



## **The Bible – God’s Word to Us**

The Bible is God's Word, and we base our whole outlook on life on what it says. If someone asked you, "What is the Bible?" Could you answer? And why do we call it God's Word?

The Bible isn't like a book you find in the library or on Amazon. You don't read it because it has good reviews or a cool cover. It's not a storybook or a self-help book. It is one of a kind, and while it contains stories and things that will help you, the message it holds is so much more. As you go through these lessons, you will learn what the Bible is, what is in it, and most importantly, how to read and learn from it.

Through this module, you will explore:

- The unique arrangement and authorship of the Bible
- The various forms of literature contained in the Bible
- How the Bible was transmitted and how it is translated
- The message God has given us through the Bible
- How the Bible is really all about Jesus and his story
- How to study the Bible and grow closer to Jesus through it

## Parent Assignment

Parents, this assignment is for you to complete on your own before leading your children through the rest of this module. We encourage you to talk about this with your spouse or with another Catechism parent.

- **Step 1:** *Estimate* how much time your family spends in God's Word in a typical week. Think back over the past week and how many times you sat down with the Bible, and for how long, and add it all up.
- **Step 2:** *Compare* the amount of time your family is spending in the Word to the amount of time you are spending on other activities - sports, screen time, other hobbies.
- **Step 3:** *Evaluate* the balance of your time between time spent in God's Word and time spent on other things. Be honest with yourself in asking a simple question, "Am I satisfied with this balance?"
- **Step 4:** *Brainstorm* ways that you can spend more time in the Word as a family, and make those times more interesting, engaging, and enjoyable.
- **Step 5:** *Develop* a plan that will bring your family more consistency and engagement in the Word.

(**Note:** The purpose of this assignment is not to shame you into action, but to encourage you to step back and honestly assess your leadership of your family. If needed, plan for change. If you feel regret or shame, take it to the cross; Jesus gives you unlimited restarts. At the end of this module, we will have some ideas and advice for how to dig into Bible study. Keep your plan handy and reevaluate it after completing this module.)

### A note about this module

There are three main parts to this module:

1. What is the Bible?
2. What is in the Bible?
3. What is the Bible's main message?

At the end, there is a "Diving Deeper" section that will help you better understand how to read the Bible. This section is not necessary for continuing through the Catechism modules but may be helpful to you if you have time to tackle it.

## Part 1: What is the Bible?

In this first lesson, we'll be looking at what the Bible is: How it is arranged, who wrote it down, how it came to be in your hands and in your language, and how to pick the best translations and tools to help you get the most out of it.

Before we begin, talk as a family about your questions. What have you wondered about the Bible? What parts are confusing or mysterious to you? What parts do you like best? What's one book of the Bible you would like to learn more about? Do you have other questions about the Bible?

Jot your answers to these down somewhere. As you go through these lessons, hopefully your questions will be answered, but if they are not, at the very end you'll have an opportunity to share your questions and get some answers!

### Unique Arrangement

The Bible is unique. It is not actually a single book, but rather a collection of writings over the course of many years. Let's look closer at how the Bible is put together.

#### 2 Testaments, 66 Books

The Bible contains 66 distinct works - what we refer to as "**books**" - and each one has its own title, chapters and verses, and overall themes.

Those books are divided into two major sections - the Old Testament and the New Testament.

**The Old Testament** contains things written for and about the people of Israel to prepare them for the coming Messiah. They were written between 1500 BC and 500 BC. These writings also help us understand who God is, what he is like, the world he made, and who we are. Most importantly, it shows us the history of God keeping his promise to send the Savior.

**The New Testament** contains the record of the Messiah, that is Jesus our Savior, what he said and what he did, as well as things written by the first leaders of the Christian Church. These books were written between 50 AD and 100 AD. It gives the Church direction and reveals God's promises for the end of all things.

Your Bible probably has a table of contents listing all 66 books, but they might not be separated into categories the way they are in the chart below. You can use a pen, pencil, or marker and label the categories in the table of contents in your Bible. Or remove this chart from the lesson and stick it in the front of your Bible. This will be very helpful in understanding what each book is for!

6 • Bible Overview			
BIBLE OVERVIEW			
OLD TESTAMENT - 39 BOOKS			
PENTATEUCH - 5	HISTORICAL BOOKS - 12	POETRY & WISDOM - 5	MINOR PROPHETS - 12
GENESIS	JOSHUA	JOB	HOSEA
EXODUS	JUDGES	PSALMS	JOEL
LEVITICUS	RUTH	PROVERBS	AMOS
NUMBERS	1 SAMUEL	ECCLESIASTES	OBADIAH
DEUTERONOMY	2 SAMUEL	SONG OF SONGS	JONAH
	1 KINGS	MAJOR PROPHETS - 5	MICAH
	2 KINGS		NAHUM
	1 CHRONICLES		HABAKKUK
	2 CHRONICLES		ZEPHANIAH
	EZRA		HAGGAI
	NEHEMIAH		ZECHARIAH
	ESTHER	DANIEL	MALACHI
NEW TESTAMENT - 27 BOOKS			
GOSPELS & ACTS - 5	PAUL'S EPISTLES (LETTERS) - 13		GENERAL EPISTLES & REVELATION - 9
MATTHEW	ROMANS	1 THESSALONIANS	HEBREWS
MARK	1 CORINTHIANS	2 THESSALONIANS	JAMES
LUKE	2 CORINTHIANS	1 TIMOTHY	1 PETER
JOHN	GALATIANS	2 TIMOTHY	2 PETER
ACTS	EPHESIANS	TITUS	1 JOHN
	PHILIPPIANS	PHILEMON	2 JOHN
	COLOSSIANS		3 JOHN
			JUDE
			REVELATION

## Unique Authorship

Unlike most books, the Bible wasn't written down by a single person. It is the work of many people over a long period of time, but all of them working under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Over its 66 books, the Bible had...

