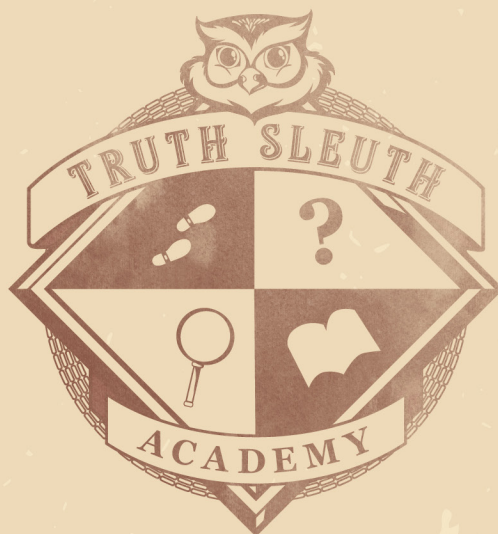


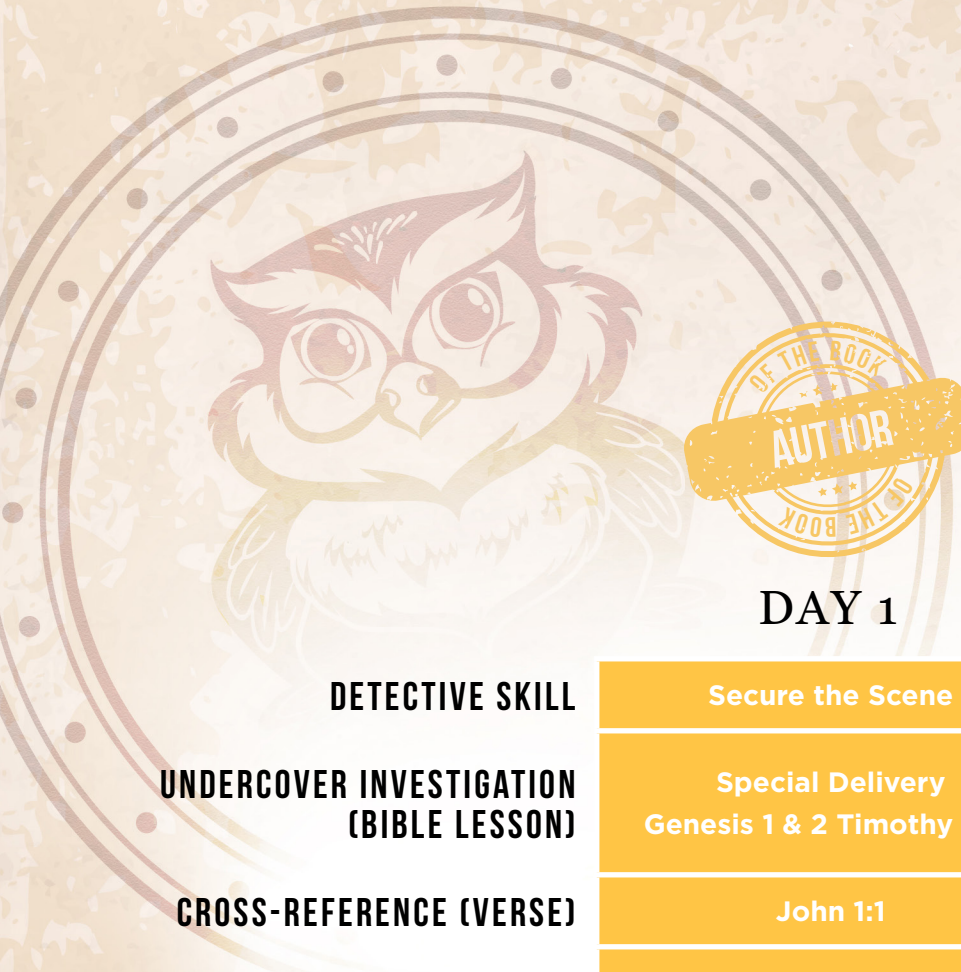
**CLASSIFIED
INFORMATION**



STUDY HALL

INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

EVIDENCE



DAY 1



DAY 2

DETECTIVE SKILL	Secure the Scene	Collect the Clues
UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATION (BIBLE LESSON)	Special Delivery Genesis 1 & 2 Timothy 3:16	A Bold Plan & Word Pictures Judges 7 & Matthew 13
CROSS-REFERENCE (VERSE)	John 1:1	Ephesians 6:19
TRUTH VERSUS LIE	<p>TRUTH: God created all things. He designed me before I was even born and He has a special purpose for my life.</p> <p>LIE: The world and everything in it just happened by chance. I am just an accident.</p>	<p>TRUTH: The Bible shows me who I am and gives meaning to my life.</p> <p>LIE: The Bible doesn't apply to me. It isn't important for my life.</p>
CHARACTER TRAIT	Alertness	Boldness
FINGERPRINT LAB (CRAFTS)	Top Secret Fingerprint Files	Exhibit #119 Lanterns
GUMSHOE GAMES	"The Game's Afoot!"	Puzzling Pieces
WHODUNIT DINER (SNACKS)	Truth Sleuths on the Trail & Donut Magnifying Glasses	Book Stacks & Carrots
WHOO'S CLUES (DAILY DUTY)	I.D. Tag	Bible Character Dress Up

This evidence board gives an overall view of the major themes and events;

"Thy

Word

BOARD



DAY 3



DAY 4



DAY 5

Examine the Evidence	Interview the Eyewitnesses	Crack the Case
The Lost Law 2 Kings 22-23	Jesus—The Way, Truth, and Life Various NT Passages	Faithful to the End The Books of John
2 Timothy 2:15	John 8:32	Isaiah 40:8
<p>TRUTH: The Bible tells me what is right and wrong. I am accountable for my actions, whether good or bad.</p> <p>LIE: There is no right or wrong. I make my own rules.</p>	<p>TRUTH: Jesus is the only Way to Heaven.</p> <p>LIE: There are many ways to Heaven. I can choose my own destiny.</p>	<p>TRUTH: Everything God has said in the past either has come true or will come true. Since the Bible comes from God, I know that the Bible is true.</p> <p>LIE: The Bible is just a book of fairy tales. I can't trust what it says.</p>
