

HOLY SCRIPTURES

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

Matthew 4:4
(Deuteronomy 8:3)

THEME

The Bible is the story of ancient people but it is our story too. The responses others have made to God may serve us, not as set rules and answers, but as guidelines to help us with our daily decisions and actions.

BACKGROUND

The Catechism describes Holy Scriptures as the Word of God “because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible.”

The Bible is the story of people-of their responses to God and of their interpretation of His responses to them. This covenant relationship is described in the form of narratives, directions, poetry, and literature, which are regarded as sacred because they reflect God's intervention in human history and, thus, serve as a guide for discerning His will.

One misconception about the Bible is that it is one book. Actually it is a collection of books, written by many different authors in many different times and places. It is essentially divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Though not canonized, some additional books called the Apocrypha are included in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, and Anglican (which includes Episcopal) Bibles.

Testament means “covenant.” The Old Covenant, as stated in the Catechism, “is the one given by God to the Hebrew people.” Starting with God’s deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptians, the story unfolds as the people again and again fall into sin and God again and again redeems them. The Old Testament story ends when the Jews are allowed to come back from their exile in Babylon.

The New Covenant (or New Testament) is the story of the new relationship with God brought about by the Incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ who “promised to bring us into the kingdom of God and give us life in all its fullness.”

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

The earliest stories and traditions in the Bible were passed down from one generation to the next orally; that is, they were told by older members of a tribe or family to younger members who, in turn, passed them on to the next generation and so on. With the invention of writing around 1000 B.C.E., the Hebrews began to write down these stories which had been repeated through the years.

Scribes who tried to provide a uniform text met with problems, however. The Hebrew alphabet had no vowels and no division between consonants so that not only was it difficult to separate words, but a different vowel in a word could change the whole meaning of the passage. For instance, THRTHWSWTHTFRMNDVD could read both “The earth was without form and void” or “The earth was without farm and void.” Thus, interpretation was made difficult and sometimes arbitrary.

Around 400 B.C.E., after the prophet Ezra expounded the LAW to the Jewish exiles who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, a feeling grew that God no longer spoke to His people through prophets. Hence, the Jews felt a need to decide which religious books were sacred so that those Jewish people who had been scattered and under the rule of foreigners for so long could know God’s will.

The destruction in 70 A. D. of the focal point of Jewish worship, the Temple, along with the rise of Christianity and its writings, finally prompted the formation of a council of rabbis to sanction certain books and exclude others. Between 90 and 100 A.D., this Council of Jamnia canonized (authorized) the books, all written before 400 B.C.E., that make up the present Hebrew Bible.

OLD TESTAMENT COMPOSITION

PENTETEUCH (also call LAW or TORAH)

- prehistory and stories of the patriarchs
- the Israelites’ exodus from slavery in Egypt
- other laws given by God to the Israelites
- wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years
- entry of the tribes into the Promised Land of Canaan

PROPHETS (includes historical as well as prophetic books)

- conquest of Canaan
- period of the Judges
- establishment and fall of the monarchy
- books by and about prophets-men inspired by God to help people understand their situation from God’s perspective

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WRITINGS

- the exile of the Jews from the Promised Land to captivity in Babylon
- older traditions put in literary form after the Jews' return from Babylon
- sorrow associated with the Babylonian Captivity as well as affirmation of and trust in God
- anticipation of God's dramatic intervention in history to bring salvation to His people in Daniel, the last book of the Old Testament to be written

APOCRYPHA

- books excluded in Hebrew and Protestant Bibles because they were written after 400 B.C.E. and, therefore, were considered uninspired books included in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican (and Episcopal) Bibles as worthy of being read even though not canonized.

NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

In contrast to that of the Old Testament which spanned centuries, the writing of the New Testament was done over a much shorter period of time. Jesus' ministry to the writing of the Book of Revelation extended over only about one hundred years.

Although not first in order, the letters (or epistles) of Paul are thought to have been the first books of the New Testament written. These letters, addressed to new Christian converts, were written not with the intent of having them become Holy Scripture, but rather as messages to churches that Paul had founded, covering a variety of subjects.

The first four books in the New Testament, the Gospels (meaning "good news") are a record of the life and teachings of Jesus. The first three-Matthew, Mark, and Luke-are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because, as the word "synoptic" implies, they have enough similarity and duplication of material to be looked at together. The Gospel of John is quite different from these three, full of symbolic meaning and emphasis on the supernatural.

The rest of the New Testament is composed of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles-a history of the expansion of the early Church from Jerusalem to Rome-and epistles by people other than Paul, ending with a highly symbolic and future-oriented book call the Revelation.

The New Testament does not contain all of the early Christian writings. For several centuries, there was some disagreement over exactly what to include. By the end of the fourth century, however, there was general acceptance of the 27 books that make up our New Testament, and they were established as canonical by a Church council.

