

SESSION 1

KNOWING GOD

Scripture Focus

Ps. 19:1–6; John 1:1, 2, 14, 18;
Rom. 1:18–20; 2:14–16;
Heb. 1:1–3; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21

BuildUP Theme



LEARN DOCTRINE

God wants us to glory in knowing and understanding Him.

Measurable Response

Students will use the Word of God to know and understand God better.

Memory Verse

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth” (Jeremiah 9:24).

Teacher Preparation

- Society encourages celebrating and promoting self above all others. “You be you!” they preach to students. “Follow your feelings and be your own biggest fan so you might find happiness and satisfaction in life.” That message, though, has not led to happy, content teens.
- Read Jeremiah 9:23, 24. God’s instructions fly in the face of modern self-promotion and self-pampering. It’s knowing and understanding God that gives a person value and reason to glory. Why? Because God treats humanity with love, justice, and righteousness. God’s marvelous ways provide the key to true joy.
- Challenge your students to consider what they glory in. Are they enamored with their abilities and accomplishments? Do they strive to do all they can to garner attention and praise from others? Direct them to be enamored with God and to glory in His ways.

Focus

This quarter focuses on the BuildUP aim Learn Doctrine. The course will emphasize the importance of knowing the truth about God, how to know God, and how to respond to that knowledge. Students will be challenged to direct their energy and focus on God and away from themselves and any selfish ambitions and goals. They will learn that a relationship with God forms the core of who they are and why they exist.

Cultural Barrier

This lesson addresses the idea that truth is subjective. When it comes to defining, knowing, and understanding God, there is no room for subjectivity. We can know objective truth about God. In fact, we must know that truth if we are going to truly live with purpose and meaning.

Session Starters

Option 1—Play-Doh Creations

Gather

- Play-Doh.

Steps

1. Each student sculpts something out of Play-Doh to represent a new plant, animal, or thing.
2. Students display and describe their new creations.
3. Discuss the students' "authority" over their creations.

ASK: How would you respond if someone said your definition of your creation was wrong and then redefined your creation?

ASK: How would you respond if your creation claimed the authority to define you, its creator?

4. Transition to Bible lesson.

Culture teaches that each person has the authority to "sculpt" God, or some other "higher power," to his or her liking, forming and molding Him to fit one's personal ideal. Such teachers elevate individual rights above absolute truth. That practice is absurd. God created us, not the other way around. He reveals the truth about Himself. We have no right to make up our own truth about Him. This session will examine God's revelation and encourage us to seek to know the truth God revealed about Himself.

Option 2—Three Texts

Steps

1. Have students read three of their texts or social media posts.
2. Discuss texts and posts.

ASK: What might someone learn about you from your three random texts or posts?

ASK: What about you might they get wrong from that limited revelation?

ASK: How many pages do you think it would take to accurately reveal your character and abilities?

3. Transition to Bible lesson.

God carefully and perfectly revealed His nature and qualities in the Bible. Unlike your random texts, the Bible gives us a complete and clear understanding of God. The complete Bible is the authority on God. This session will encourage us to value and study the Bible so we might know and understand God better.

Bible Study

Gather

- Resources 17-R1 through 17-R5.

I. General Evidence of God's Existence

A. In creation (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:20)

READ: Psalm 19:1–4a.

The sun, moon, and stars all reveal the glory of God. We see His “handiwork” in His created objects (19:1). All day and night the heavenly bodies are “speaking” about God. The idea is that they “bubble forth” their message (19:2). As a bubbling stream that continues to flow, so the heavens “bubble forth” the knowledge of God. The created bodies are continually speaking about God without ever saying a word (19:2)!

Anthropologists calculate that there are about six thousand languages and dialects in the world. God speaks His revelation through creation to each person regardless of his or her language. He reaches all people, and His message is equally intelligible to all. Whether a person speaks English, Spanish, or a dialect in a remote part of Africa, everyone “hears” God’s revelation of Himself through observing nature (19:3). Even a deaf and/or blind person can learn about God from creation by using his or her other senses.

David named the sun as the most obvious example of God’s revelation through creation. God established a place (tabernacle) for the sun in the heavens.

READ: Psalm 19:4b–6.

David used two word pictures to describe the sun’s path. Every day the sun peers over the horizon like a bridegroom eager to meet his bride and like a champion runner eager to run his race. The sun’s route, like that of a bridegroom and runner, is direct and predictable. In fact, it is so predictable that we already know that on September 15, 2039, the sun will rise in Jerusalem at 6:22 AM and set at 6:45 PM. Unless God

changes His mind or supernaturally alters the course of the heavens, that is exactly what will happen.

The regular, predictable path of the sun across the sky testifies to God's power to control the earth as it moves around the sun. The sun's regular path also testifies to God's grace to keep the earth close enough to the sun to sustain life and yet not so close that it burns up.

