

Introduction to the Bible
Module



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION & FORMATION

SAINT THOMAS SEMINARY - ARCHDIOCESE of HARTFORD

Center for Catholic Education and Formation Archdiocese of Hartford

Leadership Formation for Teachers, Catechists, and Parish Ministers

Introduction to the Bible

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Emmaus Formation Journey: Introduction to the Bible

Activity 1. "The Bible in Our Lives"

Begin this learning module by reflecting on your personal experience of the Bible using the following three questions.

1. What memories do you have about reading or not reading the Bible? (Check all that apply.)

- I remember a parent or grandparent reading the Bible for himself or herself.
- I experienced a parent or grandparent reading the Bible to or with me.
- I heard the Bible in religious education classes, Vacation Bible School, and other programs.
- I began reading it for myself when I received a Bible of my own.
- I participated in a Bible study group.
- I took a course in Scripture in college or in an adult religious education program.
- I received a background in Bible through hearing sermons.
- There was a Bible in our home, but I do not recall people reading it.
- I really don't have any memory of reading the Bible when I was growing up.

2. How do you remember reading and studying the Bible? (Check all that apply)

- I remember listening to Bible stories in church, Catholic school, and/or college.
- I remember lectures or a course about the Bible in church, Catholic school, and/or college.
- I remember discussions about the Bible in church, Catholic school, and/or college.
- I memorized verses from the Bible.
- I remember singing biblical verses in songs and hymns.
- I remember doing dramatic readings and acting out Bible stories.
- I remember studying the Bible when taught Sunday in religious education classes.
- I have no memories of studying the Bible.

3. What is your experience of reading the Bible today? (Check all that apply)

- I enjoy reading the Bible and am strengthened by it.
- I take time for a daily Bible reading or use a daily devotional book that has Bible passages.
- I am inspired and guided by the Bible to help me practice my faith in daily life.
- I turn to the Bible as a source of help in time of trouble.
- We have family devotions and conversations using the Bible.
- I have discussions/conversations with my friends about the Bible.
- I participate in a Bible study group at my church.
- I study the Bible by taking courses or workshops or studying online.
- I consult the Bible in order to make good decisions in life.
- I do not read the Bible very often.
- I turn to the Bible as a guide for my moral living.
- I believe that reading and studying the Bible leads us to Christ and a deeper faith.
- I do not know where to start reading the Bible.
- I feel intimidated by reading and studying the Bible.
- I am not sure the Bible has much relevance for my life today.
- I just don't have time to read the Bible regularly.



Approaches to Interpreting the Bible

Modern Bible readers split into two main groups. For the sake of clarity we may refer to them as literal interpreters and contextual interpreters. Literal interpreters focus primarily on the text of the Bible. Contextual interpreters focus equally on the text and context (historical, cultural, and literary) in which the Bible has developed. Within each group there is some flexibility.

The Literal Interpreter

An example of flexibility among literal interpreters is shown by the position taken by Jehovah's Witnesses and the Church of God concerning the word day in the creation story. Jehovah's Witnesses hold you may interpret the word "day" to mean "era." Church of God members hold you must interpret it to mean 24 hours. Thus, Church of God members, following a strict biblical timetable, hold that creation took place in the year 4004 BC. Moreover, they believe it took place in the course of six 24-hour days.

People ask: "How can you hold that creation took place about 6,000 years ago, when science proves the earth is millions of years old?" The literal interpreter answers: "Read your Bible!"

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light." (Genesis 1:1-3)

Literal readers say the word "then" holds the key. It shows that "the heavens and the earth" already existed before God began his six days of work. The six days, therefore, refer only to preparing earth for human habitation.

The Contextual Interpreter

Contextual interpreters view the Bible differently than do their literal colleagues. They believe the key to understanding it lies not in adherence to the text alone. Equally important is an understanding of the historical and cultural context in which the Bible developed and was written. This is especially true of early accounts that deal with prehistory, that foggy period of time between the appearance of humans on the earth and their first attempts to tell their story.

For example, when the Bible says that Adam lived 930 years, did the Biblical writer intend this literally? Or when the Bible says the snake talked to Eve, did the biblical writer intend to teach us something about the previous condition of snakes? Or when the first chapter of the Book of

Genesis says that man was created last, and the next chapter says he was created first, wasn't the biblical writer stating that this report is contradictory if taken literally?

The contextualists firmly believe that the Bible is the Word of God but is expressed in the words of humans. They believe that God inspired the biblical writers. God, however, did not dictate what to say. The biblical writer was a person uniquely open to God's revelation and uniquely inspired by God to express it in the language and idiom of his time.

Go Back in Spirit

Contextual interpreters believe that they must read the Bible within the context of its historical times and cultural background. This gives a better understanding not only of the words, but also of the special meaning certain words and symbols held in ancient times. Pope Pius XII told Catholic biblical scholars:

You may go back, as it were, in spirit to those remote centuries of the East. With the aid of history, archaeology, ethnology, and the other sciences, you must determine accurately what modes of writing the ancient writers would likely use, and in fact did use.

In other words, scholars must approach the Bible from the viewpoint of ancient times, and not impose their own 20th-century viewpoint. This is simple in theory but difficult in practice.

Modern Scholarship

In recent years, however, remarkable advances have been made in biblical interpretation. New sciences, like biblical archaeology, have cast new light on passages and stories. Never, since the biblical time itself, has so much new information been available.

As a result, a whole new understanding of the Bible is emerging. The biblical scholar is like a person who has been walking in the fog. Now the fog is lifting, and the scholar sees, in beautiful detail, things once seen only in vague outline.

(By Mark Link in *These Stones Will Shout*, Tabor Publishing)

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?



The Bible is in itself a small library of books, all of which emerged from the history of the people of ancient Israel. It is the most influential book in the history of Western and much of Eastern civilization. People have a lot of opinions regarding what it means, but let's just start with what it is.

OLD TESTAMENT

Ta NaK

TORAH

"LAW"

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

NEVI'IM

"PROPHETS"

JOSHUA
SAMUEL
KINGS
ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
ETC.

KETUVIM

"WRITINGS"

PSALMS
PROVERBS
JOB
RUTH
CHRONICLES
ETC.

Written in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic over the span of more than 1000 years, the TaNaK contains 24 books (39 in the Christian count *). The books emerge from the history of ancient Israel. They tell of their birth as a nation, their history in the land (called Israel-Palestine today), exile from it, return, and their eventual rebuilding around the city of Jerusalem. Furthermore, it is the story of Israel's origin as Abraham's family, how God promised to bless all nations through him via a messianic king—who one day would come.

* "TaNaK" and "The Old Testament" are identical texts. The difference is in their ordering as well as some of the books being broken into separate volumes. (e.g. 1st & 2nd Chronicles).

NEW TESTAMENT

27 books emerged out of the movement started by Jesus of Nazareth. All of them were written in Greek by Jewish authors who had become Jesus' disciples.

GOSPELS

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN

Four tell the story of his life, death, and resurrection.

EPISTLES

PAUL	13 Letters
PETER	2 Letters
JOHN	3 Letters
JAMES/JACOB	1 Letter
JUDE	1 Letter
ANONYMOUS	Hebrews

Twenty-one early letters are from the team of leaders Jesus appointed (apostles). They were addressed to communities all over the ancient Roman world, guiding them in their discipleship to Jesus.

ACTS

One recounts the first couple decades of the movement he started.

REVELATION

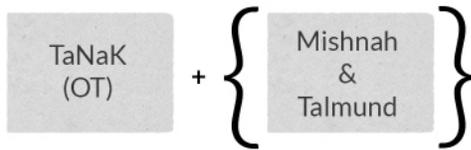
One is an apocalypse addressed to 7 churches.



CANON VARIATIONS

The previous pages list books included in the “standard” Bible or Protestant Bible containing 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books. Whereas the Hebrew Bible is centered solely on the TaNaK alone, Orthodox and Catholic Bibles include second temple period writings in addition to the Old and New Testaments.

HEBREW BIBLE



Orthodox Jews acknowledge the Oral Torah which resulted in additional bodies of authoritative literature.

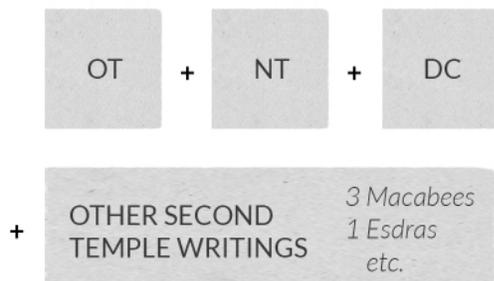
CATHOLIC BIBLE



DEUTERO-CANONICAL or APOCRYPHAL BOOKS: These are 7 separate Jewish texts from the second temple period and editorial additions made to two other biblical books (Esther and Daniel). They were widely read by Jews during that period and later by Christians as well. In 393 they were recognized as part of the “larger collection” of holy scriptures at the Council of Carthage and later ratified in the 1546 Council of Trent.

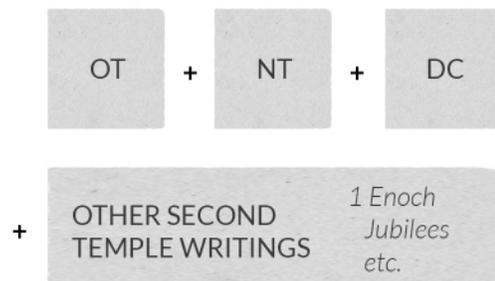


ORTHODOX BIBLE (Greek)



Additional second temple period texts existing in Greek.

