

VOICES

HEARING GOD
IN A WORLD OF
IMPOSTORS

OLD TESTAMENT

Leader's Guide

by

pam gillaspie

VOICES

HEARING GOD IN A WORLD OF IMPOSTORS

OLD TESTAMENT

My fellow leaders, this study has been harder for me to write than any other to this point. Because of the ear-tickling days we live in, I have felt not merely called but also compelled to write it. As you lead your students through this study, I want to caution you with the same truth that I have had to live with day in and day out in writing and week in and week out in leading: Let the Scriptures speak for themselves. There are many strong opinions on this topic today, evidenced by several books currently on Christian best-seller lists. Rather than striking and calling out specific books, authors, and genres based on opinions, let's ask God to establish us in His Truth and make His Word our plumb line to measure all else. His Word is truly "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). Let's allow it to do its good and perfect work and do our best not to get in the way.

Many blessings,

pam

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Voices Old Testament

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WEEK ONE

What Voices are Calling?

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		10 min.	Class Basics • Introductions • Ground Rules • How to Use this Study
Segment 2:		5 min.	Inductive Study Basics
Segment 3:		15 min.	Presuppositions and Current Views
Segment 4:		15 min.	Foundations: 2 Timothy 2:14-17; 2 Peter 3:14-18; Hebrews 1:1-2
Segment 5:		15 min.	Back to the Beginning
			Genesis 1; 2:15-8; 3:1-5, 9-13

BEFORE YOU START**HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:****The Basics**

Well here you are! You've either been called, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news – *Voices* is designed to be flexible to both students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifting. With this in mind, please use the Leader's Guide to help you prepare to lead a *Voices* group. Always remember that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules and edicts.

Although presented as an 8-week study with weekly homework, *Voices* can be stretched over a longer period of time with "homework" sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through smaller portions of a lesson together. Thus, it is possible for this 8-week Bible study to flex and expand to fill a 16-week session or more depending on how deep you and your students want to go.

For those who have ample time and are running an 8-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. This person can be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. With the advance of technology, it's now possible to bring in people from other parts of the country or the world to talk to your class via tools like Skype. Additional people and material mix things up and keep the class on its toes. This additional week gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide – that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others also! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only less traumatic but also filled with great joy!

Small groups or Sunday School classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson but study groups will benefit from additional talk points and material.

About the Leader Guide

This leader guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just like there are many ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Each week we'll suggest a time frame for running the class one or two hours. You'll find background information and suggested discussion questions. Always look for

* Skype is a free service that allows you to use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to your class. Learn more at www.skype.com.

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opportunities to help your students move from Observation and Interpretation to Application. We want them to learn the truths of Scripture not so they can win at Bible trivia but so that their thinking will be renewed and their actions will more and more reflect the One they belong to (Romans 12:1-2).

For the sake of space, we typically list only suggested discussion questions. Also, when possible we'll leave space for you to fill in your own thoughts so you don't have to go flipping back and forth between the student book and the leader guide. Finally, you may look at the material and think, "There is no way that I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson.

Inductive Focus

Each week we'll focus on one facet of inductive study to help students build their skills and confidence in the inductive process.

Starting on Time

One way to start on time every week is to read through the week's main text(s) at the beginning of class. In doing this you will reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. As odd as it may sound, when we study deeply the temptation to stray away from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you will reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS

Introductions and Ground Rules

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class members introduce themselves**
- **Set boundaries (see below)**

Make sure you allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will require and double it. Asking everyone to share their name and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for "a little bit about yourself," you're sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect.

You'll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. The time to set effective boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed,

but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies to both how you will lead your class discussions and how you will let your class interact with you throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask them to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day off-limits. My classes know I rarely answer the phone when my kids are home from school. That is my boundary. When they are home, my primary job is being their mom. Your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. No one has all the answers, even those who have studied a lifetime. While acknowledging your limitations may seem uncomfortable at first, you'll find it is freeing for everyone! If someone asks a question you can't answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers – who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them learn how to ask right questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, "I don't know."

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Basics of the study guide and philosophy

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the "How to use this study" page of their books and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy and not guilt. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find the fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guiltting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God's Word and ask His Spirit to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take some time to read the "How to use the study" page (prior to Week One) with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Take special care in stressing the flexibility to long-time Precept-Upon-Precept students as many have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God's Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mind set, however, can throw people off with a flexible study. Because the material is designed to flex to

CROWD BREAKER

In the book of Hebrews, we're told that Abraham "when he was called . . . went out, not knowing where he was going."

Where is the most interesting place God has had you live so far?

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very advanced students, the volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every question and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won't finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will, but probably not every week. If every student finished every week, the study would not be flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced students. The goal in allowing the material to flex is not to have people study less; it is to have each person take the next appropriate step from where they currently are and to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.

SEGMENT #2: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS

Observation | Interpretation | Application

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take some time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but giving them an overview will help put them in context! You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries about the Bible, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.

1 Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?

What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?

When did or will the events recorded occur?

Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?

Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?

How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?

Careful observation leads to interpretation – discovering what the text means.

One important part of observing the text involves identifying key words. A key word helps to “unlock” the meaning of the text. It is vital to understanding the text and is often repeated.

2 Interpretation

The more you observe, the greater you'll understand God's Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we'll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand God's message that was communicated to the original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

3 Application

After we've observed the text and discovered the meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although the text of Scripture has one interpretation – what God inspired the author to write to his original readers – we can have numerous applications. The result is a transformed life – the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

It is exciting to learn and know about the faith of others. It is transforming to live what we have learned!

SEGMENT #3: Presuppositions and Current Views

If you have enough people in your class to break into small groups, do so and have the groups discuss presuppositions students are bringing to the class. If you have a small class, simply discuss the questions on page 4 together.

If you've broken into groups, pull them back together to see what each one discussed.

How do you think God speaks today? Why?

If someone said, "God told me to . . .", how would you respond?

Do you think the Bible is authoritative? Why or why not?

Do you think the Bible is sufficient? Is it "enough" to answer life's questions? Why or why not?

SEGMENT #4: Foundations: 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 3:14-18; Hebrews 1:1-2

- Key Talk Point:**
- All Scripture is inspired and sufficient.
 - We're exhorted to learn and continue in what *has already been* revealed.

Context/Comments: Paul, Peter, and the author of Hebrews each direct readers back to what has already been revealed.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

In his final letter before his death at the hands of Rome, Paul writes final orders and exhortations to Timothy. Having just talked about coming evil days and godless, persecuting people earlier in chapter 3, Paul commands Timothy to continue in the revealed truth that he knows. The contrast drawn between a scripturally-grounded man of God and the wicked of "the last days" could not be more stark.

The scripturally-grounded man is adequate (Greek *artios*, noun: complete, totally fitted to fulfill a purpose) and equipped (Greek *exartizo*, verb: compound verb form of *artios*: to totally equip, make fully ready to roll). To use a military metaphor, don't think of a new recruit with a gun ("adequate"); think of Black Op forces thoroughly trained and ready for the mission at hand. This is because God has given us truth. He has given Scripture that is inspired (Greek *theopneustos*: God-breathed) that is profitable for:

- teaching,
- reproof,
- correction,
- training in righteousness.

Conversely, the wicked of "the last days" will oppose truth and proclaim lies. While godless, these last-day "lovers of self" and "haters of good" will hold to a "form of godliness" and weak women will be "always learning" yet "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Does this seem similar to what you see around you?

Paul tells Timothy in verse 14 to continue in what he has learned and become convinced of, the sacred writings (Old Testament Scriptures) which give the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ. The Old Testament comprehends the truth he learned from his mother and grandmother, Paul, and ultimately God Himself who inspired ALL Scripture.

The bottom line in this is that a person cannot *continue* in something he does not already understand. This is a huge issue in the church today where many assent to truths they don't understand.

2 Peter 3:14-18

By the time Peter writes his second letter, at least some of Paul's letters are circulating. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, affirms Paul's writings as Scripture.

He describes Paul as a wise, beloved brother but acknowledges that his writings contain some things that are “hard to understand.” If Peter had a hard time understanding some of Paul’s writings, it’s a good bet they won’t all be a slam dunk for us. Encourage your students with these words while assuring them that the Spirit will guide and help them understand God’s Word appropriately.

As with Paul, Peter contrasts bearers of truth with promoters of error. While the beloved and wise brother Paul speaks “some things hard to understand,” the unlearned (Greek: *amathes*) and unstable (Greek: *asteriktos*) distort not only Paul’s letters but also “the rest of Scripture.” While they may persist for a time, Peter says this path leads to their ultimate destruction (Greek *apoleia*: completely destroyed, ruined). *Apoleia* is used by every NT author except James and Jude and is frequently coupled with *aionios* (everlasting). These unprincipled men (*athesmos*) are marked by error (*plane*) that threatens to carry people away.

Peter tells them not to turn a blind eye. They know the threat and they must guard against it. The way to stand against error is to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of the Lord.

We are seeing this increasingly today. Certainly many dismiss the Bible as an authority outright but many others pose as brothers, claiming the Bible is their authority but paradoxically distorting texts to promote their *sin du jour*. Threats from the “outside” are easy to spot. Threats from the “inside” are far more insidious because the Church is typically a high-trust environment. The danger to Peter’s readers is the same danger we face today. Those who twist and distort the Scriptures threaten to carry people away with them and cause the steadfast (Greek: *sterigmos*; also established) to fall.

