

A1 - The Bible

Study 1 - A Library

BIBLE READING: Psalm 119: 9-16

KEY VERSE:
"God spoke to our fathers by the prophets."

Hebrews 1: 1

These studies will help you understand the importance and background of the greatest book in the world - the Bible. It is sometimes called the 'Word of God' because it originated from God, or 'The Scriptures', because it was written as a script. No Christian will be able to grow spiritually without reading and studying the Bible.

The Bible is not one book, but a collection of books. The English word 'Bible' comes from a Greek word 'Byblos' which means 'books' or a 'collection of books' - almost like a library!

The Bible is made up of 66 books, divided into two sections. The first section is called the Old Testament (39 books) and the second, the New Testament (27 books). The word 'Testament' means 'covenant' or 'promise'. The Old Testament is about God's covenant with the Israelites, whereas the New Testament is about God's covenant with all who trust the Lord Jesus.



Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls which contained many Biblical texts were found.

1. DIFFERENT WRITERS

The first writer was Moses and the last was John, the apostle. Between Moses and John were at least 35 other writers from many different backgrounds. These included Jewish priests, prophets and kings, shepherds, fishermen, a tax-collector, a doctor and a tent-maker. Some books, such as Hebrews in the New Testament, are anonymous and we don't know who wrote them.

Some of the writers were highly educated. For example, Moses was instructed in the wisdom of the Ancient Egyptians. Daniel was educated in the best schools in Babylon. The apostle Paul was taught by a brilliant Jewish rabbi in Jerusalem. But not all the writers were like these. Peter and John are referred to as "**uneducated, common men**". (**Acts 4: 13**) Most of the writers had no contact with each other and would not have known that their separate writings would be a complete book. It is remarkable that although there was a variety of writers the whole Bible has one message which is centred on God's wonderful plan for mankind.



A fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls

2. DIFFERENT PLACES

Some examples are Paul's letters which were written from prison. At least one of David's psalms came from a cave (Psalm 142) and another was probably composed under a night sky! (Psalm 8) Books were written in the cities of those times: Jerusalem, Babylon and Rome.

3. DIFFERENT TIMES

In some cases there were hundreds of years between the time of one writer and the next. In total, it took over 1500 years for the whole Bible to be written. It was finished nearly 2000 years ago, so the earliest books are extremely old.

4. DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

Originally the New Testament was written in Greek. The majority of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek.

It wasn't until the 14th century that the Bible was first translated into English. Since then, much work has been done to translate it so that it is clear and easily understood. The Bible can now be accessed in print, digital and audio formats. The whole Bible has currently been translated into 700 different languages, with 1 in 5 people still waiting to have the full Bible in their own language.

We should be very thankful to have the Bible in our language so that we can discover the content of its books and learn its important message.

This is the first of two units on The Bible.

A1 - The Bible

Study 2 - A Unity

BIBLE READING:

2 Timothy 3: 10-17

KEY VERSE:

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness...”

2 Timothy 3: 16

In this study, we will look at how the Old and New Testament books can be sub-divided, as in a library.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

- 1) **LAW** - Genesis to Deuteronomy
- 2) **HISTORY** - Joshua to Job
- 3) **POETRY** - Psalms to Song of Solomon
- 4) **PROPHECY** - Isaiah to Malachi

THE LAW BOOKS: Genesis describes Creation, the flood and the growth of the nation of Israel from Abraham to the time in Egypt when they later became slaves. Exodus tells us how the Israelites left Egypt with Moses and about their journey through the desert to the Promised Land of Canaan. Much of Leviticus and Numbers record the commands that God gave to Israel.

