

Junior 1 Year 3 Book 1 Lesson 1
Introduction to the Bible
Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Bible is the living word of God, inspired by Him.2. The Bible shows us the path to salvation; it is the ultimate guide to living a godly life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is truth.2. God is eternal.3. God is living.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The word of God teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains us in righteousness.2. Cherish God’s word and apply it to our lives.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Bible Is the Truth
 1. The Language and the Printed Word
 2. How the Bible Maintained Its Accuracy
- B. The Bible Is the Path to Salvation
 1. The Bible Calls Mankind to Repentance
 2. The Bible Leads Us to True Righteousness
 3. The Bible Directs Us to the Path of Salvation
- C. The Bible Is Living and Powerful

Life Application

1. Hunger for God’s Word
2. Seek Time with God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The Bible is living and powerful, and it teaches us the path to salvation. We need only open ourselves to its instruction.

Introduction

Many believe the Bible is merely fiction or myth, or simply a collection of insights by a religious people for theological study. Others regard the Bible as a great piece of literature, a book of philosophy, or a historic account of the Israelites. But is the Bible merely a collection of man-made manuscripts? Let's examine the various purposes of the Bible, its development over history, and how God's hand has guided it into what it is today for us: our teacher, and our path to salvation.

A. The Bible Is the Truth

The truth of the Bible is always one of the first matters of debate when it comes to the Bible. We know it to be true because we understand that the authors were guided by God Himself, proven by nature of its very existence: no other book has spanned such a vast number of generations with no contradictions.

According to most scholars, the oldest book in the Bible is either Genesis or Job, both thought to have been completed around 1400 B.C., about 3,400 years ago. The Book of Revelation was written around A.D. 90, about 1,500 years later. Despite being written by about forty different authors over the course of more than 1,000 years, the Bible never contradicts itself, and none of its prophecies have been proven untrue.

Let's examine more closely how the Bible was put together over time.

1. The Language and Printed Word

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament in Greek. The Greek version of the Old Testament, called the *Septuagint*, was translated between 250 B.C. and 100 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt. The Latin version, *Jerome's Vulgate*, was written around A.D. 400. It wasn't until much later, the 1300s, that the Bible began to be translated into the Latin languages, and in 1455, the Bible became the first book ever printed mechanically using Gutenberg's new invention of the printing press.

As of October 2017, the Old Testament has been translated into over 600 languages, the New Testament into over 1,500, and certain excerpts and stories of the Bible have been translated into over 1,000 other languages!¹

2. How the Bible Maintained Its Accuracy

Even today, books that are printed and reprinted over time develop inconsistencies or errors that spread with each reprinting. How did the Bible avoid such errors over its long lifespan of over 3,000 years since its conception? For an idea, let's first look at some of the rules the scribes followed when copying the Scripture. During A.D. 100–500, the group of scribes who copied the Bible were called the Talmudists. Here are some rules they had to follow when writing the synagogue scrolls (Swindoll, 14–15):²

- 1) *A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals,*
- 2) *prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew.*
- 3) *These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals.*

¹ Wikipedia contributors, "Bible translations," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bible_translations&oldid=868989381 (accessed December 5, 2018).

² Charles Swindoll, *A Look at the Book* (Insight for Living, 1994), 14–15.

- 4) Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex.
- 5) The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 or more than 60 lines; and the breadth must consist of 30 letters.
- 6) The whole copy must be first-lined; and if three words be written without a line, it is worthless.
- 7) The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other colour, and be prepared according to a definite recipe.
- 8) An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate.
- 9) No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him...
- 10) Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene;
- 11) between every new parashah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants;
- 12) between every book, three lines.
- 13) The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so.
- 14) Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress,
- 15) wash his whole body,
- 16) not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink,
- 17) and should a king address him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him—

It is evident that the scribes of the past took their responsibility seriously. They understood that they were recording the very words of God Himself. This dedication to their craft contributed to the accuracy of the Bible today.

Other evidence that we have of its accuracy can be found in what are called the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in a cave by the Dead Sea, in the year 1947. A young shepherd boy, in search of some lost goats, happened to hear a crack of pottery when he threw a rock into one of the many caves in the area. When he and some of his cousins came back to explore, they found the cave floor covered with debris and a number of clay jars with their covers still in place. They found several bundles of ancient manuscripts and sold them, eventually drawing the attention of scholars of the time. When examined, the scrolls were found to be written between 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, making them the oldest manuscripts ever to be found. Over time, more were unearthed, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are now the oldest copies of the Bible discovered to date. They include all the books of the Old Testament except for the book of Esther (Stevenson, 12–13).³ (*Teachers: A more detailed account can be found in the source pdf.*)

The Dead Sea Scrolls are considered the most important discovery of Old Testament manuscripts. When the Old Testament scrolls were compared to the next earliest manuscripts in existence, those from the ninth and tenth centuries, they were found to contain essentially the same text. This shows that in the thousand years between, the scribes remained true to the original text, and the word of God had been passed down accurately to us.

