

JIM GEORGE

**A YOUNG
MAN'S
GUIDE TO
DISCOVERING
HIS BIBLE**



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*To the special young men in my family,
Jacob Seitz
Matthew Zaengle
Isaac Seitz
Ryan Zaengle
and all young men who want to know more about God.*

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1

Unlocking the Secrets of the Universe



*In the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth.*

GENESIS 1:1

Zack is your average 15-year-old guy. He loves sports, playing video games, and isn't all that fond of school. Oh, he makes just enough effort to get by. His teachers are satisfied with his mediocre efforts—after all, he doesn't cause any problems for them. But that was about to change. Zack would soon be given a challenge that would rock his world forever.

Justin, the youth pastor at Zack's church, had asked Zack to drop by his office for a chat. Zack had no idea what Justin wanted to talk about. He couldn't think of anything he had done wrong. He pretty much approached the youth group the same way as he approached school: Don't make waves. Don't look or act too smart. Just blend in.

"Zack, I've had my eye on you ever since I took this position as youth leader," Justin began as soon as Zack entered the office. Zack's heart sank. On no—busted! His cover as an average, non-interested teen had just been blown.

“Zack,” Justin continued, “I’d like to take you on a journey to unlock the secrets of the universe. Are you interested?”

Zack had spent his teen years trying not to care about anything. Well, except himself and his special interests and hobbies. But the challenge was tempting. He had always liked reading action and adventure books about quests and the search for mysterious artifacts and secret codes. So, without much thought, Zack blurted out, “Sure—what do I have to do?”

Ultimately, what Justin was really asking Zack was, “Would you like to discover the answers to the secrets of the universe? That is, would you like to understand your Bible?”

The Challenge

Suppose a friend or even a stranger came up to you and handed you a note that read, “The extent of something is in direct proportion to the sum of nothing divided by its separate parts.” If you’re like me, you would give the note a blank stare because, if there was a message packed within those words, the meaning of it wouldn’t be very obvious.

Or how about receiving a note that read, “Alabby labbakayon Justinabokin”? Again, those are just random letters on a piece of paper with no understandable message.

Unfortunately, many teens regard the Bible as you would regard these two notes. The popular thinking is this: “The Bible is supposedly a message from God written with words you recognize, but whose meaning is mostly unclear and way beyond your understanding.”

So you, like most boys your age, might believe you need an expert to explain God’s message to you. Someone like a youth pastor or perhaps a Bible scholar. Or maybe you think you need to go to a Bible school for a couple years before you can really understand your Bible.

If you view the Bible as mostly unknowable, you might not have a very strong desire to read it. After all, it seems like a hard-to-understand collection of stories and mysterious sayings.

But is that really the case? Why would God give you a book about Himself that you and others cannot understand? The answer is that He didn't. God meant for men and women of all ages, including a teen like you, to be able to understand the Bible. It is necessary—no, make that essential—that you not wait until you are an adult to gain some understanding of the Bible. Nor is it necessary to wait for an expert to explain the Bible to you.

God wants you to know His Word...now. He wants you to understand what He is saying to you right now, so you can make the best kinds of choices right now! The sooner, the better. So the issue is not *can* you understand the Bible. The issue is do you *want* to understand the Bible?

It's totally up to you. If you are up for it—along with Zack—you can join him as he takes on Justin's challenge to go on a journey to unlock the secrets of the universe.

Your mission, my friend, is to understand your Bible.

"And why would I want to do that?" you might be asking. "What's so special about the Bible?"

Why Is the Bible So Special?

The Bible is the most priceless possession of the human race. Because the goal of this book is to help you discover and understand God's Word, go get your Bible now and write out the verses listed below as you answer the question, Why is the Bible so special?

1. The Bible is the most complete revelation of God to man—Ephesians 1:17.

Bonus: Write out the definition of the word *revelation* from a dictionary.

2. The Bible is trustworthy—Psalm 119:138.

3. The Bible is true—John 17:17.

4. The Bible is eternal and therefore indestructible—
Psalm 119:89.

5. The Bible's message brings salvation—2 Timothy 3:15.

6. The Bible's message brings spiritual maturity—Acts 20:32.

7. The Bible's message is alive—Hebrews 4:12.

8. The Bible's message applies to people of every race and of every age, male or female—Isaiah 51:8.

9. The Bible's message has one great theme, Christ—Hebrews 13:8.

How to Approach the Bible

Are you convinced yet that the Bible is important? Hopefully you are at least leaning toward seeing the Bible as something

unique and special. At first glance, the Bible might look and feel like any other book. It has black words on white paper, just like other books. However, the Bible claims that God Himself inspired it. God spoke His message through more than 40 different authors over the course of hundreds of years to produce a specific message for all of mankind.

