

Session 2



DIVINE REVELATION

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DIVINE REVELATION: God Seeking Us & the Compass for Our Lives



LEADER PREPARATION OVERVIEW

Today, many people tend to think they can decide for themselves what is true, and what is morally right or wrong, and ultimately decide on their own what God wants for their lives. But in this week's lesson, we will see that God loves us too much to leave us to our own devices. Instead, he lovingly revealed himself and showed us the truth and his plan for our lives by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, as the fullness of his divine disclosure. This Divine Revelation has been passed down through the centuries by means of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Scripture and Tradition have been entrusted to the teaching authority (Magisterium) of the Catholic Church—the Church established by Christ himself.

Think of God's revelation, handed on by the Church, as a sort of sacred compass comprised of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. When we submit our lives to the compass of God's revelation, we are led out of the confusing currents and fads of the modern world, and liberated from our own selfish desires. As that happens, we will be pointed to the true path for human happiness, for God's revelation leads us into a relationship with the One who is our true North Star—Jesus, the Christ.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **Divine Revelation: why and how God reveals himself to us**
- **Jesus as the fulfillment of God's revelation**
- **The transmission of Divine Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition**
- **The Magisterium as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture and Tradition**

STEP # 1

OPENING PRAYER



SAY: Welcome to our session on Divine Revelation.

Have participants turn to page 17 of their Guide to find the Opening Prayer and discussion questions.

This week, we are going to talk about how God, the all-powerful Creator of the Universe, loves us so much he wants to make himself and his will known to us. How astonishing it is that God is so in love with each of us that he not only sent his Son to redeem us, but he has promised that the message of Jesus will be preserved until the end of time!

Before we get into how this is accomplished, let us begin by praying together for the ability to accept God's guidance for our lives.



Father in Heaven,
Give us the power of your grace
that we might always walk
in the way you have revealed
through your Son, Jesus Christ.
Free us from the darkness of our own desires
and bring us into the light of your truth.
Form our lives according to your will,
mold our hearts by your love.
And grant that we might always be open and receptive
to the guidance of your Church.
We ask this in the name of the One who has promised
to be with us always,
now and forever. Amen.

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Optional)

Suggested Scripture readings for a Celebration of the Word of God

(see Introduction to the Leader's Guide)

Matthew 16:18-22

Matthew 10:1, 6-10

Hebrews 1:1-2

John 3:16

John 1:14-18

STEP # 2

INTRODUCTION



SAY: Do you believe God is a personal God who wants to have a relationship with you?

Today, people have many different impressions about God. Some view him as a vague spiritual "force." Others may believe he exists but view him as an absentee God—a God who created the universe but doesn't interact in this world and in our daily lives. Still others don't think about God much at all, claiming to be "spiritual, but not religious."

None of these is the Christian view. For us as Christians, God is Love. And because God so loves us, he comes to find us. He wants us to know him so much that he reveals himself to us. We don't have to look for an elusive and evasive god, because God is looking for us.

How amazing it is that God seeks us out just so that we can know and love him!

Here are just a few of the many topics we're going to explore in this session:

- Divine Revelation: why and how God reveals himself to us
- Jesus as the fulfillment of God's revelation
- The transmission of Divine Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition
- The Magisterium as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture and Tradition

We will start by watching a short video.

STEP #3

VIDEO PART I: GOD'S SEARCH FOR MAN



Play video Part I, which will play for approximately 11 minutes.

STEP #4

PROCLAMATION

After the video has stopped,




SAY: We just heard how God revealed himself and his loving plan for all humanity through his Son, Jesus. We then learned how Jesus established the Catholic Church and why we need the Church to know what God has revealed. Now we are going to explore this plan of Divine Revelation in more depth.

God revealed himself and made known his loving plan of salvation so that we can know him and love him. This unveiling of God culminated in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who is the fullness of Divine Revelation. This revelation of Jesus Christ was handed on in the Church orally (through Sacred Tradition) and in writing (through Sacred Scripture) and was entrusted to the teaching authority of the Church, the Magisterium, for its authentic interpretation.

STEP #5

VIDEO PART II: HOW WE KNOW GOD'S REVELATION: SCRIPTURE, TRADITION, AND THE MAGISTERIUM

 **SAY:** In our second video segment, we will hear how we come to know and understand God's revelation through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. Let's see how these three work together by watching this video.

 *Play video Part II, which will play for approximately 21 minutes.*

STEP #6

BREAK

After the video is finished,

 **SAY:** Now let's take a short break. When we come back, we will discuss some of the things we learned in this last video segment.

Break should be about 10 minutes.



