

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Basic Doctrines: Revelation

iFOLLOW

Walking with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

Curriculum Development: The iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition curriculum development was lead by the **Center for Creative Ministry**. **General Editor:** Monte Sahlin; **Assistant Editor:** Debbonnaire Kovacs; **Directional Advisory:** Brad Forbes, Carole Kilcher, Ceri Myers, Cesar Gonzalez, Clayton Kinney, Curtis Rittenour, Dave Osborne, Dave VanDenburgh, Gerry Chudleigh, Jane Thayer, Jerry Thomas, John Appel, Jose Rojas, Kim Johnson, Nicole Chao, Paul Richardson, Rich DuBose, Shasta Nelson, William Sutton; **Pastoral Advisory:** Claudio Consuegra, Collette Pekar, Dave Hutman, Don Driver, Fredrick Russell, Jerry Nelson, Jesse Wilson, Leslie Bumgardner, Loren Fenton, Rebecca Brillhart; **Unit Authors:** Alberto Valenzuela, Althea Pineda, Corienne Hay, Debbonnaire Kovacs, Ed Dickerson, Gianluca Bruno, Gil Bahnsen, Greg Nelson, Jack Calkins, James Whibberding, Karen Collum, Monte Sahlin, Norma Sahlin, Pam Splawinski, Patty Ntihuka, Reinder Bruinsma, Ryan Bell; **Additional contribution** by Maria Ovando-Gibson; **Additional editing:** Dave Gemmell, Meredith Carter; **Graphic Design:** Mind Over Media; **Layout:** Paul D. Young; **Web Development:** Narrow Gate Media.

License

iFollow Discipleship Pastor's Edition is produced by the NAD Church Resource Center for use by Seventh-day Adventist Congregations in Bermuda, Candada, and the United States. Churches may freely copy the lessons and PowerPoints for use within their congregations. Any other usage is prohibited without prior written consent from the NAD Church Resource Center. iFollow Discipleship, Copyright 2010, the North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists. NAD Church Resource Center, 12501 Old Columbia pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, 301-680-6339.



iFOLLOW

www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

Basic Doctrines: Revelation

Learning Objectives

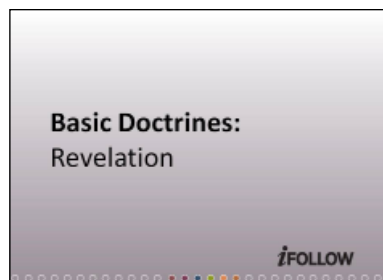
1. Realize that God still speaks to all who are willing to listen
2. Watch for the many ways God communicates with you
3. Become receptive to the Spirit's voice by spending time with God

Content Outline

- A. God Speaks through nature
- B. God speaks through our conscience
- C. God speaks through the Bible
- D. God speaks through prophets
- E. Christ--God comes to us in person
- F. Are we listening?

Background Material for the Presenter

For some people, God is a distant power who at a remote moment in the past set the world in motion but no longer interferes with what happens here. That, of course, is not the God portrayed in the Bible, who instead is consistently shown as a Father (Deut. 1:21), Mother (Isa. 66:13), Shepherd (Isa. 40:11), Protector (Ps. 68:5), Strong Tower (Prov. 18:10), and many other images, all of them proclaiming love, involvement, and watch care. First and foremost, the Bible sees God as the Creator who continues to take an intimate interest in His creatures. He is the Covenant God, and He seeks to establish a bond between Himself and the people made in His image. This God is a great Communicator. Human words cannot adequately explain who and what God is, but the fact that He constantly is referred to as speaking to His people is utterly significant.



As soon as Adam was created, God spoke to Him. Immediately after the first human inhabitant of this world had sinned, God called to him, Adam, “where are you?” (Gen. 3:9, NIV) Ever since, God has spoken to humanity in various ways. (Heb. 1:1) Even on the final page of the Bible we find confirmation of this in the divine appeal, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ” (Rev. 22:17, NIV) Let us spend some time exploring some of the various ways God speaks to us today.

