

**Bible  
Teachings  
Series**

*A self-study  
course about  
the main  
message of  
the Bible*



# A Bible Handbook





# **A Bible Handbook**

A self-study course about  
the main message of the Bible

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Level 1, Book 2



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## ***About This Book***

Maybe the thought of reading the Bible scares you a little. Maybe you would like some help getting to know how the Bible works, knowing a little bit more about the way the Bible was put together. Then you will feel more ready to read it. That is what this book is for—to help you understand the Bible and its main message. Of course, the Bible does not need this extra little book. If you read the Bible, God will use the words in the Bible to speak to you and teach you. We will be glad if this book helps you to read through the Bible. But we will be even happier to know that you are reading the Bible itself, because the Bible is full of God's powerful truth!

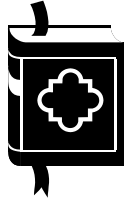
Each chapter in this book begins with a list of goals, marked with a small star (\*). These goals tell you what you will be learning in the chapter. Then you will read a page or so, and answer some questions. At the end of each chapter there is a test. If you have read the chapter carefully and answered the questions, you should be able to answer the test questions without trouble.

When you finish answering a group of questions, you will be given a page number where you can turn to check your answers. If you turn to that page, you will find the answers at the very bottom of that page. Check your answers and correct any mistakes you made. Make sure you understand each set of answers before reading further.

Starting on page 86, there is a word list, telling you the meanings of some words. As you are reading this book, you will see some words underlined the first time that they are used. These words are explained in the word list, so you can look them up if you are not sure what something means.

At the end of the book there is a final test. Before doing the test, go back and study the chapter tests again.

May God be with you as you work through this book and learn more about the Bible!



## *Chapter One*

# THE BOOK OF BOOKS

In this first chapter, you will learn:

- \* what the Bible is;
- \* what the word “Bible” means;
- \* how the Bible is divided;
- \* the different kinds of books that are in the Bible.

God made the world and everything in it. The people on earth are his creation, and he has important things to tell all people. The Bible is God’s way of talking to people.

Without the Bible, people could guess that there is a God. By looking at the earth and the universe tells people can tell that there must be somebody who

made everything. The Bible itself says, “The heavens tell about the glory of God. The skies show that his hands created them” (Psalm 19:1). Also, each person has a feeling inside of him that there is a God, and that God expects good behavior. This is called a person’s conscience. The Bible says that people “have no excuse for what they do. They know God. But they do not honor him as God. What the law wants them to do is written on their hearts. They know the difference between right and wrong. Sometimes their thoughts find them guilty. At other times their thoughts find them not guilty” (Romans 1:20,21 and 2:15).

So even without the Bible, we would know a little bit about God—but not nearly enough. The little bit we know in our conscience does not actually connect us with God. It makes us feel like we need to be connected with God, but we do not know how to do it.

That is why we need the Bible. The Bible shows us that we cannot connect ourselves to God. Instead, through the Bible, God connects himself to us. In the Bible, God speaks to us, telling us about himself and about our relationship with him. He tells us what that relationship like in the beginning, how we have broken and ruined it, and how he has healed it.



The Bible is God's Word. Without God's word, we can feel lost and wonder what life is all about. A man named Augustine once wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they find rest in God." The Bible is God's way of giving rest and comfort to our hearts. In the Bible God tells us what he has done to heal our relationship with him.

1. People could guess that there is a God by looking at the earth and the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Inside each person there is a feeling that God exists and expects good behavior. This inner sense is called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What we can know by nature and by \_\_\_\_\_ is not enough to \_\_\_\_\_ us with God.
4. God connects himself to us through the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Bible is God's \_\_\_\_\_, which tells us what God has done to \_\_\_\_\_ our relationship with him.

*Check your answers on page 13.*

The word “Bible” comes from an old Greek word meaning “book.” But the Bible is not like other books. You might call it “The Book of Books,” because it is so much more important than any other book.

There is another reason to think of the Bible as “The Book of Books.” The Bible is actually like a little library containing many different books. God used more than 30 different persons to write the various Bible books. Altogether, there are 66 books inside the Bible. They were written over a very long period of time, from before 1400 BC to about AD 100. That’s more than 15 centuries!

As the Bible was written, the books were put in a certain order. People did not simply put them in alphabetical order like a dictionary. The Bible is not just a lot of information. The Bible has a story to tell. So people put the books that tell the Bible’s story in chronological order—according to when they were written. That is part of the way the Bible is arranged.

In addition to that, the books of the Bible also are arranged in groups. We will say more about that later.

6. The word “Bible” comes from an old Greek word meaning \_\_\_\_\_.
7. You can think of the Bible as “The Book of \_\_\_\_\_,” because it is like a little \_\_\_\_\_ containing \_\_\_\_\_ different books.
8. Altogether there are \_\_\_\_\_ books in the Bible, written over a period of more than \_\_\_\_\_ centuries.

*Check your answers on page 13.*

The birth of Jesus into this world brings us to the heart of the Bible. This great event divides the books of the Bible into two main parts. The two parts are called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament’s 39 books were written before Jesus was born. The 27 books in the New Testament were written after Jesus was born.

Why do we call each group of Bible books a testament? The word “testament” means a very serious document. A person might write something called a “last will and testament,” telling what he wants to do for his family after he has died. You could think of the testaments of the Bible that way. They are important documents that tell what God wants to do for his family—for the people he created. In the Bible God promised to do great

things for us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And he has done it!

9. The \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ is the important point in time that divides the books of the Bible into two main parts.

10. The Bible's two main parts are called the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.

11. The 39 books in the Old Testament were written \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was born. The 27 books in the New Testament were written \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus was born.

12. A "testament" is a serious, important \_\_\_\_\_.

*Check your answers on page 13.*

We said that the Bible is like a little library. To understand how the books are arranged, it might help to picture the Bible as a couple of bookcases in a library. One bookcase holds the Old Testament books and the other holds the New Testament books. Each bookcase has three shelves, and each shelf holds a different kind of book. There are four kinds of books: history books, poetry books, prophecy books, and epistles (letters).



## The Old Testament

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua <input type="radio"/>
Judges <input type="radio"/>
Ruth <input type="radio"/>
I Samuel
II Samuel
I Kings
II Kings
I Chronicles
II Chronicles
Ezra <input type="checkbox"/>
Nehemiah <input type="checkbox"/>
Esther <input type="checkbox"/>

### Historical Books

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs

### Poetical Books

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea <input type="radio"/>
Joel <input type="radio"/>
Amos <input type="radio"/>
Obadiah <input type="radio"/>
Jonah <input type="radio"/>
Micah <input type="radio"/>
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

### Prophetical Books

In the first bookcase, the first shelf holds the first seventeen books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Esther). These are all history books, telling us about main events from the past. In them we read

how God made the world, how evil came into the world, and how God promised a Savior who would rescue the world from evil. The history in these books follows the story of the Savior-promise and the people who believed in that promise.

On the second shelf are five books (Job through Song of Songs). These are poetry books. A little bit of poetry can be found in many books of the Bible, but these five books are entirely in poetry style. Poetry in those days was different from poetry today. Do not expect Bible poetry to rhyme.

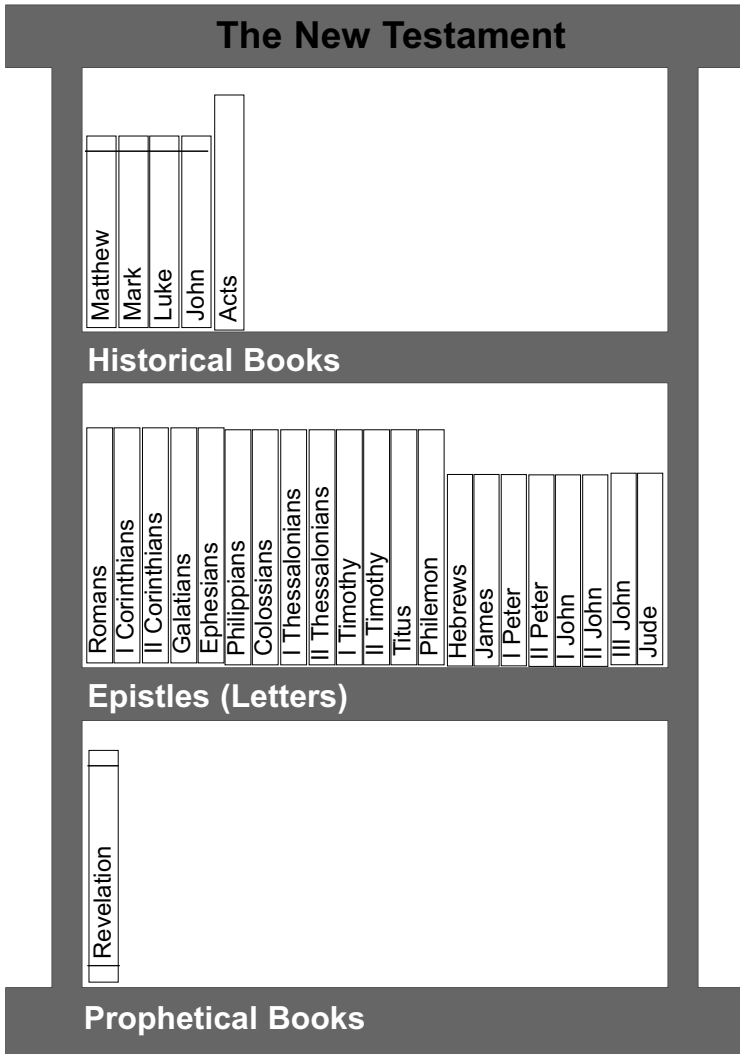
On the third shelf are the remaining seventeen books of the Old Testament (Isaiah through Malachi). These are books of prophecy. They were written by men called prophets. Since the Old Testament prophets lived in the time before the birth of Jesus, some of what they wrote was about the future when Jesus would come. Prophecy often talks about the future. But prophecy can also talk about the past or the present. The word “prophecy” simply means “a message given directly by God.”

13. The four kinds of books found in the Bible are \_\_\_\_\_ books, \_\_\_\_\_ books, prophecy books, and \_\_\_\_\_ (letters).

14. \_\_\_\_\_ is a message given directly by God.

*Check your answers on page 13.*

The New Testament bookcase also has three shelves. Again each shelf contains a different kind of book. The first five books in the New Testament are history books.



The first four history books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are known as the Gospels. “Gospel” is a word that means “good news.” Small gems of gospel can be found throughout the Bible. But these four books are like rich diamond mines. They are called Gospels because they tell all about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. That good news is the heart of the Bible.

The fifth history book in the New Testament is called The Acts of the Apostles. Sometimes people shorten the title to one word, “Acts.” This book tells us about the ministry of the apostles and the first years of the Christian church. The apostles were men chosen and sent out by Jesus to spread his message.

The next books in the New Testament are epistles. An epistle is something sent to someone else, like a letter sent in the mail. The Bible’s epistles teach what it means to believe in Jesus. These books guide the faith and the lives of Christians. There are 21 such letters in the New Testament (Romans through Jude).

The last book of the Bible (Revelation) is a prophecy book. Revelation is like a room filled with very wonderful paintings. There are pictures of things the Bible has told us already, visions that predict God’s final victory over the devil and all evil, and



even a glimpse of what heaven will be like for us when we go to be with God.

15. \_\_\_\_\_ means “good news.” The four Bible books that tell about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are called the \_\_\_\_\_.
16. The word \_\_\_\_\_ means something that is sent to someone else, like a \_\_\_\_\_ sent in the mail.
17. The last book of the Bible, called \_\_\_\_\_, shows us pictures of God’s final \_\_\_\_\_ and how He will take Christians to \_\_\_\_\_.

*Check your answers on page 13.*

**Answers to questions within Chapter 1:**

1. universe; 2. conscience; 3. conscience, connect;  
4. Bible; 5. Word, heal; 6. book; 7. books, library, many  
8. 66, 15; 9. birth, Jesus; 10. Old Testament, New Testament;  
11. before, after; 12. document; 13. history, poetry, epistles;  
14. prophecy; 15. gospel, Gospels;  
16. epistle, letter; 17. Revelation, victory, heaven.

## ***Review of Chapter One***

We could know a little bit about God without the Bible, but not enough. Through the Bible, God connects himself to us. The Bible is God's Word. It tells us what God has done to heal our relationship with him.

The Bible is a book with many smaller books inside of it. There are 66 books in the Bible, written over a very long period of time. The books of the Old Testament were written before Jesus was born. The books of the New Testament were written after Jesus was born. All of the Bible was written to give people faith in Jesus.

The Old Testament books point ahead to the time when Jesus would come. The New Testament begins with history books that tell about the life of Jesus and the first years of the Christian church. Then there are letters (called epistles), which were written to guide the faith and lives of Christians.

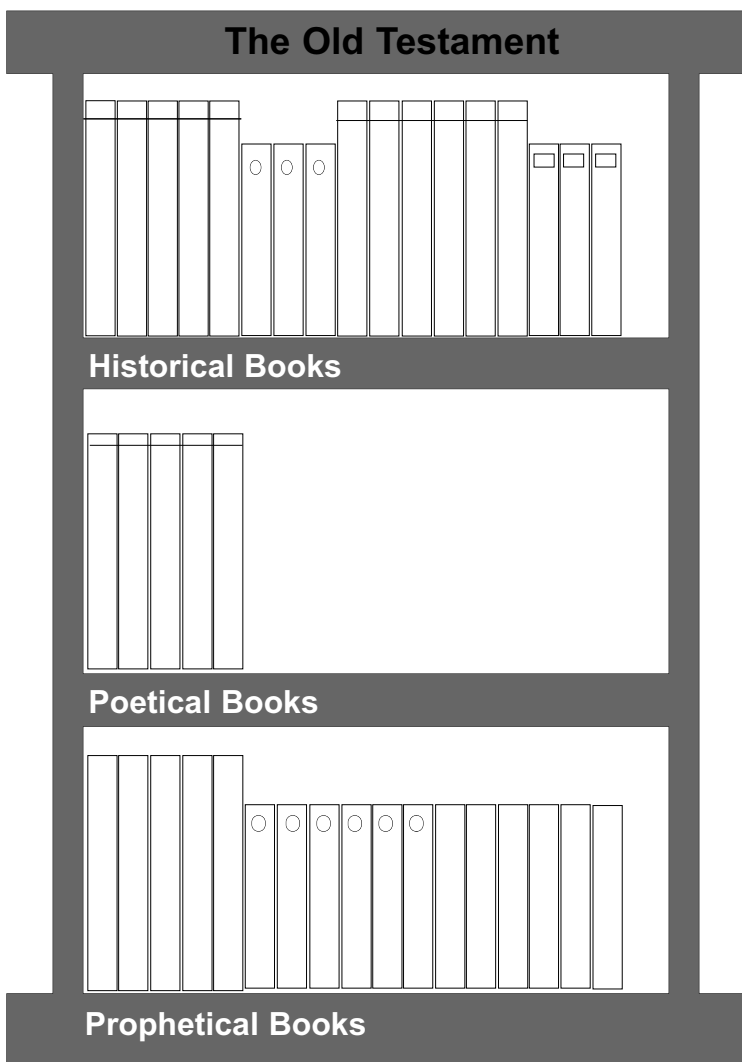
The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is a prophecy book that pictures God's final victory over all evil and how he will take Christians to be with him in heaven.

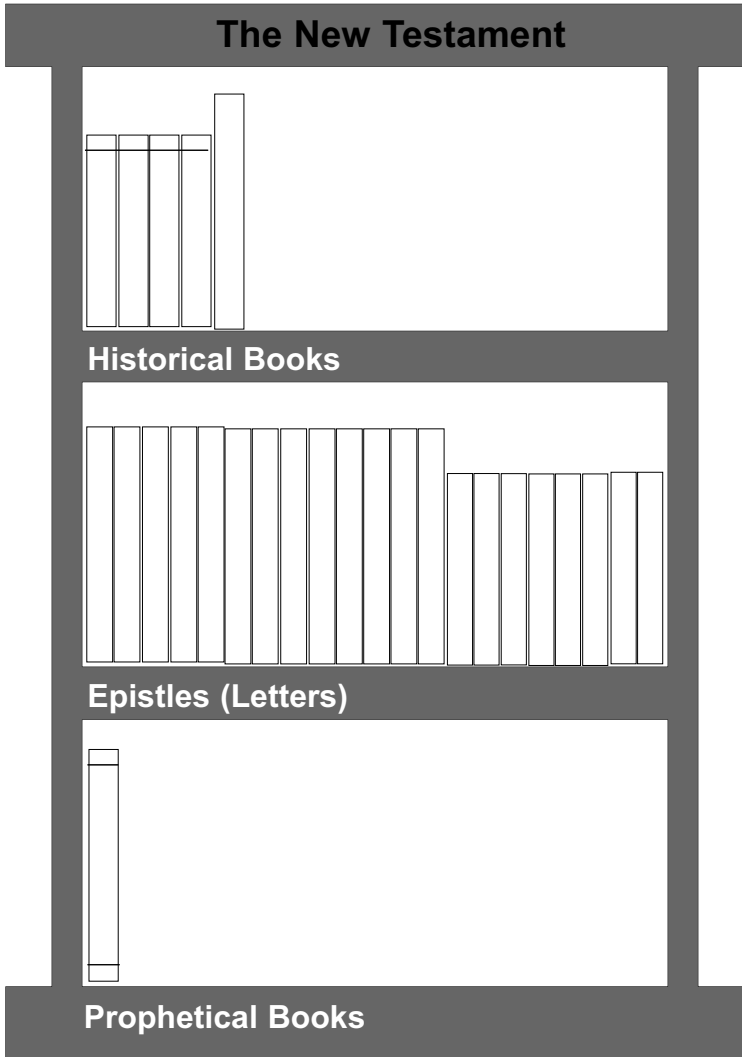
## Chapter One Test

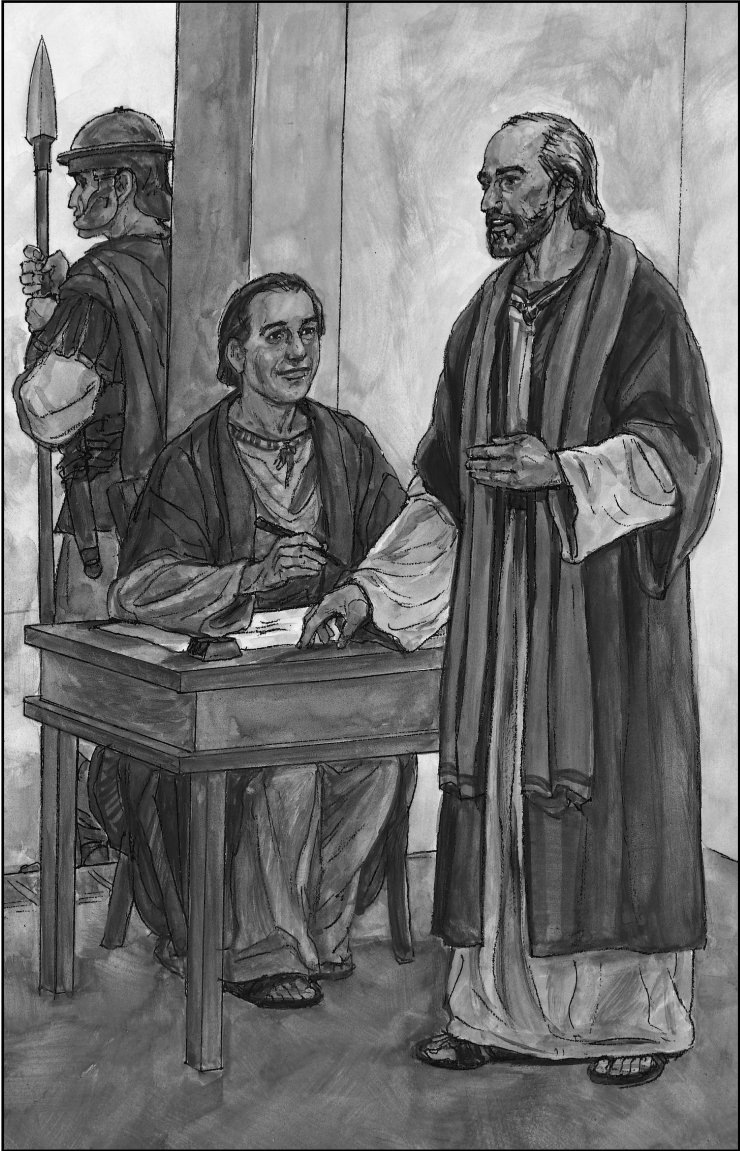
1. Each person has a \_\_\_\_\_, which is a sense that there is a God and that God expects \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Without the \_\_\_\_\_, we can only know a little about God.
3. The Bible tells us how our \_\_\_\_\_ with God was broken and ruined, and how God \_\_\_\_\_ it.
4. There are many \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible, written over a period of many \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus divides the books of the Bible into \_\_\_\_\_ main parts.
6. A message that comes directly from God is called \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The books of Matthew, \_\_\_\_\_, Luke and \_\_\_\_\_ are called "Gospels." They tell about the life, death and resurrection of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ (or letters) of the New Testament were written to \_\_\_\_\_ the faith and lives of Christians.

9. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is like a \_\_\_\_\_ that pictures what the rest of the Bible has told us.

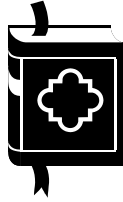
*Check your answers on page 85.*







*The apostle Paul dictates to a scribe in Rome.*



## *Chapter Two*

# THE BOOK WE CAN TRUST

In this chapter, you will learn:

- \* how we got the Bible;
- \* what it means to say the Bible is inspired;
- \* what languages were used to write the Bible;
- \* why we can trust the Bible and build our lives on what it says.

Libraries are full of all sorts of books on all sorts of subjects. Some books are labeled “fiction.” The authors of those books are telling you that their writings are not really true. They made up the stories. Other books are labeled “non-fiction.” Their writers say they are telling things that actually happened or ideas that are correct. But there is a

problem with finding truth in non-fiction books. If you compare books about the same subject written by different authors, you will find that they do not agree with each other. For instance, think about history and politics. One person will write that a certain ruler of a country was a very good ruler. Another writer will argue that he was a poor ruler. Or consider science. Science is supposed to be the most reliable knowledge people can produce. Yet, one scientist's ideas will go against those of another scientist. This happens all the time. You can see the problem most if you look across a long period of time. A scientist named Isaac Newton wrote a book in the year 1687, explaining how the universe works. For over two hundred years, people considered Newton's ideas the best. Then, in 1905, Albert Einstein showed that Newton's ideas were not always correct. Books written by human beings are never perfect. We cannot always rely on what people have written.

But the Bible is a book unlike any other. It too was written by people—but not in any ordinary way. God gave his message to the men who wrote the books of the Bible. More than 30 men wrote 66 different books. The writing took more than 1,500 years to finish. Yet, the whole Bible stayed true and reliable. Peter, one of the Bible's writers, explained it like this: “No prophecy in Scripture ever came from a



prophet's own understanding. It never came simply because a prophet wanted it to. Instead, the Holy Spirit guided the prophets as they spoke. So prophecy comes from God" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Even though many prophets and apostles wrote down the words of the Bible, really we can say that all the Bible's books have one Author—God Himself. "God has breathed life into all of Scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16). "Prophecy comes from God" (2 Peter 1:21).

1. Books written by human beings in the ordinary way are never \_\_\_\_\_; we cannot always \_\_\_\_\_ on what is written in them.
2. The Bible was not written in an ordinary way; \_\_\_\_\_ gave his \_\_\_\_\_ to the men who wrote the books of the Bible.

*Check your answers on page 27.*

There is a short way of saying that all of the Bible was given directly by God. The Bible is inspired. "Inspired" means that every word in the Bible was breathed by God. God put his words into the minds of the men as they wrote. Because the Bible is inspired, we can know that the Bible really is God's Word.

Notice that we said, “The Bible *is* God’s Word.” Saying it that way is important. Sometimes people say, “The Bible **contains** God’s Word.” But that leaves room for doubt. Think of two bottles of fruit juice. On one of the bottles you read: “100% real juice.” On the other bottle you read: “Contains 10% juice.” What is inside these bottles is not the same. The first one has only real juice in it. The second one has some juice in it but also other things like water that are not fruit juice. God promises us that the Bible is 100% his Word. The Bible does not simply contain God’s Word; it *is* God’s Word. Every word in the Bible comes from God.

Since the Bible is God’s Word from cover to cover, it gives us everything we need for life with God. The Bible is like pure nourishment for our souls to eat and drink and be refreshed. Jesus described his words as being like miracle food and miracle water: “I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever go hungry” (John 6:35). “Anyone who drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty. In fact, the water I give him will become a spring of water in him. It will flow up into eternal life” (John 4:14).

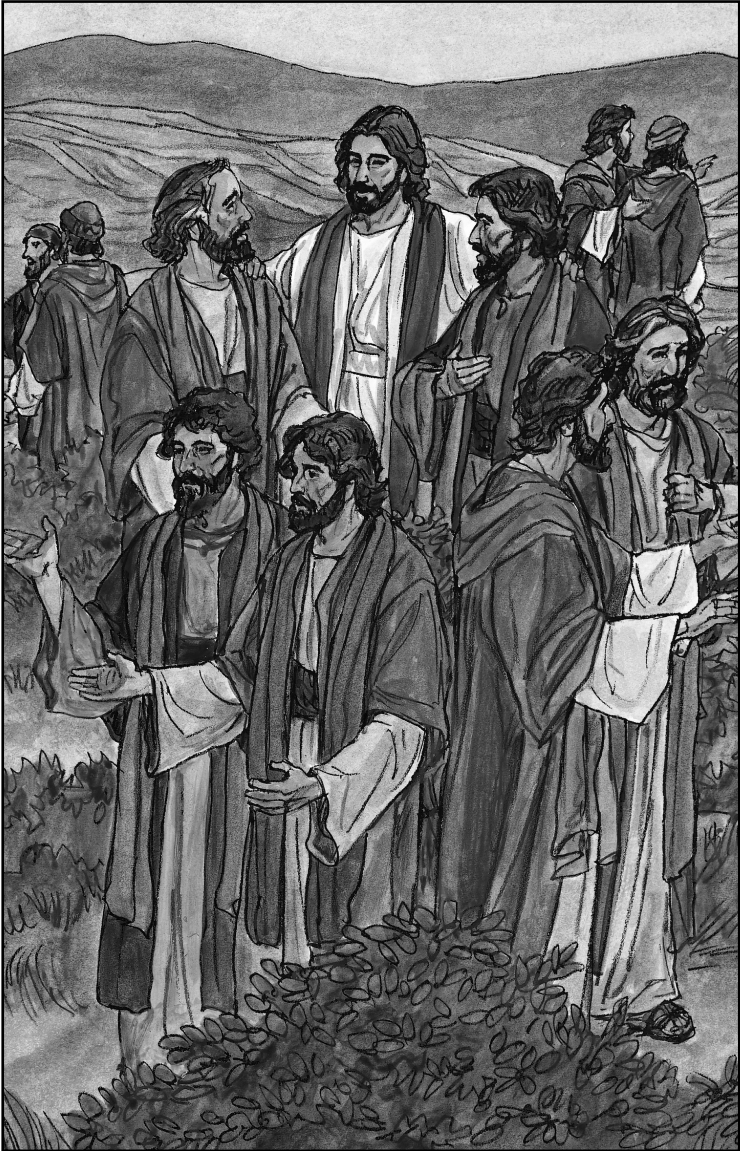
God’s book is not like ordinary books written by people. “God isn’t a mere man. He can’t lie” (Numbers 23:19). When God gave his words to the prophets and apostles who wrote the Bible, God

made sure there were no mistakes. Every word of the Bible is true. We can trust everything the Bible tells us.

3. To say that the Bible is \_\_\_\_\_ means that every word in the Bible was \_\_\_\_\_ by God.
4. The Bible does not simply \_\_\_\_\_ God's word; the Bible \_\_\_\_\_ God's Word.
5. Every word of the Bible is \_\_\_\_\_; we can \_\_\_\_\_ everything the Bible tells us.

*Check your answers on page 27.*

Some people suppose that the Bible was written in a mysterious language. They think it has secret codes that we need to unlock in order to find hidden meaning. That is not correct. God had the Bible written in ordinary, everyday languages so that people could understand God's Word. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. That was the language of the people who were picked by God to carry his promise until Jesus came. Then, when Jesus told his apostles to go out to all the world with his good news, they wrote their books in Greek. At that time Greek was the common language of most of the people whom the apostles would meet. In fact, the Greek they used to write the New Testament was the kind spoken by ordinary people



*Jesus sends out his disciples.*

everyday. It was not the fancier style written by scholars. God wanted his message to be read and understood.

God still wants his message to be read and understood by all people today. We translate God's Word into languages spoken by people all around the world. Translations carry the same power as the Hebrew and Greek writings did. The power of God's Word is not in any particular language. It is in the gospel message that God gives to us, whatever our language.

6. The Old Testament was written in \_\_\_\_\_.  
The New Testament was written in \_\_\_\_\_.  
These were not mysterious code languages,  
but languages that people could  
\_\_\_\_\_.

7. So that the Bible can be understood by many  
people today, we \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible into  
many \_\_\_\_\_.

*Check your answers on page 27.*

One of the pictures in the book of Revelation shows us what the Bible is like. God's Word, going out to all people, is pictured like an angel "flying high in the air. He came to tell everyone on earth the good news that will always be true. He told it to every nation, tribe, language and people" (Revelation

14:6). Since the Bible is God's true Word, meant for every person on earth, we need to pay attention to it! "It is like a light shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19). No other book on earth can give us the hope and the answers that we find in the Bible.

Year after year, writers publish books that say they can help us do this or do that, or solve one problem or another. Well, those books might help a little with our lives on earth. But only the Bible can tell us what God himself says about our lives. Only the Bible can give us hope for life beyond this earth, beyond the day we die. Only the Bible is a book we can trust completely.

The Bible is a solid foundation on which we can build our lives now and forever. People who believe what the Bible says are like "a building that is built on the apostles and the prophets. Christ Jesus himself is the most important stone in the building" (Ephesians 2:20). Through reading the Bible, "you are being made into a house where God lives through his Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22).

8. Only the Bible can tell us what \_\_\_\_\_ says about our lives. Only the Bible can give us \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ beyond the day we die.

9. The Bible is a solid \_\_\_\_\_ on which we can \_\_\_\_\_ our lives now and forever.

*Check your answers on page 27.*

## ***Review of Chapter Two***

Ordinary books make mistakes and often contradict each other. The Bible is unlike any other book. The words of the Bible were given by God. He inspired the writers so they would put down just what he wanted them to say. The Bible does not just contain some words from God. The whole Bible is God's Word and is like the bread and water of life for our souls. We can trust everything the Bible says.

The books of the Bible were written in Hebrew (in the Old Testament) and in Greek (in the New Testament). God used ordinary human languages because he wanted people to hear and understand his message. Today, we translate the Bible into many languages so that God's Word can be understood by all people.

We all need the Bible to give us help and hope for our lives—now and even after we die.

### **Answers to questions within Chapter 2:**

1. perfect, rely; 2. God, message; 3. inspired, breathed;  
4. contain, is; 5. true, trust; 6. Hebrew, Greek, understand;  
7. translate, languages; 8. God, hope, life; 9. foundation, build.

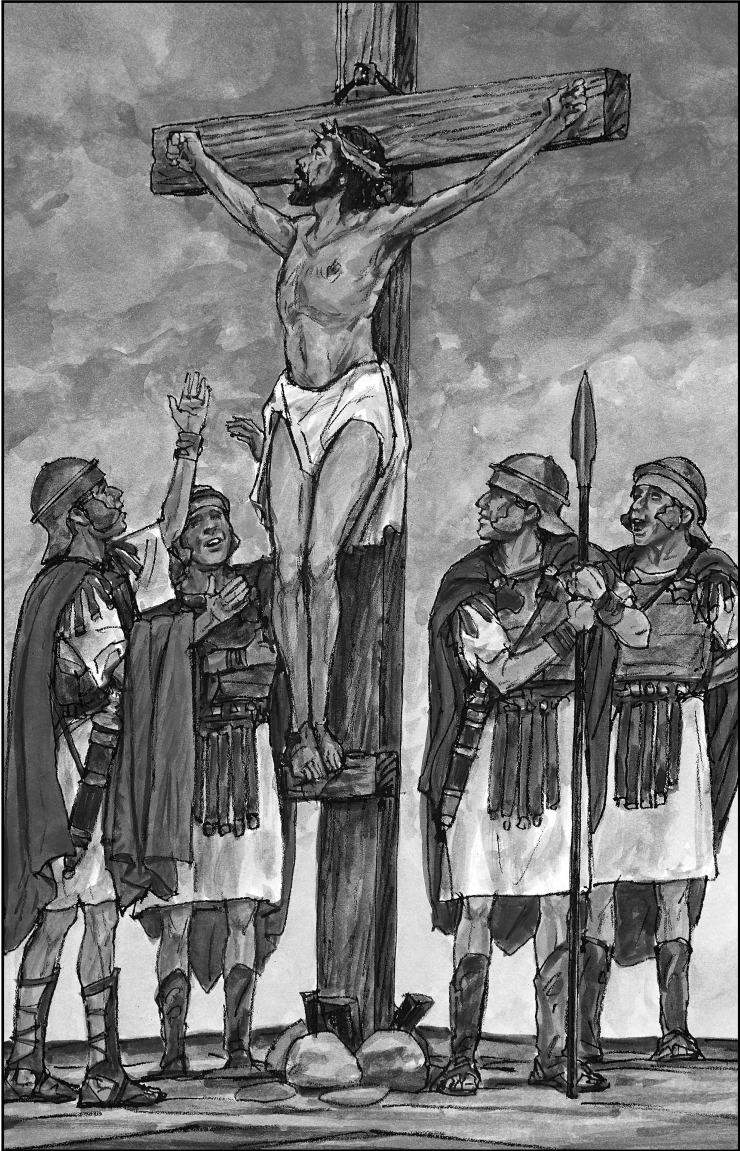
**Test on Chapter Two**

1. The Bible is a book \_\_\_\_\_ any other; because the Bible was \_\_\_\_\_ by God.
2. Ordinary books often make \_\_\_\_\_, but because the Bible is God's \_\_\_\_\_, there are no mistakes in it.
3. Jesus said that listening to his words is like drinking special \_\_\_\_\_ that flows up into \_\_\_\_\_ life.
4. Another way of describing God's Word is that it is like a \_\_\_\_\_ shining in a \_\_\_\_\_ place.
5. The Bible was not written in secret \_\_\_\_\_, but in languages that people could \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ of the Bible carry the same power from God that the original \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ languages did.

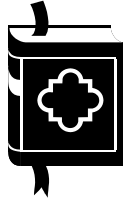


7. The Bible is the only book that we can \_\_\_\_\_ completely. We can build our \_\_\_\_\_ now and forever on what the Bible says.

*Check your answers on page 85.*



*Jesus dies for us on a cross.*



### *Chapter Three*

## **THE BOOK THAT SPEAKS TO OUR SOULS**

In this chapter, you will learn:

- \* what the key message of the Bible is;
- \* how the law and the gospel are the two main teachings that make up the Bible's key message;
- \* how the law and the gospel tell us exactly what we need to hear.



Keys are used to lock things. In prison, the guards have keys that they use to lock prisoners in their cells.

But keys can also unlock things. When prisoners wait for their prison release date, they look forward to the day when the guards unlock the doors. Then the prisoner can go out freely into the world.

There is a key for understanding the Bible. If you have that key, the meaning of the Bible opens up for you. “Then you will know the truth. And the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

The key to the Bible is not some special tool. The key to the Bible is simply the main message that can be found throughout the whole Bible. When you have the key, the entire Bible becomes clear.

Here is the key message of the Bible:

All people are guilty of doing wrong and deserve to be punished by God; but God punished Jesus instead of us so that we are given heaven instead of hell.

Knowing this key message will greatly help you to understand and appreciate the various books of the Bible. They all fit together as God’s Word, telling us how God’s love saves us from all the wrong that we have done.

This chapter will explain more about the Bible’s key message and how it is made known to us in the Bible.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ to understanding the Bible is to see the overall \_\_\_\_\_ that the Bible is telling us.
2. The key message of the Bible is that all people are guilty of doing \_\_\_\_\_ and deserve to be \_\_\_\_\_, but God punished \_\_\_\_\_ instead of us.

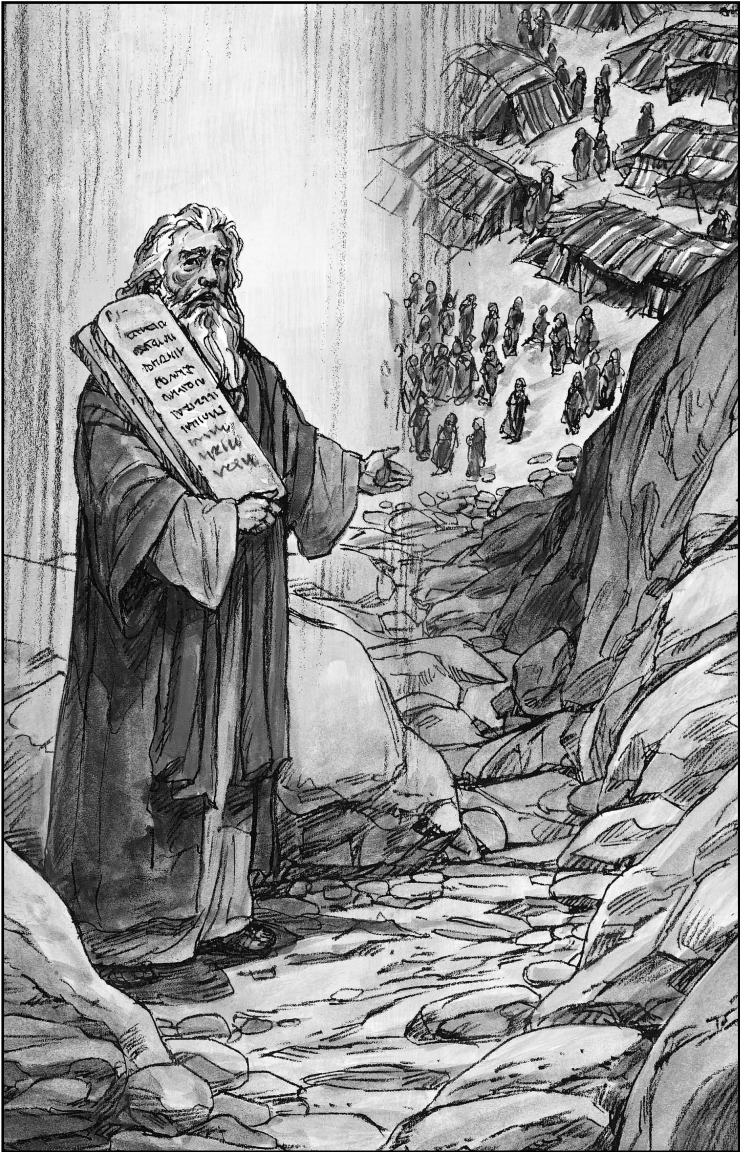
*Check your answers on page 42.*

The Bible's key message has two parts to it. They are the two main teachings of the Bible. The law tells us that we are sinners who deserve to die. The gospel tells us that Jesus has saved us from our sins to live with him forever.

The first main teaching is the law. In the law, God tells people what to do and what not to do. When we look at God's law, we see that our lives are not what God expects of us.

Because we fail to do what God wants, we deserve to be punished by him. "When you sin, the pay you get is death" (Romans 6:23a).

The second main teaching in the Bible is the gospel. We have already said that "gospel" means "good news." The good news is that because of Jesus, all



*God gives Moses the Ten Commandments.*

our law-breaking has been forgiven. “Now we have peace with God because of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). “God gives you the gift of eternal life because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done” (Romans 6:23b).

The Bible’s two main teachings—the law and the gospel—go together to form the Bible’s key message: We are sinners, and Jesus is our Savior!

3. The two main teachings in the Bible are the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ shows us that our lives do not fit with what God \_\_\_\_\_ of us.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the good news that because of \_\_\_\_\_, all our law-breaking has been \_\_\_\_\_.

*Check your answers on page 42.*

We want to look at the law and the gospel more closely.

All of the rules or commandments that God tells us to obey are his law.

When people think of God’s law, often they have the wrong idea. They think that if they follow God’s

rules, they will be good and God will be good to them. That is not how it works.

God did give us commandments in the Bible, and it is good for us to try to live by his rules. But the main thing God teaches us with his rules is that we cannot make ourselves right with him. We cannot keep God's rules. We keep falling short. "No one does anything good, no one at all" (Romans 3:12). "Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory" (Romans 3:23). The law of God shows us that we need to be rescued from all our sinning.

When Jesus was on earth, there were people who thought they were not sinful. They thought that if they kept all the rules in the Old Testament, God would be happy with them. They told themselves that they were being good. But really they were not so good at all. They were missing the main point of the Bible. Jesus warned them about how wrong they were. He said, "You study the Scriptures carefully. You study them because you think they will give you eternal life. The Scriptures you study give witness about me. But you refuse to come to me and receive life" (John 5:39-40).

The law of God is bad news for sinners. The other main teaching of the Bible is the gospel—the good news about Jesus. Jesus kept all God's laws for us.



And what Jesus did counts as if we did it. Also, God placed the guilt of all our sins on Jesus and gave him the punishment that we deserved from God. “He was punished to make us whole again. His wounds have healed us” (Isaiah 53:5).

In simple words, the gospel says this: “Christ (Jesus) did not have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was nailed to a cross and died, and he did that for us. Because of Jesus, God “forgave us all of our sins. He wiped out the written law with its rules. The law was against us. It opposed us. He took it away and nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13, 14).

After Jesus was killed, he was buried. But within three days he came back to life again! This miracle shows that Jesus is really God. It proves that he has the power to give us life that never ends. “Anyone who believes in me will live, even if he dies,” Jesus said (John 11:25). Jesus’ message truly is a message of good news!

6. The main thing God wants to teach us with his law is that we \_\_\_\_\_ make ourselves \_\_\_\_\_ with him.



*An angel announces that Jesus has risen from death.*

7. The law of God is only half the story. The \_\_\_\_\_ tells us that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ all God's laws for us, and that God placed on Jesus all the \_\_\_\_\_ of our sins and \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus instead of us.

*Check your answers on page 42.*

The law of God tells us how much we need God to rescue us. The gospel tells us that God has in fact rescued us by sending Jesus. Those lessons from God's law and his gospel are exactly what we need to hear.

If we do not listen to God, we might think we can make things right between ourselves and God. But we cannot. "Those who are controlled by their sinful nature can't please God" (Romans 8:8). God's law crushes any false pride we have in ourselves.

Then, after God destroys our false pride, his gospel lifts our spirits up again. The news about Jesus is "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). We do not need to die in our sins. The gospel promises us that through Jesus, we have life. Our life is right with God. It is perfect in his sight. We have it now, and it will never end, even after we die.

When you put the law and gospel together, you have the key message of the Bible. It is exactly what we

need to hear. “Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. The Scriptures give us strength through the forgiveness of sins. They cheer us and give us hope” (Romans 15:4).

8. When you put the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ together, you have the key message of the Bible.

*Check your answers on page 42.*

When you are by yourself, away from your family, you can feel cut off and alone. It helps when someone visits you, or when someone sends a letter to you. Visits and letters show that someone cares about you and is thinking about you.

In a way, every person on earth is in a prison when they do not believe that Jesus is their Savior. “The whole world is a prisoner because of sin” (Galatians 3:22a). Sinners are cut off from God and cannot get close to him. But God can get in contact with us and connect with us. When we open the Bible, it is like getting a letter from God himself. God’s Holy Spirit comes to us through the words of the Bible. Reading the Bible is like being visited by God. In the Bible, God lets us know that he cares about us and has not forgotten us. He has a plan for us that brings us freedom. God promises to set us free from sin and

death forever. "The promise comes through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 3:22b).

The Bible is the book that speaks to our souls. It is the only book that gives us the answers we really need.

9. Reading the Bible is like getting a \_\_\_\_\_  
or a \_\_\_\_\_ from God.

10. Scripture announces that the whole world is a  
\_\_\_\_\_ because of sin, but that we  
are set free through \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus.

*Check your answers on page 42.*

### ***Review of Chapter Three***

Knowing the key message of the Bible can help you to understand the Bible as you open it and read it. The key message of the Bible is that all people have done wrong and deserve to die, but Jesus has set us free. He took our place in obeying God's law and suffering the punishment that we deserved.

We call what Jesus did for us the gospel. It is wonderful good news, promising us life forever with God.

The truths of the law and the gospel are just what we need to hear, because we would never figure out these things ourselves. There is only one way to find true life, and that is through Jesus. This is the Bible's message.

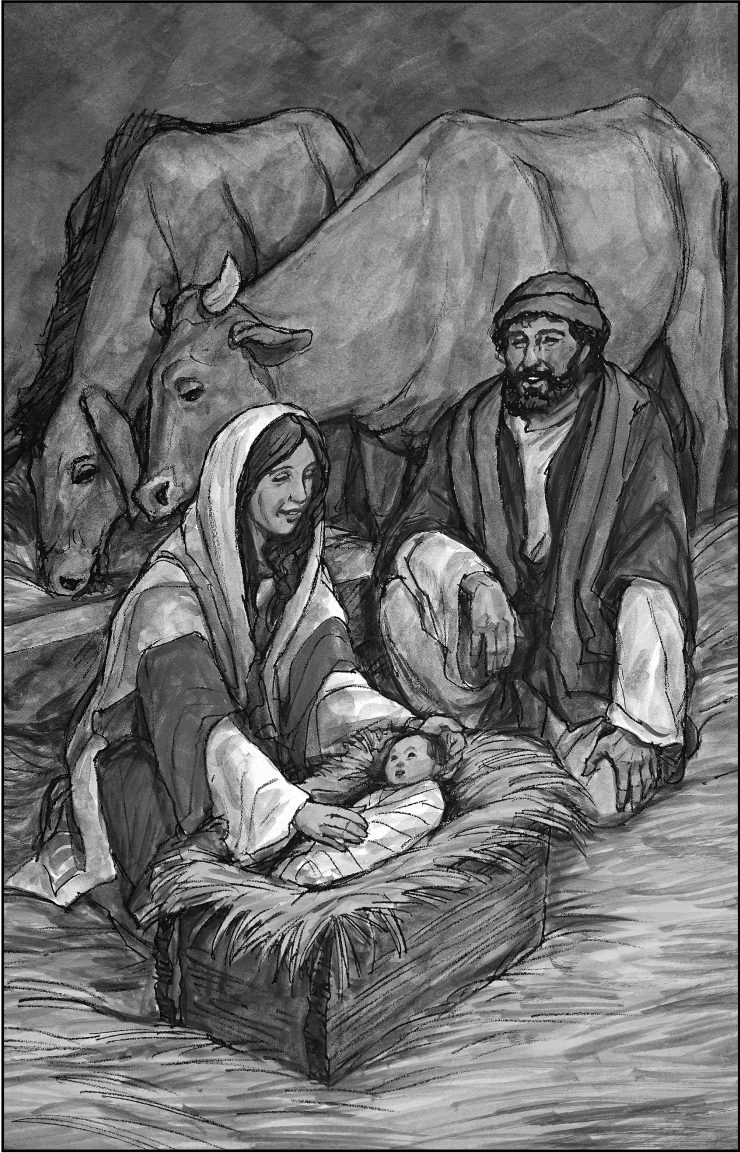
**Answers to questions within Chapter 3:**

1. key, message; 2. wrong, punished, Jesus; 3. law, gospel;
4. law, expects; 5. gospel, Jesus, forgiven; 6. cannot, right;
7. gospel, kept, guilt, punished; 8. law, gospel; 9. letter, visit;
10. prisoner, faith.

### ***Test on Chapter Three***

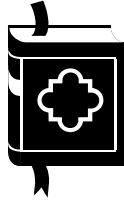
1. The key to understanding the Bible is not some special tool or \_\_\_\_\_. The key is simply seeing the overall \_\_\_\_\_ that the Bible is telling you.
2. The law tells us that we are \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The gospel tells us that Jesus has \_\_\_\_\_ us from our \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Because we are sinners, the payment we deserve to get is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Jesus suffered the \_\_\_\_\_ that we deserved for our sins. All that the law said against us was \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus' cross.
6. After Jesus died and was buried, he became \_\_\_\_\_ again. This miracle proves that Jesus has power to give us \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the only book that gives us the answers we need about life.

*Check your answers on page 85.*



*God sends Jesus to be our Savior.*





## *Chapter Four*

# **THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD**

In this chapter, you will learn:

- \* some of the stories told in the Bible;
- \* how the stories are connected to the key message of the Bible.

The Bible is full of many stories but all the Bible's stories really make up one big story. The big story is what we have been studying. We called it the key message of the Bible: that all people are sinners, and Jesus is our Savior. All of the smaller stories in the Bible are telling us a part of that one key message. In this chapter, you will learn about some of the smaller stories that help to tell the Bible's big story.

The Bible's story begins... in the beginning! The Bible's very first words tell us where the world and everything came from. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). When God made the world, everything was perfect. The first people were perfect too. They were right with God. They had no sin in them. Their names were Adam and Eve. Adam is the Hebrew word for "the man." Adam called his wife Eve, which means "life" or "living." He called her Eve because "she would become the mother of every living person" (Genesis 3:20). Adam and Eve were our first parents. They are the parents of every person that has ever lived on earth.

But then Adam and Eve sinned against God. They did something God had told them not to do. As soon as they sinned, they were no longer perfect. They were sinners, and all their children (all people) would be born with sin in them. They and all their children would die because of sin. But God still loved the people he had created, and gave them a wonderful promise. God said that a Savior would come who would take away all the trouble that was caused by sin.

1. All of the Bible's \_\_\_\_\_ make up one big \_\_\_\_\_, telling us that \_\_\_\_\_ is our Savior.



*God creates Adam and Eve, our first parents.*

2. When God made the world, everything was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Because Adam and Eve became sinners, all people born from them would be born with \_\_\_\_\_ in them.

*Check your answers on page 66.*

At first, the children of Adam and Eve were eager to tell God's promise to their children. They wanted everyone to trust in God and believe in the Savior that was coming. But after many years, most of the people on earth had forgotten about God's promise. Parents did not train and teach their children to avoid sin and to ask God for his forgiveness. "The Lord saw how bad the sins of man had become on the earth. All of the thoughts in his heart were always directed only toward what was evil" (Genesis 6:5). So God punished them. He flooded the earth with all the waters in the sky and all the springs of water under the ground. God caused a huge flood that killed all the people on earth except for one family. God saved a man named Noah, along with Noah's wife and their three sons and their wives. Those eight people were to be the new parents who would bring life back to the earth after the flood.

But after a number of years, people forgot about God again. In the world after the flood, people



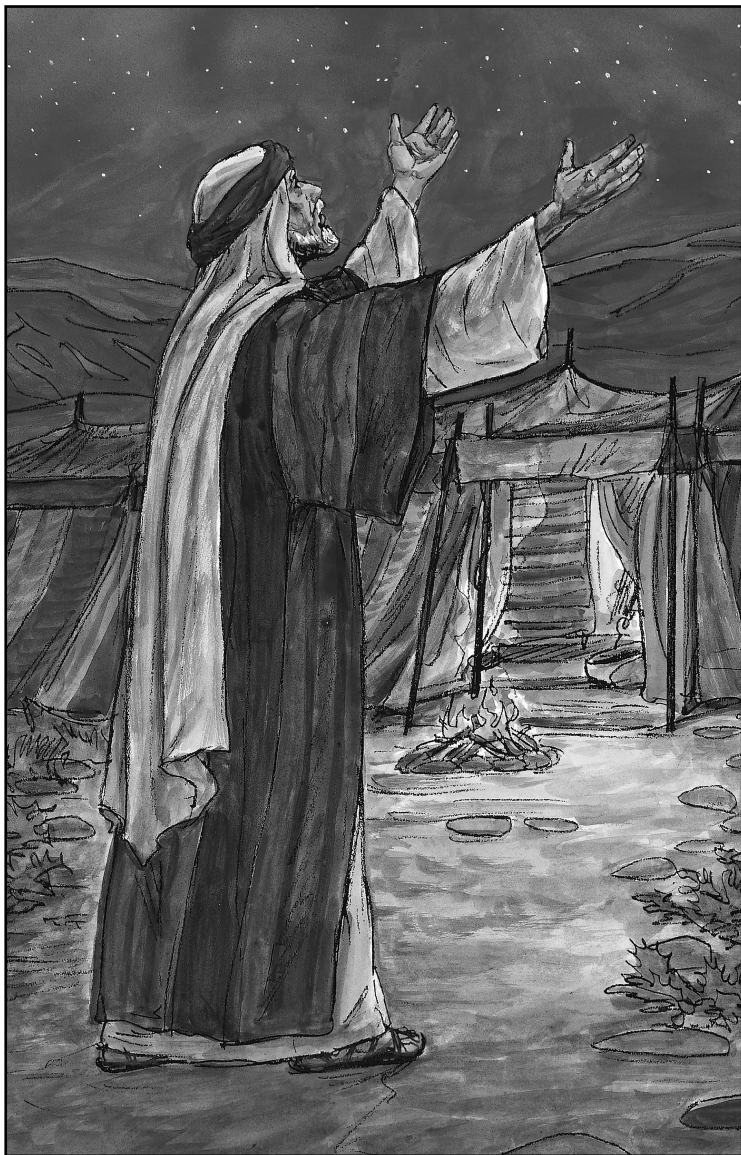
*After the flood Noah thanks God.*

thought they could live without God. They said, “We will make a name for ourselves” (Genesis 11:4). As the years went by, parents did less and less to teach their children about God’s promise to provide the Savior that they needed. Instead, parents and their children only wanted to be famous and powerful.

God gave one more group of parents a chance to be his messengers. They would be the people to carry his promise for the rest of the world. God chose a certain man and gave him the name “Abraham” (meaning father of many). God would make a new nation of people from Abraham and his children. From that nation, God would bring the Savior, Jesus, who would take away all the sins of the world. And so Abraham and his son Isaac, and Isaac’s son Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons became the fathers of a new nation that was called Israel.

4. When people on earth became very bad, God sent a \_\_\_\_\_ that killed all people on earth except \_\_\_\_\_ and his family.
  
5. God said the Savior would come from a nation called \_\_\_\_\_. This nation started with the family of \_\_\_\_\_ and Isaac and Jacob.

*Check your answers on page 66.*



*Abraham counts the stars.*

There are many stories about the people of Israel, filling the pages of the Old Testament. We do not have time to tell all those stories here, so we are going to study only a few ideas and a few stories as examples.

Parents by themselves were not strong enough to keep their children—and now the nation of Israel—close to God. So God gave the people of Israel a special set of laws that were to keep them different from other people. These laws were given to Israel through a leader named Moses. Moses was a strong leader. With God's power helping him, Moses led the people of Israel out of slavery into another country. But even Moses was not a perfect leader, and God reminded everyone of that. When they got to the place that God had promised to give them, Moses was not allowed to go into the new land (Deuteronomy 32:48-52). God ended the leadership of Moses, but the laws God had given to them would be God's way of leading the people of Israel until the Savior would come.

God did appoint other leaders to be in charge of the people and to keep them faithful to God's laws. Some of these leaders were called judges. They were in charge of the people's life as a nation. Others of these leaders were called priests. They were in charge of how the people were to worship God.





*God speaks to Moses out of a burning bush.*

But like parents (from the time of Adam down to the time of Jacob), the judges could not be perfect leaders. They could not lead everyone to follow the law of God. In the days when the judges ruled, “the people did what was evil in the sight of the LORD” (Judges 2:11). “The people did anything they thought was right” (Judges 21:25).

The priests also were not perfect leaders. An important priest named Eli was weak and unable to keep even his own family strong in God’s ways. His sons became priests and used their power to lead people away from God. In those days, people brought animals as sacrifices to God as a way of worshiping him. Eli’s sons would steal the best parts of the animals for themselves. They would force people to give them the best parts before sacrificing anything to God. Even worse, “they were having sex with the women who served at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.” The tent was Israel’s place of worship (1 Samuel 2:22). Not all of Israel’s priests sinned as badly as Eli’s sons did. But their sinful example shows how no human leaders are pure enough to make us right with God. The judges and priests had plenty of sins of their own.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ was a strong leader who led the people of Israel out of slavery in another country.

7. During the time when the \_\_\_\_\_ ruled the nation of Israel, people did anything they wanted to do.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ were supposed to be in charge of how the people worshiped God.
9. No human leaders are \_\_\_\_\_ enough to make us right with God.

*Check your answers on page 66.*

After the failure of the judges, the people of Israel wanted a king as their leader. This was not because the people wanted to do better at following God. Instead, they said, “We want a king just like the kings all of the other nations have” (1 Samuel 8:5). Instead of being special and different, as God wanted them to be, the people of Israel only wanted to fit in with the rest of the world.

God let Israel have a king. It did not take long before the sinfulness of kings could be seen. Talking about the first king, a man named Saul, God said, “He has turned away from me. He has not done what I directed him to do” (1 Samuel 15:11). So God chose another king to take Saul’s place. God “looked for a man dear to his heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). He decided on David, and “the Spirit of the LORD came on David with power” (1 Samuel 16:13).

But even the great King David failed to be faithful to the Lord. From on top of his palace in Jerusalem, David saw a beautiful woman who lived near the palace. He had her brought to him and he had sex with her. When he found out she was going to have a baby, David arranged to have her husband killed. Then David took her as his own wife (in addition to other wives he already had). “The LORD wasn’t pleased with what David had done” (2 Samuel 11:27). David faced many troubles as king after that.

It seemed things maybe were getting better when David’s son Solomon became the king. Solomon was wise, and his kingdom became very rich and powerful. Solomon even built an expensive temple to replace the Tent of Meeting as the place to worship God. But through much of his life, Solomon did not stay close to God in his heart. And after Solomon, the kingdom broke into two pieces. In both the northern part and the southern part there were many bad kings and only a few good ones. Finally, God let an enemy army take over the northern half of the kingdom. And then the people of the southern kingdom were defeated and carried away by the powerful empire of Babylon. (Today that land is called Iraq.)

So kings were no protection against trouble or disaster. In fact, many times the kings were the ones who brought trouble and disaster to the nation.

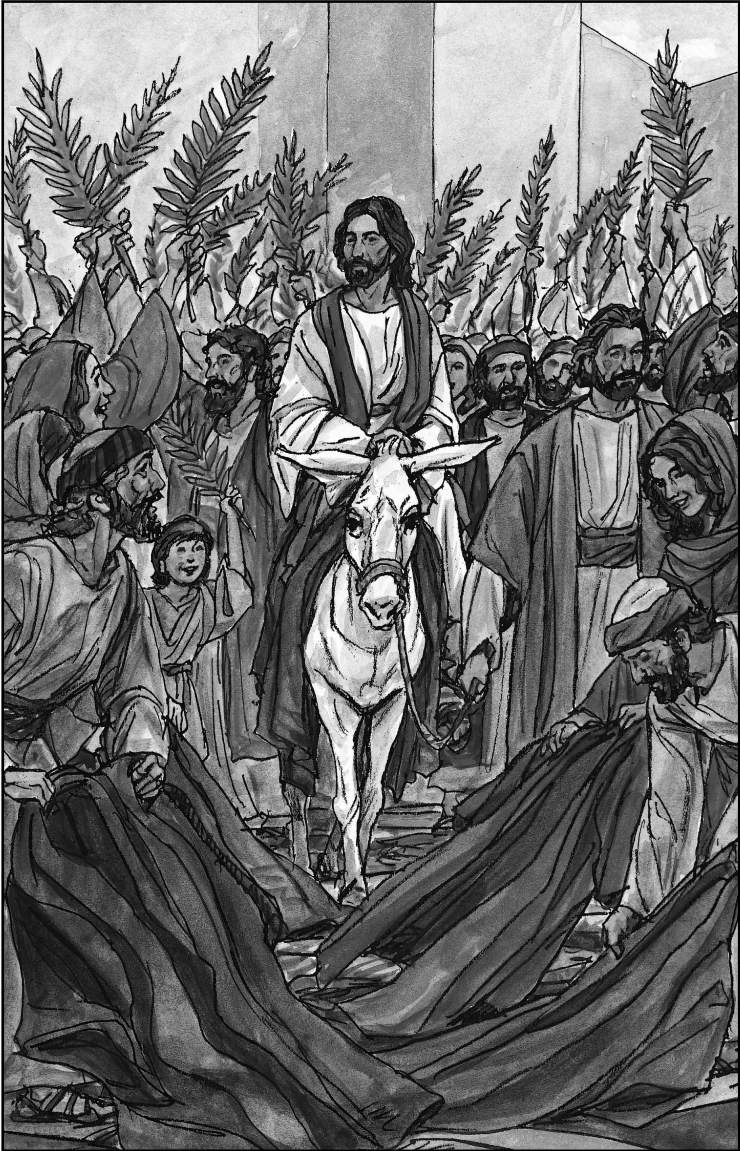
10. The first three kings of Israel were Saul,  
\_\_\_\_\_ and Solomon.

11. Kings could not provide \_\_\_\_\_  
against trouble and disaster. In fact, the kings  
often \_\_\_\_\_ trouble to the nation.

*Check your answers on page 66.*

The judges and priests and kings did a poor job of leading the people and helping them follow God. So God also sent prophets with messages to tell the people. The prophets told the people how they deserved to be punished for their sins against God. They also kept reminding the people about the Savior that God had promised. God always wanted people to remember his gospel promise about Jesus.

The prophets gave more details about how to recognize the Savior when he arrived. One prophet announced “a miraculous sign”—that a “virgin is going to have a baby” (Isaiah 7:14). Another prophet told where this amazing child would be born. “Bethlehem, you might not be an important town, but out of you will come a ruler over Israel for me” (Micah 5:2). The Savior would come to his people as a different kind of king. “He always does what is right. He has the power to save. He is gentle and



*Jesus rides into Jerusalem.*

riding on a donkey. He is sitting on a donkey's colt" (Zechariah 9:9). But the prophets also said that people would not recognize the Savior when he came to them. "He was like someone people turn their faces away from. We looked down on him. We didn't have any respect for him" (Isaiah 53:3). People would kill him, but at the same time God would offer the life of Jesus as his payment for the sins of all people. Then Jesus would come back to life. "The LORD says, 'It was my plan to crush him and cause him to suffer. I made his life a guilt offering to pay for sin. But after he suffers, he will see the light that leads to life. And he will be satisfied. My godly servant will make many people godly because of what he will accomplish'" (Isaiah 53:10.11). All of these things came true when Jesus came many years later.

The prophets did their best to point people to God and remind them of God's promises about the Savior. But few people listened. Their unbelief made God angry. The Old Testament ends with a warning from God. "You can be sure the day of the LORD is coming. My anger will burn like a furnace. All those who are proud will be like straw. So will all those who do what is evil. The day that is coming will set them on fire" (Malachi 4:1).

12. The \_\_\_\_\_ pointed people to God and gave details about the \_\_\_\_\_ that God promised to send.

*Check your answers on page 66.*

The story of what Jesus did fills the first four books of the New Testament. The rest of the New Testament tells about the church (the people who believe in Jesus). These books are letters that give instructions to believers in Jesus.

When Jesus came, very few people recognized him as the Savior, even though he was born from a virgin in Bethlehem, just as the prophets had said. Jesus did many miracles to show that he was the promised Savior. He rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey colt, like the prophecy said. But still people rejected Jesus and had him killed (like the prophecy said). He came back to life and appeared to those who did believe in him. Then he went back up into heaven to rule over all of the world until the end of time.

After Jesus went back up to heaven, his apostles and all his followers began to tell many other people about Jesus. Quite often the Christians were attacked by other people because of their faith. Jesus said this would happen. "Everyone will hate you because of me," Jesus had said (Matthew



10:22). But Jesus also promised, “If anyone loses his life because of me, he will find it” (Matthew 10:39). Many Christians were killed by those who hated the Christian message, but they received life in heaven with God. And those who tried to stop the church by attacking it actually helped the church to grow. When the church began to be attacked and treated badly, Christian believers moved away to other places to try to find safe places to live. When they moved, “the believers who had been scattered preached the word everywhere they went” (Acts 8:4), and many other “men and women believed and were baptized” (Acts 8:12).

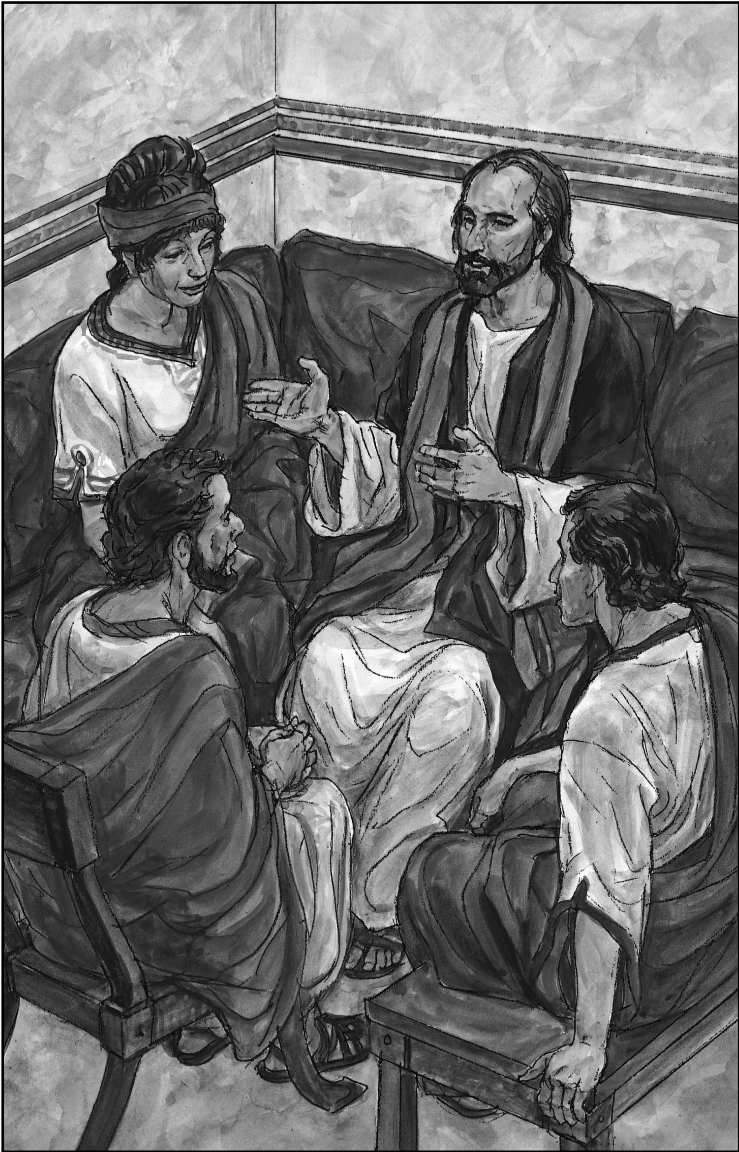
The apostles themselves went out into different parts of the world to tell people about Jesus. The most famous of these missionary journeys were led by the apostle Paul. The book of Acts tells about Paul’s journeys. The end of the book tells how Paul was arrested and put on trial for the work he was doing. The Roman Empire was in power then, and they thought this preaching about Jesus would make people less loyal to the emperor. Of course, God helped Paul through all of the struggles he faced. God had told Paul, “My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak” (2 Corinthians 12:9). So Paul said, “Because of how I suffered for Christ, I’m glad that I am weak. I am glad in hard times. I am glad when people say mean

things about me. I am glad when things are difficult. And I am glad when people make me suffer. When I am weak, I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). “I can do everything by the power of Christ. He gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

Those thoughts from Paul come from some of his epistles, or letters, sent to the church. In the letters of the New Testament God reminds us of what he has done for us, and he teaches us how to live as followers of Jesus. In a way, you could say that the story of the Bible is still continuing today, because much of the New Testament is about the church. We become part of the church by believing in Jesus and by letting him lead our lives. When that happens, we become part of God’s story in the world today.

13. When \_\_\_\_\_ came as the Savior, people rejected him and had him \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Jesus came back to \_\_\_\_\_ after being dead, and then went up to \_\_\_\_\_. He now rules over all things.
15. Those who follow Jesus are the members of his \_\_\_\_\_. This group grew even when they were \_\_\_\_\_ by people who hated the Christian message.

*Check your answers on page 66.*



*The apostle Paul speaks to new believers.*

The story of the Bible tells us about parents, about priests, about judges and kings and prophets. None of them could make themselves right with God, and they could not bring anyone else to God by their own strength. “No man can pay for the life of anyone else. No one can give God what that would cost. The price for a life is very high. No payment is ever enough. No one can pay enough to live forever and not rot in the grave” (Psalm 49:7-9). Again and again the stories in the Bible show us how true those words from God are.

But Jesus is God, who became a human being in order to save us. Human beings “have bodies made out of flesh and blood. So Jesus became human like us in order to die for us” (Hebrews 2:14). What Jesus did for us is full payment for our sins so that we can live forever. Jesus is unlike ordinary human leaders. Jesus is the only one who never fails to help us. He is always able to rescue us from anything—even from death. Jesus is the kind of king and priest and prophet that “meets our need.” He is holy, pure and without blame. He isn’t like other people. He does not sin. He is lifted high above the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26). Parents on earth often fail to lead their families well. But, because of Jesus, we now have God as our father in heaven. “Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father” (James 1:17). “As his children, we will receive all

that he has for us. We will share what Christ receives” (Romans 8:17).

The Bible’s stories are all telling us that we cannot trust in ourselves or in anyone who is only a human being. We need to trust in God. We need to trust in Jesus. “It is better to go to the LORD for safety than to trust in mere men. It is better to go to the LORD for safety than to trust in human leaders” (Psalm 118:8, 9).

16. \_\_\_\_\_ is the only one who is able to rescue us from anything, even \_\_\_\_\_.

*Check your answers on page 66.*

We are not simply giving our own opinion when we say that all of the Bible is telling the story about Jesus as our Savior. Jesus himself said this. When he met with his followers, “He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written. The Christ will suffer. He will rise from the dead on the third day. His followers will preach in his name. They will tell others to turn away from their sins and be forgiven. People from every nation will hear it’” (Luke 24:45-47). When we read the Bible, we find the key that opens the door of heaven for us. The key is the message about Jesus who has rescued us from death by paying for our sins. That message certainly is the greatest story ever told!

## ***Review of Chapter Four***

The Bible's many stories all have a part in telling one big story, which is the Bible's key message. The stories show us how people sin again and again, and that we need God to be our Savior.

God promised a Savior to Adam and Eve, the first people, after they had sinned against God. Parents were to tell their children about God's promise. But parents did not always do so, and people kept falling away from God. God sent a flood over the whole world, and started over with Noah's family. But again after that, people did not stay connected to God.

God chose to make Abraham the father of the nation from which the Savior would come. Much of the Old Testament tells stories about this nation, called Israel.

God gave judges and priests and kings and prophets to the people, but they were all sinful human beings. Sinful people could not be saved

### **Answers to questions within Chapter 4:**

1. stories, story, Jesus; 2. perfect; 3. sin; 4. flood, Noah;
5. Israel, Abraham; 6. Moses; 7. judges; 8. priests; 9. pure;
10. David; 11. protection, brought; 12. prophets, Savior;
13. Jesus, killed; 14. life, heaven; 15. church, attacked;
16. Jesus, death.

forever by other sinful people. We all needed Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus is God, who became a human being in order to rescue us from all the trouble that sin has caused.

All of the Bible's stories are really pointing us to Jesus and what he does for us. He forgives our sins and makes us God's children.

**Test on Chapter Four**

1. The Bible's stories are connected to the \_\_\_\_\_ message of the Bible, that we are \_\_\_\_\_ and we need God to \_\_\_\_\_ us.
2. When God made the world, everything was perfect. But then much trouble and death was caused by \_\_\_\_\_. God promised to send a \_\_\_\_\_ to take away all the trouble cause by \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Many of the stories in the Old Testament are about the people of the nation called \_\_\_\_\_.
4. God gave several kinds of leaders to his people: judges and \_\_\_\_\_ and kings. He also sent \_\_\_\_\_ to point people to God and remind of God's promises about a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. When \_\_\_\_\_ came, all the things the prophets had said about the \_\_\_\_\_ came true.

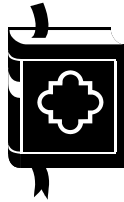


6. Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_, who became a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in order to save us.
7. Jesus is the sort of king and \_\_\_\_\_  
and prophet that we need. Because of Jesus,  
we now have God as our \_\_\_\_\_ in  
heaven.
8. All of the Bible stories are really pointing us to  
\_\_\_\_\_ and what he does for us.

*Check your answers on page 85.*



*Jesus and children—He teaches us everything we need.*



## *Chapter Five*

# **USING YOUR BIBLE**

This chapter will be a little different from the other parts of this book. There will not be questions in the chapter or a chapter test. That is because this chapter is like a guide to keep with you. You will use this guide to help you get started on reading the Bible itself.

In this chapter, you will learn:

- \* how to start reading your Bible;
- \* where to look in the Bible for help with different situations in your life.

## **Starting to read the Bible**

Learning to use your Bible is like learning to drive a car.

If you follow the laws about driving, this is how you learn to use a car: First you have a class about the rules of the road. Then you must pass a written test about traffic laws before you can get a driver's permit. Then you need an experienced driver to go along when you begin driving. You do not go out on a busy highway right away. Maybe you go to an empty parking lot or an out-of-the-way country road. You start slow and get used to driving a little bit at a time.

Now let us compare learning how to drive a car with learning how to use your Bible. By studying this booklet on the Bible, you have had a class that helps you understand how the Bible works. Now it is time for you to open up your Bible and start reading. It would be good to have someone more experienced—someone who knows the Bible well—to help you with any questions you might have. The people who provided this study booklet about the Bible can be your helpers.

So where will you go as you start reading the Bible? Some books and chapters of the Bible are easier to

read—just like some roads are easier for driving than others. When you are starting as a Bible reader, it will be best to read easier books and chapters at first, and save harder things for later.

“Why should I not simply start at the beginning of the Bible and read until the end?” you might ask. A lot of people do try that. It seems like the normal way to read a book. But almost everyone who tries reading the Bible that way gets stuck after a little while. Usually they get no farther than the Bible’s second book named Exodus. There are parts of the Old Testament that are full of all sorts of laws that God gave to the people of Israel long ago. All of those laws were important for Israel then, but many of them can be very hard for us to understand today, more than three thousand years later. So when new readers of the Bible run into all those laws in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, they often get stuck and quit reading.

We do not want you to get stuck or to quit reading the Bible! So we are going to suggest, for your first time reading through the Bible, that you read only some books and chapters. That will be an easier road to follow.

We are going to give you a plan for reading through various parts of the Bible. The plan follows the order

in which you will find the books in the Bible. Even though this plan skips over many parts of the Bible, if you follow the plan you will still be doing a lot of reading! There will be enough to keep you reading for weeks or months. Do not worry if it takes you a long time to read all this. This plan tries to stay with easier parts of the Bible, but there will be some hard things to understand. If you do not understand something, that is all right. Keep reading. How much you understand will keep growing as you keep reading.

This plan has you read many of the stories of the Bible. As you are reading, remember that all the stories are part of one big story—that people are sinners and need God to be our Savior. Keeping that key message in your mind will help you understand the different stories you are reading. Again and again you will see people who are weak, who do wrong things, who get in trouble. And you will see how God keeps showing love to his people and how he rescues them.

So, here is a plan for reading through the Bible for the first time.

Start with the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible.

**What to read:**

Genesis chapters 1–4

Genesis chapters 6–9

Genesis chapters 12–33

Genesis chapters 37–50

**What you will learn:**

How God created the world, and how people fell into sin

How God saved Noah and his family from the flood

Stories about the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Stories about the lives of Jacob's sons (the beginnings of the nation of Israel)

Next, read other parts of the early history about the people of Israel.

**What to read:**

Exodus chapters 1–20

Numbers chapters 10–14

Numbers chapters 20–25

Deuteronomy chapters 31–34

Joshua chapters 1–11

**What you will learn:**

How God rescued the people of Israel from slavery and gave them his law

How the people of Israel failed to put all their trust in God

Stories from the years that the people of Israel wandered in the desert

How Moses ended his days as leader of Israel

How God gave Israel victory over other kings in order to give them a land of their own

Along the way in some of the chapters listed above, you will come across some lists of names. Do not worry if you do not recognize the names or cannot pronounce them. God included things like these lists of names to show that these Bible stories are about real people who lived in real places on the earth. The Bible is not written like a fairy tale, about what

happened “once upon a time.” The people who are in the Bible’s stories actually did the things the Bible says they did. Even the most amazing miracles were things that really happened, not things the Bible writers were making up.

As you keep reading the Bible, you will learn more about the history of the people of Israel. Read some stories from the time of the judges and priests and kings.

**What to read:**

Judges chapters 1–2

Ruth chapters 1–4

1 Samuel chapters 1–31

2 Samuel chapters 1–20

1 Kings 1–11

**What you will learn:**

How Israel had trouble during the time of the judges

The story of a woman who became part of the family from which the Savior would come

Stories about weak and bad priests (Eli and his sons) and about Israel’s first king (Saul)

How David ruled as king—and how there were many sinful troubles in his house

How Solomon ruled as king, also the building of the temple for God

We had you pass over the stories of many of the leaders in the book of Judges. We also suggest you pass over stories about the many kings who came after Solomon in the rest of the books of Kings and Chronicles. You can read some of those stories if you want to. But the plan is that you pass over some parts of the Old Testament for now. We want you to



keep going forward so you can get to the New Testament. That is where you will read about Jesus your Savior and how he lived and died for you!

Before we get to the New Testament, though, there are a few sections you should read to finish the Old Testament's story.

**What to read:**

2 Kings chapter 17

2 Kings chapters 24–25

Ezra chapter 1 and chapters 4–7

Esther chapters 1–10

**What you will learn:**

How the northern part of Israel was taken over by another country

How the southern part of Israel (called Judah) was taken over by the empire of Babylon

How when Persia took over Babylon, some of Israel's people were allowed to return to their own land and rebuild their temple

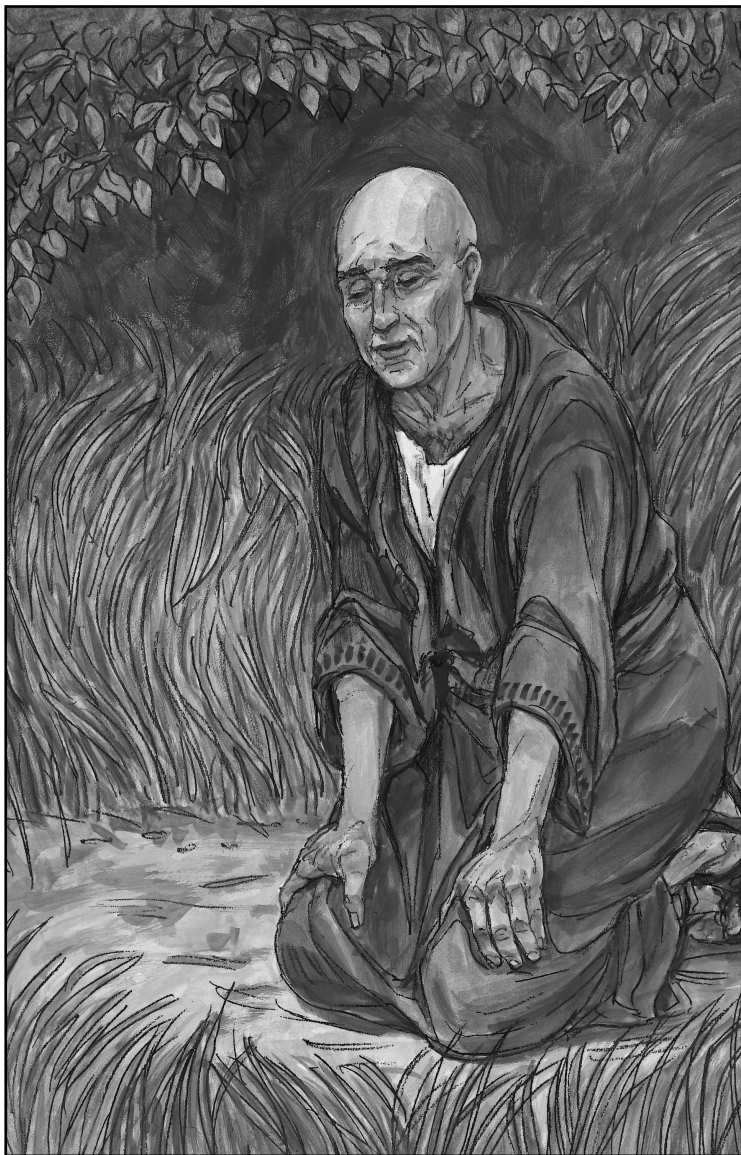
The story of a Jewish woman and the Jewish people who remained in Persia (Note: People from Judah became known as "Jews")

Reading about what happened in the time of Ezra and Esther takes you to the end of the main story about God's people in the Old Testament. There are certainly other stories you can read. But if you read the parts of the Bible that the plan has suggested, you will have gone through many of the Old Testament's stories about people's troubles and how God helped them.

The next books in the Bible are the poetry books. Job is about a godly man who suffered very much in his life. Psalms is a book of poems for worshipping God. Proverbs is a collection of wise advice. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon at the end of his life. He looked back and saw that much of what he did in life was worthless, and that trusting God is the only thing that is important. Song of Songs is Solomon's description of what true love is like.

You will want to read the poetry books sometime, especially some of the worship poems in the book of Psalms. But for your first time through the Bible, we will stay mostly with books that tell stories.

We also suggest that for now, you pass over the books by the prophets. To understand the prophets, it helps to know about the history of the times when they were writing their books. It also helps to know about the life of Christ, because important parts of their prophecies were pointing ahead to when the Savior would come. So you might want to come back to reading some of the prophets after you have read about what Jesus did when he came.



*Job.*

The Bible's stories about Jesus are found in the first four books of the New Testament. Rather than reading all four books, we suggest you start with only two of the Gospels.

**What to read:**

Luke chapters 1–24

John chapters 1–20

**What you will learn:**

The life of Jesus, focusing on his actions

The life of Jesus, focusing on his words and teachings

The rest of the books of the New Testament are about the church. The book of Acts tells what the apostles did to spread Jesus' message. There are also many epistles (letters) for teaching and strengthening the church. Read the book of Acts and then some samples of the epistles.

**What to read:**

Acts chapters 1–28

Romans chapters 1–15

Ephesians chapters 1–6

Philippians chapters 1–4

1 Thessalonians chapters 1–5

James chapters 1–5

1 Peter chapters 1–5

2 Peter chapters 1–3

1 John chapters 1–5

**What you will learn:**

The story of the church and how it grew, especially through the work of Paul

A summary of Christian teachings

How we are to live as Christians

How to stay strong when your life is hard

How to be ready for Jesus to come again

How we need to put our faith into action

To stand strong when you are suffering

To watch out for those who teach wrong ideas about God

To live in love, as God has loved us

## **Looking for help from the Bible for different situations**

The first part of this chapter was a guide you can use when you read through the Bible on your own. Having a plan for reading the Bible regularly will help you learn much from God.

But there are also times when you might want to turn to the Bible for advice about a problem you have, or for help in dealing with how you are feeling. You want to hear words from God that connect with what you are experiencing in life. To help find some words from God that are helpful for different situations in your life, you can use the list of suggestions on the next pages.

In the list, Bible books are referred to by name, followed by a set of numbers. The first number is the chapter of the Bible book. The next numbers are the verses in that chapter. So, for example, John 3:16 means the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16. You can use the table of contents at the front of your Bible to help you find the Bible books. In each book, there are numbers at the start of each chapter, and then each verse in the chapter has a little number next to it.

<b>At times when ...</b>	<b>Read these verses ...</b>	<b>What you will find there:</b>
You wonder where your life went wrong	Proverbs 3:1-8	You need to trust in the Lord, not in yourself.
You think God seems far away	Psalms 139:1-16	God is very close to you all the time.
You feel like God has filled your life with too much trouble	Hebrews 12:4-13	God uses the hard things in your life to train you as his child.
You are sad or depressed	John 14:1-3	Jesus has a place in heaven for you.
You cannot sleep	Psalms 121 and Proverbs 3:21-26	God keeps you safe day and night and gives you peace of mind.
You want peace and calm in your life	John 14:27 and Romans 5:1-11	The only lasting peace for your life comes from Jesus.
You are lonely or miss your family	Psalms 68:4-6	God makes you part of his family.
You feel like everyone has left you and you are alone	Psalms 31:9-24	God is with you and tells you never to give up hope.
You are sick	Psalms 41:1-3	God watches over you when you are sick.
You are afraid	Psalms 23	God cares for you like a shepherd cares for his sheep.
You are full of anger	Ephesians 4:22-27	Anger only gives the devil a chance to control you.
You hate someone	Luke 6:27-36	God wants you to love even your enemies.
You are full of sexual urges	1 Corinthians 6:12-7:3	Your body belongs to God, and you should only use your body in ways that honor God.
You are jealous of the things other people have	Luke 16:19-25	Having God is all that is important in the end.
You are tempted to do wrong	Psalms 1	Sinners will only harm you; things go well if you follow God.

At times when ...	Read these verses ...	What you will find there:
Your faith in God is weak	Psalm 46:1-3 and Psalm 146:5-8	God holds onto you no matter how difficult things get.
Life seems unfair	Psalm 10	Bad people may seem to get what they want, but God is always in charge.
Other people are trying to harm you	Psalm 37:1-13	God is on your side and will protect you.
You are going through pain or problems	Isaiah 43:1-2	God will go with you through all your troubles.
You feel like your life is crashing down around you	Matthew 7:24-27	Building your life on Jesus' words is the only way to keep it from falling apart.
You need courage to keep going	Joshua 1:9	God will make you strong.
You worry about how you will get through life	Matthew 6:25-34 and Philippians 4:12-13	Worry only harms you; trust Christ and you will be strong.
You feel guilty because of your sins	Psalm 51	Even murderers can pray to God for forgiveness.
You wonder if you can be forgiven for all you have done wrong	Psalm 32	God forgives all your sins and surrounds you with his love.
You need something to be happy about	Philippians 4:4-9	You can be glad because you belong to Jesus.
You want to know how to pray	Luke 11:1-13	Jesus invites you to pray to God, and God will listen to you.
You want to know how God wants you to live	Ephesians 4:28–5:20	Your life changes when you live for God.
You worry that you might get pulled away from God	Romans 8:28-39	Nothing is stronger than God's love for you.
You wonder what will happen to you when you die	Job 19:25-27, John 11:25, and 1 Corinthians 15:53-57	God will raise you back to life after you die, so you can live forever with him.



## **Conclusion**

We hope that this little book has helped you to learn much more about the Bible—the big, wonderful book that God has given us. Now that you have worked through this study, you are ready to do some Bible reading on your own. And no matter how much you read the Bible, there is always plenty more to learn!

There are also many other short study books like this one that you can ask for. They will help you learn more about what God has told us in the Bible. You can ask for other study books to be sent to you.

God bless you as you learn about him and grow closer to him!





## **Answers to Chapter Tests**

### **Answers to Chapter One Test: (pages 15-17)**

1. conscience, good behavior; 2. Bible; 3. relationship, healed; 4. books, centuries; 5. birth, two; 6. prophecy; 7. Mark, John, Jesus; 8. epistles, lead; 9. painting. Check the pictures on pages 9 and 11 for the correct books of the Bible.

### **Answers to Chapter Two Test: (pages 28-29)**

1. unlike, inspired; 2. mistakes, Word, 3. water, eternal; 4. light, dark; 5. code, understand; 6. translations, Hebrew, Greek; 7. trust, lives.

### **Answers to Chapter Three Test: (page 43)**

1. code, message; 2. sinners; 3. saved, sins; 4. death; 5. punishment, nailed; 6. alive, life; 7. Bible.

### **Answers to Chapter Four Test: (pages 68-69)**

1. key, sinners, save; 2. sin, Savior, sin; 3. Israel; 4. priests, prophets, Savior; 5. Jesus, Savior; 6. God, human being; 7. priest, Father; 8. Jesus.



## Word List

(explanations of some words used in the book)

### **AD**

This stands for “Anno Domini,” which is Latin for “In the year of our Lord.” All of the years since Jesus was born are dated as “AD.”

### **apostle**

Someone who is sent out on a mission by God.

### **appreciate**

To see the good qualities of someone or something, to be thankful, to think well of someone or thing.

### **Augustine**

Pronounced “aw-GUS-tin.” Augustine was a man who lived long ago (354 - 430 AD) in North Africa. He tried many ways to figure out what life was about, until finally he heard God’s word and became a Christian.

### **BC**

Short for “Before Christ.” The years before Jesus birth are dated like a countdown, with the number of each year getting smaller as you get closer to the birth of Jesus.

### **behavior**

The way a person acts in his life.

### **century**

From the Latin word for “100,” a century is 100 years.

**Christ**

The Christ is the one who comes from God. It is a special title used in the Bible for the Savior that God promised to all the world.

**Christian**

A Christian is a person who believes that Jesus is the "Christ" (the Savior of all people).

**chronological**

Arranged according to time; put in the order that things happened.

**church**

The word "church" means a gathering of people. The people who believe in Jesus are called his church.

**contradict**

To say something that is the opposite of what someone else says.

**conscience**

Knowledge that is in all of our minds. Conscience tells us there is a God and that he expects good behavior.

**dictionary**

A book that lists words used in a language in alphabetic order telling what the words mean.

**disaster**

Something terrible that happens.

**emperor / empire**

An emperor is a ruler over many countries. An empire is when one country takes control over many countries.

**encyclopedia**

A set of books or computer files that give general information about various things.

**epistle**

A letter—a written message sent to someone else.

**eternal**

Never ending; lasting forever. Jesus gives us life that will last forever.

**foundation**

The base of a building, set firmly in the ground. The Bible is like a foundation for our lives.

**glimpse**

A brief look at something.

**gospel**

From the Old English words “good spell,” the word “gospel” means “good news.”

**inspired**

Words were “breathed into” human writers by God. God gave the writers the very words that they wrote in the Bible.

**Israel**

Pronounced “IZZ–rah–el,” the name means “wrestles with God.” It was a nickname God had given to Jacob. One time Jacob would not let go of God until God promised to bless him (Genesis 32:22-30). The name “Israel” then became the name of the nation that grew from Jacob’s children and grandchildren.

**Jews / Jewish**

The southern half of Israel was called Judah. People from Judah were called Jewish people or Jews.

**law**

A law is a rule to be obeyed. All of God's rules and commandments are called God's law. Mostly God's law shows us that we are sinners who do not do what God wants.

**Lord**

Someone who rules over us or is in charge of us. We call Jesus our Lord because he rescued us from sin.

**mysterious**

Something that is not explained.

**nourishment**

Something that gives us what we need to survive. Just like good foods and water nourish our bodies, God's Word in the Bible is what we need for our souls to be alive.

**politics**

The activities of those who wish to rule a country.

**prophet / prophecy**

A prophet is a person who speaks for God. Prophecy is a message given by God.

**recognize**

To understand that something is true.

**rejected**

Not accepting or making use of something.

**reliable**

Trustworthy, dependable.

**rescue**

To save someone who is in trouble.

**Savior**

Jesus is our Savior—the one who saves us—because he forgives our sins and will rescue us from death.

**sin / sinners**

Sin is falling short of what God expects of us. We are sinners because we do wrong things and because we do not do the good things we should do.

**Scripture / Scriptures**

Another name for the Bible. “Scripture” means “the writing.” “Scriptures” means “writings.”

**testament**

An important, serious document.

**translate**

To put words from one language into another language, like changing from Hebrew or Greek into English or any other language

**universe**

All of God’s creation including the sun, moon, stars and planets.



## *A Bible Handbook* **Final Test**

### **On the blank write:**

- O.T.** if the statement is talking about the Old Testament,  
**N.T.** if the statement is talking about the New Testament,  
**Both** if the statement describes both Old and New Testaments.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 39 books written before Jesus was born.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 27 books written after the time Jesus was born.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Includes stories about the nation of Israel.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Includes books about the life of Jesus.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells how people are sinners.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Tells how God loves people and rescues them.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ Originally written in the Greek language.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Originally written in the Hebrew language.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Contains the book of Revelation, which paints a picture of what the rest of the Bible tells us.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Contains the book of Psalms, which are poems for worshiping God.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Teaches us God's law and his gospel.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ The books were inspired by God.

**Complete the following sentences:**

13. The three shelves in the Old Testament  
bookcase hold \_\_\_\_\_ books,  
\_\_\_\_\_ books and \_\_\_\_\_  
books.
14. The three shelves in the New Testament  
bookcase hold \_\_\_\_\_ books,  
\_\_\_\_\_ (or letters), and a book of  
\_\_\_\_\_.



15. While the books of the Bible were written by many different men, the real author of the Bible is \_\_\_\_\_.
16. We say that God **inspired** the Bible because God \_\_\_\_\_ into the writers the \_\_\_\_\_ that he wanted them to write.
17. The Bible contains \_\_\_\_\_ mistakes. Every word of the Bible is \_\_\_\_\_.
18. The key message of the Bible is that all people are \_\_\_\_\_ of doing wrong and deserve to be \_\_\_\_\_ by God, but God \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus instead of us so that we can be given \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_.
19. The two main teachings that go together to make up the key message of the Bible are the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
20. The \_\_\_\_\_ shows us that we cannot make ourselves right with God.
21. The \_\_\_\_\_ tells us that Jesus kept all God's \_\_\_\_\_ for us, and that Jesus received and removed the \_\_\_\_\_ we deserved for our sins.

22. The Bible's stories teach us that we cannot trust in \_\_\_\_\_ or in anyone who is only a \_\_\_\_\_. We need to trust in \_\_\_\_\_.
23. The Bible's stories are about \_\_\_\_\_ people who lived in \_\_\_\_\_ places on the earth. The things told about in the Bible are things that \_\_\_\_\_ happened.
24. When you read the Bible's stories, you should keep in mind the big story they are telling: that people are \_\_\_\_\_ and need \_\_\_\_\_ to be our \_\_\_\_\_.
25. Show that you understand this example of how to find something in the Bible. To find **John 3:16** you would look for the Bible book of \_\_\_\_\_, the third \_\_\_\_\_, the sixteenth \_\_\_\_\_.

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