ORTHODOX BIBLE (Ethiopian)



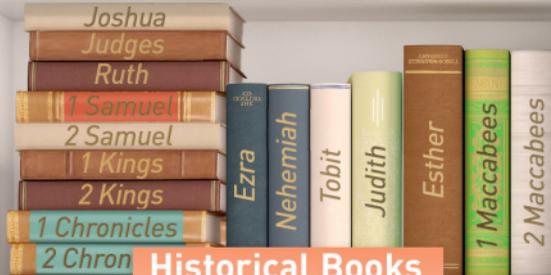
The Ethiopian “broader” canon includes even more second temple period Jewish texts.

THE BIBLE *is a* LIBRARY

OLD TESTAMENT



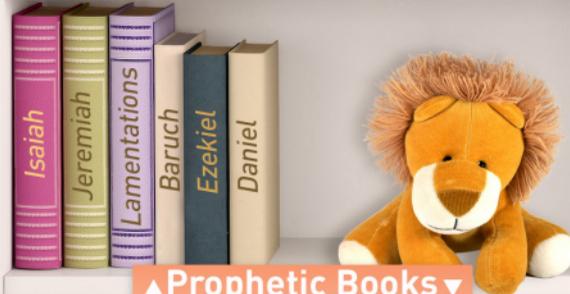
Pentateuch



Historical Books



Wisdom Books



Prophetic Books



NEW TESTAMENT



Gospels



History



New Testament Letters



Catholic Letters

Catechist
www.catechist.com



Revelation

PHOTOS FROM SHUTTERSTOCK: (BOOKS/SHELF): URFIN, (OBJECTS L-R, T-B): JORN PILON, MMINANO, PETER VORONOV, JACQUES JULIEN, GUREZENDE, PUBLIC DOMAIN; COMPOSITED AND DESIGNED: TS

The Story of the Bible

STUDY NOTES



Learn more and watch our videos at thebibleproject.com

Reading the Bible as a Unified Story

The Bible is a really large book made up of the Old and New Testaments, which themselves are made up of many books. There's a lot of ancient history, poetry, and letters written across the span of fifteen hundred years. On top of that, there's a cast of hundreds of people over this period of time. Who can keep it all straight?

It can be easy to get lost, not only because it's an ancient text, but also because the book is large and complex.

Despite this variety and diversity, the Bible shows a remarkable unity. The most dominant type of literature in the Bible is narrative. It opens with, "In the beginning," and the second to last paragraph concludes with, "and they reigned forever and ever." Narrative composes five hundred and two chapters, or forty-three percent of the text. That's nearly half the Bible! On the other hand, poetry makes up thirty-three percent of the Bible (three hundred eighty-seven chapters).

Although the Bible is a diverse set of literature and may appear fragmented at first, it ultimately presents itself as a unified epic narrative that leads to Jesus. There is one main plotline weaving the different books and stories together.

Once you grasp this core storyline and how all the books fit together, you can pick the Bible up at any point, and you'll know right where you are and what's going on.

<p>Creation and the Royal Task Genesis 1 - 2</p>	<p>OLD TESTAMENT</p>
<p>Rebellion and the Fallout Genesis 3 - 11</p>	
<p>God's Covenant with Israel Genesis 12 - 50, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalm, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</p>	
<p>Jesus and the Kingdom of God Matthew, Mark, Luke, John</p>	<p>NEW TESTAMENT</p>
<p>The Spreading of Kingdom People Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude</p>	
<p>The Return of the King Revelation</p>	

How the Story Works

1 | Creation and the Royal task

God confronts chaos and out of it creates a wonderful, ordered world full of beauty and potential. He then appoints humans to oversee this world and multiply and create new communities. This opening story offers an ideal vision of the vocation of humans. Humans are to take this good world and develop all of its potential while living in harmony with God and each other.

2 | Rebellion and the Fallout

As the humans go about this task they've been given, they're faced with choices about what is good and evil. Will they trust God's wisdom, or will they seize autonomy and define good and evil for themselves?

Here a dark, mysterious character enters the story. It represents evil at its source, and it entices the humans to doubt God's generosity and rebel. This leads to disaster; humanity's relationship with God is fractured, and their relationships with themselves, their families, and the earth breakdown. This all leads to the rise of two cities (Enoch and Babylon) where pride and violence reign.

3 | God's Covenant with Israel

The tension between the just and generous creator God and the rebellious nations who have given into evil develops the plot conflict that drives the storyline of the entire Bible.

God's response sets in motion a plan to restore divine blessing to the whole world. He will do this through one family chosen from among the nations, the people of Abraham, who later become Israel.

The story of God and Israel is the first main subplot of the Biblical story. It has three main movements:

Movement One: God Chooses Israel to Bless the Nations

Genesis 12-
Deuteronomy God makes a covenant promise to Abraham's family to bring them into a land where they'll become a nation that brings God's blessing to the world. The family grows, but they become enslaved in Egypt. As a nation, Egypt embodies all that's gone wrong with humanity: idolatry, injustice, and giving into evil.

God raises up Moses and defeats Egypt's evil, rescuing his people and bringing them to Mount Sinai. There he enters into a covenant partnership with Israel. Furthermore, he will personally live among them. They are invited to obey the terms of the covenant which start with the ten commandments, followed by hundreds more. By being faithful to these commands, they will become God's priestly representatives to the nations.

Movement Two: Israel's Royal Failure

Joshua,
Judges,
1 & 2 Samuel,
1 & 2 Kings Israel enters the promised land, and they blow it—big time. They begin worshiping the gods of the nations around them, leading to corruption and injustice. Even their best kings, like David or Solomon, fail miserably. Eventually the leaders of Israel run the nation into the ground. Then the tribes of Israel are conquered by the superpower, Babylon. Most of the Israelites are then dragged into exile in Babylon. Now we see two big conflicts in the story. All of the nations have continued with their rebellion, ruining God's good world. Even God's own chosen people are doing the same!

Movement Three: Israel's Exile and the Prophetic Hope

Isaiah,
Jeremiah,
Ezekiel,
Hosea - Malachi Despite Israel's sin, all wasn't lost. Among Israel was a vocal minority called the prophets. They had previously warned of Israel's downfall, but they also made it clear that it wasn't the end of the story. God had promised to restore divine blessing to the

world through this family, and even Israel's rebellion wouldn't stop him.

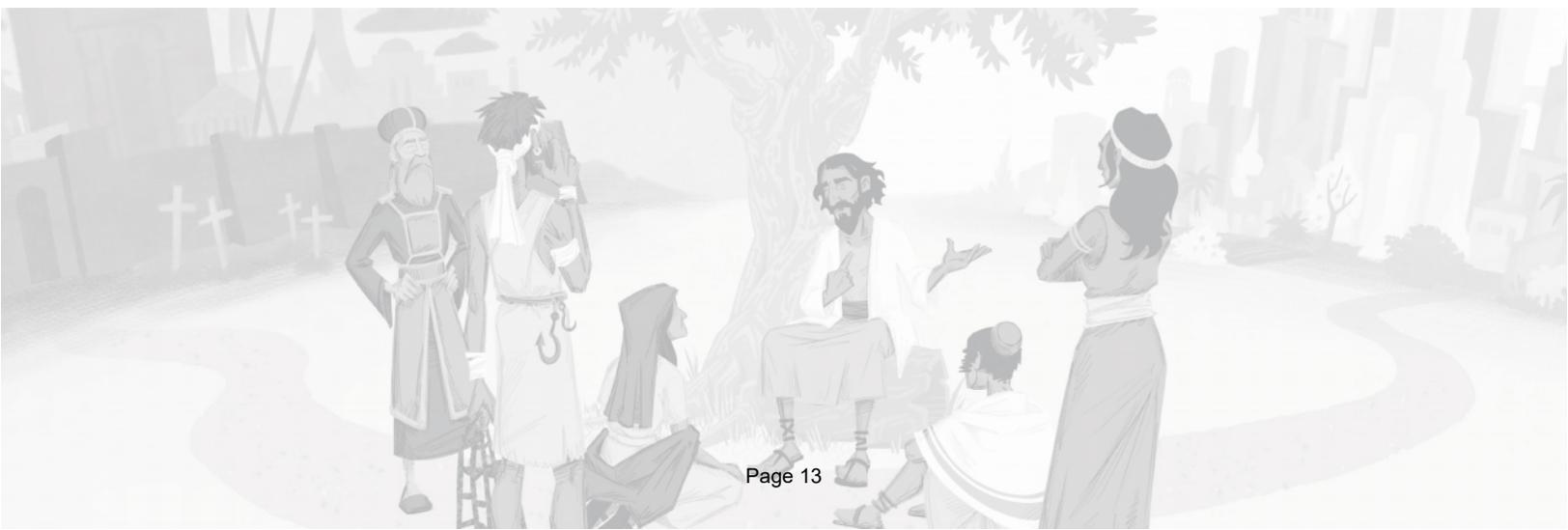
Their hope was that after the exile God would return to live among his people once again and a great leader would come and lead Israel in faithfulness to their God. Moreover, it would be through this very leader that God would rescue the world.

So the storyline of the Old Testament comes to a close, but with all of these tensions unresolved. We are left with a truly epic story waiting for the final ending.

4 | Jesus and the Kingdom of God

Enter Jesus of Nazareth who is sometimes called Immanuel, meaning God with us. The four Gospels in the New Testament present him as the resolution to all of the conflict of the Old Testament. They claimed he was the very love of God become human and the embodiment of divine mercy. They claimed Jesus was the kind of human we were all made to be, but perpetually fail to be. Furthermore, they claimed Jesus was the faithful Israelite who would fulfill God's promise to return divine blessing to all of the nations through Abraham.

