

# Standard LESSON™

## Teaching a Bible Lesson: Part 1 Diving In—Introducing the Lesson

Imagine a lifeguard manning his perch seaside—hair perfectly styled, skin bronzed but never burned, and he is wearing the latest, fashionable swimwear. But this lifeguard stays out of the water! After all, the salt water will fade the new trunks, waves will wash off the sunblock, and the whole process will destroy his styled locks.

One cannot imagine a less effective lifeguard! His is not a task to be accomplished from the water's edge.

Yet it is tempting to teach a Bible lesson with similar attitudes. Our learners are struggling in the deep waters of life. Do we shout out Bible instructions from our post? Or do we dive in?

**Accept reality: We are drowning!** A Christian musician opened concerts by saying: “It’s *nice* to be in this *nice* place for this *nice* event with such *nice* people. It’s just so *nice*!” He would then recite Jeremiah 17:9—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Point made. We gather for Bible instruction—a concert, a sermon, a Bible lesson—not because we are *nice*. We do so because we need help in fighting the waves of wickedness from within ourselves and from our culture. We are drowning and need a lifeguard!

A good lesson introduction does *not* immediately open to the Scripture lesson text. The remainder of the lesson will deal with Bible content and application. Rather, the first step of a lesson must show your willingness to understand kind of waves that are battering the lives of your class members. It is their opportunity to tell *you* about their world.

**Identify yourself: We are in this together!** First show that you are aware of the world in which your students live. For example, every week we publish a free current-events lesson-introduction download for lesson that is to be taught. Opening a lesson by talking about an event that is on your students’ minds sends two distinct messages: 1) I live in the same world that you live in. 2) The Bible, though written centuries ago, has something to say about today’s events!

Lesson introductions from our commentary, in our Involvement Learning lesson plans, and in our PowerPoint® lesson slide shows in *Adult Resources* work similarly. They meet students in the *common* ground of everyday life before leading them to the *higher* ground of Bible truth. References to pop culture, knowledge from a wide variety of disciplines, and quotations from famous people about the general topic of

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the day all send the same message—“Yes, I know what the world says about this topic. Let’s move on to see what God says.”

**Evaluate your group: How deeply are they submerged?** When rescue teams go deep under water, they must not return to the surface too quickly. The rapid change in pressure can cause a painful and even deadly condition called the bends.

Students may experience “the bends” when a teacher tries to pull them from their culture into Bible study too rapidly. Therefore, the amount of time spent on the lesson introduction should be based on how deeply class members are immersed in their culture. For example, the Bible account of the friendship of David and Jonathan might be introduced briefly to a group that is close and has solid Christian friendships. In such a case, a simple discussion question such as, “Who is the first person in your life you identified as your best friend?” might be sufficient.

On the other hand, when introducing the same text to a group that struggles with making solid friendships, you may need a longer activity. For example, matching a collection of quotes (both positive and negative) about friends with a famous person who said it would ease the class into the topic more slowly.

A lifeguard who does not get in the water might look great on the shore, but is of little use in actually guarding life. Likewise, to be an effective Bible teacher, one must do more than spout Scripture from an ivory tower. The lesson introduction helps the teacher enter the world of the class before washing away cultural misconceptions with a flood of Bible truth.