


UNIT ONE: I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER

BIBLE MORNING [9.00am -1.00pm]

SESSION I: How God's Word Reached Us

[75minutes]

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. God speaks to us through creation. By looking at nature we can come to know of his beauty, power, wisdom etc. He invited our first parents to live in friendship with him. [CCC 54]
2. God continued to reveal himself to Noah, to whom he made a promise, to Abraham and his descendants, and to the Israelites as he delivered them from Egypt led by Moses. [CCC 71,72]
3. He called the people to conversion and pointed to the coming of a Saviour through the prophets. [CCC 64]
4. At last God spoke his best and final 'Word' by sending his own son, Jesus. [CCC 65]
5. God's plan was that everyone should know Christ and be saved. Jesus commanded his apostles to preach the Gospel to the whole world. [CCC 74,75]
6. And so the apostles handed on the Gospel in two ways, orally and in writing. The successors of the apostles (bishops) also carried on preaching and teaching about God, guided by the Holy Spirit. This living transmission is called Sacred Tradition. Sacred Scripture (the Bible) and Sacred Tradition both help us to know God and follow him. [CCC 76-80]
-  7. *We respond to God's Word as we realize his love in revealing Himself to us..*

REFERENCES: Matthew 28:19

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts (*printed back-to-back*), Bibles; Flowers, ribbon, fruit, paper for skit.

I. STARTER:

[Prepare a boy and a girl to do the following mime:]

The boy makes a bouquet, picking up flowers, leaves etc and finally places it somewhere where the girl can see it. He watches from a distance. The girl comes along and sees the flowers, admires them, then walks off with them, without looking for or noticing the boy.

The girl sits down to eat, and the boy pushes a fruit (or a chocolate) towards her. Again she takes it and eats it, but doesn't think about where it came from.

The boy moves off and writes 'I LOVE YOU' on sheets of paper, folds them into rockets and aims them at her. She reacts in the same way.

The girl gets up and hurries off, looking at her watch. She slips and falls, dropping her bag. The boy helps her to get up and pick up her things. She walks away without thanking him.

[The students are placed in groups of 3 to 4. They discuss the questions and share their answers to the class.]

- Suppose you were the girl, how would you have reacted to the boy?
- What was the boy trying to do? Did he succeed?
- Compare the boy's behaviour with God's. Is there any similarity, any difference?

[Using the answers, bring out:]

- God is like the boy in that he too loves us and wants to express it to us in some way.
- He is different in that he is our Creator, and is far greater than us.
- Like the bouquet of flowers, the fruit and the 'rockets' God gave us a beautiful world which is a sign of his love; he provided us with food and in different ways shows us his love. He is inviting us to be his friends. God even rescues us when we are in trouble (Jesus died for us!) as the boy helped the girl when she fell.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- Let's look more closely at the way God has been speaking to us, and revealing himself to us.
[Give out the handout 'HOW GOD'S WORD REACHED US'. The students study it carefully and then try to solve the crossword puzzle without looking at the previous page. Go over the answers, bringing out:]
- Just by looking at creation [1], we can get to know something about God.
Even without reading the Bible people from different places around the world realized that God was good, wise, powerful, beautiful.
- Before the sin [2] of Adam and Eve, God was like a friend [3] to them.
Of course, once they sinned man couldn't live with God in true friendship. Only after Jesus came the way was opened again.
- God saved Noah [4] and his family from the flood and made a promise to them.
The promise was that God would never again destroy the whole world with a flood.
- God called Abraham [5] and his descendants [6] to walk in faith with him.
- God set the Israelites free [7] from a life of slavery in Egypt.
This was a sign that Jesus would set us free from slavery to sin.
- God spoke of the coming Saviour [8] through the prophets [9].
For hundreds of years the Israelites (or Jews) were waiting for a Messiah.
- Jesus [10] is God's final Word.
By sending his Son, God revealed who he was in the best possible way. After Jesus, there will be nothing new. We can only try to understand God's Word more and more.
- Jesus told his apostles to preach the Gospel [11] to the whole world [12].
Gospel means 'Good News'. God's plan was that everyone in the world should come to know Jesus and enjoy living in friendship with him. That means that you and I also have a job to do, because many people still don't know Jesus.
- The apostles obeyed by passing on his message orally, and in writing [13]. They did this with the help of the Holy Spirit [14].
The Holy Spirit still speaks to the Church and helps us to understand God's Word better.
- Today, we can get to know God's Word through Sacred Scripture [15] and Sacred Tradition [16].
Sacred Scripture is the Bible. What is Sacred Tradition? It is all that we have learnt about God through the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit. These two ways of knowing God are connected to each other very closely.