B. The Bible Is the Path to Salvation

³ John Stevenson, *Ancient History: A Framework for the Bible* (Florida: Redeemer Publishing, 2015), 12–13, http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/books/Ancient_History.pdf.

In John 5:39, Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." And in John 6:63, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."

Unlike secular books which provide entertainment, academic analysis, and philosophical discussions, the Bible is the living word of God, with many purposes. It declares the great and wondrous works of God and reveals life, spiritual mysteries, and the truth – all matters transcending human wisdom. Without God's revelation, no one would have been able to write the Bible, and certainly not with such authority. But most importantly, the Bible's purpose is for our sake. Let's examine its primary purposes.⁴

1. The Bible Calls Mankind to Repentance

The Bible teaches us that all mankind has sinned, and have fallen short of eternal life (Rom 3:23). But its teachings do not come without hope; it also calls us to repentance, to walk "where the good way is" so that we will "find rest for [our] souls" (Jer 6:16). Proverbs 1:23 urges us to "turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you."

2. The Bible Leads Us to True Righteousness

Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Mt 5:6). The Bible explains that we can only obtain this righteousness of God "through faith in Jesus Christ" (Rom 3:22). It is impossible to become truly righteous on our own, but when we keep the teachings of the Bible we become skilled in the "word of righteousness" (Heb 5:13), and "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17).

3. The Bible Directs Us to the Path of Salvation

Jesus said, "Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved" (Jn 5:34), and, "[If] anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (Jn 8:51). The Book of James also describes the Scripture as "the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas 1:21).

C. The Bible Is Living and Powerful

As the word of God, the Bible is more than words on a page. The Book of Hebrews describes the Bible as "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12). The word of God is called a sword because it has the ability to pierce us and cut to the heart of the matter. It reveals who we are in our spirit, our thoughts, and intents – the deepest and innermost parts of ourselves. It can actively chastise us, guide us, and encourage us as we walk our spiritual journey towards salvation.

Why is the word living and powerful?

1 Peter 1:23 says we have been "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." Like a plant seed, the word itself has the power to impart life. But unlike anything on earth, the word cannot be changed or altered in any way, because it is Truth. Any word that God gives is an incorruptible seed that will permanently impact and affect the person who hears it.

⁴ Tze-Yuan Kuo, *What is the Purpose of the Bible?* (True Jesus Church: 2018), <http://ia.tjc.org/elibrary/ContentDetail.aspx?ItemID=35382>.

Let's read Isaiah 55:10–11. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

Just as rain and snow fall from the sky and water the earth, God's word also causes growth wherever it falls, because it has the power to change someone's life. It will not return to God empty-handed, but has the power to accomplish God's purpose and to produce growth in those who hear it.

Check for Understanding

- 1. What is remarkable about the Bible's existence with regards to its age?** Despite being written by about forty different authors over the course of more than 1,000 years, the Bible never contradicts itself, and none of its prophecies have been proven untrue.
- 2. What do we have as evidence of the Bible's accuracy?** We know that the scribes of the past followed very strict laws regarding the writing of the Bible. We also have the Dead Sea Scrolls, currently the oldest manuscripts ever to be found, to compare our text to.
- 3. What are the three primary purposes of the Bible?** It calls mankind to repentance; leads us to true righteousness; and directs us to the path of salvation.
- 4. Where does the Bible record that the word of God is living and powerful?** Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
- 5. Where does the Bible record that believing the word of God has eternal life?** John 5:39, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Life Application

1. Hunger for God's Word

It is easy to forget that the Bible is more than a book. When we read the Bible, we are holding a conversation with God. It is the only way by which we can understand God and draw closer to Him. And when we truly desire to learn more about Him, He will open our hearts and minds so that we can understand what He wants to tell us through the living and powerful word of God. But to have this understanding, we must first nurture within ourselves a hunger for God's word.

God wants us to spend more time with Him. He desires that we draw closer to Him. But to do so, we must read His word, because that is how He speaks to us. When we study the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit teaches us His will, and how to make decisions in our priorities. He teaches us what our values and goals should be, and guides us in every other aspect in our lives. Embracing God's word is a choice that we have to make, but when we do make the choice, our lives will become fruitful and prosperous. Let's read Psalm 1:1–3.

*Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

*He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.*

To delight in God's word means it is a constant companion to us, like a close friend whom we know to call upon at any time. Meditating on it day and night means that it affects our every decision and action in our lives. But in what way does it affect our decisions and actions? 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." As the path to salvation, the Bible offers:

- a. Doctrine – it tells us what we should believe in
- b. Reproof – it teaches us the errors of our ways
- c. Correction – it guides us back to the correct path
- d. Instruction in righteousness – it teaches us how to live a righteous life

God does not always use dramatic or extreme measures to guide us. When He uses the Bible to speak to us, it is often like the still small voice that Elijah heard on the mountain (1 Kgs 19:12). We need to learn to listen carefully and open ourselves to the instruction of the Spirit by paying attention to sermons and our RE classes, and by studying the Bible at home. When we hunger for God's word in this way, we allow ourselves to be guided by the Scriptures. Let's read the following scenarios and identify which of the four types of guidance the Scriptures offered in each.

Scenario 1:

Susan was faced with many temptations at school. She tried to keep herself away from situations that could lead her to sin, but sometimes it was very difficult. One day during RE class, she read about how Jesus Christ resisted the devil by quoting Scripture. She then realized how important it is to memorize Scripture so that she can resist temptation as Jesus did.

Which aspect of Scripture applies here? (Instruction in righteousness)

Scenario 2:

While he was hanging out at his friend's house, Joshua's friend happened to flip to a channel that was playing X-rated programs. Out of curiosity, Joshua ended up watching with him. Even though he did not plan for it, one instance quickly became two, then three. Joshua soon became hooked to watching what he knew he shouldn't. One Sabbath, the speaker referred to Matthew 5:27–30. When he read it, Joshua realized he had sinned, and he knew he had to stop.

Which aspect of Scripture applies here? (Reproof)

Scenario 3:

Every morning Pam and her classmates would rush into the classroom to find a good seat. One day, Pam found that the only seat left was one beside Jane. There was nothing wrong with Jane, really. She was a quiet kid who didn't speak English well, and she looked kind of shabby. No one usually wanted to sit beside her, so she was by herself most of the time. Pam slipped quietly into the chair next to her, but did not say anything. She did not want her classmates to stop talking to her because she had spoken to Jane. Later, someone accidentally knocked Pam's books onto the ground and ran off without helping her to pick them up. As Pam knelt to gather her books, she found Jane helping her pick them up. She suddenly

recalled Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself." That day, Pam learned an important lesson from Jane: to treat others with love, no matter who they are or what they look like.

Which aspect of Scripture applies here? (Doctrine/Correction)

2. Seek Time with God

During His ministry, Jesus was constantly busy, from the moment He woke up to the moment He slept. Despite this, He never neglected to spend His own quiet time with God, often rising before dawn to pray. Jesus made it a priority to spend as much time with God as He possibly could (Mk 1:35; Lk 5:16; 6:12; 22:39–44).

Have you ever stopped eating or drinking anything for a few days? Without sustenance, our physical bodies weaken. Our spiritual bodies are the same; when we stop reading the Bible or communicating with God through prayer, we grow spiritually weak. Our goal should be to know Him, grow in our relationship with Him, love Him, and eventually be more like Him. So we need to take the initiative to seek out time with God at home, either through personal study of His word, or through family services. Like Jesus, we need to purposefully set aside time for God every day.

Discussion

- How much time do you spend on social media compared to the amount of time you spend studying God's word? Rate yourself in each, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.
- Discuss with a partner how to purposefully set aside some quiet time to spend with God.
- What are some elements to consider if you want to have a quiet time with God? (*Examples: Choose a specific time and location, have the proper mindset, take notes while reading the Bible, highlight important keywords, praise God through singing hymns, don't rush through Bible study, etc.*)
- Share your "quiet time with God," either how you spend time with Him in the present, or how you plan to set aside time for God in the future.

Memory Verse

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Meaning

(See *Life Application #1.*)

Conclusion

We know that the path to eternal life is found in the Bible, and that as the word of God, it is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). It can actively chastise, guide, and encourage us as we walk on our spiritual journey toward salvation. We need only seek to learn more about Him, and open ourselves to the Bible's instruction by spending more time communicating with God through His word.

Lesson 1 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Briefly explain the different purposes of the Bible mentioned in the memory verse.
Doctrine – it tells us what we should believe in
Reproof – it teaches us the errors of our ways
Correction – it guides us back to the correct path
Instruction in righteousness – it teaches us how to live a righteous life
2. What is the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for us?
They are the oldest copies of the Bible discovered to date, and when compared to the next earliest manuscripts in existence, were found to contain essentially the same text. This shows that the word of God has been passed down accurately to us.
3. What are the three primary purposes of the Bible?
The Bible: calls mankind to repentance; leads us to true righteousness; and directs us to the path of salvation.
4. Pick one of the above purposes and briefly explain, with Bible references.
See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section B.
5. What does it mean to delight in God's word, and to meditate on it day and night?
To delight in it means to treat it as a constant companion to us, like a close friend whom we know to call upon at any time. Meditating on it day and night means to ensure that it affects our every decision and action in our lives.
6. What is one way you plan on seeking out quiet time with God?
Personal answers.