

LETTERS & DEVOTION

Bible: Church History, Pentecost to the Present

Free sample: Unit 1, Lessons 1 to 8

These are 8 lessons from *Bible: Church History, Pentecost to the Present: Grade 10*, a Grade 10 year a parent runs at the kitchen table. Each lesson is a short script for you, a page to read together, and a practice sheet you may copy for your household. Answers are at the back.

Bible: Church History, Pentecost to the Present: Grade 10. Sample edition.

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Letters & Devotion is a Christian curriculum: a Bible course in every grade from the King James text, and science taught as scientists teach it, including an old earth. Standards references: Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.



BIBLE · UNIT 1

The Early Church and the Councils

From Pentecost to Augustine's death in 430. An illegal minority, three centuries of intermittent persecution and the martyrs it produced, the recognition of the canon, Constantine's legalization and the establishment that followed, the great councils at Nicaea and Chalcedon that fixed how Christians speak about Christ, and Augustine writing as the Roman world ended around him.

In this unit

1. A movement with nothing
2. Persecution as a distribution system
3. The martyrs, and what Rome thought it was doing
4. Why an empire bothered
5. How the Bible got its table of contents
6. Constantine, and the most consequential conversion in history
7. Nicaea, and a fight about one letter
8. Two natures, and why the argument continued

A movement with nothing

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “A movement with nothing” (Acts 2:1-24 and Acts 2:36-47), and say Acts 1:8 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: A movement with nothing

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Acts 2:1-24 and Acts 2:36-47, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

The church begins with none of the things we now assume a church requires: no buildings, no clergy class, no legal standing, no political power, no New Testament, and no plan for the next Tuesday.

Within three centuries it had spread across an empire that was trying to kill it, and within four it was running that empire's religious life. Both halves of that sentence are this year's subject.

Here is the claim the whole course rests on: the history of the church is not the same thing as the history of the gospel. One is an institution made of people; the other is the message it carries.

That distinction is not a dodge invented to excuse bad behavior. It is the thing every reformer in this course was arguing for, and it is why they could attack the church without abandoning Christ.

You will need it, because in week 15 the church launches a holy war and in week 30 it defends slavery from the pulpit, and you will need a way to say what went wrong that is more precise than everything did.

MEMORY WORK (Acts 1:8):

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

DISCUSS:

1. Luke opens the church's story with people hearing in their own languages. What does it suggest about the movement that its first recorded miracle is a translation?
2. List what the Acts 2 church did not have. Which of those things turned out to be optional, and which do you think the church later mistook for essential?
3. Name a group you belong to that has rules or habits nobody chose on purpose. How would you tell the difference between what it is for and how it happens to be run?

WRITTEN WORK: Set up the year. Start a notebook and put a timeline on a wall running from AD 30 to now, with room to write. Every week for the next thirty-five weeks you add one entry with four fields: the date, the event, what changed because of it, and one sentence saying whether the church looked more like Acts 2 or less like it, and why. That last field is a judgment, and you will be asked in week 36 to defend a dozen of them at once. Write this week's entry now.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: A movement with nothing

1. The essay lists what the first church did not have. Which set does it name?
 - ☐ A No preaching, no prayer, no baptism and no meals held in common
 - ☐ B No buildings, no clergy, no legal standing and no New Testament
 - ☐ C No interest in anyone living outside the city of Jerusalem, since the message was meant to stay there
2. According to the essay, what had happened to this movement within four centuries?
 - ☐ A It had split into an eastern and a western church that no longer spoke to each other
 - ☐ B It was running the religious life of the empire that had been trying to kill it
 - ☐ C It had been pushed out of the Roman Empire and survived only beyond its borders
3. In the memory verse, Acts 1:8, in what order are the places named?
 - ☐ A Samaria, then Judaea, then Jerusalem, then the uttermost part of the earth
 - ☐ B Jerusalem, then all Judaea, then Samaria, then the uttermost part of the earth
 - ☐ C Jerusalem, then Rome, then all Judaea and Samaria, before the uttermost part of the earth
4. The essay says the history of the church is not the same thing as the history of the gospel. What distinction is that drawing?
 - ☐ A That one is an institution made of people and the other is the message that institution carries
 - ☐ B That the church's record does not matter as long as the message is true
 - ☐ C That the gospel changed over the centuries while the church stayed remarkably fixed in its practices