- 40 authors from 3 different continents
- Writing over a period of 1,600 years
- And yet, they all gave one central message: *God's eternal grace*

Here are just a few of the biblical authors:

**Moses** - a Hebrew boy adopted as an Egyptian prince who was exiled and became a goatherd

**Ezra** - a Jewish priest who returned from exile in Babylon and served the new King

**David** - a shepherd boy and musician who became a King

**Matthew** - a Jewish tax collector and social outcast who became a disciple of Jesus

**Luke** - a Greek doctor who became a Christian missionary

**Peter** - a fisherman who became the leader of the Christian Church

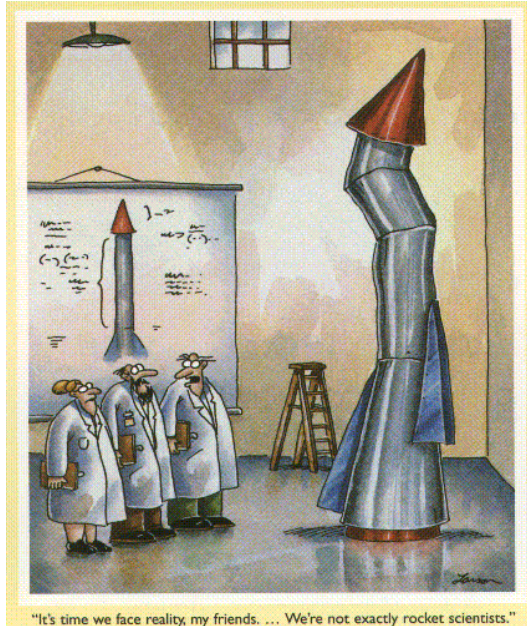
**Paul** - a Jewish rabbi who imprisoned and murdered Christians until he met Jesus

As a family, discuss the following thoughts:

- As you look at the list of authors, you'll notice that they come from all kinds of backgrounds. Many of the biblical authors are even unknown. What does this say about the kinds of people God uses to accomplish his purposes?
- Some people say that because we don't know all the authors of the Bible, then it can't possibly be God's Word. What would you say in response to that?

## Verbal Inspiration

If you put any two experts on a single subject in a room and have them discuss a topic, odds are they will not be able to agree. So how can so many people from such diverse backgrounds talk about the most complex subject of all - who the true God is and what he's like - and present a unified picture?



The Bible tells us who its true author is. Though people wrote down the words, there was a mastermind behind it all:

**“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 Peter 1:21).**

**“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).**

We call this concept **Verbal Inspiration**.

**"Verbal"** refers to the fact that the exact words of Scripture are what God led people to write down.

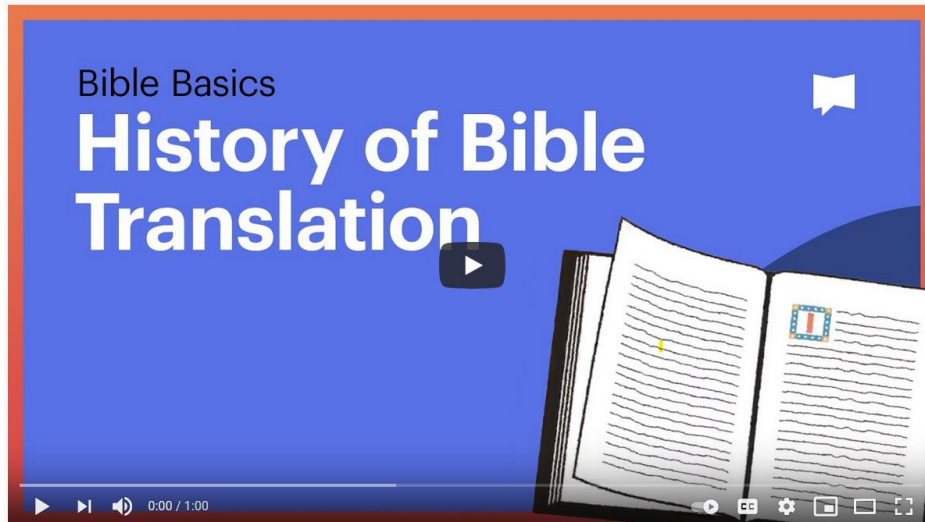
**"Inspiration"** is related to the Latin word for "breathe," and it means that as God's Spirit (the word in both Hebrew and Greek for Spirit is the same word as breath) led the people to write the things they wrote.

In other words, God put his Spirit in this people so that they wrote exactly what he wanted them to write. God still used their own personal styles and perspectives and thoughts, but he moved them so that they would write exactly what he wanted.



You probably know that the Bible you read is a translation – that is, the words God gave us are in a different language. So how do you know you can trust what you have?

*Watch the video from the Bible Project called “History of Bible Translation.” Use the QR code to the right to find it →*



The Bible was not written in English. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The New Testament was written in Greek.

Both languages have changed a lot over the years (just like English has), so translators spend years learning the original language and figuring out how to say the same thing in English.

Most translations are done by a whole team of people, with many revisions until they get it right. All this is because they want you to know what God says to you in his Word.

Can you trust a translation? The simple answer is, “Yes.” Translators are usually devoted Christians who want to communicate God’s Word faithfully. But can you trust *every* translation? Not always. Not all translations are created equal.



## So how do you choose the best translation?

Some translations are close to word-for-word from the original text. We call these “**literal translations,**” and they focus on “faithfulness to the text.” An example is the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Some translations try to express the meaning as best as possible. We call these “**paraphrases,**” and they focus on “readability for the reader.” An example is the Message Bible (MSG).

Many translations fall somewhere in between. One is not necessarily better than another. Literal translations can be harder to understand, but paraphrases might be biased. When choosing a good translation, here are some things to investigate:

- Is it more of a literal translation or a paraphrase?
- Who translated it and why? (Example: the Jehovah’s Witnesses use their own translation of the Bible that purposely supports their false teachings)
- How does this translation compare to others? Look at a familiar passage and compare different translations.

We recommend that you regularly use more than one translation. You get a better sense of what the original text meant, and it helps you practice **discernment**.

We recommend that you consider using one of the following translations:

- New International Version (NIV)
- English Standard Version (ESV)
- English Heritage Version (EHV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)
- Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

All of these translations can be opened using websites like Biblegateway.com or Bible.com, or apps like the Youversion Bible App.

***Now it's time to review what we've learned so far.***

**Knowledge Check 1**

1. Choose the *best* answer: The Old Testament was written,
  - a) So long ago we couldn't possibly know anything about it.
  - b) Just a few years before the New Testament was started.
  - c) Over about 1,000 years ranging from 1500 to 500 B.C.
  - d) Over about 500 years ranging from 2000 to 2500 A.D.
  
2. Choose the *best* answer: The New Testament
  - a) Is like "The Old Testament: The Sequel!"
  - b) Tells us about the life and ministry of Jesus and the early Church.
  - c) Was probably written hundreds of years after Jesus.
  - d) Contains a lot of myths and legends about who people thought Jesus was.
  
3. Choose the *best* answer: The Bible was written by,
  - a) A few monks hiding in caves sometime around 200 A.D.
  - b) A guy who was trying to start a religion.
  - c) Many different authors who were inspired by God.
  - d) The Apostles in the years shortly after Jesus died.
  
4. **True or False?** Since the Bible was written down by human beings, it's not really God's Word. It's just human ideas about God.
  
