

How do Catholics read the Bible?

Spiritual Question No. 2

➔ Personal welcome & hospitality

➔ Opening prayer

Suggestion:

Read Luke 1, 68-79 – Known as the “Canticle of Zacharias” as he recounts the ways the Lord has carried out his promise that he made to our forefathers so long ago who wrote them down as scripture.

➔ Icebreaker

Suggestion:

Warm up your group. Suggestions:

Ask everyone to tell the group their name and ask them to:

- Tell the group their favorite book and why they enjoy it so much, or
- Tell the group to recall an imaginary game or image they had when they were children.

➔ Unanswered questions

① Introducing the topic

Announce the Spiritual Question to be discussed: *How do Catholics Read the Bible?*

② Bible reading(s)

Read aloud one or two of the following Bible references:

- **Luke 1:1-4** — The eye witness accounts of Christ.
- **Luke 4:14-21** — The fulfillment of the scripture.
- **1 John 1:1-10** — The words that are proclaimed that lead to life

③ Catechism reading(s)

Also read aloud one or two of the following reference from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

- **80-83** — The relationship between tradition and Sacred Scripture.
- **84-87** — The interpretation of the heritage of our faith.
- **134-141** — What Sacred Scripture is.

④ View the DVD segment

⑤ Discussion

Ask one or more of the following questions. These questions are designed to get the discussion going—they are not a list of questions you need to ask. Ask them in any order and add questions of your own:

- What are some of the stories in the Bible that you find the most interesting and appealing?
- What made Jesus such a good preacher and so easy to remember?
- Have you ever put yourself into a story that is in the Bible, imagining what you would say or what you would do with the other biblical characters? How did you feel when you did that?
- As Catholics, what and who else do we rely on besides the Bible to get information about our faith?
- Are there parts of the Bible that you have memorized? Are there people you know who seem to have the whole Bible memorized?
- Do you feel you have a good understanding of the way the Bible is organized and the way the story of our Salvation is recounted through each of the different books?
- How do you feel when the Bible is read during mass? Does it help you in your prayer?

⑥ Wrapping it up

5–10 minutes before the meeting end-time, let everyone know the meeting is nearly over. Ask for any final questions.

⑦ Follow-through

If there are lots of unanswered or undiscussed questions, ask the group if they would like to stay with SQ 2 at the next meeting, and ask if anyone is interested in researching the questions and reporting back to the group.

⑧ Go the extra mile

(This is optional.) As a group, decide on a challenge related to what you have discussed. Here are some suggestions:

- Go to mass and really pay attention to the readings used and try to think about how you might offer a reflection about them.
- Try a “contemplation” by picking a favorite story from the Gospels and using your imagination to literally put yourself into the scene. Who do you see? What do you say? How do you respond to what happens?

⑨ Closing prayer

Read Romans 1:16-17 about living the gospel, wherever you are, and not being ashamed of it. Ask the Lord to give you strength to be preachers of the Gospel with your lives.

⑩ Preparing for the next session

Be sure to thank everyone for coming to the meeting. Remind them when the next meeting is and make sure everyone knows how to get the booklets to prepare.

Spiritual Question No. 2 Glossary of Terms

12 Apostles

Because Jesus recognized the significance of the number 12 and the significance of the 12 tribes to the Jewish people, Jesus appointed 12 Apostles as symbolic reference to the tribes of Israel. (Luke 6:13)

12 Tribes

The organizing structure of the Israelites. Jacob is renamed Israel and his twelve sons are named the Leaders of each tribe. The number 12 was fundamental to Israel's understanding of itself as a worshipping community. (Genesis 49)

Abraham

Considered the father of three faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham was called out with his wife Sarah to follow Yahweh to the land of Canaan. A covenant was formed between God and Abraham that promised Abraham descendants that numbered the stars if Abraham would believe in Yahweh as the one God. (Genesis 17:5)

Apocalypse

Referred to in the book of Revelation. The chaos and disorder that comes before God's great intervention.

Apocrypha

Meaning "hidden or secret writings." The Old Testament readings that were included in the early Greek version (the Septuagint) of the Hebrew Scriptures that the early Christians used. These readings are not included in the Jewish Bible today.

Authorship in the Bible

The Bible doesn't have just one author (except in the sense that God is behind it all!). The Bible is a collection of writings written by people who wanted to reflect on their relationship with God and the world they lived in.

The Catholic Church believes that God inspired the authors, though this does not mean that God whispered into their ears, telling them word-for-word what to write. What it does mean is that God was part of the process by which the authors took their experiences and set them to paper.

Bible

This term is used to refer to the two-volume Christian Scriptures (Old Testament and New Testament). The Bible is more than just one book. It is really a library of books.

Creation Stories

In the first book of the bible, Genesis, there are two creation stories. (Genesis 1-2) The first tells the story

of God creating the world in seven days. The second tells the story of Adam and Eve. These stories were never meant to be taken as literally true. What we can learn from these stories is that:

God is creator (Genesis 1:1)

All creation is good (Genesis 1:31)

We are to take care of the earth (Genesis 1:28)

We are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27).

Dei Verbum

The document of the Second Vatican Council (or Vatican II) on the Bible and Revelation.