Persecution as a distribution system

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Persecution as a distribution system” (Acts 7:54-8:8 and Acts 11:19-26), and say Acts 8:4 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Persecution as a distribution system

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Acts 7:54-8:8 and Acts 11:19-26, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Stephen's execution triggers the first organized attempt to destroy the movement, and Luke records the result in one dry sentence: it scattered, and it preached wherever it landed.

That is not a pious silver lining. It is a mechanism. Persecution broke up the concentration in Jerusalem and forced the movement into Samaria, Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, where for the first time it was preached to non-Jews on purpose.

Antioch matters more than its page count suggests. It is where the mixed congregation forms, where the name Christian is first used, and where the mission to the Roman world is launched from.

The man holding the coats at Stephen's execution becomes the movement's most effective missionary, which is either the strangest coincidence in the ancient world or the point Luke is making.

Keep the mechanism in mind. It repeats: in 303, in 1685 when France expels its Protestants, and in 1949 when missionaries are expelled from China and the church there grows anyway.

MEMORY WORK (Acts 8:4):

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

DISCUSS:

1. Luke could have described the scattering as a disaster. He describes it as a distribution. Is that spin, or is it a claim about how God works, and how would you tell the difference?
2. Why would a movement have to be pushed out of its home city before it took its own mission seriously?
3. Think about a setback in the last two years that rearranged something for you. Can you say what it produced without pretending it was not a setback?

WRITTEN WORK: Write one page. Take the sentence 'the church grows under persecution' and argue against it, using evidence: name places and centuries where persecution did in fact destroy or nearly destroy the church. North Africa after the seventh century and Japan after 1614 are two places to start. Then write a second paragraph stating what you think the honest version of the claim is.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Persecution as a distribution system

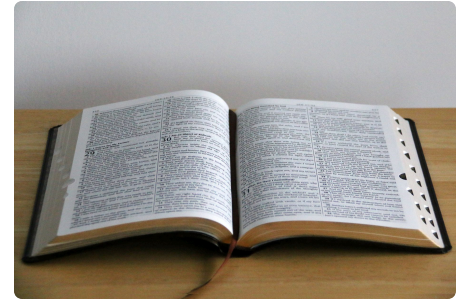
1. What set the scattering of the Jerusalem church in motion?
 - ☐ A A famine that made the city impossible to live in
 - ☐ B Stephen's execution and the persecution that followed it
 - ☐ C A decision by the apostles to send missionaries out in pairs
2. Why does the essay say Antioch matters more than its page count suggests?
 - ☐ A It is where the church kept its treasury, its records and its elders
 - ☐ B It is where the apostles are said to have written most of the letters that later became the New Testament
 - ☐ C It is where the mixed congregation forms and where the name Christian is first used
3. The memory verse, Acts 8:4, says that they that were scattered abroad went every where doing what?
 - ☐ A Preaching the word
 - ☐ B Seeking safety among their own people
 - ☐ C Building churches
4. The essay says Luke's sentence about the scattering is not a pious silver lining but a mechanism. What does calling it a mechanism claim?
 - ☐ A That the persecution physically moved preachers into places not yet reached
 - ☐ B That the persecution was not really as bad as the account makes it sound to modern readers today
 - ☐ C That God caused the persecution deliberately in order to spread the message

BIBLE · UNIT 1 · LESSON 3

The martyrs, and what Rome thought it was doing

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “The martyrs, and what Rome thought it was doing” (1 Peter 4:12-19 and Hebrews 11:32-40), and say 1 Peter 4:12 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: The martyrs, and what Rome thought it was doing

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: 1 Peter 4:12-19 and Hebrews 11:32-40, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Persecution before 250 was mostly local, sporadic and provoked by neighbors rather than emperors. Under Decius and then Diocletian it became imperial policy, systematic and empire wide.

