

LESSON TWO: THE BIBLE

The Episcopal Church bases its essential beliefs and teachings on the Bible.

The word Bible comes from the Greek word for “books.” Although the Bible is typically bound in one volume, it comprises many books written by various human authors over the course of many centuries. These books are sometimes also called Scripture (from the Latin for “writing.”)

The books of the Bible contain a diverse range of writing styles (or genres), including history, poetry, visions, letters, and even folk tales and myths. So, for example, we don’t need to take the creation story at the beginning of Genesis literally—but we do need to pay attention to what it teaches us about God, the world, and humanity.

The Christian Church considers the entire Bible uniquely inspired by God. So, after Bible readings in church, the reader says, “The Word of the Lord,” and the congregation responds, “Thanks be to God.” This expresses the belief that God speaks to us through the biblical writings—although we must exercise great care in interpreting what God is saying to us through them.

The Bible does not answer all our questions about everything. For example, it does not tell us how to build a car or operate a microwave oven. What it does teach us is how to be in a right relationship with God—both in this life and the next. The traditional way of putting this is that “the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation.”

The Christian Church accepts the Bible’s teachings as “divine revelation” or “divinely revealed.” This means that in Scripture, God reveals truths that we could never have discovered on our own. It’s similar to me telling a story in class that reveals something about myself that the participants would otherwise have no way of knowing. So it is with the Bible: its stories and teachings are not human inventions but divine revelation.

(None of this necessarily means that those who have never read the Bible cannot be in a right relationship with God. At this point, we are only talking about what the Bible means for us in the Church, not what its absence might mean for those of other religions or of none.)

EXERCISE – SESSION TWO

BIBLE VERSE LOOK-UP

Most books of the Bible are divided into chapters and verses. Thus, any passage in the Bible can be quickly and easily located by its “chapter and verse” citation:

(Name of Book), (Chapter), (Verse(s)).

Most Bibles give a list of books near the beginning of the volume. In some Bibles, there are separate lists at the start of the Old Testament and at the start of the New Testament. Participants in this class should be able to find any passage using its chapter-and-verse citation. To gain some practice, please look up the following Bible verses and write them in the space provided. (Please use a hard copy of the Bible—just so that you know how.)

1. Genesis 1:1
2. Exodus 3:3
3. Isaiah 40:1
4. Matthew 2:1-2
5. Revelation 22:21

(Note: A valuable online resource for finding Bible passages quickly is biblegateway.com.)

QUIZ – SESSION TWO

TRUE OR FALSE

1. The Bible is a collection of books. T F
2. The Bible had one human author. T F
3. The Church believes that God inspired the Bible. T F
4. All the books of the Bible are alike. T F
5. The Church considers the Bible to be divine revelation. T F
6. The books of the Bible were all written at the same time. T F

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The Bible is a collection of _____.
2. The Church believes the Bible was inspired by _____.
3. The Church considers the Bible's teachings to be divine _____.
4. After the readings in Church, the reader says,
"The _____ of the _____."

MULTIPLE CHOICE (Circle the letter of the best answer.)

1. The Episcopal Church affirms that the Bible contains all things necessary to:
 - a. Good manners
 - b. Success in your career
 - c. Salvation
2. What does the Episcopal Church base on the Bible?
 - a. Its essential beliefs and teachings
 - b. The colors of its church buildings
 - c. The flowers for its altar arrangements