The way to fight this threat is to stand on Scripture. When we know truth for ourselves, when we are taught by it, reprovved by it, corrected by it, and trained by it, we are equipped not only to serve but to stand. We cannot expect to recognize distortion if we don’t first know truth.

Hebrews 1:1-2

Hebrews points to a shift in the way God speaks. Long ago He spoke:

- in many portions and in many ways,
- to the fathers in the prophets.

The entire Bible was not revealed all at once; it came progressively, piece by piece over time. In the Son, though, revelation is complete. “In these last days”—and the last days refer to the time since the first coming of Christ—“God has spoken [Greek *laleo*: an aorist indicative] to us in His Son.” Jesus is God’s final and complete Word. New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce puts it this way, “The story of divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ, but there is no progression beyond Him” (in Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Hebrews* (Vol. 15, p. 27). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House).

While we will explore the Holy Spirit’s leading particularly in the New Testament portion of our study, it is important to remember that in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God has said everything He intended to say. The tenses of *laleo* here are telling. Both references to God speaking—long ago (v. 1) and in these last days (v. 2)—

are aorist verbs, the first a participle (“having spoken”) and the second an indicative (literally “spoke”). Unlike a present tense that indicates continuous or ongoing action, aorists usually (particularly in the indicative) picture actions as completed. God spoke to the fathers and God spoke in His Son.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Again, if you have a large group, let your students discuss these questions around tables and then bring it back for a large group summary discussion. I suggest giving them one set of questions at a time.

How does 2 Timothy 3:14-17 compare with 2 Peter 3:14-18 in its view of Scripture? What commonalities do you see? Did you note any differences? What is the focus of each text?

According to 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 3:14-18, how is the man of God's relationship to Scripture different from that of the untaught and unstable? How is each affected by Scripture? What does each do with it? (See also 2 Timothy 2:15.)

What specifically does Paul say about Scripture? What characterizes it? What can it do? What benefits does it offer?

How have you seen this to be true in your life? Are you taking full advantage of what God offers us in His Word?

How do the untaught and unstable distort Scripture today? How can you begin to identify this more accurately and oppose distortions?

When Paul and Peter point their readers toward truth, what do they instruct them to do? How does this relate to the completed revelation described in Hebrews 1:1-2?

What does Hebrews say about how God has spoken? What was everything leading up to?

Summarize what these three texts teach about God speaking and Scripture.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE SECTIONS:

As we move into more historical narrative sections of Scripture we will provide overview material to help you with the general direction and flow of the discussion but not with extensive detail in the manner in which we covered doctrinal issues regarding the nature of Scripture itself. Here are some basic guidelines for each section of the text:

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #5: Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1, 2:15-18, 3:1-5, 9-13

Key Talk Points: When God speaks, good things happen.

The serpent speaks doubt and lies.

Genesis 1

When God speaks in Genesis 1 good things happen. Creation as we know it comes into existence. Over and over we see the repeated phrase "it was good." Six times the text notes that God saw that what He created was good (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Then Genesis 1:31a says "God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good."

God speaks the world into existence and then He pronounces blessings on creatures, on man and woman, and on the seventh day. The sharp contrast we'll soon see is that while God's words bring life and blessing, the serpent's lies bring death and the curse. His common command to animals and human beings is to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. A blessing is tied to this command (see 1:22, 28). In fact it is part of the fulfillment of the blessing that He gives. Additionally, He commands man (male and female: 1:27, 28; also "the man became as one of us" includes Eve) to subdue and rule the earth.

It is interesting that God also blesses the seventh day (2:3) “because in it He rested.” The workaholics among us would do well to consider that one with more than a passing glance.

Genesis 2:15-18

Amid the positive commands God gives the people and creatures, there is a single prohibition and even that is contained in a much greater “You may freely” statement. In Genesis 2:16-17 God says “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” One “Don’t.” They had one “Don’t” with a clearly defined result: eat from it and “you will surely die” (2:17). Unfortunately, that’s all it took. They could eat anything else. Anything. There was no ambiguous command and there was a clear judgment for disobedience.

Genesis 3:1-5

The text describes the serpent as “more crafty” (Hebrew: *arum*) than any beast of the field. He engages the woman with a question intended to plant doubt about what God said in the first place. His point of attack is the character of God, implying that God is holding out on them. Then he flat out denies the judgment God has decreed for disobedience countering with “You surely will not die!” He says that God knows that eating the fruit will make them like God, knowing good and evil. Of course, at this point they know only good.

So he contradicts what God said. He LIES about death following sin. He TRUTHS about their eyes being opened to evil but denies that the consequences will be bad.

The serpent seduces them to contradict God, to disbelieve Him, negate what He says. Note that God’s words and Satan’s words are both clear. Satan simply negates what God says.

We face this mix of truth and lies in numerous ways today. We see syncretism even in the church – everything from legalism to “mystical Jesus” teachings. The only ways to stand against these movements are by the power of the Spirit and God’s Word. If we don’t know the Word, we will not be able to discern error.

Genesis 3:9-13

Unlike the serpent who asks doubt-inducing questions, God asks the man straightforward questions after his sin:

- Where are you? (v. 9)
- Who told you that you were naked? (v. 11)
- Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? (v. 11)

The simple answer to God’s final question is “yes” or “no,” but Adam instead tries to blame God by saying: I ate because the woman **You gave me** gave me from the tree to eat, implying **if You had not given me** the woman, I wouldn’t have eaten from the tree.

When God asks Eve, “What is this you have done?” she implicates the serpent before answering: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Here’s a brief summary of what God says versus what the serpent says. God’s words are truth and life, the serpent’s, lies and death.

What God Says

Let there be light (1:3)

Let there be an expanse (1:6)

Let the waters be gathered (1:9)

Let the earth sprout (1:11)

Let there be lights (1:14)

Let the waters teem (1:20)

Be fruitful and multiply (1:22)

Let the earth bring forth (1:24)

Let us make man in Our image (1:26)

Be fruitful and multiply (1:28)

Behold I have given you (1:29)

From any tree...you may eat (2:16)

Do not eat from tree of K of G/E (2:17)

If you eat from G/E you will die (2:17)

It is not good for the man to be alone (2:18)

God gave everything good to the pair, absolutely everything they needed. He withheld only something they should not have wanted – the knowledge of evil. Don’t you wish we could give that one back?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

What the Serpent Says

Indeed has God said? (3:1)

You surely will not die! (3:4)

WEEK TWO

A God Who Calls Clearly

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		10 min.	Review basic concepts
Segment 2:		10 min.	Cain
Segment 3:		10 min.	Noah and Babel
Segment 4:		15 min.	Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
Segment 5:		15 min.	Joseph

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

A little review each week will cement the basics and give your class a framework for study. Although we'll focus on specific inductive tools each week, keeping the basic components of **OBSERVATION**, **INTERPRETATION**, and **APPLICATION** in front of your class consistently will equip them for a lifetime of handling God's Word. Always remind them that the goal is transformation! We don't learn for the sake of learning; we learn because God uses His Word to transform us and conform us more and more into the image of His Son. Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence to work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

*What is **Observation** and why is it important? What question does it answer?*

*How is **Interpretation** different from **Observation**?*

*What do we need for proper **Application**?*

Application needs to be grounded in the single God-intended meaning of the text, its interpretation.

Be aware that at this point you can run into two distinct problems:

1. Some people do not want to apply. They seek knowledge but bristle at application.
2. Others want to apply the text without dealing first with what God said to the original hearers. They want to know "What this means to me" before "What God said."

It is important for you to continually guide your class toward application that comes from the text. When discussions veer toward speculation or issues that do not promote life-change, redirect them to consider what the Author intends.

For those who gravitate toward opinions and ungrounded applications, gently direct

them with questions like “Where do you see that in the text?” Continually point them to the text and appropriate application. It may take some repetition, but they will learn. Always be gentle in your approach remembering Proverbs 16:21b that the “sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.”

Review Questions:

What does Scripture say about itself? (What did you learn last week from 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 3:14-18, and Hebrews 1:1-2?)

What differences did you notice between God's words and the serpent's in Genesis 1-3?

How did you apply the Word of God in your life last week?

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

So you don't have to flip back in the text, here are the basic guidelines to remember as you walk your class through the texts from Genesis today.

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Cain, Genesis 4:1-16

- Key Talk Points:**
- God speaks to the brother whose offering was not accepted.
 - God warns and instructs.
 - Cain's action shows his rejection of God's Words

Context/Comments:

Abel was Cain's younger brother and a keeper of flocks. He brought an offering of "firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions." Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve, was a tiller of the ground and brought to the LORD an offering of the "fruit of the ground."

God accepted Abel's offering but He did not accept Cain's. The text doesn't specify why. It simply says that the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but not for Cain and his.

Some speculate that Abel knew God wanted a blood sacrifice. Others say that while Abel brought "firstlings," Cain offered "secondlings," inferior fruits from his crops. We know from Hebrews 11:4 that a distinguishing mark of Abel's sacrifice was that he offered it "by faith." We also know from 1 John 3:12 that Cain was "of the evil one" and that "his deeds were evil" while his brother's were righteous.

In spite of rejecting His offering, God speaks to Cain.

As with Adam and Eve, God asked Cain questions:

- *Why are you angry?*
- *Why has your countenance fallen?*
- *If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?*

The LORD warns Cain: "... if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." The Hebrew word for "master" is *mashal*, typically translated "rule." It is, incidentally, the same word used in 3:16 with reference to the husband ruling over the wife. The verb form is also translated govern, charge, have authority, dominion, control, and wield authority in Daniel. God speaks clearly. Cain must master sin. The implication is that unless he masters it, it will master him.