Forgiveness	Truthfulness	Faithfulness
Scrolls of Evidence	Morse Code Keychains	TSA Case Notebooks
Scribe Shuffle	TSA Targets	Sleuths & Suspects
Scrumptious Scrolls & Grapes	Mystery Cupcakes & Oranges	Snoop Scoops & Fruit Kabobs
Make an Owl	Team Color	Decorate a Bookmark

however, due to circumstances, facilities, and timing, some items may change slightly.

Is

Truth."

John 17:17

MYSTERY OF THE BOOK

TRUTH SLEUTH ACADEMY

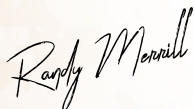
Welcome! Get ready to go undercover as we investigate God's Word to solve the "Mystery of the Book!"

This VBS program has been specifically designed to incorporate a variety of techniques in order to meet each child's individual learning style(s) and needs - visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic. Luke 2:52 says that, as Jesus grew, He "increased in wisdom (scholastically) and stature (structurally), and in favor with God (spiritually) and man (socially)." This verse has served as our model during the creation and production of *Truth Sleuth Academy*.

Regardless of whether you have been working in VBS for years or this is your very first time, we hope you find the following suggestions and guidelines beneficial. This manual will answer a lot of questions (and probably create a lot more!), so please read it carefully, jot down some notes, and don't hesitate to contact us.

We're glad you've joined us on this "myth-defying, undercover investigation!" We have a lot of mysteries to solve, so grab your magnifying glass and let's get started!

