

BY KEN CASTOR AND ZACH CASTOR

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You'll need a countdown timer (an app on your phone, a stopwatch, an egg timer, or something), a large flipchart or whiteboard for taking notes, colored markers or pens, and enough printed copies of Isaiah 53 for each student.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the second set of studies in a year-long series that explores what it looks like to get closer to Jesus.

JESUS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE

Begin your discussion by describing this open-ended scene: **A freak weather vortex has sent sharks and other dangerous sea creatures—giant squid, angler fish, krakens, and narwhals—hurtling through the sky, devastating everything in their path and ushering in a new apocalyptic era. The only way you can survive this aquatic attack is to quickly evacuate to the safety of indestructible land-based shark cages that are hidden in the mountains. Because space is limited, you're allowed to bring only three items with you...**

Then ask:

- **What three items would you take with you? Explain.**
- **If you did or didn't choose the Bible, explain why.**

Say something like: **I think the Bible is more important to surviving in this world than we often realize.**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud 2 Timothy 3:16-17, then ask:

- **Based on this passage, what's "useful" about the Bible?**
- **Okay, besides a storm of dangerous aquatic creatures, how has the Bible been a source of help and hope for you in facing other issues in your life?**
- **Most English translations of this passage say that Scripture is "God-breathed"—what do you think that means?**

Say something like: **The Bible is often called the "Word" of God. Basically, that means that the Bible represents God's "voice" to us. But the "Word" also has a double meaning...**

Ask: **If someone were to ask you what the Bible is about, what would you tell them? Explain.**

Recruit someone who can write quickly to take notes on your flipchart or whiteboard, then pull out your countdown timer.

Say something like: **Okay, you have two minutes to call out everything you know that's in the Bible—brainstorm all the stories, special verses, and key ideas that come to your mind. Ready? Go!**

Encourage your kids by looking back over the notes that were recorded. Then ask:

- **What's something missing from this list that we *must* include?**
- **Taking everything into consideration, what's the main thing God wants to communicate to us through his Word, the Bible?**

Say something like: **God wants us to cherish the Bible because it all points to his son, Jesus. For all of time, people have been longing for a savior—someone who can rescue them from a life of sin and destruction and invite them into a life of joy and purpose. In fact, the longest chapter in the Bible is full of "pointers to Jesus."**

Give each student a copy of Isaiah 53, as well as a marker or pen. Have them spend five minutes or so skimming through the chapter, highlighting every verse that points to Jesus.

Afterward, ask:

- **What struck you about this activity?**
- **One of Jesus' names is the "Word"—the gospel of John opens with this famous phrase: "The Word became flesh." In what way is Jesus the "Word" of God?**
- **What practical purpose does it serve to have both the Old and New Testaments point to Jesus?**

Finish your time together with a unique way of praying. As you pray together, encourage your kids to each pick out a verse from Isaiah 53 that caught their attention, and then read that verse out loud as a prayer of thanks. Wrap-up your prayer time with this: **Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself through the Bible, and for helping us to know you through your Word.** ●



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You'll need Bibles for each student, a place to sit outside (if possible, and if not, meet near an outside window). [Optional: Print copies of the following online articles: Mt. Everest (<http://climbing.about.com/od/mountainclimbing/a/EverestFacts.htm>); Platypus (<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/platypus/>); and Oceans (<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2014/06/04/4018335.htm>).

JESUS REVEALED IN THE CREATED WORLD

After your teenagers arrive, gather in an outdoor location (or by a window that allows you to see outdoors), then ask:

- **What's your favorite outdoor activity, and why?**
- **Where is your favorite outdoor place on earth, and why?**
- **What's the most amazing large-scale aspect of creation?**
- **What's the most amazing small-scale aspect of creation?**

Say something like: **Today we're going to explore how Jesus is revealed to us through the created world.**

Ask someone to read aloud Romans 1:20, then have kids each choose one thing in nature to study—it could be a leaf, a rock, a flower, a bug—anything. Ask them to focus their entire attention on this one thing for a few minutes. As they study their object, ask them to consider this question: **How are the invisible attributes, eternal power, and divine nature of Jesus evident in the thing you're studying?**

After a few minutes, gather back together and ask a few students to describe what they noticed. After a few have shared, read aloud Psalm 104:1-9, then ask:

- **What do these large-scale aspects of creation teach us about Jesus?**

Pass out the article on Mount Everest, and quickly highlight the facts in it. Then ask: **How would you complete the**



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following statement: Thinking about Mount Everest makes me realize that Jesus is _____.

Read aloud Psalm 104:10-22, then ask:

- **Why does God's creation—a stream or a tree or an animal—often create a response of awe in us?**
- **What do the small-scale details about creation teach us about the nature of Jesus?**

Pass out the article on the platypus, and quickly highlight the facts in it. Then ask:

What can the quirky aspects of the platypus reveal to us about Jesus?

Read aloud Psalm 104:24-35, then ask:

- **What does the variety of life on earth reveal to us about Jesus?**

Pass out the article on the ocean, and quickly highlight the facts in it. Then ask:

- **What do the oceans teach us about the Jesus?**
- **Look at verse 30—what does the created world teach us about what the Spirit of Jesus is doing in us?**

Close your time together by asking someone to read aloud Psalm 104:33-34, then join together in a prayer of praise. ●



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