The names to know are Ignatius of Antioch, carried to Rome around 108 and writing letters on the way; Polycarp of Smyrna, burned around 155 at the age of eighty-six; Perpetua and Felicity, a young noblewoman and an enslaved woman killed together at Carthage in 203; and Blandina at Lyons in 177.

Perpetua's account is partly her own diary, which makes it one of the earliest surviving pieces of writing by a Christian woman, and she records her father begging her to recant.

The martyr accounts were copied and circulated because they functioned as arguments: a movement whose members would die rather than say four words was making a claim about what it believed that no essay could make.

Be careful of the numbers. Popular accounts inflate them enormously; serious historians think the total executed under Roman law across three centuries was in the thousands, not the millions. The smaller number does not make it smaller.

MEMORY WORK (1 Peter 4:12):

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

DISCUSS:

1. Why would a persecuted movement write down and circulate the details of its members' deaths? What is that document doing?
2. The required act was usually a pinch of incense and one sentence acknowledging Caesar as lord. Many Christians did it and were later readmitted after argument. What would you have said to them in 252?
3. Name something you would refuse to say even if refusing cost you something real. Then say honestly what the cost would have to be before you said it.

WRITTEN WORK: Read a primary source. The martyrdom accounts of Polycarp and of Perpetua are short, public domain, and easy to find. Read one in full and write two pages: summarize what happens, identify three places where the writer is clearly shaping the story for an audience, and answer whether that shaping makes the account less trustworthy or simply makes it a document rather than a transcript.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

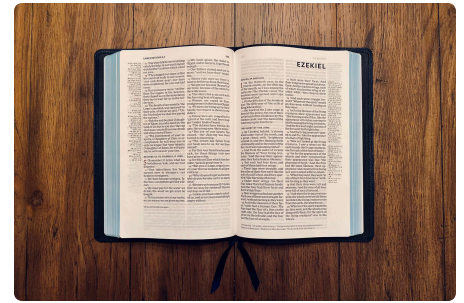
Practice: The martyrs, and what Rome thought it was doing

1. How did persecution change under Decius and then Diocletian?
 - ☐ A It became imperial policy, systematic and empire wide
 - ☐ B It stopped being a legal matter and became mob violence only
 - ☐ C It was limited to the city of Rome
2. Who were Perpetua and Felicity?
 - ☐ A A young noblewoman and an enslaved woman killed together at Carthage in 203
 - ☐ B Two bishops executed at Smyrna in the second century, during an earlier wave of persecution
 - ☐ C Two women who recanted and were later readmitted to the church
3. The memory verse, 1 Peter 4:12, tells its readers to think what about the fiery trial?
 - ☐ A To think it a sign that they have done something seriously wrong
 - ☐ B To think it not strange, as though some strange thing happened unto them
 - ☐ C To think it will be over shortly, and that patient waiting is all that is required of them
4. What does the essay say about the number of Christians executed under Roman law across three centuries?
 - ☐ A Serious historians put the total in the many millions, a figure repeated constantly in popular accounts
 - ☐ B Serious historians think the total was in the thousands, not the millions
 - ☐ C No estimate is possible, because no records of it survive

Why an empire bothered

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Why an empire bothered” (Romans 13:1-7 and Acts 5:17-32), and say Acts 5:29 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Why an empire bothered

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Romans 13:1-7 and Acts 5:17-32, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Rome tolerated hundreds of religions, so the question is not why it was intolerant but why this one group was the exception, and the answer is that Christians refused the civic religion that held the empire together.

Refusing to sacrifice to the genius of the emperor was not read as a private conviction; it was read as disloyalty, and when plague or famine came, the people who had refused the gods were an obvious cause.