God Reveals Himself through Nature

What we can see: Perhaps the two most cited texts for the concept of God’s revelation through nature are the two following Psalm 19 and Romans 1:20. We will review each of these scriptures.

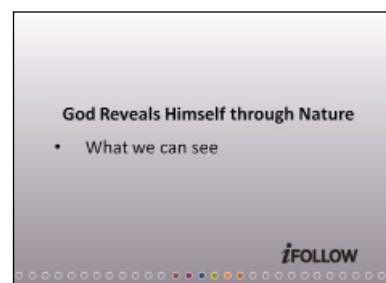
Psalm 19:1–4: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”

Here, the psalmist points out that the “voice” of nature “goes out over all the earth.” In that time, nobody could miss it. But today’s indoor, climate-controlled, uninvolved societies in developed nations are more insulated from nature and its effects than any society has ever been. Perhaps we miss many of the lessons about God that nature has to teach us.

The natural world is sometimes referred to as “God’s first book,” the second book being the Bible. Nature does not particularly point to the Bible specifically (it’s been around a lot longer, after all), but the Bible does specifically point to nature, in many more passages than these two popular ones. Those who believe in the Bible, therefore, will be confirmed in their convictions that when they look at the starlit sky or see the majestic trees in the forests and the beauty of the setting sun behind snow-covered mountaintops, they are seeing the works of a loving and powerful Creator. When they see an eagle in flight, admire a tulip, or marvel about the intricacies of the human body, they see evidences of God’s invisible qualities and agree that nature indeed declares the glory of God.

Romans 1:18–20: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Vs 20)

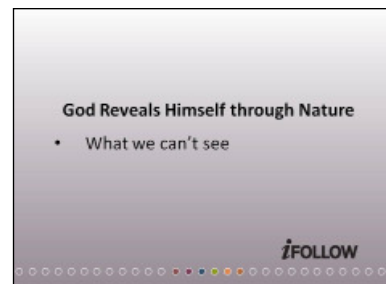
This is more in the nature of a rebuke. People, says Paul, can know about God from nature, and so have no excuse for their wickedness. In this case, the things we can see in nature are spelled out: God’s “invisible qualities, eternal power, and divine nature.”



Both these passages, but especially the second, suggest that the nonbeliever, by looking at nature, will somehow catch a glimpse of a divine Power that designed and made all that is. In today's world many close their eyes to this aspect. They have imbibed evolutionary thinking and want to explain all that exists in terms of chance and necessity. But, increasingly, scholars are admitting that there is so much evidence of intelligent design that this can be ignored only by those who stubbornly close their eyes to it.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary says, "The invisible things of God may be clearly perceived by the mind with the help of the created works of nature. Even though blighted by sin, the 'things that are made' testify that One of infinite power created this earth. All around us we see abundant evidence of His goodness and love. Thus it is possible for even the heathen to recognize and acknowledge the power of the Creator." (Vol. 6, p. 478) Any Bible commentary would agree.

What we can't see: Still, as beautiful and potent a witness as nature is, it alone cannot reveal the plan of salvation. Those who look at nature alone in an attempt to find God can see Him as a violent, dog-eat-dog force or being. In this philosophy, God either had to or chose to use trial and error to learn how to make things. This God doesn't seem to mind how much blood and death is used in the process, though He may be seen by some as working toward a better, "higher" society, in which love, peace, and justice reign. These people are often deeply spiritual and godly. But it's a very different theology than the biblical one which says God created things perfect to begin with, and humans chose not to live by the rule of love and self-sacrifice necessary to keep creation going as planned. So we can't see God completely clearly in nature. For the fuller picture, we must turn to other sources. Let's move first to conscience.



God Speaks Through Our Conscience

What we can feel: God loves us so much that He wants to have an ongoing dialogue with us. One of the ways He does this is through what we call our conscience.

