

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?



CROSSROADS
PRISON MINISTRIES

ANSWER KEY

Cover artwork by anonymous Crossroads student



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INTRODUCTION

In this course, students will learn about the Bible. Though most people think of it as one book, students will learn that it is actually a collection of books written over the course of about 1,500 to 2,000 years. They will learn how the Bible was written. They will discover that the Bible contains different types of writing. They will see how God used different writers to write one complete story through many books that all point us to Jesus.

STUDY TOOLS

Throughout this course, students will be provided with the tools listed below to assist them in their studies. These tools provide ways that you can interact with your students.



CONVERSATION BOXES: We have included some spaces throughout the lessons that we call **conversation boxes**. Students can use these boxes to write questions and thoughts they have about the lesson or about life. You can also respond to a student in any space that the student has not filled.



ACTION STEPS: At the end of each lesson, we have included a challenge called an **action step**. It asks the student to apply what they have learned. If they feel that they need help or encouragement to complete it, they may simply write down what they plan to do. You can follow up with the student by asking if they have completed it.

We have included blank spaces labeled “My Notes” throughout the answer key. You can use these spaces to jot down notes relating to a specific question or theme that you want to remember when reviewing future lessons. These could include encouraging Bible verses that come to mind, your own answers to the questions, relevant stories from your life, or insights from students that you may want to share with other students.

Glossary of Terms

Each lesson contains Bible names, terms, and ideas that may be new to students. We will do our best to provide definitions that are easy to understand. The list below includes all of the terms found in this course. In each lesson, we have included an asterisk (*) the first time each term appears.

Apostle — A follower of Jesus chosen to spread the message of the Gospel.

Church — A building used for worship or the name for all Christian believers as a group. When the second definition is used, the word is often capitalized ("Church").

Circumcision — Removal of the male foreskin as a religious act. For Abraham and his household, it was a sign of the covenant God made with them.

Commandment — A teaching, law, or rule from God that must be obeyed. Christians follow God's commandments because they love Him.

Covenant — An agreement or contract between two people or groups of people.

Crucifixion — The act of putting someone to death by nailing or tying their wrists or hands and feet to a cross.

Disobedience — The act of failing or refusing to follow rules, standards, or laws. The Bible tells us that disobedience to God happens when we follow our own will and desires instead of following God's will.

Epistle — A formal letter that is written to instruct.

Exile — A period of time when a person is forced to leave his or her own country or community.

Firsthand — Coming from someone who directly saw or experienced something.

Generation — A group of people born and living during the same period of time or the members of a family born and living during the same period of time.

Gospel — The good news about Jesus Christ found in the Bible. The word can also be used to describe the first four books of the New Testament, which are written about Jesus' life and ministry.

Holy Spirit — One of the three persons of the Trinity of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in Christians, guides them, and gives them new life.

Humanity — All human beings; also called "the human race" or "humankind."

Meditate — To focus the mind on something, such as the words in the Bible.

New Testament — The second part of the Christian Bible. It was originally written in the Greek language. It records Jesus' teachings and the stories of His life while He was here on earth. It includes the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (also called the Gospels), the book of Acts, twenty-one epistles (letters to the early faith communities), and the book of Revelation.

Observation — The act of carefully watching or listening to someone or something in order to get information.

Offspring — A person's child or a child born later in the same family line.

Old Testament — The first part of the Christian Bible. Its thirty-nine books come from the original Hebrew Bible, which Jews still follow. It was originally written in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages. It includes the law, history, prophecy, and wisdom literature of the ancient people of Israel.

Persecuted — Treated cruelly or unfairly, especially because of race, religious beliefs, or political beliefs. The early Christians were persecuted by the Romans because of their faith in Jesus.

Prophecy — A statement about something that will happen in the future. The prophecies that God gave to the prophets to give to His people always came true and will always come true.

Prophet — Someone who brought messages from God to His people. Many books of the Bible were written by prophets (for example, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea). These books contain many promises God made to His people that came true years later.

Proverb — A short, well-known saying that contains wise thoughts and is easy to understand and remember.

Redeem — To make up for something, to win something or buy it back, or to free someone from sin.

Redemption — The act or process of freeing people from their sins.

Resurrection — The act of coming back to life after death.

Sinful — Being full of sin. Continually doing, thinking, or saying things that break God's laws and go against God's divine plan.

Testimony — A spoken or written statement that confirms a truth.

