

So What?

Relating Faith to Life & Life to Faith

Thanks for downloading the *Getting Started Guide* from *So What?* youth Bible studies!
This file contains information to help you understand how to use the studies:

- Step-by-Step Prep (pp. 2-3)
- Understanding What's Here (pp. 4-5)
- Leading an Effective Study (p. 6)
- Using Digital Resources (p. 7)

SO WHAT...

... does the Bible say?

Teenagers have questions. God's Word has answers. That's why Scripture is the heart of each session. Students will examine what the Bible says, learn what it means, and see how it relates to their lives.

... questions does the Bible answer?

A good question has remarkable power to stimulate and engage critical thinking skills. Each session of *So What?* zeros in on 1 major question and answer, allowing students to focus on the truth of Scripture.

... difference does it make?

Students are asking, *How does the Bible apply to my life? How can I live out what I believe? So what difference does faith in Christ make?*



The question "So what?" captures in a nutshell this series' primary purpose: that God the Holy Spirit will work through the study of his Word to bring about students' ownership of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Learn more at
www.sowhatstudies.org

getting started guide

Every So What? Leader Kit includes:

Leader Guide



Examine Student Bible Study



(either a booklet or individual studies)

Student Devotional Journal



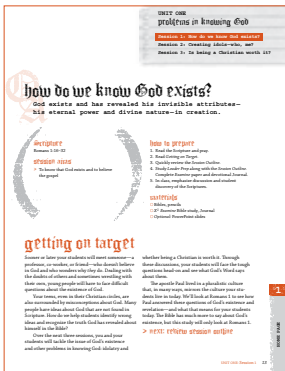
(either separate or included in Examine booklet)

Online Resources

- PowerPoint shows
- Digital Devotional
- Training resources and more!

sowhatstudies.org

Ready to go? Step-by-step session prep:



Leader Guide
Session 1, Home Page

STEP 1: Understand the big picture.

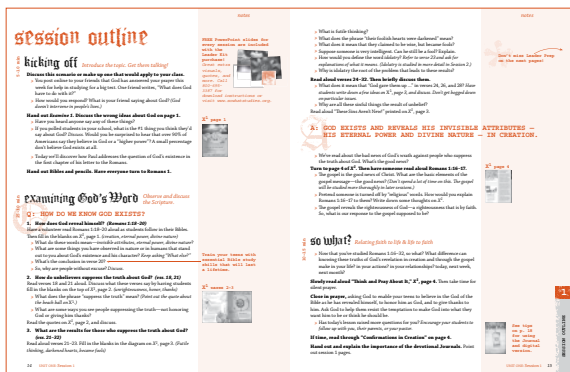
- Read the major question and answer.
- Look over the session aims and the materials needed.
- Read *Getting on Target*. This is the “why” of the session. It sets the parameters of the study. Every passage of Scripture has many truths to explore, but they all can’t be covered in 30 minutes to an hour. This focuses your attention on the scope of the session and what will be covered in later sessions or in other series.

STEP 2: Pray and read the Scriptures.

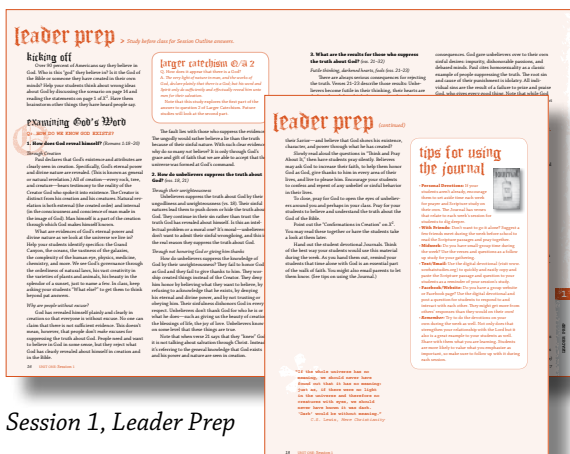
- Pray, asking God to teach you as you read and meditate on the Bible passage. Make notes on what you learn.
- Ask yourself: *How does the Scripture passage apply to me? What would my students think about this passage? What questions might they ask? How does it relate to their world?* Pray for your students.