"Conscience" is sometimes defined as the faculty, or inward principle, that helps us decide between right and wrong. Even those who do not believe in God usually possess some insight into what is morally acceptable and what must be rejected (Rom. 2:14, 15). For C. S. Lewis, this inborn feeling that there were right things and wrong things was one of the most powerful ideas that turned him from atheism to Christianity. In his apologetic, *Mere Christianity*, put together from a long series of radio discussions, he asks, in essence, If we are the



product of chance, why on earth would we ever get the idea that there is or should be a god of some kind, and why do we have these built-in consciences? Even though they may vary from society to society, there are a remarkable number of basics almost all humans agree on. Love is good. Hate is bad. You shouldn't kill, or at least you shouldn't kill within your own family or tribe. You shouldn't lie or break promises. You should worship someone or something bigger than yourself. Where did we get these ideas, unless there is a Creator?

The Christian believes that God is the supreme Lawgiver and that He has placed in humanity a conscience, even though sin has blunted this God-given tool for moral decision-making. In most Bible translations we do not find the word conscience in the Old Testament, though it occurs numerous times in the New Testament. But whether or not the term is used, the concept is present throughout Scripture.

What we can't feel: Important though our conscience is, it is not always totally trustworthy. We notice that people in good conscience often come to very diverse conclusions about what to do in particular circumstances. The apostle Paul was aware of this, as his remarkable statement in 1 Corinthians 4:4 shows: "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me" (NIV). The same apostle also warns that we can resist the pull of our conscience. In fact, some people appear to have seared their consciences with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:2) or have corrupted them (Titus 1:15).



Probably all of us, at one time or another, have made a decision based on that small, inner voice that we ended up regretting, or even realizing it was actually wrong. We can't always "feel" or sense the Spirit, and our own all-too-vocal desires and wishes and goals often get in the way. How can we be sure when God is speaking and when it's just us, or worse, an evil pretender?

There's only one way. We must **know God**. That means learning all these ways God speaks to us, and paying attention to them all.

There are ways of sharpening one's conscience. Being in tune with God by regularly reading His Word and by frequently communicating with Him in prayer will make us more sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, who can speak to us through our conscience.

Sometimes we mistake desires and feelings for something they're not. We feel a longing or craving, and seek to fill it, only to end up with sorrow. Sugar can serve as an interesting picture of this confusion. This innocent-looking, white substance has a rather villainous reputation that is enough to leave a sour aftertaste in the mouth of someone with the biggest sweet tooth. There's no denying that when sugar occurs naturally in nutritious foods, such as honey and papayas, it is, of course, beneficial. But it's no secret that too much sugar, especially added, refined sugar, can have detrimental effects on the body.

We all crave a certain amount of sweetness, and there's just no denying sugar makes certain foods taste better. We know that sugar is present in candy or cake, but it also can be a "hidden" ingredient in soups and sauces, ketchup, and even some prepared meats. When sugar is included in foods in which you might not expect to find it, its sweetness often is disguised by less sugary names, such as lactose, Maltodextrin, high fructose corn syrup, Sorbitol, and Xylitol.

Like sugar, every human ever born instinctively craves knowledge of God and His will. Like healthy sweetness, that knowledge also can be obtained through abundant sources. God reveals Himself to us in so many ways. One has only to avail oneself of these sources in order to "taste and see that the Lord is good," as the psalmist says (Ps. 34:8). But when we seek to fill that longing for love with something lesser, with the love of humans (and often not even healthy human love!), or with pleasure or too much work or other "empty calories," the end effect on us is much more devastating than the health crises too much sugar can bring. The worst of all is what could be called "toxic religion," whether Christian, or some other variety. If a belief system either puts you down and loads you up with rules and punishments, portraying God as the violent tyrant, or puts you on a pedestal, assuring you that God wants you to have all sweetness and light and doesn't care what you do so long as you are happy doing it, you can be sure you have stumbled on "spiritual diabetes" in its most virulent forms.

