

LESSON 29: Inspiration

AIM

To explain the meaning of inspiration as applied to sacred writings, and how to read the Bible so as to understand God's message (8.2.6, 8.6.4)

OUTCOME

Learners understand the Christian view of the Bible as inspired literature.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1 Discuss Inspiration

Ask the children to tell you what they understand as inspiration. Jot their answers on the board. Together with the children look for the meaning of the word in the dictionary. Talk about inspiration in art. Artists are normally inspired by something outside themselves to create a work of art, like a painting, a sculpture, a piece of music, or a book. It is that something that motivates or moves their minds or thoughts in a certain direction.

2 The Israelites had an important story they wanted to tell. They wanted to tell the story of how God revealed himself to them, his people. Certain members of the community wrote this story down. The books that tell the story are together called the Bible.

3 The Bible is inspired. This means that the writers of the books of the Bible were inspired by God. Or we can say they were written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The word 'spirit' means breath, and it is as if the writers were breathing in the Spirit of God as they wrote. [See 2 Tim 3: 16-17]. When we say that the Bible was inspired by God we do not mean that God made people say what he wanted. God did not just put words into people's mouths. The Holy Spirit guided, inspired the people who wrote about God's story in their own way, in their own language, and out of their own experience. We can therefore say that the Bible is the word of God in human language, spoken to us today as it was to the people long ago, for whom the Bible was first written.

4 Guided by the Spirit [Galatians 5:16-18, 22-25]

We are also guided by the Spirit. There is within us an 'angel of goodness' we call conscience who counsels us and encourages us to do good, helping us to discern between what is right and what is wrong.

5 God speaks to us in the Bible. This is what God said to Jeremiah: "I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I set you apart." [Jeremiah 1:5] God has a message for each and everyone. We need to listen carefully and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us to hear it. How do we **read the Bible** so that we understand what is God saying to us? First we need to find a quiet place and an appropriate scripture reading, then we can follow these easy four steps to be with God:



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Dictionary (1)
- * Bible (2)(3)(4)(5)(8)(9)(12)
- * Copies of the worksheet (5) ⇒
- * Oh the Word of My Lord (6)
- * Blindfold (7)
- * Copies of the worksheet (9)(10) ⇒
- * A5 sheets of white paper, coloured paper for covers, colour pencils, ribbon (10)



PRAY- READ - THINK - ACT

Give the children a copy each of the worksheet and go through it with them. Give them the following scripture reading: [Nehemiah 8: 1-8, 12] and invite them to follow the steps.



6 Song: *Oh the Word of My Lord*








ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 7 **Guided by the Holy Spirit:** To illustrate the importance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in reading scripture, do the following demonstration with them: Blindfold a child. Set a course to the wall and let him/her go. He/she will stumble and perhaps fall. (Explain that this is like trying to read the Bible without help or guidance). Now, guide the blindfolded child by telling him where to go so that he will find the way without getting hurt. (Tell them that this happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us). Explain that trying to read the Bible without help or a system is like walking in the dark.
- 8 **Dramatise the following situations:**
 - A child reads the Bible in bed. He soon falls asleep. (You cannot be alert and concentrate in bed.)
 - A child starts reading the Bible. She begins with the New Testament and chooses the first chapter in Matthew. (Ask the children to find it in their Bibles. It is difficult, heavy reading and she'll be put-off the Bible.)
 - A child 'lucky-dips' verses and he opens the Bible at any page and reads: 'Judas went and hung himself.' And then at another: 'Go and do likewise' (Doing this will confuse and mislead one into believing something the Word of God never intended.)
- 9 Give them the following readings and ask them to choose one and do the **4 STEPS** Bible reading at home (you can also use this for another lesson): Psalm 1: 1-6; Psalm 119: 17-24; 1 Corinthians 2: 11-13; Hebrews 5: 11-14; 2 Peter: 1: 3-4; 2 Peter 1: 19-21. Invite them to write their response down in a special book. See ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY 10. 
- 10 **My Bible Journey:** For children to deepen and grow in their love and knowledge of God, it is a good idea to keep a Bible journal where they can write their thoughts and responses to their scripture readings. Talk about a Bible journal. Explain the benefits we can gain from having one. For the journal, put together A5 size pages and bind them together with a ribbon. The cover page should be decorated in some way. Name this journal: *My Bible Journey*. Invite the children to use one or more of the other readings in the previous activity to go through the 4 STEPS and write their response (act) in their Bible journey. 
- 11 Discuss the difference between **being influenced and being inspired**. Write the definitions on the board. Explain that when you are influenced you do not have as much freedom. Influence comes more from the outside, but inspiration works from within a person.
- 12 Read Ezekiel 37:1-14. The prophet **Ezekiel's vision** explained that God is powerful enough to restore even dried-up bones to life. Ask the learners to draw a series of pictures which explain what is happening in the story. They write a caption to illustrate the difference that God's Spirit made.