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAYER:

Let's try and take in all that we have been discussing. If we get a lot of knowledge, but if nothing touches our hearts, God will be disappointed. He wants us to understand and then respond to him. He is not interested in the 'world', but in people.

Close your eyes and imagine that God is acting just like that boy in the skit. He thinks of you and paints a beautiful sky in the morning... He sends a cool breeze to cool you down when you are feeling hot... He puts some green leaves just outside your window...

He sends you people to keep you company... He speaks to you at Mass through the readings... Then, best of all, he offers you his Son at Holy Communion. He's watching to see if you notice, realize, believe... Be still and speak to God quietly. If you like you could write to him.


[The students spend some time in silence.]

20 MINUTE BREAK

SESSION II: The Bible: Opening the Treasure-Chest

[75minutes]

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. Jesus spoke of a man who took out of his treasure-chest 'treasures old and new'. The Bible is like that box. Our task is to open, examine and use these treasures. [Commentary www.usccb.org]
2. WHO: God is the true author of the Bible. But he used human authors, acting in and through them. [CCC 136]
3. HOW: We should read the Bible prayerfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, since it is he who inspired the authors. We pay attention to what God is trying to say. We read with love and reverence. [YouCat 16, CCC137]
4. WHY: We read the Bible because it is God's love-letter to us. Through it we come to know Christ.
5. WHAT: The Old Testament contains: The Law, Historical books, Wisdom and the Prophets. The New Testament contains the Gospels, Acts, St. Paul's letters, the Catholic letters and Revelation. [Youcat 16]
6.  We must make a decision to read the Bible regularly and fix a time for this daily.

REFERENCES: Matthew 13:52.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts (printed back-to-back), Bibles.

I. STARTER:

[Ask the students to be ready to draw a quick sketch of the word you are about to say. (Reassure them that they don't have to be great artists!) Say the word 'TREASURE'. After a minute, they show what they have sketched and explain. Talk about different ideas of treasure, bringing out:]

- Many of us have drawn gold coins, jewelry, precious stones etc. A treasure is something precious, valuable. It is valuable because it is worth a lot of money. When we are in need, we could just sell one of the pieces and provide ourselves with food, clothes or whatever we want.
- Jesus once spoke about a treasure that a man found hidden in a field. A little later he spoke about a man who opened his treasure-chest and took out precious things, both old and new. Can you guess what he was talking about?... He was speaking about the Scriptures, both the Old Testament, and his teachings, which we now find in the New Testament.
Jesus encouraged his disciples to be like that man. God wants all of us, his followers, to open up the treasure-box of the Bible. He wants us to know, understand and receive his Word.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- Let's spend some time today opening the Bible and looking at the different treasures. If you suddenly found a treasure-box in your family house, you would be interested to know who put them there, what the things are used for, what they are worth. We too will check out some of these things.

[Give out the handout 'OPENING THE TREASURE CHEST'. The students try and answer the top three questions: WHO, HOW and WHY. Go over the answers, bringing out:]

- WHO: God is the true author of the Bible, because he inspired the human authors to write.
- HOW: Since it is God's letter to us, we should read the Bible trying to find out what God is trying to say. We read it prayerfully, with love and reverence, and asking the Holy Spirit's help, since it was the Holy Spirit who inspired the authors in the first place.
- WHY: Because it is God's love-letter to us! (Why would anyone refuse to read a love-letter, especially from such a loving and good person?) By reading, we get to know Jesus and his ways. The whole Bible points to Jesus. (Notice what St. Jerome says about the Bible!)