DIGGING DEEPER

Sacred Tradition is the handing on through the apostolic preaching and witness of all that Christ did and taught through the doctrine, life, and worship of the Church (CCC 76). The Bible contains that part of Divine Revelation that the Holy Spirit ordained to be committed to writing, and the fullness of truth is contained in both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Therefore, nothing in Sacred Tradition can contradict Sacred Scripture, and Sacred Scripture can only be understood and interpreted in light of Sacred Tradition.

STEP #7

DISCUSSION

Have participants refer to their Guide to find these questions.



SAY: Welcome back to our session on Divine Revelation. Let's talk a bit about what we learned in the last video segment.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

What is inconsistent with this line of reasoning: "There is a God, God is love, but we can't know with confidence who God is and what his will is for us"?

(If you come to the conclusion that there is a God and that God is love, then you believe that God created you and loves you. If God created you, then there must be a purpose and plan for your life. If God loves you, then he wants you to know who he is and what his purpose and plan is for your life. It would not be very loving for God to have created you for a specific plan and purpose and then leave you guessing as to what that is.)

DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

Why do you think the Church from earliest times chose to use the word revelation, or unveiling, to describe how God has communicated to us?

(God, who is All Holy, unveils himself to us for one purpose: covenant love. He wants to enter into an eternal loving relationship with each one of us. So God allows us to see into the mystery of his inner life and communicates his will for our lives. In other words, he wants us to know him and his expectations for a loving relationship with him.)

DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

In the video, the presenter used the imagery of a three-legged stool to describe how Divine Revelation is handed on. What are the three "legs" of the stool?

(The three legs of the stool in this analogy are Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church. If one or more of these legs is removed, God's revelation will not be known and understood, and the entire stool will collapse.)



DIGGING DEEPER

*"Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others. Under the action of the one Holy Spirit, all of them together—and each in its own way—contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."
—Dei Verbum, 10*



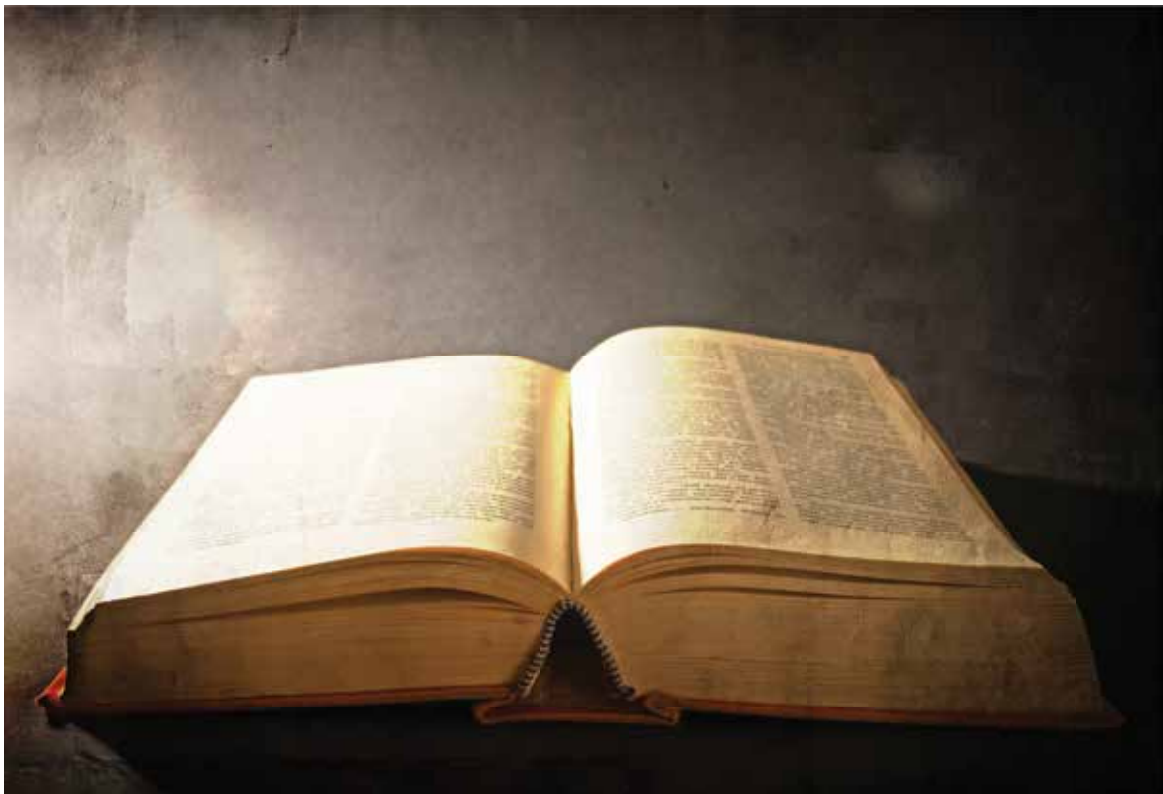
DIGGING DEEPER

Problems with Sola Scriptura

It is unbiblical: The belief that the Bible is the only source of Divine Revelation is not found in the Bible. Second Thessalonians 2:15 says that the followers of Christ hold fast to the traditions that were given to them, both orally and by written letter.