After the LORD speaks to Cain, Cain tells his brother about it. Later he rises up against Abel and kills him. Again, the LORD speaks to him as He spoke to Adam and Eve after they sinned against Him. In both cases, He

- asks general questions.
- asks personal questions: "What have you done?"
- pronounces judgment with mercy.

Unlike his parents who shift blame, Cain blatantly lies to God and reaps punishment although God tempers it with mercy, putting a mark on Cain so people won't kill him. We don't know what it was, but we know it worked.

Throughout the interaction God was clear. If Cain didn't know what to sacrifice (though he likely did, particularly considering 1 John 3:12) he certainly knew what God expected after it. So we can consider this either a clarification or a second chance. Either way, God spoke clearly to Cain so Cain knew what He expected. Notice that he wasn't punished for the sacrifice that was not acceptable; in fact he may well have brought a better one later. He was punished after he killed his brother and even that was mixed with mercy.

SEGMENT #3: Noah and Babel

- Key Talk Points:**
- God spoke again because of human sin.
 - God gave Noah clear commands and Noah obeyed.
 - At Babel the people disobeyed God's clear commands.

Genesis 6:13-22

God speaks again in Genesis 6. This time it is to Noah and again it is with reference to man's sin. God says He is bringing a flood "to destroy all flesh" because the earth is filled with violence. This time He speaks to the one man He considers righteous in all the earth and gives clear, specific instructions on how to survive. He commands Noah to:

- make an ark
 - of gopher wood, with rooms, covered with pitch.
 - that measures 300 cubits long by 50 cubits wide by 30 cubits high.
 - with a window (NAU, KJV; "roof" in ESV) one cubit from the top, door in the side, three decks.
- bring animals
 - two of every kind: male and female (Genesis 7 adds specifics regarding clean and unclean animals)
- bring "every sort of food eaten"

Noah obeyed all the way. Genesis 6:22 says: "Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did" and Genesis 7:5 repeats it: "Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him."

Help your class consider how we can obey God's Word.

Genesis 7:1-5

God further defines his commands to Noah, instructing him to bring seven pairs of clean animals. Although the Law had not been given yet, Noah knew to sacrifice them to God. God also tells Noah when the rain will start ("after seven more days") and how long it will persist (40 days and 40 nights). Prophecies like these help Noah plan how much food to bring and they encourage and strengthen him when they come to pass.

God doesn't always answer "How long?" in advance.

- Abram
 - Knew a son was coming, didn't know specifics or how long
 - BUT God did tell him his descendants would be enslaved 400 years.
- Isaac
 - Knew he would have descendants and prayed that his wife's barrenness would end.
 - Twins were born after 20 years.
- Joseph
 - Knew that prosperity and famine would each be seven years.

Genesis 8:15-9:17

After the flood, God gives Noah some new commandments and repeats some old ones:

- “Go out” 8:16
- “Bring out” 8:17
- “Be fruitful and multiply on the earth” 8:17, 9:1, 9:7
- Don’t eat flesh with blood in it 9:4
- Don’t shed man’s blood 9:6

Although God wiped out mankind with the flood, He promises never to do it again even though the eight people left still have evil hearts: “The intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21).

Help your students unpack the ramifications of this. Many people assume that man is basically good but the Bible teaches the opposite—that the intent of the heart is evil from youth. (See also Jeremiah 17:9.) If applied properly, this truth can prompt us towards compassion and mercy instead of cynicism. We can’t expect fallen people to behave like people who have been redeemed, saved, and sanctified.

Genesis 11:1-9

The people at the tower of Babel immediately prove God’s statement about man’s evil hearts to be true. Like Adam and Eve, like Cain, and quite frankly like everyone on the earth at the time of Noah, they rebelled against God’s clear words.

They were intent on huddling together (“lest we be dispersed” which seems to be a rejection of multiple commands to “fill the earth”) and making a city and name for themselves. These discrete rebellions reflect the more general sin of choosing their own voices (Let us make bricks [11:3], let us build for ourselves a city/tower to heaven [11:4], let us make for ourselves a name [11:4]) over God’s and God responds by confusing their language and scattering them. This is not the last time scattering will happen because of sin. While man can make a mess, no one can thwart God’s plan then and no one can thwart God’s plan now.

SEGMENT #4: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

- Key Talk Points:**
- God gives specific instructions and promises to Abraham.
 - God repeats His covenant promises over time to Abraham’s descendants.

Context/Comments:

Given the time constraints of class, help your students to focus a little more closely on Genesis 12:1-7 and Genesis 22:1-18. Then talk them through the remaining texts to help them see the similarities and differences in what God said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Genesis 12:1-7: God Calls Abram

God calls Abram to go from his country, from his relatives, and from his father's house to a land He will show him. From cross references we know that Abram's home country was Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:31) and that his people were idolators (Joshua 24:14-15).

God is very clear. He tells him what to leave and that he'll get more information along the way. He also gives Abram the big picture of what He's going to give him—descendants and land.

God promises that He will:

- make Abram a great nation
- bless him and make his name great
- bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him
- bless all the nations of the earth in him (ultimately in Jesus, Abram's descendant).

Genesis 22:1-18: God Tests Abraham

In stark contrast to Adam and Eve, Abraham trusts God's character and obeys even in the most difficult circumstances. The description of Isaac shows his value to his aged father and perhaps gives some hints to his age. He was:

- Abraham's son
- his only son
- his beloved son
- a lad (Hebrew: *na'ar*); the same Hebrew word is used to describe the "young men" who accompanied Abraham and Isaac on the journey to Moriah
- big enough to carry the wood for the offering

Whereas Eve disobeyed when the serpent called God's truth into question, Abraham trusted God's promise when asked to sacrifice his only beloved son. Hebrews 11:9 says that "He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him [Isaac] back as a type." While Eve doubted God, while Cain and the people at Babel rebelled against God, Abraham "believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Abraham believed before this test and the God he believed in held him.

Texts on Isaac and Jacob:

Talk your students through the following texts on Isaac and Jacob by using the 5Ws and H and helping them to note the similarities and differences in the content and the way God communicates to these other patriarchs.

Genesis 26:1-6 – God tells Isaac to remain in Canaan; don't go to Egypt.

Reaffirms covenant of land and seed

Genesis 28:10-17: Jacob dreams at Bethel.

Reaffirms covenant of land and seed

Genesis 31:1-3 – God tells Jacob to return to Canaan.

Moves Jacob and his wives back to the land

Genesis 32:24-32 – Jacob strives with God and prevails.

Jacob renamed Israel

SEGMENT #5: Joseph

Key Talk Points:

- God speaks to Joseph through dreams.
- God gives Joseph ability to interpret dreams.

Context/Comments:

God causes a series of dreams to communicate information to Joseph and others.

Genesis 37:3-11

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and his brothers hated him for it. If that weren't enough, Joseph had two dreams that he would rule over his family that he told his brothers and dad about. While Genesis 37:10 says Jacob rebuked (Hebrew: *gaar*) him for it, the text also says "his father kept the saying in mind." But his brothers hated him all the more because he was the favorite and because he talked about his dreams of ruling (37:8).

Joseph's dreams eventually did come true, but years later. God did not reiterate his covenant with Abraham to Joseph, as He did with Isaac and Jacob.

Genesis 40:1-13, 16-22 and Genesis 41:25-32

God gave Joseph not only two dreams that were fulfilled but also the ability to interpret them. Joseph confessed that this ability was from God and made no claims to have this power in himself: "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please" (Genesis 40:8). After correctly interpreting dreams for the King's cupbearer and baker, Joseph spends another two years in jail before Pharaoh calls him to interpret his dreams.

As with his servants who were "dejected" because of their dreams, Pharaoh was troubled. When Joseph was brought in he turned everyone's attention to God:

- "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer" (Genesis 41:16).
- "God has told (Hebrew: *nagad*) to Pharaoh what He is about to do" (Genesis 41:25).

- “God has shown (Hebrew: *raah*) to Pharaoh what He is about to do” (Genesis 41:28)
- “. . . the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about” (Genesis 41:32)

It's important to remember that this is a major event in the greater biblical narrative. God is beginning to show His power to the Egyptians and to the world. The dream's interpretation is not about Joseph and minor issues of life . . . it is about God, His power and plan!

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

WEEK THREE

Write this in a Book

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		25 min.	Exodus passages "Write it down"
Segment 3:		15 min.	Leviticus and Numbers passages
Segment 4:		15 min.	Deuteronomy passages

START CLASS HERE**Review Basic Concepts****Review Questions:**

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

How do they function together?

What risks do we run if we don't correctly observe the text? (Misinterpretation and misapplication)

What risk do we run if we don't apply personally?

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

Again, here are the basic guidelines to remember as you walk your class through the texts from Exodus. We looked at a tremendous number of texts this week surveying different situations in which God spoke, how people responded, and other voices that carried sway. We'll make notes on a number of the texts to help you along, but you'll definitely need to pick and choose which to address in class as there won't be time for everything.

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Exodus

- Key Talk Points:**
- Moses listened and obeyed God's voice; Pharaoh rejected it.
 - God tells Moses "Write it down!"

Context/Comments:

The big contrast, particularly in the early chapters of Exodus, is between Moses who listens and obeys the voice of God and Pharaoh who does not know God and will not obey Him.

Exodus 3-4 – Moses Hears and Heeds

Although Moses initially resists, he eventually obeys God.

Exodus 5:1-9 – Pharaoh Ignores and Dismisses

Conversely, Pharaoh rejects God initially and continues to harden his heart to the end: "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2).

Exodus 6:1-11 – Oppression Causes Deafness in People

Although the people are willing to follow Moses initially, they stop listening when Pharaoh increases the oppression: "they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage" (Exodus 6:9).

Exodus 15:22-26 – Grumbling People Exhorted to Heed God's Voice

After grumbling for water, the people are exhorted by Moses to "give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God" so that He will not give them the diseases that were in Egypt.

Exodus 17:8-14 – God Tells Moses to **Write in a Book for Joshua**

There is a dramatic shift that starts in Exodus 17:14. For the first time God directs Moses to write something down. God's Word will begin to be recorded, remembered, and recited. This will begin a pattern of "write it down" moments.

Exodus 19-20 – Moses Recounts God's Words to People

Moses acts as an intermediary between the people and God. They know God is speaking clear words to him for them.

Exodus 24:1-13 – Moses Recounts God’s Words and Writes Them Down; God also Writes

Again Moses writes things down: “Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD” (Exodus 24:4). Later God Himself writes: “Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction’” (Exodus 24:12).

Exodus 29:42-46 – Tent of Meeting

God designates the tent of meeting as the place where He will meet with the sons of Israel.

Exodus 31:18 – Written by the Finger of God

God gives Moses “the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.”

Exodus 32 – Listening to Themselves

When Moses is on the mountain with God, the people begin to fear and start listening to themselves. Big problem.

Exodus 33:7-11 – Face to Face

At the tent of meeting, “the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.”

Exodus 33:17-23 – “Show Me Your Glory”

Moses asks God to show him His glory.

Exodus 34:1-8 – God Declares His Name

God passes by Moses and declares His name to him.

Exodus 34:10-27 – Write Down These Words

Again, God tells Moses to write: “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

SEGMENT #3: Leviticus, Numbers

- Key Talk Points:**
- God communicates on *His* terms.
 - Approaching God on *our* terms can be deadly.

Context/Comments:

Exodus recorded many examples of God communicating with people. Some listened and were blessed; others rejected and met judgment. The passages students looked at this week in Leviticus and Numbers show examples of what God deemed a proper approach to Him and what He prohibited.

Leviticus 9:23-10:3, 8-11

Leviticus 10:1-3 stands in razor-sharp contrast to the verses that immediately precede. The end of Leviticus 9 records a literally glorious moment as “the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.” Moses and Aaron had just exited the tent of meeting, having approached God with proper offerings and in a proper manner. “Fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering” and the people fell face down in front of God. For all their bad wilderness moments, this was a good one the whole way around. Too bad it didn’t fade to black right then.

While Moses and Aaron approached God on God’s terms, Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu approached on their own. They took their firepans as commanded, they made an offering as they were supposed to, but they did not offer the way God had commanded. (Sound like Cain?) Approaching on their own terms they consequently offered “strange [Hebrew: *zara*, loathsome, disgusting] fire” (see also Exodus 30:9). Scholars have different views of what the strange fire was and the specifics aren’t critical for us to know. What is critical is that God gave clear requirements and Aaron’s sons veered from them.

The fire from the LORD that consumed the acceptable sacrifice also consumed the offending priests. (See also Hebrews 12:29.)

Nadab and Abihu did not approach God on His terms and He took their lives. It is a sobering account that highlights the holiness of God.

Leviticus 19:31, 20:6-7, 27

There are certain things in life that seem self-evident. Consulting mediums (Hebrew: *ob*) and spiritists (Hebrew: *yiddoniy*)—those who claim to consult the dead—is one of them. Israel, though, needed this spelled out as they lived among nations that hotly pursued wrong “spirituality.” While most first-world folks today don’t have carved idols like the Canaanites of old, wrong spirituality is alive and well and it defiles today as it did then. Syncretism, though often in style among people, is never acceptable to God. Rather, He calls it harlotry. Voices of mediums, spiritists, and anything they claim to communicate with is expressly forbidden by God.

Numbers 1:1-3, 7:89

God has spoken in the Garden to Adam, by a tree to Abraham, in dreams to Jacob and Joseph and, early on, out of a burning bush to Moses. Eventually He tells the people to make a place where He will speak with Moses and meet with them. That place was the tent of meeting. Numbers 7:89 says that Moses “heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him.” There was no doubt that God was speaking. He ordained a way and a place and the people knew it was Him.

SEGMENT #4: Deuteronomy

Key Talk Points:

- Signs and wonders alone DON'T confirm a prophet as true.
- Presumptuous words DO confirm a prophet as false.
- Weighing the veracity of a prophet always presupposes the weigher knows God's Word.

Context/Comments:

Signs alone don't confirm a true prophet, but predicting something that doesn't come true and calling people to stray from the LORD do confirm a false prophet. The bottom line in discerning true from false is not signs and wonders but consistency with the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

Signs and wonders get people's attention, but they don't confirm that God has spoken. Even if a sign or wonder comes true, God commands His people not to follow any teaching that promotes going after or serving other gods. Syncretism is not an option. Rather, God's people are to follow and fear God, to “keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him” (Deuteronomy 13:4). God's people are never to allow themselves to be seduced (Hebrew: *nadach*, also “driven”) from God's already revealed and commanded ways.

The key is knowing what has already been revealed. Those who don't know the commandments won't be able to distinguish seducing voices and seductive content. *Discerning error presupposes knowing truth.*

Deuteronomy 18:9-22

The land Israel was entering to possess was under God's judgment. Instead of following the one true God, local inhabitants listened “to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners.” They were seeking to know but not God's truths. Off-limits to Israel were their practices which included divination, interpreting omens, sorcery, spell casting, and calling up the dead.

God's people were to listen to God's prophets, men like Moses who spoke God's words, not others who spoke presumptuously (Hebrew: *zud*, also “arrogantly”)

typically saying “Thus says the Lord God when the LORD has not spoken” (Ezekiel 22:28). While a sign coming true did not confirm true prophets, a prophecy not coming true did confirm a false one and the penalty was death. It was and is an abomination to put words into the mouth of God.

Help your students see the practical nature of this. Claiming “God told me” is an ultimate trump card for manipulators who seek to control the weak and simple. Certainly the Spirit leads believers today through the Word. Still, putting words into the mouth of God is lethal business. If God is leading you to act by His Word and His Spirit, by all means act; but think long and hard before presuming to compel action in others based on a “God told me [personally]” rather than “. . . in His revealed Word.” This may seem obvious, but based on what is selling well in bookstores today, it is not at all obvious to the masses.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Before handing over leadership to Joshua, Moses commands the people to know the revealed and written word of God. After writing God's words down for them, Moses gives the law to “the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.” They were to read it to the people—men, women, children, and foreigners—every seven years on the year of Jubilee at the Feast of Booths. The purpose was not to begin an empty tradition but to teach the people to hear, learn and fear God and obey His law. Moses alerted them in Deuteronomy 18 to the fact that God will send other prophets (the ultimate one will be Jesus Christ) but as he departs, he points them back to the written and revealed word.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is truth you're learning changing the way you think and act?

WEEK FOUR

From Hearing the Deafness

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		10 min.	Joshua 1:2-9, 3:7-13, 8:30-35, 23:6-16
Segment 3:		10 min.	Judges 2:1-12 (see also Deut. 6 and 31)
Segment 4:		10 min.	Deborah, Gideon, Samson's Parents
Segment 5:		10 min.	Judges 17 and cross-references
Segment 6:		10 min.	Judges 18:1-6

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

How have you observed God speaking thus far in the Bible?

• *In the beginning?*

• *To the Patriarchs?*

• *To Moses?*

To Others?

What was the major shift that happens in Exodus?

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

Again, so you don't have to flip back in the text, here are the basic guidelines to remember as you move through this week's texts from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Joshua

- Key Talk Points:**
- God directs Joshua to the book of the law.
 - Joshua directs the people to the book of the law..

Joshua 1:2-9

After the death of Moses, God promises Joshua He will fulfill everything He said to Moses about the land and be with him just as He was with Moses. What is so interesting, though, is that while God promises Joshua His presence, He directs him to His book, to the Law of Moses, and not just in a passing fashion. He says:

- Be care to do according to all of it (v. 7).
- Don't turn from it to the right or the left (v. 7).
- Don't let it depart from your mouth (v. 8).
- Meditate on it day and night (v. 8).
- Be careful to do all that is written in it (v. 8).

God also repeatedly commands Joshua to be strong and courageous:

- "Be strong [Hebrew: *hazaq*] and courageous [Hebrew: *amas*]" (1:6)
- "Only be strong and very courageous" (1:7) ¶
- "Be strong and courageous! (1:9)

These are no sweet nothings whispered in Joshua's ear as we sometimes see attributed to God in popular writings. Rather there is truth seen both in imperative directives to action mingled with the promise of His presence. God commands Joshua to be strong and courageous *because* He will be with him.

Joshua 3:7-13

God exalted Joshua to show the people that He would be with him as He had been with Moses. Under Moses God had parted the Red Sea; under Joshua God held back the waters of the Jordan River. Joshua didn't need to exalt himself. The God who raised him up as a leader took care of that. Self-exalting leaders are never God's true shepherds.