5. **True or False?** "Verbal Inspiration" is the idea that even though human beings wrote down the words, God inspired them so that every word is what God wanted.
  
6. **True or False?** Since the Bible was written in ancient languages, we can't be sure that the Bibles we have today are right.
  
7. **True or False?** All translations are different, so it's good to use multiple translations to get a better understanding of what the original text said.

## Part 2: What is in the Bible?

We know what the Bible is, so now let's explore what is in the Bible. The Bible has a unique message, and it is unlike any other holy book or religious text in the world. And the Bible has a central message that we don't want to miss.

### Law and Gospel

Some religious books contain histories, philosophies, and moral ideas. Some contain rules that people are supposed to follow. Some contain encouragements to live a certain way.

The Bible certainly contains histories, moral ideas, and even rules. But everything in the Bible can be summed up in two main teachings: Law and Gospel.

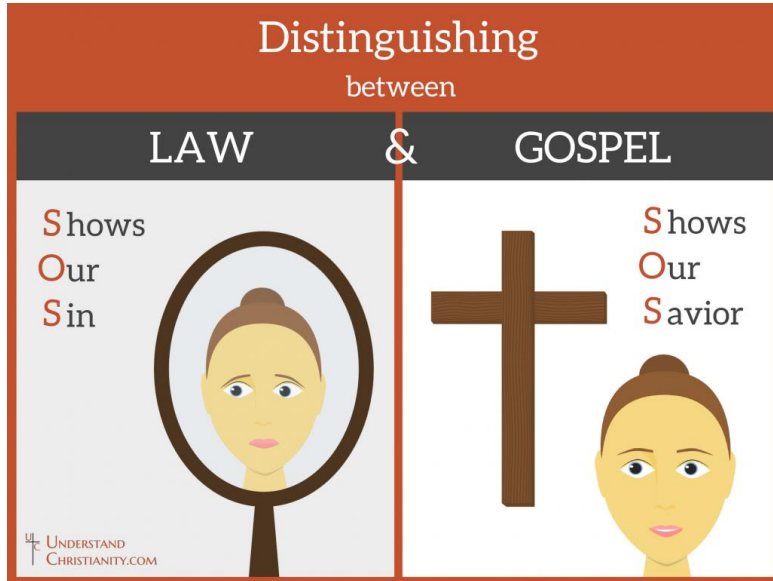
Here's a helpful chart to understand the basic differences between Law and Gospel:

Law	Gospel
<b>Commands</b> God tells us what to do and what not to do	<b>Promises</b> God tells us what he has done and what he will do
<b>Ten Commandments</b> God gives us his list of rules	<b>Creed</b> We summarize who God is and how he has saved us
<b>God's Will</b> God tells us what he wants from us	<b>God's Works</b> God tells us what he has done for us
<b>Threats and Promises</b> God threatens punishment if we fail and promises rewards if we succeed	<b>Only promises</b> God promises to give us life and salvation and joy even if we fail
<b>Shows our Sin</b> The Law reveals our failures and our lack of perfection	<b>Shows our Savior</b> The Gospel reveals Jesus as the Savior and the forgiveness he brings
<b>Accuses and Condemns</b> The Law tells us that we are sinners who deserve only wrath and punishment	<b>Forgives</b> The Gospel tells us that God loves us and has forgiven our sins
<b>Death</b> The Law brings death because it cannot give us faith	<b>Life</b> The Gospel gives us faith, and faith saves and gives eternal life

## Here's another simple way to think of the Law and the Gospel:

The Law is a mirror that shows us our sin

The Gospel is a message that shows us our Savior



The Law tells us what God demands of us. It is God's message of "do!"

The Gospel tells us how God has saved us. It is God's message of "done!"

When we read Scripture, it can be helpful to ask this simple question:

**"Does this show me what God expects me to do, or does this show me what God has done for me?"**

## The Story of God

*What if you walked up to someone on the street and said, "What is the Bible?"*

*They might give you a lot of different answers, but lots of them could be summed up into one of three ideas:*

- Some say the Bible is a book of **parables**, just stories that tell us something about people, about the world, or some ideas about God.
- Some say the Bible is a book of **proverbs**, just moral ideas that help you to live well in the world and with people.
- Some say the Bible is a book of **prescriptions**, rules you have to follow if you want to get right with God.

The Bible does contain parables, and also true stories about what God is doing in the world. But it's not **just** a book of stories.

The Bible does contain proverbs, and God gives us wisdom about how to live well in the world and with people. But it's not **just** a book of morals.

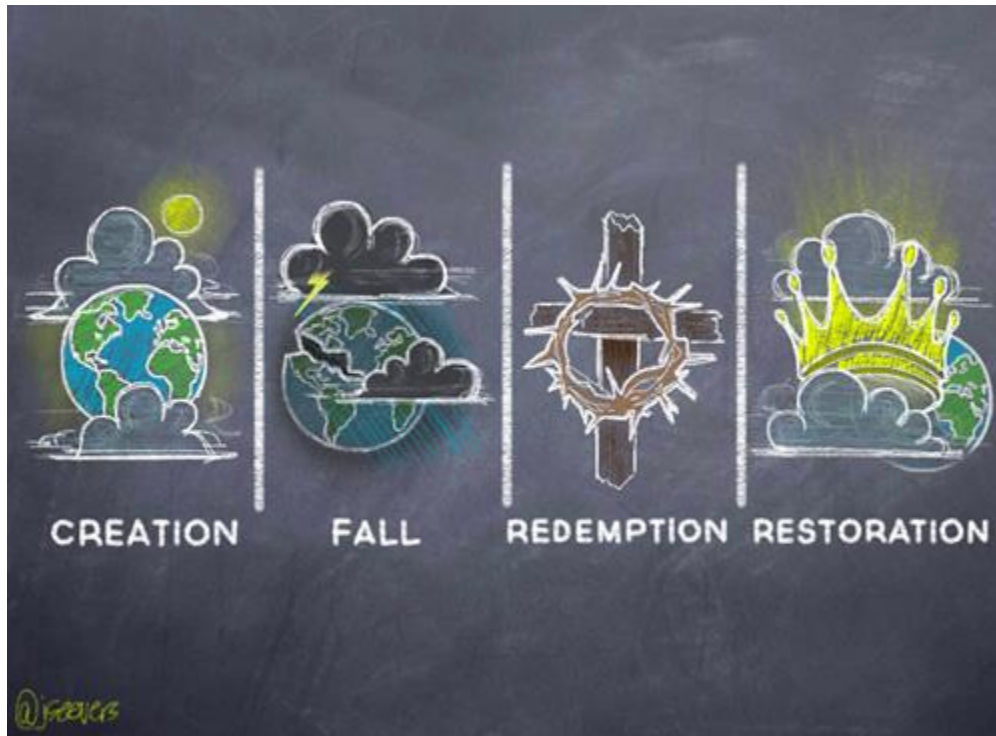
The Bible does contain prescriptions, and God gives rules that he expects his people to follow. But it's not *just* a book of rules.