Christians were accused of atheism for denying the gods, of cannibalism for language about eating flesh and drinking blood, and of incest for calling each other brother and sister. Rumor did most of the work.

The apologists answered in writing. Justin Martyr, a philosopher who kept his philosopher's cloak after converting, addressed a defense to the emperor around 155 and was executed around 165; Tertullian argued in Carthage that a Christian could be a good subject without being a worshipper.

Notice that the New Testament itself holds two things at once: Romans 13 tells Christians to submit to governing authority, and Acts 5 shows apostles refusing a direct order from theirs. Any serious Christian politics has to hold both, and the rest of this

MEMORY WORK (Acts 5:29):

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

DISCUSS:

1. Romans 13 and Acts 5 are both scripture and they pull against each other. Write the rule that lets both stand. Where does the line fall?
2. The charges against Christians were false but not random; each one was a distortion of something real. What does that suggest about how a misunderstood minority is described by the majority?
3. Where in your own life do you obey something you did not choose, and what would have to be asked of you before you refused?

WRITTEN WORK: Write a formal one page defense in the style of an apologist, addressed to a Roman governor in 180, arguing that Christians can be loyal subjects without offering the sacrifice. You must actually concede something: state one Roman concern that is reasonable. Then write a short paragraph naming the strongest objection your defense does not answer.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Why an empire bothered

1. Rome tolerated hundreds of religions. Why, according to the essay, was this one group the exception?
 - ☐ A Because Christians refused to pay the taxes that funded the empire's temples and civic festivals
 - ☐ B Because Christians refused the civic religion that held the empire together
 - ☐ C Because Christians were foreigners and Rome distrusted foreign religions
2. The essay lists three charges made against Christians. Which set is it?
 - ☐ A Treason, theft and forgery ☐ B Atheism, cannibalism and incest
 - ☐ C Sorcery, tax evasion and desertion from the army
3. The memory verse, Acts 5:29, records what Peter and the other apostles said. What is it?
 - ☐ A Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's
 - ☐ B Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers
 - ☐ C We ought to obey God rather than men
4. What does the essay tell you about Justin Martyr?
 - ☐ A He was a soldier who refused to serve and was executed for desertion
 - ☐ B He was a bishop of Carthage who argued that Christians should withdraw from public life
 - ☐ C He was a philosopher who kept his cloak and wrote a defense to the emperor

BIBLE · UNIT 1 · LESSON 5

How the Bible got its table of contents

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “How the Bible got its table of contents” (2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Luke 1:1-4), and say Jude 1:3 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: How the Bible got its table of contents

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Luke 1:1-4, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

By the second century the church had a problem it could not avoid: many documents were circulating, some were forgeries, and one man, Marcion, published his own short list around 144 that cut the Old Testament entirely and edited Luke and Paul to match. The church did not respond by inventing a canon. It responded by naming what congregations had already been reading in worship for a century, and the criteria were roughly apostolic origin, wide use across many churches, and consistency with the rule of faith.

The process was slow and public. Irenaeus argues for four gospels around 180; the Muratorian fragment lists most of the New Testament in the same period; Athanasius lists the exact twenty-seven in a letter in 367; councils at Hippo and Carthage confirm it in the 390s.

The common claim that Constantine chose the books is false and easy to disprove: the four gospels were being defended as a set almost a century and a half before he was born.

The disputed books are worth knowing by name, because honesty about them is stronger than pretending there were none: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation took longest to be universally accepted, and some early churches read

Hermas or Clement.

Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include additional Old Testament books that this curriculum does not cover; that disagreement is about the Old Testament, not the New, and the New Testament list is the same in all three traditions.

MEMORY WORK (Jude 1:3 (part)):

that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

DISCUSS:

1. The church recognized a canon rather than creating one, according to this account. What evidence would distinguish those two descriptions, and does the timeline support one over the other?
2. Marcion forced the issue by publishing a rival list. Why do institutions so often define what they believe only when someone attacks it?
3. You have inherited a set of books you did not choose. Does knowing how they were chosen make you trust them more, less, or differently? Answer in a way you could defend to someone who disagrees.