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NEW TESTAMENT COMPOSITION

GOSPELS (means ‘good news’)

- life and teachings of Jesus
- Matthew, written for Jews to prove that Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy of a messiah
- Mark-the earliest Gospel, which was written for Gentiles to proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Son of God
- Luke, written for Greeks to proclaim Jesus as a universal messiah, emphasizing His humanity
- John, written to instruct and interpret Christ’s teachings to the early Church, with much symbolism and emphasis on Christ’s divinity

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

- history of the early Christian Church in the first century
- written by the same author as Luke
- first half of the book about Peter; second half about Paul

EPISTLES OF PAUL

- first New Testament books to be written
- messages to churches that Paul had founded
- range in subject matter from theological analysis to practical solutions to problems

LATER EPISTLES

- pastoral epistles-instruction for pastoral oversight of congregations
- catholic or general epistles-letters that deal with the problems of a developing church institution

REVELATION

- apocalyptic book like Daniel (last Old Testament book to be written), which deals with the end of time
- highly symbolic language
- heavenly visions that reveal the future

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BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Exodus 20:1-17	The Ten Commandments: God's Covenant with Israel
Exodus 19, 20	The story of Moses when he received the Ten Commandments
Deuteronomy 6:4-9	The Shema-the Jewish confession of faith
Leviticus 19:18	The Old Testament law that required love of neighbor
Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-38	The Great Commandment of the New Covenant

PRAYER BOOK REFERENCES

An Outline of the Faith commonly called the Catechism	pp. 845-862
Holy Scriptures	p. 853
The Old Covenant	pp. 846-847
The Ten Commandments	pp. 847-848
The New Covenant	pp.850-851
Historical Documents	p. 868

PRAYERS

Use the Collect for Proper 28 in The Book of Common Prayer on page 184 or 236; make up a simple prayer of your own; or use one of the following:

Heavenly Father, you have inspired your people to tell their stories in Holy Scripture; help us, through learning about and reflecting on their stories, to live our own stories according to your will. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Almighty God, you have given us rules to live by. Help us to follow these rules in our daily lives so not only that we may enjoy your blessings but also that you might bring blessings to others through us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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SOURCES

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HOLY SCRIPTURES
Lesson One: Composition of the Bible

LESSON ONE: COMPOSITION OF THE BIBLE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to familiarize children with the Bible and how it was composed and written.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Open class time with a prayer. For early primary classes, keep discussion very simple and basic. Spend the major portion of the class time on the activity(s) and discuss ideas as you help them work.

For older primary and intermediate students, distribute Bibles—preferably a modern translation such as the Good News Bible. Make sure that they all have the same translation.

For all ages, hold up a Bible and ask, “Does this look like one book or more than one book?” and “Do you think the Bible is one book or many books?” After their responses, explain that the Bible is really a collection of books under one cover. These books were not written by one person at one time; they were written by many different people over a long, long period of time. In fact, some of the stories date back before the invention of writing and were written down much later than when they actually happened.

Explain ORAL TRADITION. This is what we call the stories that were not written down at first but were told from one generation to another and remembered. Since people in biblical times did not have books, newspapers, or TV, they relied on their memories a lot more than we do. The little details in these stories may have changed somewhat in the retelling, but the main points of the stories did not. They showed how people thought about God and how they saw God responding to them.

We still have oral tradition. Most families have stories that have been passed down through at least several generations. Ask the class if they can recall any such stories in their own families that they have been told by parents or grandparents—stories about their ancestors. These stories basically reflect the ways families perceive themselves and are complete with heroes, heroines, good times, bad times, etc. In the same way, the Bible is a collection of stories about our ancestors and their relationship with God. We learn things about ourselves as we learn about our ancestors.

For the younger classes, end the discussion here. The important things for the little ones to remember are that the Bible is a collection of many books under one cover, that it contains

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stories of how ancient people-our ancestors-thought about and related to God, and that it was put together under one cover many years after the stories occurred.

For the older classes, discuss the CANON of the Bible. Explain that the word “canon” means “measure” and that this refers to how the determination was made of which books to include in the Bible. Briefly talk about the Council of Jamnia which canonized the Old Testament and the councils which decided on the New. Canonization ensured that false teachings called “heresies” would not be included.

Have students open their Bibles to the Table of Contents, where they will note that the list of books is divided into two parts (three if the Apocrypha is included.)

Ask if anyone can explain the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Read them the answers pertinent to this question from the Catechism (pp. 846, 850, and 853 of the BCP), and give a brief explanation of the Old and New Covenants. For older classes, include the Apocrypha and explain why it is included in some Bibles but not in others.

Hand out copies of the included sheet that lists the books of the Bible. Explain that all of the books of the Bible are not written in the same form. Some are stories, some history, some poems, and some warnings and predictions of things to come. Some are lists of laws and some are letters.

On the sheet you have given them, the books are divided into general categories. Choose examples of each literary form and have students look up several of these in their Bibles, using the Table of Contents. See if they can tell the difference in the way the passages are written.

Some Bibles have MAPS in the back that show how countries and land possessions changed throughout history. If the Bibles you are using have maps, have students turn to these and look at them. Point out a few differences in Old and New Testament times.