Here's how he'd do it. Humanity and Israel's embrace of evil had created a world of violence and death, but Jesus was a man of compassionate power. He proclaimed that he was bringing God's kingdom back over the earth and he would confront the tragic effects of evil. But Jesus' plan to defeat humanity's evil and sin was to let it defeat him. After dying for the sins of the world, his resurrection from death sealed his victory over all of our evil and death. He now offers up his own righteous life as a gift to those who would follow him.



5 | The Spreading People of the Kingdom

After his resurrection, Jesus' followers experienced the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling them with his presence in Jerusalem. Jesus appeared in the flesh many more times, sending his followers out as witnesses to share the incredible news of what he had done for Israel and all humanity. This Jesus movement became a multi-ethnic international movement that flourished especially among the poor. It was made up of small communities of mutual love and generosity called "churches." People would gather to celebrate their new way of life as redeemed humans enjoying an intimate covenant with God. They would eat together and worship Jesus while challenging each other to abide by his teachings.

A large portion of the New Testament is made up of letters from Jesus' appointed leaders called "apostles." Written to all kinds of different churches, these letters showed the recipients what it meant to participate in Jesus' kingdom in the first century world. Moreover, the entire New Testament presents Jesus as the way forward for humanity itself. In Jesus, God's brand new world is inaugurated. His followers continue to look to the day when he will return to finish what he started: conquering evil completely while fully establishing his kingdom on earth with us forever.

6 | The Return of the King

All disciples of Jesus, the apostles, and Jesus himself have set their future hope in God's covenant promises to completely redeem our world and set all things right. This hope is focused on the return of Jesus to consummate the kingdom he inaugurated through his life, death, and resurrection. On that day, he will return to fully confront and deal with evil in all of its manifestations, removing it completely from his good world. He will make all things new, and people from all nations who submit to his love and justice will be invited into this new creation. It is here, and at an unfathomable degree, that the great human vocation of ruling as caretakers in the presence and goodness of God will be carried forward.

Discussion Questions

- 1 | From the Tower of Babel story through the rest of the Old Testament, what specific consequences manifested themselves from choices that individuals and whole groups of people made in defining good and evil on their own terms rather than on God's?
- 2 | Why is it so tempting to eat the "forbidden fruit" and define good and evil on our own terms?
- 3 | Review the context of Exodus 19:13b. Might God be calling all of Israel up the mountain into his presence here? If so, does Israel remain "distant" by choosing to make Moses an intermediary in Exodus 20:18-20? Correspond this thought experiment with Israel's desire to have a human king like their neighboring nations. Furthermore, how might this "distance" from God inform the apostle Paul's view of the law?
- 4 | Why do you suppose it took so many generations for Jesus, the promised messiah, to arrive?
- 5 | How does God/Jesus' definition of good, as serving others and practicing self-sacrificial love, ultimately triumph over the evil we often choose for ourselves? Where else can we see evidence of this triumph at work in the world?
- 6 | In the end, when all wrongs are made right, all evil is eradicated, heaven and earth unite, and humanity rules together with God, will it be because humanity finally chooses God's definition, or because God overwhelms us with so much goodness that we have little choice in the matter? What are some other possible scenarios?

FURTHER READING:

*The Drama of Scripture: Finding
Our Place in the Biblical Story*
Craig Bartholomew & Michael Goheen

A Walk through the Bible
Lesslie Newbigin

*Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical
Theology of the Hebrew Bible*
Stephen Dempster

*The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology
of the Old and New Testaments*
Thomas Schreiner

Reading and Studying the Bible

What Is the Bible?

Regardless of their faith background or religious beliefs, many people at some time ask themselves: “What is a Bible?” “How did the Bible come into existence?” “Why does the Bible have such authority in some people’s lives?” “How does a person correctly understand what the Bible has to say?” For Christians, these questions carry added importance, as the answers to them say something about how God has revealed God’s self over the centuries, as well as about God’s self-revelation today. In one well-known biblical psalm, the narrator offers a prayer to God the lawmaker: “Your word is a lamp for my feet, / a light for my path” (Ps 119:105). Christians today continue to look to the Bible as that word, that lamp.

The Bible is not one book but a library of books. Whereas a book is usually all one kind of writing, a library includes a variety: myth, legend, history, biography, and fiction, to name but a few. And where a book is usually by one author who lived at one time in history and had a particu-

lar point of view, a library comprises a number of authors who lived at various times in history and had many points of view.

“But wait,” many Christians might object. “The Bible does have only one author and that author is God.” It is true that Christians claim that God is the author of the Bible. We will discuss just what that means later when we explore the Catholic Christian understanding of the Bible as a means of handing on revelation and when we say that the authors are inspired. Nevertheless, Christians regard human beings as God’s instruments in writing the Bible. These human beings lived in different centuries and had a variety of points of view.

It is extremely important to understand that the Bible is a library of books written in different literary forms, at various times in history, from a variety of points of view, because this information affects how we understand what the Bible teaches. You will find in-depth discussion of each of those topics in other articles

in this guide (“Understanding Genres and Literary Forms,” “Understanding the Bible in Its Historical and Cultural Contexts,” and “Understanding the Bible within the Living Tradition of the Catholic Church”). Here we will address another question: “How did the Bible reach its present form?”

A Five-step Process

The Bible is in finished form; that is, the library of books considered canonical is complete. But how was this particular arrangement of books decided? The Bible as we know it is the end result of what might be described as a five-step process.

Events

Though Christian faiths differ in how they read and understand the Bible, the sequence leading to the selection of particular writings to comprise the biblical canon is a five-step process. The first step is what Catholic Christians believe is God’s self-revelation through events. These events occurred over a two-thousand-year period, starting with the ancestors in faith of the Jewish and Christian traditions, Abraham and Sarah, who lived around 1850 BCE, and concluding with the end of the apostolic age, that is, around the end of the first century CE. Many of the events may be familiar: Abraham responding to God’s call to leave the home of his ancestors and go to a new land; Moses leading God’s people out of slavery in Egypt; David uniting the twelve Tribes and establishing a united kingdom; the division of the kingdom; the rise of the Assyrians, who conquered the northern kingdom; the rise of the Babylonians, who conquered the southern kingdom and sent the people into Exile; the rise of the Persians, who

conquered the Babylonians and allowed the Israelites to return to their holy land; the rise of the Greeks and then the Romans, who ruled the holy land as part of the Roman Empire. All these events form the skeleton of the Old Testament.

It was during the time of the Roman occupation that Jesus, whom Christians believe is both human and divine, was born. The events that underlie the Gospels are: Jesus had a public ministry that was powerful in both word and deed; Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy in a Jewish court, and accused of sedition in a Roman court; Jesus received the death penalty; Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried; Jesus rose from the dead and is still in the midst of his people. The events that underlie the rest of what we call the New Testament involve the birth of the Church and the spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the surrounding countries.

Oral Tradition

The second step in the process is oral tradition. People talked about the events that they experienced. Through the generations the stories of God’s powerful intervention in the lives of God’s people were told over and over. For example, in the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we read the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. As that book ends, the Israelites have gone to Egypt because there was a drought in the holy land and they needed to find food. The second book in the Bible is the Book of Exodus, in which we read the story of Moses leading the people out of slavery in Egypt. Between the last page of Genesis and the first page of Exodus, five hundred years have elapsed. The Israelites who were

slaves in Egypt knew about God's promises to their ancestors not because they had a modern Bible, but because the stories of the ancestors and God's promises to the ancestors were passed on through oral tradition.

Not just stories about the events of the Old Testament were passed on through oral tradition; stories about Jesus were also passed on through oral tradition before they were written. This means that no biblical account, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, is contemporary with the events that it describes. All the stories are told in hindsight. In addition, none of the stories were passed on for the purpose of teaching history. Rather, the stories are stories of faith; their purpose is to describe how God has revealed God's self through events.

The stories that developed to pass on the people's understanding of God's powerful presence in the events of their lives could be in any literary form. After all, the stories were composed not to teach history but to inspire each succeeding generation, to teach that generation that the promises made to Abraham are promises made to them, and that because they are in a covenant relationship with God, they have certain obligations and responsibilities. Such lessons could be taught in any number of forms, including legends, songs, fiction, allegories, parables, and riddles. Any literary form could be a vehicle to teach truth.

Written Tradition

Slowly, over time, some of the stories passed on through oral tradition began to be written down. If we had lived during the time of Abraham

(1850 BCE) or Moses (1250 BCE), we would not have been able to read any part of our present-day Bible. However, if we had lived during the time of King David (1000 BCE), we could have read some of what became today's Old Testament. At that time stories that had developed orally over hundreds of years were gradually written down and collected into an organized narrative.

This same process underlies the New Testament. Had we been contemporaries of Jesus, we could not have read what would become today's New Testament. Had we lived during Paul's lifetime, we could not have read the present-day Gospels, although we could have read Paul's letters, the earliest New Testament material to reach written form. Gospel materials, too, were passed on orally, and then in written form, before they became the organized narratives that we have today.

Edited Tradition

Had we lived at the time of King David and read the organized narrative that dates to about 1000 BCE, we would still not be reading the Book of Genesis or the Book of Exodus as those books now exist. Over time, in the light of subsequent events, the stories were retold to include new insights or emphasize certain points that were learned through the subsequent events. For instance, in the earliest collected narrative that dates to the time of King David, the stories of the ancestors were told from the point of view of those who lived in the south. When the kingdom split into north and south, the stories were retold from the point of view of those in the northern kingdom. After the northern kingdom was conquered

by the Assyrians, those in the south pondered what the northern kingdom had done wrong. The stories were retold, emphasizing the lessons stressed by the reformers who were calling the people to fidelity to their covenant relationship with God. After the Babylonian Exile, the stories were again retold in the light of what had been learned from that experience. The Old Testament stories as they exist today are layered. They reflect the thinking and insights of the Israelites over the span of their history, not just the insights that are contemporary with the original storytellers.

