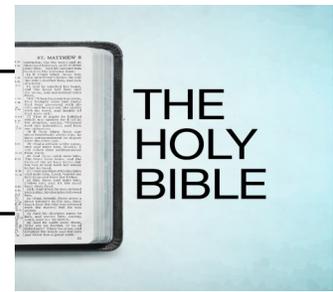


The Bible



Introduction

Have you ever been to the South Pole? If you've never been there, how do you know it exists? Have you ever met Abraham Lincoln? Then how do you know he ever lived? None of us has ever been to the South Pole or met Abraham Lincoln, and yet we know both of them are real. In the same way, none of us has ever seen God. Yet we know that he exists. Today we're going to learn how we know about our great God, whom none of us has ever seen.

We know about God from a book. This book is the all-time best seller. It has been translated into virtually every language on earth. It can be found in many homes, and even in most hotel dressers. Throughout history God in his goodness and wisdom has seen to it that this book is available to people, no matter what their culture and language. This book is the Bible. Although the Bible has not yet been translated into languages like Pig-Latin and Klingon, it has been translated into a language of every culture. Yet, sadly, this book is often misinterpreted, misquoted, and misunderstood by much of the world. Let that not be the case with us. Instead, let's study it so that we can correctly understand and interpret it.

Opening Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for giving us your Word in the Bible and for preserving it for us, so that we may know you and your love. Be with us now as we begin a year of study. Bless our efforts, our diligence, our study, our faith, and our family. Amen.*

Lesson Aim: What is the Bible?

Part One

Read Psalm 19.

- 1) How is it that the heavens declare God's glory? What do you think we can learn about God from looking at the sky or the universe or from looking at nature?
- 2) The first six verses of this psalm talk about the natural knowledge of God (knowledge about God that people have naturally). The rest of the psalm refers to the revealed knowledge of God (knowledge about God that needs to be revealed to them or taught to them). Based on this psalm, does anyone in the world have an excuse for not knowing God at all?
- 3) By looking at the sky or the universe or at nature, we can know that God is powerful and wise. But what will looking at those things never tell us about God?
- 4) Where do we need to look if we want to learn more about God than we can from just looking at the sky?
- 5) Verses 7-14 refer to the Bible, or God's Word. What different words are used to refer to God's Word and how is it described?

There are some things that we can learn about God naturally, just by looking around and listening to our conscience. We know that the pyramids in Egypt or the skyscrapers in major cities didn't just happen. Someone had to make them. It's the same with the universe. Common sense says that it didn't just happen. Someone had to make it. That someone is God. What we know about God from nature and our consciences is referred to as the natural knowledge of God. But only from the Bible can we learn that God saves us. Only the Bible tells us the truth about Jesus. And that is referred to as the revealed knowledge of God.

Read Acts 8:26-40.

The book of Acts tells the history of the formation and growth of the early Christian Church before the year 100 AD. This passage tells us of a man named Phillip and his work to tell others about Jesus.

- 7) What was the Ethiopian man reading while in his chariot?
- 8) What problem was the Ethiopian man having while trying to read?
- 9) What did Philip do to help this man understand?
- 10) The section of the book of Isaiah that the Ethiopian man was reading had been written 700 years before Jesus lived. Yet it foretold Jesus' suffering and what it would accomplish to save us. How is it possible that Isaiah could write about Jesus like that?

God gave prophets like Isaiah the words to say. In Part Two we'll now look at several passages that teach us more about prophecy.

KEY POINT 1 - The Bible is the only way for us to know the full truth of God.

What I've learned so far:

Part Two

Read Hebrews 1:1.

- 1) When the prophets—who wrote the books of the Old Testament before Christ was born—spoke about God, who was really speaking through them?
- 2) Define "prophet."

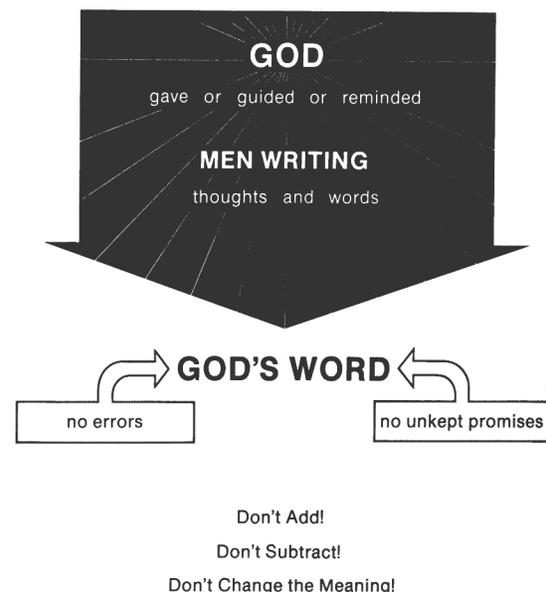
Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

The Holy Scriptures, or Scripture, is another name for the Bible.