And even though it was written 2000 years ago and countless attempts have been made to destroy it, the Bible has survived and is the most popular book that has ever been printed. Men and women all over the world have given their lives and fortunes in order to possess even a small portion of the Bible.

These facts should make you stop and think. After all, if the Bible really is a message from God, wouldn't it be well worth your time to discover what it says? You will never know how significant the Bible is until you open it and begin to read it for yourself.

Take up the challenge along with Zack. If the Bible could possibly hold the answers to questions about the universe—including questions about the past, present, and future—why not start reading through as much of it as you can? Then if you think it still holds possibilities, you might want to add to your understanding by spending some time studying the Bible as you read. These two exercises, reading and studying, will be the most profitable efforts you can make each day for the rest of your life—starting with today and this week!

Here are some suggestions on how you can get to know your Bible better and use it. Once again, write out what the Bible says about itself.

1. Recognize the supernatural nature of the Bible—
2 Timothy 3:16.

2. Realize the Bible's usefulness—2 Peter 1:3.

3. Approach the Bible with a mind that is open to the truth—2 Timothy 2:15.

4. Respond to the Bible's message—John 3:16.

5. Resolve to live out the truths of the Bible—1 Samuel 12:24.

6. Count on experiencing the blessings of knowing and obeying God's Word—Psalm 1:1-3.

Getting Past Your English Class

If you asked most teen guys what two classes they detested the most in school, a good number of them would probably say, “English grammar and English literature!” Maybe that’s why many people can’t or won’t read the Bible—because the Bible is grammatically constructed and it is literature. In fact, the Bible is made up of several different types of literature. It contains poetry, prophecy, teaching, allegories, and narrative (or, as your English teacher would call it, prose).

Much of the Old Testament, the Gospels (the books that tell the story of Jesus), and Acts is narrative. Narratives are stories, in this case God’s story—a story that is utterly true and crucially important. Bible narratives tell you about things that happened—but not just ordinary things. Their purpose is to show God at work in His creation and among His people. The narrative honors God and helps you to understand and appreciate Him. Narratives give you a picture of God’s care and protection along with providing illustrations of many other lessons important to your life.

Genesis, the very first book in the Bible, is a narrative, a story. Read the text of Genesis 1:1-5 below, then answer the questions that follow.

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he

called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

What is this story about?

What does this story tell you about God?

What answers do these verses give about the origin of the universe—about the creation of the world and all things?

All narratives have a story line or plot and characters, whether divine, human, animal, vegetable, or whatever. However, the Old Testament narratives have plots that are all part of a bigger, special plan. They also have a special cast of characters, the most special of whom is God Himself. Let’s follow up on what we just read in Genesis 1:1-5 and read Genesis 3:1-7 as an example.

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He

said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,

³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.

⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Who are the characters in this story?

What was the story line, or the plot?

What was the result of the man and woman's actions?

Based on these verses, how would you answer if someone asked you, "Where did sin come from?"

Your Goal

Your goal in reading and studying the Bible is to first find out what the Bible meant to the people who read it when it was written.

Then ask yourself: Would God have two different messages—one for the original readers, and another for today? The answer is no, and that's one of the key reasons for Bible study: finding out what the Bible's message was to the original readers, and then taking that same message and applying it to your life today.

TAKING IT ALL IN

No one lives in a vacuum. You are and will always be influenced and impacted by people and your surroundings. Obviously, your parents have and will continue to provide the greatest contribution to your development. And as the years go by, there will be others. Maybe a coach, a pastor, a Sunday school teacher, a best friend, even a big brother.

And there will be some people who will provide a not-so-good influence. If you're not careful and wise, they can drag you down. How will you know if what you are experiencing from others or your surroundings is good for you?

God has provided for you in advance. He has already given you a way to evaluate your life experiences before they occur, before you are tempted. He has supplied you with a guidebook, the Bible. Yes, the Bible unlocks the secrets of the universe, but it is also meant to be the greatest and the most lasting influence in your everyday life. First you need to discover God's guidelines in the Bible—His wisdom and His do's and don'ts. God's Word can make you wise unto salvation, and it can serve as a light that will guide your steps along the road of life.

So what do you think? Are you ready to take the challenge along with Zack and start the quest to unlock the secrets of the universe? Then head to the next chapter, and see where it leads.

What Others Have Said About the Bible

*I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man.
All the good from the Savior of the world
is communicated to us through this book.¹*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

16th President of the United States