



SESSION 1

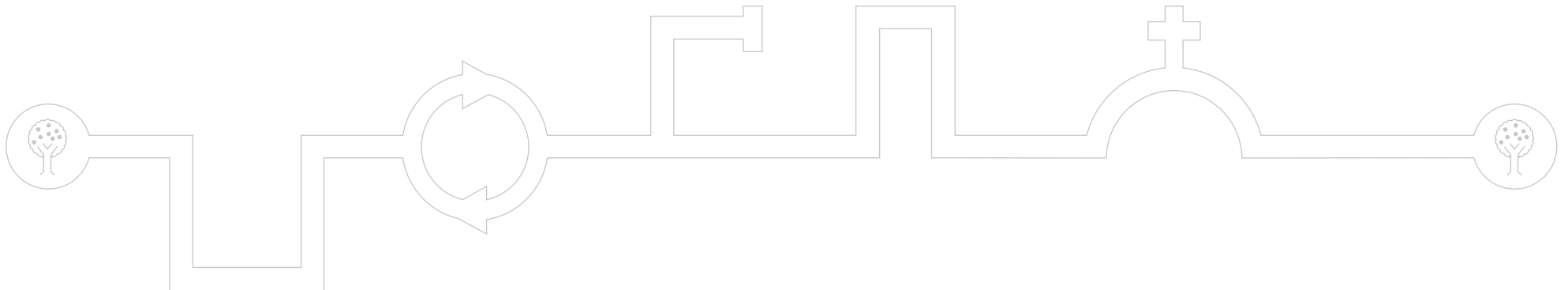
Introducing the Bible

The Bible is the world's bestselling book. Inside the cover we find an ancient library, which forms one big story with a powerful message for today.

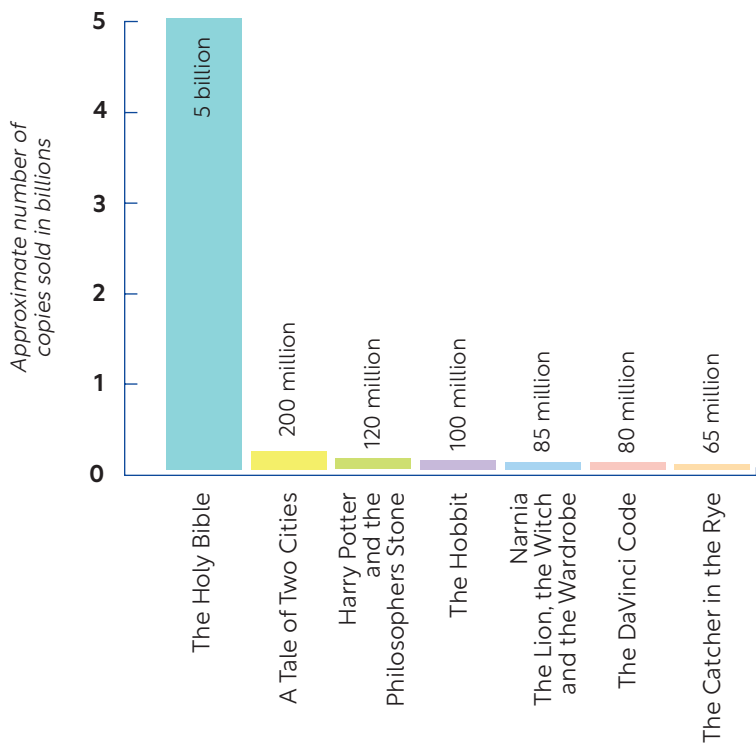


Glossary
BIBLE

*from the Greek word biblia meaning 'books.'
'Holy Bible' implies these books are sacred
or special.*



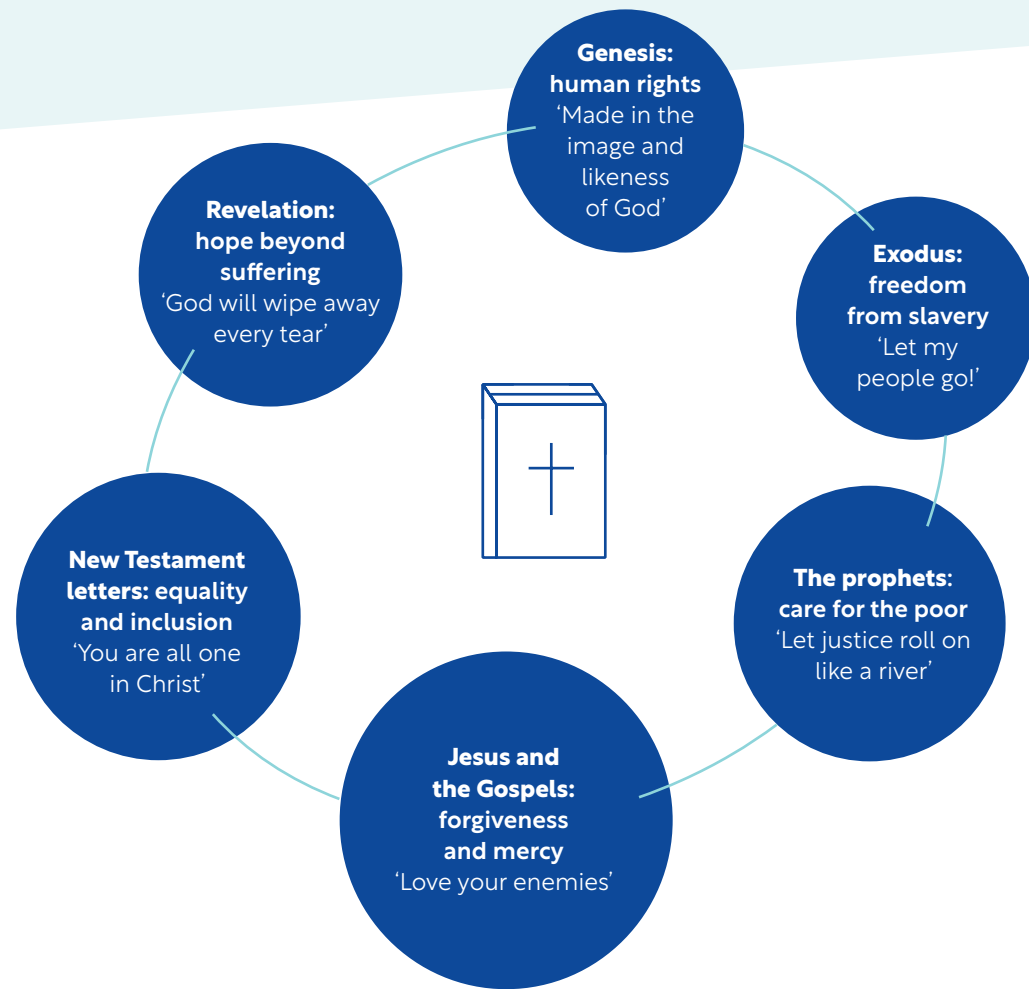
The Bible is the world's bestseller



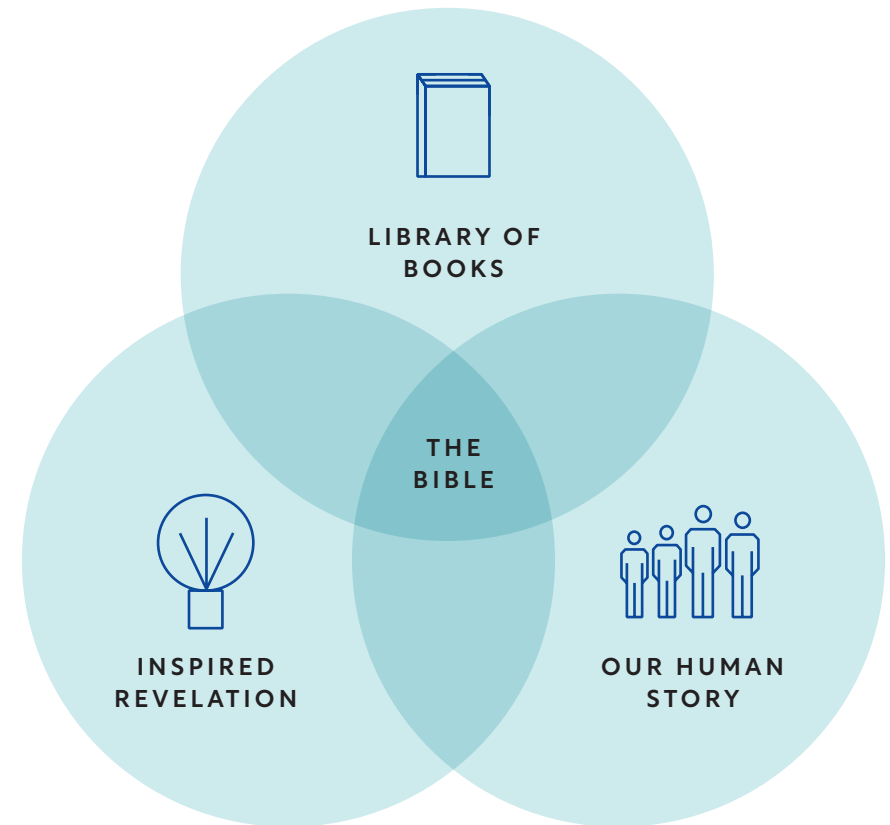
Of the world's approximately 7,000 spoken languages ...

- The whole Bible is published into over 750 languages in addition the New Testament is translated into a further 1,700 languages
- Around 6,5 billion copies of the Bible have been printed
- The most popular Bible app has been installed on over 720 million unique devices across the world.

The Bible has inspired many values we cherish today



What is the Bible?



**The LORD is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in
green pastures,
he leads me beside
quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.**

PSALM 23.1-3

The Bible is a library of books

There are 66 core books in the Christian Bible. Catholic and Orthodox traditions also include a second tier of books, known as the Deuterocanon or the Apocrypha.



A collection of books accepted as genuine. 'Canon' comes from a Greek word meaning 'rule' or 'standard'. The biblical canon has unique authority that sets the standard.

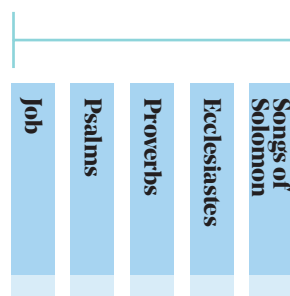
OLD TESTAMENT

books written before Jesus' birth, mainly in the Hebrew language

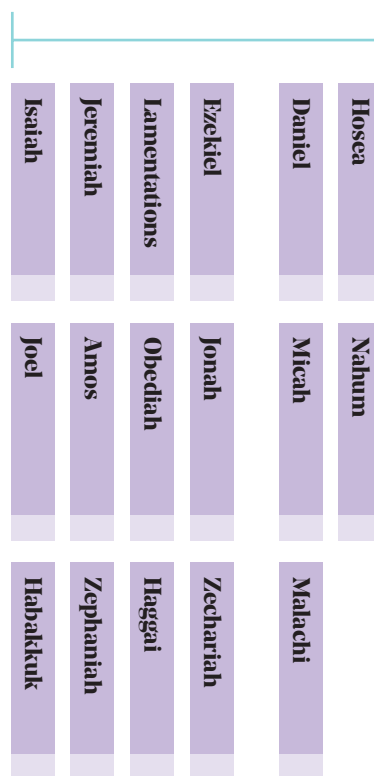
HISTORY



WISDOM



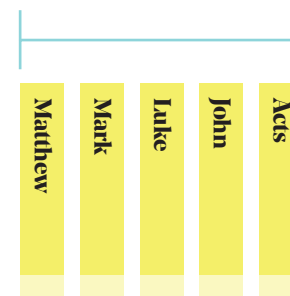
PROPHECY



NEW TESTAMENT

books written after Jesus' birth, in the Greek language

GOSPELS



LETTERS



REVELATION



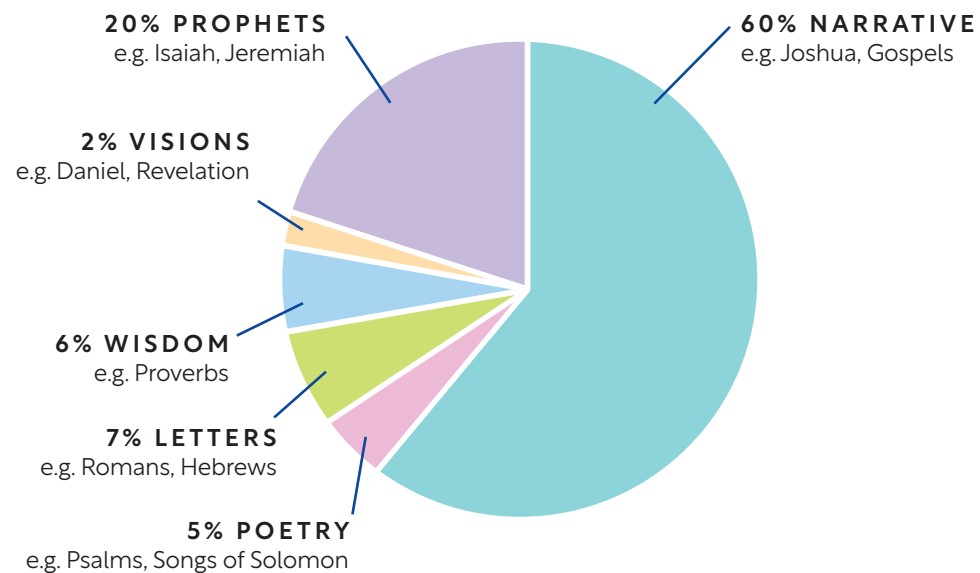
Christopher Wren was the architect who designed St Paul's cathedral. But it took many labourers to build it.

God is the ultimate author of the Bible. But he used many different people over centuries to develop it.



What kind of books make up the Bible?

There are lots of different communication styles to explore.



Personal moment

Which of these styles of writing would you most enjoy reading?



Guidebook exclusive
ANDREW'S
TAKE ON ...

Can we trust the books that make up the Bible?

I love all the different writings in the Bible – poetry, love songs, stories, letters. There's so much to explore. Over the years, I've come to believe these books have unique authority. They guide us into God's truth. Imagine the Bible as like a DIY spirit level. It reveals what's straight or crooked. The Bible isn't just true. It's a standard that decides whether other ideas are true or not.

But why were certain books included in the Bible and others left out?

The core 39 books that we call the Old Testament were considered to have unique authority by the time of Jesus. They were the Bible that Jesus himself knew and loved. He quoted them when he was tempted and when he was teaching people. He believed they had special authority. Throughout the Old Testament, God tells his people to write down his words and deeds so they can be preserved for future generations – including us. That's why I trust the Old Testament, even though I still find some passages hard.

The New Testament was developed because of Jesus. The four Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record what Jesus said and did; the letters unpack what it all meant for the first Christians – and for us. I've heard conspiracy theories which claim the Church suppressed the real truth about Jesus. But other books and 'gospels' that came later were not based on eyewitness evidence, so they lacked credibility. For example, the so-called 'Gospel of Thomas' claims that Jesus taught that women must become men to enter God's kingdom. I'm so glad that book was not included in the Bible, aren't you? The 27 books in the New Testament safeguard the real truth about Jesus.

EXPERT



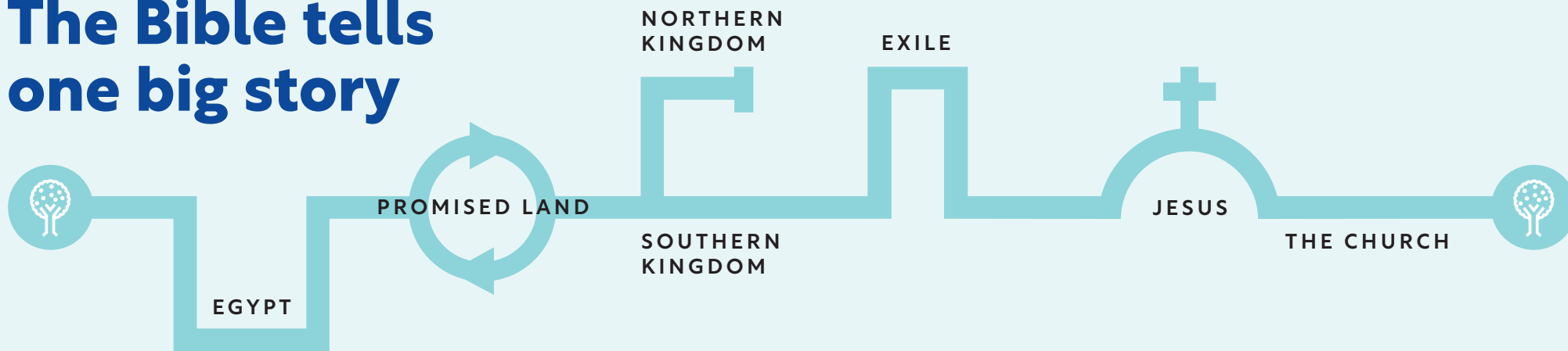
'We have many manuscripts that build up the reliability of the Bible.'

Clare Williams

Associate Speaker and Tutor,
Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics

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The Bible tells one big story



The Bible includes many flawed characters who told lies, betrayed trust, and even committed murder. But their small stories are gathered up into one big story that centres on Jesus Christ.

How to understand a passage in the Bible?

Some stories in the Bible date back to the middle of the Bronze Age – perhaps up to 1,800 years before Jesus was born. It’s called the Old Testament for good reason! So, it helps to appreciate the original context and cultural background. As the saying goes:

‘If you take a text out of context, you’ll be left with a con!’

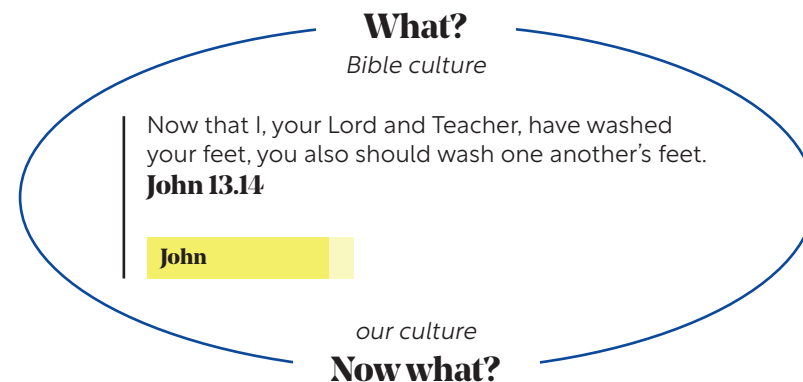
Here’s two simple questions you can ask of any passage to get the most out of it:

What?

What did it mean in it’s original context?

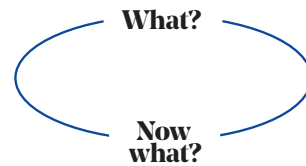
Now what?

Now, what does this passage mean for my life today?



Group discussion

GETTING STARTED:
Have you ever tried reading the Bible? What are you hoping to get out of The Bible Course?



DIGGING IN
Read 2 Timothy 3.16

- Think back to the example of St Paul's cathedral.
- What do you make of the claim that although the Bible was written by human beings, it ultimately comes from God?
- If this is true, how might it change the way we interact with the Bible?

DIGGING DEEPER
Read Psalm 1

- What impact does the word of God have on the person described here?
- Have you experienced the Bible making a difference in your life?



PAUSE THE VIDEO FOR 20 MINUTES

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Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself ...