- 3) List the four tasks that God's Word is useful for:
- 4) List the purpose for which we do those four tasks with God's Word:

This passage tells us that the Bible is "God-breathed." God breathed these words into men he had chosen, and they wrote them down. Another word for this is "inspiration" (Latin, in + spirare = to breathe.) God inspired people—the prophets and apostles—to write the Bible. So God himself is the real author of the entire Bible. And it is God himself who is speaking to us when we read the Bible.

VERBAL INSPIRATION



Read 2 Peter 1:20-21.

- 5) Where does prophecy (God's Word) never come from?
- 6) How then did the prophets speak God's Word?

God moved the people he had chosen to write down what he wanted them to record. The Holy Spirit made sure that they wrote exactly what he wanted. Jesus put it very simply when he told his disciples, "The Holy Spirit... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). The term we use to describe this biblical truth is "verbal inspiration." Verbal inspiration means that the Holy Spirit guided people to record the exact words that he wanted them to write.

Read John 17:17 and Numbers 23:19.

- 7) Because the Bible is God's Word, we know it is _____ because God cannot _____.
- 8) Why is it important for us to know that the Bible is true?

The Bible makes a lot of wonderful promises. It tells us that our sins are all forgiven, that we will rise from the dead when Christ comes again, and that we will live with him forever in heaven. Because the Bible is verbally inspired, we can be sure that it has no errors and that all its promises will be kept.

KEY POINT 2 - The Bible is God's inspired Word.

What I've learned so far:

Part Three

Study questions 1-5, 9-12 in the Catechism and answer the following questions in your own words.

- 1) How do we know what we know about God?
- 2) How was the Bible written?
- 3) What is the Bible?



Helpful Passages

Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19

Because the Bible is God's Word, what should we be careful to not do to it?

1 Corinthians 2:12-13—The same Spirit who wrote the words of the Bible also leads us to understand the words of the Bible.

1 Thessalonians 2:13—The Bible is the Word of God.

Main point — The Bible is the Word of God, which God himself wrote through the hands of men. And God has preserved the Bible so that through it God may reveal his saving truth to us and all people.

Final considerations:

The word "Bible" means book. The Bible is actually a collection of several books. There are 66 books in the Bible. The oldest of the books of the Bible was written almost 3,500 years ago. The latest book included in the Bible is almost 2,000 years old. The Bible has withstood vicious attacks of its enemies as no other book in history. Many have tried to burn it, ban it and outlaw it from the days of Roman emperors to present day.

And though there is nothing that people and nations have sought to destroy more than the Bible, it remains the most published book and the most owned item in the history of the world. The Bible is sometimes referred to as "Scripture" or the "Holy Scriptures". The word "scriptures" means writings. The Bible is a book of collected writings supporting one common message. Maybe the simplest way we can summarize the inspired writing of the Bible is the way David does in 2 Samuel 23:2: "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue." That's why, even though all the books in the Bible were written by humans, we still call the Bible "God's Word" because he is its true and ultimate author.



- 1) What we know about God by nature is called
 - A. ___ the natural knowledge of God.
 - B. ___ the revealed knowledge of God.
 - C. ___ the hidden knowledge of God.
- 2) The natural knowledge of God isn't enough because
 - A. ___ not everyone has a conscience.
 - B. ___ some people can't see how marvelous nature is.
 - C. ___ it doesn't tell us who the true God is, nor does it tell us about the Savior from sin.
- 3) That the Bible is inspired ___.
 - A. ___ means that it contains no errors or contradictions at all.
 - B. ___ does not necessarily mean that it does not have a few errors in speaking of scientific, historical, or geographical matters on which the ancient writers had no accurate knowledge.
 - C. ___ is an old-fashioned superstition that no educated person today could still believe.
- 4) "God-breathed," or verbal inspiration, means that God ___.
 - A. ___ selected only the very best educated men whom he thought would express his ideas in the best way as they wrote.
 - B. ___ actually spoke aloud so that the writers could copy down what he said.
 - C. ___ breathed into the minds of the writers in a miraculous way the very thoughts and words he wanted them to write.
- 5) We learn who the true God is from
 - A. ___ great philosophers.
 - B. ___ praying.
 - C. ___ the Bible.



Commit to Memory:

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Isaiah 55:11
- The books of the Bible

What I've learned about the Bible: