

# THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

## PART 1: BEGINNINGS

### LESSON 1 || SEEING THE GOSPEL IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE

#### SESSION SNAPSHOT

**NARRATIVE PASSAGE:** John 1:1; John 5:31-40

**GOSPEL FOCUS:** 1 John 1:1-4

#### STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- Understand that the story of the Bible points to Jesus as God's Son, the promised Rescuer of humankind.
- See that Jesus was God's Word made flesh, both the Messenger and the message of God's salvation for all people.
- Accept the call to commit to learning God's story, drawing closer to Jesus as a result.

#### OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this first lesson is to make the case that it's appropriate to read all of Scripture through what we might call a "Jesus filter." It's not a stretch to look for echoes of the Gospel in the biblical narrative. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that all of Scripture ultimately points to Christ. By looking at the words of both Jesus and John, your students will see how true this is. You'll use this lesson as the foundation to study the big-picture story of Scripture and trace the thread of the Gospel through the Bible's narrative.

#### TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



#### BIBLE BACKGROUND

*The Bible Background* is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

#### JOHN

- *Author:* The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation and the three New Testament letters that bear his name.

- *Time frame:* The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- *Purpose:* John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah.

## I JOHN

- *Author:* 1 John was written by John the Apostle. John was one of Jesus' disciples and was referred to as "the beloved disciple." John was probably only a teenager when he spent his three years with Jesus. In addition to 1 John, he authored 2 John, 3 John, the Gospel of John, and Revelation.
- *Time frame:* 1 John was probably written sometime after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, but no later than 90 AD.
- *Purpose:* John wrote to a population (1st-century Christ-followers) who had seen their ranks diminished at the onset of Roman persecution. John was calling his audience to a doctrinally sound and application-oriented faith. He reminded his readers of the teachings of Christ and urged them to put those teachings into practice.

# LESSON PLAN

*The Lesson Plan contains four elements:*

- **GETTING STARTED**— An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**— A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**— A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**— An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

## GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To get your students familiar with identifying the underlying theme in a story.
- *Set-Up:* You’ll want to make sure you’re prepared to mention a few relevant movies and/or books and articulate the underlying theme. We’ve provided some ideas that were new as of the writing of this lesson, but you may want to supplement or update them as needed.

FIRST, explain to your students that this is the first lesson in a series about the story of Scripture. You’ll explain more about this as you go, but for now, kick off the lesson with a little introduction. **Say something like:**

- I want you to think about a really great movie you’ve seen recently. Or, if you haven’t seen any good movies lately, think about the last great book you read or TV show you watched. What was the last movie, show, or book that you just loved?
  - *Allow students to call out answers.* Then, **Say something like:**
- In every story, there are underlying themes that drive the plot. These themes often communicate the deeper message of the story. So, for instance, think of a superhero film, like *Wakanda Forever* or *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. What might an underlying theme be in a movie like this?
  - *Answers might include* “good versus evil,” “the importance of being courageous,” or “some things are worth sacrificing for,” and so on.

THEN, continue with this line of discussion. Ask what the theme might be for a movie like *Inside Out*. Allow students to answer. When you’ve finished this discussion, **Say something like:**

- Sometimes it’s easy to forget that the Bible tells a story, too. It gives us the story of God’s plan to rescue humanity from the consequences of sin. The Bible intimidates many Christ-followers, partly because they don’t understand the overall story of God’s Word. Throughout this series, we’re going to embark on a journey to learn the big-picture story of the Bible. But that’s not all.

Explain to students that just as there are underlying themes to their favorite movies and books, there is an underlying theme in the Bible. Ask if anyone can guess what it might be. Allow students to suggest a multitude of answers without really correcting or re-directing them. When they’ve finished, **say:**

- The underlying theme that runs through the Bible is the Gospel. Plain and simple. In Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written, the word we translate as gospel means “good news.” The Gospel is the good news of God’s love, grace, and mercy poured out through His Son, Jesus. The Gospel is God’s rescue plan, most fully realized in Christ. And if we look for it, we can see echoes of the Gospel threading through the big-picture narrative of Scripture. We’re going to learn the story of the Bible, but we’re also going to see how the Gospel is powerfully evident throughout that entire story.

