



# “Bible” Session Leader Guide

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**This Leader Session Guide outlines a meeting & discussion format for a 45-60 minute lesson.**

## **Pre-session (about 1-hour prep):**

- Download video at <https://vimeo.com/672873200> and transfer to your computer.
- Test the video on the TV or projector you will be using for the lesson. Good speakers always make a bigger impact. Arrange seating to best facilitate discussion.
- Watch the video at least 2-3 times before the learning session. The 1<sup>st</sup> time consider the big picture. The 2<sup>nd</sup> time identify key questions raised and any unresolved issues.
- Review the Leader Study Guide for this episode and note any material you hope to share with your students, either during the learning session or later.
- Personalize the opening introduction and presentation to help facilitate the discussion and key messages.
- Determine **one key concept** you want to leave your students with from this session.

**Opening (5-10 Minutes): Introduce the topic by reading the short summary of the video and any background you think is important to the topic.**

“Bible: DM from God” - While longboarding with her friends, Julia confesses that she tried reading the Bible last week, and didn’t get much out of it. Is it a bunch of fairy tales? Or a love letter from God? Either way, her issue with the Bible is... why can’t she even understand it?

**Video (10 Minutes)** Turn out the lights, the darker the room the better. Play the video and pay attention to your students as they watch. Notice what *they* notice. Take your cues for discussion from their responses.



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**Discussion (20-30 Minutes)** If you have a large group consider breaking into groups of 8-10.

- Is the Bible historically reliable? What about variations and contradictions found in biblical manuscripts?
- Do we have any proof that events described in the Bible really happened?
- What makes the Bible unique in a literary sense?
- Aren't the characters in the Bible “too good to be true?”
- Is the Bible really relevant today--does it speak to my life?

**Key Message:** The Bible has more to say about how to live a joyful, purposeful and peace-filled life than any book ever written. But perhaps the biggest way the Bible speaks to us is an invitation: to know the God who made us; to be exposed to the incredible depths of his love; and to respond to his offer of new life in Jesus Christ, becoming a part of God's family forever.

**Promise to send additional** “deeper dive” resources/info to students about this week's subject on a certain day of the following week. Offer to discuss any of the questions raised with students individually. Announce next week's lesson topic and dismiss. You can reference the “Post-Session Messages” document for suggestions.

**Prayer (5 Minutes)** Pray as you would for your group.

**EXTRA RESOURCES FOR  
LEADER STUDY & BACKGROUND**

**DARKROOM FAITH - "BIBLE"**



## **DARKROOM Bible EPISODE: “DM from God”**

While longboarding with her friends, Julia confesses that she tried reading the Bible last week, and didn't get much out of it. Is it a bunch of fairy tales? Or a love letter from God? Either way, her issue with the Bible is... why can't she even understand it?

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## **Discussion Questions:**

### **1 | Is the Bible historically reliable? What about variations and contradictions found in biblical manuscripts?**

By the measures typically used to determine the historical reliability of ancient manuscripts, the Bible (that is, the 39 individual books that comprise the Old Testament together with the 27 books of the New Testament) performs very well. By “reliability” we mean, did the historical events to which the Bible refers take place in real space and time? And if so, did they happen as the ancient writers described them? Are they verified internally, within the entirety of the text itself? Are they verified externally, by other writers of the period? Does archeological evidence exist of the Bible's veracity? Do multiple copies exist of the same writings—and were those copies produced within a time frame that could have reasonably relied upon the authors' memory of recorded events? By these standards, the Bible has excellent historical credentials.

What we call “The Bible” today is actually a collection of writings by a number of different authors, produced over a period of some 1500 years. We call it God's word even though God didn't physically write it. Instead, he inspired ordinary people to record what they saw and heard, and what he revealed to them. In the Old Testament, we have a record of God's dealings with his chosen people, the Jews. In the New Testament, we have a continuation of that record, through first century accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, and the early history of his followers, who came to be known as Christians.



If the Bible were simply an ancient history book, it would probably not be terribly controversial. But it claims to be much more. It claims to be God communicating with us. And it makes very particular truth claims, too: that God created the heavens and earth; that Jesus was God in the flesh; that his life, death, and resurrection ushered in the Kingdom of God, and more.

