

# Knowing God

## STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Visual telephone game.
- *Optional:* Read a feature in *The Rock*.
  - Paper
  - Crayons
  - Tape
  - Optional: The Rock*

## STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Compare Moses' vision of God's glory with Jesus' revelation of the Father.
- *Optional:* Study passages that show Jesus is God.
  - Bible
  - The Rock*
  - Whiteboard or poster board and markers
  - Optional: Bibles*

## STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Show how God is revealed in Jesus.
- *Optional:* Discuss partial truths.
  - Bible
  - The Rock*
  - Whiteboard or poster board and markers
  - "John 1:18" poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*
  - Optional: The Rock*

## STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Discuss the role of Jesus as God's representative.
- Students pray.

## Memory Verse

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

—John 1:14

indicates items you will need to prepare before class

## Bible Basis:

Moses learns he cannot see God, but he does experience God's glory (Exod. 33:11-23); Jesus is the embodiment of the unseen God (John 1:14, 18).

## Bible Truth:

The unseen God may be seen in His full glory only in Jesus.

## Lesson Aim:

That your students recognize Jesus as their only way to approach a holy God.

## Understanding the Bible

"No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18). "And [they—Moses and those named in vs. 9] saw the God of Israel"

(Exod. 24:10). Contradiction? No. No one has ever seen God in His true essence, for God cannot be seen. God is Spirit (John 4:24).

Nevertheless, in Old Testament times God represented Himself by various physical forms (for example, "hand," "face" in Exod. 33:22-23). This kind of visible appearance is called a theophany (thee-OFF-uh-nee). Laird Harris renders the Hebrew for "my back" in Exodus 33:23 as "aftereffects" (like the wake left in the water by a motorboat after it has passed by). He stated that "it was meant that Moses could see the glory and afterglow behind the Lord as He passed by, but His very presence could not be seen" (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*).

In Jesus, or "the One and Only," (some Greek manuscripts give the expression as "the only begotten [or unique] God" in John 1:18), God has made plain what He is really like. Jesus is the exact representation of God's nature (Heb. 1:3).

## Tips

### classroom

This important lesson teaches a vital doctrine: Jesus is divine; He is God. There may be times when students' questions get you off track because the issues addressed are broad. The feature story in *The Rock* can potentially bring up many questions. Be sure you keep the goal of this lesson in mind. You can communicate this by:

- thoroughly familiarizing yourself with the lesson—especially the sections in bold type and the feature story in *The Rock*.
- honestly telling your students when you don't have an answer to a question. Tell them you'll search for an answer and get back to them.
- inviting your pastor or other church leader to answer any questions students might spring on you that you can't answer.

### PRESESSION ACTIVITY



#### A, B, C Game

• **Objective:** To help students reveal facts about themselves to know each other better.

Have students sit in a circle to play this game. The first player uses the letter A to reveal something true about him or herself such as this: "I am always late." The second player uses the letter B ("I am afraid of bees!"), and so on through the alphabet.

## Understanding Your Students

The students seated in your class are going through a period of enormous transition in the development of their thought processes. They are moving from concrete thinking into abstract reasoning.

You may know about the five year old who stated flatly, "I know Jesus isn't in my heart because if He was, the food would fall right on His head." That's concrete thinking. And up until now your students may not have been much past that. Now, however, their ability to make sense of the world is vastly improved. What an opportunity!

Caution, though. Don't get too excited about laying heavy spiritual concepts on your students. Transition means change, instability, and

sometimes confusion. They're not there yet, but they're on their way. You have probably noticed the peculiarities of this stage in your students' thinking. One minute you see the light dawn on a student's face and know she has just gained some new spiritual insight. The next moment she greets another brilliant comment with a blank stare, and you know it just hasn't clicked yet.

Don't be discouraged. As their ability to think abstractly grows, you have the potential for guiding your class into the truth about God in a new way. You can help build a bridge from concrete to abstract thinking by presenting spiritual truths in concrete terms whenever possible. This lesson is full of such bridge-building methods.



# STEP 1

Life Need  
5–10 minutes

## Lesson Aim:

That your students recognize Jesus as their only way to approach a holy God.

**Objective: That your students play the visual telephone game.**

### Materials:

- Paper
- Crayons
- Tape

Start class today with a game. Have your students sit in a straight line, facing the same direction, and close behind the student in front of them. You want each person to be looking at the back of the head of the person in front of him. The only person who does not see the back of someone else's head is at the front of the line. If you have more than seven students, break them into two groups so that you have two lines.

