

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

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- The Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God that gives unerring witness to Christ Jesus, teaches us about God, His story, His truth, and His way of salvation and the life of faith. The Bible is the story of God and shows the way to join that story.

HOW MANY BOOKS?

- The Bible is God's story made up of 66 books.
- 39 Old Testament
 - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
- 27 New Testament
 - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessa- lonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

Oral Tradition

- The people of God told the story of God through oral tradition, or spoken word.

Copied Accounts

- These stories were then copied down by specific writers and redacted into the accounts we have today.

Human Authors, Divine Inspiration

- The Scriptures were written by human beings who were inspired by the Spirit of God for the purposes of God. They wrote at specific times to specific contexts and audiences, yet by God's inspiration and guidance the Bible was put together to point to Christ, His saving work, and the way of life.

HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE TODAY?

- Both the Old and New Testaments were spoken, written, copied, and then refined by the early Church with established and specific criteria. They asked the following questions:
- Was it used in the Christian community as a part of their worship of God? (Did it point to God, the Church, and the calling of the Church to worship?)
- Was it noted in the writings of ancient authorities (other Christian authors, leaders in the church, theologians, etc.)?
- Does it come from an apostolic or prophetic origin (was it written by somebody who was a firsthand witness and follower of Jesus)?
- Did it align with the Rule of Faith or Rule of Truth? (Aka. Did it point to the truth of God and the united faith we have in God that we see in the early councils and creeds, prayers, and writings of the early church?)

EXAMPLE OF A CREED

- Apostles Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

WHERE DID TRANSLATIONS COME FROM?

- Greek was the main language in which the New Testament was written.
- By the year 200, the Old Testament was written in both Hebrew (Hebrew Bible) and Greek (Septuagint). There were also Syriac and Coptic translations of the Gospels.
- The earliest collection of the full Scriptures was known as the Vulgate (Latin word for “common”. This Bible was put together by Jerome in 405 and was used by the Church as the only Bible for the next 1,000 years of history.
- In 1384, a man named John Wycliffe produced the first “English” translation of the Scriptures with the goal of making the Scriptures more accessible.
- In 1455, the Printing Press was created by Johannes Gutenberg, which allowed the world to have more access to printing and reading the Word of God.
- In 1522, Martin Luther translated the Bible into German from the original languages. This was part of the Protestant Reformation that had lasting effects on worship, doctrine, and practice of the Catholic and Protestant Churches..
- In 1530, William Tyndale fought to have the Bible translated into the common language of the common person.
- In 1611, King James authorized the King James version of the English Bible.
- The Bible continued to be translated into the common language of the people around the world. The full Bible is translated into 776 languages, with portions of the Bible reaching 4,007 languages in the translations we have today.

FREE METHODIST BELIEFS

Excerpt from *Free Methodist Church (Book of Discipline ¶108-110)*

The Bible is God's written Word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit. It bears unerring witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word. As attested by the early church and subsequent councils, it is the trustworthy record of God's revelation, completely truthful in all it affirms. It has been faithfully preserved and proves itself true in human experience. The Scriptures have come to us through human authors who wrote, as God moved them, in the languages and literary forms of their times. God continues, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to speak through this Word to each generation and culture. The Bible has authority over all human life. It teaches the truth about God, His creation, His people, His one and only Son and the destiny of humankind. It also teaches the way of salvation and the life of faith. Whatever is not found in the Bible nor can be proved by it is not to be required as an article of belief or as necessary to salvation.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Find more at our website: commissionchurches.org and/or explore the “How to Read the Bible” page.