God Reveals Himself in the Bible

What we can know: God, the Bible says clearly, has been speaking to all people in all times, throughout the history of the earth. Therefore it must be true that every holy book that portrays a Creator who is both all-powerful and loving (and there are more than you might think) has truth in it. But there is no other holy book on the planet that can stand up to the Bible. No other book was written by more than 40 people, in 66 pieces, over 20 centuries, and still hangs together as one coherent **Word** of God. This literary compendium is amazing! Quite impossible, in fact. There is only one way it could exist, and that is if God wanted it, inspired it, guided it through the centuries, and protected it. The fact that there are places in the Bible which seem contradictory or hard to understand is not to be feared; it is clear evidence of the astonishing vicissitudes this beautiful Book has survived. And it **has** survived.

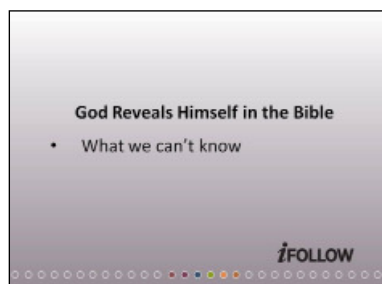
One 19th century writer put it this way: "As we contemplate the great things of God's Word, we look into a fountain that broadens and deepens beneath our gaze. Its breadth and depth pass our knowledge. As we gaze, the vision widens; stretched out before us, we behold a boundless, shoreless sea. Such study has vivifying power. The mind and heart acquire new strength, new life.

"This experience is the highest evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible. We receive God's Word as food for the soul through the same evidence by which we receive bread as

food for the body.” (White, 1952, p. 26)

More Bibles are sold today than ever before. New versions for specific target groups keep appearing. We have Bible versions that are more easily accessible to beginners, while we also have versions that lend themselves to liturgical use. And this is a good thing. But that does not necessarily mean that the Bible also is more widely read. In fact, there are indications that Bible reading among Christians is on the wane. Many do not know their Bible as a former generation once knew it. But only at our own eternal peril can we ignore the Word of God, which has the power to speak to us afresh every time we open it.

What we can't know: Yet even this Book, like every powerful instrument or tool, can be misused. It seems that too often we want it to be more like a magic book than the Living Word of God. We want to find exact rules for every situation, laid out just so, so that we can't possibly make a mistake, but never have to actually **think** about anything. People sit down and study with their favorite prejudices, find things they think fit, create entire theologies based on one or two verses or passages, and then beat each other over the head with it. Most wars in the history of the world have been over religion in one form or another, and a horrifying number of them have been over the Bible—the Word of the Prince of Peace who said, “Put up your sword—those who live by it die by it.” (Matthew 26:52)



Others skim amusedly over the Bible, think that the stories are all made up by early, infantile peoples, (not nearly so advanced as we technological marvels are) and dismiss the whole thing. Still others attribute to God all the horrific things done by some of His followers, talking, and all the things they blamed Him for, talking, for instance, of the “violent Old Testament God,” or “angry Judeo-Christian masculine gods.” When we pick up the Bible, we must understand that this is the **living Word** of a **living Creator**, and that we are usually not going to find what we expect, but if we come to it with prayer and humility, we will always find what we need.

God Speaks Through Prophets

A significant number of the writings that have been collected into the Bible were known as prophecies. But that doesn't mean what you might think. Many people have a very restricted view of the gift of prophecy. Prophecy is mainly seen in terms of predictions, and the prophets they are aware of are those who have given their names to a number of books in the Bible. The facts are different. God used prophets on a much wider scale than one would think. And prophecy is not only about predictions. It stands for much more.

Old Testament Prophets: The passage of Exodus 7:1–6 highlights the true work of a prophet. Moses, who (though he rarely made predictions) is referred to as a great prophet (Deut. 34:10–12), was assisted by his brother, who served as his spokesperson. “Moses is like God to Aaron, who is like a prophet to Pharaoh. The clear idea is that prophets don’t manufacture their own speeches but only pass on what they have heard from God.” (Dybdahl, p. 80)

A prophet is a man or a woman who speaks on behalf of God. Those words have authority because the message comes from God, even though the prophet may choose his or her own words to convey that message. God used this manner of communicating with His people quite extensively, as Amos underlined when he stated, “The Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7, NIV)

New Testament Prophets: Many people also confine prophets to the Old Testament. But there are many passages in the New Testament, especially in speaking of the early church, which mention prophets and make it clear that no one in that time thought God had stopped talking. In Luke 1:67, 2:36 and Acts 13:1, prophets are mentioned by name. In 1 Cor. 12:28 and 14:1–5, Paul speaks specifically of prophecy as an abiding gift of the Spirit. There are false prophets, according to both Peter and John. (2 Pet. 2:1, Rev. 2:20) Most germane to our needs today, John states clearly, under direct influence from God, that the gift of prophecy will be a characteristic of the remnant church. (Rev. 12:17, 19:10)



What gives authenticity to a prophet’s words? Why do we know that we can trust the Bible prophets? Well, of course, if you don’t believe the Bible is the revelation of God’s voice, then you can’t know whether to trust its prophets, either. Many specific predictions have come true, so that, at least, would give some credence, unless one decides that those must have been written later, after they’d already come to pass. (It’s hard to see what such people make of prophecies about, for instance, the Roman Empire. The prophecies of the Old Testament are known to have been around before

If, however, one chooses to accept the Bible as the Word (not the words) of God, then one can simply listen to its own “credentials.” “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” @ Timothy 3:16. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit This whole first chapter of Peter is very instructive on the gift and use of prophecy.

Modern Prophets: If God spoke through prophets all through the history of the world, and kept on speaking through them after Jesus had come and gone, at what point did He stop? Were there never prophets again, once the canon of scripture was closed? Does He

never speak through prophets now?

It's not logical to believe this. It's not consistent with God's revelation of Himself throughout human history. And so we do believe there have been other men and women inspired to speak for God to the people. One of those, most recently, we believe to have been a woman named Ellen White.

To hear some Seventh-day Adventists, you would think Mrs. White was the fourth member of the Godhead. To hear others, you'd think she was a wicked fraud and a charlatan. But we can use the same criteria the Bible gives to test her work and her words. A full study of the gift of prophecy as revealed in the life of this humble woman is not within the purview of this unit. Suffice it to say that we believe her gift to have been genuine and miraculous, and misused by some. Her words must never be taken in place of the Bible. She called her work "the lesser light" whose sole purpose was to point to "the greater light," the Word of God.

Christ—God Comes to Us in Person

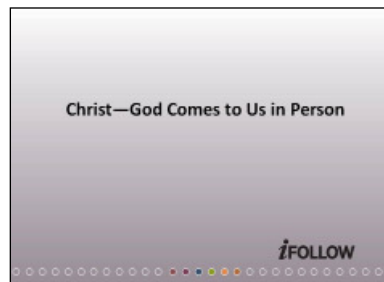
Getting letters from someone on a regular basis can go a long way toward getting to know that person more intimately. Receiving a picture will reveal another dimension of that person. But you will not really know that person until you actually have spent time face-to-face.

Because of sin, God could no longer commune with us as He had done with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Though He has communicated with us very effectively in various ways, He wanted to give us a fuller picture of Himself. And this He has done through Jesus.

According to many passages, such as John 1:1, 2; John 14:9; and Heb. 1:1–3, for example, God (the whole presence of the Godhead bodily) was fully present in Jesus. We are all children of God. But Jesus was the Son of God in a way that no human has been before or since. He Himself claimed to have been preexistent. (See John 8:58.)

