

GENERATE CAMP: Make It Matter

Session 1: The Word of God

What We Want Students to Learn: That a life of real impact flows out of God’s Word working in and through our lives.

Scripture:

- Narrative Snapshot: Peter and John before the Council (Acts 4:1–13)
- Supporting Passages: Psalms 1:1–2 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17

Session Snapshot: In this session, you’ll look at a narrative from Acts where Peter and John make a bold stand for their faith. The religious leaders’ reaction to them reminds us of a key truth: when we spend time in relationship with God, we are never the same. We don’t have the same luxury as Peter and John. We can’t hang out personally with Jesus. But we can be transformed by seeking God through His Word. In order to live a life that matters, God’s Word has to work in us and through us. This lesson challenges your students to embrace this truth.

Bible Background

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.

Teacher Prep Video

Each Small Group Leader’s Guide comes with a *Teacher Prep Video*. These are simply short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

Your teacher prep videos are located in your download, under Small Group Lesson Plans. There is a sub-folder titled “Teacher Prep Videos” that will have a document for you. On the document, you should be able to click the link designated for the lesson you are currently on.

The Details

Psalms

- **Author:** God inspired various authors to write a majority of the Psalms, including seventy-three by David, twelve by Asaph, eleven by the Korahites and two by Solomon. Heman, Ethan, and Moses each wrote one, while the authorship of fifty other psalms remains unknown.
- **Time frame:** The Psalms were written during different eras of Israel’s history, spanning from 1100 BC (i.e., Psalm 29, 68) to 400 BC (i.e., Psalm 119).
- **Purpose:** The Psalms are inspired by God to poetically reflect humanity’s journey with Him. Each psalm serves a different purpose, such as a personal or communal lament, hymn, song, reflection or declaration. Many of these were set to music and intended to be shared publicly, even when sharing a revealing confession (i.e., Psalm 51).

2 Timothy

- **Author:** Though in the last 200 years or so there have been efforts by some scholars to shed doubt on Paul’s authorship of both 1 and 2 Timothy, their arguments aren’t very compelling.

- **Time frame:** Most scholars believe Paul wrote these letters to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry, between Paul’s first and second imprisonment in Rome, although some scholars believe that Paul penned 2 Timothy while in his final imprisonment before he was executed. By most accounts, this would place the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy sometime around 64–65 AD, though 2 Timothy could be as late as 67 AD.
- **Purpose:** Paul tells Timothy in the first epistle to continue to combat false teachings. In addition, Paul gives Timothy specific instructions on how to protect against such teaching, including how to install faithful leadership in the church at Ephesus. 2 Timothy, we see Paul passing along his final words to Timothy. 2 Timothy can be thought of as a personal note from an old man awaiting his death to a young, son-like figure. It’s personal, tender at times, encouraging, and practical.

The Main Point

The narrative you’ll read from Acts makes a profound point. The Sadducees noted that Peter and John were uncommonly bold in their teaching and attitude, especially for men of their background and vocation. The Sadducees credited the boldness of these otherwise humble men as having “been with Jesus.” How powerful it is that the difference in Peter and John is the change Jesus made in their lives. Our students are called to be just as bold in their faith and lives. And for them, just as it was with Peter and John, the source of their boldness must be that they have spent time with Jesus.

The Takeaway

We can’t “be with Jesus” in the same way that the disciples were. But that’s why we have God’s Word. By being grounded in God’s Word, we put ourselves in the position to let the Word of God do the work. The nature of the Word is active. And when it is IN us, it works through us. You’ll focus on Psalms 1:1–2 as a picture of what a life grounded in the Word looks like, and 2 Timothy 3:16–17 as a calling to confidently embrace the Word as part of what it means to live a life that matters.

Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: an introductory activity called *Getting Started*; the Bible study section called *Digging In*; and an application-focused segment called *Wrapping Up*.

Getting Started

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This lesson will utilize pages 8-12 in the *Make It Matter* Student Book.
 - This activity will use page 8-9.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - None

FIRST, welcome students to their first session. If everyone in the group doesn’t already know each other, take a moment to have people introduce themselves. Explain to them that you’re going to be hanging out a lot over your time in this study, so you want to do a little more to get to know each other. Have students go

around and give their name, their least favorite dessert. When you're done, explain that you're going to use the student book to facilitate these times of Bible study.