Unless someone lives underground his or her entire life, it is impossible to escape the sun's light. It is a warm and brilliant testimony to God's power and glory (19:6).

ASK: How often do you think about the sun? Do you normally take it for granted?

ASK: What truths about God does the sun "shine" into your mind?

The rest of creation reveals God too. Paul wrote about creation's testimony when he penned his letter to the believers in Rome.

READ: Romans 1:20.

God's creation, though affected by sin and therefore only a reflection of its original glory, still reveals God's eternal power and Godhead. God's "eternal power" refers to the creative force He used to speak everything into existence. "Godhead" refers to His absolute authority over His creation. Both are clearly seen. There is nothing vague nor unintelligible about God's general revelation through nature.

DISPLAY: Resources 17-R1 through 17-R5. **ASK:** What truths about God might we clearly see from these examples of His creation?

ASK: Why might a person refuse to see the clear evidence of God's existence in creation? *The person rejects the evidence of God's existence to theoretically escape responsibility to God as his or her maker.*

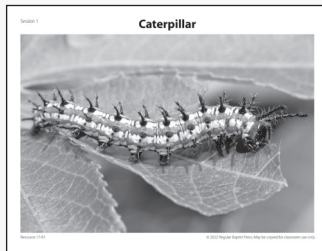
ASK: How do most unbelievers explain the existence of the universe? *As a grand accident.*

Creation is sending a clear message everyone can receive: There is one true God, Who is our creator. We all stand accountable to Him. On this Psalm 19 and Romans 1 agree.

B. Through conscience (Rom. 1:18, 19; 2:14–16)

God also gives evidence of His existence through each person's conscience. A person's conscience alerts him or her to right and wrong. Feelings of guilt flood our minds when we violate our conscience.

READ: Romans 2:14, 15.



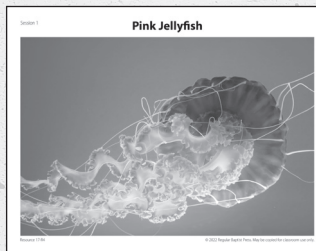
17-R1



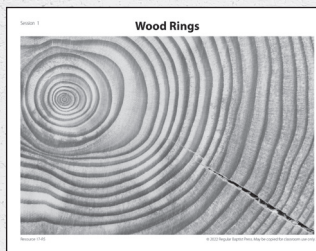
17-R2



17-R3



17-R4



17-R5

The Jews had the Old Testament law to show them right and wrong. But Gentiles (non-Jews), who didn't have the Jewish law, couldn't excuse themselves from knowing right and wrong. All people have an internal moral standard, a conscience—defective though it may be because of sin. Paul emphasized that a Gentile's internal standard constitutes his or her law. God will judge them for violating their law so far as the law agrees with God's standard of right and wrong. God will find them guilty of violating their conscience. No one has always done right, even according to his or her own understanding of right. Each one has done things that make him or her feel guilty.

ASK: How have you seen guilt and remorse in unbelievers? Do you remember feelings of guilt before you were saved?

ASK: How might a believer use a person's guilty feelings as a witnessing tool? *The believer can point the person to God's standards of right and wrong, the existence of sin, and the forgiveness of sin through Jesus.*

Lest a person claims he or she has not violated his or her conscience, Paul made it clear that God judges all sin, even the sin a person may not even realize he or she has committed (Rom. 2:16).

READ: Romans 2:16.

God can't be fooled. He will judge sinners justly.

Evidence of God through creation and conscience can't cleanse a person of sin. Yet, God's wrath justly abides on all people who reject, or hold down, the evidence of God's existence.

READ: Romans 1:18, 19.

Humanity obviously needs more information than the testimonies of God's existence through creation and conscience. God provided the necessary information through special revelations of His existence.

II. Specific Revelations of God's Existence

A. In the written Word (2 Pet. 1:20, 21)

The clear testimony of nature will always be distorted by man's sinful condition (Rom. 3:11), and it is limited.

ASK: What can't we learn about God from observing creation and acknowledging our conscience? *That God provides salvation and forgiveness of sin; how to accept the salvation God offers.*

The written Word of God, the Bible, is our primary means of knowing God and understanding His offer of salvation.

READ: 2 Peter 1:20, 21. **ASK:** Why can we trust the Bible is true?

It is inspired by God. The Holy Spirit directed authors to write exact words.

The written revelation of God is the product of God's authorship. Yes, God used human writers within the scope of their own personalities and historical cultures to pen the books; yet, the Bible is the revealed Word of God—the living, inspired Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12). Of all the books in the world, only the Scriptures are divinely inspired and authoritative.

The written revelation doesn't reveal all God's mind; yet, the record contains all God intended to say. Nothing we need to know from God is missing in His Word. Every word in the Bible is equally authoritative.

