

The Hows and Whys of Biblical Truth.

KEY IDEAS THIS WEEK

“HOW MUCH OF THE BIBLE IS REALLY TRUE?” It is important to engage this question early, by engaging in a discussion about **What is Truth?** Truth is a complex concept, with many diverse elements and dimensions. Too often today, truth is too narrowly defined; confined to a notion that only what can be observed and measured is true. Under this definition the Scriptures fail the modern moment truth test and are too often relegated as irrelevant.

Good stories engage us intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually. They speak to us on both the personal and universal level, and have varied levels of meaning. All stories need to be interpreted using solid interpretive principles.

Different groups of people interpret the Bible differently, causing disagreements about what any given passage or story in the Scripture means or intends to teach. Catholics take a contextual approach.

OVERVIEW

- 5:15-6:45pm - Small Group Lesson Plan/dismissal

LESSON COMPONENTS

- A. Community Building
- B. Shared experiences by adults and teens
- C. Scripture & Prayer
- D. Catholic Teaching
- E. Putting Faith Into Action
- F. Announcements

OBJECTIVES

1. Review the key ideas from prior sessions.

The **purpose of divine revelation** is to make known the relationship between God and God's people, which we call **salvation history**.

God employs storytelling as a major tool for communicating with us, because of the power of stories.

As Christians we believe the Scriptures convey **divinely revealed truth** – truth only God knows and chooses to share with humankind through the work of inspired human authors who are guided by the Holy Spirit.

All stories need to be **interpreted**.

2. Engage the teens in a discussion about expanding our idea about Truth.

3. In order to understand God's **Revelation** and apply it to our lives, we must follow good **principles of interpretation** by examining the **contexts** in which the **Scriptures** were written.

Many teens report being challenged daily by their non-Catholic Christian peers and relatives on **how** they understand the scripture. Since Bible Study **is** Religious Education for many other Christian communities, teens formed in those traditions, feel confident in expressing what they have been taught and believe to be true. The scriptural literacy of others often **intimidates** Catholic teens, who feel they don't know much about Scripture.

The Non-Believer's Challenge

Other significant people in the lives of teens, adults and peers, who have no personal connection with religious faith, ask them **why** they believe in Scripture. These individuals often reframe Sacred Scripture as belonging to an older, less advanced time of human culture, that are no longer relevant to the search for truth in the post-modern age. They point out internal contradictions within and across the texts and question teachings put forth by some, based on their personal or denominational interpretation of the texts, as at best unenlightened and at worse, socially divisive or dangerous.

- **Community Building - choose 1 (15 min)**
 - **Marshmallow Challenge** - divide your team into groups of four and give each group 20 sticks of spaghetti, one yard of tape, one yard of string, and a marshmallow. Whichever team can build the tallest structure, wins -- the trick is, the marshmallow must be on top. Get's everyone doing something together. Allows you to strengthen your team's brainstorming and problem-solving skills, and your team can also have some fun. A win, win.
 - **The Name Game** (also known as the Adjective Game) starts with one person in the room picking a word that describes himself or herself as a person. The catch is, that the word must start with the first letter of their first name. For example, my students call me Miss Velasquez. I would say "Hello! My name is Vivacious Velasquez." The person after me must say my adjective and name before saying theirs. So they would go, "Hello, Vivacious Velasquez, my name is Silly Sam." Then the third person would go, "Hello, Vivacious Velasquez, and Silly Sam, my name is Easy-going Edwin." This continues on until all of the students have gone. Being last is hilarious in this game, because they must remember everyone's name AND adjective before stating theirs. **Great icebreaker for new groups.**
 - **2 Truths & A Lie** - To start, one person has to give three statements about themselves to the rest of the group. The trick is: all of the statements won't be true—two of the statements given should be and one should be a lie. After you're finished, everyone should guess which statement they think you made up. Once everyone has made their guess, reveal which statement was your lie. Keep the game going by then choosing someone who guessed correctly to go next and then play as many rounds as you'd like. This icebreaker can tie into the discussion on truth.
 - **High-Low** – Teens share a high point and a low point from the previous week. Talkative groups love this; shy types hate it. Best for groups that have been together for a while.

- **Shared experiences by adults and teens (30 min)**
 - **Start by introducing the lesson** (see TH p. 1) You could have the teens fill out the Check-In Box on TH p. 5 to prime the pump or use this activity toward the end of the lesson.
 - **What is Truth?** – (see the ppt Thinking about Truth for background) (10 min)
 - As people of Faith we believe, **God is ultimate reality.**

For those who know and believe God exists, God is the source of everything God is the source of everything seen and unseen, known and unknown. This includes truth.

- A God-centered view of truth demands that we affirm that truth itself comes from God.

Truth encompasses everything God knows

- Help kids visualize truth – direct kids to image on TH p. 4
- The search for what is true is a universal human activity.

Discussion Prompts – feel free to use your own

1. Why is it important to know something is true?
2. What does it mean to say each of us has part of the truth

Option 2: Direct the teens to TH p. and do the image exercise.

Why is it important to know something is true?