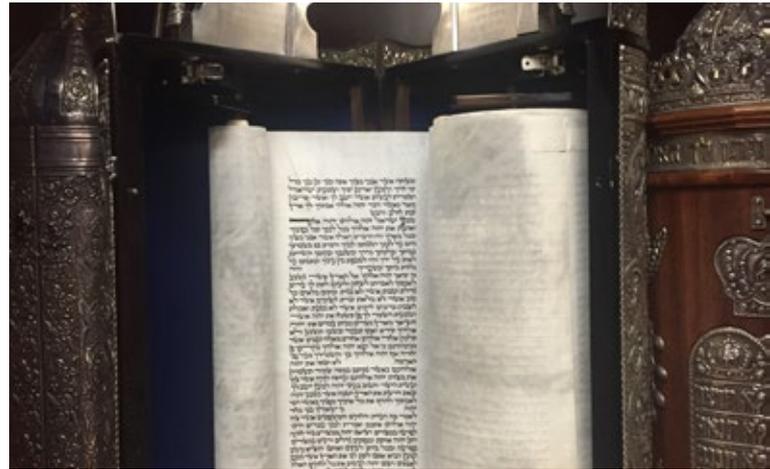
THE HISTORY BOOKS record approximately 800 years of Israel's history following Moses' death. Joshua replaced Moses as leader and after that, Israel was ruled by the Judges, such as Gideon and Samson. Israel's first king was Saul followed by King David. A series of kings, some good, some bad, reigned until Israel was punished by God, and the nation was sent into exile in Babylon for 70 years. Nehemiah and Ezra record the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the nation of Israel.

THE POETRY BOOKS contain some of the greatest writings of the Bible. The Psalms reveal people's relationship with God and are sometimes sung as part of worship. The Proverbs are a collection of King Solomon's sayings and the Song of Solomon is a love poem.

THE PROPHECY BOOKS are God's messages of encouragement and warning to the Jews as told by God's spokesmen, the prophets. Some prophesied before the captivity, others like Daniel during the captivity and some after the return to Israel.

Paul spoke about the value of reading the Old Testament. **“For whatever was written in former days was written**

for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15: 4)



A Torah Scroll, this contains the first five books of the Old Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

- 1) **GOSPELS AND HISTORY** - Matthew to Acts
- 2) **LETTERS** (sometimes called the epistles) - Romans to Jude
- 3) **PROPHECY** – Revelation

THE GOSPELS AND HISTORY section includes four books about the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Each of these is called a 'gospel' (meaning 'good news'). The book of Acts explains the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles (mainly Peter and Paul), and describes the beginning and growth of the Christian church.

THE LETTERS are really a kind of early Christian 'post bag'. The longest ones were written by Paul, to some of the churches he had visited, to help them in their church life and as individuals. Others, such as Peter's letters, were written to Christians who were facing persecution and needed help. Churches today still use the teaching in these letters as the foundation of how they function.

THE PROPHECY BOOK is Revelation. This describes some of the things which will happen in the future.

Despite all these different books, the Bible as a whole displays unity and agreement. It is the same God presented in Revelation as is revealed in the writings of Moses. The Bible has one central theme - the person and work of the Lord Jesus. His coming was foretold in the Old Testament and is declared and explained in the New Testament. God's way of salvation is always the same. Paul wrote to Timothy describing the role of the Bible in bringing him to faith in Christ. **“And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3: 15)**

The Bible itself explains that God's mind is present in all the different books. The Key Verse claims that **“All Scripture is breathed out by God.” (2 Timothy 3: 16)** It then mentions the four ways in which Scripture is useful - for teaching the truth, for pointing out what is wrong (reproof), for showing us how to put it right (correction) and showing us how to apply it in our lives. (training in righteousness)

This is the first of two units on The Bible.

Answer Sheet

A1 - The Bible

Study 1 - A Library

Name: _____ Return address on back of answer sheet

Address: _____

1. Write TRUE or FALSE after each sentence:

- a) God used only well educated men to write the Bible. _____
- b) There are 27 books in the New Testament and 39 in the Old Testament. _____
- c) The Bible was completed before the time of Christ. _____
- d) We know who wrote every Bible book. _____
- e) It took over 1500 years for the entire Bible to be written. _____

/5

2. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. The majority of verses mention the Bible using different words. Find four of these words from the Bible reading. (verses 9-16)

- i) _____ ii) _____ iii) _____ iv) _____

/4

3. Look at Psalm 119: 9-16 and write part of a verse which:

- a) tells us where the writer has put God's Word.

- b) explains his reason for doing this.

- c) helps us understand how we can live pure lives.

- d) tells us that the writer gives much thought to what God's Word says.

- e) reminds us that we must always obey God's Word.