The New Testament is also an edited text. The author of the Gospel According to Luke describes himself as an editor who is arranging the inherited oral and written traditions about events in order to meet the needs of his particular audience (Lk 1:1–4). Also, the order of the books in the New Testament is not the order in which the books were written. In the modern edited arrangement, the Gospels come first, and the letters, many of which were written earlier than the Gospels, follow.

Canonical

Not every book that developed through the process we have described is in the Bible. We call those books that are in the Bible, canonical. The word canon originally referred to a reed that was used to measure things, a ruler. The fact that a book is in the canon means that the believing community claims that this book is inspired by God and therefore faithfully teaches those truths that God wishes to teach for the sake of salvation. The book is a rule for faith.

The selection of canonical books also developed slowly over time.

The Old Testament canon, as it exists today, is divided into three sections by Jewish scholars: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. We see evidence of these divisions in the foreword to the Book of Sirach, which dates to the end of the second century BCE: “Many important truths have been handed down to us though the law, the prophets, and the later authors.” However, the Hebrew canon of the Jews, which Christians call the Old Testament, probably did not reach its present form until the first century CE.

The Catholic Old Testament canon includes some books not included in the Jewish Hebrew canon or in the Protestant canon. These books—Tobit, Judith, First and Second Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch—are called deuterocanonical books by Catholics and apocryphal books (that is, not part of the canon) by Protestants. All the disputed books were written during the last few hundred years before Christ, many of them in Greek. They became part of the Septuagint, that is, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek in the third century BCE because many Jews lived in Egypt and spoke Greek rather than Hebrew. The deuterocanonical books appear in the Catholic canon because Catholic biblical translations rested on both the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament texts. They do not appear in Protestant canons because Protestant translations rested only on the Hebrew Old Testament texts.

Catholics and Protestants have exactly the same New Testament canon. Again, not all the books about New Testament events are in the canon. There are deuterocanonical or

apocryphal gospels as well. However, by the end of the second century CE, the four Gospels that we now have were in general use, and the others had fallen out of use. By the end of the fourth century, the whole New Testament canon as we now have it had taken shape.

Christians believe that the formation of the canon was due to the work of the Holy Spirit in the worshiping community. Those books that the community recognized as faithfully passing on the beliefs of the community and nourishing the community remained in use; those that did not fell out of use.

The Catholic canon was officially closed in the sixteenth century at the Council of Trent. During the Protestant Reformation, debate arose about whether or not all the books that were then in use should be considered canonical. In reaction to this discussion, the Council affirmed that the New Testament books that had been in use for fifteen hundred years and that had formed the self-understanding of the Catholic Church were canonical. The Church would not add to them nor subtract from them.

Inspiration

Catholics affirm that God is the author of the Bible. However, Catholics do not claim that God actually wrote the Bible. The Catholic understanding is that the Bible is the end result of a process that included events, oral tradition, written tradition, editing, and acceptance by the Spirit-filled community.

Catholic belief, then, is that God is the author of the Bible in that God inspired God's people at every step of the process. Those who originally experienced the events, and recog-

nized them as events in which God was powerful and present, were inspired. Those who passed on the stories through oral tradition, those who originally wrote them down, those who edited them, and the community that recognized certain texts as texts that accurately passed on the faith of the community were all inspired. God's inspiration was present in every generation. At the same time, the human authors of the Bible are real authors. They wrote in their own language, using their own literary expressions, and from their own historical perspectives to record the revealed word of God. Thus, the Bible is the word of God in the words of its human authors.

Revelation

What does the Church mean when it claims that the Bible is revelation? Does it mean that inspired authors had God's point of view so that every word they spoke on every subject is true (that is, literally God's word or the words that came directly from God's mouth)? No, the Church does not make such a claim, even though it affirms that the Bible is inerrant, that is, without error. When it claims that the Bible contains revelation and is inerrant, it is claiming that the Bible teaches the truth on the subjects that it is addressing: the inspired authors teach the truth about who God is, who humanity is in relation to God and the rest of creation, and what God would have people do to cooperate with the coming of God's Kingdom.

The Bible was written, then, not to teach history or science, but rather to teach about the nature of God, about how God has revealed God's self through the centuries, and about how people might live in a way that

is pleasing to God. The Bible was written to teach what is necessary regarding salvation.

The Authority of the Scriptures

The Second Vatican Council's document *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (*Dei Verbum*) says, "the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture" (no. 21). Because Christians believe that the Scriptures are God's self-revelation and that they teach the truth regarding salvation, they also believe that there is no higher authority on earth than the Scriptures. The Catholic Church teaches that the teaching Church, the Scriptures, and Tradition have a relationship in which each is essential to the other. It is the Church's role to interpret the Scriptures, but in doing so the "teaching office [Magisterium] is not above the word of God, but serves it" (*Dei Verbum*, no. 10).

This means that the Church cannot teach something that contradicts the Scriptures. However, the Church can teach a truth that has its roots, but not its full flowering, in the Scriptures, as well as something on which the Scriptures remain silent.

A Contextualist Approach to the Scriptures

Because the Catholic Church sees its role as interpreting the Scriptures, it also teaches how to understand the truth that the Bible contains. In a single word, the Church teaches its people to be contextualists, rather than fundamentalists, in interpreting the Bible. This means that in order to understand correctly the revelation that

the Bible is teaching, the reader must interpret biblical passages in the context in which they appear in the Bible. There are three contexts to consider.

Because the Bible is a library of books, the reader must consider the kind of writing, that is, the literary form, in which a particular passage appears. To ignore the literary form may cause the reader to misunderstand not only what an author is teaching on a topic but the very topic that the author is addressing.

Because the authors lived at various times in history, the reader must consider the context of each author's historical time and the presumptions that the author and the audience shared. If an author pictures God creating a flat world, the author is not teaching about the shape of the earth, but merely presuming that the earth is flat in the course of teaching that God created all that exists.

Because the Bible took form over a two-thousand-year period, the reader must consider the context of the process of revelation that occurred over time. Early insights often represent one step in understanding a mystery, not the fullness of revelation. If the reader takes a partial truth and presents it as the whole truth, he or she has once more put the authority of the Scriptures behind his or her own misunderstanding, not behind what the Bible actually teaches.

A Living Word

To be a biblical contextualist does not contradict an understanding of the Scriptures as a living word that can speak directly to the human heart in any context, any human experience. However, biblical contextualists are aware that scriptural passages taken out of context can be used to sup-

port conclusions that directly contradict the revelation that the Scriptures teach. Therefore, when a biblical contextualist hears the Scriptures as a living word, that person asks, "Is the conclusion I am drawing from this passage compatible with what the Scriptures teach as a whole?" In this way, the Christian believer feels assured of using the Scriptures to hear God's voice and not to self delude. Integrating the Scriptures into one's prayer life in this way, the Christian believes, allows the living word to

help one discern God's self-revelation in one's own life, so that the Scriptures truly will be a lamp for one's feet, a light upon one's path.

Margaret Nutting Ralph, PhD
Director of the
Master of Arts Program
for Roman Catholics
Lexington Theological Seminary
Lexington, Kentucky

Bible 101: A Basic Introduction to the Word of God

In the Bible, which is also called the Sacred Scriptures, God speaks to us through human words. Through the Scriptures and Tradition, God not only reveals to us divine truth but God's very self. That is why we call both the Bible and Jesus Christ (the Second Person of the Trinity) the Word of God. "Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks with one single Word, his one Utterance in who he expresses himself completely" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC]*, 101).

The word *Bible*, is a derivative of the Greek word *biblios*, which simply means "books." And that is the way we should think of the Bible, as a library of books that is divided into two parts: the Old Testament (before Jesus) and the New Testament (after Jesus' birth).

The Old Testament

The Old Testament closely parallels the scriptures of the Jewish faith (although the Catholic Old Testament contains additional books that are not part of the official Hebrew Scriptures). The Jewish people are called Hebrews, Israelites, Judeans, and Jews at various times in the Old Testament. The Old Testament prepares us for the coming of Jesus Christ, and its covenants (promises), laws, prophecies, and wisdom find their ultimate fulfillment in the life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. Its books are typically grouped into these sections:

The Pentateuch (a word meaning "five books") tells about the beginnings of God's Chosen People, the Israelites. You'll read about their early stories, their history, and the laws God gave them.

The Historical Books pick up Israelite history from about 1250 BC to 100 BC. You will find accounts of the Israelites' settling the Promised Land, the rise and fall of their kings, their dispersion into Exile, and their eventual return to the Promised Land.

The Wisdom and Poetry Books are a collection of hymns, poems, proverbs, and stories. They use imaginative language to make their points.

The Prophets are people who speak God's Word. In the prophetic books, you will find the recorded prophecies and stories of sixteen of Israel's prophets (there were other prophets told about in other books too). Their words contain condemnation of Israel's idolatry, false worship, and unjust practices. But they also offer many prophecies of comfort and promise for God's People, when they most needed to hear them.

New Testament

The New Testament tells the stories of Jesus Christ's life, Death, and Resurrection and interprets the meaning of those stories for our salvation. Because Jesus and his first followers were Jews, frequent quotations and allusions from the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) appear in the New Testament. The Old Testament prepares the way for the New, and the New Testament helps us to fully understand the meaning of the Old. The New Testament is typically divided into these sections.



The Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospels (means “Good News”) focus on the person and teachings of Jesus. The four Gospels each offer a slightly different perspective on the meaning of Christ’s life, Death, and Resurrection. Only with all four together do we get the most complete picture of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. “The four Gospels occupy a central place because Jesus Christ is their center” (CCC, 139).

The Acts of the Apostles was written by the same author who wrote the Gospel According to Luke. It shows how the Church was formed and how the first Christians spread the Good News, starting in Jerusalem and ending in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. These books cover 5 BC to the early AD 60s.

The Letters. The Letters, or Epistles (some written by Paul and his followers, and others written by other Apostles or their followers), are actual letters that describe the new Christian faith, give advice, and offer words of hope to early Christians and the first Christian communities. Sometimes this section is further divided into the Pauline letters, the Pastoral letters, and the Catholic letters.

Revelation. The Revelation According to John is a collection of mystical visions written to encourage the early Christians, who were being persecuted by the Roman Empire.

How Did We Get the Bible?

It would be nice to imagine that God gave us the Bible in one neatly bound book, but the actual process was more complicated than that! Scholars call the result the canon—the official list of sacred books.

The Development of the Old Testament

At first, stories about Israel’s history were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. Around 1000 BC people started writing down these stories. The stories, along with laws and poetry, were gradually combined and edited, and the “books,” as we know them, began to take shape in the sixth century BC. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, but by the fourth century BC, Greek had become the most influential language, and many Jews could speak nothing else. During the third and second centuries BC, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) began to take shape. It has more books in it than the present Hebrew canon, which was established in the first century AD. These books (called deuterocanonical) include Tobit, Judith, First and Second Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and additions to the books of Esther and Daniel. Most Protestant Bibles do not include these books, which Protestants call the Apocrypha. Many Protestants, however, still consider them spiritually useful.

The Development of the New Testament

The language Jesus spoke was Aramaic, but the New Testament was written mainly in Greek. The oldest books in the New Testament are the letters of Paul; First Thessalonians probably was Paul’s earliest letter (c. AD 51). Stories about Jesus and his teachings, passed down orally at first, were eventually written down. The earliest collection of these writings is Mark’s Gospel (c. AD 70). The last book written in the New Testament was probably Second Peter (c. AD 130). As early as AD 160, the Church Father Irenaeus gave his list of approved Christian books and letters that is a very close match to the canon of the New Testament. In AD 367, in response to a debate that arose about which of the many new



Christian books should be considered sacred, Athanasius suggested a list that comprises the twenty-seven books of the New Testament today. Later councils, in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, affirmed this list and closed the canon.

How Did We Get the Catholic Translation of the Bible?

In AD 382 Pope Damasus asked Jerome to offer a standardized Latin translation of the Bible. Working from the Hebrew and Greek, Jerome produced the Vulgate (*editio vulgata*, meaning “common version”), which became the authoritative biblical text for Catholics for centuries. In 1943 Pope Pius XII allowed scholars to use the Hebrew and Greek for subsequent translations. Noteworthy Catholic translations are the New American Bible (NAB); the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB); the Good News Translation, Catholic Edition (GNT); and the New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (NRSV).

Inspiration and Inerrancy

So did a bunch of old guys just decide on their own what would go into the Old and New Testaments? No! The Holy Spirit guided the process from oration to composition to editing to canonization. This is called **biblical inspiration**. The stories that survived are the ones in which God’s People heard God speaking. In time the Spirit inspired human authors to write down these stories and edit them to illustrate their growing understanding of God’s plan of salvation. Finally, the leaders who selected and closed the two canons made their decisions based on what was already happening through the Spirit within God’s People.

God himself is the ultimate author of the Bible because he inspired the human authors of the Scriptures to record the truth God intended to reveal for our salvation. Thus, the Bible is without error in matters of faith and morals when it is correctly interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is called **biblical inerrancy**. Catholics are not troubled by historical inconsistencies, or ancient cosmologies, or cultural differences, or literary devices used by the human authors. We do not look to the Bible to teach science or history; rather we look for the salvific truth God is revealing through the Bible to every new generation.

Interpreting the Bible

Reading, studying, and praying with the Scriptures is a lifelong task that all Christians are called to. But it takes effort to develop the skills and knowledge to properly understand—or interpret—what God is communicating to us through the human words of the Bible. This process of interpreting a biblical passage is also called exegesis.

Making Sense of the Scriptures

The Church teaches us to consider two main “senses” in interpreting the Scriptures (see CCC, 117):

- **The literal sense:** This is the most direct meaning conveyed by the words of the Scriptures and discovered by good exegesis. We might think of it as the meaning the human authors probably intended to convey.
- **The spiritual sense:** Beyond the literal sense, the events reported in the Scriptures can also convey a greater meaning. They are signs or guideposts pointing to God’s plan of salvation. The



Catechism lists three spiritual “senses:” (1) the allegorical sense—we understand the significance of certain events because they point us in some way to Christ (e.g., the Israelites’ crossing of the Red Sea is a sign of Baptism and Christ’s victory over death), (2) the moral sense—events are signs of how we should act morally and justly, and (3) the anagogical sense—events are viewed in light of their eternal significance (e.g., the Church is a sign of God’s heavenly Kingdom).

Looking for both the literal sense and the spiritual sense of a Bible passage or story is one important step for interpreting the Scriptures.

Consider the Contexts

When interpreting the meaning of any particular Scripture passage, it is also important to understand it in light of the larger context in which it was written and within the context of the living Tradition of the Church. Everyone needs help with this. As a start have an edition of the Bible with good notes and chapter introductions, like *The Catholic Youth Bible*® or *Saint Mary’s Press*® *College Study Bible*.

The following are elements to consider when interpreting the Scriptures:

- **The historical and cultural context** To understand the human author’s intention in a specific Scripture passage, it is important to know the historical situation and cultural biases during the time the author or editor wrote.
- **The literary form or device used** Was a certain book or passage intended to be history, poetry, prophecy, a letter, a Gospel, or another literary form? Did the passage use metaphors, parables, symbols, or other literary devices? How were these forms and devices used during the time the author or editor wrote?
- **The unity of the whole Bible** It may be tempting to look at a single verse or Scripture passage and presume we know everything there is to know on that subject without reading further. But it is necessary to read the Scriptures within the context of the whole chapter or book. In fact, the old saying “use the Bible to interpret the Bible” calls us to see specific Scripture passages within the larger context of God’s message throughout the whole Bible.
- **The Sacred Tradition of the Church** In order to understand God’s Word, we must read it within the living Tradition of the Church. We interpret the Bible in light of what we know to be true about our faith and in light of God’s whole plan of salvation. In the Catholic Church, bishops have been given the ultimate responsibility for properly interpreting the Bible, although Scripture scholars and others share in this responsibility. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—which has an extensive scriptural index—can help to show how the Church’s doctrine is rooted in the Scriptures or helps us to interpret certain biblical stories and teachings.

Biblical “Criticisms”

The work of biblical scholars can also help us in interpreting the Bible. In their work of exploring the meaning of the Bible, scholars sometimes apply different critical techniques, such as textual criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, literary criticism, historical criticism, and canonical criticism. These scholarly techniques are not criticisms in the negative sense, but in the positive sense of applying a thoughtful and thorough method of analysis to the biblical texts. These critical techniques usually give us deeper insight into the literal sense of the Scriptures and the intent of the human author, but by themselves, they are not enough to fully interpret the Bible.



What Are Some Common Myths about the Bible?

Myth 1: The Bible provides all the answers to life's questions.

Fact: Some people wish the Bible were the answer book for our faith, but the Bible doesn't tell us what to do in every situation in life. Instead of preaching on hundreds of rules, Jesus focused on one law—to love God and others—as a way to live. In addition to the Bible, Catholic Christians believe that God also has given us the sacred Tradition of the Church to help us with life's questions.

Myth 2: We know who wrote each book of the Bible.

Fact: The real author of a book in the Bible isn't necessarily the name associated with it. For instance, both the Letter to the Romans and the Letter to the Ephesians say that Paul is the author. Paul was certainly the author of Romans (Pauline letter), but probably not of Ephesians (Deutero-Pauline letter). A common practice in biblical times was to write using the name of a famous person. Today we may consider this fraud, but at that time it was a way to say, "I'm a follower and admirer of a certain famous person." This practice is called pseudonymous writing.

Myth 3: The events in the Bible happened in the order that they appear.

Fact: People often start reading the Bible, beginning with Genesis, and expect to find a seamless timeline of biblical history. Even though the Books of Genesis through Second Kings appear to be laid out chronologically, the story line is actually interrupted with stories that are repeated (see Genesis 1:1—2:3 and 2:4–25) and with genealogies and laws that often prove discouraging to the reader. Then the next set of books, First and Second Chronicles, begin by telling some stories all over again. This sometimes confusing order occurs because there were so many authors and they sometimes had different versions of the same stories. Even a single book like Genesis has several sources. When the stories were eventually collected and edited, they were put side by side in the order we now have in the Bible.

Myth 4: The Bible predicts the future and tells us when the world will end.

Fact: Wonderful verses in the Old Testament point ahead to the time of Jesus. And verses throughout the Bible assure us that God will be with us in all our future days. However, the Bible is not a prediction book. Books like Daniel and Revelation seem to mysteriously hint at something, but they are a particular kind of apocalyptic literature that uses code language to say more about the time in which they were written than about the future. Don't expect to find in the Bible clues about when the world will end. Jesus told us that only the Father knows the day and the hour (see Mathew 24:36).

Myth 5: God dictated the Bible to humans, who wrote it down word for word.