In His Service,



"Detective" Randy Merrill
and the Merrill Evangelistic Team (MET)



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INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

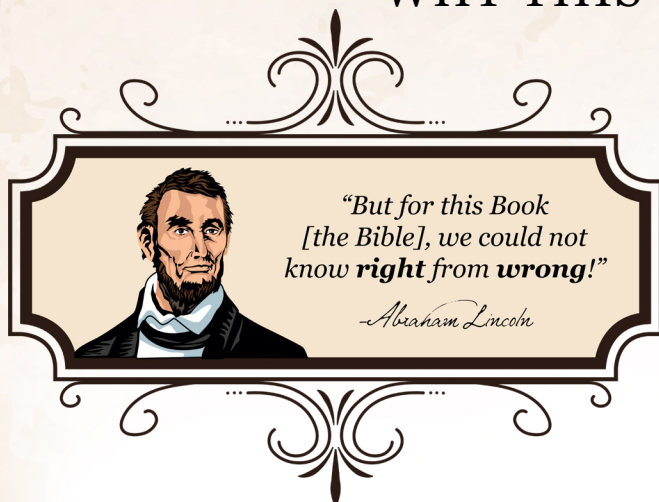
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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WHY THIS PROGRAM?



God has always honored His Word, and we ought to honor it daily as well. Every day our children are inundated with lies—lies about God, lies about the Bible, lies about reality, lies about themselves... the list goes on and on.

In a world where the lines between fact and opinion are being blurred, children (and adults) need to know the Truth. At *Truth Sleuth Academy*, our goal is to help children see that the Bible is true, relevant, essential, and reliable.

Each day during VBS, we will uncover the lies that bind us and the Truth that sets us free.

TRUTHS

1. God created all things. He designed me before I was even born and He has a special purpose for my life.
2. The Bible shows me who I am and what I need to do.
3. The Bible tells me what is right and wrong. I am accountable for my actions, whether good or bad.
4. Jesus is the only Way to Heaven.
5. Everything God has said in the past either has come true or will come true. Since the Bible comes from God, I know that the Bible is true.

LIES

1. The world and everything in it just happened by chance. I am just an accident.
2. The Bible doesn't apply to me. It isn't important for my life.
3. There is no right or wrong. I make my own rules.
4. There are many ways to Heaven. I can choose my own destiny.
5. The Bible is just a book of fairy tales. I can't trust what It says.

CONCLUSION

God's Word is the definitive standard by which we measure all things, regardless of what men say. The Bible's amazing unity, indestructibility, accuracy, honesty, and life-changing power cannot be refuted.

Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is TRUTH!" (emphasis added). If we, as individuals or nations, ever intend to enjoy true freedom now and eternally, we must return to the absolutes of this sacred Book.



TRUTH SLEUTH ACADEMY COURSES

Do you have what it takes to be a good detective? What is the Bible? Is It really true?

At *Truth Sleuth Academy*, you'll discover clues to solve these and many other mysteries by going under the cover of God's Word and investigating the facts for yourself!

DAY 1—SECURE THE SCENE



To solve the mystery of the Book, we first need to find out “Who dun it?” Genesis 1 gives us a clue! We also learn about revelation, inspiration, and illumination—big words with big meaning for our lives!

DAY 2—COLLECT THE CLUES



What do a mirror, a sword, a light, and a seed have in common? The Bible! It shows us who we truly are inside, convicts us of sin and lights our path! If we want to grow spiritually, we must “take a little time each day to practice God's Word.”

DAY 3—EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE



When we look closely at God's Word, we discover what is right and what is wrong. In 2 Kings 22, King Josiah shows us the right response to have when we break God's Law and are confronted with our sin.

DAY 4—INTERVIEW THE EYEWITNESSES



During Jesus' trial, Pilate asked, “What is truth?” The answer to this mystery is found in the “Red Thread of Redemption” that runs throughout the pages of Scripture, pointing us to Jesus—“the way, the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)

DAY 5—CRACK THE CASE



Looking back, we can see how God's Word was true. Looking ahead, we can trust that God's Word will be true. Cover to cover, our investigation reveals that God's Word is true!

From the moment Truth Sleuths arrive at *Truth Sleuth Academy*, they are immersed in an incredible VBS experience filled with mystery, excitement, and adventure!

The high-energy opening **Alpha Rally** is filled to the brim with lively, Scripture-based songs, dramatized Bible stories, a true-life Hero Story, character trait highlights, hilarious skits, and more! From there, the Truth Sleuths rotate through 5 fun-filled, thematic Field Assignments:

Study Hall: Here, Truth Sleuths search for clues found in God's Word. Exciting review games help reinforce the daily memory verse and everyone is given an opportunity to respond to the Biblical truths they've learned. Instructors watch closely to catch Truth Sleuths demonstrating the daily character trait.

Fingerprint Lab: At the Fingerprint Lab, Truth Sleuths get hands-on detective experience learning about fingerprints, designing codes and ciphers, and using their God-given imaginations to create beautiful art!

Gumshoe Games: Speed and agility are put to the test at this lively field assignment. Truth Sleuths must stay alert as they hunt for clues, practice their accuracy, chase suspects, and more! “The game's afoot!” Can they solve the puzzle before it's too late?

Cross-Examination Station: It's non-stop motion at the Cross-Examination Station! Truth Sleuths learn fun songs that reinforce Biblical themes, investigate scientific and historic evidence for the validity of the Bible, and demonstrate their listening skills by answering questions!

Whodunit Diner: From edible magnifying glasses to stacks of “books” to “Mystery Cupcakes,” the Whodunit Diner is full of delicious surprises! Grab yourself some “Hot on the Trail” mix for quick energy as you track down the next clue!

During the fast-paced closing **Omega Rally**, Truth Sleuths are rewarded for their hard detective work. But, stay vigilant! There are always those that want to stop the Truth!






TRUTH SLEUTH ACADEMY TERMS

Here is a list of detective/academy-type terms that will be used throughout the program to describe various positions, events, or places...

TITLES / POSITIONS

TSA
TSA Staff
Director
Instructors
Field Assignment Leaders
Assistants
Truth Sleuths
Hebrews
Greeks

TEAM

-  Nursery Rhymers (NR)
-  Tip Trackers (TT)
-  Myth Mashers (MM)
-  Fact Finders (FF)
-  Code Crackers (CC)

EVENTS

Strategy Meetings
Team Instructor Meetings
Alpha Rally
Omega Rally
Awards Ceremony
Field Assignments
Study Hall
Fingerprint Lab
Gumshoe Games
Whodunit Diner
Cross-Examination Station

TERMS

Cross-References
TSA ID Tag

PERSON / PLACE

Truth Sleuth Academy
All VBS Staff
VBS Director
Teachers
Crafts, Games, and Snack Leaders
Helpers
Students
Boys
Girls

AGES

*0 - 3
4 - 5
6 - 7
8 - 10
11 - *13

WHAT

Staff Training Meetings
Daily Info from Detective Merrill
Opening Assembly
Closing Assembly
Final Closing Assembly
Middle Rotation
Class Time
Crafts
Games
Snacks
MET: Songs & Quizzing

DEFINITION

Bible Verses
Name Tag



CLASSROOM

Nursery

WHERE

Auditorium
Auditorium
Auditorium
Auditorium
Designated Locations
Various Classrooms

Auditorium Preferred

*For churches that wish to include these ages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

YOUR ROLE

As a *Truth Sleuth Academy* Instructor, you are not just a facilitator. You...

- Are a Truth Sleuth trainer!
- Have a special desire to see children learn God's Word.
- Strive to be an example of Christ in word, thought, and deed.
- Are responsible for organizing and maintaining an efficient class. (This includes collecting supplies, organizing your Assistants, attending pre-VBS Strategy Meetings and Team Instructor Meetings with Detective Merrill, etc.)
- Realize there may be some unexpected events along the way, but plan ahead to avoid them.

- Work hard and inspire your fellow staff to do the same, knowing the reward is a heavenly one.
- Understand that, ultimately, God is in control of all things.

Thank you!

Thank you in advance for your hard work, preparation, and willingness to serve. We appreciate you and are praying for you!

Who knows? Maybe someone in your class will...

- Be changed forever by the power of God.
- Lead countless people to Christ because you faithfully presented the Gospel. (Such was the case of D. L. Moody because of his Sunday School teacher.)
- Say, "You were the one that impacted my life the most!"

YOUR PLAN

Solving mysteries can be a daunting task. Precise investigation, organized note taking, and detailed assembly of clues and evidence are essential.

The same is true in this VBS, but eternity hangs in the balance. Grab your Undercover Guide (Bible) and this manual. Study carefully and prayerfully. Preparation matters!