Joshua 8:30-35

After conquering Jericho and Ai, Joshua wrote a copy of the law of Moses on stones. Then in front of all the people (men, women, children, and foreigners) he read all of the words of the Law. God had told Joshua to be careful to observe the law and meditate on it. Now Joshua was modeling this obedience to Deuteronomy 1 1:29 and 27:12.

Joshua 23:6-16

As Joshua nears the end of his life, he points the people back to the book. They are to cling to the LORD their God but they will be able to do it only if they know Him. If they do not know Him, they will end up clinging to the nations. They need to take "diligent heed" to love God who has fulfilled His covenant blessings to the people but will also fulfill the curses if *they* break the covenant.

SEGMENT #3: Judges 2:1-12

Key Talk Points:

- The people ignore God's Word and go their own way.
- They had written instructions on how to live but didn't do it.

Context/Comments:

God had Moses write down the Law and told Joshua to "be careful to do according to all of it." Joshua obeyed God's command and passed the Word and instructions on to those who followed behind him, but after he and the elders who survived him died, the people strayed. They were commanded not to make covenants with the people of the land – but they did. They were told to tear down the altars of their idols – but they did not. The next generation did not know the LORD but they would have if Joshua's generation had obeyed Deuteronomy 6:5-7: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." This generation disobeyed God's clear commands and reaped judgment that had been promised in writing beforehand. Still, God in His mercy listened to their cries for deliverance.

SEGMENT #4: Deborah, Gideon, and Samson's Parents

- Key Talk Points:**
- God's Word comes to people in the time of the judges who were neither asking for it nor expecting it.
 - In each case we looked at, God's purpose in communicating was to deliver His people.

Deborah (Judges 4)

Deborah was a wife and prophetess who judged Israel. It's not clear how God's message came to her but when it did she summoned Barak and told him: "Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you [masculine singular] ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. I [God] will draw out to you [masculine singular] Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your [masculine singular] hand" (Judges 4:6b-7).

Nothing indicates she was seeking a message but when it arrived it was clear: the LORD will give Sisera into Israel's hands. But when Barak insists she come with him, she tells him the LORD will now give Sisera into the hands of a woman. That woman will be Jael. God delivers Israel as He predicted and the people rejoice!

Gideon (Judges 6-7)

Although the people were crying out for deliverance, Gideon certainly wasn't seeking a word from God although that didn't stop God from sending one. Gideon was just trying to hang onto his food, beating his wheat in a wine press out of the sight of Midianite invaders. Far from seeking God, Gideon thought God had abandoned His people (6:13).

Unlike Deborah who hears God's word and acts, Gideon drags his heels looking for a series of signs to confirm God's word to him.

God shows enormous patience with Gideon, bearing with him through a series of "tests" and even allowing Gideon to overhear a Midianite conversation about a dream (that God certainly gave!) that Israel would conquer their country.

All of God's communication with Gideon revolved around raising him up to be God's deliverer for the Israelites from their Midianite oppressors.

Samson's Parents (Judges 13)

Samson's originally-barren mother heard from the angel of the LORD while she was minding her own business. The message: she will have a son who will be a Nazarite and deliverer of God's people. Her husband, Manoah, wanted to see the angel of God so he could ask: "What shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?"

God granted Manoah's request, but the Angel of the LORD basically says, "It's what I already told your wife."

Summary

Of all these folks God sent messages to, the only one looking for a word was Manoah and that only after his wife received a message. In each case, God communicates with people as part of His larger saving work in delivering His people from their oppressors.

SEGMENT #5: Judges 17 and What God has Already Said

Key Talk Points:

- If God has already spoken, don't behave like He hasn't.
- Right in man's eyes is often wrong in God's.

Context/Comments:

Judges 17 is a curious chapter where everything has an odd slant. Everything sounds vaguely spiritual and yet off kilter. It sounds frighteningly like the religious climate today, at least in the western world. Readers are tempted to sympathize with the young Levite and even at times with Micah unless they hold their behavior up to the revealed Word of God. The most effective way to lead discussion of this section is simply to read the text of Judges 17 with the inserted texts that show where the men are straying from what God has already said.

SEGMENT #6: Judges 18

Key Talk Points:

- Man's claim to speak for God is not equal to God's call and authority to speak for Him.
- God does not approve those who do what is right in their own eyes.

Context/Comments: Having just contrasted the behaviors in Judges 17 with God's prior words, read and talk through Judges 18 helping your class see that Micah's "priest" was not legitimate and could in no way assure the men that they had God's approval as he himself stood at odds with God. In fact, he brought the graven image the Danites set up for themselves when the place they should have been worshipping at that time was in Shiloh.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How are these truths changing the way you're thinking and acting?

WEEK FIVE

Hard Words from a Sovereign God

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		10 min.	Samuel
Segment 3:		15 min.	Saul
Segment 4:		15 min.	David
Segment 5:		15 min.	Solomon

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study and why is each important?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

Has your thinking changed at all in our study so far? If so, how?

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

So you don't have to flip back to a previous lesson, here are the basic guidelines for talking through the text:

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Samuel

- Key Talk Points:**
- God gives young Samuel hard words for Eli.
 - Samuel listens to and acts on God's words.

Context/Comments: Samuel and Saul provide another set of contrasting characters in an ongoing pattern of people who respond differently to the voice of God. Noah listened, the people of his day rejected. Moses listened, Pharaoh rejected. Now after a long season of God's people ignoring His voice, Samuel listens but Saul eventually rejects.

1 Samuel 2:27-36

Before God sends word to Eli by Samuel, He sends it via another man who declares coming judgment on Eli's house because he has honored his sons above God. His descendants will die "in the prime of life." The sign to Eli is that his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will die the same day. Not a warm, fuzzy word by any stretch of the imagination.

1 Samuel 3:1-15

During a time when "word from the LORD was rare" and "visions were infrequent," God repeatedly speaks to a young boy named Samuel who asks an old, corrupt priest about it (although Samuel doesn't recognize God's voice to start with). After three times though, Eli realizes that God is calling the boy. Verse 7 tells us that "Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him."

The first word revealed to him is a hard one. It is so hard that he is afraid to deliver it but eventually does when Eli presses him for it. It is clear from the beginning that Samuel has heard the voice of God. The message authenticates another Eli has heard (one that indicts Eli for not following God's revealed word) and the word comes to pass.

SEGMENT #3: Saul

- Key Talk Points:**
- Saul rejects the voice of God.
 - Saul seeks forbidden revelation.

Context/Comments: Saul toys around with "partial obedience" to God listening, as it were, with one ear to appear submissive. The path he chooses, though, leads to total alienation from God.

1 Samuel 15

God sends a specific command to Saul through Samuel. It is hard, but crystal clear: "Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

Bottom line: Destroy everything including all of the animals AND DON'T SPARE THE KING!

God even tells Saul why. He is punishing Amalek for coming out against His people on their way from Egypt. Remember, this incident was the first thing God had Moses write down (Exodus 17:14-16).

Saul "obeys" what he wants to from God's command and leaves the rest. To his twisted way of thinking, he had obeyed. Samuel, however, calls it what it is: rejection of God's Word. There is no way to escape the truth that partial obedience is still disobedience. Don't miss the obvious application question here: How often do we pick and choose which parts of God's Word we'll obey? How often do people miss the living word already revealed because they're sniffing around for something new?

1 Samuel 28:6-7

Saul stops listening to God and God stops answering Saul. The text notes three ways God had communicated in the past:

- dreams.
- Urim (see Exodus 28:30). Urim and Thummim were worn by the priest and thought to be a means for determining God's will.
- prophets.

When God stops responding, Saul starts looking for answers in forbidden places. Although God clearly said "No!" to mediums and spiritists, Saul tells his servants to find a medium.

1 Samuel 28:8-19

Stay with what is clear in the section on Saul and the medium. Saul has been the beneficiary of revelation from God in the past, but he has rejected that revelation. When God stops responding to him, Saul rebels further by knowingly defying God's revealed prohibition about consulting mediums and brings further judgment on himself. (See also Leviticus 19:31, Deuteronomy 18:10-12.)

SEGMENT #4: David

- Key Talk Points:**
- David highly valued the revealed and written Word of God.
 - God used a prophet to tell David about the covenant He would make with him.

Context/Comments: As we look at David and Solomon in the next two sections, it is interesting to note that God spoke directly to Solomon twice but big news came to David twice through a prophet.

Psalm 19

David placed high value on the Law of Moses, God's written word in his day and God inspired him to write more of His Words. Psalm 19 shows David's esteem for the Word. After talking about how creation shows God's glory, David (writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) focuses on God's Word using a series of synonyms to talk about it.

- The **law** of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul.
- The **testimony** of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
- The **precepts** of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.
- The **commandment** of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- The **judgments** of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

He goes on to say that God's word is "more desirable than gold" and "sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb." God's written Word is beneficial in every sense and David knows and treasures it.

2 Samuel 5-6, 2 Samuel 6:1-9

David knew God was with him but he also realized that God was working through him for Israel (2 Samuel 5:10-12). Even though David followed God well for the most part, he didn't follow perfectly.

In fact, in his zeal to bring the ark of the covenant to his city, he does not follow God's rules for transporting it. He uses a cart like the Philistines had although God had clearly said the ark was to be carried on the shoulders of Levites (see Numbers 4:15, 7:9, 10:21, Deuteronomy 10:8, 31:9). Did David not comply intentionally? Almost certainly not, but the fact remains God revealed clearly how this article of worship was to be transported and David did not comply. God has ways of approach. Zeal apart from truth comes up empty. There is no excuse for not knowing God's revealed truth.