The Bible is ultimately **one big story**. It's the **One True Story** about the God who made all things, how he loves and cares for his creation. It's about how his creation fell into corruption, sin and death, and what God did to redeem it. It's about what God will do to renew and restore his creation at the end of all things.

The Bible makes more sense when we see it as the Story of God and his interaction with his creation. Check out a video from the Bible Project called "The Story of the Bible" for more about this. You can find it on Youtube, or by following this QR code:



We could summarize the story of the Bible into four main themes - **Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.**



In Genesis, God shows us how he created the world and his purposes for it.

We see how mankind fell into sin, and all creation was corrupted along with it.

The rest of Scripture shows us how God brought the Savior and achieved redemption through him.

At the end, Revelation shows us a vision of how God will restore all Creation.

It's a masterfully woven story that goes through all of human history. You play a part in that story as well, as God invites us to follow Jesus on to victory.

## Everything Points to Jesus

**The Bible is God's One True Story, and the central figure in that story is Jesus. Everything in the Bible points to him. From start to finish, God is revealing himself through Jesus, and calling our hearts to know him, to trust him, to love him, and to follow him.**



The Creation story shows us how God fashioned the whole world and made it a good place. Sin entered the picture, and so God promised to send a Rescuer, a Redeemer, a Savior - Jesus.

The first books of the Bible show how God chose a family and made it into a nation and promised that this family and this nation would bring the Rescuer - Jesus.

The rest of the Old Testament tells the story of the nation of Israel, their failings and God's faithfulness, and how God moved all human history to bring into the world the Redeemer - Jesus.

The first books of the New Testament tell the story of how a very special baby was born, how he grew into a man and said and did amazing things, and how he gave us his life and rose again to be our Savior - Jesus.

The rest of the New Testament tells of how that man's disciples grew in a Church, and into a movement that took the Gospel message to all the earth, so many more people could become disciples of Jesus.

The last book of the New Testament tells how the world is going to come to an end, and when it does God will reunite Heaven and Earth to be the perfect Creation once again, and we will spend eternity living with Jesus.



*Now let's take a few minutes to review what we've learned.*

## Knowledge Check 2

1. **Fill in the blanks:** The two main teachings of the Bible are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Finish this sentence: **"The Bible is ultimately..."**
3. **True or false?** The Bible contains stories that tell us things about who God is, who we are, and how the world works.
4. **True or false?** The Bible contains moral ideas and philosophies about how to live well in the world and with others.
5. **True or false?** The Bible contains rules that God wants us to follow.
6. **True or false?** The Bible is much more than just stories, morals, and rules.
7. **Finish this sentence:** The whole Bible is designed to focus our attention on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Memory Treasure: 2 Peter 1:21 and 2 Timothy 3:16



As a family, work to memorize the following passages:

[2 Peter 1:21](#) - 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 Timothy 3:16](#) - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

## Tools and Tips for Studying God's Word

*Now that we've seen what the Bible is and what's in it, the last question is... How can we get the most out of it?*

Here are some things to remember as you get started:

1. **God wanted you to read this.** He gave us his Word because he wants to speak to you through it. So don't think of it as a book that is hard to understand that only certain people should read. It is for you.
2. **What it says is what it means.** Don't look for hidden meanings or try to find some kind of allegorical interpretation. Just take it for what it says.
3. **Do some research.** Use a study Bible or a commentary or some other tool to help you understand the original context of what you're reading.
4. **Allow difficult passages to be difficult.** Sometimes you'll read something that you don't understand. Instead of trying to invent an explanation, be okay saying, "I just don't understand it yet." Maybe God will help you understand it later on.
5. **Practice, practice, practice.** Reading the Bible is a skill, and it takes time and practice. The more time you spend doing it, the easier it becomes. Start small and easy - 5-15 minutes at a time.

**Here are a few other tips that might help your family:**

- As you read a section of Scripture, try to answer these four questions:
  - What is this telling me about God?
  - What is this telling me about myself and my need for a Savior?
  - What is this telling me about my Savior and what God has done for me?
  - What is this leading me to do?
  
- Keep a Bible reading journal, and as you read the Bible, jot down words, phrases, thoughts, and ideas that you read or hear, or that come to mind.
  
- Read the Bible out loud. The Bible was written to be read to its original hearers, and sometimes it just makes more sense when you hear it read out loud.
  
- Here is a simple outline for reading the Bible as a family:
  - Begin with a simple prayer: "Lord, open our hearts and send your Holy Spirit, to help us learn and grow."
  - Open a section of Scripture, not too long - about half a chapter.
  - One person reads out loud, while the others listen for words and phrases that catch attention.
  - When the reading is done, ask, "What did you notice from this section of Scripture?" Give everyone a chance to answer.
  - Once you've talked as much as you want to, close with prayer: "Thank you, Lord, for this time in your Word. Increase our faith. Amen."

- Here are some books you can find on Amazon (or other booksellers) that may be useful to your family: resources your family might find helpful:
  - The Story Bible
  - The Family Devotional Bible
  - Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God
  - The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story
  
- Here are some websites worth exploring as a family:
  - The NETBible ([www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org))
  - Biblegateway ([www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com))
  - Youversion Bible Online ([www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com))
  - Blue Letter Bible ([www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org))
  
- Look for a good commentary series, like the *People's Bible* series.

There are many, many tools, and tricks out there for studying the Bible. But the best one of all is the one that makes it easy and enjoyable for you to spend time in God's Word. So, find what works for your family and make the most of it.

## Part 3: What is the main message of the Bible?

### Our Need for Forgiveness

To fully appreciate the work Jesus accomplished for us, we must first understand what we were without him.

**Read Genesis 3:1-19.** This is the true story of how sin entered the world.

#### What did you read and hear?

- What was the lie the snake used to deceive Eve?
- Why did Eve buy into this lie?
- Why didn't Adam intervene?
- Look especially at verses 16-19. How does this explain the troubles we face in life?
- How do those troubles prove that sin is still with us?

Before Adam and Eve sinned, humans were good - inside and out. They had no sin. But ever since Adam and Eve sinned, all people have fallen under the curse of sin. Later on, we read that Adam had children "in his image" - that is, sinful like he was. And every human since then has been born with sin. Let's continue on to see what the Bible says about our natural sinful state...

