

AUTHORITY

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

—2 Timothy 3:16-17, TEV

1 The Biblical Word

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

Inside me is this persistent longing to reach out to Someone; this desire to know if God has anything to do with me, to say to me; this need to know if the Bible has any power to offer me.

ASSIGNMENT

The goal of DISCIPLE is to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who know and love God's Word. Throughout the DISCIPLE study, you will be reading Scripture. We urge you to follow the daily pattern of reading and study. As you read Scripture, make notes in the appropriate space on the adjoining page. Daily assignments will indicate when to read and respond to “The Bible Teaching” and “Marks of Discipleship” sections in the study manual. Usually you will read the study manual on Day 6, after you have read all the week's Scripture.

- Day 1 Hold the Bible in your hands, remembering that it is many books by many writers who were inspired by God. Study the listing of the books of the Bible to get a feel for the titles. Look through the entire Bible, paying attention to the content headings. Locate study aids in your Bible: preface and introductions, notes at the foot of the page, maps, charts, and supplementary articles. Read portions that interest you.
- Day 2 Sample different styles of biblical literature. Do not try to understand the message yet. Just enjoy the variety in style and

begin learning how to read different material. Today, read poetry aloud. Read Psalm 84; Hosea 11; Exodus 15:1-18.

- Day 3 History. Read 1 Kings 19; 1 Chronicles 22; Acts 9. Read rapidly; try some different Bible translations if available.
- Day 4 Law. Exodus 20 (Ten Commandments); Deuteronomy 5-6 (6:4-9 is called the *Shema*, which means “Hear”). Prophets. Micah 4.
- Day 5 Letters. Philemon (a letter from Paul). Gospels. Luke 15 (a parable of Jesus).
- Day 6 Read and respond to “The Bible Teaching” and “Marks of Discipleship.”
- Day 7 Rest and prayer.

PRAYER

Pray daily before study:

“Treat me according to your constant love, and teach me your commands. I am your servant; give me understanding, so that I may know your teachings” (Psalm 119:124-125, TEV).

Prayer concerns for this week:

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Day 1 One Bible: many books (Write your impressions.)

Day 4 Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5-6 (Law); Micah 4 (Prophets)

Day 2 Psalm 84; Hosea 11; Exodus 15:1-18 (Poetry)

Day 5 Philemon (Letters); Luke 15 (Gospels)

Day 3 1 Kings 19; 1 Chronicles 22; Acts 9 (History)

Day 6 "The Bible Teaching" and "Marks of Discipleship"

DISCIPLE

THE BIBLE TEACHING

The word *Bible* means “book.” It is *the* book. All others pale beside it. Yet it is not a single book but a library of sixty-six books, written over a period of a thousand years. But the experiences that are recalled, analyzed, evaluated, and celebrated occurred over a much longer period. Stories were told around campfires; songs and psalms were sung in countless worship settings; histories were written and rewritten; laws received by inspiration were systematized and interpreted; prophecies were proclaimed, written down, fulfilled. Visions of a kingdom of justice and peace kept circulating through the people’s minds.

The Bible tells about the Hebrew people. They were a unique people, unique in that they were called to be a revealing people, struggling always to be God’s people, beginning about 2000 B.C. when Abram and Sarai heard the Lord call them to “go forth.” God spoke in and through the experiences of this called people. Later, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God made full revelation and continued to show mysteries of truth with a new people of faith we call the church.

The Bible, inspired by God, is both human and divine. You may be surprised at how human the Bible is when you read of violence, rape, betrayal, adultery, sickness, and death. Nothing is hidden. You also will be overwhelmed at how divine the Bible is when you see repentance and faith, just and compassionate laws, acts of devotion and self-sacrifice, and the unending love of the forgiving, covenant God.

Not only are the experiences both human and divine, but so are the actual writings. Oral tradition was finally put into writing, then edited and reedited, copied and recopied; the whole process is a witness to the guiding hand of God. Even the canonizing—setting the standards for what is Scripture—was inspired.

