

The Bible

"I get that Jesus was a real person. But how do you know he actually did all those things people said he did in the Bible? Isn't the Bible just a bunch of stories?" Lisa asked.

"The Bible isn't like a history textbook," Mrs. Evans answered. "We can't flip through it to pick out certain historical facts. But it's not a storybook, either. Everything the Bible teaches us about God and about how to live our lives is truth." Mrs. Evans held up her Bible, saying, "This is one of the most important things you can take with you on your faith journey."



List two or three things you know or have heard about the Bible.



What Is the Bible?

The **Bible** is a collection of books about God and God's people. It begins when God created the world and all living things. The Bible tells about history and travels, victory and failure. There are stories, songs, blessings, and rules. It tells us how Jesus came into our world and how God wants us to live our faith.

Who Wrote the Bible?

It took hundreds of years and a lot of people to write the Bible we use today. But that doesn't mean the Bible is made up. The Bible is like a collection of memories people had about God, and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they were able to share those memories with the people who would come after them.

Because all those memories came from God, and because God is Truth, we know we can trust the truths in the Bible. The Holy Spirit **inspired** the biblical authors to write down their experiences and wisdom so everyone could hear God's word.



What do you think it means to be inspired?

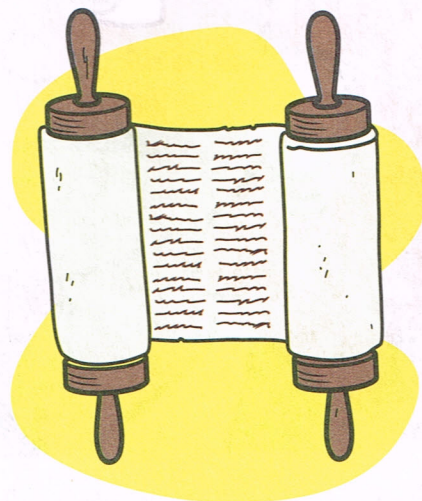
What's in the Bible?

There are different types of writing in the Bible: historical stories, poems, songs, and messages from God's prophets. We can't read a book of poems like a history book because they each have a different purpose. Poems use images to teach us about life or the world. History books give us facts about people, dates, and events. When we understand the kind of writing we're reading, we understand the Bible better.

The Bible has two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The **Old Testament** is about God's people before Jesus. It tells us about God's laws, how God helped his Chosen People, and even about the coming Messiah, Jesus. The **New Testament** tells us about Jesus and the things he taught when he was on earth. It also tells us about the early Church.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament took almost a thousand years to write. The first five books are called the **Pentateuch** or the **Torah**. These books explain the promises and laws between God and his people, the Israelites. God told his people he would send them a Messiah, a Savior. But the people didn't know who Jesus was. They waited, wondered, and prepared.



The New Testament

The New Testament starts when Jesus was born. The four Gospels teach us about Jesus' life on earth. Each Gospel is a little different because different people wrote each one. Each Gospel writer wanted to share a unique picture of Jesus so we could learn more about him. When we read the Gospels we hear, in Jesus' own words, what God and heaven are like. We read about Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. We learn how to live like Jesus.

Later, some disciples wrote letters to help build the first Church. These letters are called **epistles**. The first Christians loved Jesus so much they were willing to die for their faith.

How Do I Know What God Is Saying?

Sometimes the Bible might not make sense to you. Or it might seem like it doesn't have anything to do with your life. This makes it hard to believe God is speaking to you. When you read the Bible, please remember three things:

1. **God loves you** and wants to talk to you. Every story in the Bible is like a message from your best friend. God has something special and important to say just to you.
2. **Everyone needs help** reading the Bible. Listen to the people God sends to teach you, and ask all the questions you have.
3. **Prayer can open your mind and heart** to new ideas. If you're confused and no one is there to help you, just pray, "God, help me understand."

LOOKING UP VERSES

Tanya raised her hand. "So we have to read the whole Old Testament before we can learn about Jesus?"

Mrs. Evans shook her head. "No. The Bible isn't like a regular book. You don't have to read it from the beginning to the end. That's why when we talk about Bible passages we say, for example, Matthew 15:10. It's like a code.

"First comes the title of the book. Then the chapter number, then a colon, and finally the verse number. Most books have numbered chapters. When you look in that chapter for the verses, you'll find tiny numbers inside the paragraphs. When you find one that matches the verse number, that's what you read. We can look up Bible passages for anything. To learn when we have a question. For help when we're scared. Or even to pray."

MATTHEW 15, 39

the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea.²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.²⁷ At once [Jesus] spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."²⁸ Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."²⁹ He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.³⁰ But when he saw how [strong] the wind was he became frightened: and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"³² After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."³³

The Canaanite Woman's Faith²¹ / Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.²² And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon."²³ But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us."²⁴ He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."²⁵ But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me."²⁶ He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."²⁷ She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters."²⁸ Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."²⁹ And her daughter was healed from that hour.

The Healing of Many People²⁹ / Moving on from the mountain, and sat down there.³⁰ Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them.³¹ The crowds were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

The Feeding of the Four Thousand³² / Jesus summoned his disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way."³³ The disciples said to him, "Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?"³⁴ Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied, "and a few fish."³⁵ He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground.³⁶ Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowd.³⁷ They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full.³⁸ Those who ate were four thousand men, not counting women and children.³⁹ And when he had dismissed the

CHAPTER 15

The Tradition of the Elders¹⁻⁹ / Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They do not wash [their] hands when they eat a meal."³ He said to them in reply, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.'⁵ But you say, 'Whoever says to father or mother dedicated to God,'⁶ and need not honor his father. You have nullified the word of God for the sake of your tradition.⁷ Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you when he said:

⁸ "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;
⁹ / in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines human precepts."

¹⁰ g He summoned the crowd and said to them, "Hear and understand."¹¹ It is not what enters one's mouth that defiles that person; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one."¹² Then his disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?"¹³ He said in reply, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted."¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides [of the blind]. If a blind person leads a blind person, both will fall into a



EXPLORING THE GOSPELS

Find these stories in your Bible and read along. Then answer the questions below. If you need help, ask your group leader or a parent.

1. What's happening in this story?
2. How do people in the story feel?
3. What does Jesus do?
4. How does God show his love for you?

Matthew 3:13–17 (The Baptism of Jesus)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Matthew 9:18–26 (The Official's Daughter)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mark 4:35–41 (Jesus Calms the Storm)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mark 6:45–52 (Jesus Walks on Water)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

John 2:1–11 (The Wedding at Cana)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

In Short

- The Bible is unique and historical.
- Scripture is the sacred and inspired word of God.
- Scripture should be read carefully and thoughtfully.



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