PREPARE YOUR HEART

A good detective makes sure he or she has the right gear to be prepared for any situation. Don't let poor planning or dull Christianity hinder your ministry. Immerse yourself in God's Word.



WHOO'S CLUES



GREETINGS, DETECTIVE!
MY NAME IS, "WHOO!"
WATCH FOR MY CLUES
THROUGHOUT THIS MANUAL!

STUDY HALL SCHEDULE

Normally, you will have 20 minutes in your classroom. This time goes quickly! We recommend that you use the following guidelines to plan your time:

- 1-2 minutes traveling from the last event and getting the students seated for learning
- 2-3 minutes teaching the verse and reviewing the daily character trait (Sometimes the character trait is integrated with the lesson.)
- 7-8 minutes reviewing the lesson and giving the invitation
- 5-6 minutes doing the reinforcement activities (Choose which ones work best in your schedule.)
- 1-2 minutes teaching/reviewing team cheer and cleaning up
- 1 minute traveling to the next event so you arrive on time

Note: On Day 5, you may have up to 30 minutes in your classroom, depending on your VBS schedule. During the extra time, consider doing some of the activities you were not able to do earlier in the week.

We recommend that you have at least one "early finisher" activity prepared that you can do with the class if you find yourself with a few extra minutes to spare. Here are a few ideas:

- Place a coded message on the wall for students to solve.
- Take a walk through the church hallways and check out the decorations. Test your students' observation skills by asking them questions about things they see.
- Bring a "mystery box" and let the Truth Sleuths guess what is inside. Let them shake it, smell it, etc. Give them clues to help them solve the mystery.
- Use the restroom.
- Practice verses and discuss ways the Truth Sleuths can help your team earn more points. Since points are divided among the team members, if someone doesn't do their part, someone else has to make up the difference. Encourage all your students to do their best!



DAY 1

SPECIAL DELIVERY

BIBLE PASSAGES

Genesis 1 and 2 Timothy 3:16

BIG IDEAS

God is the Author of the Bible and the Creator of all things. God created each of us for a special purpose.

Three Big Words—Revelation, Inspiration, and Illumination—help us remember how we got the Bible.

MEMORY VERSE

John 1:1

(**TT & MM**) “In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God.”

(**FF & CC**) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

CHARACTER TRAIT

Alertness: Being aware of my surroundings so I can act quickly

LESSON OVERVIEW

Preparation

Introduction (for older and younger classes)

Bible Lesson Review

- Part 1: The Author of the Book
- Part 2: Three Big Words

Reinforcement Activities

- God’s Special Creations Page
- Balloon Volleyball

Application & Invitation

MATERIALS

- Bible

Introduction

- Magnifying glass
- Assorted books (Please select books with a biblical worldview.)

Part 2 Lesson Review

- Marker and white board (or create “Revelation,” “Inspiration,” and “Illumination” cards)
- Box (see additional items below)
 - On the *outside* of the box write: “To: (Your Team Name),” “From: Detective Merrill,” and “Special Delivery”
 - On the *inside* of the box place: a note from Detective Merrill (see templates), an deflated balloon with a piece of paper stuffed inside that says “Alertness” (paper is optional), and a flashlight or lantern

Activity 1: Balloon Keep Up

- Additional balloons (optional)

Activity 2: Special Delivery Activity Page

- Pencils, 1 per student
- Crayons
- Special Delivery Pages, 1 per student

Note: You will receive your activity pages during the daily Team Instructor Meeting.



WE WILL TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON DURING THE ALPHA RALLY. YOUR JOB IS TO REVIEW THE LESSON AND REINFORCE IT THROUGH ACTIVITIES.





PREPARATION

Display the books and magnifying glass.

Give the package to one of your Assistants before class. When you give the predetermined signal, have your Assistant say, “Special Delivery! Special Delivery!” and bring you the package.

Note: Balloon Volleyball is played during the lesson.

INTRODUCTION

What types of books do you like to read? **Hold up books as you talk about them.** Fiction? Non-fiction? Mystery or adventure stories? Comics? **Tell about your favorite book as child.** As you can see, I have a lot of books here, but I need some help finding out who wrote them.

