



What Is the Bible?

“All your words are true; all your laws will stand forever.” (Psalm 119:160, NIV)

When you think of the Bible, what do you think it is – a book of myths, fantasies, a storybook, or God’s own words to you? Whatever you think, you know it is not an ordinary book. Actually, it is God’s own words in a library of books bound into one volume.

The meaning of the word

The word “Bible” comes from a Latin word *biblos* or *biblia* which means, “The Books.” In English, it means, “the Book made up of little books.” The Bible is also called “The Word” and “Scriptures”. There are sixty-six of these books – thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New. A testament is a covenant or an agreement entered into by two or more persons or parties. Today people make agreements to buy a car, a house, etc. God made two covenants with his people – one in the Old Testament period (BC) and one in the New Testament period (AD).

The authors

Who wrote the Bible? Forty men over a period of fifteen centuries wrote the story of Jesus as if it were just one book. Incredible! The men came from a variety of backgrounds and education: physician, shepherd, soldier, king, farm hand, king’s cupbearer (wine taster), priest, tax collector and fisherman. They wrote from prisons, palaces, deserts and the seashore. They represented many countries: Arabia, Syria, Babylon, Palestine, Rome and Greece. They used many literary styles. Even their languages were different – Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic! They had no ordinary paper but painstakingly wrote on “paper” made from the papyrus plant or parchment made from the skins of animals. How grateful believers should be for their obedience!

The real author

How could ordinary men from different centuries, languages and backgrounds write a book like this? They couldn’t! Although they did the actual writing, they didn’t think up the content. **God is the real author!** He inspired them to write. Let them tell you their secret. Paul wrote to Timothy: *“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 straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.”* (2 Timothy 3:16, NLT) The Greek word for “inspired” is different from what you would normally think. The Greek word means that God

“breathed out,” and the Holy Spirit moved the authors to write. In other words, the Bible is the “breath of God.” As the apostle Peter wrote: *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophets themselves or because they wanted to prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit who moved the prophets to speak from God.”* (2 Peter 1:20, 21, NLT) What is truly exciting is that this same Holy Spirit will help you understand what they wrote!

The testimony of the authors

Do the writers actually testify that God spoke in some way to them? Yes! There are many examples. David said, *“But this word of the Lord came to me.”* (1 Chronicles 22:8, NIV) Isaiah testified, *“The Lord spoke to me with his strong hand upon me...”* (Isaiah 8:11, NIV) Jeremiah declared, *“The word of the LORD came to me.”* (Jeremiah 1:4, NIV) Moses explained that God said to him, *“I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”* (Exodus 4:12, NIV) The apostle Paul told the Corinthians: *“When we tell you this, we do not use words of human wisdom. We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths.”* (1 Corinthians 2:13, NLT) Many of these men suffered persecution and even death because they dared to listen to God and write down his words. Do you think men would willingly die for something they knew was a lie?

The red thread of redemption

What is the Bible about? Some think it is a science textbook or a history of civilization, but is it? No! From the first book to the last, the Bible tells us all about Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. What is a Redeemer? The word “redeem” means “to buy back, to purchase out of the market place and to set free from slavery.” If you took something to a pawnshop and later returned to buy it back, you would “redeem” it. Redemption, as used in the Bible, means, “To be freed from the slavery of sin.” All, including you, have sinned. You cannot save yourself from the consequences of sin. However, Jesus performed the ultimate sacrifice by dying in your place on the cross, purchasing you from the market place of sin and setting you free to live a new life. Only he could do this because he lived a perfect life. Like a red thread running through a piece of cloth, the story of Jesus and redemption runs through the Bible from beginning to end. This “Master Key” opens up every book. As you read each book, look for the Jesus story.

The testimony of Jesus

After resurrecting from the dead, Jesus shared with the disciples that all Scriptures (only the Old Testament had been written) were about him. What an eye opener this was to the disciples!

Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining what all the Scriptures said about himself ... Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me by Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must all come

true.” Then he opened their minds to understand these many Scriptures.
(Luke 24:27, 44, 45, NLT)

For the first time, they truly understood the Scriptures. How eager are you for God to open your eyes to some truth in Scripture?

A love letter

So, what is the Bible? It is God’s love letter written to you. You will find yourself reading parts of it repeatedly – even memorizing the words. God tells you how he tenderly knit all your inner parts together in your mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13), how sin came into the world (Genesis 3) and how he loved you enough to send his Son to die and provide a way for you to be in his family. (John 3:16) As you get to know God’s love, his character, his ways and his plans for you, you will fall in love with him. How cruel it would have been for God to save you and then fail to give you an instruction book. How foolish it would be for you to refuse to read and study it. Take to heart the instructions God gave Joshua: *“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”* (Joshua 1:8, NIV) What a promise! Truly, the Bible is an extraordinary book!

Attitude Check:

- What attitude do you have toward the Bible? Does your attitude motivate you to daily read, study and obey what God tells you to do?

Explore:

- Read “Study the Bible” (in the front of the *Student New Testament*.)
- Write three reasons in your journal why you believe the Bible is God’s Word to you.

Talking with God:

- Dear Father, thank you for your words to me in the Bible. Give me a hunger to read, a spirit and a mind to understand, and a deep desire to obey what you have instructed.