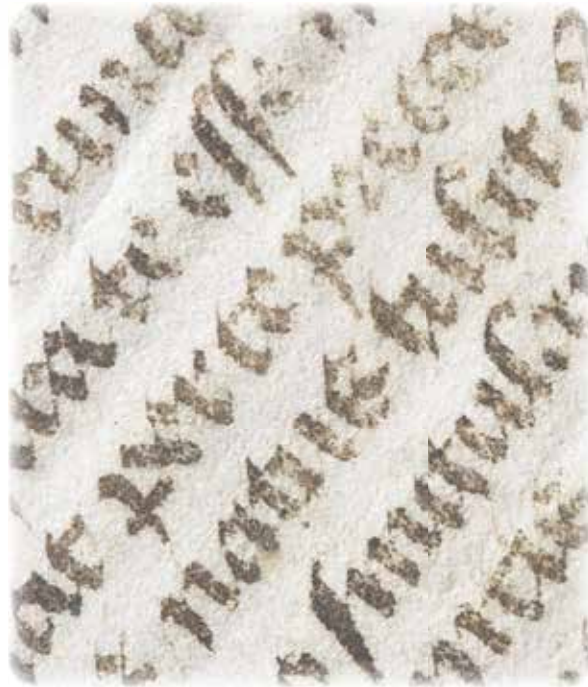


Session 3



THE BIBLE

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August 1, 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude the many catechists, teachers, and diocesan leaders from across the country that have given invaluable advice and guidance in the development of Symbolon:

Michael Andrews, Keith Borchers, Steve Bozza, Dr. Chris Burgwald, James Cavanagh, Chris Chapman, Fr. Dennis Gill, Jim Gontis, Dr. Tim Gray, Lisa Gulino, Mary Hanbury, Deacon Ray Helgeson, Dr. Sean Innerst, Ann Lankford, Deacon Kurt Lucas, Sean Martin, Martha Tonn, Kyle Neilson, Michelle Nilsson, Ken Ogorek, Dr. Claude Sasso, Scott Sollom, Deacon Jim Tighe, Mary Ann Weisinger, and Gloria Zapiain.

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Information: 303-937-4420

Formed.org

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-9972037-0-7

THE BIBLE: God's Love Letter to Humanity

INTRODUCTION

What do you know about the Bible? Perhaps you are coming from a faith tradition that emphasizes Scripture reading, and you know a great deal. But maybe all you know about the Bible is that it is a famous and holy book. Whatever you know (or don't know), this week's session will introduce you to the Catholic understanding of Scripture, how it fits into God's plan of salvation for our lives, and how the Catholic Church has been the guardian of the Bible since the very beginning of Christianity.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **The Bible as God's loving communication with each of us**
- **What we mean when we say the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit**
- **The Catholic approach to interpreting Scripture correctly**
- **How the Church discerns which books are part of the Bible (the canon of Scripture)**
- **How we can know with confidence that the Bible contains God's revelation for our lives**
- **How to start studying the Bible and praying with God's Word**



OPENING PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ,
 open the eyes of my heart,
 that I may hear your word
 and understand and do your will,
 for I am a sojourner upon the earth.
 Hide not your commandments from me,
 but open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of your law.
 Speak unto me the hidden and secret things of your wisdom.
 On you do I set my hope, O my God,
 that you shall enlighten my mind
 and understanding with the light of your knowledge,
 not only to cherish those things
 which are written, but to do them;
 that in reading the lives and sayings of the saints
 I may not sin,
 but that such may serve for my restoration, enlightenment
 and sanctification, for the salvation of my soul,
 and the inheritance of life everlasting.
 For you are the enlightenment of those
 who lie in darkness,
 and from you comes every good deed
 and every gift. Amen.

—St. John Chrysostom

*“If you believe what you
 like in the gospels, and
 reject what you don’t like,
 it is not the gospel you
 believe, but yourself.”*

—St. Augustine



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it true that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”?
2. According to the video, what does it mean that Catholics don’t interpret the Bible in a literalistic way, but they do read the Bible literarily? What examples does the presenter give?
3. Let’s say a friend of yours, while speaking about a passage she was reading in the Bible, states, “It was like God was speaking directly to me—directly into a situation in my life—when I read the passage.” How is this possible?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

#1 Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.” What does this passage mean to me? Am I willing to read God’s Word in Scripture with an open heart and mind, expecting that God will give me insights for my life?



“As Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” —St. Jerome

#2 What can I do this week to make the reading of Scripture a greater part of my life? (Consider reading the Bible, perhaps starting with the Gospel of Luke as suggested in the video.)

#3 Reflect on the following quote from Pope St. Gregory:

“The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind’s eye. In it we see our inner face. From the Scriptures we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection.”

How might thinking of the Bible as a mirror and as a way to learn about my spiritual progress make a difference in how I listen to the readings at Mass? What can I do to be better prepared for the Scripture readings each week?



CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer Before Reading Scripture

We praise and thank you
glorious Lord Jesus Christ,
for being present among us
and in us.

In us you praise the Father
with the voice of the Spirit,
whom you have given us.

Lord, may this voice of the Spirit
be roused in us as we listen to the words
of Scripture in a manner
that is worthy and fitting,

appropriate to the meaning
of the text and in harmony
with what is revealed to us.
Make us ready to recognize
how we can correspond
to the teaching and example
proposed to us, for you are God,
living and reigning
for ever and ever. Amen.

—Carlo Maria Martini, SJ

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” —Hebrews 4:12

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE BIBLE?

TO ENRICH YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH, VISIT FORMED.org

Where you'll find helpful videos, audio presentations, and ebooks from the most trustworthy presenters in the Catholic world.

For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about the Sacred Scripture, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *Christ as the Word of God: CCC 101–104*
- *Inspiration and the truth of Scripture: CCC 105–108*
- *The Holy Spirit and Sacred Scripture: CCC 109–119*
- *Books of the Old Testament: CCC 120–123*
- *The New Testament canon: CCC 124–127*
- *Scripture and the Church: CCC 131–133*

Other Resources:

- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 3*
- *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture* by **Scott Hahn**
- *Walking with God: A Journey through the Bible* by **Tim Gray** and **Jeff Cavins**
- *Catholic Bible Dictionary* by **Scott Hahn**
- *Where is THAT in the Bible?* by **Patrick Madrid**
- *The Bible Compass: A Catholic's Guide to Navigating the Scriptures* by **Edward Sri**
- *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible series* by **Scott Hahn** and **Curtis Mitch**