The story of Adam and Eve shows us how sin entered the world. But the Bible shows us that since then, the whole world and all people continue to be bound by sin. It tells us that since birth, we were like dead people, doomed to destruction:

**Ephesians 2:1,3** - As for you, you were *dead in your transgressions and sins...* We were by nature objects of wrath.

We are sinful from birth, and that sinful nature leads to sinful actions. Consider what God tells us to do and to be:

**Matthew 22:37-39** - Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

**Matthew 5:48** - Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

**1 Peter 1:16** - for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

#### Questions to ponder:

Have you always loved God fully and completely?

Have you ever decided to do your own thing, instead of listening to God?

Have you always loved other people perfectly?

Have you ever had a day where you didn't do anything you regret?

Have you always done all the things God wants you to do?

We have sinned and we do sin. It doesn't help to make excuses. All we can do is confess that it's true.

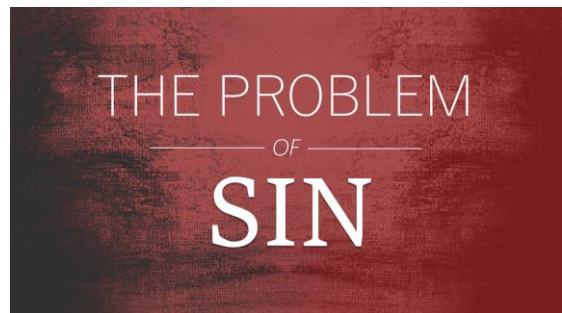
God could have responded to our sinfulness by destroying us. He would have had that right.

But he chose something else: forgiveness.

#### Memory Treasure: Matthew 22:37-39

As a family, work to memorize the following passage:

**Matthew 22:37-39** – Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’



## **Suggested Family Activity:**

Open your Bible to 1 John chapter 1 and starting with verse 5 read all the way through 1 John chapter 2 verse 2 (1 John 1:5-2:2).

As John says, it is good to confess our sins. The old saying, “Confession is good for the soul” is more than just nice words. To be honest about our sin frees us to hear God’s Gospel promises without anything to hold us back.

**Talk as a family and be honest with each other and confess to each other. Share one reason you need forgiveness for your thoughts, words, and actions this past week.**

**Here are some ground rules:**

- **Don’t try to make excuses. Just be honest and say what is on your heart.**
- **No judgment or consequences allowed. Parents, promise your kids that they won’t “get in trouble” for what they share. (See below for one major side note.)**
- **Everyone has to say something. This includes parents. (Babies and/or nonverbal children get a pass).**
- **Don’t interrupt when someone is speaking.**

After everyone has spoken, go back and read 1 John 2:1-2 again, and remind each other of your forgiveness.

Finally, as a family talk about what this experience was like.

Was it difficult to be open and honest with each other? Parents, did you find it hard to confess to your kids? Kids, how did it feel to have your parents just listen, without fearing consequences? Would you like to do this again in the future?

(Important Side Note to Parents: If your child shares something that makes you concerned for their safety, then it is essential that you do something to help them. Reassure them that you are not angry, and they are not in trouble, but that you need to help them and will do whatever it takes to keep them safe and cared for. It is not a consequence to get them help.)

Remember that your sins are completely forgiven by Jesus. In the next section we will begin reviewing what God has done to save us, and how our faith connects us to his saving work.



## God's plan to save us

It's a simple message: God sent Jesus to save us. Jesus came to set us free from slavery to our sinful natures and from the condemnation we deserve.

**Read John 19:16-30 to hear the story of how Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins.**

Jesus' death on the cross was a real event, and both the Bible and other historians tell us about it. But only the Bible explains the true significance of his death. Look at some passages that explain what Jesus' death means for us.

- **Galatians 4:4-5** – But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.
- **Romans 5:19** – For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.
- **1 Corinthians 5:3** – For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
- **1 John 2:2** – He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

**Did you know?** The Bible is *not* the only place in history where Jesus is mentioned. Historians from around the time of Jesus talk about him, what he did, and how he died. Three specifically mention that Jesus died on a cross. If you ever hear someone say, "Jesus is just a myth!" you can be sure they are mistaken. They probably haven't spent enough time reading history! All serious historians agree - Jesus was a real person who really died on a cross!

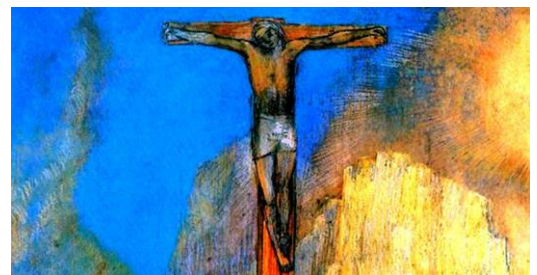
By his death, Jesus has paid the whole price of sin. We are free. God does not hold our sins against us. We stand before God righteous, as though we had never sinned.

This is the central message of the Bible: God so loved the world that he sent his only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

## Memory Treasure: 1 John 1:8-9

As a family, work to memorize the following passage:

**1 John 1:8-9 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

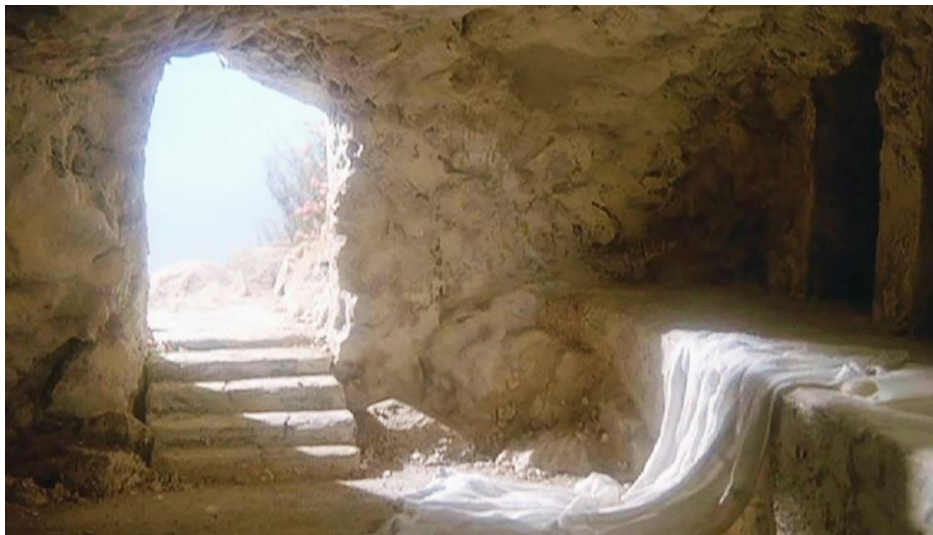


## Resurrection

Jesus died, but he did not stay dead. The Bible tells us that our faith depends on Jesus' resurrection. It is the proof that Jesus is who he says he is, that he did what he said he would do, and that forgiveness and eternal life are really ours.