The Fall — The event in the Bible when Adam and Eve sinned and disobeyed God. Because of the Fall, humans are born sinful, and death and pain exist in the world.

LESSON 1: The Story of the Bible

1. Which statement below best describes how familiar you are with the Bible? Put a check mark next to that statement.

The student's response will give you insight into their previous experience with the Bible. Keep this in mind as you review the rest of their answers.

2. This passage tells us that after God had created each new thing, He "saw that it was good." What do you think this means?

Answers will vary. Students may respond with any or all of the following: When God created the universe and everything in it, it was exactly how He desired it to be. His creation reflected His nature and character. Everything functioned the way He designed it to. Adam and Eve lived in paradise with nothing standing in the way of their communication with God.

There aren't necessarily right or wrong answers. The student may answer in a way that reflects what they view as good in the world today. Affirm the student, but also provide a biblical example of why God called His original creation good.

3. According to this passage, how are humans different from the rest of God's creation (see verses 27–28)?

The most important difference is that God created humans in His image or likeness. Students may also give the following answers: God blessed them; God told them to produce children and fill the earth; God made them rulers over the plants and animals.

4. Have you experienced a time when you felt that your relationship with God was broken? Why did you feel that way?

The answer to this question should give you a glimpse into the student's heart. Many students will share very personal thoughts and feelings. Be sensitive as you read between the lines and pray about how best to share words of comfort and healing. If you are comfortable doing so, you can encourage the student with a similar story from your life.

5. List the specific promises God made to Abraham and Sarah and their family.

Students should list most or all of the following:

- **Abram will be the father of many nations**
- **Abram will have a new name: Abraham**
- **God will greatly increase the number of his descendants**
- **Nations and kings will come from his family line**
- **The covenant will be everlasting**
- **God will be their God and the God of all their descendants**
- **God will give their family the whole land of Canaan**
- **Sarai will have a new name: Sarah**
- **Sarah will have a son and become the mother of nations**
- **God's covenant will be established through Abraham and Sarah's son, Isaac**

6. What promises did God ask them to make in return?

God told Abraham that he and his descendants must keep His covenant by circumcising all males, including male babies when they reached eight days old.

My Notes

My Notes

7. In the passage you read, how did the leader fail to follow God or His laws?

Students should have answered the question about one of the following three men:

- **Moses said that “we” (meaning he and Aaron) must bring water out of the rock, not crediting God as the one doing the miracle. By striking the rock twice instead of speaking to it as God had commanded, Moses made it seem that it was his human effort and power that produced the miracle. He showed a lack of trust in God.**
- **Solomon married women from other nations, even though God had forbidden it. Solomon had temples built to honor the foreign gods of his wives. Eventually, Solomon strayed from the Lord and worshiped false gods.**
- **Asa didn’t trust God to protect the nation. He used gold and silver from God’s temple to make a treaty with a foreign king for protection. Asa also oppressed his own people.**

8. Why do you think it was so hard for God’s people to follow Him?

Students may say that God’s people had trouble following Him because of their sinfulness or because they didn’t fully trust or understand God. A student’s answer may reflect their own struggles with following God. This is a good chance to affirm what God’s Word says about His trustworthiness and the fulfillment that can only be found when we follow Him.

9. What would your church or faith community look like if Christians truly followed this command?

The word for “love” used in the passage is the Greek word *agape*. This love is not selfish. It cares for others. It portrays all the fruits of God’s Spirit. If Christians followed this command, more people would want to follow God. God would be better represented by His people, giving a more accurate view of God’s nature. People would get along better. We would better care for those around us, resulting in a healthier, happier community.

10. What happened when people began to follow Jesus?

Students should list most or all of the following:

- **They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship**
- **They saw the apostles perform miracles**
- **They shared everything they had with each other**
- **They met together to eat, pray, and worship God**
- **They were respected by others**
- **Even more people believed in God and were saved**

11. What encouragement did the writer give to the faith community in Philippi?

The general summary of Paul’s encouragement to the Philippian church in this passage is that God is working through the believers to accomplish His will in their lives. The student’s answer should reflect that the believers could trust God because He was working to fulfill His purpose through the lives of the believers; it wasn’t from their own effort.

12. What encouragement did you find in this passage?

Answers may vary, but we hope students will find encouragement in the fact that God is also working in them to accomplish His will.