THEN, direct their attention to page 9. Explain that you're going to kick off their time by having a little competition. Break students into groups. How you do this will depend on the size of your group. Instruct your groups to choose one person who will be designated as the person who will write their answers. Then, explain the nature of the game.

Explain that you're going to give students a prompt. They will have twenty seconds to come up with as many answers to the prompt as they can. They are to work as a group to brainstorm responses while their "writer" records their answers on the student book page. Repeat this for each of the four prompts. The prompts are listed below:

- **First, come up with a list of things that undergo a change.**
- **Next, come up with a list of things that could be considered "forces of influence."**
- **Then, come up with a list of situations where people are surprised.**
- **Finally, come up with a list of things that annoy people.**

NEXT, when you are done, go through each prompt and have groups take turns reading out what they believe to be the most creative or unique responses. Allow for some spirited debate on whether the rest of your students believe their answer to be valid and/or creative. If you want, award one of your groups the "winner" based on their responses.

FINALLY, have a student volunteer to read the introduction on page 8. When they have finished, say something like:

- **We're about to look at a really awesome story from the Bible about two people who lived their life in such a way that it mattered. Greatly. People saw these two guys and were amazed, surprised, influenced, and annoyed! We'll read their story, but more importantly, we'll learn WHY they were in the position to make the impact they made, and how YOU can make the same impact.**

If there are no more comments or questions, transition to the *Digging In* section of your lesson.

Digging In

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 10-11 in the *Make It Matter* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with, and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, explain to students that you're going to be doing something a little unique over the course of the next few sessions. Explain that you're going to be looking at a narrative from Scripture, a story, and asking what this story teaches us about living a life that matters.

For this first narrative, have students find Acts 4 in their Bibles or Bible apps. While they are finding it, provide some context for where you're picking up the story. Say something like:

- **Where we pick up the story, Jesus has already been crucified, raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit has come at Pentecost, and thousands of people have become Christ-**

followers. The 11 disciples are in and around Jerusalem leading the new, young Church. They are doing GREAT things. People's needs are being met, both physically and spiritually. The Gospel message is moving powerfully. But as we're about to see, not everyone thinks this is a good thing. We're about to see Peter and John have a pretty crazy interaction with some of the religious leaders. Let's see what happens.

THEN, before you read the narrative, explain to students that they need to listen carefully for any specific details that jump out at them. They'll have a moment to write these down once the story has been read. Read or have a student read Acts 4:1-13. When the narrative has been read, give students about a minute or so to write down any detail or point that really stood out in the space provided on page 10. Once you've allowed them to do so, jump into a brief discussion of the story. Ask something like:

- **OK, what details or important points jumped out at you?**
 - Allow students to share. Engage in discussion as you go, asking students, "Why do you think that is important?" or "Why did that stand out?" or offering your thoughts or observations as you go. (*Continue with the rest of the questions below, omitting any that you've already covered based on your students' responses.*)
- **What was the religious leaders' response to Peter and John? Why?**
 - *Answer:* They were "greatly annoyed" that Peter and John were "teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."
- **Why did this fact annoy them? Why did they care what Peter and John were preaching?**
 - *Answer:* Remember, these are the people who had put Jesus to death on the cross. They accused Jesus of lying about who He was and what His mission was. These folks had every reason not to want Peter and John telling the truth about Jesus' identity and His resurrection.
- **Describe in your own words the interaction between Peter and John and the religious leaders in verses. What do you think the religious leaders expected from Peter and John?**
 - Answers will vary. While we don't know for sure, it's reasonable to think that maybe they thought Peter and John would be intimidated. After all, it was quite the display of authority.
- **How did Peter and John respond?**
 - *Answer:* BOLDLY! Filled with the Spirit, Peter dropped a truth-bomb on this collection of religious leaders. His response was true, powerful, and bold.
- **Verse 13 is the real heart of why we're studying this narrative. What does it say?**
 - *Answer:* "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."
- **Peter was a fisherman before he encountered Jesus. John was almost surely a teenager. And yet, they were proving to live powerful lives of influence, lives that mattered! What was the reason for this? What was the explanation for their boldness?**
 - *Answer:* They had been with Jesus!