ASK: What does the Bible say about sin? *Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23).*

ASK: What does the Bible say about salvation? *Jesus paid the price for our sin. God will forgive us our sin and give us eternal life when we trust in Jesus' payment for us (John 3:16).*

ASK: What might life be like without God's revelation in His Word? *There would be no answer to life's problems, no hope for life after death, and no purpose for living beyond self-indulgence.*

B. Through the living Word (John 1:1, 2, 14, 18; Heb. 1:1–3)

Within the Holy-Spirit-inspired Scripture, Christ's life and teaching reveal specific details about God the Father.

READ: Hebrews 1:1.

Before Christ came to earth, God communicated in various time periods and through various means. He used dreams, visuals, angelic proclamations, and prophets. These methods revealed truth, but they didn't complete the truth God wanted to reveal.

READ: Hebrews 1:2.

God revealed His promises and prophecies throughout the Old Testament, but some of His revelation remained a mystery. When Christ came, God's Old Testament promises and prophecies gained clarity. Jesus' arrival, ministry, death, and resurrection provided answers to the Old Testament mysteries. Jesus made that clear. After rising from the dead, He walked with two strangers on a road to Emmaus. As they walked, Jesus presented Himself as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and prophecies (Luke 24:27; 24:44).

READ: Hebrews 1:3; John 1:1, 2, 14, 18. **ASK:** What do we learn

about God from the life of Christ? *The glory of God the Father, including the Father's power, character, grace, and truth.*

ASK: How did Jesus show God's power? *By performing miracles, including healing the sick, raising the dead, reading minds, controlling nature, and rising from the dead.*

ASK: How did Jesus show God's character? *He resisted all temptations to sin, never complained, gladly submitted to God the Father's will.*

ASK: How did Jesus show God's love and grace (undeserved favor)? *He cared for the sick, reached out to the rejected, and surrendered Himself to be crucified for the sins of the world.*

Jesus' life as the God-Man illustrated God the Father's greatness and glory. His life helps us understand the Father. As Jesus said, if we have seen Him then we have seen the Father (John 14:7–10).

ASK: What is the most significant truth you have learned about God the Father through the life of Christ?

Because we have the Word of God and its record of the Son of God, we can know God and become rightly related to Him. We, however, should never mistake knowing about God with trusting in Him for salvation. Consider that Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, learned a lot about God by following Christ for three years. Judas, though, never trusted in Jesus as His Savior. The knowledge he collected in his head never penetrated his heart. Make sure you have trusted in Jesus as your Savior so you might build a true relationship with God.

Memory Builder

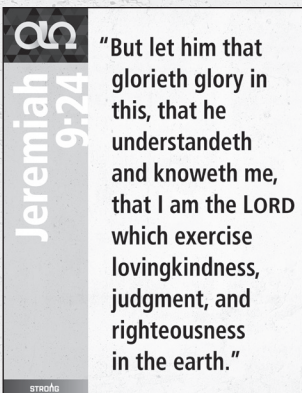
Gather

- Theme Verse Poster.

Steps

1. Post the Jeremiah 9:24 theme verse poster and explain the meaning of the verse.

A person shouldn't be impressed with his or her own wisdom, might, and riches. Intellectual, athletic, or monetary achievements don't make us worthy of glory. Nor do they help us fulfill our purposes. We find success and purpose as we know and understand God and recognize His loving, just, and righteous ways. When we know God and His ways, we will glory in Him and reject the notion that we somehow have earned a right to that same glory.



2. Each student lists on the board three reasons he or she could glory in him- or herself. Reasons might include an athletic or academic accomplishment, a character trait, a once-in-a-lifetime experience, or a social media presence.
3. Students presents their lists and then write “understanding and knowing God” above their lists.
4. Encourage the students to see their relationship with God as primary to their identity. Nothing is as important in their lives.
5. Students work on memorizing the verse.

Session Application

Gather

- Understanding God poster.
- Sticky Tack.
- Marker.

Steps

1. Review the lesson.

Being the smartest, strongest, fastest, funniest, and richest person you can be won't meet your deepest needs. All your efforts will ultimately leave you with a sense of emptiness. Knowing and understanding God gives your life the value and purpose that intellectual, physical, and economic pursuits never could. We must devote ourselves every day to knowing and understanding God better through His Word.

2. Discuss the process of understanding and knowing God.

ASK: What does understanding and knowing God look like in your life presently?

ASK: What could you do to increase your understanding and knowledge of God?

3. Display the Understanding God poster. Ask the students to suggest a word or phrase to put on the first line to capture the essence of this session. Consider using the word “Communicator.” Write your word on the first line so that the “u” in the word aligns with the “u” on the poster. Each session you will add key words or phrases to summarize the lesson.
4. Have a student add an icon or illustration in the circle for session 1 on the Understanding God poster. If you desire, use the icons

included as part of the posters. Cut out the icon and use Sticky Tack or a similar product to attach it to the poster.

Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity encourages them to consider their pursuit of knowing God through His Word.