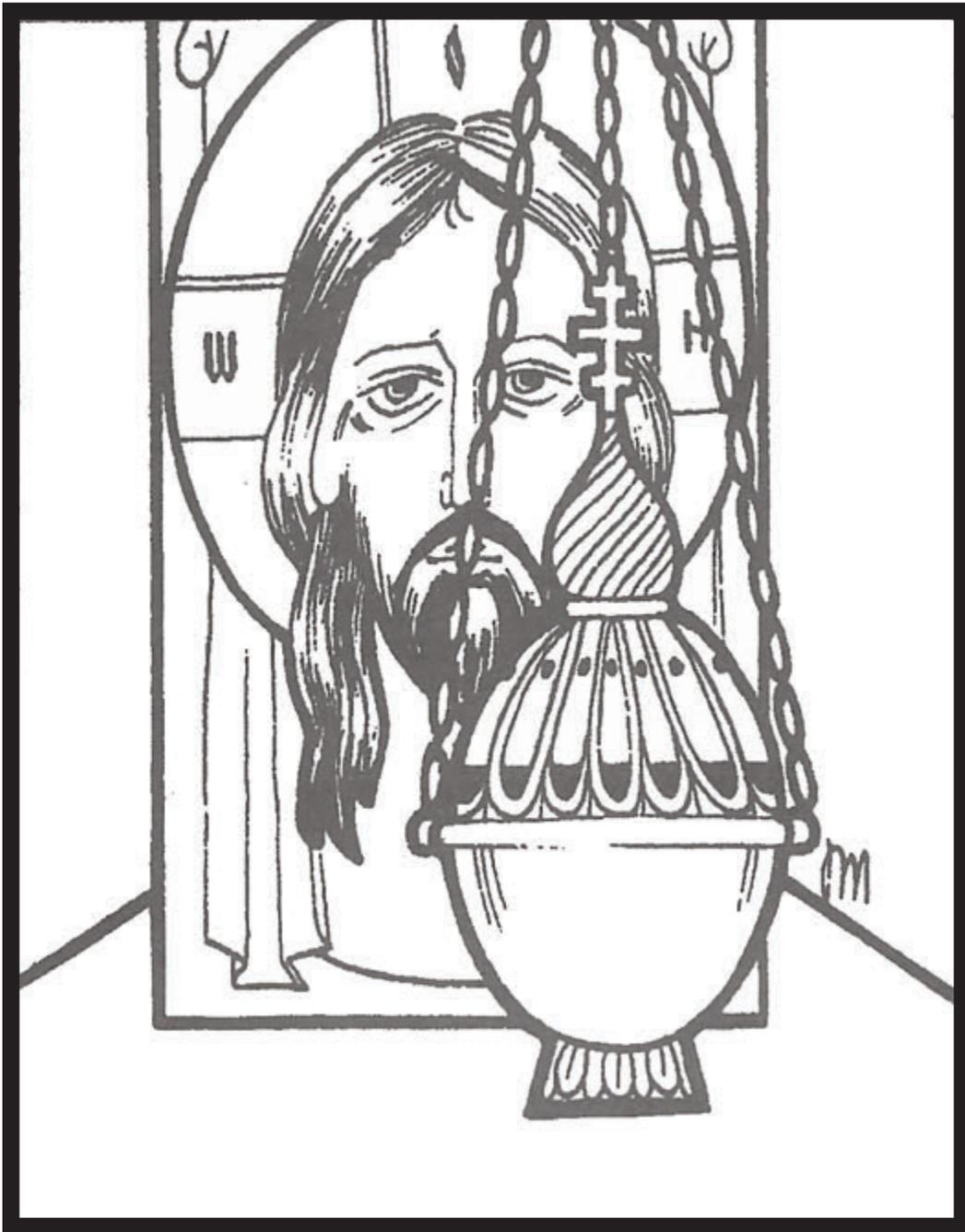
When God fills people with His Spirit to guide them, it is called inspiration.

The word *Bible* comes from a Greek word that means a collection of books. There are 73 different books in the Bible.

The part of the Bible that tells us what God said and did for His people before Jesus came

A covenant or agreement, especially one between God and people.