NEXT, take a moment to let this truth sink in. Remind students that the disciples were the most ordinary of people, men who would have not been promising enough as teenagers to continue in religious schools and would have gone and found a trade. Matthew was actually working for the Roman government, the hostile, occupying country, when Jesus called him to be a disciple! Remind students that the disciples were nothing special. Say something like:

- **BUT, because of the impact Jesus made on them, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, their lives were radically changed. They became forces of influence for the Gospel. God transformed the world**

around them, and history itself, through their lives. We can't be with Jesus the same way the disciples could. But we have something they didn't even have: God's Word. We have all of Scripture, the entire Bible. And when we let God's Word work in our lives, powerful things happen. Let's see where we see this.

Instruct students to look at page 11 to the two passages of Scripture found there. First, have a student read Psalm 1:1–2. When he or she is finished, lead students in the following discussion. Ask:

- **The psalmist is talking about living our life in such a way as to either live a blessed life or not. He first lists three things that lead to a life that DOESN'T experience God's blessing. What are those three ways?**
 - *Answer:* "Walking in the counsel of the wicked" or "standing in the way of sinners" (both of these simply mean to live according to the advice of those who don't follow God), and "sit[ting] in the seat of scoffers" (a scoffer was someone who literally does not believe in God, someone who "laughs" at the thought of God and His ways).
- **He follows this up in verse 2 with a definition of HOW to live a life blessed by God. What is the key to living a life that experiences the goodness of God?**
 - *Answer:* We must "delight" in God's Word. We must think about it always.

Explain that we all have a choice. We can allow our lives to be influenced by the things of the world, or the things of God. Say:

- **When we allow God's Word to impact our lives, it works in our hearts to make us more like God. And it works through us to impact the world around us. We see the power of just how the Word works in one more passage. Let's take a quick look.**

THEN, have students look at 2 Timothy 3:16–17 printed on page 11. Explain that this is Paul giving advice to Timothy, the young pastor whom Paul had taken under his wing. Read the verses and ask the following questions:

- **First, what does Paul say about the Bible in verse 16?**
 - *Answer:* That all of the Bible is "breathed out" by God. In other words, it's "God inspired."
- **What does this mean for how we view the Bible?**
 - *Answer:* It's authoritative. It's God's Word, not humans. We can 100% trust that it is true, and right, and fully capable to steer our lives by.
- **But check out what else it says. What does verse 17 mean?**
 - *Answer:* That the Bible is the means by which we are prepared to do the work God has for us to do.

FINALLY, put this all together for your students. Say something like:

- **What have we seen in this session? We've seen an example of two regular men who lived outsized lives, lives that mattered. And when people looked at their lives, they realized the power behind their lives was time spent with God. We have the same power available to us today. In order to live lives of impact, lives that REALLY matter, we have to maintain a closeness to God. We have to spend time in His presence. How do we do this? By spending time in His Word. The Bible is God's main way of making Himself and His ways known to us. We can't live a life of impact apart from a connection to God's Word.**

Ask if anyone has any thoughts or questions, then transition to the *Wrapping Up* portion of your lesson.

Wrapping Up

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 12 in the *Make It Matter* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have something to write with.

FIRST, instruct students to turn to page 12 in their books. Explain that for this activity, they are going to spend a moment evaluating where they are when it comes to spending time connected with God through reading the Bible.

Explain that on this page, there are several questions with scales that enable them to evaluate their habits and attitudes. Give your students a few minutes to answer these questions, then gather for a discussion afterwards.

NEXT, when students have had time to finish the activity, ask the following questions:

- **When was the last time you really evaluated your Bible reading habits?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **One thing we risk is that we see our Bible reading as just a box to be checked. Based on what you learned today, what is the REASON for creating consistent habits of meeting God in the Bible?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What if you were to get serious about improving your time in the Word? What effect do you think it would have on your life?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **What is keeping you from committing to grow in this area? What are you waiting on?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the *Encounters* devotions located on pages 38-45 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. (The first devotion is on page 38.)

If there are no more questions, close in prayer for your group.