TO REMEMBER

We say the Bible is inspired because the Holy Spirit guided its writing and putting together. The Bible is the word of God in human language.

Four-Step Bible Reading

<h2>1. PRAY</h2> <p>that God will help you to understand and learn from what you read.</p>  	<h2>4. ACT</h2> <p>Pray that God will help you today and in the future to act on what you have learnt.</p> 
<h2>2. READ</h2> <p>a Bible passage - one you have chosen, or one that has been suggested to you - one of the readings of the day.</p>  	<h2>3. THINK</h2> <p>What have I read about God today? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to believe? Is there a good example to follow? Is there a wrong thing I should avoid? What have I learnt from my reading?</p>  

(Adapted from *The Challenge*. 1986. Scripture Union)

LESSON 30: What Is True?

AIM

To develop an awareness of different kinds of truth, and a realisation that biblical truth does not work on a literal level. (8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.6.5)



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bible (2)(5)
- * A selection of advertisements (7)
- * Bibles (8)

OUTCOME

Learners understand the Christian view of the Bible as inspired literature.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **Searching for the truth:** Ask the learners in a short brainstorm to suggest ways in which people search for the truth. Make a list. Here are some thoughts that will help you to prompt their responses:

People search for truth throughout their lives. They want to find out and know the reality behind appearances. They want to know the truth about things. Human beings want to discover more about their world and other planets through scientific research, explorations, and investigations. For centuries people believed that the earth was flat, until Ferdinand Magellan sailed right round it. Explorers and inventors have been driven by their desire to know the truth.

- 2 **What is truth?** Read [John 18: 37-38]. Explain that the lesson will explore this question of Pilate.
- 3 **Kinds of truth:** Put the following question to the children, "When someone asks you to tell them about yourself, what answer do you give?" Ask them to write down their responses, and then invite some to read their's out. Write some examples on the board to illustrate that there are different kinds of truth. The children might mention something:

PERSONAL: their name, their likes and dislikes;

HISTORICAL: where they (and their parents) come from;

GEOGRAPHICAL: where they live;

SOCIAL: who their family is;

MATHEMATICAL: what number they are in the family;

RELIGIOUS: what they think about God.

- 4 **Biblical Truth:** Almost every page of the Bible is a record of God 'speaking' to us. There is a popular saying: 'You cannot see the wood for the trees.' This means that you concentrate on the little details so much that you cannot see the whole picture. When dealing with scripture we can also say: 'You cannot see the WORD for the words'

By this we mean that because the Bible has been written by humans in human words, we often lose sight of what God intended to say - we become confused by the 'other words'. We must take into account that the Bible writers used their own language and their own way of seeing the world, and were concerned about things that were going on around them. They spoke, for instance, about historical events, political decisions, and social issues.

Through all the human variety comes the voice of the Living God - speaking to people then, and through them speaking to us now. What needs to be emphasized in this lesson is that the Bible is concerned with RELIGIOUS TRUTH. It is not intended as a Science, Geography or History book, but tells the story of who God is to us and what God does in our world. The religious truth of the Bible is often written in symbolic language. The following exercise will make this clear.

