

re:form

Bible Unit
Who wrote the Bible,
God or humans?

Prepare

What's behind all this?

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The nature of the biblical canon has been a very contentious issue throughout the history of Christian theology. The spectrum of opinions spans from those who believe that the writers were in a trance and God moved their hands to form the words to those who believe that the authors had no idea that what they were writing was even special, let alone holy.

While Paul wrote that “all scripture is inspired,” it’s hard to imagine he was referring to his own writings. However, in hindsight, the church determined in the early centuries that some writings testified to the gospel in a way that they considered in line with the Apostles’ teaching, and was therefore authoritative. Human beings clearly put pen to parchment to create the documents that have become the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, but as with other moments of God’s grace, Christians believe that God inspired these writers in a unique way and that God guarded the process that formed the canon.

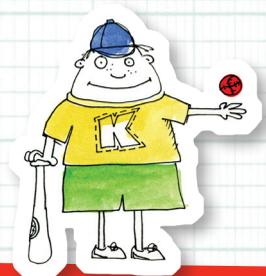
Therefore, while Christians may believe many books to be inspirational, we believe that the Bible is uniquely inspired by God and therefore the best revelation of God and the gospel that we have.

Where are kids at?

- Kids love competition. It’s a great way to engage them in learning and discovery. Make sure it takes place in an environment of trust with clear ground rules.
- Tech-savvy teens are more aware than ever of other cultures and religions and may wonder what’s different about the Bible and Christian writings. Encourage curiosity, and provide resources where kids can discover more—like Bible concordances, maps, dictionaries, reputable websites, etc.



2 Timothy 3:16



Where's this going?

By confronting their assumptions and biases about where the Bible came from, the group can start wrestling through them to a new understanding of the Bible.

Consider this . . .

“What we have, from Genesis to Revelation, is a massive narrative structure in which, though Paul, the evangelists, and John of Patmos are, of course, extremely well aware of the earlier parts, no single author saw the whole or knew about all its other parts. It is as though engineers from different workshops were invited to produce bits and pieces of cantilevers which ended up, when put together without the different work-shops knowing of it, producing the Forth Bridge.”

N.T. Wright, *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible*, p. 61.

encounter

15 minutes

Video

Get things started by watching the session video. You can also use an Anti-Workbook activity as an ice-breaker.

1. Set up

Give each kid a note card, and ask everyone to write down one thing they wish God said. Collect the cards and read them to the group. Invite kids to raise their hands for any of the statements they think God might have said. Pose the question: Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?

2. Watch

“Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?” DVD 1, Chapter 1

3. Unpack

- Which ideas from the video hadn't you thought of before?
- What don't you believe? What surprised you?
- What do you disagree with? What do you agree with? Why?
- So, what do you think? What is still confusing?

What about the Bible?

Tell about a time when you felt inspired in a creative act. The most important thing is that you were carried away in the creative endeavor. Did you know at the time that you were inspired? What was the outcome? How did others respond to what you did? If possible, bring the creative work with you, and offer time for kids to ask you questions.

Questions for conversation:

- Can someone tell if they're inspired? How?
- Have you ever felt inspired? What inspires you?
- Read 2 Timothy 3:16. Do you think the people who wrote the books in the Bible knew their writings would become “holy”? Did they know their work was “inspired”? Why or why not?
- What is your favorite novel? What is the difference between that book and the Bible?

Make sure you've got the obvious stuff for this session—re:form video (DVD or download), Anti-Workbooks, Bibles, pens or pencils, paper, tape, etc.



Get this stuff . . .

Note cards.



in-spi-ra-tion

[in-spuh-rey-shuh n]

Literally, to breathe in. It's what happens when God sparks creativity from the inside out.

Tear here for easy use!

engage

25-30 minutes

Choose 1+ Anti-Workbook (AW) activities to explore the session question. The first 2 are for individual use, while the last 2 involve the whole group.



1. Graffiti Wall, AW p. 10

Use art supplies to graffiti page 10 with an answer to the question, “Who wrote the Bible?” Encourage youth to capture favorite Bible passages or stories through their graffiti. Offer Bible dictionaries and concordances for kids who want to dig deeper.

Questions for conversation while you work:

- How do you define “inspired”?
- Before today, how did you imagine the Bible being written? What about now?
- What did you create in your Anti-Workbook?
- Did you include any favorite Bible passages? What are people saying and doing in these stories? How do they point to God?
- What questions do you still have about the Bible’s authorship?

Where’s this going?