The precise wording of John 1:1 is important. John does not say that God showed Himself in the flesh, or appeared in the flesh. Rather, John says that Jesus became flesh at a definite point in time. Jesus came from above and became flesh; that is, He took on Himself our humanity. That our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became flesh for our salvation is probably the one tenet of the Christian faith that is basic to all Christian denominations.

Have you ever met a child who looked and acted almost exactly like his or her parent? It can be an unsettling experience. You may have even felt as though you were in the presence of the very person the child resembled, though, of course that was not the case.



iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation

Jesus resembled His Father in character even more than any earthly parent and child ever could resemble each other. He and the Father are One. Jesus' presence here on earth was the most complete revelation of God ever given to humanity.

But He went away. He went "back to His Father" in heaven. (See John, chapters 13 through 17.) So today, 2,000 years later, there is only one way to really know His story well, and that's through the same way we spoke of above—God revealing Himself in the Bible.

For some the study of the Bible is an end in itself. Indeed, many gifted Bible scholars don't believe in God at all. Yet, reading the Bible without seeking to know the Lord whom it reveals can no more lead you to salvation than reading a recipe can fill your empty stomach.

Jesus Christ is the focus of the Scriptures. He said more than once that the Bible is about Him, about what He has revealed to us regarding the nature and character of God. The Bible doesn't save us, but it is the authoritative source of truth about the only One who can, Jesus of Nazareth.

Are We Listening?

This week's lesson has explored many ways in which God reveals Himself to us. The question is, are we listening? Are we really looking deeply at the glories of the natural world, watching for the hand of God? Are we spending time in silence with God, paying attention to the "feelings" or impressions He sends, checking them against revealed Word? Are we reading closely, carefully, and prayerfully to the Word? Are we listening to the words of the prophets—Old Testament, New Testament, modern time, and even people who speak the Word of God into our personal lives at opportune moments? A song, sermon, something on the radio—almost anything can be used by God as a private, prophetic moment for us. A moment in which He reveals Himself and His ways to us more clearly than we'd perceived before.

1 Sam. 3:1-10 tells the story of the young boy, Samuel, a servant in the house of God, being called from sleep because God had something to tell him. In this case, God calls out to Samuel four times before he responds. God really wants to talk to us. He does so through nature and by speaking through our conscience. Throughout the ages He has used prophets, and He has made the prophetic gift available even for His church today. The Bible, God's Written Word, remains the divine Guidebook for our pilgrimage. Its focus is on what God has done for us, most sublimely in entering this world in the Person of His Son, to which all Scriptures testify. Are we listening?



Handouts in this Package

1. Participant Notes



iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation

Additional Resources

- Crosby, T. E. (1988). *Is Your God Real?* Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association.
- Dybdahl, Jon (1994). *Exodus, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- Fitzgerald, Troy (2008). *20 Questions God Wants to Ask You*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press.
- Hasel, Gerhard (1980). *Understanding the Living Word of God*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.
- Henry, C. F. H. (1976-83). *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 Volumes. Waco, TX: Word.
- Holbrook, Frank and Van Dolson, Leo; editors (1992). *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration. Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers*, Volume 1. Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications.
- Horn, Siegfried (1980). *The Spade Confirms the Book*, Revised Edition. Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association.
- Hyde, G. M.; editor (1974). *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*. Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute.
- Kubo, Sakae and Specht, Walter (1983). *So Many Versions? Twentieth Century English Versions of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Lewis, C. S. (1943). *Mere Christianity*. New York, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Maxwell, A. G. (1967). *You Can Trust the Bible*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.
- Reid, G. W.; editor (2000). *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association. Pages 22-57.
- Rice, Richard (1985). *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press. Pages 20-46.
- Thompson, Alden (1991). *Inspiration*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Co.
- Venden, Morris (1995). *How to Know God's Will in Your Life*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Company.
- Wade, Loron (2009). *Simply Put: What God's Been Saying All Along*. Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association.
- White, A. L. (1973). *The Ellen G. White Writings*. Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation

White, Ellen (1952). *My Life Today*. Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association.