/5

4. Look up these references to record the name and occupation of each Bible writer.

	Reference	Name of writer	Occupation
a)	Daniel 2: 48	_____	_____
b)	Amos 1: 1	_____	_____
c)	Matthew 9: 9	_____	_____
d)	Colossians 4: 14	_____	_____

/8

5. Read 1 Peter 1: 23-25 and then explain in your own words the reason Peter gives for the Bible enduring so long.

/3

THINK: Has reading the Bible been a help to you? Try to find an opportunity to talk about this with a friend

Answer Sheet

A1 - The Bible

Study 2 - A Unity

1. In which book would you find:

- a) an account of the beginning of the Christian church? _____
- b) the wise sayings of Solomon? _____
- c) songs which can be sung in worship? _____
- d) the stories of Samson and Gideon? _____
- e) a prophecy written during Israel's exile in Babylon? _____
- f) Israel's return to Jerusalem? _____
- g) Israel's departure from Egypt with Moses? _____
- h) New Testament prophecies about the future? _____

□ /8

2. In the table below there are five Old Testament references containing a prophecy about the Lord Jesus. Look up the corresponding verses in the New Testament and in your own words write what the fulfilment was.

Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfilment	What was fulfilled?
a) <i>Psalm 22: 1</i>	<i>Matthew 27: 46</i>	_____
b) <i>Psalm 69: 21</i>	<i>John 19: 28-29</i>	_____
c) <i>Isaiah 7: 14</i>	<i>Matthew 1: 22-23</i>	_____
d) <i>Isaiah 53: 5</i>	<i>1 Peter 2: 24</i>	_____
e) <i>Hosea 11: 1</i>	<i>Matthew 2: 14-15</i>	_____

□ /5

The fact that over 400 prophecies from the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament proves the uniqueness of the Bible.

3. The Lord Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me". (John 5: 39) He was referring to the Old Testament. Write one main fact from each Old Testament verse about the Lord Jesus.

- a) *Isaiah 9: 6* _____
- b) *Isaiah 53: 6* _____
- c) *Isaiah 61: 1* _____
- d) *Micah 5: 2* _____
- e) *Zechariah 9: 9* _____

□ /5

4. 'The books of the Bible reveal a complete unity.' Explain what this means.

□ /3

5. Explain in your own words the four ways mentioned in 2 Timothy 3: 16 in which Scripture is useful.

□ /4

THINK: Can you identify specific ways in which the Bible has been at work in your own life?

Answer Sheet

A1 - The Bible

Study 3 - The Word of God

1. Answer the following questions:

a) What is meant by saying, 'the Bible is inspired by God'?

b) Give some verses from the Old Testament to support this.

c) Give some verses from the New Testament to support this.

□ /6

2. In what ways would 'the Helper', the Holy Spirit, assist the apostles in the writing of what Jesus had said?

Why do you think they would need such help?

□ /4

3. Read 2 Peter 1: 16-21 again.

a) To what was Peter an eyewitness? (**verse 16**)

b) What did Peter hear when he was on the mountain with Jesus? (**verses 17-18**)

c) Explain the meaning of the Key Verse (**verse 21**) in your own words.

□ /6

4. The Bible is God's way of revealing to us His purposes for the world.

a) Whom did God use to reveal His Word to the world?

b) Why did He choose to reveal His purposes to us?

c) Why did His revelation have to be written down?

□ /6

5. Why is the 'Inspiration of Scripture' a very important Christian belief?

□ /3

THINK: Has God ever spoken to you through His Word? If so, what has been your response?

TOTAL = □ /25

Answer Sheet

A1 - The Bible

Study 4 - A Book to Read

1. Read *Psalm 119: 97-105* again. In which verse or verses does the Psalmist mention:

- a) his love for God's Word? _____
- b) his meditation of God's Word? _____
- c) his obedience to God's Word? _____
- d) the benefits of God's Word? _____
- e) his guidance from God's Word? _____

(As we have explained before, different words are used in *Psalm 119* to refer to the Word of God).

□ /5

2. Read *Psalm 1* again.

- a) What effect does Bible reading and meditation have on the person described in **verse 1**?