Fact: God did author the Scriptures by inspiring humans to write the truth that God intended. But at the same time, those writers and editors remained true authors with all the limitations and experiences that accompany being human in a specific time, place, and culture. Though we can always trust the truth the Bible teaches, we cannot expect the Bible to be a science or history book. If occasionally the Bible



doesn't seem to coincide with what we expect today from scientific or historical truth, it doesn't mean that God's truth doesn't shine through the Bible. However, to discern God's truth, we need to understand the contexts in which the authors were writing.

A Good Basic Bible Reference Library

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Most of the content in this article has been adapted from *Saint Mary's Press® Essential Quick Charts: Bible Basics* (2007), written by Gary Dreier.



A Bible Reading Method

Pray

Pray before reading, asking God to help you understand and receive his Word. Through Christ you are in the Father's holy presence. Approach him boldly, humbly and expectantly.

Read

Next, read slowly and carefully through the Bible passage. Sometimes, you'll want to read the passage more than once. You may also find it helpful to read the preceding or following passages to get the context. Take the time to read it as thoroughly as you can, expecting God to answer your prayer for understanding of his Word.

Reflect

Reflect on what you have read, waiting in openness, ready to obey God's Word to you. Think through the passage, asking yourself such questions as:

- ◆ What does this passage say? What is its main point?
- ◆ What does it reveal about God, or about me?
- ◆ What insight am I given into myself and into my life situation?
- ◆ What does God require of me now, in thought, word or action?

These questions will help you "dig deeper" into the meaning of the passage as you study and reflect. Many people find it helpful to write their answers in a journal or notebook. You may find it helpful to use a Study Bible to help you probe the deeper meaning.

Apply

The Bible's purpose is not only to give us information about God, but also to help us live in the proper relationship to God and others. Apply what God has taught you from today's reading to the circumstances of life – situations at work, home school, or church. Use what you have learned in order to become more like Jesus.

- ◆ How can God's Word apply to my life today: my situations at home, at work, school or church?

Pray

End your time as you began, in prayer. This time turn the things you have learned into prayers. Make your discoveries from the Bible the basis of your prayer time. Ask God to help you live out and apply what you learned that day.

Studying a Biblical Text

Bible Reading: Matthew 18:1-5

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me"

1. What is happening in the reading? Try this:

- ◆ Identify the characters by name.
- ◆ Identify the words and phrases that seem significant to you.
- ◆ Identify the emotions or feelings that are expressed by the characters.
- ◆ Identify the plot and theme of the reading.
- ◆ Consult a commentary that will help you discover if there are any important details that a 21st century reader would likely miss. For example, the word that Jesus would have used for child is synonymous with the word slave. Jesus is not instructing his followers to become childish; he is telling them to become humble, powerless and dependent. This childlike or slave-like disposition, not arrogance or selfish ambition, is the path to Christian greatness.

2. How is the happening in the reading present in today's world? Think about:

- ◆ Newspaper stories about murders that are committed for personal or financial gain
- ◆ Corrupt politicians who are more concerned about selfish desires than service
- ◆ Television programs that glorify selfish ambition at the expense of harmonious relationships
- ◆ An unbalanced competitive spirit that compels some people to cheat to get to the top

3. How is the happening in the reading present in my life? Examine this:

- ◆ What characters do I like/dislike in the reading?
- ◆ Why do I like particular characters?
- ◆ Why do I dislike particular characters?
- ◆ How do I see what I like and dislike in my own personality?
- ◆ How do I compete with others in my life?
- ◆ What is my definition of greatness?
- ◆ Am I willing to be dependent upon others? Why or why not?
- ◆ Am I willing to hand my life over to God in the way that a young child must be dependent upon a parent? Why or why not?

The critical task here is to discern how the Word of God that you discover in the Bible is also calling you and guiding you outside of the Bible in your daily life. When we develop an understanding of the Word of God in the Bible, we are then in a privileged position to seek out and follow Jesus, the living Word, with more confidence in our daily experiences. The Bible helps us to clarify in our minds the identity of Jesus so that we will recognize him when he presents himself to us in every moment of every day.

Reading the Bible with Heart

Select a Gospel story with lots of action (e.g., a parable or healing story) to “read with heart.” A few examples of Gospel stories are listed below. You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.

- ◆ The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon’s House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ◆ Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- ◆ “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Matthew 16:13-17)
- ◆ Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- ◆ The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- ◆ Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- ◆ Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ◆ The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- ◆ The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- ◆ Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- ◆ The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- ◆ Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- ◆ Washing the Apostles’ Feet (John 13:1-20)
- ◆ The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- ◆ The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- ◆ The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Reflection

1. Read the Bible passage slowly.
2. Read it again and pay attention to any verses that draw their attention.
3. Identify an attention-grabbing verse that really settles in your heart.
4. Write that verse down on a piece of paper or file card or note, and carry it with you through the day or week.

Reflective Bible Reading

1. Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. (See the list of “Scripture Passages by Topics” list if you need help.)
2. Choose a comfortable place where you will not be interrupted.
3. Light a candle, if possible. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit.
4. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
5. Acknowledge God’s presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
6. Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
7. Say the words or phrases that struck you.
8. Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
9. Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
10. Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
11. Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
12. Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
13. Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.

Scripture Passages by Topic

(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

Affliction: Romans 8:18–25, 35–39; Sirach 2:1–18; John 14:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:12–13; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.

Anger: James 1:19–21; Ephesians 4:26; Proverbs 12:16; Sirach 30:24; Colossians 3:12–13; Psalm 37:7–8

Charity/Love: John 13:1–15, 15:9–13; Romans 12:9–21, 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 Peter 4:8–10; 1 John 3:11–20; 1 John 4:7–12, 18–21.

Confusion about God: Isaiah 55:8–9; James 1:13–14; 1 Peter 4:12–13; James 1:2–3; Luke 6:22–23; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Death: 1 Corinthians 15:19–22; John 11:1–44; Romans 5:12–15; Colossians 3:1–4.

Discouragement: Philippians 4:6–8; Psalm 138:7–8; John 14:1; John 14:27; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 94:18–19

Fear: John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:1–5; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 43:2; Sirach 34:14; Matthew 10:28

Forgiveness: Ezekiel 36:25–36; Matthew 18:15–18, 21–35; Luke 15:11–32.

Friendship: Sirach 6:5–17, 9:10–16, 13:1–13; Luke 10:25–37, 11:5–13; John 15:14–17, 20:11–18.

Happiness or Joyfulness: Psalm 4:8–9; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 34:6; Psalm 71:23; Isaiah 29:19; Acts 2:28; 3 John 1:4

Impatience: Romans 8:24–25; Psalm 37:7–8; Proverbs 25:15; Ephesians 4:1–3; James 5:8–10

Life: Isaiah 65:17–25; Genesis 1:1–2:4; John 15:4–7; Romans 6:3–11, Romans 20–23; Matthew 7:13–14; 1 John 5:9–13.

Loneliness: Psalm 25:16–17; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 41:13; John 14:18; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 73:23–24; Revelation 3:20

Marriage: Genesis 2:18–24; Deuteronomy 24:5; Isaiah 62:3–5; Matthew 19:3–11; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:22–33.

Peace: Ezekiel 34:25–31; Isaiah 2:2–5; John 20:19–26; Luke 24:36–43; Philippians 4:4–7; 2 Timothy 2:20–26.

Physical Illness: Psalm 103:2–3; Jeremiah 30:17; James 5:14–15; Exodus 23:25; Sirach 31:22; Matthew 10:1

Sadness: Sirach 30:21–23; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 4:8–10; Ecclesiastes 7:3; Matthew 19:21–22; Isaiah 41:10; Proverbs 15:30

Temptation: Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Timothy 6:9; Psalm 119:9–11; James 1:13–14; Ephesians 6:10–11

Thankfulness: Tobit 12:6; Psalm 107; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 30:13; Psalm 105:1; Psalm 118; Daniel 3:89; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Exodus 18:8–12; Psalm 111; John 11:41–42; Ephesians 1:3–6; Philippians 1:3–6.

Worry: Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:34; 1 Peter 5:6–7; Philippians 4:18–19; Mark 13:11; Philippians 4:6

Praying with the Psalms

The Psalms are the Bible's book of prayer. The Psalms have been used in worship for thousands of years. We often go to the Psalms today for prayer, personal devotion, and for communal worship. Select one of the Psalm passages below that you feel most comfortable with as the focus of this prayer experience. (You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.)

- Psalm 8:1-7 "What is man, that you think of him?"
- Psalm 11:1-7 "I trust in the Lord for safety."
- Psalm 16:1-11 "I am always aware of the Lord's presence."
- Psalm 23:1-6 "The Lord is my shepherd."
- Psalm 25:1-14 "Keep your promise, Lord, and forgive my sins."
- Psalm 30:1-12 "Lord...I will give you thanks forever."
- Psalm 32:1-11 "Happy are those whose sins are forgiven."
- Psalm 62:1-12 "God alone protects and saves me."
- Psalm 63:1-8 "O God....My whole being desires you."
- Psalm 86:1-13a "Teach me, Lord what you want me to do."
- Psalm 103:1-14 "Praise the Lord, my soul!"
- Psalm 121:1-8 "Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do."
- Psalm 139:1-12 "Lord, you have examined me and you know me."

1. Read the Psalm passage you selected in quiet. Read every word, pausing when necessary, in order to let every word present itself to you. Read the words as if you had never read or heard them before. Be open to new insights that may come. Read the words as if they were the words of your own prayer. Whenever you read "I," "my," "me," etc., read it as if that meant you.
2. From the passage you have read, select a phrase, a verse or two verses to be the words you will use to begin your own prayer.
3. Write those words down and then continue writing an additional sentence or two of your own continuing the thoughts and feelings begun by the words of the Psalmist.
4. Here are a few ways you can incorporate praying with the Psalms in their daily life:
 - Read a psalm as you rise each day.
 - Read a psalm as part of your evening prayer.
 - Read a psalm or part of a psalm as part of your meal blessing.
 - When you are experiencing strong emotion, like joy or grief or frustration, flip through the psalms and see which one reflects your own feelings then pray it.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6th century. It is a way of praying the Scriptures that leads us deeper into God's word. We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savor it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally, and aids that union we have with God through Christ.