Critics of the Bible and skeptics of Christianity are quick to point out that discrepancies exist in the Bible—small inconsistencies and variances within the text and from copy to copy—but despite these claims the Bible’s text has remained remarkably consistent over thousands of years...and none of the variances significantly impact or change key Christian beliefs or claims.

## 2 | **Do we have any reliable proof that events described in the Bible really happened?**

We do. The ancient Roman historian Tacitus wrote about the execution of Jesus at the hands of Pontius Pilate in his final work, *Annals*; Tacitus also reported the existence of the early Christian church and recorded such historical events as the burning of Rome in 64 A.D. First century Jewish historian Josephus writes of Jesus and his brother James in his *Antiquities*. And the accounts in the New Testament itself were written by eyewitnesses (and those close to them) who had first-hand knowledge of the events themselves.

It’s also important to note—in terms of the New Testament—that after thousands of years and through some 5,000 existing copies, the New Testament remains virtually unaltered. Scholars who compare the earliest manuscripts with those produced centuries later find few variations of any significance.

Archeological evidence authenticates the Bible as well. Archeology can’t dig up everything that happened in the past, and it certainly can’t dig up God. But it can corroborate the existence of things that are recorded in the Bible. Only about 5% of the sites mentioned in the Bible have been excavated to date, but what has been discovered indicates there is much more to be found. In recent years, archeologists have discovered the ruins of the biblical city of Ziklag (where King David hid from King Saul); the base of a stone watchtower in Southern Israel dating to the time of King Hezekiah; and from the site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, weights and coins that affirm the record of temple life in the 4th century BC.



As biblical scholar David Capes notes, “Every day we depend on a few trustworthy people when it comes to some of life’s most important issues. We bet our lives and happiness on them—and we do so without any scientific, objective proof. Instead, we simply trust others to tell us the truth. Whether you regard the Bible as reliable probably depends on the people you trust. There are two billion Christians who rely on the Bible to tell them the truth about God. They have staked their lives on it. They “bear witness” that it is true. But they are not alone. There are scholars, historians, and archaeologists who have studied the Bible in depth and testify that it is trustworthy.”<sup>1</sup>.

## 3 | What makes the Bible unique in a literary sense?

Although the Bible is really a small library of books written by numerous authors over a span of 1500 years, it presents a single, unified story with one consistent storyline! One main plotline weaves all the different books, characters, and literary genres into a single compelling message, from the opening line of Genesis (“In the beginning”) to the final words of Revelation (“Come, Lord Jesus.”)

This large and complex ancient text is comprised of narrative (502 chapters, or 43% of the content), poetry (387 chapters, or 33% of the text), and letters, legal texts, prophetic and wisdom writings (the remaining 24%). Taken together, these writings tell an epic story about how God is working through a people (Israel) to bring order and beauty out of the chaos of our world. And they build hope and expectation for the coming of a divine deliverer who annihilates sin and death and ultimately renews all of creation. Whether in the Old Testament or the New, all roads in the Bible’s story lead us to Jesus.

The basic plotline of the Bible goes something like this:

1. God creates a wonderful, ordered world of beauty and potential; creates man and woman, and places them in charge of all He has made.
2. The human beings God has made rebel, sin enters the world, and along with it, death. What God has made is fractured, and this leads to chaos.
3. God sets in motion a plan to restore “shalom” and blessing to the entire world through one family, chosen from among the nations (the nation of Israel, whose patriarch was Abraham).

<sup>1</sup> Capes, David “Is the Bible Reliable?”, for [explorethegod.com](https://www.explorethegod.com/articles/is-the-bible-reliable); <https://www.explorethegod.com/articles/is-the-bible-reliable>.



4. God’s chosen people, Israel, fail to honor him by worshipping other Gods. As a result, they face repeated cycles of war and exile—and through it all God retains a remnant for Himself.
5. After a period of 400 years with no word from God, Jesus arrives on the scene as a Hebrew baby miraculously born to a woman of Nazareth.
6. Jesus, the Son of God, fulfills God’s promise to bless all the nations through Abraham. By his sacrificial life, death, and resurrection he defeats sin and death and ushers in a new kingdom that will be fulfilled at his return.

This story is not just a good read; it provides us with a distinct way of seeing the world. It helps us make sense of things and even invites us to “step into the story,” becoming a part of God’s great plan for the people and the world he has created.

## 4 | Aren’t the characters in the Bible “too good to be true?”

Hardly. If the aim of the Bible was to make its main characters appear super-virtuous or “too good to be true,” you would consider it an awful failure even before you finished reading its first book, Genesis. The first family, Adam and Eve quickly became the first dysfunctional family when one of their sons killed the other in a jealous rage. Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish race, was a handy liar, passing his wife Sarah off as his sister not once but twice when he feared for his life. Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, played fast and loose with the truth, too, tricking his father Isaac into giving him the birthright that rightly belonged to Jacob’s brother, Esau. When his daughter Tamar was raped, Jacob postponed justice to protect his own interests, until his own sons took revenge and murdered their sister’s attacker. Later, Jacob’s sons sold their brother Joseph into slavery because he was their father’s favorite. Far from being “too good to be true,” the Bible’s characters were human, with human flaws.

Moses, who led the nation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, had murder in his past. King David, a man after God’s own heart, committed adultery then murdered to cover it up. And if we go to the New Testament, we see among Jesus’s disciples one who denied him and another who betrayed him for money. The Bible never glosses over sin or presents us with perfect saints to carry out God’s story. And that’s a good thing. The very human, very flawed individuals we see in its pages are people like us, and give us hope that we, too, can become a part of God’s ongoing story of redemption.



## 5 | Is the Bible really relevant today--does it speak to my life?

It is and does, for this reason: God’s word is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) God’s word doesn’t just lie on the page. It becomes animated and active by the very Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. It’s that powerful.

It reveals both the human heart and the heart of God. It speaks to timeless issues like hope, fear, understanding, purpose, and identity. It talks frankly about money, sex and power—the driving forces of our culture—and it the answers questions we ask in our most unguarded moments: Can my failures be redeemed? Can I be loved? What happens when I die? How should I treat others?

And from a purely pragmatic standpoint, the Bible has more to say about how to live a joyful, purposeful and peace-filled life than any book ever written. But perhaps the biggest way the Bible speaks to us is an invitation: to know the God who made us; to be exposed to the incredible depths of his love; and to respond to his offer of new life in Jesus Christ, becoming a part of God’s family forever.

### Supporting Scripture

**Psalm 1:1-3** Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

**Psalm 119:89-93** Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts for by them you have preserved my life.

**Psalm 119:105** Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.



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**Matthew 4:4** Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

**Matthew 22:34-40** Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

**2 Timothy 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

**2 Peter 1:16-18** For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

**1 John 1:1-4** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

## Episode Excerpts:

**Video Segment:** (5:09 – 5:57) For a book that is centuries old, there's no way we can trust that the Bible has been transmitted reliably. That's what I thought too - but I've heard the four Gospels can be dated within decades of the events they're about. So, I guess that means the people who saw it happen were still alive when the books were written. Like no way that's been handed down through history without any significant changes! That's the crazy thing. I read that when scholars compare thousands of



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surviving biblical manuscripts, they found almost no variations that affect any essential teaching of the Bible. Like less than 1%, and only minor things like different spellings or orders of words. And that’s after thousands of years of copying.

**Video Segment:** (1:20 – 2:04) I think it's just a bunch of fairytales. And even if it is real, it's just outdated. It's a love letter from God written over thousands of years telling the story of God and how He loves and rescues people just like us. Yeah - but it also says some guy got swallowed by a whale and survived. And that Jesus walked on water. And raised people from the dead!?! Yeah. Please. You think I'm stupid? You can't actually believe all that. But here's the thing. I do.

**Video Segment(s):** (0:03 – 0:32, 02:19 - 02:36) I tried reading the Bible last week. Oh yeah? What did you think? Well ... I didn't get much out of it to be honest. You'd think that a book that was supposed to be from God would be easier to understand. But it seems like people just use it as an excuse to judge other people. Anyway...it's confusing. At its core, the Bible is what God wants us to know about Him. It's like an autobiography, using all different kinds of stories, genres and authors to show His attributes.

**Video Segment** (3:33 – 04:20) For a book that’s supposed to be religious, the Bible never sugar coats the ugly side of humanity. within the first three chapters, the original two humans, disobey God which brings sin and suffering into the world: that led to war, murder, rape, and a bunch of other messed-up things. If the Bible was all hype--PR for God, by God--you would have expected the authors to gloss over some of the things they did. Like, for example, if I sold my siblings into slavery, or I stoned a follower of Jesus - I, for sure, would have left those parts out of the story. But that’s why the authors chose to keep those parts IN! So - I'm pretty confident that the Bible reflects the legit truth of humanity, real stories of actual people who are not perfect.

**Video Segment** (04:25 – 05:07) Since the Bible is God’s story of Himself and of our world, and we’re made in God’s image, it means it’s about us, too. That’s why it deals with all kinds of aspects that are applicable to daily life: For example, did you know there are: over 2,000 references to money & finances in the Bible? Over 500 verses on love? And over 100 about finding purpose? There are verses about caring for the Earth, racism...justice for the oppressed, diversity, social equality of women and minorities...defending the vulnerable including immigrants, children, and widows. All stuff that’s relevant and impacting our culture today.



## Notable Quotes

- “The best evidence of the Bible’s being the word of God is to be found between its covers. It proves itself.” - *Charles Hodge*
- “There’s one medium of revelation that allows for both public accessibility and long-term preservation: the written word. It was a technology available in the ancient world that would accomplish both these goals.” - *Michael Kruger, Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College (Crossway, 2021), 152*
- “The Bible is the way that, through the Spirit, God is active in my life.”- *Timothy Keller, “The Bible is Alive and Active,” timothykeller.com, 9.15.2015*
- “I study my Bible as I gather apples. I search the Bible as a whole, like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb—study book after book. Then, I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the sense. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings.” - *Martin Luther (1483-1546)*
- “Both literal and figurative language can describe reality. We can tell lies with literal words and speak the truth through metaphor. Indeed, when it comes to the Bible, some of the deepest truths are metaphorically expressed.”- *Rebecca McLaughlin, Confronting Christianity (Crossway, 2019), 95.*
- “It is Christ Himself...who is the true word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him.” - *C. S. Lewis, in a private letter to a friend.*
- “Some passages of Scripture lie clear before us—blessed shallows in which the lambs may wade; but there are deeps in which our minds might rather drown herself than swim with pleasure if she came there without caution.” - *Charles Spurgeon, “How to Read the Bible,” delivered in 1879 at the Metropolitan Chapel, Newington.*

## Additional Resources to Explore

1. Michael Kruger, *Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian on Keeping the Faith in College*, Chapter 10: “Everything I Believe Seems to Hinge on the Truth of the Bible—How Do We Know It’s Really From God?” (Crossway, 2021)
2. Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*, Chapter 6: “How Can You Take the Bible Literally?”, (Crossway, 2019)



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3. The Bible Project: Intro to the Bible (Four short, animated videos to help students understand the Bible and its unified message).  
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/how-to-read-bible-introduction/>
4. Wayne Gruden (Ed.), C. John Collins (Ed.), Thomas R. Schreiner (Ed.), *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible’s Origin, Reliability and Meaning* (Crossway, 2012).
5. Sean McDowell, “Is the Old Testament Reliable?” a 3:55 video from apologist and Biola University Professor Sean McDowell,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCwrXcC52Co>
6. Sean McDowell, “Is the New Testament Reliable?” a 4:22 video from apologist and Biola University professor Sean McDowell,  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs4s2i\\_bWEw&t=48s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs4s2i_bWEw&t=48s)
7. Wayne Gruden (Ed.), C. John Collins (Ed.), Thomas R. Schreiner (Ed.), *Understanding Scripture: An Overview of the Bible’s Origin, Reliability and Meaning* (Crossway, 2012).
8. The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable? F.F.Bruce
9. 10 things to know about the reliability of the New Testament,  
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-reliability-of-the-new-testament-writers/>
10. 14 Reasons to Read the Bible, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/bible-studies/reasons-read-bible.html>
11. Why Read the Bible, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qITHR\\_hqH9I&t=20s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qITHR_hqH9I&t=20s)