- b) What illustration does the Psalmist use to describe the person who reads and meditates on God's Word? (**verse 3**)

- c) How does the Psalmist describe those who do not follow God's laws? (**verses 4-5**)

□ /6

3. Write TRUE or FALSE after each of the following sentences:

- a) Reading the Bible helps us to discover God's will for our lives. _____
- b) Reading the Bible is best when it is systematic. _____
- c) The Bible was originally written in English. _____
- d) Before reading the Bible, we should ask God to make our reading enjoyable and useful. _____

□ /4

4. List and explain in your own words the three things that are essential when you read or study the Bible.

- i) _____
- ii) _____
- iii) _____

□ /6

5. Read *John 3: 16-21*. In your own words write down one thing that this passage tells us:

- a) about who God is and what He does. _____
- _____
- b) about the Lord Jesus Christ. _____
- _____
- c) about my salvation. _____
- d) about the kind of life I should live to please God. _____

□ /4

THINK: What steps do I need to take to make Bible reading and meditation a priority in my life?

A1 - The Bible

Study 3 - The Word of God

BIBLE READING:

1 Corinthians 2: 11-16

KEY VERSE:

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 1: 21

In the last study it was stated that the Bible claims to be inspired by God. This means that God guided and controlled its writers when they wrote. We have already seen that the Bible has about forty writers. However, it has only one author - God. It is therefore described as “The Word of God”. The claims to its inspiration run right through the Bible.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

In **Exodus 20: 1** Moses wrote that **“God spoke all these words”**. In nearly five hundred other places Moses claimed that he was writing the words of God.

Later, David said, **“The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; His word is on my tongue”**. (2 Samuel 23: 2)

Jeremiah, the prophet, said on many occasions, **“The word of the Lord came to me”**. (Jeremiah 2: 1-2)

The expression, **“Thus says the Lord”**, occurs over 400 times in the Old Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus promised that God would help His apostles to remember His sayings accurately. We have these in the four gospels. The Lord Jesus also said that, after He had gone to Heaven, the Holy Spirit would teach the apostles everything that they would need to know. **“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said to you.”** (John 14: 26).

Paul, who wrote well over half the letters in the New Testament, said:

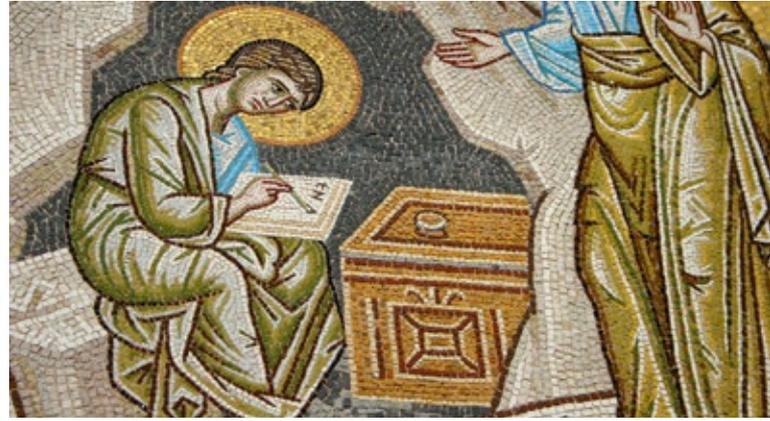
“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you...” (1 Corinthians 11: 23)

“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord...” (1 Thessalonians 4: 15)

“And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.” (1 Corinthians 2: 13)

HOW DID GOD GUIDE MEN TO WRITE WHAT HE WANTED?

Paul’s way of writing is different from John’s. Jeremiah’s style is not like that of Isaiah. These men’s minds and their personalities are shown in their writings; God did not use them as if they were lifeless things, like pens or computers! God prepared the writers for the task, for example He ordered the place and time of their birth, their background and education. When they came to record what God revealed to them, they wrote it just as He had planned.



Mosaic of a scribe copying the Book of Revelation

WHY DID GOD GUIDE MEN TO WRITE THE BIBLE?

God wanted us to know the truth about Himself, for example, He wanted us to discover how much He loves us, and how we can have eternal life. God revealed these things to the prophets and apostles.

WHY DID GOD’S REVELATION HAVE TO BE WRITTEN DOWN?