WRITTEN WORK: Build a canon timeline in your notebook, one page, with at least eight dated entries from Marcion to Carthage. Then write a page and a half answering the internet claim that the Bible was assembled by Constantine at Nicaea to consolidate power. Your answer must state the claim fairly first, in its strongest form, before you take it apart, and must cite dates.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: How the Bible got its table of contents

1. What did Marcion do around 144 that forced the canon question?
 - ☐ A He translated the whole of the Bible into Latin for the first time
 - ☐ B He collected forged gospels from around the empire and presented them as apostolic writings
 - ☐ C He published his own short list, cutting the Old Testament and editing Luke
2. Who listed the exact twenty-seven books of the New Testament in a letter in 367?
 - ☐ A Constantine
 - ☐ B Irenaeus
 - ☐ C Athanasius
3. The memory verse, Jude 1:3, says the faith was delivered when?
 - ☐ A Delivered to the councils that met at Hippo and Carthage
 - ☐ B Delivered anew in every generation
 - ☐ C Once delivered unto the saints
4. Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include books that this curriculum does not cover. What does the essay say about the scope of that disagreement?
 - ☐ A It is about the Old Testament; the New Testament list is shared by all three
 - ☐ B It is about which translation of the text may lawfully be used in public worship
 - ☐ C It covers both testaments, and the three traditions share no agreed list

Constantine, and the most consequential conversion in history

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Constantine, and the most consequential conversion in history” (Matthew 20:20-28 and Daniel 2:31-45), and say Matthew 20:26 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Constantine, and the most consequential conversion in history

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Matthew 20:20-28 and Daniel 2:31-45, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

In 312 Constantine won at the Milvian Bridge under a Christian sign; in 313 the Edict of Milan legalized the faith; by 380 under Theodosius, Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire.

In under seventy years the church went from an illegal minority whose leaders were executed to an establishment whose leaders were paid, exempted from taxes, and seated at the emperor's table.

Almost everything good and almost everything catastrophic in the next twelve centuries follows from that. Persecution stopped, churches were built, scholarship was funded, the poor were fed at scale. And the church acquired the sword, the habit of using state power against dissenters, and a permanent temptation to confuse the kingdom of God with an empire.

By 385 the state executed its first heretic, Priscillian, and it is worth noticing that Martin of Tours and Ambrose of Milan objected. The church's own conscience registered the change at the time.

Historians argue about Constantine's sincerity and always will, and the argument is less interesting than it looks: whatever he personally believed, the structural change would be the same.

This is the first entry on your timeline where the honest answer is closer to Acts 2 or further from it is probably both, and you should write it that way.

MEMORY WORK (Matthew 20:26 (part)):

but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.

DISCUSS:

1. List three specific goods that followed legalization and three specific harms. Which list would you rather the fourth century church had chosen, and what would refusing have cost?
2. Why is the question of Constantine's personal sincerity less important than it feels?
3. Describe a situation where you gained power or standing in a group and it changed how you behaved before you noticed. What did it cost you?

WRITTEN WORK: Two pages, argumentative. Take a position on this question: was the Constantinian settlement a rescue or a capture? You must state and answer the strongest objection to your own side, and you must use at least four dated facts. This is the first essay this year where you will be graded on whether you engaged the other side, not on which side you took.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Constantine, and the most consequential conversion in history