White, Ellen (1892). *Steps to Christ*. Boston: Fleming H. Revell Company.

White, Ellen (1911). *The Great Controversy*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press. Pages v-xii.

White, Ellen (1958). *Selected Messages*, Book 1. Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association. Pages 15-23.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation

Discussion Questions

1. Romans 1:18–20 tells us that the “invisible things” of the eternal power of God and the Godhead are revealed so clearly through nature that an ignorance of Him or a refusal to acknowledge Him is “without excuse.” What specific example or examples can you find in nature that reveal God’s “eternal power” or that illustrate the concept of the “Godhead”? Explain your answer.
2. What do we need to know about God that nature cannot tell us?
3. God speaks to us in a variety of ways. We can see His glory through nature, His knowledge in prophecy, and His love through Jesus. How does God speak to you personally?
4. How do you arrive at important moral decisions? Do you listen to your conscience? How can you be sure that your small, inner voice is not overruled by other voices in and around you? Have you let your conscience be your guide and ended up making a wrong moral decision? What did you learn from that experience that could help you not to repeat it?
5. Is Bible reading a prominent feature in your daily program? If not, why not?
6. What are ways in which we can read the Bible in order to come away from it knowing God better? What are ways in which we can read the Bible and come away from it not knowing any more than when we came?
7. How can you invest your time this week communing with God? In what ways can you listen to God’s leading and let yourself be more receptive to what He has to say?
8. The presentation talked of children who resemble their parents. How can we grow to “look more like” God?
9. Think about how you came to know God personally. Was it nature, prophecy, the Bible, or the life of Christ that made the greatest impact? Which revelation will you explore now to deepen your intimacy with God? Give reasons for your choice.

Group Activity

Activity 1

Purpose: To explore the character of God in a new and dramatic way.

Preparation: You will need a board or flipchart and markers, writing materials and tables, plus room to move around and act. Several different Bible versions would be helpful

Assignment: Choose a scribe to send to the board. Have the group call out favorite Bible stories that portray the character of God. Then have the group choose one they would like to either rewrite in a contemporary setting, or act out, or both. If there are more than 15 people you may need to divide the story into two or three acts and divide into teams to work on those acts. Then (or next time) act out the story.

Debrief: Discuss feelings, reactions, insights. What has been portrayed about the character of God? Have there been new insights?

Time: Allow five minutes for the initial brainstorming and picking a story. Don't let them get bogged down. Just pick a good one and go. Allow 15 minutes work at the tables. If you are going to rewrite the story in contemporary terms, you may need a little longer. Again, don't get bogged down. If you have a budding playwright in your group, encourage him or her to go ahead and write a full play, but not here and now! If you are going to act the story out as is, you may only need to choose actors and go for it. Allow five to 10 minutes for acting out the story, depending on its complexity, and allow another 10 or 15 minutes for discussion.

Activity 2

Purpose: To see God in nature, and discuss the pros and cons of that view of God.

Preparation: If at all possible, you need a place where your group can go outside themselves, in which you need not do much preparation. If that is not possible, bring plants, fish or birds, animals, rocks ... anything from nature that you can, into the room and scatter them on tables and around the room. A distant third option would be short video clips of nature (nice and not-so-nice, if you really want to spark discussion).

Assignment: Either go outside and take some time enjoying the world and collecting things to discuss, or wander around the room enjoying, each one choosing something that speaks to him/her.

Debrief: What do these items declare about God? What are their shortcomings when it comes to clearly displaying the Creator’s might? Why did you choose what you did?

Time: Allow as long as practical for the “nature walk,” even if indoors. Allow at least 15 minutes for discussion.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

Group
Activities

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation

Handout

Doctrine 5: Revelation

Scripture Focus: Exodus 7:1-6; Psalms 19:1-4; Romans 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-3

Concept: We long to hear God speak to us. Although we don't hear an audible voice, if we stop and listen, God is speaking: through nature, our consciences, Scripture, the prophets, and the life of Jesus.