- 5 **Activity:** This exercise will help illustrate that we need to read the Bible in context and not on a literal level in order to understand God's message. Give the following instructions:

1) Look up Psalm 23:1-4 in the Bible. (Tradition says that King David who was a shepherd boy wrote this psalm. He knew all about looking after sheep.)

2) Answer: How is God described in this psalm? What are God's people likened to in this psalm?

3) Draw a chart with two columns. In the first column make a list of the things that the shepherd does for the sheep. In the second make a corresponding list of the things that these verses tell you God is doing for David, the writer of the psalm, and of course, for ourselves.

Things the shepherd does for the sheep	Things God did for David, and does for us

Help the children see in this exercise that God is comparing himself to the shepherd to show us how much he loves and cares for us. The truth in this scripture passage is God's love. God is saying that he cares for us and that no harm will come to us as long as we are with him.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 **Points of view:** People have different points of view. There is more than one way of looking at something. People see 'reality' in different ways and interpret it according to their background and experience. It is therefore natural that each account of the same incident may differ. Points of view are therefore never the whole truth. To illustrate this point: Ask a group of three or four volunteers from the class to give a brief description of an incident that the whole class witnessed. They give the description one by one with the other volunteers outside the classroom. Invite the class to point out the different perceptions.

- 7 There are other factors that affect the way in which we perceive things as being true or real. **Advertisers** use certain techniques to win our support for their products. They present only the facts which support a particular idea - these are half-truths and are often misleading. It is important that we learn to be critical and discerning about what we hear, read or see, to enable ourselves to see the truth and act accordingly. Ask the learners to look at a few adverts they find appealing, and say what their message is. Is the message true?

8 **Nebuchadnezzar's Dream**

Invite the children to look up and read the story in Daniel 4. The word of God also speaks to people in dreams which are difficult to understand. Daniel was able to interpret the dream because he was a special friend of God.

LESSON 31: Word and Symbol

AIM

To explore the imagery and symbols used in the Bible (8.5.3, 8.6.3, 8.6.5)



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Bibles (3)(4)(6)
- * 🎵 *Love Is His Word* (7)

OUTCOME

Learners understand the Christian view of the Bible as inspired literature.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **1 Explain:** In our everyday speaking we often use figurative forms of speech, called idioms. Idiomatic expressions vary from region to region, from language to language. We say things such as: as white as snow; as sick as a dog; she's the apple of his eye, and so on. Ask the children to give other examples and say what they mean. Afrikaans is a language rich in idiomatic expressions. Invite the children again to talk about which expressions are used and what they mean. If the children know of examples of this form of expression in other African languages ask them to do the same as before.

We also use symbols to express our thoughts. The heart, for example, is a symbol of love. Or the lion is a symbol of courage.

- 2 **Symbols and Pictures in the Bible:** The authors of the Bible used many symbols and pictures to teach religious truths. Knowing the meaning of these symbols will help us to understand the meaning of the scriptures better. The writers of the Bible often speak of God as:

- the water which gives life,
- the light that shines among men,
- the food that nourishes us.

The psalmist asks God to 'hide me in the shadow of your wings' [Psalm 17:8]. In the last example, what the psalmist means is that God will protect us as a mother bird protects her young.

- 3 **Second Creation Story** [Genesis 2: 5-25]

Write the underlined items below as headings on the board. Then read the above passage to the children. Invite them to look at the headings on the board one at a time and try to explain the creation story's imagery:

- The creation of a man from the soil of the earth is a way of teaching that we depend on God for our existence. Because we are created from the soil we are mortal. One day we shall die.
- God breathed life-giving breath into the man. This action symbolises the dignity and value of all human life. Humans have the breath of life that comes from God.
- The garden is a symbol of peace and happiness. Gardens had a special meaning for the Israelites who lived near the desert. The garden symbolises that God wants us to have fullness of life and to share in God's own life.

- The tree of knowledge is a symbol of the experiences of life. The first people could choose between good and evil, but they were not able to decide for themselves what is good and evil. God encouraged them to use their freedom.
- Naming animals and birds is a way of teaching us that humans have dominion over creation and are therefore to care for it.
- Putting Adam into deep sleep to create a second person means that men and women share the same human life, that they are partners with each other and with God.