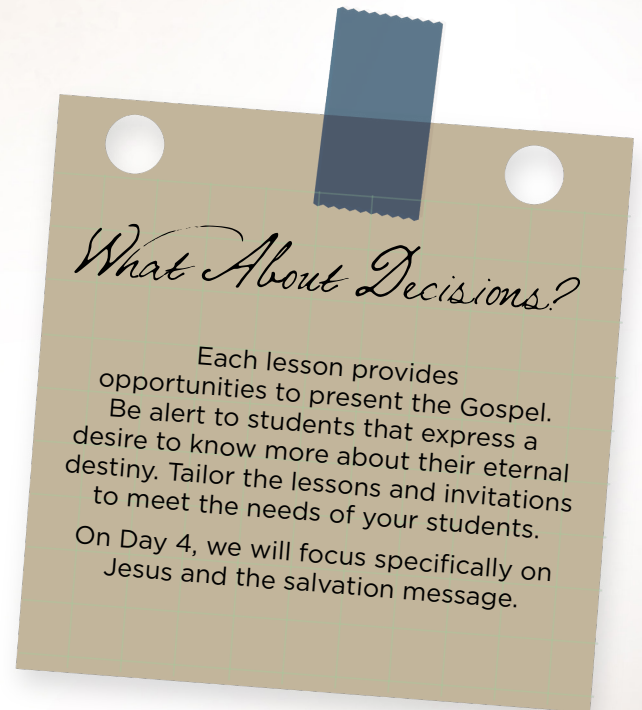
YOUNGER CLASSES

Have a volunteer help you hold the book and use the magnifying glass to find the title and author.

OLDER CLASSES

Option 1: Give each student a book and ask them to use their magnifying glasses to find the title on his/her book. Ask for a couple of volunteers to read their book titles. Next, have them look for the author of the book and again ask for volunteers to give examples.

Option 2: Set out two or three books and ask for volunteers to come up and use the magnifying glass to find the title and author of each book.



BIBLE LESSON REVIEW

PART 1: THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

An author creates an idea for a book and then brings that idea to life on paper. We learned today that the Author of the Bible is... **Take answers—God.** That’s right! God is the Author of the Bible. The very first verse in the Bible, Genesis 1:1, tells us that God created everything in the world! **Read Genesis 1:1 from your Bible or have a student read or quote the verse.** That means that God is the Creator (or the Author) of our world.

Some people may try to tell you that the world just happened by chance, but don’t believe them. You are not an accident! The Bible says in Psalm 139:15-16 that God wrote down His special design for each of you before you were even born! **Read Psalm 139:15-16 or have a student read it.**

Authors have a specific purpose in mind as they write their books. God wrote the Bible for a special purpose too. When we read the Bible (God’s Word), we see how often we sin and break His holy Law, but we also see that God loves us and wants us to have a relationship with Him. That’s why God gave us the Bible! And He delivered it to man in a very special way. **Cue assistant to say, “Special delivery!” and bring you the package.**



PART 2: THREE BIG WORDS

Special delivery? I wonder who sent this package! Let's see if we can find out! (Use your magnifying glass to read the writing on the package. If your students can read, have a student come help you.) Ah, here it is. "To the _____ (your Team name). From Detective Merrill. Special Delivery!"

Would you like to see what's inside? Take responses. Let's open it and find out! Open the package carefully, or have a student help you. **Important:** Take out the note and read it first.

"Hello, Truth Sleuths!

In this package, I've given you some clues to remind you of the big words we learned today in our "undercover investigation" of God's Word. Here's a clue: you demonstrated the first word when you opened this package! Can you solve the mystery before Study Hall is over? I'll be checking your answers when we meet for the Omega Rally. See you soon!"

Detective Merrill



For younger students, ask questions that focus on the items, rather than the big words.



Box (Revelation—God to Man):

Let's get busy so we can find the answers to Detective Merrill's clues in time! He said the first word had something to do with opening this package. What big word do you think it is? Take answers—Revelation. If students do not know, provide hints as needed or say the answer. Write "Revelation" on the board or hang up the "Revelation" card.