Now give each person a piece of paper, a crayon (pencils or pens could be too sharp), and a piece of tape. First, students should tape the piece of paper to the back of the person in front of them. When they have done this go to the person at the end of the line and whisper a simple object in his ear so no one else can hear. For instance, you could use a Christmas tree, a diamond ring, a flower, a basketball, or anything else you come up with that is familiar to your students.

When you say "begin" the last student should start drawing the object you whispered to him on the paper that is taped on the back of the person in front of him. When he is finished, the next person should draw what she thinks was drawn on her back on the paper taped on the person in front of her. The person will only know what is drawn on his or her back by discerning the pressure of the crayon on their back. This will continue up the line until the first person has to guess what you told the last person to draw.

Most likely the first person will have a hard time figuring out what the picture was supposed to be. Now ask:

**▶ How did you feel trying to draw something you haven't seen?** *Students may have felt frustrated or they may have thought it was fun, or a mixture of both.*

Perhaps you felt a strong desire to see the picture for yourself. That's how Moses felt. He wanted to see God for himself. Let's take a look at today's Bible study.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

#### Materials:

- The Rock*

If you have time here have students read page 7 in *The Rock*. This feature gives examples of things we already believe but cannot see.



## STEP 2

### Bible Learning

15–20 minutes

### Bible Basis:

Moses learns he cannot see God, but he does experience God's glory (Exod. 33:11-23); Jesus is the embodiment of the unseen God (John 1:14, 18).

**Objective:** That your students compare Moses' vision of God's glory with Jesus' revelation of the Father.

#### Materials:

- Bible
- The Rock*
- Whiteboard or poster board and markers

Have students turn to the Bible study on page 4 in *The Rock*.


#### ■ From *THE ROCK*—Oh, Say Can You See?

Can anyone really know what God is like? Probably Moses knew God better than anyone else in the Old Testament. God used to speak to him in the "tent of meeting" (Exod. 33:7). Whenever Moses went to the tent, the pillar of cloud that meant God's presence would come down, and God would talk to Moses "as a man speaks with his friend" (vs. 11).





But the people of Israel were always straying from God. When Moses was on Mount Sinai getting the Law, the people were making a golden calf to worship. God was angry at their stubbornness and threatened to leave them alone to finish the journey to the promised land. So Moses went once more to the "tent of meeting."

#### Read Exodus 33:11-17.



-  What were the first two requests Moses made of God (see verses 13, 15, and 16)? (*In verse 13, Moses asked God to teach him His ways, so he might know Him better. In verses 15 and 16, he asked God not to leave the people.*)

Moses' second request (begging God not to leave them in the wilderness) shows how much Moses cared for the people of Israel, even though they caused trouble.

-  What do these requests tell you about how close Moses was to God? (*These requests show that Moses loved God and depended on Him for everything. Moses knew he couldn't lead the people without God.*)
-  **How did God answer Moses' requests? What does His answer show about what He thought of Moses?** (*God said that He would do what Moses asked because He was pleased with Moses. God must have loved Moses very much too.*)

Even though Moses knew God personally, as a friend, there was something missing, and Moses wasn't satisfied.

#### Read Exodus 33:18.

-  What more did Moses want? (*Moses wanted to see God's glory. He wanted to see what God was really like.*)
-  Why do you think Moses wanted to see God's glory? (*Allow students to speculate. They might say he was curious to see who it was he was trusting. Perhaps he wanted to know God even better—to know more about God's character.*)

## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 33:11-23

<sup>11</sup>The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

<sup>12</sup>Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' <sup>13</sup>If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

<sup>14</sup>The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. <sup>16</sup>How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

<sup>17</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

<sup>18</sup>Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

<sup>19</sup>And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>20</sup>But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

<sup>21</sup>Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. <sup>22</sup>When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup>Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

- ▶ Read verses 19-23 to find out how God answered Moses' request. (*God told Moses he could see God's "back" but not His "face," or Moses would die.*)

You might want to communicate some of the information given in Understanding the Bible in simplified terms your students can understand to deepen their understanding.

- ▶ Think about Moses' experience. What picture comes to mind? Describe something you would compare Moses' experience with. (*Some examples are: 1. Moses' experience of seeing God was like watching a rocket launching. The initial flare may have been too intense to look at directly, but the visible trail left behind was also spectacular. 2. Just as it is deadly to see God's face, it is dangerous to look directly at the sun. You'll go blind unless you use special equipment to look at it.*)

No one, not even Moses, could ever actually see God directly. God is too great, too powerful, too pure for us mere mortals to ever really know Him.

