



THE BIBLE: GOD'S AMAZING BOOK • SESSION 7

Meeting the Author



Over the weeks of this study, we have seen that the Bible really is an amazing book. It has many exciting stories, wise advice for good living, and a variety of ideas that make for good discussion and debate. But the best thing about it is that we can actually meet the author!

DAY 1—A PERSONAL INVITATION

1. The Gospels and Acts tell us many stories of people who met the author. For each reference, write something you notice about these encounters with Jesus.

Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-9

The woman at the well: John 4:1-42

Saul/Paul: Acts 9:1-19

Cornelius: Acts 10:1-8, 19-48

The jailer in Philippi: Acts 16:16-34

2. Read Isaiah 55:1; John 6:37; and 7:37. What invitations did God give? What are some reasons people say yes? Why would some say no? What do you say?

DAY 2—FREEDOM FROM GUILT

3. The Bible, God's Word, instructs us on how to live in harmony with Him and each other. When we rebel against His counsel, we mess everything up. All human beings have made mistakes and done things they know are wrong. This causes guilt. It also brings consequences that seriously affect peoples' lives and relationships. But most important, it affects our relationship with God. Read Psalm 51:1-4. King David committed adultery. What stands out to you from his prayer of confession?

4. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has made a way for us to receive God's forgiveness and make a fresh start. Read 1 John 1:7-9. What is our part in being forgiven, and what is Jesus's?

DAY 3—A NEW LIFE

5. Many people think they have to clean up their lives before coming to Jesus. But that's backward. When we say yes to Jesus, He makes us new. Read Mark 2:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; and Titus 3:5. What do you learn about this renewal?

DAY 4—WHEN TROUBLE COMES

6. Trouble? Yes, trouble. As Jesus's follower, you can expect not only great things but also trouble. When we become His followers, people around us respond to us differently. Some are glad, others may make fun of us, and some will even be openly hostile. It was this way for Jesus Himself and for His first followers. Read John 15:18-19; 16:33; and 2 Timothy 3:12. What do these verses say about what a Christ follower can expect?

7. Perhaps people have been less than supportive when they found out you were in this study group. How does the prospect of trouble fit in with your idea of being a Christian?

DAY 5—HELP TO LIVE RIGHT

8. As Jesus gives us a new heart and a new mind, we actually start wanting to live His way. But that's a tall order, and no one can do it simply by gritting their teeth and trying hard. The great news is that help is available. Read the following verses: John 14:15-17; Romans 8:26-27; and Philippians 2:13. What do you learn about the help Jesus offers?

Over the past few weeks, you've only begun to scratch the surface of why the Bible is so amazing. Every time you open the Bible, you're likely to discover more reasons it's so remarkable—it's just that kind of book!



What's most amazing about the Bible is that its author, God—the Creator and ruler of the universe—invites you into a relationship with Him.

God Wants a Relationship with Me?

It goes without saying that God doesn't need us. He is more intelligent and powerful than anyone or anything else in the universe. He owns and rules everything, and He is perfect in every way. If God wants a relationship with hopelessly flawed human beings, it's clearly not because we're so great—it's because He is!

When God made the world, He filled it with people. But not because He was lonely or lacked anything. He did it because He is relational. He wants to share Himself—His love, kindness, goodness, wisdom—with the people He created, with you! When the earth was created, God strolled in the garden paradise He had made for the first man and woman, and He talked with them.

But this first man and woman rebelled against God. He'd given them only one rule—just one—and they broke it. They didn't trust God enough to follow His ways. As a result, they broke the fellowship between them and God.

That's what sin does. Sin always causes pain and separation among individuals—whether it's between two people or between a person and God.

However, God still wanted a relationship. He loved the people He had made and didn't want them to be separated from Him, even though they had betrayed Him. So He took the first step to repair the relationship. From the earliest pages of the Bible, we see that God had promised a way to be recon-

ciled to Him. As you have learned, the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, ultimately made that reconciliation possible.

Okay, but How?

Think about healthy human relationships. Even in the best of them, someone eventually is going to do something that hurts the other person. In a mature and strong relationship, when one person hurts another, both parties take steps to restore the relationship. The offender admits the wrong done and its damaging effects, asks for forgiveness, and promises to make an attempt to not repeat the hurtful behavior. Reparations or restitution may be offered to make things right. And the injured person, in return, offers forgiveness. If this process goes well, the relationship is renewed, and trust and intimacy can be restored.

It's a little like that with our relationship with God. When we chose to do things our way instead of His, our willful actions damaged the relationship and separated us from Him. But unlike the human relationship you read about above, this relationship is not between two flawed humans. With God, there's no give-and-take where we take turns forgiving and asking forgiveness. In this relationship, we're always the ones at fault. God never is.

The Word of God we studied in Ephesians chapter 1 helped me to commit my life to Jesus. I learnt how to pray and to remain in Jesus Christ.

—CBS Participant in Malaysia

To make matters even more difficult, it's often hard for us to admit our wrong because we know that we will never measure up to God's standards. We'll always fall short. And we know that there is no restitution we could ever make for the damage we've done to the relationship. After all, what payment could a finite human ever offer to make things right with an infinite God?

But God knew all this. Before He ever created the first human being, He knew that humans would be disloyal to Him. So He had a plan. Before the foundation of the world, He had already planned to send His only Son, Jesus, into the world to live the perfect life we could never live. And then, Jesus willingly gave up His life to redeem us and pay the price for our salvation. It's as if we were on death row and He volunteered to die in our place. There's nothing we could ever do to make restitution to God—but the precious life of His perfect Son was enough. John 3:16 says it this way: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

So you see, the payment has already been made. All that remains for us to do is this:

- Admit to God that we have sinned against Him.
- Ask for His forgiveness.
- Believe that forgiveness truly is possible because of what Jesus did for us.

If you do and believe these things, you can also tell Him that, with His help, you will not repeat the hurtful behaviors that had separated you from Him in the first place. How can you make such an audacious promise? That's what we'll talk about next.

Say Yes to a Personal Relationship

When you put your trust in Jesus, you become part of God's family. John 1:12 says, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” As God's child, you have all the benefits of a Father-child relationship. God pledges to help you, teach you, defend you, and take care of you. He promises to be with you and to never leave you, no matter what.

Of course, you can't see Him—God is Spirit, after all. So how is this possible? Well, here's one more amazing thing: God actually sends His Spirit to take up residence in you! Way back in Old Testament times, God foretold this through His prophet Ezekiel:

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26-28)

When you say yes to God's invitation, He not only forgives and welcomes you into His family. He also gives you power to enjoy the life He has created for you. He doesn't leave you alone to figure out how to live His way or what to do when trouble comes. God, through His Spirit, comes into your life, walking and talking with you, helping you enjoy the companionship He made you for.

There's way more to it than these few words can explain. But there's a whole book about it that can help you learn everything you need to know about this new life. It's called *the Bible*. And as you are surely realizing by now, it truly is God's amazing book!