2 Samuel 7:1-16

While we'll see in the next section that God twice reveals Himself to Solomon, in one of the biggest Old Testament moments – His making a covenant with David – He doesn't speak directly to David. After the prophet Nathan tells David to go ahead with his plans to build a temple for God because the LORD is with him, God tells Nathan

that Solomon will build the physical temple but God will make David a house: an offspring, throne, and eternal kingdom.

SEGMENT #5: Solomon

- Key Talk Points:**
- Two messages from God didn't assure a good finish.
 - Solomon's great failures could have been prevented had he held closely to the written and revealed Word of God.

Context/Comments: Before looking at the individual texts about Solomon, read Deuteronomy 17:14-20 to your class so they will be able to see where Solomon strayed from the clear, written words to all Israel's kings.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Several hundred years before Israel has kings, God establishes rules for them. Here are some of them that Solomon strayed from:

Prohibitions

- Kings were not to "multiply horses."
- Kings were not to "cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses." (Solomon may not have returned to Egypt, but he made a political alliance with Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter [1 Kings 3:1]).
- Kings were not to "multiply wives."
- Kings were not to "greatly increase silver and gold" for themselves.

Commands

- Kings were to write a copy of the law in front of the priests.
- Kings were to keep their copy of the law with them and read it every day.
- Kings were to learn to fear the LORD "by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes" (17:19).

1 Kings 3:5-15a

God appears (Hebrew: *raah*) to Solomon for the first time in a dream at Gibeon and says: "Ask what *you wish* me to give you." Help your students stick right to the text on this one as the off-the-cuff answer is "wisdom." The text shows that he's after a kind of wisdom to help him do something specific: "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" It was a good answer, God was pleased with it, and Solomon does rule the people well. In fact, in the very next section of the text that wisdom to rule is on display for everyone to see. Still, in several areas Solomon does not rule

himself wisely.

1 Kings 9:1-9

The LORD appears to Solomon again after he has built the temple and his own house. He tells Solomon that he has heard his supplication and consecrated the temple Solomon built. Then He directs Solomon back to His written Word and to the example of his father David's following it. He warns Solomon that if he and his sons turn away, judgment will come . . . and so it does.

1 Kings 11:1-13

Twice the LORD appeared to Solomon. Twice Solomon received clear words and yet the wisest man ever to live (not including Jesus!) rebelled. He gathered horses and chariots (1 Kings 10:26) and he loved many foreign women (1 Kings 11:1). God clearly said foreign women turn hearts away, and Solomon had wives from Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Sidon, as well as from among the Hittites. The king who was not supposed to multiply wives collected seven hundred of them along with three hundred concubines, and "his wives turned his heart away" (11:3). If only the man God appeared to twice (1 Kings 11:9) had consistently followed God's written Word.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

WEEK SIX

From God to Prophet to King

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		15 min.	Jeroboam, Baasha
Segment 3:		15 min.	Ahaziah, Jehu
Segment 4:		5 min.	Rehoboam
Segment 5:		20 min.	Jehoshaphat

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Questions:**

*What is the biggest takeaway **Application** you have had thus far?*

Compare Saul, David, and Solomon with regard to hearing and obeying God's voice.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

Here are the basic guidelines for each section of the text:

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Jeroboam, Baasha

- Key Talk Points:**
- God's first word to Jeroboam was extraordinarily good!
 - His second word to Jeroboam was tragic.
 - Baasha followed Jeroboam's ways instead of God's.

Context/Comments: God gives the kingdom of Israel to Jeroboam and promises him an enduring house like David's if he will obey. He has God's written Word to follow and God's clear message through the prophet Ahijah. It was handed to him gift-wrapped, but like Solomon, he does not obey. While Solomon fell because of foreign women and consequent idolatry, Jeroboam bows to fear . . . which also leads to idolatry.

VOICES
HEARING GOD
IN A WORLD OF
IMPOSTORS

Old Testament

Jeroboam, 1 Kings 11:28-38

Jeroboam is a “valiant warrior,” an “industrious” young man Solomon appoints over his laborers before God appoints him king over the ten northern tribes. The prophet Ahijah finds Jeroboam and uses a new cloak as a visual aid. He tears it into twelve pieces and instructs Jeroboam to take ten of them. The pieces, of course, represent ten of Israel’s tribes.

God says that He will:

- tear the kingdom from Solomon during the reign of his son.
- give Jeroboam ten tribes.
- give one tribe to Rehoboam.
- make Jeroboam king over Israel.

God tore the kingdom from Solomon because he did not follow Him. He defied God’s clear revealed Word and chose instead foreign women and their foreign gods.

Jeroboam has the opportunity for an enduring house like David’s if he will follow God’s Word and His ways: “Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you” (1 Kings 11:38).

Tragically, Jeroboam does not follow God’s Word and the next time God speaks to him is a much more somber occasion.

Jeroboam, 1 Kings 14:1-20

After introducing his own system of idolatrous worship to Israel, Jeroboam moves rapidly away from God. Still, when his son becomes sick he sends his wife to Ahijah, the prophet who had anointed him king, for answers. Although the prophet is old and can no longer see, God tells him that Jeroboam’s wife is coming and gives him a message to send back. The man who was presented a kingdom is now given a harsh message. The son who could have sat on an enduring family throne had his father obeyed God will die as soon as his mother’s feet enter the city.

What could have been an enduring house will now come to a tragic end. Those dying in the city will be eaten by dogs, those in the field by birds. Yet in the midst of it all help your students see God’s mercy to the child: “All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam’s family will come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam” (14:13).

Baasha, 1 Kings 16:1-4

Baasha is another in a long line of rulers who receive a word from the LORD but probably wish they hadn’t. Although God makes him king, Baasha follows in Jeroboam’s ways and ends up reaping the same judgment. The prophet Jehu (different from Jehu the king) brings the word: “Anyone of Baasha who dies in the city the dogs will eat, and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat.”

By now your class should be seeing that the modern view of “hearing from God” and feeling warm and fuzzy is not exactly, well, biblical.

SEGMENT #3: Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehu

- Key Talk Points:**
- God speaks to evil Ahab so that he will know God is God.
 - Ahaziah sends for a message from a false god, but the true God sends a hard answer.
 - God sends a message to Jehu to complete the work he has already declared against Ahab and Jezebel.

Ahab, 1 Kings 20

Ahab is being threatened by Aram's King Ben-hadad who is planning to come and take what he wants from Israel. Although Ahab seeks counsel from elders in the land, he does not seek God's counsel. Nonetheless, God sends a prophet to tell Ahab that He will deliver Israel so that Ahab will "know that I am the LORD" (20:13). Ahab follows God's instructions through the prophet and drives the Arameans back.

The prophet then warns Ahab to prepare for another Aramean attack "at the turn of the year" (20:22). The Arameans come on schedule and a man of God brings a second Thus-says-the-LORD message: "Because the Arameans have said, 'The LORD is a god of the mountains, but He is not a god of the valleys,' therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD" (20:28). The result? In one day Israel kills 100,000 foot soldiers. Another 27,000 flee and die when a wall falls on them.

Instead of killing King Ben-hadad whom God had set apart for destruction, Ahab not only spares his life but also enters into a covenant with him. This action prompts a third "Thus-says-the-LORD" message to Ahab from another prophet: "Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people" (20:42).

Ahaziah, 1 Kings 22:51-2 Kings 1:17

The son of Ahab and likely of Jezebel, Israel's King Ahaziah was bad to the bone following in the footsteps of both his father and Jeroboam.

In 2 Kings 1 he sends messengers to seek a medical prognosis from Baal-zebub, Ekron's god, but the angel of the LORD sends Elijah with a message from God instead: "You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die." Ahaziah does die, but not before 100 men also die trying to deliver him to Ahaziah in yet another instance of "the word of the LORD" decreeing judgment.

Jehu, 2 Kings 9:1-10

God uses Elisha to send a message to Jehu through one of the sons of the prophets. God's Word to Jehu is good: "I have anointed you king over Israel." Jehu is tasked to be king and judge Ahab's house as God promised. (See also 1 Kings 21:19.)

SEGMENT #4: Rehoboam

Key Talk Point: • God stops Rehoboam from engaging Jeroboam in battle.

1 Kings 12:22-24

When God tears the kingdom out of Solomon's hands to give ten tribes to Jeroboam, He sends word to Solomon's son Rehoboam by Shemaiah not to fight: "You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me."

SEGMENT #5: Jehoshaphat

Key Talk Points: • Not all prophets are God's prophets.
• Not every prophecy is true.
• Be discerning!

1 Kings 22:5-28

Judah's good King Jehoshaphat visits Israel's evil King Ahab during a hiatus in the war between Aram and Israel. Ahab wants Jehoshaphat to help him reacquire some land that Aram took from Israel. Jehoshaphat agrees to go but first wants to inquire for the word of the LORD. Ahab brings in about 400 "prophets" who tell him exactly what he wants to hear: "Go up, for the Lord [Hebrew: *adonai*] will give it into the hand of the king."

Jehoshaphat isn't satisfied. He doesn't want a unanimous vote of confidence from court prophets. He wants to hear the truth from a prophet of the LORD (Hebrew: *YHWH*). After King Jehoshaphat requests a "prophet of the LORD," Ahab's prophets start claiming to speak in the name of the LORD.