So What? has 10 studies in the series. This guide uses *Knowing the God Who Is* as an example.

Don't cheat your students! The student Bible study contains diagrams, questions, quotes, and illustrations not in the Leader Guide or PowerPoint shows. It's essential for students to use as a discovery tool, teaching them how to study God's Word.



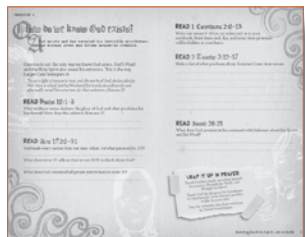
Session 1, Session Outline



Session 1, Leader Prep



Examine 1 Student Bible Study



Devotional Journal, Session 1

STEP 3: Read the Session Outline.

- This is your in-class discussion guide. Familiarize yourself with the questions and the study. The explanations and answers to the questions are on the following pages, in *Leader Prep*.
- Make notes about other questions to ask your group.
- **Bonus!** A PowerPoint show for each session is included with the Leader Kit purchase. Browse the slides to determine how you will use them during your session. See more on p. 7.

STEP 4: Study Leader Prep.

- *Leader Prep* contains Bible commentary, answers to in-class questions, and other tips to prepare, including activity options and more.
- Study it in conjunction with the *Session Outline* and student Bible study, titled *Examine*, which contains material not in the Leader Guide.
- Note that it is divided into three sections, which match the *Session Outline: Kicking Off, Examining God's Word, and So What?* (Read about this in detail on pages 4–5.)

STEP 5: Complete *Examine* Bible study.

- The student Bible study, called ***Examine***—noted with the letter X and session number, as in **X¹**—is used by each student during the study. Fill it out as you study the *Session Outline*.
- The major question and answer will always be printed in the studies, along with Scripture passages, questions, places to take notes, diagrams, and more. *Examine* contains material that isn't in the Leader Guide and vice versa, so don't leave this piece out! They are integrated together. It's essential to keeping your students' attention while teaching them to study God's Word.

STEP 6: Complete devotional Journal.

- Complete the devotional that relates to the session to encourage your own growth. Then remind students to use it during the week for their personal Bible study and prayer. You may also use it as a guide for your midweek meeting.
- **Bonus!** A digital version of the devotional is included with the Leader Kit purchase. Use it in the way best suited to your group: email or text students with a question each day, post it to your group's Facebook page, or more. See more on p. 7.

understanding what's here

At first glance, you may think that the best way to use this material is to lecture from the Leader Prep pages. But no—your students will retain much more from class if they discover truths for themselves as they read the Scriptures and discuss what it means together, with you as their guide. This material is designed to help you accomplish this task. It may take a little more thought and preparation on the front end, but it is well worth the effort!

After you have studied God's Word and the leader materials, you will be prepared to help your students discuss and apply the biblical truths set forth in each session. Pray that the Holy Spirit would illumine your hearts and minds to understand and embrace the truths of Scripture.

Session Outline

session outline

1 Kicking off Introduce the topic. Get them talking!

Discuss this anecdote or make up one that would apply to your class.

- You post notes in your friends that God has answered your prayers. This week he helps in studying for a big test. One friend writes, "What does God do with us?"
- How would you respond? What is your friend saying about God? God doesn't intervene in people's lives.

Hand out Exercise 2. Discuss the wrong ideas about God on page 1.

- Have your handout explain some of the wrong ideas about God.
- If you polled students in your school, what is the #1 thing you think they'd say about God? Discuss. Would you be surprised to hear that over 90% of Americans say they believe in God or a "higher power"? A small percentage don't believe God exists at all.
- Today we'll discover how Paul addresses the question of God's existence in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans.

Hand out Bible and pencils. Have everyone turn to Romans 1.

Examining God's Word Observe and discuss the Scripture.

Q1: HOW DO WE KNOW GOD EXISTS?

1. How does God reveal himself? (Romans 1:18-20)

Have students read Romans 1:18-20 and answer the questions in their Bibles. Then fill in the blanks on p. 1, page 1. (creation, eternal power, divine nature)

What do these words mean—visible attributes, eternal power, divine nature?

- What are some things you have observed in nature or in humans that stand out to you about God's existence and his character? Keep saying "What else?"
- What is the conclusion in verse 20?
- So, why do people without natural revelation deny God?

2. How do unbelievers suppress the truth about God? (Rom. 1:21-23)

Read verses 18 and 21 aloud. Discuss what these verses say by having students fill in the blanks on the top of p. 2. (suppression, inner, denied)

What does the word "suppress" mean? (Point out the word "suppress" in the Bible.)

What are some ways you see people suppressing the truth about God or trying to deny him?

Read the question on p. 2, page 2, and discuss.

3. What are the results for those who suppress the truth about God? (Rom. 1:24-32)

Read aloud verses 21-23. Fill in the blanks in the diagram on p. 3. (Futile thinking, defiled hearts, become filthy)

Major Sections of Each Session

- 1 Kicking Off
 - 2 Examining God's Word
 - 3 So What?
- Q Major Question
- A Major Answer

Leader Prep

leader prep

1 Kicking off

Over 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God. What is the "gap" they believe in? Is it the God of the Bible or someone they have created in their own mind? Help your students think about this and read the Scriptures on page 1 and discuss the questions on page 1 and 2.

2 Examining God's Word

Q1: HOW DO WE KNOW GOD EXISTS?

1. How does God reveal himself? (Romans 1:18-20)

Paul declares that God's existence and attributes are clearly seen in creation. Specifically, God's eternal power and divine nature are revealed. This is known as general or natural revelation. All of creation—every rock, tree, and creature—bears testimony to the reality of the Creator God who pulled it into existence. The Creator is distinct from his creation and his creatures. Natural revelation is both external (the created order) and internal (the consciousness and conscience of man made in the image of God). Man himself is a part of the creation through which God makes himself known.

What are evidences of God's eternal power and divine nature as we look at the universe as we live? Help your students identify specific: the Grand Canyon, the oceans, the patterns of the galaxies, the complexity of the human eye, physics, medicine, chemistry, and more. We see God's governance through the orderliness of natural laws, his vast creativity in the varieties of plant and animal, his beauty in the splendor of a sunset, just to name a few. In class, keep asking your students "What else?" to get them to think beyond gut answers.

Why are people without natural revelation?

God has revealed himself plainly and clearly in creation so that everyone is without excuse. We can claim that there is not sufficient evidence. This doesn't mean, however, that people should stop looking for revealing the truth about God. People need not wait to believe in God to some extent, but they reject what God has clearly revealed about himself in creation and in the Bible.

2. How do unbelievers suppress the truth about God? (Rom. 1:21-23)

Though they are agnostics, unbelievers suppress the truth about God by their suppression and suppression. In 10, "What would someone lead them to push down or hide the truth about God? They continue in their sin after they treat the truth through which God makes himself known. This is an intellectual problem as a result of 8's mind—unbelievers don't want to admit their sinful wrongdoing, and this is the main reason they suppress the truth about God." (Rom. 1:21-23)

How do unbelievers suppress the knowledge of God by their unbelief? They fail to honor God as God and they fail to give thanks to him. They worship created things instead of the Creator. They deny him himself by believing what they want to believe, by refusing to acknowledge that he exists, by denying his eternal Lord, divine power, and by not trusting or obeying him. Their sinfulness dishonors God in every way. Unbelievers don't think God has to be as we have him—such as giving us the beauty of creation, the blessing of life, the joy of life. Unbelievers have no sense that God does these things for us.

What does verse 21 say about the way they "know" God, it is not talking about what they know through Christ. Instead, it's referring to the general knowledge God exists and his power and divine nature as seen in creation.

leader prep

2 Examining God's Word

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kicking off

Through an activity, game, or discussion, **Kicking Off 1** is a time to introduce the topic and get students talking about it. As you spark interest, you are helping your teens understand the importance and relevance of the session.

It is also time to "set the hook" for the lesson. If your students don't

(continued on page 5)

understanding what's here (continued)

connect to the central question, they will tune out. Allow time for them to become personally engaged in the topic and interested in learning the answers to their own questions. This is a time for you to learn what questions or misconceptions they might have, to put the topic into context, and to find out what they know and *don't* know. It's equally important for the students to realize at the outset that they don't have all the answers! Provide a safe, accepting atmosphere for individual responses and comments. Wrong ideas may be raised here, which will be corrected and answered through their study of Scripture. Don't be put off by silence; give your students time to think about questions. Resist the temptation to fill silences with your own words.

Examining God's Word

Once you capture your students' interest, you will proceed to the heart of the session—the study of the Bible in *Examining God's Word* ②. This is where the major question ② of the session is posed. It is printed in the student Bible study, *Examine*, and is the guiding question.

The most important thing is to allow your students to explore the Scripture for themselves. Through these modified inductive Bible studies, your students will discover the truths of Scripture with you as their teacher and guide. See page 6 for a detailed explanation of a modified inductive Bible study and tips on leading your group.

This section closes with the major answer ③ to the major question. The major answer summarizes the main truth for your students to learn and retain. The Q&A are also printed in the student *Examine* Bible study. There are many truths in each passage of Scripture. The major Q&A are intended to help you focus the session and avoid “rabbit trails” when you only have 30 minutes to an hour. Students will learn much more than just the major Q&A. Trust the Holy Spirit to instruct and transform the hearts and lives of your students as they study God's Word.

so what?

Relating faith to life and life to faith is the point of this series. After your teens have explored the Scripture and discovered what it says, they need to actively engage with its truth. What difference does this make in the way your teens think and live? Because we all need to see relevance in what we study, this last part of the session stresses personal application of biblical truths.

So What? ③ is the time to drive home the point. You are challenging your teens to interact with the passage and apply it to their lives. Asking the “so what” questions pushes them to think beyond a simple summary to broader implications and application of biblical truths. Use this time to encourage them to think, believe, or act differently because of what they have learned.

Plan your discussion time carefully so that you don't omit this section. It is possible for students to study the main point of the session without answering the “so what” questions for themselves. You may need to choose just one or two of the application questions if time is limited, but don't let this opportunity slip by without some response to God's Word!

Scripture

All Scripture in this series is from the English Standard Version (ESV). There are a number of excellent study Bibles that will help in your preparation. Consult your pastor for recommendations.

Examine Bible Study



Essential to every session!

Don't Lecture!

The *Session Outline* comes before the *Leader Prep* section. It's organized this way to help you, as leader, remember to teach from the *Session Outline* and not the study notes. This reflects the goal of the *So What?* Bible studies: your students will relate their faith to their lives when they are engaged with God's Word, you, and each other. Lecturing does not accomplish this.

leading an effective study

The *So What?* series of Bible studies may be used with small groups, large classes, Sunday school classes, discipleship groups, and more. However you use it, *So What?* is designed to provide your group with a modified inductive Bible study. What is a modified inductive Bible study? Read on ...

Bible study

Each session is rooted in the study of the Bible. The Scriptures are your “textbook” and the *Examine* student Bible studies are the guide for each passage. Because the Bible is the infallible Word of God, the source of life, and the gospel of Christ, each session is centered on reading and understanding God’s Word.

what is “inductive”?

A good question has remarkable power. By asking questions during the study of Scripture, the students discover answers from the Bible. There are three ways the inductive method does this:

1. **Observation:** What does the passage say?
2. **Interpretation:** What does the passage mean?
3. **Application:** What does the passage mean for me, others in the group, and others in general?