Ask the children how knowing the symbols of the creation story helps them understand the story better. Write their responses on the board and discuss them together. Invite them to write their findings in their workbooks.

(Adapted from *Coming to God's Word*. 1987. New York: Sadlier Inc)

4 Pictures of the Bible at work

There are various pictures the Bible uses to describe the Word that it contains. Some of them will help us see how the Bible is meant to be used. As an exercise, ask the learners to draw up a table, to look up the verses below, and to complete the table.

Verse(s)	Symbol	What it says about the Word of God

The following information is given to you, the teacher:

- [Psalm 119:105] **A lamp** - God's Word lights the road we walk on.
- [Ephesians 6:17] **A sword** - to help us in our struggle against temptation and sin. God's Word is as sharp as a sword - it means what it says.
- [1 Peter 2:2] **Milk** - the Word, like milk for a baby, nourishes us and helps us grow spiritually strong and mature.
- [James 1:23-25] **A mirror** - the Word helps us to see ourselves as we really are.
- [Jeremiah 23:29] **A hammer** - the Word of God breaks down our resistance, our hardness of heart.
- [Luke 8:11] **A seed** - the word of God, like a seed, once it is planted, germinates, grows and eventually bears fruit.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

5 Symbols of God the Spirit in the Bible

- **Wind** – the word spirit is borrowed from the natural appearances of wind and breath. It indicates God's presence, his coming is unexpected - strong and powerful [Wisdom 1:7; 1 Kings 19:11-13; John 3:8].
- **Breath** – the biblical writers frequently use the symbol of breath when they speak of the Spirit. Breath gives life [Genesis 2:7; Psalm 104:30; Ezekiel 37:1-10].
- **Fire** – used when the biblical writers speak of God when communicating with man, e.g. story of Moses and the burning bush. God's fire purifies, strengthens, comforts, fills the heart with joy and enthusiasm [Genesis 15:17; Exodus 3:2; Isaiah 6:6-7; Luke 12:49, 24:32].

(Adapted from You Are My Witnesses. 1976. Fr Paul Nadal & Sr Theodula Müller. SACBC)

6 Bible search

Give the children the following readings and ask them to explain the symbols in them. They could draw the symbol next to the scripture reference in their workbooks:

Exodus 3: 2

1 Kings 19: 11-13

Ezekiel 37: 1-10

Isaiah 6: 6-7

Luke 12: 49

7 Song: *Love Is His Word*

LESSON 32: Proclaiming the Word

AIM

To show the learners how the Bible is used in the liturgy, and to help them distinguish between lectionary, missal and Bible (8.6.2)

OUTCOME

Learners distinguish between lectionary, missal and Bible.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 **1 Celebrating God's Word:** In the previous lessons we've learned to understand the Bible better, how God speaks to us in the Scriptures, and to see what his message for us is. In the words of St Richard of Chichester we learnt "to see him more clearly, to love him more dearly, and to follow him more nearly." In liturgy, the Church celebrates, as a community, God's life among us. Every liturgy celebrates God's love for us in giving us the Word.
- 2 **The Eucharist or Mass** begins, after an introduction, with a celebration and proclamation of the Good News of God's Kingdom in the Liturgy of the Word. We celebrate God's word which is the focus and source of Christian life. Christ promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." This is what happens when we celebrate God's word: Christ is present and active with us and is a source of prayer and praise and the proclamation of God's wonderful works. Christ speaks to his people.
- 3 **The LITURGY OF THE WORD** consists of:
 - READINGS from the Bible, the word of God.
 - A HOMILY, in which the priest explains the readings to the people.
 - The CREED, in which we profess our faith.
 - The PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL in which we, the people, pray to God for our needs and the needs of the world.

Ask the children to think about the scripture readings at Mass. Can they remember what they are? (FIRST READING - RESPONSORIAL PSALM - SECOND READING - ACCLAMATION - GOSPEL). Make flashcards of the items given above in capitals and build the picture of the Liturgy of the Word as the lesson proceeds.
- 4 **How are the Scripture readings put together:** The scripture readings have been carefully selected from the Bible to show how God's message to his people in the Old Testament came to fulfilment in Jesus Christ, as we read in the New Testament..

The **First Reading** is taken from the Old Testament, or during Easter time, from the Acts of the Apostles. It is followed by a **Psalm** which reflects on the reading, and to which the people respond. The **Second Reading**, from the New Testament, usually one of St Paul's letters, is followed by a verse of welcome for the **Gospel**, the high point of the Liturgy of the Word.

The Sunday readings follow a three year cycle. During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, the readings proclaim the theme of the time of the year. During the



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Flashcards (3)
- * Missals or photocopies (4)
- * Sacramentary, lectionary, missal (5)
- * Bible, flowers, stand or pillow, candle, copies of final prayer (6)
- * 🎵 *Oh the Word of My Lord* (6)
- * Copies of the choral psalm (7)

Ordinary Sundays of the Year, each one of the Synoptic Gospels is read, more or less in full: Matthew in cycle A, Mark in cycle B, Luke in cycle C. Readings from the Gospel of John are interspersed at particular times. The New Testament Letters (Epistles) are also read during the Ordinary Sundays of the Year. The Old Testament readings are chosen to fit with the Gospel. Through the readings, God speaks to his people of redemption and salvation, and nourishes their spirit with the Word.

(Adapted from The Sunday Missal. 1975. London: Collins)

Try to have a number of missals handy so that the learners can look up things as you explain. If this is not possible, photocopy a few pages from a missal for them.

5 Special books used in the Liturgy: Draw the learners' attention to the missal, lectionary and Bible that you have brought. If any of these are not available, ask them to think of the 'special' books used at Mass. There are three special books used at Mass:

- The **Sacramentary** is the 'big book' that the priest reads at the altar at Mass. This book contains all the special prayers that are said at the celebrations throughout the year, for every occasion and season of the year.
- The **Lectionary** is the book read by the readers and the priest at the lectern. It comes in two volumes. Volume I provides the scripture readings for all the Sundays of the year and special feasts of the Church. Volume II provides the scripture readings for every day of the week throughout the year from Monday to Friday and any solemnity or special day.
- The **Missal**, the third book, which is a smaller publication used mainly by the community and contains the scripture readings of the Mass plus the Order of the Mass, which is the whole process - prayers and responses- from the first prayers (Introductory Rites) to the final blessing (Concluding Rite), plus other additional prayers and celebrations. The most commonly used is the Sunday Missal. Like the Lectionary there is one missal for Sundays and another for daily Mass.

6 Enthronement of the Bible: To consolidate the lesson, celebrate God's Word in this paraliturgy. On a table prepare a stand or pillow on which to place the Bible. The Bible is carried in procession and placed on the stand as the whole class stands and sings an appropriate hymn, for example, *Oh the Word of My Lord*. Everyone is seated for the readings.

Leader - Today we honour the Holy Book containing the word of God. We want to give it a special place, not only in our classroom, but also in our lives.

Reader 1 - (using the Bible which has just been 'enthroned')

A reading from the Book of Nehemiah 8: 8-12.

Reader 2 - (using the same Bible) A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews 1:1-3.

Leader - This is the book of the acts of God. It tells of God's saving power on behalf of the people of Israel and of God's saving presence in Jesus. We will study this book. Let us determine today to do so with reverence and with joy.

The candle is lit and the leader invites all to stand and pray:

All - Lord, your Word is our strength. It nurtures and sustains us and all things. Teach us by the guidance of your Spirit, and with the help of your Church, to read it rightly. May it give light to our minds that we may come to know you. May it give warmth to our hearts that we may grow to love you. May it give direction to our wills that we may learn to serve you, forever and ever. Amen.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

7 Let's proclaim God's word [Isaiah 40:3-5]

Divide the class in two groups, **1** and **2**, and pray this psalm as choral verse with the groups alternating:

- 1** A voice cries out: "In the desert prepare the way of the Lord!
- 2** Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God."
- 1** Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low;
- 2** The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley.
- 1** Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all humankind shall see it together;
- 2** For the mouth of the Lord has spoken!