Revelation! That's right! Revelation means "to take the... Pause for response—Cover off.

When you opened this package, you took the cover off and revealed what was inside.

God revealed His Word to man in four specific ways. Raise your hand and name one of them. Take answers—Voice, Nature, Dreams, and Visions. If you have time, ask for examples of each.

Ask for a volunteer to come up and reveal an item from the box. Read the corresponding section for each item revealed.



Balloon (Inspiration—Man to Paper): Hmmmm. A balloon? That's interesting. What do you think the balloon stands for? Take answers—Inspiration. Inspiration! That's right! (Hang up or write "Inspiration" on the board.)

Inspiration means, God... Blow into the balloon—Breathed.

Yes, God-breathed. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Read the verse or have a student read it. Read

or reference 2 Peter 1:21. That means that God inspired man or impressed upon his mind what He wanted to say. Then, man wrote God's words down on paper.

Blow up and tie off the balloon or have an Assistant do it. Continue to Activity 1: Balloon Volleyball. (See next page.)

Note: After the activity, display and refer to Character Trait poster—Alertness.



Activity 1

BALLOON VOLLEYBALL

SUPPLIES: Balloon(s)

GOAL:
Keep the balloon in the air.

OPTION 1:

Divide into 2 teams. (A center aisle or middle rows make great dividers.) Each team has three hits to try to get the balloon to the other side of the aisle without it touching the ground.

OPTION 2:

See how long players can keep the balloon(s) in the air.

NOTE:

If you have a large number of students, introduce more balloons to the game.

Stop the game after 2 minutes and continue the lesson.

TEACHING ALERTNESS

Pop the balloon and retrieve the “Alertness” paper from inside. (You may need to use scissors to release the air if your students are sensitive to loud noises.) Detective Merrill gave us another clue. Read (or have a student read) the word “Alertness.” Review the character trait. Show and refer to Alertness poster and have the class repeat the word and definition with you. During the game, you had to show alertness to keep the balloon in the air and not bump into your teammates.

Pick up the box from Detective Merrill. Ask for a volunteer to help you “reveal” the next item.

Light (Illumination—Paper to Heart):

When we pick up God’s Book, we should pray and ask the Holy Spirit to turn on the light and show us what He wants us to learn. Read Psalm 119:130 and 2 Cor. 4:6. We call this...pause for students to answer—Illumination. Write “Illumination” on the board or hang up the “Illumination” card. Illumination is what happens when you read a familiar passage but, suddenly, you understand it in a whole new way! It’s like flipping the light switch on in your room! Walking in the dark can be dangerous, but walking in the light is delightful!



APPLICATION

Think and Discuss

Do you own a Bible? If not, please make a note of the student’s name and let Tricia Merrill know. Do you know where it is? If so, do you have a regular time when you open and read the Bible? Nehemiah 8:8.

Dr. Ron Merrill (Detective Merrill’s father) often said, “A dusty Bible leads to a dirty life!” and, “If your Bible’s falling apart, you probably won’t!”

If you want to learn God’s plan for your life, you need to take the time to open your Bible, read it, and let God speak to your heart!

Action Step

Commit today to read your Bible daily! Encourage younger students to ask someone to read the Bible to them.

INVITATION

The Bible tells us about a special delivery in John 3:16. Read or quote John 3:16 and discuss. What a wonderful reminder of God’s love!

Close in prayer. (Call to action ideas: salvation, gratitude for God’s design, committing to read the Bible, etc.)

Activity 2

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Find 10 differences between the 2 pictures. Color the picture.

Draw an item in each box representing one of the Three Big Words we learned today.

NAME: _____
DAY 1: SPECIAL DELIVERY
MEMORY VERSE: John 3:16
INSTRUCTIONS: God created each of us according to His special plan! Find 10 differences between the two pictures. Color the pictures.

Draw an item in each box that represents one of the Three Big Words we learned today.

BOX REVELATION BALLOON INSPIRATION LIGHT ILLUMINATION

ALERTNESS: BEING AWARE OF MY SURROUNDINGS SO I CAN ACT QUICKLY

*Attach Field
Assignment
Schedule Here*