**Read Matthew 28:1-10. After these people had seen Jesus crucified and dead, how do you think they would feel at seeing Jesus alive and well in front of them?**

You can read more about Jesus' resurrection appearances in Mark chapter 16, Luke chapter 24, John chapter 20, and Acts chapter 1.



In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains why these appearances are so important to our faith as Christians.

**Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-28. Why is Jesus' resurrection so important to our faith?**

Not everyone believes Jesus really rose from the dead. Many say it is impossible that a dead person can come back to life. But look again at the evidence:

- Jesus appeared in person to the women at the tomb
- Jesus appeared in person to his disciples many times after his resurrection
- Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time after his resurrection
- James, Jesus' brother, did not believe in him until Jesus met with him in person after his resurrection
- Paul, an enemy of the Christians, became a Christian missionary after meeting the risen Jesus

Why would so many people claim to have seen Jesus alive, especially when doing so meant persecution and possibly death? Why would people like James and Paul suddenly become believers when they were not?

**Watch this video titled “Evidence of Jesus Resurrection from a Historian” by searching for it on YouTube or using this QR code  
→**



A few possibilities exist:

1. That the disciples were all lying, and willing to die rather than tell the truth.
2. That all those who saw Jesus alive after his death were suffering from a mass hallucination.
3. That someone was paying them to claim Jesus rose from the dead and promising them fame and power.
4. That the disciples were mistaken and only thought they were seeing the risen Jesus, when in fact it was someone else.
5. That Jesus really did rise from the dead, a miracle only God can do.

Which seems most likely? If we believe God can do miracles, then the possibility that Jesus rose from the dead is not so difficult to believe. All the other options seem sort of silly. This is why Christians all over the world believe that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

### **Suggested Family Activity:**

This should take about 20 minutes:

- Make sure everyone has some paper and something to write with.
- Go to YouTube and search for a video called “Dead Come Alive - An Animation.” The channel is called “Full of Eyes.”
- Watch the video together as a family, paying close attention to the words and images.
- After watching the video, spend 10 minutes quietly, with everyone putting something down on their paper. You might journal, or just jot down words or phrases that come to mind or draw a picture. Let the video you just watched inspire you.
- Share with each other what you put on your paper and why.

### **What did you think?**

Did you enjoy this activity? Would you like to do something like it again as a family? If so, plan time to do so in the future.

***Now let's take a few minutes to review what we've learned.***

### **Knowledge Check 3**

1. Choose the *best* answer: Sin entered the world when...
  - a) God created it and decided sin should be part of it.
  - b) Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit God told them not to eat.
  - c) The angels lost a battle to the demons.
  - d) Humans first evolved from monkeys.
2. Choose the *best* answer: God created us and wants us to be...
  - a) As good as we can be, even though we'll fail.
  - b) Better than other sinful people.
  - c) Perfect, just as he is perfect.
  - d) Perfectly content with who we are, sins and all.
3. Choose the *best* answer: God chose to deal with our sin by...
  - a) Sending Jesus to be our Savior and take our place.
  - b) Requiring us to do more good work to save ourselves.
  - c) Destroying humanity and starting over with perfect people.
  - d) Just shrugging his shoulders and ignoring sin.
4. **True or False?** We need Jesus to save us from our sins.
5. **True or False?** Because of Jesus, we have been adopted into God's family.
6. **True or False?** Jesus' death on the cross is a good story, but it probably didn't really happen.
7. **True or False?** Jesus' death paid for all the sins of everyone.
8. **True or False?** The message of the Bible is that if we're good enough, we can get to heaven by serving God.
9. **True or False?** Jesus really rose from the dead, assuring us that he is truly God, and our sins are really forgiven.

## Wrap Up

At the beginning of this module, you were asked to write down any questions you had about the Bible. Have they all been answered? Probably not! That's okay, because studying the Bible is a lifelong pursuit. You should always have questions about the Bible, no matter how long you study, no matter how much you learn.

To wrap up this module, please take a moment to talk as a family about what you have learned. What has stood out to you the most? What surprised you? What makes you more interested in studying the Bible?

If you still have questions, we would love to hear them. Please feel free to email your questions to any member of the pastoral staff.

## Bonus Material for going deeper about the Bible

*The books of the Bible are not all written the same. They have different genres.*

“**Genre**” is a word that means “a type of art, music, or literature with distinct form, style, or subject matter.” When we use it to describe the books of the Bible, we are saying that different books of the Bible have different styles and purposes, so we read them differently.

<b>Pentateuch:</b>	"Pentateuch" means "Five Scrolls." These are the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, which tell the origins of God's people and give the laws that governed the lives of the people of Israel.
<b>Histories:</b>	These are Books of the Bible that mostly report specific things that happened to specific people at specific times.
<b>Prophecies:</b>	These are Books of the Bible that mostly record God's messages to specific people for a specific purpose. Sometimes these messages include things that will happen in the future.
<b>Wisdom:</b>	These are Books of the Bible that tell us about God, about the world and how it works, about how to live well in God's world, or offer songs of prayer and praise to God. Often these include a lot of poetry.
<b>Gospels:</b>	These are the unique historical, eyewitness accounts of the life and work of Jesus the Savior.
<b>Epistles:</b>	"Epistles" means "letters." These are messages from specific church leaders to individuals or groups of people, but they are God's Word to the Christian Church.

Some books of the Bible will contain more than one kind of writing. For example, many of the historical books include some words of prophecy, and many of the prophetic books contain some history.



Keeping the genre in mind helps you avoid misunderstanding. For example, books of prophecy often contain things that are meant to be interpreted symbolically. Books of history often report the sinful behavior of people, even if God did not want them to do what they did. Keeping the genre in mind helps us see how a particular book fits into the overall picture of God's story.

