


What's this Leader Guide thing?

Tear here for easy use!




Bible Unit
Who wrote the Bible,
God or humans?

Prepare
What's behind all this?


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.



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.


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.

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 workshops knowing of it, producing the *Earth Bridge*."

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



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Outline of the whole session's theological and biblical framework. Use this section to get your head in the theological zone.

Quick overview of the session's purpose and direction.

Wise words from smart people. Use these for a bit more perspective on the topic and quote them if you want to look well-read.

A quick glimpse into adolescent development and how to work with youth. Use this section to zero in on the adolescent mind.

encounter


15 minutes

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.


Video

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

- 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?
- Watch**
"Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?" video.
- 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?



Get this stuff ...
Note cards.




In-spi-ration
[in-spuh-rey-shuh n]
Literally, to breathe in. It's what happens when God sparks creativity from the inside out.

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?



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Guidance for how to set up and discuss the session video. Remember, read this BEFORE the video. Waiting till after is too little too late.

Any supplies you'll need in addition to the basics outlined at the top of the page. Most will be available at any store with the word "mart" in the name. And save your receipts!

Definitions of key terms for the session. Some folks really go for such a thing.


Activities to lay a biblical foundation for kids' discovery in the rest of the session. Use this section to add as much depth to the session as you need, or to keep things moving when you start to lose them.



engage

25-30 minutes

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



Graffiti Wall

Use art supplies to graffiti the brick wall in the Anti-Workbook 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?

2. Boxed Out

Fill in the spaces in the boxing ring in the Anti-Workbook 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 write 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 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.

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."

Back it up . . .
"For the very first people who heard these Bible stories . . . the story could be very "true" indeed, whether or not anybody could prove that it actually happened. The important thing for them was the meaning behind the story—that it demonstrated the character of God."
—reform DVD

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Icon indicates whether the activity was designed with individuals or groups in mind.

Summary of the Anti-Workbook activity's goals. With the right diet and goal-setting, you can do anything!

Directions for facilitating the Anti-Workbook activities. Pick the ones that work best for your group. Allow yourself to GET INVOLVED with the kids' activities.

Helpful session video quote that provides some context for the activity.

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 conversation and individual pieces of work. Upload them to your online galleries, or ask students to do so.

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Closing activity and facilitation notes to help youth reflect on what they've discovered. Use this section to wrap things up.

Reminder to capture kids' responses and share with others via online galleries. Check them out at www.reformgallery.org.

Sending ritual and prayer that challenges kids to continue exploring the session topic. Keep on trucking!