The part of the Bible that tells us about the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and about the coming of the Holy Spirit.



THE NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW (Mt): This Gospel includes many Old Testament quotations, thus appealing to a Jewish audience and presenting Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. Matthew told the story of Jesus from birth to resurrection and placed emphasis on his teaching.

MARK (Mk): Mark wrote a short, action-packed Gospel. He emphasized Jesus' miracles and his life of suffering. His aim was to deepen the faith and commitment of the community to which he wrote.

LUKE (Lk): In this Gospel the availability of salvation for all people is emphasized. Luke proclaimed this message by showing Jesus' involvement with people who are poor, needy, and on the fringes of society.

JOHN (Jn): The Gospel of John stands apart from the others. John organized his message around seven "signs" that point to Jesus as the Son of God. His writing style is reflective and filled with striking images.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (Acts): When Jesus left his disciples, the Holy Spirit came to abide with them. Written by Luke as the sequel to his Gospel, Acts records key events in the history of the work of the early Christian Church to spread the Gospel throughout the Mediterranean world.

ROMANS (Rom): In this important letter, Paul wrote to the Romans about life in the Spirit, which is given to believers in Christ through faith. The apostle tells them about God's great kindness and declares that because of Jesus Christ, God accepts us and sets us free from our sins.

1 CORINTHIANS (1 Cor): This letter deals with the problems the church in Corinth was experiencing: dissension, immorality, public worship, and confusion about spiritual gifts.

2 CORINTHIANS (2 Cor): In this letter, Paul wrote about his relationship with the church of Corinth and the effects of false apostles on his ministry.

GALATIANS (Gal): This letter addresses freedom from the law through Christ. Paul declares that it is by faith that all who believe are put right with God.

EPHESIANS (Eph): A central theme to this letter is that God's eternal purpose is to bring together from many nations and peoples the universal Church of Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPIANS (Phil): This letter emphasizes the joy found in any situation when a person believes in Christ. Paul wrote it while in prison.

COLOSSIANS (Col): In this letter Paul tells the people of Colossae to make Christ the center of their faith and to put aside their superstitions.

1 THESSALONIANS (1 Thes): In this letter Paul gives advice to the people of Thessalonica concerning Christ's return.

2 THESSALONIANS (2 Thes): This letter discusses the same topics as the first. Paul teaches the people a way to be ready for the Lord.

1 TIMOTHY (1 Tm): This letter served as a guide for Timothy, a young leader in the Church. It contains advice about worship, ministry, and relationships within the Church.

2 TIMOTHY (2 Tm): This is Paul's last letter. In it he offers a final challenge to his co-worker.

TITUS (Ti): Titus was ministering in Crete. In this letter Paul gave him advice on how to help Christians follow Christ.

PHILEMON (Phlm): In this letter Philemon is urged to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, and accept him as a friend in Christ.

HEBREWS (Heb): The letter to the Hebrews challenges new Christians to move beyond their traditional rituals and ceremonies and believe that Christ has fulfilled them all.

JAMES (Jas): James advises putting beliefs into practice and offers practical ways for Christians to live out their faith.

1 PETER (1 Pt): This letter was written to comfort early Christians who were being persecuted for their faith.

2 PETER (2 Pt): In this letter Peter warned against false teachers and urged Christians to stay loyal to God.

1 JOHN (1 Jn): This letter explains basic truths about the Christian life with emphasis on the command to love one another.

2 JOHN (2 Jn): This letter, addressed to "the elect lady and her children," warns against false teachers.

3 JOHN (3 Jn): In contrast to 2 John, this letter states the need to welcome people who preach Christ.

JUDE (Jude): Jude warns against the influence of evil ones outside the fellowship of believers.

REVELATION (Rv): This book was written to encourage persecuted believers and affirm their faith that God will care for them. Using visions and symbols, the writer illustrates the triumph of good over evil and the creation of a new heaven and new earth.

(The listing of the "Summaries of the Books of the New Testament" is used by permission from the American Bible Society.)

*Gospel Of
St. Matthew*

*Gospel Of
St. Mark*

*Gospel Of
St. Luke*

*Gospel Of
St. John*

*Acts of the
Apostles*

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

Revelation