Connecting with Scripture

- A. Go outside and collect one nature object. This can be something simple such as a blade of grass, a flower, a leaf, a pebble, etc.
- B. Contemplate on how this one object speaks to you about what God is like. For example, "This flower tells me that God loves beautiful things," or "This leaf tells me that God brings back something that dies each fall." Write about your thoughts in your prayer journal.

Sharing and Receiving Scripture

- A. Can God be revealed to us when God can't be seen or heard? Has ample evidence been supplied to us to really know what our God is like?
- B. Read Psalm 19:1-4 and Romans 1:18-20. How is God's character revealed to us in these texts?
1. If the "heavens proclaim the glory of God," then we know that our God is majestic
 2. If the "skies proclaim the work of His hands," we know that God is infinite in power and scope
 3. If the night skies display knowledge, then we know that our God is intelligent and wise
 4. Since creation, the world has been able to clearly see God's power
 5. I lean toward being an evolutionary theist, so these texts are difficult for me to comprehend
 6. Other....
- C. Read Genesis 42:18-23 and Matthew 27:3-5. What can these two stories teach us about God speaking to us through our conscience?
1. We shouldn't wait until we've been found guilty to listen to our conscience
 2. If we wait too long to listen, the wrong we've done can't be undone
 3. If we repeatedly refuse to listen, we may eventually become deaf to God's voice

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

HANDOUT

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation

4. God speaking to us through our conscience is just not dependable enough
5. A guilty conscience without forgiveness can take away one's will to live
6. Other....

D. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-16. What claims regarding the revelation of God through Scripture are found here?

1. God inspired the entire Bible. We can't only pick and choose which parts we agree with
2. The scriptures we learned during our spiritual infancy are still trustworthy
3. We need to continue in our learning. None of us has "arrived"
4. Scripture makes us wise so that we can discern the things God has to teach us
5. God loves us enough to show us the way to a whole life
6. Other....

E. Read 1 Corinthians 12:28 and 14:3, 4. What's your opinion about God speaking through prophets, male or female?

1. Follow only the Bible because I don't know if I could tell a true from a false prophet
2. Prophets are chosen by God, not self-appointed
3. In Scripture prophets are listed after apostles, so God must want us to listen to them
4. Prophets are meant to strengthen, encourage, and comfort; that's something I want
5. I've not read Ellen White recently, maybe I should have an open-minded approach to her writings again
6. Other....

Applying the Message of Scripture

Choose one of the following options and work on a solution. If you have opportunity, share your solution with someone else. (The first one requires a friend.)

Option 1: Have a mock creation vs. evolution debate. One person is a creationist, the other, an evolutionist. How was God revealed through this exercise? Is the Spirit of God always present in the real creation vs. evolution debates you have read or heard?

Option 2: You have done something that you think might be wrong—but you're not sure. You feel guilty, but at the same time you can kind of justify your action. How do you decide which voice to listen to?

Option 3: Find a beautiful nature film and show it at your church. Or have a program where you collect photos from members that show the beauty of God's creation. You can set these to music or the reading of Scripture. Invite your community to attend.

Valuing Scripture in Your Life

A. Stop and listen to God. Really listen. Is God speaking to you through your conscience, asking you to throw out something that hinders your friendship? Ask God for the strength to replace it with something you desire more that enhances your friendship and is good for you.

B. Read Psalm 139 to yourself. When you're finished, you'll know just how valuable you are to God. And/or note the names of Jesus mentioned in Isaiah 9:6. Write each one in a separate column. Then, under each, write how that particular name has been meaningful in your life. For example, under "Prince of Peace" you might write about a time that you were troubled about something and God gave you peace about it, and so on.

C. Read John 17:3. Think and write about how important it is to get to know God. Keep a journal this week describing the ways in which God reveals Himself to you.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Walking with
Jesus

HANDOUT

Basic
Doctrines:
Revelation