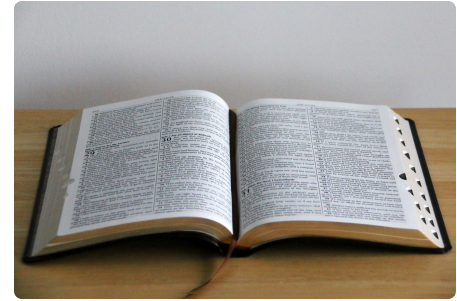
1. What happened in 313?
 - ☐ A Constantine won at the Milvian Bridge
 - ☐ B Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire
 - ☐ C The Edict of Milan legalized the faith
2. How did legalization change the position of the church's leaders?
 - ☐ A They lost authority over their own congregations to imperial officials
 - ☐ B They were required to hold civil office as well
 - ☐ C They were paid, exempted from taxes and seated at the emperor's table
3. The memory verse, Matthew 20:26, says whosoever will be great among you must be what?
 - ☐ A The youngest among you
 - ☐ B Your minister
 - ☐ C Your teacher
4. In 385 the state executed its first heretic, Priscillian. What does the essay note about the reaction?
 - ☐ A That Martin of Tours and Ambrose of Milan objected
 - ☐ B That the emperor was excommunicated for it
 - ☐ C That no Christian voice objected until centuries later

BIBLE · UNIT 1 · LESSON 7

Nicaea, and a fight about one letter

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Nicaea, and a fight about one letter” (John 1:1-18 and Colossians 1:12-20), and say John 1:1 by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Nicaea, and a fight about one letter

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: John 1:1-18 and Colossians 1:12-20, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Arius, a popular and disciplined presbyter in Alexandria, taught that the Son was the highest of all created beings: glorious, pre-existent, but made, so that there was a time when he was not.

That was not a quibble. If the Son is a creature, then Christians worship a creature, and the salvation described in the New Testament is being performed by something less than God.

Constantine called the council at Nicaea in 325 mainly because he wanted the empire quiet, and around three hundred bishops attended, many of whom had been tortured or maimed under Diocletian twenty years earlier.

The council produced a creed with one non-biblical word in it, *homoousios*, meaning of the same substance, chosen precisely because every biblical phrase they tried could be signed by the Arians with a private meaning attached.

That is the useful lesson: the church resorted to a technical term not to go beyond scripture but to stop scripture being agreed to and emptied out, and Athanasius spent the next forty-five years, five exiles included, defending it.

Nicaea did not end it. Arianism won imperial favor repeatedly for the next fifty years, and it was still the faith of the Goths when they entered Italy, which is one reason the

fall of Rome in week 9 had a religious dimension.

MEMORY WORK (John 1:1):

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

DISCUSS:

1. Explain in your own words why it matters practically, not just technically, whether Christ is created or uncreated. What changes about salvation on the Arian account?
2. The council adopted a word not found in scripture in order to protect what scripture says. Is that a betrayal of the Bible's authority or a defense of it? Argue it.
3. Have you ever agreed to a form of words with someone while meaning something different by them? What made that possible, and what did it cost when the difference surfaced?

WRITTEN WORK: Copy the Nicene Creed into your notebook, then annotate it: for each clause, write the specific error it was written to exclude. You will need to look several up, and you should note which clauses are aimed at Arius and which came in later at Constantinople in 381. Then write a paragraph on why creeds get longer over time.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Nicaea, and a fight about one letter

1. What did Arius teach about the Son?
 - ☐ A That the Son was the highest of created beings, so there was a time when he was not
 - ☐ B That the Son and the Father are simply two different names for one and the same divine person
 - ☐ C That the Son was a human being who was adopted by God at his baptism
2. The creed of 325 contains one non-biblical word, homoousios. What does it mean?
 - ☐ A Begotten in time, and made
 - ☐ B Of the same substance
 - ☐ C Of one mind and one will
3. How does the memory verse, John 1:1, end?
 - ☐ A and the Word was with God, and the Word was from God
 - ☐ B and the Word was with God, and the Word was God
 - ☐ C and the Word was with God, and the Word was made flesh
4. What does the essay say happened after Nicaea?
 - ☐ A Arianism won imperial favor for fifty years and was still the faith of the Goths
 - ☐ B The dispute ended, and Arianism disappeared within about a decade
 - ☐ C The emperor made Arius a bishop, and the Nicene creed was quietly withdrawn from use

Two natures, and why the argument continued

Goal: Read, analyze and argue about “Two natures, and why the argument continued” (Philippians 2:1-11 and Hebrews 4:14-16), and say Philippians 2:7 (part) by heart.