**But wait! There is a way to know God and to see what He is like. Read John 1:14, 18.**

- ▶ How can we know God? (*We can know God through Jesus.*)

In Jesus, God actually entered His own creation in order to bring people back into fellowship with Himself. It's as if all God's glory was funneled into a form we could understand and relate to—a flesh-and-blood person. This is the mystery of God come in the flesh. Jesus was a human being like ourselves. He was also God. Everything we know about what God is like can be seen in Jesus.

- ▶ From what you know about Jesus, what can you discover about God? Make a list of your discoveries (John 1:14 can get you started). (*We know God has glory and is full of grace and truth. He is good, kind, perfect, all-knowing.*)

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

## Materials:

- Bibles

If you have time, copy this chart on the board, have students look up these Scripture passages, and match the Old Testament reference about God with its New Testament counterpart that says something similar about Jesus (to show that Jesus is also God). In the third column, students should write what both verses show them about God.

Scripture tells us about God:	Jesus shows us God:	God is:
Exodus 20:6	John 1:14	
Jeremiah 10:12-13	Mark 1:40-42	
Isaiah 42:8	Romans 5:8	
Lamentations 3:22-23	Mark 4:35-41	

Here are the matches and answers: Isaiah 42:8/John 1:14—God is full of glory; Lamentations 3:22-23/Mark 1:40-42—God is compassionate; Exodus 20:6/Romans 5:8—God is loving; Jeremiah 10:12-13/Mark 4:35-41—God is the Creator, He controls nature.



# STEP 3

## Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

**Objective:** That your students understand God can be revealed to them in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Materials:**

- Bible
- The Rock*
- “John 1:18” poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

One of the most amazing and sometimes frustrating things about God is that we can’t see him physically. Today we can’t even see Jesus physically—and neither could Moses. As we studied earlier God said Moses would die if he looked directly at God’s face. Sometimes it doesn’t seem possible to trust in what we can’t see. But God has given us other ways to see Him that will strengthen our faith, help us grow, and show us more and deeper layers of ourselves and our Creator.

One way God helps us see Him, or in a more spiritual sense know Him, is through the Bible. The more we read and study the Bible, the more we will learn about God.

Let’s see what the Bible says about another way we can know God. Display the teaching aid poster for this lesson “John 1:18.” Have a student read the verse from his/her Bible. The rest of the class can follow along in their Bibles or from the poster.

There is more to Jesus than meets the eye. Though He was fully human (just like all of us), He is also God; He is the only human being who can claim this. Jesus shows us what God is like. In Christ, we can see and approach God Himself.

Through Jesus we are given an opportunity to see or know God in many ways. Once we start a relationship with God through Christ we will know and continue to learn what God is like. At this time you might want to describe what it is like to live in a relationship with God from your own perspective. Let students know what a wondrous adventure it is to live life as a child of God.


If you know some of your students are not Christians, you might also take some time to explain what it takes to become a Christian. See the inside back cover of this commentary for more directions on how to lead a student to Christ.

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITY**

**Materials:**

- The Rock*

If you have time, read and discuss the feature article in *The Rock*, “Another Way?”

 **Other religions may contain a glimpse of the truth making them deceptively alluring. What parts of other religions are true? Which are obviously false? (Many religions teach high standards of morality, goodness, and love. In the end, however, they teach that salvation is accomplished through works, or by becoming a god yourself. In all other religions, trusting in someone or something other than Jesus is required.)**



**STEP 4** 

Life Response  
(5–10 minutes)

**Bible Truth:**

The unseen God may be seen in His full glory only in Jesus.

**Objective: That your students thank Jesus for revealing God to them.**

Remember the picture we tried to communicate at the beginning of class? Even though someone drew it on your back, you weren't sure you knew exactly what it was until you saw the original for yourself.

Since we can't look at God and live, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one who has seen God and knows what He's really like. In fact, Jesus is God; yet He was also a man. So He showed us through His own life and words what God is like.

To know Jesus is to know God; He is the exact representation of His Father's nature.

We're going to close class today with sentence prayers thanking Jesus for revealing God to us.

If your students know their Bible stories well, ask them to tell a story about Jesus that shows something about God's character.

Before closing class with prayer, write this unfinished sentence on the board and have youth verbally finish it during your prayer time:

“Jesus, thank You for showing me that God is \_\_\_\_\_.”