

B101 Introduction to the Bible

Discussion Questions

Directions: *The local teacher can discuss the following questions with students after the lecture presentation. These questions can also be used for small group discussions. These questions will help students process the key theological themes and ideas. Teachers may ask other questions related to the parts of the Bible covered in the sessions.*

Session One

1. What do the following passages tell us about how the Bible came into existence? You can underline key ideas:

Luke 1:1-4

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled^[a] among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

John 20:30-31

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe^[a] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Peter 1:10-12

¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

2 Peter 1:20-21

²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2. What does it mean to say that the Bible is the inspired word of God?
3. Why is it important to study the Bible?

4. Review the statement in Article IV from the Nazarene *Manual* about the Bible. Help students understand each part.

IV. The Holy Scriptures

4. We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

(Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

Session Two

1. What makes the Old Testament difficult to study?
2. What are the key ideas found in Jeremiah 31:31-34?

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
 “when I will make a new covenant
 with the people of Israel
 and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
 I made with their ancestors
 when I took them by the hand
 to lead them out of Egypt,
 because they broke my covenant,
 though I was a husband to^[d] them,^[e]”
 declares the Lord.

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
 after that time,” declares the Lord.

“I will put my law in their minds
 and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,
 and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor,
 or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’
 because they will all know me,
 from the least of them to the greatest,”
 declares the Lord.

“For I will forgive their wickedness
 and will remember their sins no more.”

3. How does the land of Israel compare to your home area: culture, language, geography, climate?

4. Review the names of the books of the Old Testament. Practice the standard English (or other language) pronunciation of the names of these books. Help students practice where these books are located in the major divisions in the class notes on p. 19.

Session Three

Students and teachers can study Genesis 1-3 together. Here are some possible questions to help with this discussion:

1. What does it mean to say that we are made in the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27?
2. Why did God rest on the 7th day (2:1-3)?
3. Why was Eve created, and what does this mean in the marriage relationship today (2:18-25)?
4. What caused Adam and Eve to sin (3:1-7)?
5. What were the results of Adam and Eve's disobedience for (1) the human relationship, and (2) the divine-human relationship (3:7-10)?

Session Four

1. At different points in their journeys, the Patriarchs were faced with important decisions about trusting God's promises. Choose *one* of the following passages and explain how faith is important. If the class is large, different groups can choose a different passage. Create a short list of at least 5 ways faith (or a lack of faith) appears in this story.
 - a. Abraham: Genesis 16
 - b. Abraham: Genesis 22
 - c. Isaac: Genesis 26
 - d. Joseph: Genesis 39
 - e. Joseph: Genesis 44
2. What significant thing happened to Jacob during that night of wrestling in Genesis 32:22-32?
3. In your opinion, does God 'wrestle' with us today to get us to change our ways? If so, what would a 'wrestling match' be like today?
4. Choose one of the names for God listed in the course notes for this session. Look up the Scripture passages that are mentioned in the notes. Share what this name for God means to you, your family, or ministry.

Session Five

1. How was the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt a symbol of God's grace and salvation?
2. What is important about the statement in Exodus 19:5-6? Compare this passage to 1 Peter 2:9-10. How is the church like Israel?
3. What does the tabernacle signify and why is this important?
4. Why did the people have to wander in the desert for 40 years? Why is obedience to God's commands important for us as Christians?

Session Six

1. According to Joshua 24, what are the conditions to the covenant renewal and how did the people respond to them?
2. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-12 and then read Judges 2:6-23. Reflecting back on Joshua 24, how did the Israelites fail to keep their covenant with God? What was God's response of judgment towards this action? How did God act in grace towards the Israelites?
3. Based on the above passages, what went wrong with the Israelites? What did they fail to do?
4. What can we learn from the experiences of the Israelites that can help us in the Christian education of our children?

Session Seven

1. How does Hosea 6:6 fit in with the problems of Israel and Judah during the 8th century B.C.:
For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings?
2. Read Amos 4-8. How does this passage speak to challenges in your culture?
3. How does Isaiah 53 prophecy about the coming messiah?
4. What assurance did Zephaniah 3:17 give to the people of Judah who were about to experience exile?
5. According to Ezekiel 3:4-11, what was Israel's problem? According to Ezekiel 36: 22-29, what was God's solution to this problem?

Session Eight

1. According to Jeremiah 2, why did God send Israel into exile?
2. Read Lamentations 5. Describe in your own words the mood (feelings) of the people in exile.
3. Read Daniel 9:4-19. According to this prayer, what should the exiled Jews do to be restored? What does Daniel hope God will do in response?
4. What are the key components of the hope expressed by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31:31-34? How does this hope compare to Daniel's hope expressed in question #3 above?

Session Nine

1. After all that Job went through, what did he learn through his suffering according to his final words in Job 42:1-6?
2. What is the key idea in Proverbs 1:7? How does Proverbs 2:1-5 help us understand 1:7?
3. How do Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 compare with Ecclesiastes 12:13-14?
4. What do you think Song of Solomon 2:4 means or how could it be applied to a Christian?

