



## Introduction to the Bible<sup>1</sup>

### **Overview:**

This series will focus on how we got the Bible, why we can trust it, and what's most important as we study, interpret, and apply what we read. This first week's overview will help you understand how we got the Bible and why we can trust it as a guide for faith and practice. Subsequent lessons and weekly discussion guides will then each center around a *genre* of scripture...each one a unique type of literature to be read and understood in a unique way.

God chose to communicate eternal truths through events within the flow of history. Because of this, God can use these words to speak again in our own time, and within our historical particularity. Knowing what genre is used in each Biblical text helps us to understand the author's intent and manage expectations about **what** and **how** a text and its author are trying to communicate. In daily life, readers switch easily between various types of literature – most don't, for example, read *The New York Times* in the same way they would read *Lord of the Rings*.

As you learn about each genre, we'll provide sample texts that illustrate some of the uniquenesses of that genre. We hope this study helps you go deeper in your bible study skills and provides helpful context and application for the broader topics discussed in the sermon series.

### **Group Objectives:**

***Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purposes of community groups.***

- Reflect on the texts below and current devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- Practice reading and interpreting the Bible.

### **DNA statement(s) tie-in:**

- *We encounter the Father daily.* God the Father speaks to us through the Bible, and we commune with him through prayer.
- *We are All for Jesus.* Jesus saves us from our past, remakes us to be like him, heals our broken places, and is coming back as our King.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- What is your background with the Bible?
  - Casual reader, regular study, interesting literature, no past context, other?
- What questions about the Bible are at the front of your mind?

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion guide was written by Elaine Rodeck and Karl Pagenkemper and edited by Dawn Gentry and Rachel Vaughn.

## Listening to God

- Where did you see God at work last week? How were you able to join him?

## Learning about God's Word: How We Got the Bible

The Old Testament was written over 2,500 years ago using ancient oral and written traditions. Copying was so expensive and time-consuming that anything less than critical information would not be copied; only the most important items were kept. Old Testament writings were utilized for 400 years by the people in Israel; Jesus himself quoted from it, submitted to it, and affirmed it.

The New Testament looks back on Jesus' life. We are fortunate to have accounts from three eyewitnesses (Matthew, Mark, and John), and one from a writer who interviewed eyewitnesses (Luke). Together, they give us a comprehensive, firsthand look at the most important life of all time. How do we know the New Testament is trustworthy? First, the books were widely known and circulated - those who were witnesses said "yes, that is how it happened." Second, these books were quoted in the first centuries after Jesus. Finally, the books were written with "apostolic authority" - either written by an apostle, or by a scribe on behalf of an apostle.

- Which part of this process (how we got the Bible) is most amazing to you?

## Learning about God's Word: Why We Can Trust the Bible

We begin not with a question of whether the Bible is *divine*, but whether it is *historically reliable*. That way, we can use historical standards to judge without taking a great leap of faith. This places our analysis of the New Testament on similar grounds to other historical documents. To determine if any book is historically reliable, there are three tests to apply.

### ***Internal Evidence, External Evidence, and Manuscript Evidence.***

- *Internal Evidence*—Where do you find internal consistency in the documents? Is there one or many? How do they agree or disagree?
- *External Evidence*—How does the evidence of the Bible line up with the evidence of other documents and archeology of its day?
- *Manuscript Evidence*—Is the text of the Bible today the same as what the eyewitnesses originally wrote? And how might it compare?

When it comes to internal evidence, external evidence, and manuscript evidence, ***there is no more reliable book in ancient literature.***

- Where do you see God expanding your trust in the Bible?

## Learning about God's Word: Why the Bible Matters

The Bible is the hardest and best piece of literature you will ever read. The more you read it, the more you realize God is behind it. God orchestrated authors throughout history to tell us his story and reveal his plan. The Bible is not just an "instruction manual for life" or a "love letter from God." It is a historical, salvation-revealing, multi-genre reflection of the character and plan of God. It is a compendium of stories that point to Jesus in a unified manner through the diversity of all kinds of cultures. It is amazing. It is worth reading, meditating on, analyzing, and studying every day of your life.

- Why does the Bible matter to the *church*?
- Why does the Bible matter to *you*?

## **Learning from God's Word: Bible Study Discussion**

- **Read Isaiah 55:8-11**
  - How are our thoughts and ways different from the Lord's thoughts and ways?
  - How are the heavens described in this passage?
  - Summarize verse 11. Why is this important?
  - What is the impact of this passage on your life?
- **Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17**
  - Who is the source of scripture?
  - What are some purposes of scripture?
  - How should scripture impact those who follow Jesus? (The NIV mentions the "servant of God," but this applies to more than just those called to ministry.)
  - How does this passage encourage you?

## **Leaning into Obedience:**

- Commit to studying the Bible each day. Experience how reading the Bible and meditating on it will enable you to know the life-transforming power that only God can have in your life.
- Consider discussing the Bible with others. If you are not yet in a community group or Bible class, there are several at CCC from which to choose.
- If you believe in Jesus, pray to surrender your life to him. A life surrendered to Jesus is the best decision of your life and will enrich your study of scripture.<sup>2</sup>

## **Prayer Prompts:**

- Invite members of the group to share requests.
- Reflect on and thank God for the Bible.
- Spend a few minutes asking the Holy Spirit how he would have you respond to today's lesson.

## **For further study:**

- See our online resources and reading guides to go deeper studying various genres in scripture – available at [www.cccomaha.org/discussion](http://www.cccomaha.org/discussion)
- Mark E. Moore, *The Chronological Life of Christ*. (College Press, 2007)
- Fossum and Munoa, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction to Gospel Literature and Jesus Studies* (Wadsworth, 2004).
- Wright, NT. *Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good* (HarperOne, 2017).
- The Bible Project videos:
  - Old Testament <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/old-testament-tanak/>
  - New Testament <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-overview/>

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<sup>2</sup> If you make a decision to follow Jesus, let someone on the CCC ministry team know so they can come alongside you and help you take your best next step in your walk with Jesus.