13. Where do you see yourself in the story of God and His love for His creation?

This is another question that can help you understand the student and where they are on their spiritual journey. The student may answer in a way that reflects how close they feel to God or how they believe God views them. Some students may have trouble seeing themselves in light of God’s love. Take this opportunity to provide encouragement and good pastoral care with sensitivity.

LESSON 2: The Old Testament

1. Why are you studying the Bible? What do you hope to learn?

Answers, of course, will vary. Some students will share goals of growing in their faith, gaining biblical knowledge, or learning how to share their faith with others. Other students may be just starting to explore Christianity and its beliefs. Some may write a specific question that they hope to have answered in their studies. Look for ways to encourage and guide the student based on their answer to the question.

2. Why is it important to know that the writers of the Bible only wrote what God wanted them to write?

Knowing this means we can have confidence that the Bible is indeed God's Word. Although humans wrote the words, the words came directly from God. This speaks to the Bible's authority in the life of believers.

3. Do you believe that what you read in the Bible is true? Why or why not?

Students will share a wide variety of beliefs about the Bible and whether they think the Bible is true and trustworthy. Remember, some students may not be Christians. We welcome students that are exploring the Christian faith but have not yet decided what they believe about the Bible. Use this as an opportunity to provide some pastoral encouragement; consider sharing your own experience with coming to faith and confidence in God's Word.

4. What laws did God give to His people? Write them in your own words if you can.

Students may list all ten commandments or some of the ten. Answers may vary slightly, depending on the Bible translation used. Make sure the answers are consistent with the meaning of the biblical text.

5. What do these laws tell you about what is important to God?

These laws tell us that honoring and obeying God, treating others with respect, and striving for holiness are important to God.

6. What promises did God make to the Israelites?

God promised to raise up a righteous King who would reign wisely. Judah would be saved, and Israel would live in safety. The King would be called the Lord Our Righteous Savior. The descendants of Israel would live in their own land. Many students will identify this King as Jesus.

7. How do these promises show that God cares about His people?

These promises show that God loves His people and will not abandon them. God had a plan for His people from the foundation of the earth. He was aware of their hardships and struggles. He promised to save them not only physically but also spiritually through the coming King, Jesus.

8. The writer was talking about God's Word (the Bible). According to this passage, how can following God's Word help us?

God's Word will prolong our life and bring peace and prosperity. When we apply the Word of God to our lives and live those words out, we will win favor with God and men. As we trust in God and submit to everything He teaches us in His Word, He will make our paths straight.

My Notes

9. Why do people sometimes find it challenging to follow God's Word?

A student's answer will probably reflect their own experience of trying to follow God's Word. This is an excellent place to offer encouragement and share your own experience of learning to follow God and obey His Word.

10. When have you found it challenging to follow God's Word?

Students may share about a time when they were not following God or they were going through a difficult situation. Answers will likely be very personal and give you more insight into your student's life and background.

11. What did God promise the people?

He promised to prosper them, not harm them, and to give them hope and a future. He promised to listen to them when they called on His name and that they would find Him when they sought Him with all their hearts. He promised to bring them back from captivity after the seventy years were over.

12. Do you believe you can trust God for your future? Why or why not?

Keep in mind that every student is in a different place in their walk, ranging from unbeliever to mature Christian. Encourage them that we are always called to trust God more fully, regardless of where we are in our journey. If a student says they don't trust God, consider providing a story that illustrates how you learned to trust God.

13. What things keep you from reading or studying God's Word?

Students may list reasons like, "I don't have enough time," "It's too noisy in my living unit," "I'm not a good reader," "My cellmate distracts me," etc. Acknowledge their struggles and offer suggestions that may help them: headphones to cut out noise (if they have access to them), setting a specific time each day, finding a study partner, etc. Encourage the student to persevere and overcome the obstacles.

14. How can you make reading the Bible a more important part of your life?

Affirm the student's response and share specific strategies you have utilized to make the Bible an important part of your life.

LESSON 3: The New Testament

1. What parts of the New Testament are the most familiar to you?

Answers will vary. A student's answer may give you some insight into their spiritual development and Christian experience. Consider sharing how the New Testament passages they mentioned have impacted your life.

2. What did John say was the reason God directed him to write down the stories in his Gospel (see verses 30–31)?

John said he wrote his Gospel so that those who read it would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so that they would have life in Jesus' name.

3. What did Peter tell the crowd about Jesus (see verses 22–24 and 32–36)?

The key point of Peter's message was that God had sent Jesus to be both Lord and Messiah of the people of Israel.

4. How did the people respond to Peter's message (see verses 37–41)?

They were deeply impacted by Peter's message. Three thousand people responded to Peter's call to repent, were baptized, and became believers as a result.

5. What did the writer encourage the people reading this letter to do?

The writer, Paul, encouraged them to love one another, to be one in spirit in the way they think and act, to be selfless and humble, to value others more than themselves, and to look out for the good of others.

6. How can this passage help Christians today as we try to follow Jesus? How can you apply it to your life?

Students should answer in a way that reflects their answer to question 5. Some students may give a specific application to a situation they are currently dealing with. If they have not done so, challenge the student to make a list of concrete ways they can apply Paul's direction to their life.

7. What specific promise for the future did God make in this passage? Write it in your own words.

God will create a new heaven and earth. God will make His home with His people. He will wipe away their tears. There will be no more death, sadness, or pain. God will make everything new.

If a student has simply copied the verses from the Bible, encourage them to try rewriting it in their own words.

8. What hope does this promise give to you?

Hopefully, the student will express confidence that God will be their God, wipe away their tears, and take away their pain. Ensure that the student understands that these promises are for them if they are a Christian.

My Notes

9. What does it mean to you that God keeps all His promises?

Hopefully, students will say that God can be trusted and that they can be assured that the promises of the Bible are for them if they put their trust in God. If a student expresses distrust in God's faithfulness, offer appropriate encouragement.

10. Do you think God can speak to you through the Bible? Why or why not?

As believers, we understand that God uses the Bible to speak to us. Some students may not have experienced this; some may have trouble understanding the concept. Consider this an opportunity to help the student strengthen their faith. Give some examples of how God has spoken to you through the Bible.

My Notes

LESSON 4: Spending Time in God's Word

1. How has reading the Bible changed you or someone that you know?

Some students may be able to describe changes in their own thinking and behavior as a result of reading the Bible. Others may share a story about someone they know whose life was changed through faith in Christ and studying God's Word. Consider sharing an example of how reading the Bible has changed you.

2. What does the Holy Spirit help us do?

The Holy Spirit helps us to know and understand God and His Word. The Spirit reveals the spiritual realities of God's wisdom.

3. What is one thing in the Bible that God has helped you understand through His Spirit?

Answers, of course, will vary. You may see answers such as, "God loves me," "God has a plan for my life," "I am sinful and need a Savior," "God can forgive my sins," "I can trust God with my life."

4. Think about the image of a tree drawing strength from water. What does it mean for us to draw strength from God's Word?

God gives us life and spiritual nutrition through His Word. When we are strong and healthy, we can prosper spiritually and grow in maturity. Without nourishment from God's Word, we will wither and be unable to bear fruit.

5. How can you create a habit of reading and meditating on God's Word regularly?

Students should outline some specific strategies that they can use to create a habit of reading the Bible and meditating on its words. Encourage the student to follow through with their strategies. Remind them that creating lasting habits takes time. If a student had trouble listing ideas, share some ways you have used to develop a healthy Bible-reading habit. Some students may say they already have a strong habit of reading God's Word regularly; encourage them to continue.

My Notes

6. What are some questions you have about this story?

Any number of questions may arise as students read Genesis 3. Students may write questions about the identity and nature of the serpent, the tree, the responsibility of Adam and Eve for the Fall, God's response, etc.

We encourage you to answer the student's questions if you can. You can also provide references to relevant passages that would help the student find answers to their questions.

7. If you could ask God one question, what would that question be?

A student's response may reveal something they have struggled with in their life. Their question may not be answerable. Offer appropriate encouragement.

8. How does this passage describe God's Word?

God's Word is alive and active. It is sharper than a double-edged sword. It can judge our thoughts and the attitudes of our hearts.

9. Why do you think it's important to remember that God knows our thoughts and desires?

We cannot hide from God. God knows our thoughts, yet He still loves us. God is aware of our struggles, weaknesses, and secret sins, but He still chooses to offer us grace and forgiveness.

10. What is a truth from Scripture that you feel God is calling you to apply to your life today?

The student's answer should reflect a truth found in the Bible and an understanding of how to put it into action.

11. Practice this meditation method.

Responses will vary greatly. Provide encouragement and guidance based on the insights they received from God through their meditation.

12. What is one thing you learned about God from this lesson or course that you did not know before? How did this change you?

Affirm and reinforce the truth that the student learned. Encourage the student to continue studying the Bible and pursuing spiritual growth.

My Notes



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