Here's a short list on the court prophets:

- about 400 men (v. 6).
- they were not prophets of YHWH (v. 8).
- all of them encouraged the king to go up and fight (v. 12).
- they were "uniformly favorable" to the king (v. 13).
- they were Ahab's prophets, not God's prophets (v. 22).
- they all had a deceiving spirit in their mouth (v. 23).

At Jehoshaphat's insistence, they eventually call in Micaiah, a prophet of YHWH. After sarcastically parroting the other prophets, he speaks God's message: Israel will be scattered and Ahab will die. The other "prophets" have been lying.

The false prophets spoke what they assumed the king wanted to hear – victory. Micaiah spoke the words God told him to speak. Remember, the true prophets had to hide from Ahab and Jezebel!

Micaiah explains how the true can be differentiated from the false. The future will tell all. If Ahab survives the battle, Micaiah has not spoken the truth; if he doesn't, the others are shown to be liars. (See also Deuteronomy 18:21-22.)

Today, just as in Ahab's day, not everyone who claims to speak from God actually speaks from God!

2 Kings 3:11-19

After Ahab dies as Micaiah prophesied; his son Jehoram seeks to ally himself with Jehoshaphat in order to take on the rebelling king of Moab. Jehoshaphat agrees as does Edom's king and they set out with their armies to attack Moab. This time, though, Jehoshaphat doesn't seek a prophet of the LORD until they run into a desperate no-water situation.

The prophet they go to is Elisha who only agrees to put up with Jehoram (Ahab and Jezebel's son) because Jehoshaphat is with him. Elisha is known for two things: he has been the servant of the prophet Elijah and the word of the LORD has been with him. When Elisha inquires of God for the kings, God sends word that He will send rain and make the kings victorious over Moab.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

WEEK SEVEN

More Words from God through the Prophets

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		10 min.	Manasseh
Segment 3:		15 min.	Josiah
Segment 4:		10 min.	Nebuchadnezzar
Segment 5:		20 min.	Daniel

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

How would you explain inductive Bible study?

What is your biggest takeaway from what God spoke to the kings of Israel and Judah?

Has your thinking been challenged? If so, how?

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

Here are the basic guidelines for each section of the text:

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Manasseh

- Key Talk Points:**
- God spoke to Manasseh and His people but they did not listen.
 - God opened Manasseh's ears with Assyrian hooks and chains.

2 Kings 21:1-15

EVIL. Nothing describes Manasseh's reign better. He became king at 12 and ruled for 55 long years.

Before Israel went into the land, God told them to destroy the high places and altars associated with idol worship. Often they did not, choosing instead to leave them alone. Good kings like Manasseh's father Hezekiah tore them down. Manasseh, though, went backwards – he rebuilt them. Here's a list of the sins of Judah's most evil king:

- did evil in the sight of the LORD.
- rebuilt the high places.
- erected altars for Baal.
- made an Asherah as Ahab did (now there's a role model!).
- worshiped all the host of heaven.
- served all the host of heaven.
- built altars for his idols in the house of the LORD.
- sacrificed his son to an idol ("made his son pass through the fire").
- practiced witchcraft.
- used divination.
- dealt with mediums and spiritists.
- set the image of Asherah in the house of the LORD.
- seduced Judah to do evil more than the nations God destroyed before them.
- provoked God to anger.

God's Law prohibited everything Manasseh championed and warned about the associated judgment. While other kings allowed idolatry (Solomon even built temples for his wives' gods) Manasseh defiled the very house of YHWH, the place where the LORD said He would put His name forever (21:7). The Law throughout commanded Israel to obey God but they did not. Instead "Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel" (21:9).

Manasseh and his people had not listened to God, so God sent a message of judgment through the prophets. Rebelling against God's revealed Word never yields anything good.

2 Chronicles 33:1-13

This text recaps much of what 2 Kings 21 says but adds this chilling statement: “The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.” By the time Manasseh finally did pay attention, the damage done to the people and the land was grave. It took a trip to Babylon in chains to wake up the rebellious king. Eventually Manasseh “knew that the LORD was God” and God brought him back to Jerusalem but judgment was coming on the land he polluted with blood.

SEGMENT #3: Josiah

Key Talk Points:

- Josiah was as good as Grandpa Manasseh was bad.
- Josiah submitted to the revealed Word of God.

2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34:1-7

Josiah was only eight years old when he became king and his early life was marked by a series of good, God-honoring and God-seeking events.

- Eighth year of reign (15/16 years old): “began to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chr. 34:3)
- Twelfth year of reign (19/20 years old): “began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, the carved images and the molten images” (2 Chr. 34:3)
- Eighteenth year of reign (25/26 years old): “found the book of the law in the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 22:3, 8)

Josiah was purging the land including Israel with great zeal before he knew the revealed Word of God. The scroll of the Law had been lost in the house of God which had fallen into disrepair. Apparently the priests had not watched over it and the kings had not been making copies as God had commanded.

Although Josiah has been living admirably given the knowledge he had, when he hears the book of the law read he tears his clothes in an act of mourning because he now sees God’s standards and realizes that he and his people have not measured up. He places enormous value on the written Word of God and knowing that both he and his country stand condemned by it asks Huldah the prophetess to inquire of God. Though his fathers had not listened, Josiah was all ears!

God tells Josiah that judgment is coming but because Josiah humbled himself and had a tender heart, it will not come during his lifetime.

2 Kings 23:1-3

Josiah does not keep God’s Word to himself. He assembles the people and reads the book to them. Then he makes a covenant to follow all of God’s Word and the people enter the covenant with him.

2 Chronicles 35:20-27

Josiah does not live to see Judah taken to Babylon. He dies at the hands of Pharaoh Neco who is just passing through his territory. Although Neco tells him not to engage, Josiah does and falls in battle. The text says he did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God. As good a king as Josiah was, nothing is said about him inquiring of the LORD regarding this threat. He simply acted and fell.

Jeremiah, who lived to see the fall of Jerusalem, lamented Josiah's death.

SEGMENT #4: Nebuchadnezzar

- Key Talk Points:**
- Nebuchadnezzar's dream left him troubled and anxious.
 - There are always plenty of people willing to lie when no one can tell.

Daniel 2

Nebuchadnezzar's dreams scared him. Daniel 2:1 says "his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him." He describes his situation to his "supernatural court" (2:2) this way: "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

Although he had enough dream experts on staff, he shrewdly insisted that any who plan to interpret the dream tell him what it was first. How *do* you keep liars at bay? How can you tell if someone "has the chops" to interpret a dream? You get them to tell you the dream first. The plan was brilliant for finding truth, but it was tough on the frauds – magicians, conjurers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. Their protest against the king's demand (because it is impossible!) only angers Nebuchadnezzar who decides to kill them all.

Daniel becomes involved when Nebuchadnezzar's men come to kill him and his friends. Unlike the king's other "wise" men, Daniel's wisdom doesn't come from within or from anything earthly. His wisdom and ability to understand Nebuchadnezzar's dream is grounded in the God who reveals mysteries.

Because Daniel relates the king's dream to him Nebuchadnezzar knows his interpretation is true and declares that Daniel's God is a "God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries" (2:47).

The difference between truth and lie made all the difference in the world to Nebuchadnezzar and should to us, too. A claim to be able to interpret dreams is not necessarily true.

SEGMENT #5: Daniel

Key Talk Points: • Daniel knew and valued God's Word.

- Daniel's visions came with a great emotional toll.

Daniel 9:1-19

Daniel discovers how long the captivity will last (70 years) by reading what God had revealed to Jeremiah. His response was to confess that he and his nation ("we" and "us" in 9:9ff) had turned away from God's commandments and ignored God's prophets. Three times he says they have not obeyed God's voice (9:10, 11, 14). Daniel knows why the nation has brought a curse on itself because He knows the written and revealed Word of God – he has a plumbline. How does our view of God's Word compare with Daniel's?

Daniel 7:15, 28, Daniel 8:15-17, 27, Daniel 10:4-12, 16-18

When Daniel received messages from God, the encounters were not warm and fuzzy:

- "my spirit was distressed within me" (7:15)
- "visions in my mind kept alarming me" (7:15)
- "my thoughts were greatly alarming me" (7:28)
- "my face grew pale" (7:28)
- "I kept the matter to myself" (7:28)
- "I was frightened and fell on my face" (8:17)
- "I was exhausted and sick for days" (8:27)
- "I was astounded at the vision" (8:27)
- "no strength was left in me" (10:8)
- "my natural color turned to a deathly pallor" (10:8)
- "I retained no strength" (10:8)
- "I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground" (10:9)
- "trembling on my hands and knees" (10:10)
- "I stood up trembling" (10:11)
- "as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me" (10:16)
- "I have retained no strength" (10:16)
- "there remains just now no strength in me" (10:17)
- "nor has any breath been left in me" (10:17)

Take some time to discuss the effect these encounters had on Daniel and compare them, if you have time, with John's in Revelation 1. See if these passages have changed any of your students' pre-conceived views of revelation. How is God's revealed Word changing their thinking? Do they "tremble at His Word" (Isaiah 66:5)? What kind of plumb line does it give us for measuring truth?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

WEEK EIGHT

On the Other Side of Judgment

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>		<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:		5 min.	Review
Segment 2:		10 min.	Cyrus, Artaxerxes
Segment 3:		30 min.	Nehemiah
Segment 4:		15 min.	Jeremiah

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

What are the basic components of Inductive Bible study?