It is unhistorical: For the first 1,500 years of Christianity, Christians understood that Sacred Tradition and the teaching authority of the Church went hand in hand with the Bible. It was only after the Protestant Reformation that sola scriptura emerged as a widespread belief among some groups of Christians.

It is unworkable: The Bible was never written to be a stand-alone teacher. Without the authority of the Church, everyone interprets the Bible his or her own way. This is one of the reasons that there are more than 30,000 Christian denominations.



STEP # 8 (OPTIONAL) SUMMARY & EXHORTATION

At this point, the facilitator, small group leader, or catechist has the option to give a summary of the main points that have been presented in the video segments. Here are some key points you may want to cover.

- God has chosen to reveal himself and make known to us his loving plan of salvation so that we can know him and love him (CCC 50-52).
- God gradually communicated himself and his will through deeds and words in salvation history culminating in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who is the fullness of Divine Revelation (CCC 53-65).
- The revelation of Jesus Christ was handed on in the Church orally through Sacred Tradition and in writing through Sacred Scripture (CCC 75-79).
- This “deposit of faith” contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition was entrusted by the Apostles to the teaching office of the Church, called the Magisterium, for its authentic interpretation (CCC 84-85).
- To know and understand God’s revelation, a Christian needs Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium. Each are so connected in the transmission of Divine Revelation that one cannot stand without the others (CCC 95).



STEP #9

CALL TO CONVERSION

SAY: Spend a few moments in prayer asking Jesus to help you to be more receptive to his revelation as handed on through the Catholic Church. Use your Guide to write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

1. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Do I really accept Jesus’s revelation as the standard of truth for my life, or do I tend to make up my own moral and religious truth? Do I believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ measures my life, or do I view myself as measuring him, picking and choosing what I want to accept from Christ’s teachings and setting aside what I don’t want to follow?
2. What can I do this week to allow God’s revelation to guide me more in my life—in my moral decisions, in my prayer, in my relationships, and in what I consider most important in life? How can I entrust my life more to Jesus and follow God’s ways more?
3. Reflect on the following quote about the teaching authority of the Catholic Church from George Weigel, biographer of Pope St. John Paul II, in your Participant’s Guide:

*“The Catholic Church believes that the truths it has been given by Christ free us as well as bind us. They are liberating truths. To accept the Church’s teaching as authoritative and binding is only a ‘restriction’ on my freedom if I imagine freedom to be an unbridled exercise of my imagination and will. (And in that case, I have chained myself to my own willfulness.) If freedom has something to do with learning what is genuinely good, for myself and for others, then the truth about what is good for me and others isn’t a restriction. It’s a means of liberation” (George Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic*).*

According to this quote, how can the teaching authority of the Church be a means of freedom for my life, rather than something restrictive that limits my freedom?



STEP # 10

CLOSING PRAYER



SAY: I hope you take time this week to reflect on what we learned about Divine Revelation and to incorporate God's revelation more into your daily life.



Let's close our time today by praying together a part of Psalm 119, which thanks God for his revelation to us.

Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;
 And I will keep it to the end.
 Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law
 And observe it with my whole heart.
 Lead me in the path of thy commandments,
 For I delight in it...
 How sweet are thy words to my taste,
 Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
 Through thy precepts I get understanding...
 Thy word is a lamp to my feet
 and a light to my path.

—Psalm 119:33–35, 103–105



FOR FURTHER READING:

For more in-depth reading about the journey of faith, see the following *Catechism* passages:

Revelation and the Plan of Salvation: CCC 50–53

How God has revealed himself in the Old Testament: CCC 54–64

Jesus, the fullness of Revelation: CCC 65–73

How this Revelation is handed on to us: CCC 74

Apostolic Tradition and Authority: CCC 75–79

The Magisterium CCC 84–95

OTHER RESOURCES:

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapters 2 and 3

The Bible Compass by Dr. Edward Sri

For additional information on Apostolic and Authority, see the following Scripture passages:

Matthew 10:1–6, 10, 40

Matthew 16:18–22

2 Thessalonians 2:15

1 Corinthians 11:23–24

1 Corinthians 15:3–5

