



Getting to know the Bible

Session 1: What is the Bible?

Objective of the course: to help us get a fuller picture of the Bible and its message, using group discussion-and-feedback, plus some 5-minute videos from 'The Bible Project' in each session.

The questions are not designed to have 'right' and 'wrong' answers, but to get us thinking, so that we will find the videos help us work things out for ourselves.

Questions:

- **How often do you read the Bible?**
- **Do you ever study it, on your own or with other people, as a regular thing?**
- **Have you always followed this sort of pattern?**
- **Do you use a reading scheme or any sort of guide or notes?**
- **Have you ever tried to read it all through?**
- **What do you find easy/hard about reading and understanding it?**

NOW WATCH VIDEO 'WHAT IS THE BIBLE?' (<https://bibleproject.com/videos/what-is-bible/>)

Questions:

- **Did the Bible help you in your journey to faith in Jesus? How?**
- **Does the Bible help you live as a Christian now? How?**

NOW WATCH VIDEO 'THE STORY OF THE BIBLE' (<https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-story-of-the-bible/>)

Questions:

- **How would you sum up what being a Christian is, in six words or less?**
- **How does getting to know the Bible help us as Christians?**



Getting to know the Bible

Session 2: What sort of books are in the Bible?

Questions:

- **What sort of literature do we find in the Bible?**
- **How do we know which books are which sort?**

Read Genesis 2:8-9; Genesis 3:1-7 and 14-15

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' '

But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.'

- **What questions do you have about the story?**

NOW WATCH VIDEO: 'JEWISH MEDITATION LITERATURE'

(<https://bibleproject.com/videos/bible-jewish-meditation-literature-h2r/>)

NB We've missed out one video from the original series, as it is largely repeated at the start of this one.

Questions:

- **How can we find the Bible speaking to us? How about ‘muttering’ ... thinking ... discussing?**
- **Does the Bible help you live as a Christian? How?**

Read Judges 6: 36-40

Gideon said to God, ‘In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, I am going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing-floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said.’ And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. Then Gideon said to God, ‘Do not let your anger burn against me, let me speak one more time; let me, please, make trial with the fleece just once more; let it be dry only on the fleece, and on all the ground let there be dew.’ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

- **What lessons do you learn from this story?**

NOW WATCH VIDEO: ‘PLOT IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE’

(<https://bibleproject.com/videos/plot-biblical-narrative/>)

Questions:

- **Are there right and wrong ways to read Bible stories? What are they?**
- **How do we fit the different parts of the Bible into the ‘big picture’?**
- **How would you explain this to someone who doesn’t see why they should bother reading it at all?**



Getting to know the Bible

Session 3: How do we learn from the Bible?

1. Read Exodus 2: 11-15a

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, 'Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?' He answered, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid and thought, 'Surely the thing is known.' When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian.

Read Genesis 12: 10-16

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, 'I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, "This is his wife"; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.' When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

Read Genesis 27: 6-29 (shortened)

Rebekah said to her son Jacob, 'I heard your father say to your brother Esau, "Bring me game, and prepare for me savoury food to eat, that I may bless you before the Lord before I die." Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you. Go to the flock, and get me two choice kids, so that I may prepare from them savoury food for your father, such as he likes; and you shall take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.'

Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob; and she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she handed the savoury food, and the bread that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.

So he went in to his father, and said, 'My father'; and he said, 'Here I am; who are you, my son?' Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me.'

So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said, 'Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.'

May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!

- **What do we learn from these characters?**
- **Are they good examples for us?**

NOW WATCH VIDEO 'CHARACTER IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE'

(<https://bibleproject.com/videos/character-biblical-narrative/>)

2. Read Genesis 16: 1-15 (shortened)

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, 'You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!' But Abram said to Sarai, 'Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.' Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

Read Joshua 7: 1-5 (shortened)

But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites.

Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, 'Go up and spy out the land.' Then they returned to Joshua and said to him, 'Not all the people need go up. Since they are so few, do not make the whole people toil up there.' So about three thousand of the people went up there; and they fled before the men of Ai. The men of Ai killed about thirty-six of them, chasing them from outside the gate as far as Shebarim and killing them on the slope. The hearts of the people failed and turned to water.

Read 1 Samuel 10: 17-24 (shortened)

Samuel summoned the people to the Lord at Mizpah and said to them, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you." But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses; and you have said, "No! but set a king over us."'

Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. He brought the tribe of Benjamin near, by its families, and the family of the Matrites was taken by lot. Finally he brought the family of the Matrites near, man by man, and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. When he took his stand among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than any of them.

Samuel said to all the people, 'Do you see the one whom the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.' And all the people shouted, 'Long live the king!'

Read 1 Peter 3: 17-22

Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- **What is the lesson from each of these Old Testament stories for us as Christians?**
- **Why is Noah and the flood a symbol of Christian baptism?**
(That's a very hard question, so have a go at it but don't worry if your answer is 'don't know').

NOW WATCH VIDEO 'DESIGN PATTERNS IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE'

(<https://bibleproject.com/videos/design-patterns-biblical-narrative/>)

Question:

- **Luke 24:27 says Jesus explained about himself in 'all the scriptures' – Where do you find Jesus in the Old Testament?**



Getting to know the Bible

Session 4: Bible poetry and Bible prophecy

1. Read Genesis 1: 1-10

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Read Psalm 1

Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the
wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and
night.

They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,

and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.
The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives
away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the
judgement,
nor sinners in the congregation of the
righteous;
for the Lord watches over the way of the
righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Read Psalm 2 (shortened)

Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and his anointed,
saying,
'Let us burst their bonds asunder,
and cast their cords from us.'

He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord has them in derision.
Then he will speak to them in his wrath,

and terrify them in his fury, saying,
'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.'

Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
with trembling kiss his feet,
or he will be angry, and you will perish in
the way;
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Happy are all who take refuge in him.

- What symbols are in use here to describe the world God made, and the way people behave?

NOW WATCH VIDEOS 10 & 11: 'METAPHOR IN BIBLICAL POETRY' and 'THE BOOK OF PSALMS' (<https://bibleproject.com/videos/metaphor-biblical-poetry/> and <https://bibleproject.com/videos/book-of-psalms/>)

2. Read Psalm 42

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'

These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house
of God,
with glad shouts and songs of
thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.*

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

By day the Lord commands his steadfast
love, and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
I say to God, my rock,
'Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?'
As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.*

Read Revelation 21: 1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

*'See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.*

*Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no
more,
for the first things have passed away.'*

Read Revelation 22: 1-7

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place. See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.'

Questions:

- **Psalm 42 ... What does this mean for us now?**
- **Revelation ... What does this tell us about the future?**

NOW WATCH VIDEO 'THE PROPHETS' and VIDEO 'THE DAY OF THE LORD'
(<https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-prophets/> and <https://bibleproject.com/videos/day-of-the-lord/>)

NB The second of these picks up one theme from the first and links it back to some of the lessons we've learned earlier ... and also to the time of Passover and Easter, which we're now coming to.

This is the end of the course, but you may like to look at some of the other videos available on The Bible Project website [<https://bibleproject.com/all-videos/>]. You will probably have noticed just how many there are! You could start with some more of the 'Biblical Themes' series (we used just one of those in this course) or look at the animated graphic outlines of individual Bible books.