

An Introduction to the Bible

1. Discussion
 - a. *Why do you think God wanted us to have the Bible?*
 - b. *What has been your “experience” of the Bible?*
2. Why do we need a bible?
 - a. The Second Vatican Council taught that “since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully, and without error that truth that God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation (DV 11).”
 - b. God desires to speak to his people. This is the preferred way God speaks!
 - c. The Bible is not meant to be a historical narrative or teaching on science. The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven; not how the heavens go!
3. How do we know this really is the “Word of God”?
 - a. INTERNAL EVIDENCE: At times the text itself claims to be the Word of God (2 Timothy 3); the unity of the text must have divine origins given that it is 73 books written by more than 40 authors; the authority and power these words have within the lives of people who approach them with faith (*For those who believe, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe, no explanation is possible.*)
 - b. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE: *see attached*
4. Is everything in the Bible true?
 - a. YES, it contains the truth that is necessary for salvation.
 - b. This does not mean that we look to the Bible for the truth of history, biology or astronomy!
5. How did the words get written on the page?
 - a. Jesus told the disciples to witness to what they have seen, heard and experienced.
 - b. The first Christians did this by talking with others about Jesus and his mission. This is known as THE ORAL TRADITION. The Holy Spirit guided their words and kept the message pure.
 - c. In time those who received what was handed on (*tradition = tradition*) wrote down what they had heard (and in some cases witnessed) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. As Catholics we do not believe in “Divine Dictation”. As most often happens, God used human beings as instruments of his grace and goodness.
6. Why are there so many translations of the Bible?
 - a. The original texts of Scripture were written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. As scholars translate them into modern languages, trying to “reach” different audiences, the result is a variety of translations.
 - b. There are Catholic and Protestant Bibles as well. The difference has to do with the Old Testament. The Catholic version of the Bible contains 73 books of Scripture (from the time of the First Century “CANON”). Protestant Bibles contain 66. The difference is that the Catholic canon includes 7 Old Testament books that are not found in the Protestant Bible (they were removed by Martin Luther and others in the Reformation). The New Testament is the same in both Bibles (27 books). The seven OT books at issue are Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) and Baruch. These books are sometimes referred to as “Apocrypha”.
 - c. How should I “read” the Bible?
 - i. There is a great variety of writing styles in the Bible and so each needs to be understood in the context of the way it is written. This diversity reveals God’s desire to communicate his message in a variety of ways to a variety of people.
 1. The Law & Legal Codes (Deuteronomy, Leviticus, etc.)

2. The Prophets Speeches (Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc.)
 3. The Wisdom Sayings (Wisdom, Proverbs, etc.)
 4. Liturgical Poetry (Psalms)
 5. Parables (Gospels)
 6. Letters (Paul)
- ii. I can approach the Bible in different ways:
 1. The Historical Approach – seeking a historical context for a period of time or culture of people
 2. The Theological Approach – seeking what the Bible says about a specific doctrinal or moral issue
 3. The Inspirational Approach – seeking inspiration to live out my faith in God each day
 - iii. We read the Bible WITH the Church
 1. *If there is conflict between Church teaching and the Bible, we have misunderstood the Bible.* St Robert Bellarmine
 2. Scripture and Tradition go together! Remember, the Church existed before the New Testament and so we need the Church to help us understand the Scriptures. Church teaching and the writings of Pope and holy people throughout history guide us in understanding Scriptures.
- d. Understanding Biblical Citations
 - i. 1 Corinthians 8:13
 - ii. First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians – Chapter 8 – Verse 13
 - e. A Spiritual Way of Reading
 - i. What does it say?
 - ii. What does it mean?
 - iii. What does it mean to me?
 - iv. What am I going to do about it?