**ASK IF ANYONE HAS ANY QUESTIONS. IF THEY DON’T, TRANSITION TO THE STORY.**

## THE STORY

- *Goal:* To understand that the story of the Bible points to Jesus as God's Son, the promised Rescuer of humankind.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful for jotting down some notes, but it's not essential.

FIRST, explain that in this lesson, you'll be doing things a little differently than you usually will in future lessons. Explain that in each lesson from this point on, you'll be reading a narrative passage that tells part of the Bible's story. You'll discuss the passage, then look at some supporting verses that point to how you can see the Gospel flowing through the story. This lesson will just serve as an introductory lesson. **Say something like:**

- Today, we're going to ask, "Is it fair or right to look for evidence of the Gospel throughout the Bible?" After all, we don't want to try and read into anything the Bible doesn't make available to us. We want to make sure that all Scripture actually does point to Jesus before we go looking for Him in it.

Explain to students that you're going to discover this by looking at a few passages of Scripture.

THEN, instruct students to find John 1 in their Bible or Bible app. While they're finding it, provide some context for John using the Bible Background. Then, when students have found the passage, read or have a student read John 1:1. When you're finished, lead students in a brief discussion. **Ask:**

- John is talking about Jesus here. Immediately, what jumps out at you about the language he uses to describe Jesus?
  - *Answer:* He calls Jesus "the Word."
- These verses are probably pretty familiar to many of us. But have you ever stopped to think about what John meant? Why do you think John called Jesus "the Word?" Let's start by asking another question. When you hear the phrase "the Word" used in church, what is it most commonly referring to?
  - *Answer:* God's Word. The Bible. Scripture. Traditionally, the Bible has been called "the Word" to refer to the written Word of God.
- So, if the Bible is called the Word, and it's God's message written out, what does it mean that Jesus is called the Word?
  - *Answer:* Jesus is God's message lived out! In Jesus, God's story was no longer confined to written Scripture. Jesus is God's message come to life. In Jesus, we see the Word of God personified.

Explain to students that John helps us understand that Jesus is the perfect expression of God's message of love, mercy, and grace. By sending His Son, God added a rich new dimension to the message of salvation and redemption that He had been telling for centuries. Explain that Jesus Himself helped explain this a little more in John 5:31-40.

NEXT, have students turn over to John 5. Explain that in the passage they are about to read, Jesus was defending His authority against a group of Jews who were hostile to Him. Then, read or have a student read John 5:31-40. When you've finished, lead students in another brief discussion, **asking questions similar to the following:**

- In verse 31, Jesus refers to a rule about witnesses in the Jewish courts. Basically, you had to have a witness if your testimony was to be considered true. So, Jesus is about to provide "witnesses" that support His claims that He is God's Son. In verses 33-35, Jesus references someone who testified about His identity. Who is Jesus talking about?
  - *Answer:* John the Baptist.
- What do you remember about John the Baptist? What did he have to do with testifying to who Jesus was?
  - *Answer:* Remind students that John was part of God's plan to prepare people for Jesus' ministry. John called people to repent from their sins and predicted that someone greater than him, Jesus, would soon be coming on the scene.

- In verses 36 and 37, Jesus discusses two more “witnesses” to His identity and authority. What does He mention here?
  - *Answer:* The works that He does and God the Father.
- Think about the miracles Jesus performed. How do they point to His authority as God?
  - *Answer:* Only God could do the things Jesus did, i.e., healing people, driving out demons, and so on.
- Finally, we get to the verses that, for our purposes, drive home the point we’re after. Look at verses 39–40. Jesus points to a final “witness” that speaks to His identity. What is this “witness”?
  - *Answer:* Scripture.
- Okay, so remember, we’re preparing to search for the thread of the Gospel through the big-picture story of the Bible. So, is that possible? Can we look for Jesus throughout the entire Bible? What do Jesus’ words in verses 39–40 seem to say about that?
  - *Answer:* Jesus says that all Scripture points to Himself.
- When Jesus talks about Scripture to His original audience, what was He talking about? (Hint: Did Jesus’ original audience have the same Bible we have?)
  - *Answer:* The Scripture Jesus’ original audience would have had access to would have been a selection of most of the same Old Testament books we have.