Session Ten

1. What are the two directions for life in Psalm 1? What is different about these two ways?
2. Read Psalm 23. Notice the imagery in this psalm. What do these images mean? Students can also apply these to their lives.

3. According to the class notes, what kind of psalm is Psalm 100? Can you identify any parallelism in this psalm?
4. What are some of the characteristics of Psalm 119? How does this psalm encourage you in your study of the Bible?

Session Eleven

A narrative is a story. It is helpful to know a few things about a story in order to understand many parts of the Gospels. A story (narrative) typically has the following elements:

- 1) Setting: This is where, when, or in what circumstances the story takes place. Often, you may need to look at the larger context. Look for clues such as time and place indicators.
- 2) Characters:
 - a) Protagonist: this is the “good guy,” the hero of the story.
 - b) Antagonist: this is the “bad guy” or enemy; the one who causes problems for the good guy.
 - c) Background characters: they serve to enhance the plot and setting but can contribute to one of the above two characters

Note: characters do not necessarily have to be people but can be items of nature. Authors may go into much detail about characters or give certain characterizations of them.
- 3) Plot: this is the story line
 - a) Rise of conflict: there is some battle or tension between the protagonist (good guy) and antagonist (bad guy).
 - b) Resolution of conflict: this usually takes place at the end; the problem is solved.
 - c) There can be several smaller stories as part of a larger story.
- 4) Props: these are the small things that enhance the details of the story.

1. Choose **ONE** of the following passages and find as many of the narrative elements described above in this story (teacher may assign different passages to different students). This exercise will help students develop skills of observation, looking at the details of the Bible.
 - Birth (2:1-23)
 - The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)
 - Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)
 - Sermon on the Mount (5:17-20)
 - Healing of the Centurion’s Servant (8:5-13)
 - Parable of the Weeds (13:24-30)
 - Problems with the Brother (18:15-20)
 - Jesus clears the Temple (21:12-17)
 - The Garden of Gethsemane (26:36-46)
2. What does this story reveal about Jesus, the kingdom, or living in the kingdom?

Session Twelve

1. Pick one of the miracles Jesus performs in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Describe the illness, how the person was healed, and what this healing tells us about Jesus.

2. Read the Parable of the Soils in Mark 4:1-20. What does this parable say about how we should respond to Jesus' teachings?
3. What two perspectives does Jesus give about the end of the age in Matthew 24 (hint: look at verses 32-36)? Are these two perspectives contradictory?
4. Read Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 5:1-11 (Mark 1:16-19), Luke 24:48-49. To what was Jesus calling his disciples? What did Jesus expect from them? How does this call to discipleship relate to us today?

Session Thirteen

1. Read and reflect on the story of Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3. How could you explain to a nonbeliever or unchurched person what it means to be "born again" according to John 3? Write a short, clear, and concise paragraph. Avoid using "religious" terms that a non-believer might not understand.
2. What does the story in John 13 suggest or imply about being a follower of Jesus?
3. Choose one of the "I am" sayings in John (see class notes). What does this statement say about Jesus?

Session Fourteen

1. **What** did Jesus command his disciples to do in Acts 1:4-8 and **why** did he command this?
2. What significant change took place in the life of Saul in Acts 9?
3. What was the crisis that prompted the Council of Jerusalem to meet (Acts 15)?

Session Fifteen

Students can be assigned different groups or divide up the following questions:

1. Based on Romans 1:18-32, how would you define sin?
2. Based on Romans 5:1-11, how would you define grace?
3. Why is the belief in resurrection so important to the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)?
4. What is Paul's answer to the problem of suffering for Jesus' sake (2 Corinthians 4:7-18)?
5. What does Paul say about *justification* in Galatians 2:15-21?
6. What benefits does Jesus bring according to Ephesians 1:3-14?
7. How is Christ an example to us in Philippians 2:6-11?
8. What do we learn about holiness in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, 5:23-24?
9. Why did Paul write 1 Timothy (see 1 Timothy 1:3-7)?
10. What is the basis of the calling Paul describes in 2 Timothy 1:9?

Session Sixteen

Choose one of the following passages.

- Hebrews 4:14-16
- Hebrews 10:19-25
- James 1:2-8
- James 2:14-26
- 1 Peter 2:21-25
- 2 Peter 1:3-11
- 1 John 1:5-2:2
- 1 John 3:1-6

Answer the following questions.

1. What is the key idea of this passage? State this in one simple statement, of 5-10 words.
2. Create simple outline of the key ideas of the passage. This can be 2-5 points.
3. Make a list of at least 5 questions on this passage that can be answered from the passage.
4. What is one way this passage could apply to your life or the setting of your ministry?

Session Seventeen

Work in small groups to answer the following questions on Revelation 2:1-3:22. Choose one of the seven churches in these chapters as the basis for this study.

1. List the parts of the letter to this church, giving specific verse references to each section.
2. If this church were a modern church, what types of problems might be in this church? Try to give specific examples.
3. What is Christ's answer to the problems of the ancient church and the modern church?
4. How does this passage apply to your church?

Session Eighteen

1. Explain how you would choose a passage from the Bible for sermon or Bible study.
2. Why is it important that we are prepared spiritually before preparing a sermon or Bible study?