Additional specific questions are posed in the *Session Outline* and the *Examine* Bible studies in each of these three areas as well.

what is “modified”?

This inductive approach is called “modified” because you are not only asking the observe, interpret, and apply questions. You have the essential role as teacher-leader. The session is not the time for you to encounter the text for the first time and ask inductive questions. Instead, you lead while also *teaching*. You provide background, contextual information, and definitions of words and terms—*teaching*—if the students are going to discover and understand what the Scriptures say. However, this does not mean you will be lecturing.

How are you a leader *and* a teacher? You:

- determine what will be studied,
- see that the lesson aims are accomplished,
- add your own additional questions to the session outline,
- keep the discussion focused,
- summarize the truths, and
- see that students understand the main question and answer for each study. (See “What’s Your Role?” sidebar as well.)

We will be adding resources and help on leading a modified inductive Bible study at www.sowhatstudies.org. Join the conversation with others in ministry today as you “relate faith to life and life to faith.”

what’s your role?

- You are the discussion leader—not a lecturer.
- You provide accurate instruction, context, definitions of words, etc.
- You keep the students focused on the Bible truth and session aims.
- You guide the discussion to ensure students complete the study in the allotted time.
- You understand the basics of group dynamics to ensure that your students are interacting well with the passage, the study, and each other.
- You avoid the dreaded outcome where students have only shared their ignorance and left with conclusions that aren’t based on the Bible.

“This material is accomplishing two things: teaching youth and teaching adults how to lead inductive Bible study.”

youth leader

using Digital resources

When you purchase a Leader Kit, you get access to digital downloads to help you get the most out of each session. (The free lesson download includes samples of the digital items.)

powerpoint

A PowerPoint show is provided to accompany each session. It does not replace the *Session Outline* or *Examine* student Bible studies. The slides are supplementary, providing extra visuals, illustrations, and other items as they relate to the session. It may help in a large classroom setting to keep students tracking along, reminding them of the major Q&A or what Scripture passage you're studying. To best use PowerPoint, go through each show before class and think about the most effective way to use it with your students. You may also print one copy to display if you don't have access to a projector. Note that these slide shows are copyrighted and may not be distributed.



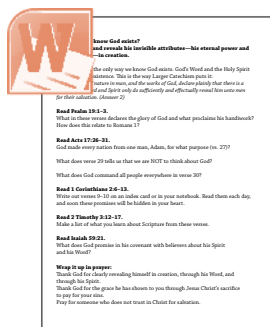
PowerPoint Slide

System requirements: Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 and newer. If you don't have PowerPoint, a free viewer is available at www.microsoft.com/downloads. Note: We are unable to provide technical support.

Digital devotional

The printed student devotional Journal contains 13 sessions with Scripture passages and questions for students to reflect on during the week. The digital devotional is a Word document that contains the same Scripture and questions as the printed version. The electronic text can be used in a variety of ways:

- **Email:** Copy and paste the day's Scripture passage and question. Send it to your group or individuals and invite them to reply. Use the opportunity to remind them that you are praying for them.
- **Text:** Send your students a text message of a verse or question. Or simply remind them of the weekly major question and answer. You may also use texting to ask how their week is going or check in another way.
- **Facebook/group website:** Post the verse and question on your group's page and encourage interaction. Your students will enjoy hearing others' thoughts and ideas, and it may encourage them to use their devotional Journals when they see peer responses.



Digital Devotional

System requirements: Microsoft Office Word 2007 and newer. Note: We are unable to provide technical support.

website

Visit www.sowhatstudies.org to find more training resources and interact with others in ministry. It is also place to let us know what you think about *So What?* youth Bible studies.



www.sowhatstudies.org

- Bonus Resources
- Articles
- Training Videos
- Tips and more!

"The best thing that came out of the devotional email connection was some of the kids emailed me individually, which I responded to. And one of the students emailed me a school situation that was an excellent illustration of the previous session: exchanging the truth of God for a lie."

leader using *So What?*