Which one did you progress in most during this class?

How are you doing with applying what you are learning?

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE REMINDER:

Yes, you probably have these memorized by now, but just in case you need them here are the basic guidelines for each section of the text:

1. Depending on the length of the text, either read it aloud or help your class talk through a summary of it using the 5Ws and H to hit the high points.
2. Identify who God is speaking to.
3. Note why He speaks and what He reveals.
4. If another voice is speaking, note what characterizes that voice.
5. Discuss how people respond to God's voice and to other voices, and what results.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS WEAVE IN APPLICATION QUESTIONS. You can find many in the workbook and you can add your own.

SEGMENT #2: Cyrus and Artaxerxes

- Key Talk Point:**
- God moves people who don't know Him.
 - God speaks "Thus saith the LORD" and stirs spirits.

Cyrus, Ezra 1:1-8

Ezra ties together a number of biblical characters and places helping the reader see the consistency of God's revelation. In an amazing turn of events for the Jewish people, King Cyrus of Persia (aka "king of the world") makes a royal proclamation that the temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt. Amazing in its own right, what makes it more amazing still is that both Jeremiah and Isaiah had prophesied it (Isaiah 44:28).

The text says "The LORD stirred up the Spirit of Cyrus King of Persia" (1:1). The Hebrew for "stir up" is *ur*. The word variously means waking something up, agitating, or moving something to action. (See also Jeremiah 6:22, 25:32; Zechariah 4:1, 9:13.)

Cyrus is not the only one God stirs. He also stirs the spirits of those He wants to perform the work. Others who were not stirred to go supported the mission of those who were.

Make sure to bring this back around to application. Does God stir up people today? What does He stir them up with? Support your answer from Scripture.

Artaxerxes, Ezra 7

Later under Persia's King Artaxerxes, Ezra the scribe goes to Jerusalem. He is a man of God to the core:

- God's hand was upon him.
- He set his heart to study the law of the LORD.
- He set his heart to practice the law of the LORD.
- He set his heart to teach God's statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Like Cyrus before him, Artaxerxes issues the favorable decree that anyone who wants to go back to Jerusalem to the house of Israel's God can go and that he will add funds to the money God's people offer. The money he is ponying up, he says, is "freely offered to the God of Israel." Ezra must use the money to buy animals, grains, and drink offerings. Any leftovers he must use "according to the will" of his God (7:18). Additional needs will be provided from the royal treasury (7:20).

The king addresses Ezra directly and tells him to appoint men to teach God's law to the people: "You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River, even all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant of them. Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of goods or for imprisonment" (7:25-26).

Ezra ascribes the king's over-the-top support to God "who put such a thing as this in the king's heart" (7:27).

This same God who set things in Artaxerxes' heart strengthened Ezra: "Thus I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me" (7:28).

Again, keep your students going with application: What benefits can people today get if they set their hearts on studying, practicing, and teaching God's Word? What benefits have you received?

SEGMENT #3: Nehemiah

Key Talk Points:

- Nehemiah fasted, prayed, and acted on what God put in his mind.
- Nehemiah refused to listen to false and lying voices.

Nehemiah 1:1-11

The book opens with Nehemiah, the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, in the capital city of Susa. He receives word from his Judean homeland that Jerusalem's walls are broken down and the remnant "in great distress and reproach." Hearing this causes Nehemiah to weep, mourn, fast, and pray for days.

Nehemiah confesses the sins of his nation and asks God to remember His covenant to gather His scattered people if they will return to Him. He asks God to listen to his prayer and to give him favor with the king: "make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man. Now I was the cupbearer to the king" (1:11)

Nehemiah 2:11-18

Nehemiah knew the Word of God and had been praying based on it. He had been fasting. He had seen answered prayers for favor with the king and he began to act without announcing what God is putting into his mind.

After assessing the situation, he eventually calls the people to rebuild the wall telling them how God's hand has been favorable toward him and recounting the king's words that paved the way. The people respond to the obvious need and to the way God has been working for Nehemiah.

There's much application here. This will get you started: When people today say "God told me to do this or that" what immediate questions does this bring up? What can we learn from Nehemiah?

Nehemiah 4:1-5

Sanballat the Horonite (see 2:19) furiously mocks the Jews and Tobiah the Ammonite joins him. They call the Jews weak and say that what they're building will be weak and they will not be able to complete it.

Instead of responding to them, Nehemiah asks God to judge them for demoralizing his builders. Then he keeps on building (4:6).

Sanballats and Tobiahs abound today. Help your class apply what they've learned from Nehemiah's response.

Nehemiah 4:14-21

Nehemiah urges the people to remember their God, turn from fear and fight. The God who brought Israel up from Egypt, the God who worked wonders on behalf of their ancestors, is the same God who has been showing them favor and who is in covenant with them.

The people continue building with “one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon” (4:17) knowing that God will fight for them (4:20)

Nehemiah 6:1-16

Nehemiah’s enemies play dirty. When they fail to discourage Nehemiah with their mocking, they resort to lies. It’s one thing to identify lies coming from the outside – clearly Sanballat and Geshem were spouting them; it’s quite another when they come from within the ranks. But when Shemaiah the son of Delaiah (one of Nehemiah’s guys) takes a bribe from enemies, Nehemiah identifies the false voice. He perceives (Hebrew: *nakar*) that God hasn’t sent him. Based on truth he knew, Nehemiah realizes Shemaiah’s prophecy is false. He urges him to behave in a manner inconsistent with his character. The goal in this false prophecy and others (see 6:14) is to scare Nehemiah into behaving badly so they can give a bad report and stop progress on the wall. Nehemiah, however, discerns the contrary voices and goes about his work until the wall is completed. When this happens in just fifty-two days, the enemies of the Jews lose confidence.

As you talk through application, help your students consider the prime tool contrary voices were using and how they responded to similarly discouraging and threatening voices.

Nehemiah 7:4-5

Again Nehemiah talks about God putting “into his heart” to do something – namely to assemble nobles and officials to enroll them by genealogy.

Nehemiah 8:1-12

Ezra reads the book of the law of Moses to all the people, both men and women, “from early morning until midday” (8:3). He brings the law to them at their request and does not leave them to figure it out on their own; rather, he has the Levites explain it to them. The emphasis in this section is not on physical listening but understanding (8:2, 3, and 8).

SEGMENT #4: Jeremiah

- Key Talk Points:**
- The true prophet knows and declares God's Word.
 - The true prophet turns people back from wickedness.
 - A prophet's claim to speak God's Word is not necessarily true.

Jeremiah 23:1-8

Jeremiah 23 opens with God declaring judgment on the shepherds of his people who are “destroying and scattering” His sheep. They were supposed to be tending them but instead they scattered them. They should have attended (Hebrew: *paqad*) them but they drove them away. Because of this God will attend (*paqad*) to them for their evil, but gather the remnant of His flock and bring them back.

In place of the evil shepherds, God will raise up shepherds who will tend and care for the sheep and He will raise up a righteous Branch of David (Jesus).

Jeremiah 23: 9-17

In this section, the LORD further describes the terrible state of spiritual affairs: “For both prophet and priest are polluted; Even in My house I have found their wickedness.” God will not allow this to continue indefinitely, but His people then and now need to be warned that while true prophets speak for God, other prophets are polluted, some prophesy by Baal, and others commit adultery, walk in falsehood, and “strengthen the hands of evildoers” (23:14). Prophets should turn people from evil to the truth, but these prophets turn no one back. Their actions are obvious to anyone who pays attention.

God warns clearly in verses 16 and 17:

Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you.

They are leading you into futility;

They speak a vision of their own imagination,

Not from the mouth of the LORD.

They keep saying to those who despise Me,

–‘The LORD has said, “You will have peace” ’;

And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart,

–They say, ‘Calamity will not come upon you.’

Before you move to the next section, ask your students if they’ve heard people today declare “Peace!” to those who walk in the stubbornness of their own hearts. How does this benediction compare with the clear teaching of Scripture?

Jeremiah 23:18-29

True prophets know God’s truth by standing in the council of the LORD, seeing and hearing His Word, and obeying it (23:18). True prophets turn people away from evil; they don’t condone it and strengthen them in it (23:22). They speak God’s Word – which is “like fire and like a hammer which shatters a rock” (23:29).

False prophets run and speak: "I had a dream, I had a dream" (23:26). They lead people away from God making them forget His name (23:27). False prophets' dreams are like straw.

Before you move on to the final section, make sure to read Jeremiah 23:28-29. It is a great set of verses to encourage your students to memorize:

"The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?" declares the LORD. "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

God's Word and the dreams of man have nothing in common! Why would anyone want straw in place of grain?

Jeremiah 23: 30-40

Three times the LORD declares that He is against the false prophets:

- "I am against the prophets who steal My words from each other" (23:30).
- "I am against the prophets who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord declares'" (23:31)
- "I am against those who have prophesied false dreams and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting" (23:32)

God says He did not send these prophets and they don't benefit the people at all!

Jeremiah describes a day when people will confuse their own ideas with God's true Word. This sounds frighteningly like our times: "For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God."

We have a sure and revealed Word! Let us not for a moment stray from "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3) to visions of our own imagination.

Final Wrap-Up Questions:

What has been your biggest takeaway from studying God's Word these past weeks? How is it changing the way you think and act? How will you remember it and live it out?

What's your next step in the Word as this study is coming to a close?