When we speak of Scripture as being inspired, we are recognizing that the Scriptures were written by particular persons in particular circumstances. We are saying that the Scriptures are connected to God and because of that connection, the Scriptures have power to bring about an encounter between God and the one who reads Scripture. The authority of Scripture, then, lies in its ability to cause encounter. When we read the Bible and God speaks to us, we hear the Bible as God’s Word.

How Was the Bible Put Together?

Canon means “rule” or standard. Canon here means the list of religious writings considered authoritative.

The Hebrew canon at first simply defined Torah, the Law, the first five books in the Old Testament (the Pentateuch). Torah was not only the central document of Jewish faith but also the fundamental law of the Jewish people. Established

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

The Hebrew Canon	The Christian Old Testament Canon
TORAH (LAW)	LAW
Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
PROPHETS	HISTORY
FORMER PROPHETS	Joshua
Joshua	Judges
Judges	Ruth
1 and 2 Samuel	1 and 2 Samuel
1 and 2 Kings	1 and 2 Kings
	1 and 2 Chronicles
	Ezra
LATTER PROPHETS	Nehemiah
Isaiah	<i>Tobit*</i>
Jeremiah	<i>Judith</i>
Ezekiel	Esther (<i>longer version</i>)
	<i>1 and 2 Maccabees</i>
MINOR PROPHETS	WISDOM
Hosea	Job
Joel	Psalms
Amos	Proverbs
Obadiah	Ecclesiastes
Jonah	Song of Solomon
Micah	<i>The Book of Wisdom</i>
Nahum	<i>Ecclesiasticus</i>
Habakkuk	
Zephaniah	PROPHETS
Haggai	Isaiah
Zechariah	Jeremiah
Malachi	Lamentations
	<i>Baruch</i>
WRITINGS	Ezekiel
WISDOM	Daniel (<i>longer version</i>)
Psalms	Hosea
Proverbs	Joel
Job	Amos
	Obadiah
FIVE SCROLLS	Jonah
Song of Solomon	Micah
Ruth	Nahum
Lamentations	Habakkuk
Ecclesiastes	Zephaniah
Esther	Haggai
Daniel	Zechariah
Ezra-Nehemiah	Malachi
1 and 2 Chronicles	

*Titles in italics are not in the Protestant Old Testament. They are from the Apocrypha and are in the Roman Catholic Old Testament.

finally between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., this Torah canon was authoritative for all Jews and later for all Christians.

By the first century A.D., most Jews accepted alongside the Torah a second, less authoritative group of books called the Prophets. This collection included Joshua through Second Kings (excluding Ruth), plus the Prophets. Other books are known as the Writings. The Hebrew canon of Torah, Prophets, and Writings was finalized around A.D. 90.

The Hebrew Scriptures, known later to Christians as the Old Testament, were originally written in Hebrew, but as early as the third century B.C. they were being translated into Greek. That translation was called the Septuagint. Early Christians inherited it and other Greek-language translations. The Septuagint differs from the Hebrew Bible in its language, in its order of the books, and in its inclusion of those books known as the Apocrypha.

Not until the second century A.D. did Christians set apart specifically Christian writings and treat them as equal to the Hebrew Scriptures by reading them in worship. A New Testament canon developed gradually. The earliest listing of books identical to our present New Testament canon was prepared by Athanasius of Alexandria in A.D. 367.

None of the books of the Apocrypha was ever included in the Hebrew Bible. At the Reformation, Martin Luther decided for the canon of the Hebrew Bible rather than the canon of the Septuagint. At the Council of Trent (1545–63), the Roman Catholic Church affirmed the canon of the Septuagint, including the Apocrypha, with the exception of 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh.

How Do We Read the Bible?

Just as God's Spirit guided those who remembered, interpreted, wrote, edited, and copied, God guides the reader today.

Our goal is not to learn the Bible as we learn algebra. Nor do we read a book of Scripture as we would read a detective story or novel. Rather, as we read, we listen for the Holy Spirit to help us understand eternal, universal truths. We watch for unexpected insights that are personal, just for us. We savor a promise, thrill to a story that rings true in our experience, or agonize over a law or principle that could change our lives.

As our spiritual understanding grows, we see new truth. Also, as we live through experiences of sickness, sin, trial, and tragedy, we come to comprehend teachings we could never fathom before.

Often you may feel like the Ethiopian eunuch in the Book of Acts who was riding in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud. The apostle Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian man replied,

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New Testament Canon

THE GOSPELS

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

The Acts of the Apostles

LETTERS TO CHURCHES

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians

LETTERS TO INDIVIDUALS

1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

Letter to the Hebrews

GENERAL LETTERS

James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude

The Revelation

DISCIPLE

"How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" (Acts 8:30-31, TEV).

You are embarking on a fascinating journey of biblical discovery. Help along the way will come from many sources: the study plan in this manual; your teacher and fellow students; and the preachers, teachers, and scholars who will instruct you through videotape. But most important of all, the Holy Spirit will lead and guide you as you study. Jesus said, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).

What Forms of Writing Are in the Bible?

Scripture simply means "writing." But the writing is of every conceivable variety: poetry, laws, historical narratives, liturgies, songs, prophetic utterances, wise sayings, short stories, parables, Gospels, letters, sermons, apocalypses.

Therefore, your reading style must vary. Some poems, such as the Psalms, ought to be read aloud. Notice in Hebrew poetry, a thought is often repeated as a form of poetic "parallelism."

"Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself" (Psalm 84:3).

Stories and historical narratives can be read rapidly. Law must be read with attention to detail. Reading the prophets requires listening for the message under the words. Proverbs or pithy texts might be memorized. Gospels are such powerful presentations of faith in Christ that they command acceptance of him or rejection.

Why Study the Bible?

What do you bring to the Bible? Your humanity. Everything you have ever thought, done, experienced, or agonized over can be dealt with by the Bible. Every human emotion is expressed there.

What does the Bible bring to you? God's authoritative guidance and counsel. The Bible has to express humanity in order to reach us; it has to express divinity in order to save us.

Once you gain familiarity with the Bible and are touched by God's Spirit, you will hunger and thirst for more of God's Word. What starts out as hard work turns into satisfaction and joy. The psalmist declared that study of the ordinances of God is

"sweeter . . . than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).

Perhaps the Scriptures best define themselves. Read again 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the verses at the beginning of this lesson.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS



The word *canon* comes from a Semitic root that means "reed" and survives in English also as the word *cane*. It originally referred to a straight reed or stalk that served as a measuring rod or ruler. It has come to mean anything straight and firm like a reed that can be used as a rule, standard, or measure and refers specifically to the standard of faith and practice in religion.

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The words in John's Gospel are even more powerful. Look up John 20:31 and copy that verse here.

MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Disciples place themselves under the power and authority of Scripture. Under "Marks of Discipleship," we will be asking ourselves how the Word of God is shaping our Christian discipleship.

Right now answer these questions: Why am I participating in DISCIPLE? Why am I planning to study the Bible with intensity, faithfulness, and serious inquiry?

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE

The division of the Bible into our present chapters was probably done by British churchman Stephen Langton (1150?–1228), who was consecrated as archbishop of Canterbury in 1207. The division of the New Testament into its present verses was done by Robert Stephanus in the Greek New Testament he published in 1551. The first division of the New Testament into verses in an English translation was Whittington's translation (Geneva, 1557). The first English Bible (Old and New Testaments) divided into verses was the Geneva version of 1560.

Memorize the titles of the Old Testament books so you can locate biblical passages easily and quickly.

Spend additional time browsing in the Bible or discovering where in the church or public library you can find reference books that you need.

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