



THE BIBLE: GOD'S AMAZING BOOK • SESSION 2

Letting the Book Speak



If we want to be people who live God's way, it's important for us to get to know and understand His book, the Bible.

This week we'll look at some ways we can do that.

DAY 1—INDIVIDUAL STUDY

1. Throughout history, God's people have put high importance on knowing personally what God's book says. Read Psalm 119:97-104 and 2 Timothy 3:15. What are some of the benefits of reading and studying the Bible?

2. What challenges do you experience when it comes to reading and studying the Bible yourself?

DAY 2—ENCOURAGING DISCUSSION

3. When we discuss and debate ideas, it can help us decide what we think and believe. Read Proverbs 27:17 and Acts 17:11-12. How could it help you to be part of a small group that discusses the Bible?

4. *Read Acts 8:26-38. How did this very small group (just two people!) experience life-changing results when they discussed the Scriptures together?

DAY 3—EFFECTIVE TEACHING

5. Learning about the Bible from others who have studied it, or have known the Bible for many years, is helpful. Read Nehemiah 8:7-8 and Acts 2:42. How can effective teaching of God's Word benefit those who listen?

6. How can you make the most of opportunities to receive such teaching?

DAY 4—INSIGHTFUL COMMENTARY

7. We can also learn by reading what has been written by people who know, understand, and live out what the Bible says. Read Proverbs 13:20 and Acts 15:30-31. What wisdom and help could we receive by reading what wise people have written about God's Word?

DAY 5—CARING COMMUNITY

8. Jesus showed His followers how to demonstrate love. Read John 13:34-35; Philippians 2:3-4; and Ephesians 4:32. What does Jesus's kind of love look like?

9. What are some reasons you would enjoy being with people who treat each other the same way these Bible verses describe?

*Questions marked with a * are optional, but they're really great questions. If at all possible, please take the time to go deeper and experience richer engagement with God in His Word.

The Bible claims to be God’s message to the world. What evidence do we have for believing the Bible to be God’s amazing book?



Impressive Manuscripts

A large part of the Bible deals with eyewitness accounts—firsthand information passed on with meticulous care. When the Gospels—the four books that describe Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection—were first circulating, many people were alive who would have known about these events personally. If the facts had been inaccurate or made up, there would have been an uproar.

There are more and earlier manuscripts of New Testament writings than any other respected ancient writings. Well over 5,000 manuscripts of New Testament writings exist in Greek. Some of these were copied a mere 200 years after the original documents were composed. Scholars accept the validity of works by authors like Homer, Plato, and Sophocles with far weaker manuscript evidence than exists for the New Testament. And as time goes by, earlier manuscripts come to light, and these confirm the later copies’ accuracy. All in all, the manuscript evidence for the New Testament is impressive. And there is an equally significant number of early Old Testament manuscripts dating back as far as 150 BC.

So the Bible is a very well-documented, carefully compiled piece of literature. It is an authentic record of events, preserved over the centuries with unequalled accuracy. It cannot be dismissed lightly.

What Archaeology Reveals

From as long ago as 2,000 BC, there is archaeological evidence that confirms many of the details given in the Bible: facts about the city Abraham came from, inscriptions from the time of Moses, the unearthing of some of Solomon’s military installations.

Turning to the New Testament, scholars had dismissed John’s pool-of-Bethesda description of “five roofed colonnades” (John 5:2) as poetic license. But archaeologists excavated the site in 1888 and discovered all five porches, just as John had written. Before that find, in 1866, at the Church of Saint Anne—located in the same area—an artifact was found containing an inscription proving that people believed that the water had healing properties!

A British scholar detailed other notable evidence in his archaeological study. He found that Luke—author of the third Gospel and the book of Acts—was a reliable historian and an accurate writer.

Many Prophecies Fulfilled

Another thing that makes the Bible such an amazing book is the way it predicts future events, which then happen. It doesn’t make predictions of the sort that you can read in your average horoscope—“Today you will meet a handsome stranger. Tomorrow it will be dry, if it’s not raining.” The Bible foretells specific events that are unmistakably fulfilled. There are hundreds of them in the Bible.

Ezekiel predicted in the sixth century BC that Tyre (a major city and thriving industrial center) would be defeated and utterly destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar and then Alexander the Great brought about

Community Bible Study found its way to Chile, and this is where I started studying the Bible on my own, not just taking notes on someone else’s study of God’s Word.

—Portia

the fulfillment of this prophecy in 332 BC. It even says in Ezekiel 26:14, “I will leave only a bare rock where fishermen can dry their nets” (GNT). Sure enough, after Tyre was taken over by the Arabs in AD 1291, it became a poor fishing village.

Among many other fulfilled predictions, Amos foretold the downfall of Israel; Jeremiah, the capture of Jerusalem; Isaiah, the Jews’ return from exile; and Jesus, the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus’s own coming to the earth was predicted in a precise way. The prophet Micah said that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2). He would enter Jerusalem on a donkey (see Zechariah 9:9) and be rejected and killed (see Isaiah 53:3-5) while men gambled for his clothes (see Psalm 22:18). Prophets made all these predictions hundreds of years before Jesus came. Each one happened.

Survival under Attack

The Bible has had its enemies, yet it has survived all their attacks. Not only has it survived, but its influence continues to grow. This is even more remarkable when you consider the nature of the opposition.

There has been opposition from philosophers. Some have relegated the Bible to the level of ancient superstition, a set of ideas appropriate to the dawn of civilization but irrelevant to our advancing culture. The 18th-century French thinker Voltaire said, “Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth!” He predicted that the Bible’s days were numbered, and as more advanced philosophies took over, an enlightened world would soon discard it. But more than 200 years after his death, the Bible is more widely read than ever before.

There has been opposition from governments. From time to time, over Christianity’s last 2,000 years, the Bible has been outlawed. During the

French Revolution, it was seen as an instrument of aristocratic oppression, and owning or reading a Bible was officially discouraged. Even in the last 100 years, millions of people have lived under government regimes that actively discouraged them from owning and reading the Bible.

There have been other types of opposition too. New theories arise that question the Bible’s accuracy. Some public figures scorn it. Television documentaries attempt to discredit it. Individuals cast doubt on its capacity to provide a coherent explanation about humanity and the world. But if the Bible can take the worst that the last 2,000 years have thrown at it and still flourish, it seems unlikely to be in danger from any 21st-century critic.

It Works!

The four areas of evidence outlined so far all point to the reliability of the Bible, but this is the crux of the matter: the message of God’s amazing book works in real life.

The Bible makes sense of the world, provides an explanation for what has gone wrong, and gives a blueprint for change. And this blueprint works. Millions of people—and this is no exaggeration—have read the Bible and found that it was like looking into a mirror. Everything it says about human nature is true.

The Bible has no qualms about describing the mess we are in—steeped in greed, pride, envy, lust, and selfishness of every kind. No sugary coating on this bitter pill! What makes it even harder to swallow is that no one escapes judgment, no one at all.

But it’s not all bad news. The Bible provides the antidote to this mess that we humans have created. There is an opportunity for a fresh start: we can be forgiven of the wrong things we’ve done and experience a new power for living.