Long ago God revealed Himself directly to only a few people. There were only two ways in which those who lived later could know what God had said. His Word could be passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation, or it could be written down and handed on. The only accurate way for it to be preserved forever was for it to be written down.

How we ought to value the Bible, when we consider that these are God’s words for the world, for the church, and for ME!



The Gutenberg Bible, the first printed Bible (mid-15th century).

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A1 - The Bible

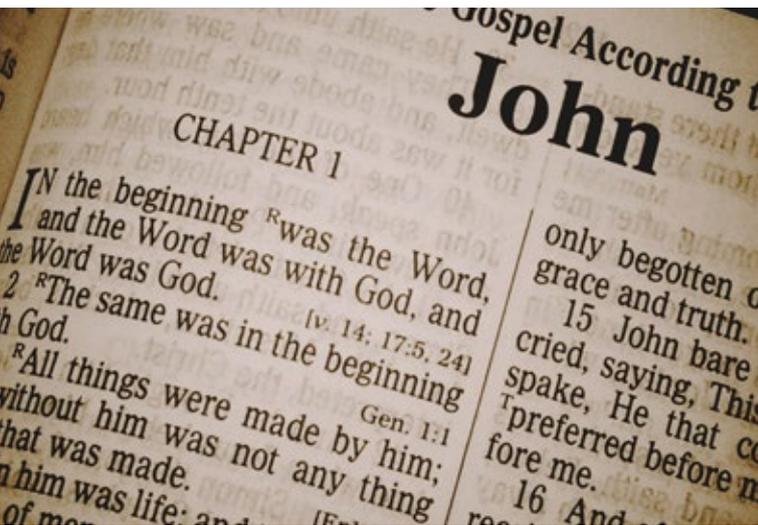
Study 4 - A Book to Read

BIBLE READING:
Psalm 119: 97-105

KEY VERSE:
“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
Psalm 119: 105

Babies need milk if they are to grow. In the same way young Christians need the spiritual “milk” of God’s word if they are to grow in the Christian life. **“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.” (1 Peter 2: 2)**

Psalm 1 tells us we will be blessed if our **“delight is in the law of the LORD” (Psalm 1: 2)** and if we meditate on it day and night. To meditate on God’s Word means to spend time thinking about its meaning and applying it to our own circumstances. The result will be a strong spiritual life which will bear fruit for God. **“He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1: 3)**



The Bible has become the most printed book in history.

WHAT SHALL I READ?

As you know, the Bible is a library of books. Rather than trying to read it from beginning to end, you may find it helpful to begin by selecting the following books to read:

Genesis - How it all began.

Gospel of John - The Life of Jesus.

Acts of the Apostles - How the church began.

It is good to be systematic and keep a record of the books you have read, as you work carefully through the Bible.

There are lots of Bible Reading Plans available to help you do this. Have a look at:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/> or

<https://www.biblica.com/resources/reading-plans/>



You can also read the Bible online.

WHICH BIBLE SHOULD I USE?

There are several different translations of the Bible. We learned earlier that the Bible was originally written in two languages. The various translations that exist each try in slightly different words to get over to us the meaning of these original languages. We should choose a translation with which we are comfortable and which we can understand easily, but also which is known to be reliable and accurate. This course usually quotes from the English Standard Version.

HOW DO I GO ABOUT IT?

Three things are essential if you are going to read the Bible properly. They are:

1. **Prayer** - The Bible is God’s Word. Before reading it, ask God to speak to you through His Word. Your prayer does not need to be long. **Psalm 119: 18** is a good example of a Bible-reader’s prayer: **“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law.”**
2. **Care** - It is sometimes possible to misunderstand the meaning of the Bible. This happens mainly when one verse or passage is read on its own without being compared with other parts of the Bible. Your Bible may have references in the margin or at the bottom of the page. It is a good idea to see what these other verses say about the same subject.
3. **Purpose** - God expects us to use our minds to think about what we read. Be on the lookout to see what the Bible can teach you. The following are examples of the sort of questions you should be asking whenever you read the Bible:

What does the passage tell me:

- about who God is and what He does?
- about the Lord Jesus Christ?
- about my salvation?
- about the kind of life I should live to please God?

This is the first of two units on The Bible.