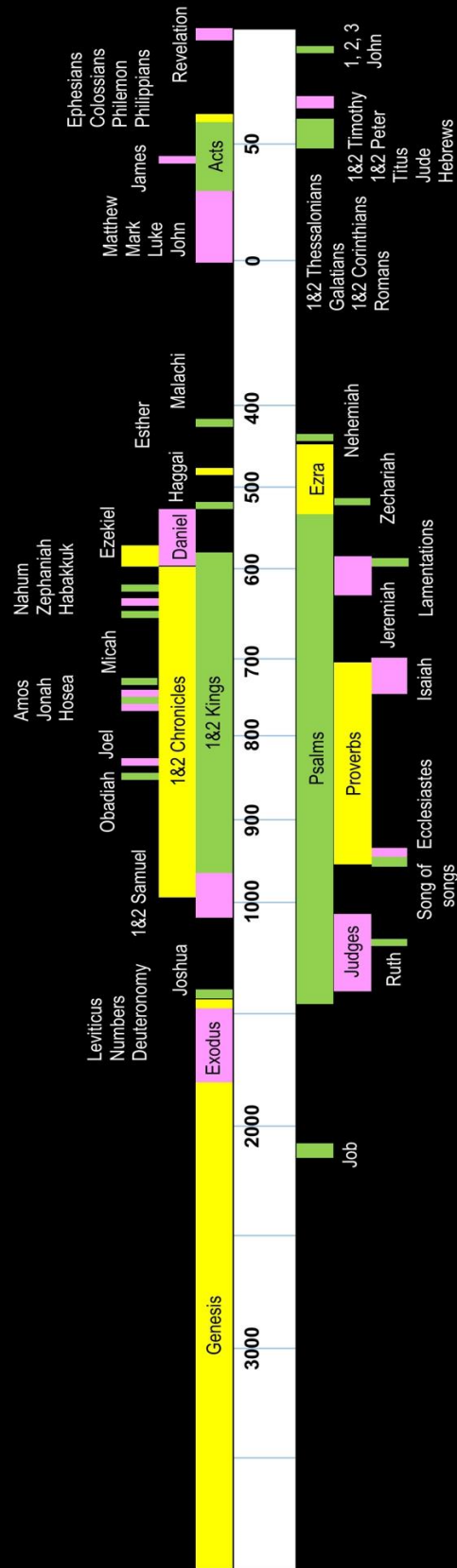
***Did you know that the Bible is not arranged chronologically? That is, if you read it cover to cover, you'll notice that some books are not placed in the order that they were written. And in some books, the events they record aren't even in the order that they happened!***

The Bible is arranged by topics and collections, and within certain books the events are recorded based on their relationship to each other, to certain characters, to subjects they address, and to their significance to the overall story. The reason for this is that the early Bible writers didn't think about events in chronological terms, but rather in terms of importance.

To get a better idea of what we mean, take a look at the chart on the next page. As you do, notice how some books of the Bible overlap in time, and they don't always appear in the Bible in the order they happened.

When you read your Bible, take a moment to ask, "When did this section I'm reading happen? How does it relate to the other books that might be around it? How does it relate to other books that were written at the same time?" Good commentaries especially can help with this!

# Bible timeline



Nation of Israel      Israel split north & south      Exile      Israelites under rule



## Unique Book

*We've looked at the unique arrangement and unique authorship of the Bible. Now for review - and to give you a little more insight - check out a video from the Bible Project called "How to Read the Bible: What is the Bible?" You can find it by searching on Youtube, or by typing in this link: <https://youtu.be/ak06MSETeo4>*



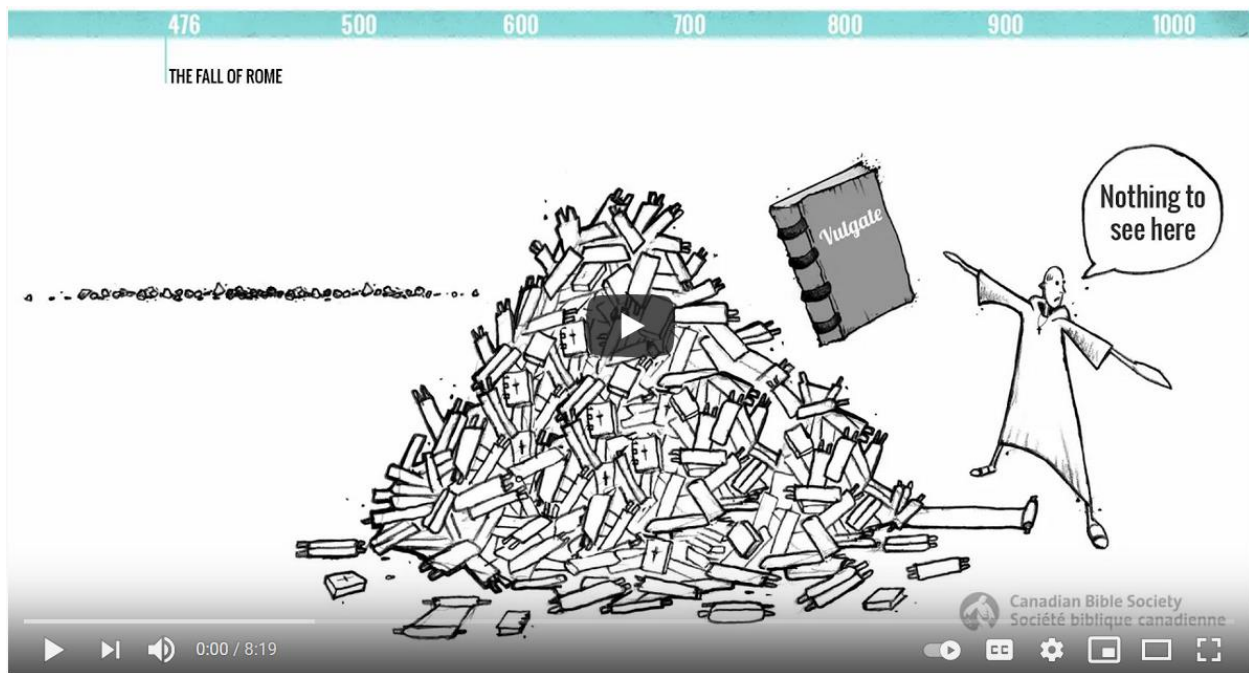
As a family, discuss the following question:

**Lots of people doubt that the Bible could be God's Word. They might say that it was written by ignorant people, they might say it was written too long ago to be trustworthy, or they might just say they don't believe in God. Based on what you've learned about the Bible, why would you say that you can trust that the Bible is really God's Word?**



## Transmission and Translation

*God worked through people to have them write exactly what he wanted. But he had them write it in their own language and their own time period. How did he get those words to us now and in a language, we understand? Some people think we can't trust the Bible because they assume that over many years, lots of changes have been made. Take a look at a video from the Canadian Bible Society called "The Bible Explored - a Brief History." You can find it on Youtube or follow this link: [https://youtu.be/r0Zm8\\_B\\_4wA](https://youtu.be/r0Zm8_B_4wA)*



We use the word "transmission" to refer to how the original text of the Bible got into our hands. There were many groups that made a point of faithfully copying the texts of the Bible so that anyone who got their hands on one could be sure that it was accurate. Here's a breakdown of the steps they would use to get an accurate copy:

- **Step 1:** Make a copy of the original.
- **Step 2:** Double check your copy by counting the number of letters per line. If there is a difference, burn the copy.
- **Step 3:** Double check your copy by going letter by letter and word by word. If there is a difference, burn the copy.
- **Step 4:** Have the Head Scribe double check your work by the same process as Steps 2 and 3. If there is a difference, burn the copy.
- **Step 5:** Have the Head Scribe read your copy out loud while all the other scribes follow along in verified copies. If there is a problem, burn the copy.
- **Step 6:** New copies that have survived the process are verified and able to be sent or sold.

