

The Bible 101

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Key Scriptures:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man (and women) of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

Psalms 19:7-11 ESV

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Summary

Part 1_What is the Bible?

The Bible widely used outside of the Catholic Church is a collection of 66 books with different authors, genres, and historical contexts.

Old Testament (39 books) + New Testament (27 books) = 66 books of the Bible

THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Compiled over hundreds of years by multiple writers and editors
- Made up of multiple literary genres including narrative, poems, prophecy and more
- The 39 books of the Old Testament are the same 39 books that make up the Jewish Bible.
- The authors wrestled with topics such as the meaning of life, good and evil, doubt, betrayal, and how to follow God in a broken world.
- Over the course of the Old Testament, God continues to reveal more of Himself to humanity.
- The Old Testament points to the coming Messiah, Jesus, who comes to redeem all of humanity.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Compiled after the life of Jesus. Includes:
 - » The Gospels: eyewitness accounts written by Jesus's disciples of His life, death and resurrection
 - » The Epistles: letters that were passed around the early church and helped followers of Jesus grow in their faith and understand what it now meant to follow Him
- Just like the Old Testament Scriptures, the New Testament continually points us to Jesus Christ.

THE AUTHORITY OF Scripture

- We believe in the authority of Scripture.
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Psalm 19:7-11

Part 2_Why is the Bible important?

DIVINE INSPIRATION

- We believe the Bible is divinely inspired. This means that God inspired the biblical authors to write what we now have as Scripture.
- By reading the Bible, God's Spirit works within each of us to refresh, restore, and guide us.
 - » Hebrews 4:12
 - » Psalm 119:105
- For us as human beings (with limited wisdom and understanding) to understand the complexity of God (with infinite wisdom and understanding) requires a posture of humility and surrender. Where our understanding falls short, we trust God as our loving creator and Lord.

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS BELIEVED ABOUT THE BIBLE

- The early church did not have the Bible as we know it today.
 - » Jewish Christians would've had access to the books of the Old Testament at their local synagogue.
 - » The apostles wrote and passed around letters that were read in local church

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Key Scriptures:

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

2 Peter 3:15-16 ESV

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 ESV

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalms 119:105 ESV

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Luke 24:27 ESV

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- gatherings to help early believers understand how to follow Jesus.
- Early church councils created frameworks to help determine...
 - » Which letters were considered “authoritative” and which were not (those that were became part of the New Testament).
 - » What the Church’s theological beliefs were. These came to be known as the creeds. Read The Apostle’s Creed and The Nicene Creed below.

Part 3_ Understanding the Bible

- The way we interpret Scripture is key to our ability to understand its intended meaning.
- Without a careful and consistent method of interpretation, it is easy to misinterpret what the authors were trying to communicate.
- Here are some questions that help bring clarity to any passage of Scripture:
 1. What literary style is this text?
 2. What context was this written in (historically and culturally)?
 3. Who was the author?
 4. Who was it written for?
 5. What was the author’s original intended meaning of this text?
 6. How does this align with other biblical texts (the metanarrative of Scripture)?

*Check out the study notes for Let’s Discuss... **The Bible Part 5_Help Me Understand!** where we practice using these questions to understand a passage from Proverbs.*

- The Bible is not a scientific journal, a child’s book, a self-help book, or a selection of motivational Christian talks.
- The Bible is a narrative that very carefully and cleverly points us to Jesus and helps us understand ourselves and how we relate to Him.
- Christ is present throughout the whole of Scripture. Jesus Himself taught His disciples how He was present in the Old Testament.
 - » Luke 24:27

Definitions

apostle: a messenger, or one who was sent to spread the Gospel of Christ. This often refers to Jesus’s 12 disciples and other early Christian leaders such as Paul and Timothy.

the canonization of scripture: the process by which the early church fathers compiled the Bible we now have today

creed: a statement or system of beliefs

Gentile: term used by the Israelites to refer to anyone who was not a Jew. In the New Testament, Jesus expanded their understanding of who could be the people of God. This was now a universal invitation to any who chose to believe in Him, including both the Jews and the Gentiles alike.

γραφή

graphē: Greek noun translated as a writing, scripture, or Holy Scripture

Messiah: the Jewish term referring to the promised deliverer/saviour of the people of Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus is revealed as the Messiah not just for the Jews, but for all humanity.

metanarratives: the big picture themes that are woven throughout the narrative of the Bible

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Let's Discuss...

- FYI, In the ***Let's Discuss...The Bible*** series, we'll dig deeper into much of what Rich taught about including the authority of Scripture, the divinity of Scripture, the creeds, how to invite God into our study of Scripture and more.
- During the process of the canonization of Scripture, the early church used three criteria to determine which books or letters were authoritative and divinely inspired, thus deserving a spot in the canon of Scripture:
 1. Apostolic Origin: Was this written by an apostle or close associate of an apostle?
 2. Content: Do the teachings of this book align with what the apostles taught?
 3. Recognition by the Church: Was this book recognised as authoritative by the wider Church community?

Was this an adequate selection process? Does it give you a sense of trust in the authority of our Bible?

- Do you believe the authors of Scripture knew they were writing Scripture at the time?
- The Gospel Message of Christ was to be spread to "all nations". How did the New Testament "change the narrative" about who the Good News was for? How do you understand this in relation to the Old Testament?
- After watching ***The Bible 101***, did you learn anything that you didn't previously know? Is there anything that you are still curious about?

Let's Pray...

As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
Psalm 42:1 NLT

- As we reflect on this introduction to ***The Bible***, we remember the aim of Scripture is to draw us closer to a living God. Our thirst for knowledge is rooted in our longing for God. So, we ask ourselves in this moment, does our soul long for God? Ask the Holy Spirit to cultivate within you a hunger and thirst for union with God that draws you deeper into Scripture.

Let's Go Deeper...

- ***Book Overviews*** by BibleProject [videos]
- ***How to Read the Bible Series*** by BibleProject [videos]
- ***Scripture and the Authority of God*** by Tom Wright [book]
- ***ESV Study Bible*** [book]
- ***How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*** by Gordon Fee & Douglas Steward [book]

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The Creeds

Within Christianity, two of the most commonly agreed upon creeds are **The Apostles' Creed** and **The Nicene Creed**.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

developed from 341 AD – early 700s AD

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

THE NICENE CREED

developed from 325 - 381 AD

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

(Join us for *Let's Discuss...The Bible Part 7_ Interpretation of Scripture* for a bit more discussion on the creeds.)