[Divide the students into 7 groups. Each group is allotted one 'shelf' for study. The students look through their Bibles and fill in the missing names of the books. On the reverse side of the handout, each group writes a short explanation of one section. They will find information in the introductions before each section (in their Bibles). They then come and read the names and present their facts, [not more than 4 sentences each] while the rest of the class writes them in the spaces provided.

NB. They may give different information to what is given below. Accept if it is correct, but check the source.]

- **THE LAW: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.**
The Jews call these books the 'Torah'. Here we find the story of creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and his descendants, Moses etc. We hear how God made a covenant with his people.
- **HISTORY: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees.**
We hear the story of the Israelites from the time they entered the Promised Land (after the death of Moses) right up to the rebuilding of the Temple, (about 500 years before Jesus). We find stories of the leaders and kings of the Jews, and also some famous women of the Bible like Ruth, Esther and Judith.
- **WISDOM: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Wisdom, Sirach.**
Here we find songs, hymns, prayers, poems and wise sayings. The most famous book is Psalms which was (and is) the prayer-book of the Jews and of Christians too. At every mass we pray a psalm.
- **PROPHETS: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.**
The prophets were people who heard God speak and gave his message to the people. Sometimes they warned the people, sometimes they gave comfort and hope. They cried out against social injustice and immoral behavior. They spoke about the promised Messiah who would come to save the people.
- **GOSPELS: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. ACTS. (Not a Gospel!)**
Gospel means 'Good News'. The Gospels are considered the heart of the Bible, because here we see and hear Jesus. Each writer stresses something different about Jesus. Matthew, Mark and Luke follow the same outline, but John is quite different.
ACTS was written by Luke. It begins with the Ascension of Jesus, then Pentecost and how the new Church grew and spread, guided by the Holy Spirit. Two important names here are Peter and Paul.
- **PAUL'S LETTERS:**
Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews.
These are the first documents written after Jesus died. Saint Paul wrote to the new Christians in different places (Corinth, Rome etc). He encouraged, taught and corrected them through his letters. (Some scholars feel that Hebrews was not written by Paul, since his name is not mentioned.)
- **CATHOLIC LETTERS:**
James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude. REVELATION. (Not a letter!)
'Catholic' means universal. In other words, these letters were written for all the Christians of the time. The names of the letters are the people who wrote the letters.
REVELATION was most probably written by St John, Jesus' apostle. He writes about visions of heaven full of dragons, angels, horses. There are many hidden meanings and symbols difficult to understand. That is why it is called the 'Apocalypse' of 'veiled writing'.

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAYER:

- Do you read the Bible often? Sometimes? Or not at all?
- Do you feel you should start doing so? Then fix a time that you will do it and write it down.
- Write a short prayer thanking God, and making a promise (if you mean it!)

[The students spend some time in silence.]

10 MINUTE BREAK

SESSION III: QUIZ TIME!

[60minutes]

1. The students sit in small groups of about 4 or 5.
2. All the groups do the quiz simultaneously by writing the answers on blank papers. (*This allows maximum participation and interest*)
3. At the end of each round, the quizmaster reads out the answers and the students mark themselves. (*Encourage them to put their faith into practice by being honest!*)
4. Each new round is done on a fresh paper and the paper is given to the quiz-master at the end of the round.
5. Make sure all Bibles and handouts are put away before the quiz begins.
6. Set a time-limit for each answer (Approximately 15 seconds).

MATERIALS NEEDED: Blank papers (4) and a pen for each group.

Prizes for all the groups which score 100 or above. (*All should manage!*)

[Students are first made into groups. They spend 10 minutes preparing for the quiz using the 2 handouts from the morning session.

During the quiz instruct them to discuss the answers in whispers, so other groups do not hear.]