Some Bibles also have in the back what is called a CONCORDANCE, which is like a dictionary. It gives the meaning of words, as well as where a particular word may be found in the Bible. The Good News Bible has a Word List with definitions.

Tell students that, in the next class session, they will learn more about the Bible as it is their own story and not just the history of a people of long ago. If you choose to do the STORYTELLING AND DISCUSSION activity in the next lesson, ask them to think of (or ask their parents to tell them) a story about someone in their own family history to bring to class next week.

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ELEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

SCRAPBOOK

Have students begin books that, during the year, will become their personal “Bibles”—a record in writing, art, and poetry that indicates their understanding of the topics in this course as they apply to the students themselves.

Give each student a $\frac{1}{2}$ ” to 1” loose leaf notebook, preferably with a clear cover in which a sheet of paper can be inserted. (An alternative, if this is too expensive, is a cardboard report folder.)

For this lesson, have students design covers for their books. If a report folder is used, the cover may be laminated or secured with clear Contact paper to the front.

At the top of the cover page have them print:

(NAME): THE STORY OF MY FAITH

Instruct them to draw under the words either a self-portrait or something that they associate with themselves—a favorite activity, a favorite place, a favorite thing—anything that is meaningful to them.

Keep these notebooks at Church School until the end of the year and add to them each week.

MATERIALS

- a loose leaf or cardboard notebook
- colored paper
- colored markers
- Contact paper
- scissors

CRAFT

Let children make scrolls to give them an understanding of how the first copies of the Bible were written down.

After your discussion about the composition of the Bible, have students choose a familiar Bible story and draw a picture of it on a piece of legal-sized paper. If they have trouble

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getting started, suggest several stories.

Glue each end of paper to a coat hanger roll where it can be rolled with the picture on the inside.

MATERIALS

- one piece of legal size paper for each student
- markers
- glue
- two coat hanger rolls for each student

GAME

This game will familiarize students with the names of Old and New Testament books.

On index cards, write the names of the books of the Bible, one per card. Indicate whether it is in the Old or the New Testament. Make two cards for each book.

Deal all the cards to the players. Have them put down pairs. The player who can name the most books of the Bible goes first and asks the person on his or her left for an Old (or New) Testament book. If this card makes a pair with one in his or her hand, it is put down and he or she gets to ask again. If the card does not make a pair, play moves on to the next player. The winner is the first player to run out of cards.

MATERIALS

- index cards
- marker

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MIDDLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

SCRAPBOOK

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Give each student a $\frac{1}{2}$ ” to 1” loose leaf notebook, preferably with a clear cover in which a sheet of paper can be inserted. (An alternative, if this is too expensive, is a cardboard report folder.)

For this lesson, have students design covers for their books. If a report folder is used, the cover may be laminated or secured with clear Contact paper to the front.

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Instruct them to draw under the words either a self-portrait or something that they associate with themselves—a favorite activity, a favorite place, a favorite thing—anything that is meaningful to them.

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MATERIALS

- a loose leaf or cardboard notebook
- colored paper
- colored markers
- Contact paper
- scissors

CRAFT

Make scrolls to give students an understanding of how the first copies of the Bible were written down.

After your discussion about the composition of the Bible, have students choose a familiar Bible story and draw a picture of it on a piece of legal-sized paper. If they have trouble getting started, suggest several stories they might choose from.

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Glue each end of paper to a coat hanger roll where it can be rolled with the picture on the inside.

MATERIALS

- one piece of legal size paper for each student
- markers

GAME

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MATERIALS

- index cards
- marker

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OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS		NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS	
Penteteuch		Minor Prophets	Gospels
1. Genesis		28. Hosea	1. Matthew
2. Exodus		29. Joel	2. Mark
3. Leviticus		30. Amos	3. Luke
4. Numbers		31. Obadiah	4. John
5. Deuteronomy		32. Jonah	
History		33. Micah	
6. Joshua		34. Nahum	5. Acts of the Apostles
7. Judges		35. Habakkuk	
8. Ruth		36. Zephaniah	
9. 1 Samuel		37. Haggai	
10. 2 Samuel		38. Zechariah	
11. 1 Kings		39. Malachi	
12. 2 Kings			
13. 1 Chronicles			
14. 2 Chronicles			
15. Ezra			
16. Nehemiah			
17. Esther			
Poetry			
18. Job			
19. Psalms			
20. Proverbs			
21. Ecclesiastes			
22. The Song of Solomon			
Major Prophets			
23. Isaiah			
24. Jeremiah			
25. Lamentations			
26. Ezekiel			
27. Daniel			
BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA		Apocalyptic	
		1. 1Esdras	27. The Revelation
		2. 2Esdras	
		3. Tobit	
		4. Judith	
		5. Additions to Esther	
		6. Wisdom of Solomon	
		7. Ecclesiastics	
		8. Baruch	
		9. The Letter of Jeremiah	
		10. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men	
		11. Suzanna, Bel, and the Dragon	
		12. Prayer of Manasseh	
		13. 1 Maccabees	
		14. 2 Maccabees	

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE