

## Session One Responses – INTRODUCTION



Still Life with Bible by Vincent Van Gogh

1. *The Church tells us: “In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them.”<sup>1</sup> Have you experienced this? In the video presentation, Jeff mentioned common difficulties people have when they start to read the Bible. What has been your experience with Scripture?*

Answers will vary.

2. *Many Catholics today feel as though they have received a “heap of Catholicism,” a random pile of separate Bible stories and facts about the Church’s teachings. What solution to this problem do the four “pillars” of the Catechism offer?*

The Church Fathers followed a “narrative approach” to teaching the Christian Faith that is built upon the biblical story of God’s interactions with his people. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which you might think of as containing a “heap of Catholicism,” reflects this in its structure. All the information in the “heap” the *Catechism* divided into four “pillars”:

- The Creed. St. Augustine tells us that this first “pillar,” the Creed, is the story of salvation history “in tightly wound form.” It is the first pillar for a reason: It is the foundation of the biblical story, and the second, third, and fourth pillars are built upon it.
- Sacraments and Liturgy. The second pillar addresses how each of us is brought into the story of salvation.
- Life in Christ. This third pillar is where we find our place in the story: how we live it.
- Prayer. This fourth pillar is where intimacy with God develops; this is the goal of the story.

<sup>1</sup> DV 21.

**3.** *Why is it important to get the “big picture” of salvation history before reading or studying the Bible?*

Each book of the Bible is linked to the other books by the “narrative thread” of God’s plan. If we do not understand this plan—which includes why we have been created, what went wrong at the beginning, and how God set about making things right—it is difficult to make sense of the Bible as a whole.

From the very beginning, God taught his people to pass down the story of all he had done for them. As the story continued, his people would refer back to past events and look forward to things God had promised. If we enter the story in the middle, the importance and meaning of many people, places, and events may be unclear. Reading the Bible without knowing the larger story makes it difficult to understand the intended meaning of the text. The *Catechism* reminds us that we must be “attentive to the content and unity of the whole” when reading the Bible (CCC 112), as well as to “the way the truths of faith hang together among themselves and within the whole plan of divine Revelation” (CCC 114).

**4.** *The “narrative books” section of The Bible Timeline Chart gives you the names of fourteen books of the Bible that tell the story of salvation history from beginning to end. They are arranged across the top of the Chart immediately below the period names, so you can see the historical time periods they describe. The list of narrative books is below:*

- Genesis 1–11 (Early World)
- Genesis 12–50 (Patriarchs)
- Exodus (Egypt and Exodus)
- Numbers (Desert Wanderings)
- Joshua and Judges (Conquest and Judges)
- 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1–11 (Royal Kingdom)
- 1 Kings 12–22; 2 Kings (Divided Kingdom)
- 2 Kings 17, 25 (Exile)
- Ezra and Nehemiah (Return)
- 1 Maccabees (Maccabean Revolt)
- Luke (Messianic Fulfillment)
- Acts of the Apostles (The Church)

**5.** *Fifty-nine “supplemental books” make up the rest of the Bible. These books are not designated “supplemental” because they are less important than the narrative books; but in this study, we will set them aside to focus on the “big picture.” Once you have learned the chronological story told in these narrative books, you will be better equipped to read the remaining books of the Bible in their historical context.*

Look at the top of the purple Royal Kingdom period on your Chart. The books of 1 Samuel 9–31, 2 Samuel, and 1 Kings 1–11 tell the story of this time period, during which God established a kingdom under David and Solomon. What are the “supplemental books” for this time period? (You can find these listed at the bottom of the Royal Kingdom period on your *Bible Timeline Chart*.)

1 and 2 Chronicles, the “supplemental” books, provide a parallel historical account of the period. The “wisdom literature,” including Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon (also called Song of Songs), reflects God’s covenant with David and thus is placed in the Royal Kingdom period. Solomon is considered the “father” of wisdom literature, and David most likely wrote or inspired many of the Psalms.

6. *God’s formation of his family through covenants with various people is central to the story of the Bible. These covenants are listed in the Chart in a section called “God’s Family Plan.” You will learn more about these later, but notice the type of family group name with each (“One Holy Couple,” for example).*

The family group grows from One Holy Couple (Adam and Eve) to One Holy Family (Noah, his wife, and their sons) in the Early World and to One Holy Tribe (under Abraham) in the time of the Patriarchs. It then grows to One Holy Nation (under Moses) after the Exodus, to One Holy Kingdom (under David) in the Royal Kingdom, and finally to One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church (in the New Covenant with Jesus Christ). Notice how God’s family grows! God starts with a couple and gradually builds a worldwide family.

7. *Key people and events in salvation history are arranged in chronological order along the center of The Bible Timeline Chart. This section is divided into three horizontal bands representing different aspects of the Middle East. The central area represents the land of Canaan, where most of the events in the story take place. When the action moves out of Canaan—to countries like Babylon, for example, or to the south and Egypt—the events appear above or below the center area. Look at your Chart: What examples of geographic movement do you see?*

The major movements are:

- God calls Abram out of Ur (event 6; from the northern countries into the land of Canaan; beginning of the Patriarchs period). There is another minor move during this time when Jacob flees into the North and has his sons.
  - Jacob’s family moves to Egypt (event 14; from Canaan into the South and Egypt at the close of the Patriarchs period).
  - Israel’s move from Egypt to Canaan at the start of Conquest and Judges (event 30; “Israel crosses the Jordan”).
  - Israel goes into exile in Assyria, and Judah falls to Babylon (events 44 and 47; see the four arrows in the Exile period).
  - Judah returns to Canaan in the Return period (see the three arrows pointing to events 49, 50, and 52).
8. *Check out the events in secular history that are arranged across the bottom of the Chart. Find one you are familiar with. What is going on in the development of God’s plan during this period?*

Answers will vary. What is most important for people to know and understand is that biblical history is written about real people to whom real things happened in real time. As the weeks go on, it will become clear that we cannot study the Bible in a vacuum. The situations in surrounding countries have a dramatic effect on the Bible narrative.

## Home Preparation: Looking Ahead

The answers to the Home Preparation questions about this time period are listed below:

Period name: EARLY WORLD Approximate dates: Creation – 2200 BC

Period color: Turquoise Color meaning: The color of the earth viewed from space

List four key people from Jesus' genealogy:

1) Adam 3) Noah

2) Seth 4) Shem

List five key events:

1) Creation 4) The Flood

2) The Fall 5) People scattered at Babel

3) Curse and promise

Name a concurrent event in secular history: Great pyramids built, c. 2685 BC; Stonehenge begun, c. 2000 BC

## Understanding The Bible Timeline Chart

The names of the twelve historic periods with their associated colors are in the chart below:

Period Name	Color	Color Meaning
1. Early World		The color of the earth viewed from space
2. Patriarchs		God's blood covenant with Abraham
3. Egypt and Exodus		The Red Sea
4. Desert Wanderings		The color of the desert
5. Conquest and Judges		The green hills of Canaan
6. Royal Kingdom		The color of royalty
7. Divided Kingdom		Israel's darkest period
8. Exile		Judah "singing the blues" in Babylon
9. Return		Judah returning to brighter days
10. Maccabean Revolt		Fire in the oil lamps in the purified Temple
11. Messianic Fulfillment		Gifts of the Magi
12. The Church		The spotless bride of Christ

- Find the Contents page in your Bible. Using your Bible Timeline Chart or Bookmark as a reference, highlight the fourteen narrative books. If you are not accustomed to finding books in your Bible, take time to locate each narrative book before you continue.