You can see why it would be very difficult for mistakes to get through.

Very rarely, though, mistakes still did get through. Scholars who try to figure out what the original texts are supposed to be are called "**Textual Critics**." Textual critics will tell you that of all the mistakes that are found in all the thousands of copies of the biblical texts that have survived from the past, less and 1% are anything other than minor spelling errors, word order changes, or use of synonyms. And even the "major" differences do not have any impact on biblical teaching and doctrine.

Want to know more about the history of the Bible? Check out the National Geographic video "The History of the Bible, Animated" on Youtube.

(<https://youtu.be/2AuDhWiO2D4>)



### ***But how do we know?!***

How can we be sure that there aren't bigger mistakes? How can we be sure that there were major changes?

When it comes to the Old Testament, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed that what we have today matches what was around at Jesus' time. For years, the main text of the Old Testament was a thing called the Masoretic Text, which dates to about 1,000 AD. But in the 1940s we discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of ancient documents dating to about 250 BC. Among those scrolls were copies of large sections of the Old Testament. They match almost identically to the Masoretic Text, despite being separated by over 1,200 years of history.

Family Assignment: Do some research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Look up some videos, find a book or a website, and learn a little more about their discovery and significance to biblical scholarship. Talk as a family about how it shows God's preservation of the biblical texts.

### ***And what about the New Testament?***

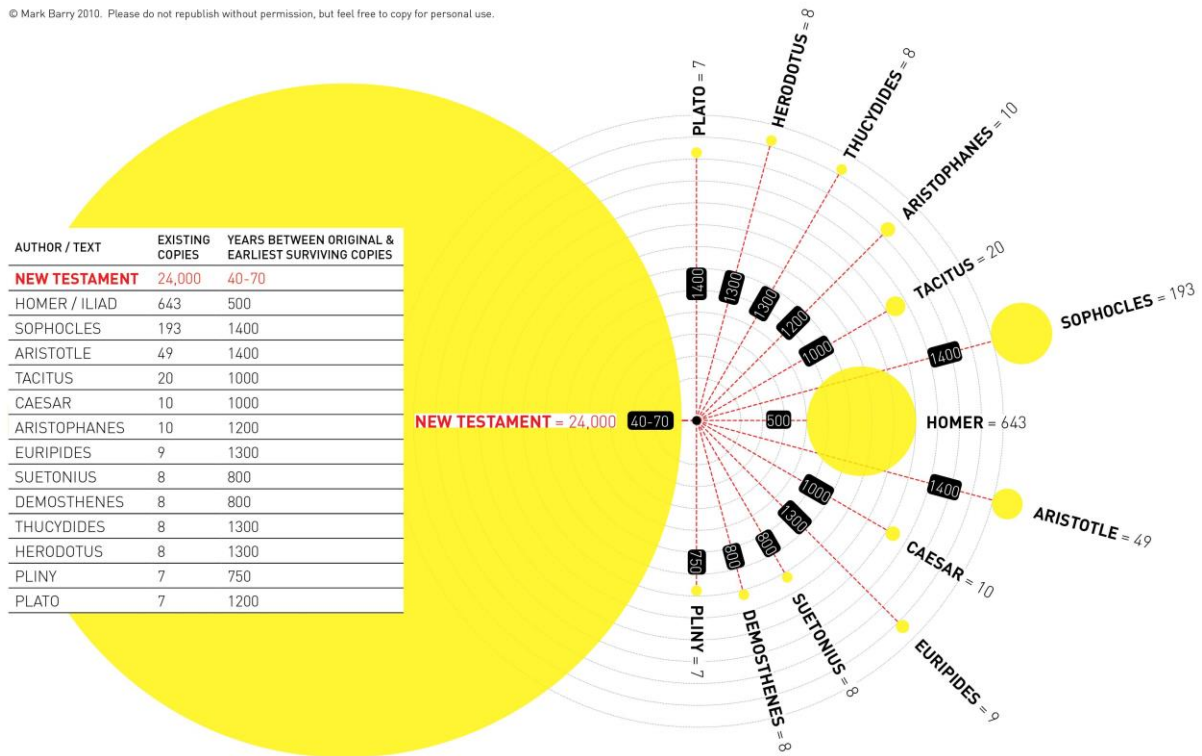
There are tens of thousands of copies of the New Testament, some complete, some just pieces. Many of them date back to as early as the 100s AD. Some fragments date back to even before the year 100. With all these copies, you would think there would be evidence if some major changes had been made. There isn't.

Just take a look at this graph. You'll see that while no one has doubts about the words of Homer, or Plato, Caesar, or other ancient historians, there is *much* less evidence for their words than there is for the New Testament.



## THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARED TO OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

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One important piece of evidence can be found in the New Testament itself. Rather, it can't be found because the evidence **isn't** included in the New Testament.

Open your Bible up to the last chapter of Acts. You will see that the story of Acts ends with Paul living in Rome and sharing the Gospel there. But it never mentions how and when he died.

We know that Paul was beheaded by the Roman Emperor in A.D. 64, but the fact that Luke (the author of Acts) doesn't mention the martyrdom of one of the most important figures in the Early Church means one simple thing: Luke wrote Acts before Paul died.

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. So, if Acts was written before A.D. 64, then Luke was probably written sometime in the 50s. We know Luke borrowed some pieces from the Gospel of Mark, and that Mark was already widely circulated before Luke wrote his Gospel. So, Mark was probably written in the 40s. And we know that Mark got most of his information directly from Peter.



Jesus died in A.D. 33.

With thousands of copies of these documents, many of which date to as early as A.D. 90-125, and with knowing that they were written so close to the events of Jesus' life and death, we can be sure that what we have in the New Testament is accurate.

But even better, we have the Holy Spirit. When you read the Bible, he uses it to give you faith and lead you closer to Jesus.

## Knowledge Check Answer Keys

### Knowledge Check 1

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. True

### Knowledge Check 2

1. Law/Gospel
2. ...the One True Story of God's loving interaction with his world
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. Jesus

### Knowledge Check 3

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True