Use the Lectio Divina experience to guide you into a prayer reflection on a Bible passage and imagining how you will live the passage in your daily life.

Select a Scripture passage that you would like to reflect upon and pray with. This may be a story from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a passage from the Prophets, a Gospel story or parable, or a passage from one of Paul's letters. You can also select the Gospel reading from Sunday worship.

1. **Read:** Read the Scripture passage slowly and purposefully. Reflect on it silently for a few minutes to pray with it and to ponder what it might be saying.
2. **Meditate:** Read it a second time followed by a few minutes of silence. Discover a word or two from the passage that is echoing in your heart or stands out for you in any way.
3. **Pray:** What do you want to communicate to God? What emotions do you want to express to God?
4. **Act:** Reflect on how God is challenging you through this Scripture passage. What is God calling me to do? What is the next step you need to take?

Scripture Passages for Lectio Divina

(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

- ◆ The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon's House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ◆ Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- ◆ "Who Do People Say I Am?" (Matthew 16:13-17)
- ◆ Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- ◆ The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- ◆ Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- ◆ Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ◆ The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- ◆ The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- ◆ Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- ◆ The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- ◆ Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- ◆ Washing the Apostles' Feet (John 13:1-20)
- ◆ The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- ◆ The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- ◆ The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Visio Divina

The practice of praying with visual images is called *visio divina* or divine seeing. It is adapted from the sixth-century Benedictine practice of Bible reading called *lectio divina*, using both the text and art to help the reader encounter the living Word of God. The rhythm of *visio divina* ignites the senses to “hear and see” the Word of God as one listens, meditates, and prays with the sacred text. Studying a text of Scripture and the illustration involves uncovering layers of meaning. When we have discovered the “voice” of the text, we can bring its images and lessons into the present and discern its significance for our life situations.

1. **Read:** Read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark. Listen with the “ear of your heart” for a word or short phrase that God has for you this day.

The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come. (Mark 4:26-29)

2. **Meditate:** What does the word or phrase you have chosen mean to you today?
3. **See:** Look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye.



Photo by [Melissa Askew](#) on [Unsplash](#)

4. **Contemplate:** Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so. Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of it. See it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so.
5. **Reflect:** What emotions does this image evoke in you? What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?
6. **Pray:** What do you want to pray for today?

Reading the Bible in My Family

When I grew up the Bible was a book my parents kept in the closet. It was very pretty with gold letters and glossy pictures. We didn't read it because my parents had never been taught how to read it and it was something that only priests or ministers read.

Today we've come to realize how important it is for everyone to read the Bible. Children, young people, adults—everyone who wants to be in relationship with Jesus needs to meet him in the Bible!

Where and when do you read or learn about the Bible? Check off ✓ all the places below that fit.

- 1. I read the Bible each morning when I wake up.
- 2. We read and talk about the Bible at school.
- 3. In our home we like to read the Bible as part of the grace for our supper meal.
- 4. We have a copy of the Bible in our car or van to read whenever we get a chance.
- 5. I read the Bible whenever I am trying to figure out what to do with a problem in my life.
- 6. We read the Bible together every night before we go to sleep.
- 7. We have a Bible in our living room and every now and then we pick it up and read it.
- 8. I have my own Bible and I use post-it notes or bookmarks to keep track of what I've read.
- 9. I hear the Bible read at church every Sunday.
- 10. I go to Vacation Bible School in the summer to learn more about the Bible.



Jesus Reads the Bible

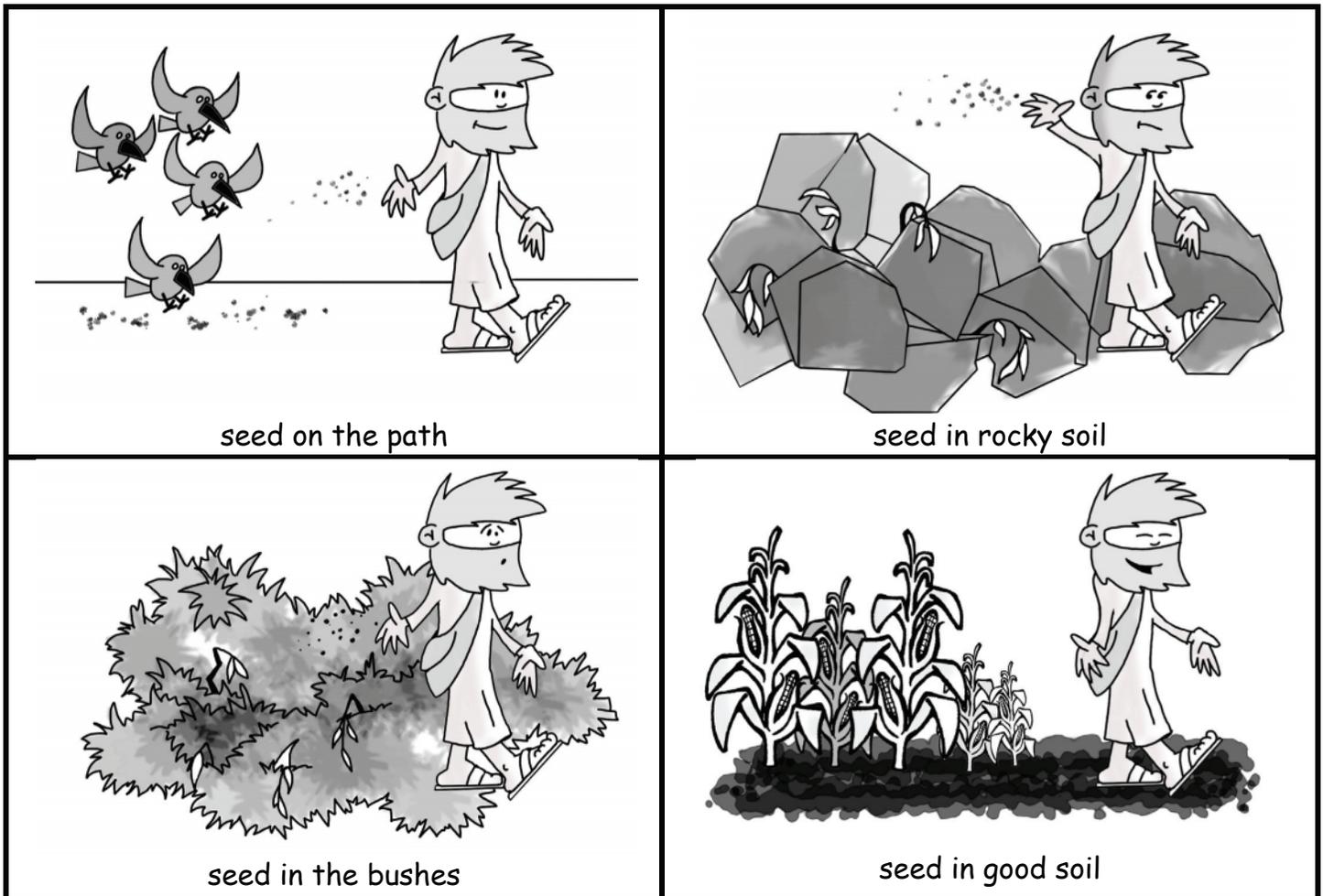
The Bible was an important part of Jesus' life. As a young Jewish boy Jesus would have attended classes to learn about the Bible. And it was part of his family's life.

The first time we hear about Jesus and the Bible is in the Gospel of Luke:

Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath he went as usual to the Synagogue. He stood up to read the scriptures and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor." (Luke 4:16-18)

Do you remember Jesus' parable of the Sower? If you don't remember, open your Bible and read Luke 8:4-8. In that story Jesus is trying to help his listeners see and understand that we need to open our hearts and minds to hear God's word in our lives.

What kind of soil are you? Circle the picture below that best describes how God's word is growing in your heart.



Reading the Bible

Do you have friends or cousins that you like a lot? Do you think you know them well? How did you get to know them? Did you hang out with them a lot, listen to their stories, and pay attention to what they liked and disliked?

One of the important ways that we get to know about God is to read the Bible. Reading the Bible helps us to build our relationship with Jesus and learn how to best love God and our neighbors. Reading the Bible and living the Bible work together—it's not enough just to read about how to live, we must live that way too!

Pretend that you have just been hired by a top advertising firm to create an advertisement to promote the reading of the Bible to your friends and family. The one condition is that you must create an acronym (see the example below) using the word "Scripture" as your advertisement.

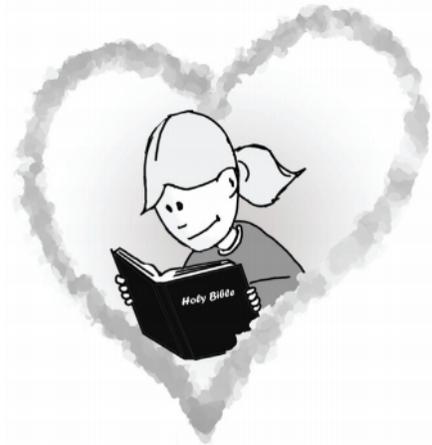
Here's an example of an advertising acronym for **LOVE**:

Life is empty without someone to share it with!

LOve is like oxygen, without it you can't survive!

Fore**V**er will God love us!

Everyone needs to feel loved and to give love



What words can you make from the letters in **SCRIPTURE** that would help convince your peers that reading the Bible is important?

S _____

C _____

R _____

I _____

P _____

T _____

U _____

R _____

E _____

Try It — Reading the Bible

The best way to begin reading the Bible, is to begin reading it! But where do you start? Grab your Bible, and try this Bible scavenger hunt! Find the Bible passage and answer the question.

Example: Gospel of Matthew (3:13): Where did John the Baptist baptize?
Answer: The River Jordan

1. Gospel of Luke (2:4): Where was Jesus born?

2. Gospel of John (2:9): What was one of Jesus' first miracles?

3. Gospel of John (11:3): Which friend of Jesus got sick and died?

4. Gospel of Mark (3:14): How many apostles did Jesus choose?

5. Gospel of Matthew (8:23): Jesus calms a what?

6. Gospel of Matthew (17:3): Who was Jesus talking to on the mountain when he was transfigured?

7. Gospel of Luke (9:10-17): How many people did Jesus feed?

8. Gospel of Luke (11:27-28): What is true happiness?

(Answers: 1) Luke 2:4 - Bethlehem, 2) John 2:9 - water to wine, 3) John 11:3 - Lazarus, 4) Mark 3:14 - 12,
5) Matthew 8:23 - a storm, 6) Mathew 17:3 - Moses and Elijah, 7) Luke 9:10-17 - 5000,
8) Luke 11:27-28 - those who hear the Word of God and obey it)

Try It — Reading Gospel Stories

Stories about Jesus' Life

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| ⊙ Birth of Jesus | Matthew 1:18 - 2:12 |
| ⊙ Baptism of Jesus | Mark 1:9-11 |
| ⊙ Peter's Declaration about Jesus | Luke 9:18-20 |
| ⊙ Transfiguration of Jesus | Mark 9:2-13 |
| ⊙ Judas' Betrayal of Jesus | Luke 22:1-53 |
| ⊙ The Last Supper | Mark 14:12-26 |
| ⊙ Jesus Washes his Disciples' Feet | John 13:1-17 |
| ⊙ The Crucifixion of Jesus | Luke 23:26-49 |
| ⊙ The Resurrection of Jesus | Matthew 28:1-10 |

Healings and Miracles of Jesus

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| ⊙ Feeding Five Thousand | Matthew 14:13-21 |
| ⊙ Walking on Water | Matthew 14:22-33 |
| ⊙ Healing the Paralytic | Mark 2:1-12 |
| ⊙ Healing blind Bartimaeus | Mark 10:46-52 |
| ⊙ Raising the Widow's Son | Luke 7:11-17 |
| ⊙ Healing an Epileptic Boy | Luke 9:38-42 |
| ⊙ Turning Water into Wine | John 2:1-11 |
| ⊙ Raising Lazarus | John 11:1-44 |

Stories and Teachings of Jesus

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| ⊙ The Beatitudes | Matthew 5:1-12 |
| ⊙ The Treasure and Pearl | Matthew 13:44-46 |
| ⊙ Two or Three Gathered | Matthew 18:20 |
| ⊙ The Unforgiving Servant | Matthew 18:23-35 |
| ⊙ What You Do for the Least Important | Matthew 25: 31-46 |
| ⊙ Jesus and Children | Mark 10:13-16 |
| ⊙ The Greatest Commandment | Luke 10:25-28 |
| ⊙ The Good Samaritan | Luke 10:30-37 |
| ⊙ The Prodigal Son | Luke 15:11-32 |
| ⊙ The Rich Man and Lazarus | Luke 16:19-31 |
| ⊙ Persistent Widow | Luke 18:2-8 |
| ⊙ Jesus, the Bread of Life | John 6:25-59 |
| ⊙ The Good Shepherd | John 10:1-18 |
| ⊙ Vine and Branches | John 15:1-17 |

5 WAYS TO

RETELL A BIBLE STORY WITH KIDS

A great way for kids (and adults!) to remember God's story and to experience it more deeply is to retell it in ways that engage their head, heart, and hands.

Get inspired with these easy ideas for retelling a Bible story.

1 BUILD

Use building blocks or play dough to recreate scenes from the story. Work together or build scenes individually and then show and tell each other about what you've made.

2 DRAW

There are lots of ways to use art to tell stories: Have each person draw a picture of a different part of the story; then put the pictures together and tell the story again. Pick a word from the story and illustrate it. Make a cartoon strip. Sketch pictures of what you're imagining as the story or text is being read; then compare your thoughts.

3 SING

Make up a tune (or use one that's familiar), and turn the story into a song. Or look for a version of the story that's already been recorded, and learn it together. (We love the Bible story songs written and recorded by *Rain for Roots*.)

4 ACT

Use puppets (socks, dolls, or utensils will do!) or yourselves to act out the story. Consider taking photos of each scene and printing them as a book or comic strip. Another fun idea is to assign readers to read the dialog and/or assign sound effects to particular words, and to reread the story together.

5 WONDER

Ask open-ended questions that have no "right or wrong" answers. For example,

- **I wonder what . . .** (I wonder what Jonah thought about inside the fish . . . ?
I wonder what you would have thought about . . . ?)
- **I wonder how . . .** (I wonder how it felt to cross the Red Sea . . . ?
I wonder how this story makes you feel . . . ?)
- **I wonder who . . .** (I wonder who the shepherds told first about meeting baby Jesus . . . ?
I wonder who you would have run to tell . . . ?)
- **I wonder why . . .** (I wonder why Jesus told stories to people . . . ?
I wonder why we don't always do what God asks us to do . . . ?)

Teaching the Bible Online Resources

Teaching the Bible Articles

“Five Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids” in the Guide.

“Using Imaginative Retellings in Teaching the Bible.” Saint Mary’s Press.

<https://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/resource/2577/>

Online Learning Center

The Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com>

The Bible Project creates videos, podcasts, articles, and classes to make the biblical story accessible to everyone, everywhere. They showcase the literary art of the Scriptures and trace the themes found in them from beginning to end. Rather than taking the stance of a specific tradition or denomination, they create materials to elevate the Bible for all people and draw our eyes to its unified message.

Bible Activities Online

Scripture Activities – Saint Mary’s Press Resource Center

(Hundreds of individual activities, articles, videos, and presentations – available for free)

<https://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/subject/Scripture/9/>

Bible Learning Stations – Loyola Press

- Bible Basics Learning Stations (4 learning stations):
<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2012/09/bible-basics-learning-stations-ready>
- Old Testament Learning Stations (4 learning stations):
<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2012/09/old-testament-learning-stations-ready>
- New Testament Learning Stations (4 learning stations):
<https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2012/09/new-testament-learning-stations-ready>

Devotionals, Bible Stories, Bible Study – Kid’s Corner

<https://kidscorner.net>

Bible Activities for Kids (A Collection of Activities) – The Religion Teacher

<https://www.thereligionteacher.com/bible-activities>

Bible Activities and Articles – The Catechist
(<https://www.catechist.com/category/lessons-and-activities/bible>)

Scripture Articles and Activities – Sadlier Religion
(<https://www.sadlier.com/religion/blog/topic/rel-topic-scripture>)

Children’s Bible Activities and Bible Stories – DLTk
<https://www.dltk-kids.com/bible/cv/index.htm>

Sunday Readings

Sunday Connection – Loyola Press
(The Sunday Connection provides useful background and activities to better understand the upcoming Sunday's Scripture readings with activities for grades 1-3, 4-6, 7-8, and families.
<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/>

Catholic Gospel Coloring Pages and Worksheets for Sunday Mass—Catholic Mom
<https://www.catholicmom.com/sunday-mass-activities>

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina with Children – Sadlier Publishing
<https://www.sadlier.com/religion/blog/lectio-divina-guide-how-to-do-lectio-divina-and-visio-divina-with-kids-and-confirmation-candidates>

Lectio Divina – Loyola Press
<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/prayer/personal-prayer-life/different-ways-to-pray/lectio-divina/>

Lectio Divina – U.S. Catholic Bishops
<https://catholic.bible>

“Lectio Divina: A Beginner’s Guide.” Elizabeth Manneh. Busted Halo, March 1, 2021
<https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>

Lectio Divina – American Bible Society
<https://ministry.americanbible.org/catholic-ministries/lectio-divina-resources>

“The Value of Lectio Divina in Class.” Marlon de la Torre. *Catechist*
<https://www.catechist.com/value-lectio-divina-class/>

Prayer and Devotionals

Bible Devotionals – Kid’s Corner

<https://kidscorner.net/devotions>

Living Faith Daily Catholic Devotions – Creative Communications for the Parish

<https://www.livingfaith.com>

Praying with Scripture from Ignatian Spirituality

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-what-how-why-of-prayer/praying-with-scripture/>

Recommended Bibles and Books

Children’s Story Bible

Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible. Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim, editors. Westminster/John Knox Press, 2018. (Ages 4-8 years old)

Catholic Bibles from Saint Mary’s Press (<https://www.smp.org/category/bibles>)

Children: *The Catholic Children’s Bible*

Middle School: *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*

High School: *The Catholic Youth Bible*

Activity Books

The Catholic Children’s Bible Coloring Book. Saint Mary’s Press.

The Catholic Children’s Bible: Leader Guide. Saint Mary’s Press.

The Catholic Children’s Bible: Activity Booklet Saint Mary’s Press.

The Catholic Children’s Bible: Strategic Reading Resource. Saint Mary’s Press.

Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics: Activity Booklet. Saint Mary’s Press.

Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics: Leader Guide. Saint Mary’s Press.

The Catholic Youth Teacher Guide: Old Testament. Saint Mary’s Press.

The Catholic Youth Teacher Guide: New Testament. Saint Mary’s Press.