Explain that Jesus makes an excellent point. He says to His audience that by searching the Old Testament stories and prophets, they can find evidence of who He is. **Say something like:**

- It’s pretty cool if you think about it. Jesus said that by reading the creation story, the story of Noah, the account of God calling Abraham to be a father of a great nation, or any other story from the Old Testament, we find evidence of Him. We can search the Bible and find that it all points toward the grace and salvation God would ultimately make available through Jesus. This is powerful!

## THE THREAD

THEN, inform students that at this time in every lesson, you’ll have just studied a narrative passage. This is when you will stop and examine a Gospel-centered passage of Scripture that relates to the story you’ve just studied. Your goal is to trace the thread of the Gospel through the Bible. Explain that today is no different. Explain that you’re going to look at one more place in Scripture that supports what you’ve just learned.

Instruct students to turn to 1 John 1:1–4. If you want, use some of the Bible Background to quickly provide the context for the book of 1 John. Then, read or have a student read 1 John 1:1–4. When they have finished, **ask something similar to the following questions:**

- Once again, John calls Jesus the “word of life.” What is John saying about Jesus in verse 1?
  - *Answer:* That he and others had heard, seen, and even touched Jesus, the Living Word of God.
- Why is this so important?
  - *Answer:* This is the heart of the Gospel! God sent His Son to come to earth and be with us. God loved us so much that He sent His Son to walk among us. That’s what the word “manifest” means in verse 2. The message of the Gospel became a physical reality in Jesus.
- John uses this introduction to provide a reason why he is writing this letter. The language may be a little tricky, but can you grasp why John said he was writing it? (Hint: It’s in verse 3)
  - *Answer:* John says that he is proclaiming, or telling, the truth about Jesus so that those who hear might be welcomed into fellowship with John and other believers, and with God Himself. Essentially, John is talking about coming to faith in Christ through reading about Jesus in the Bible.

Begin to wrap up your time of Bible study by **saying something similar to the following:**

- What John says is at the heart of what we will be talking about throughout the series. Jesus is God's answer to restoring the relationship between Himself and humanity. This relationship was destroyed by sin, and we can only be restored by coming to faith in Jesus and the work He did on the cross for us. The Bible is God's story. We read the Bible, see the Gospel at work, and come to faith in Christ through it. That's what this year is all about. It's going to be an incredible journey.

**FINALLY, IF YOUR STUDENTS HAVE NO MORE QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION.**

## **WRAPPING UP**

- *Goal:* To challenge students to commit to learning God's story and draw closer to Jesus as a result.
- *Set-Up:* No set-up is needed.

FIRST, explain to students that you're about to wrap up. But before you do, ask them to think of one of their closest friends. Give them a second to visualize this person. Then, ask them to comment on how well they know this person's backstory. **Ask questions like:**

- Can you tell me anything about their parents?
- What about their grandparents?
- Can you tell me something they did that they were proud of?
- What about the bad stuff? Can you think of a time when they were going through a tough time?
- Could you tell me your favorite thing about this person's personality? What is it that makes being friends with them so much fun?

*Allow students to answer.* Try to get some students to share details, especially if they are funny or entertaining.

THEN, explain to students that it's hard to truly be friends with someone if you don't know them. Friendship requires a certain level of understanding and knowledge of the other person and their history. Explain that our relationship with God works the same way. **Say something like:**

- The beauty of the salvation God makes available to us is that we don't have to understand every single aspect of who God is before we come to faith in Jesus. We don't have to know the Bible cover to cover before we can accept Jesus as Savior. We can come to salvation through faith in Jesus. That's awesome. But to truly grow closer to God, we need to know His story. To go beyond a surface understanding of who God is requires learning about His character and watching Him work through history. You're going to get a chance to do that, but if you truly want to grow closer to God, you have to be willing to accept the challenge to know Him more.

Explain to students that you want them to consider what it means to take the journey they're about to undertake seriously. Each week they'll have the chance to learn more about God. Challenge them to commit to opening their hearts and seeking how this knowledge of God can lead to life change. Encourage them to be excited about what they're about to experience.

**FINALLY, ASK IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS. IF NOT, WRAP UP YOUR LESSON BY PRAYING FOR YOUR STUDENTS AS THEY LEARN ABOUT GOD'S BIG-PICTURE STORY.**

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 1 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at [feedback@youthministry360.com](mailto:feedback@youthministry360.com).