



THE BIBLE: GOD'S AMAZING BOOK • SESSION 1

# God's Amazing Book



Why should I care about a book written thousands of years ago?  
Can there be anything relevant in it for me?

No one in their right mind would doubt that the Bible is a remarkable book. It has long been the number-one bestseller. Each year, people buy hundreds of millions of Bibles. The Bible — the whole book or part of it — is available in more than 1,500 languages, and each year it sees yet more translations. All this despite the fact that the Bible is no lightweight paperback novel.

The Bible is not a single book either. It is a collection of 66 books written by 40 human authors whom God inspired. It uses more than three-quarters of a million words written over a period of more than 1,000 years. And there is an amazing harmony in it from beginning to end!

## The Bible's Unique Message

The Bible tells the story of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament foretells His coming, and the New Tes-

tament explains why He came. Most religious writings describe humankind's attempts to reach up to God by doing something to earn favor or acceptance. Only the Bible's message of Christ reveals what God has already done for humankind. Many religions have savior images, but none equals Christianity's unique claim. The Bible declares that the eternal, true, and living God became a human man, one without sin. This man is Jesus, who died and rose again so that everyone who believes in Him can live forever (see John 1:12; 3:16).

The Bible is not an easy book, however. In some places, it appears complicated, and in others, it seems dry. There are several possible explanations for this.

- First, it was written in a different period of history: the most modern bits are nearly 2,000 years old! And it was written in cultural and political contexts vastly different from our own.
- Second, the text we read has been translated from other languages, usually Hebrew in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament. It's tricky to translate the nuances of other languages, especially ancient ones.
- Third, the Bible contains a huge and sometimes bewildering array of subjects, characters, and literature types.

This is what *Time* magazine (December 30, 1974) had to say about the reliability of the Bible:

After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived—and is perhaps better for the siege. Even on the critics' own terms—historical fact—the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack. The miraculous can be demythologized, the marvel explained, but the persistent message of the Bible will not go away.

### Why Read the Bible?

Sometimes people make judgments about the Bible without having read it for themselves. If you have never read the Bible, or have read only parts of it, there are some good reasons to dig in for yourself.

*It tells us how to live.* The Bible is God's Word to humankind. He is its author, and His words reveal what He is like and how He thinks. God loves the people He made and wants us to know how to live well. So the Bible offers us guidelines for how to deal with almost every situation—some things to avoid and other things to do. It provides a set of values and principles to help us plot our course through the stormy waters of a world where a clear sense of direction is hard to find.

What does God say about true peace and joy? Can God love me even when I mess up? Who is really in control of my destiny? Concerns like these are addressed in the pages of the Bible.

*It is a spiritual antibiotic.* The Bible can destroy the “diseases” that assault our souls and spirits. God's truth combats the lies that attack our spiritual health. When we fall for these deceptions, we get a distorted view of ourselves, of others, of God, and of the world. But the truth we find in the Bible renews our thinking and restores our health.

*It is nourishing food.* God created humankind to thrive. He gave us the Bible as the most nourishing spiritual food anyone could ever find. A high-Bible diet fosters growth, vitality, and abundant life. But we can't just binge on it once in a while—we need a regular intake of Scripture. The Bible will feed our inner being and bring us assurance and strength in a way nothing else can.

*It has power to change us.* Anyone who has ever tried to kick a bad habit or just become a better person knows how hard change can be. Sometimes change seems so out of reach that we're tempted to give up. But God is a great life coach, and He has the power to do what we cannot. The Bible says that the same power He used to bring Jesus back from the dead is available to work in us to bring about real and lasting change.

Sound too good to be true? It's not! Find out for yourself as you continue in this course over the next few weeks.

*When I first joined Community Bible Study, I was very nervous and couldn't understand the Bible well, but I wanted to know about God. Then I started to change slowly. Homework time got shorter. Studying the Bible was fun. My shyness slowly disappeared. I know now that everything is made by God, even my timid personality.*

—Gina