I. NAME-GAME:

INSTRUCTIONS. Each answer is the name of a person. Write numbers 1 to 6 in the margin. If you don't know an answer, go to the next number. EACH CORRECT ANSWER GETS 5 POINTS.

1. God promised him never to destroy the world again with a flood. NOAH.
2. He said, 'Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ'. ST. JEROME.
3. He received the commandments of God. MOSES.
4. He said, 'In Jesus Christ, God took on a human face and became our friend and brother.'
POPE BENEDICT XVI.
5. God promised to give him descendants as many as the stars. ABRAHAM.
6. The final Word that God spoke. JESUS.

II. WHAT'S THE GOOD WORD:

INSTRUCTIONS. The answers are 1 or 2 words. Write numbers 1 to 6 in the margin. If you don't know an answer, go to the next number. EACH CORRECT ANSWER GETS 5 POINTS.

1. Another word for Good News. GOSPEL.
2. Another name for the Bible. SACRED SCRIPTURE
3. Those who gave God's message to the people. PROPHETS.
4. Human beings got to know something about God by looking at this. CREATION.
5. Successors of the apostles are ... BISHOPS.
6. God's Word which comes to us through the Church is called this. SACRED TRADITION.

III. TRUE OR FALSE?

INSTRUCTIONS: Write TRUE or FALSE after listening to the statement. Write numbers 1 to 6 in the margin. If you don't know an answer, go to the next number. The correct answer will be given immediately, not at the end. EACH CORRECT ANSWER GETS 5 POINTS.

1. The books of the Bible were written directly by God. FALSE. *[He inspired human authors and they wrote.]*
2. We can find out about Jesus in both the Old Testament and the New. TRUE. *[All Scripture points to Christ. Even in Genesis God spoke about someone who would fight the Devil.]*
3. Before he ascended, Jesus told his apostles to preach the Gospel to the people of Israel. FALSE *[He commanded them to preach to the whole world.]*
4. The apostles did this only by writing books and letters which later became the Bible. FALSE. *[They gave the Good News both orally as well as in writing.]*
5. There are 83 books in the Bible. FALSE. *[There are 73: 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New.]*
6. The 4 Gospels are considered more important than any other part of the Bible. TRUE *[This is because they tell us the actual words and actions of Jesus.]*

IV. BIBLE SEARCH:

*INSTRUCTIONS. Write numbers 1 to 6 in the margin. If you don't know an answer, go to the next number. Name the book in the Bible where you will find the following. E.g. If I say, 'How God created the world.' You write GENESIS. **EACH CORRECT ANSWER GETS 5 POINTS.***

1. The story of how the Israelites escaped from Egypt. EXODUS.
2. Prayers and hymns are found in this book. PSALMS
3. The story of how the angel appeared to Mary. LUKE.
4. The story of Adam and Eve. GENESIS.
5. Visions of heaven, dragons, angels, horses etc. REVELATION.
6. The story of the first Christians and the early Church. ACTS.

V. SORTING THE BIBLE'S LIBRARY:

[Write down the 7 main headings on the blackboard (or students write them in their books)]
 THE LAW, HISTORY, WISDOM, PROPHETS.
 GOSPELS, ST.PAUL'S LETTERS, CATHOLIC LETTERS.

*INSTRUCTIONS. I will name a book of the Bible, and you must say in which section it is found. Eg. If I say GENESIS, you should say THE LAW. This is done individually, but your group will get points for your correct answer. Everyone will stand and when you have answered, sit. I will ask one person from each group in turn. **EACH CORRECT ANSWER GETS 2 POINTS.***

1. Sirach... WISDOM.
2. Philippians... ST.PAUL'S LETTERS
3. Leviticus... THE LAW
4. Judith... HISTORY
5. Jude... CATHOLIC LETTERS
6. Proverbs... WISDOM
7. Kings... HISTORY
8. Exodus... THE LAW
9. Mark... GOSPELS
10. Daniel... PROPHETS

*[Continue with the remaining books till all the students have had a turn.
 NOTE: Do **not** say ACTS, REVELATION or HEBREWS]*

[Award prizes and congratulate the students.]