CATECHIST NOTES

Community Builders are key in building a sense of unity in a group. You can use these or one's you've found on line.

Background Material

The Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com/>

A non-profit ed-tech organization and animation studio that produces 100% free Bible videos, podcasts, blogs, classes, and educational Bible resources to help make the biblical story accessible to everyone, everywhere. Excellent resource.

PPT Presentation, **Thinking About Truth** that comes with this lesson for ideas about how to structure the conversation with your Teens about What is Truth?

Bible Project Video - **The TaNaKh: the Old Testament Books of Jesus' Time** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALsluAKBZ-c> - (12.43 min) - Great overview of the Old Testament to help you present this concept to your teens. You can decide whether you want to show the video - or a part of it - to your teens.

[SparkNotes: Bible: The Old Testament: Themes, Motifs & Symbols](#)

[The Original Testament | America Magazine](#)

[10 Techniques for Teaching the Bible - CATECHIST Magazine blog](#)

[A Catholic Guide to Understanding The Bible - beginningCatholic.](#)

DEI VERBUM - DOGMATIC

CONSTITUTION

ON DIVINE REVELATION

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html - this is the Vatican II

document on Scripture. Read it in sections.

3. Why do individuals and communities value the truth?

What does the truth provide?

4. How do falsehoods impact truth?



CATECHIST NOTES

You do not have to do all three discussion questions. One will set up the next section which is the heart of the matter:

Interpreting the Bible (10 min)

- Ask the teens to turn to TH p. 2
 - Have them read the cartoon and the boxes
 - Why is the author's intent more important than the reader's intent?
 - Why would we consider the fellow in the cartoon to be misinterpreting the Bible?
 - Can you think of some negative consequences misinterpreting the Bible might have?
 - Ask the teens turn to p1844 in the CYB and find the entry for biblical interpretation. Ask for a volunteer to read it. Have everyone underline or highlight the following phrases
 - Not only what the human authors intended but also what God reveals to humans through their words
 - (1) considering the kind of writing; (2) considering the context of historical time; (3) considering the context of the process of revelation that occurred over time.
 - How could knowing what kind of writing (literary form) the passage uses help us better understand what God is trying to say? **(this is what is meant by literary criticism)**
 - How could knowing about the historical context that influenced the passage itself or the writing of the passage help us better understand what God is trying to say? **(this is what is meant by historical critical method)**
 - How would knowing how a passage/story fits into the overall themes of salvation history help us understand what God is trying to say? **(this is what is meant by Salvation History context)**

Being a contextualist (5 min)

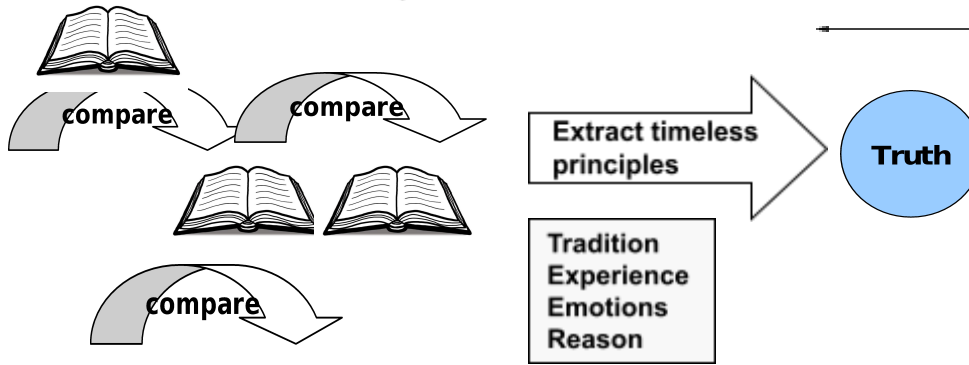
- Ask the teens to turn to p1845 and find the entry – **contextualist**. Ask one of the teens to read it aloud and ask all the teens to highlight it.
 - What does it mean to take something out of context?
 - Why is important to put things into context?
 - Why is it important to put a particular passage story or account from Scripture into context?

- Walk the teens through the diagram on Biblical interpretation on TH3 (see below). (5 min)

If you do not get through all of the material on interpreting the scripture don't worry. You can pick it up at another time. It is more important to get to the Scripture sharing part of the lesson.

Catholics interpret the scriptures contextually. Other Christians may interpret scripture using a different lens or approach. Different approaches yield different results.

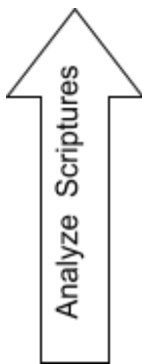
Biblical interpretation in a nutshell



Author's Intent

TIMELESS AUDIENCE

TIMEBOUND AUDIENCE



Step 1: What did it mean then?

- Historical Interpretation
- Literary Interpretation
- Contextual Interpretation

Author's Intent
 ANCIENT AUDIENCE
 CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

Step 2: What is the timeless truth taught?



Step 3: How does it apply to me/us?

CATECHIST NOTES

Walking the teens through the interpretation diagram.

