

Basics - Bible

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Basics

Basics is a series of short and hopefully easy to understand sessions, looking at some of the basics of the Christian faith. This isn't a section about proving things or arguing things – we have a section for that called 'Questions'...

The Bible

2 Timothy 3.16–17 – All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

The Bible is what Christians believe and know to be the true Word of God. It's a little bit like having a manual for life – like you'd buy a car manual for your car. But it's much more than that too!

The Bible is divided into two main parts (a bit like Lord of the Rings is divided into 3 books but is all the same story). The Bible's two halves are called the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament'. These are like two periods of time when God related to humans and it lets us know how he did that. So in the Old Testament, God gave people 'laws' and rules. Today God guides us by the Holy Spirit who lives in the life of every believer in Jesus.

Other things people call the Bible are 'the Word of God' and 'Scripture'.

Over the centuries, many people have been killed because of wanting the Bible in their language, even in England.

Who Wrote It?

The Bible was written by different people over many years but was inspired by God who helped people to write and put the Bible together. There are 66 books in the Bible, divided into 'chapters' and lots of verses to help people find their way around the Bible. These chapters and verses weren't in the original Bible but were added later to help people get to know the Bible and find their way around easily.

So for example – in the first Bible verse we read earlier, the book is '2 Timothy' (this was who the book was written to and not its author, who was someone called Paul). The chapter is '3' and the verses are '16 and 17'.

Why was it written?

The Bible isn't a record of the world's history – but it is a record of God's history (some people say the Bible is 'His Story' talking about God). One of the greatest things about the Bible is that it helps us get to know the author – God. It centres around Israel and the Middle East / some of Europe.

There are many Bible verses like the one from 2 Timothy that help us know God, help us grow as Christians and guide us. But it's not quite as simple as following an instruction manual because when we become a Christian, God does this amazing thing that means he lives on the inside of us (by the Holy Spirit) and the Holy Spirit actually helps us and changes us so we want to obey God and obey the Bible.

So imagine the Bible is like a school. But it's not like being forced to go to school where you have to do this, have to do that and obey all the rules. It's more like something you're really interested in and have got a passion for – so you want to read the Bible and want to do what it says because it helps you become more like God.

The Bible is also truth – so it helps us know what kinds of things God wants and what's good for us – and the things that would be bad for us. So when we have decisions to make, the Bible is like an unchanging truth that helps us decide what we should do or not do. We know that when we understand the Bible properly, what it says is God's will.

But God will speak to us specifically and individually through the Bible as well. We will read something or hear something and it's like it 'jumps off the page' to us or it really makes us think. We may need to know direction for something, so we can pray and ask God and one way he will speak to us is showing us something from the Bible. We can also go to the Bible to check that what we think God has said lines up with the principles of the Bible – so God won't say 'it's OK to steal' because the Bible tells us it's not right to steal!

The Bible teaches us lessons about how to live life – it has many examples of people just like us through history who followed God. We can learn from their mistakes, their situations and the good things they did for God.

The Bible also enables us to live good lives that means we can and want to help others.

How do we understand the Bible?

The Bible also help us understand the rest of the Bible. When we read Bible verses, we shouldn't just read them on their own but see what the rest of the Bible says, to give us a complete picture.

It's like a jigsaw – if you have one piece it only really tells you about that piece and those next to it a bit. It may have a picture of a flower on it, so if you took that one piece you may think the jigsaw is about flowers. But imagine putting it together and finding it's a flower in a pot on the window of a house with a garden and children playing – mountains in the background and a farm next door. So the real picture is about a house and family in the mountains, not about flowers.

So we read the Bible looking at the complete picture as much as we can! We also understand the Bible 'literally'. This doesn't mean everything is literal (for example it says that God is a 'rock' – this doesn't mean that God is an actual rock). What it does mean is that we understand the Bible in the right way that God wants us to understand it. So when the Bible says God is a rock – it means he's strong.

Some parts of the Bible are written history like a historical document. Other parts include poems and songs (called 'Psalms'). Other parts of the Bible tell us about something that happened and about things that will happen in the future. The final book of the Bible is like this – it's called Revelation and tells us a lot about the end of time.

Sometimes, different books of the Bible cover the same periods of time but from different angles. So in the 'New Testament' there are four books called 'Gospels' which tell us about the life of Jesus. Each of these four books was written for different people – one for Jewish people, one for non-Jews etc.

Versions of the Bible

There are lots of 'versions' of the Bible. Some people get confused with this but it's very easy. The Bible comes from the same original sources which are in Hebrew and Greek (and they can be trusted).

But different people translate the Bible and say things very slightly differently – of course, the Bible has also been translated around the world into hundreds and hundreds of languages over time.

Some Bibles take the original sources and stick to what it says very strictly word for word. Other versions stick to the original sources as well but then help us understand what God is saying in ways we can really understand easily.

If you imagine the Bible is a mountain – some translations are like walking on the mountain – some translations are like looking down on the mountain to get a kind of overview. It's the same mountain, just different perspectives.

The best thing is to get a translation of the Bible that you can really understand – maybe get a couple to get different perspectives on the same thing!

You can also buy Bibles that are not in the normal order but instead have the Bible in 'chronological order' – this means it's written in time and date order.

Four different translations, all from 2 Timothy 3.16

You'll see how the language changes from different versions, from top to bottom (in order)

New King James Version (NKJV) – All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

New International Version (NIV) – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

New Living Translation (NLT) – All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

The Message – Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way.

How do I read the Bible?

A really good thing is to read the Bible every single day. But we don't just read it like we're flicking through a text book and there are lots of ideas and things to help us understand the Bible. It's important to grow in our understanding of the Bible so it's good to read it on your own and it's good to go to church and hear other people read it and talk about it, explaining it to us in ways we can relate to and understand.

It is also important to know that the Bible is powerful. What do we mean? Well, when we speak lines from the Bible, we're actually agreeing with God and it helps encourage and make us stronger in our faith. Equally amazingly, we can speak out, think about, pray Bible verses and it releases God's power in us and in situations through the world.

Across the world, people try to ban the Bible. If you've ever seen the movie 'Book Of Eli', the movie leaves us with the same message that we know is true – people want to ban the Bible because it is powerful and challenges them!

Here are some tips to help you (with some space for your ideas)

1. Try to read the Bible on your own every day at the same time. It's good to build a habit to help.
2. Before you read the Bible, ask God to speak to you.
3. Some people like to read through the Bible in a year. This helps get to know the big picture.
4. Other times we read just a few verses of the Bible and we think about them and what they mean. This helps to get to know bits of the Bible really well.
5. We can use the Bible to help us pray – so we can pray, "God you say that the Bible is hear to help me and show me truth about my life. Please speak to me about areas of my life that are wrong."
6. We can also use the Bible to pray God's promises for us, for other people and for world situations. If we know God's said something in the Bible, we know that it's something that God wants to answer.
7. We can get daily notes to help us read the Bible. Myfishbites does daily online notes, so do many people by email or Facebook and Twitter. Or we can get the amazing [WORD 4U 2DAY](#).