About 140 minutes



Read together FOR THE STUDENT

THIS WEEK: Two natures, and why the argument continued

Four sittings this week, about thirty-five minutes each: read the passage and the essay, then the discussion and the written work.

READ: Philippians 2:1-11 and Hebrews 4:14-16, from the King James Bible. Read it before the context below, not after.

THE ESSAY:

Nicaea settled that Christ is fully God. The next century and a half fought over how he can be fully God and fully human at once without being two people or one blended thing.

The wrong answers each protect something real: Apollinarianism protects unity by removing a human mind, Nestorianism protects the distinction so hard it risks two persons, Eutychianism blends the natures into a third thing that is neither.

Chalcedon in 451 refused to explain the mechanism. Its formula says the two natures are united without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, which is four denials and no positive theory.

That restraint is the point worth carrying. The council fenced the mystery rather than solving it, and a fifteen-year-old who learns that a definition can be a boundary rather than an explanation has learned something useful well beyond theology.

The stakes were pastoral, not academic. Hebrews says the high priest is one who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and that consolation depends on the humanity being real, not a costume.

Chalcedon also broke the church. The churches of Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, Armenia and India did not accept the formula, and those communions still exist. Modern dialogues

suggest much of the split was about vocabulary in different languages, which is a sobering thing to learn about a fifteen hundred year division.

MEMORY WORK (Philippians 2:7 (part)):

and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

DISCUSS:

1. Why would the council choose four denials over one explanation? What is gained, and what is lost, by defining something negatively?
2. Take one of the rejected positions and make the best case for it in three sentences. What was its author trying to protect?
3. Name something true about your own life that you can describe accurately only by saying what it is not. Why is that the only honest way to put it?

WRITTEN WORK: One and a half pages. Explain the Chalcedonian definition to a bright twelve-year-old, in plain language, without using the words hypostatic, substance, or nature more than once each. Then add a paragraph explaining why the writer of Hebrews would have cared about the outcome.

LOGGING: a parent records the minutes on the Transcript & Hours page. Reading, discussion and the written work all count.

Practice: Two natures, and why the argument continued

1. What question did the century and a half after Nicaea fight over?
 - ☐ A How Christ can be fully God and fully human without being two people
 - ☐ B Whether Christ is fully God, or merely the highest and most glorious of all creatures
 - ☐ C Which books rightly belong in the New Testament
2. Chalcedon's formula in 451 says the two natures are united in what way?
 - ☐ A Without confusion, without change, without division, without separation
 - ☐ B By the human nature being taken up and absorbed entirely into the divine one
 - ☐ C By the divine nature supplying what the human nature lacks
3. The memory verse, Philippians 2:7, says he took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of what?
 - ☐ A Angels
 - ☐ B His brethren in Israel
 - ☐ C Men
4. The essay says each rejected answer was protecting something real. What was Apollinarianism protecting, and how?
 - ☐ A It protected the divine nature by blending both natures into a third thing
 - ☐ B It protected the distinction between the natures so hard that it risked two persons
 - ☐ C It protected the unity of Christ by removing a human mind

Answer key

Bible

Lesson 1	1. B 2. B 3. B 4. A
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Lesson 2	1. B 2. C 3. A 4. A
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Lesson 3	1. A 2. A 3. B 4. B
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Lesson 4	1. B 2. B 3. C 4. C
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Lesson 5	1. C 2. C 3. C 4. A
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Lesson 6	1. C 2. C 3. B 4. A
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Lesson 7	1. A 2. B 3. B 4. A
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Lesson 8	1. A 2. A 3. C 4. C
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Unit 1 check-up	1. C 2. A 3. A 4. B 5. C 6. A 7. B 8. A 9. B 10. C 11. B 12. B 13. B 14. A 15. C 16. A
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