1. The whole point of reading, studying and praying with scripture is to discover **TRUTH** – the wisdom God has and wants to share with humankind.
2. The authors of scripture are always addressing two audiences – people of all times and cultures and people of a particular time and culture.
3. We compare texts, passages, stories, accounts within the Bible and we compare the biblical texts with Tradition, our personal and communal experiences and our thoughts and feelings in order to discover the “heart of the matter” the “timeless truth” God is revealing.
4. As Catholics we believe that particular books, passages, stories, accounts need to be put into **context** in order to yield the best, fullest, most truthful interpretation.

Read slowly enough for the teens to mark the words and phrases that are important to them in the passage.

C. Scripture (20-25 min)

- Ask the teens to locate Genesis 15:1-6 in the Bibles (CYB 43)
- Make sure the teens have a pencil, pen, or highlighter so as they follow along the are *'actively reading'*.
- Introduction (use your own words or those words below).

The passage we are about to read illustrates how God reveals himself as a friend. As you are listening to the passage I want you to follow along in your Bible and underline, circle or highlight the words or phrases that are important to you.

- After the passage is read ask the teens if they want to go back and underline, circle or highlight any other words or phrases.
- Then discuss the passage – see discussion questions below. This box is also on TH p. 6



God's Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 15:1-6

Abraham's faith and trust in God has become a model for Jews, Christians and Muslims. All three of these religions trace their faith back to Abraham. He embodies for all three what it means to have a deep and personal friendship with God.

- What does this passage tell us about Abraham?
- What does this passage tell us about God?
- What does this passage tell us about the relationship between Abraham and God?
- God assures Abraham saying, ***"Do not fear, Abram! I am your shield."*** Have you ever experienced God as your shield, your protection against fear? If so how did that make you feel? How does thinking about God being your shield make you feel right now?
- God took Abraham outside and had him try to count the stars as a way of showing Abraham how many descendants he would have. What signs does God show us about his willingness to be faithful to us?
- How does knowing the story of Abraham help us trust God?
- How does Abraham's faith in God help us to believe in God more readily?

Suggest to your teens that they might like to re-read the passage over again during the week and think about how they are like Abraham - a person in need of God's friendship.

CATECHIST NOTES

5. Scripture always has something to say to us and the issues we are facing in our lives. ***When we read or listen to scripture we are having a conversation with God.***

Even non-believers see the sacred texts of all religions as a source of human wisdom.

SMALL GROUP TIP

Active reading simply means reading something with a determination to understand and evaluate it for its relevance to your needs. Simply reading and re-reading the material isn't an effective way to understand and learn. Actively and critically engaging with the content can save you time.

Active reading strategies

1. Underline or highlight key words and phrases as you read.
2. Make notes in the margin to summarize points, raise questions, challenge what you've read, jot down examples and so on.
3. Ask questions of the text
 - Who wrote it?
 - When was it written?
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - Does it link with other material you've read/studied? Is it an excerpt from a longer piece of text?
 - Why do you think it was written?

Does any of this sound familiar in light of teaching scripture?!

• **Putting Faith Into Action (3-5 min)**

- Direct the teens to TH5 and identify one thing they will do in the coming week because they were at class tonight. If you have time have them share what they wrote.
- If you feel you have done a lot of sharing this week, you might choose to close the session with the Prayer Have the Faith of Abraham below and on TH5 or read the 10 Things God wants you to remember TH4 and have the teens highlight the 1 or 2 promises God makes to us in the O.T. that they feel they will most need in the coming week.

Have the Faith of ABRAHAM!

When all else fails,
believe a Promise of **God**.
Have the faith of Abraham!

"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed." Rom 4:18
"He was fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised." Rom 4:21

Believe for yourself the promises of **God**,
given to you in **Christ Jesus**.

When all else fails,
faith in the promises of **God**
will sustain you,
will uphold you, and
will not let you down.

Hold tight to this faith!

For Abraham believed the promise of **God**,
and it was credited to him as righteousness.

Now what about you --

Are You Believing A Promise of God?

Poem by Ken Pilcher, Jr. © All Rights Reserved/ www.faithclub.org

• **Announcements (2 min)**

Your next class is the Christian service class. Please remind your class what you will be doing and where/when they should meet you.

CATECHIST NOTES

SMALL GROUP TIP

Time for personal reflection is an important part of every group meeting. Teens need to make the information presented their own. Don't skip this part of the lesson.

PRAYING is one of the things the teens identified as one of their needs. Remember to **set the stage** for prayer.

- gather everyone in a tight circle
- instrumental music might be good in the background or use a Christian Rock song - the following are all available on YouTube

- Aaron Shust - To God Alone
- Kari Jobe - We Cry Out
- Lauren Daigle - Trust In You
- Hillsong United - Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)
- 'Journey of life_Cadence' - heavy rock.

LESSON PREPARATION NOTES:

Is there something I want to pick up or go over from last week's class?

My community building activity this week will be

What parts of the lesson will the Peer Ministers lead/facilitate?

Do I need anything from the Faith Office prior to class?

Other _____

CATECHIST NOTES

Things I will need for class this week:

The Key Ideas/Objectives for this week are

Things I need to consult Teen Faith about

Other _____