Kids consider their favorite Bible passages and “tag” a graffiti wall to represent where they stand on the Bible’s authorship.

Get this stuff ...

Misc. art supplies: gel pens, paint, markers, colored pens and pencils, etc. Bible dictionaries and concordances.



2. Boxed Out, AW p. 11

Fill in the spaces in the boxing ring on page 11 with different “blows” to the theories that God alone wrote the Bible or that humans alone wrote the Bible.

Questions for conversation while you work:

- Why do you think people disagree about how the Bible was written and assembled?
- How can we deal with difficult Bible passages that don’t seem to make sense today? Or with texts we don’t totally agree with?
- Can you think of other examples of religious writings (or other things) where people disagree about who created it?
- If the Bible was the disputed item in an intellectual property lawsuit between God and the people who wrote the words, who would win and why?
- Why does it matter so much to people who wrote the Bible?
- Do you know people who are skeptical about the Bible? Or who think it was transmitted directly from God to parchment?

Where’s this going?

Kids think about their own responses to claims that “God wrote the Bible so I believe it” or “The Bible was just a book written by people.”



3. Thumb War AW p. 12

Hold a thumb war tournament. Punch out the thumb-wrestling mat on page P1 of the Anti-Workbooks, and fill in the tournament bracket on page 12 with your wrestlers. Each match's winner argues what they think and then progresses to the next round until you have a champion.

Questions for conversation while you work:

- Do you think this is a good way to determine who wrote the Bible? Why or why not?
- Do you think God cares about the argument over who wrote the Bible?
- Do you know what the word "plagiarism" means? Which of the four gospel writers plagiarized the others? Or could something else have been happening?
- If God wrote the gospels, why did it take four different versions to get the job done?
- Is there any way to prove conclusively who wrote the Bible? Can we prove who wrote any of the books of the Bible?
- Jesus quoted the Old Testament all the time. What does this tell you about what God thinks of the Bible?

Where's this going?

Friendly competition in the form of a thumb war gets kids sharing what they believe.

plagiarism [play-juh-riz-um]

Stealing another person's words or ideas and claiming them as your own. (In Bible times, retelling a story to fit the author's context wouldn't have been considered plagiarism like it might be today.)



4. Tower Races, AW p. 13

Create teams of two or three kids. Hand out an equal number of toothpicks, gumdrops, and mini-marshmallows to each team. Give teams 132 seconds to build a free-standing tower on the yellow circle in one of their Anti-Workbooks—in silence! After time is up, use a tape measure to determine the tallest tower.

Questions for conversation while you work:

- What was your favorite part of this activity?
- What's the most challenging part of working together without being able to talk?
- Would it have been easier to build if you could talk with your team members?
- Name some of the benefits of doing this activity with others. Some difficulties?
- When you look at the Bible, what are some of the benefits of having a lot of different writings together in one book? The challenges?
- Compare the foundations of each tower. What designs worked best?
- What does a tower need to be tall and strong?
- How was the Bible designed? What kind of foundation does the Bible have?

Where's this going?

Tower-building gets kids thinking about what makes a solid foundation and the importance of community.

Get this stuff...

Toothpicks. Gumdrops. Mini-marshmallows. Stopwatch. Tape measure.

Back it up...

"At its foundation, the Bible is a true witness to an active moving God and the life of Jesus Christ."

re:form DVD



respond

15-20 minutes

Gather to share the different points of view kids have discovered and developed during the session.

Regroup

Hand out note cards. Ask kids to write 1 question they still have about the Bible. Invite volunteers to share with the rest of the group.

Share

Go around the group and ask each person to share what they've done (if they're comfortable) and explain how they did it and why. Affirm all thoughtful explanations and attempts at the work. Point out 2-3 things about each kid's work that you like best. Invite others to offer thoughtful observations.

Questions for conversation:

- What are three things you learned today about how the Bible was created?
- Do you agree with this statement: "The Bible is the inspired word of God"? Why or why not?
- We don't keep expanding the books of the Bible. Do you think God could still be speaking to us today? How?
- What are some ways to tell the difference between something that's inspired and something that's not?

Send

Stand in a circle and pray Isaiah 55:9-11. Hold the Bible open and ask kids to pray the question from their note card and place the card in the Bible. Ask God to be with the kids as they wrestle with their questions about the Bible.



Get this stuff . . .

Note cards.



Capture it . . .

Use a digital camera, camcorder, scanner, web cam, or audio recorder to capture group conversations and individual pieces of work. Upload them to your online galleries, or ask students to do so.

Tear here for easy use!