[Then] they asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

LUKE 24.27,32



The Bible is God's revelation

Miraculous things happen when ordinary people open the Bible.

Why might this be?

Reflect on a claim in the New Testament.

Here it is in several different translations:

All Scripture is inspired by God (GNB)

All Scripture is God-breathed (NIV)

Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word (CEV)

2 Timothy 3.16

2 Timothy

What might this mean?

God didn't write the Bible. He used over 40 human authors to do that. And their personalities and cultural contexts shine through. But God inspired what they wrote so that ultimately their words communicate his truth.

Why trust the Bible

There are some challenging passages and apparent contradictions in the Bible. It's not an easy read. But there are good reasons to believe that the Bible is God's inspired truth:

Historical evidence

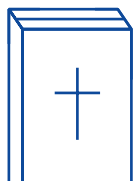
Some discoveries by archaeologists show that places mentioned in the Bible really existed – for example, Hezekiah's tunnel in the Old Testament and the Pool of Siloam in the New Testament.

Messiah's endorsement

Jesus trusted the Old Testament and promised that the Holy Spirit would reveal further truths, which we have in the New Testament.

Ancient predictions

The Old Testament foretold what would happen centuries later – a great ruler would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5), pierced to death and raised to life (Isaiah 53).



Special status

The Apostle Paul claimed that all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3.16) – and the Apostle Peter considered Paul's letters to be Scripture too, even if they are 'hard to understand' (2 Peter 3.15–16).

Transforming power

The Bible's values and truths have shaped entire civilisations, and millions of people have found that God speaks to them through the Bible. Why not give it a try yourself?

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TESTIMONY

'The only thing that has changed my life from what it was to what it is now, is the Word of God.'

Finny

Session Sum-up

- As the bestselling book of all time.
- Many values we hold dear today were originally inspired by teachings from the Bible.
- The core library of books is divided into the Old and New Testaments.
- Many characters and events form one story that centres on Jesus Christ.
- The Bible claims to be inspired by God ... and there's good reason to believe it.



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Putting it into practice:

Get hold of a copy of the Bible or download it to your phone

Register for The Bible Course digital hub and have a look at the extra resources

Set aside a regular time each day to engage with the daily Bible plan.

All Scripture is God-breathed.

2 TIMOTHY 3.16

Closing reflection

Reflection:

Take a few moments to read the key verse.

Reflect on the fact that the God of the universe wants to communicate with you through the Bible. How could this change the way you experience it?

Prayer:

- Thank God for the Bible, and the fact we can access it freely in our own language.
- Pray for God to help you make time for the Bible every day and ask him to speak to you through it.

Digging deeper into the Bible



BITESIZE

'Introducing the Bible'

In The Bible: A Story That Makes Sense of Life

Andrew Ollerton, Hodder



BOOK

Why Trust the Bible?

Amy Orr Ewing, IVP

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Daily Bible plan

Looking forward to Session 2:

- Read or listen to the passage and consider:
WHAT? What did this mean in its context?
NOW WHAT? Now what does this mean for my life today?
- Try writing down a key verse or phrase that stands out to you
- Ask God to help you to put it into practice today

- Day 1:** Entering the story – quenching our thirst for meaning
Read or listen to: Psalm 139:1–18
- Day 2:** Creation, beauty and humanity – the origins of everything
Read or listen to: Genesis 1.1–2.3
- Day 3:** Temptation, the fall and evil – where it all went wrong
Read or listen to: Genesis 3.1–24
- Day 4:** The flood, the ark and the rainbow – time for a new start
Read or listen to: Genesis 6.5–8; Genesis 8.1–9.29
- Day 5:** The tower, the promise and Abraham – God's got a plan
Read or listen to: Genesis 11.1–9; Genesis 12.1–9
- Day 6:** Isaac, the sacrifice and the substitute – a big test of faith
Read or listen to: Genesis 22.1–19
- Day 7:** Joseph, the coat and the dreams – down to Egypt
Read or listen to: Genesis 37.1–36



For more reflections on each passage,
check out the Bible Course Hub.