Deutero-canonicals

Books included in the Catholic Bible that are not in the Protestant Bible. These books include: Baruch, I Maccabees, II Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and a small section of the book of Daniel.

Development of the Bible

The Hebrew Scriptures came together after the exile to Babylon. Without the Temple as a focal point of their worship it was important for the Jews to create a “canon”—a set of scriptures that everyone agreed were inspired by God. The same happened with the New Testament. As the Christian population grew and as different and sometimes conflicting theologies were being preached, it became important for a canon to be established. Gospels, letters, and other writings that were

not considered to be inspired by God were kept from the canon.

Epistle/Letter

The letters in the New Testament sometimes go by the Greek term “epistle.” Most of the letters in the New Testament are attributed to Saint Paul, though not all. He wrote these letters to communities he helped to found after his conversion. Eventually the letters were passed from community to community because of the wisdom the various churches found in them.

Fundamentalism

Usually refers to those who practice and believe in a strict, literal interpretation of the Bible.

Gospel

Literally means “Good News.” There are four Gospels in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). The Gospels tell the story of Jesus on earth in relationship with the disciples. There are several non-canonical (not part of the New Testament) gospels including the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, and Mary.

Historical Books

The books that tell the history of the Israelites. They include the books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, and Esther.

Historical Critical Method

A way of interpreting Scripture using the lens of history. The idea is that there is an historical gap between us

and the writers of the Scriptures and studying history helps us to get at what the culture, background, and intentions of the original writers may have been.

Inspiration

Our Christian belief that the Holy Spirit influenced the writers of the Bible, in the course of the human activity of writing it, to include in it what God wished to be there.

Israelites

In the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures, this refers to the Hebrew people who were gathered together in their belief in the one God known as Yahweh. The Israelites come from a line of people beginning with Abraham through the sons of Jacob who established the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jerusalem/Zion

The capital city of the United Kingdom of Israel, later just of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The city was established by King David. The Temple was built there by Solomon. The city came to be considered holy. The Book of Judges tells of the time period of Israel after the conquest of the Land of Canaan from roughly 1200-1000 BC.

King David

Became king of the Israelites after slaying Goliath with a slingshot. It was through the lineage of David that the Messiah was to come. Jesus' ancestry can be traced to David.

Law

The covenant obligations of the Israelites to Yahweh.

Moses

Called forth by God to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Even though he felt inadequate to the task, he trusted in God's word and answered his call. He led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land. (Exodus 3:2-22)

New Testament

The second volume of the Christian Scriptures. This volume contains the four Gospels; the Acts of the Apostles; letters to early church communities, and the book of Revelation.

Noah

A righteous man who listened to the voice of God even when all around him was laughing and jeering at him. He built an ark to carry his family and all the animals of the world safely through the flood God brought on his creation. (Genesis 7)

Numerology

In the Bible many numbers are symbolic. Seven is a symbol of perfection, 12 of Israel or other national divisions, 40 of great duration, 144,000 of all the nations since it is 120 X 1200.

Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures

The Old Testament is considered the first volume of the Christians' two-volume Bible. It contains the spiritual stories of the Israelite people, from the creation of the world to the

reclaiming of the Promised Land by the Maccabees in the second century BC. It is divided into the Pentateuch (the first five books), the historical writings, the prophets, the wisdom literature, the apocalyptic writings, and the psalms. Today scholars often use the more neutral term Hebrew Scriptures (the writings of ancient Israel) to refer to this set of writings.

Patriarch

The ancestors of the Hebrew people, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, before the Israelites moved to Egypt.

Prophet

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures prophets stepped forward to call God's people back to his ways. John the Baptist is a prophet who called on all to repent and be baptized.

Protestant and Catholic Bibles

The Catholic and Protestant Bibles have differed over the apocryphal (so-called by Protestants) or deuterocanonical (so-called by Catholics) books since the Reformation. These are seven books that Martin Luther removed from the Bible because they were not originally written in Hebrew.

Proverbs

Wise sayings or maxims. A book in the Old Testament. Some are thought to date from the time of Solomon.

Psalm

Songs of praise in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament.)

Traditionally authorship is given to King David. There are 150 psalms.

Rabbi

Teacher. Jesus was called Rabbi because he gathered disciples around him to hear his message of God's love. (John 1:38)

Revelation (not the book)

The way God reveals to us his message and truths. We receive revelation through our human experience. Our tradition is built on what was revealed to the disciples of Jesus and the early Church.

Torah/Pentateuch

The first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Torah makes up the "Law" portion of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Tradition/Scripture

The two primary sources of Catholic teaching and beliefs. Scripture is already established. It cannot be changed. Tradition though, needs to be reinterpreted throughout the ages so that those of a particular time can understand the truths taught from the beginning. Precedent is important to interpreting and teaching the beliefs of the Church. When new issues arise the bishops and theologians look to what the earlier writers have said. Through prayer, study, and dialogue the teaching authority can present a new understanding of the same tradition that was established centuries ago.

Wisdom

The personification of wisdom is found in the proverbs. The Greek word for wisdom is Sophia. We are to seek wisdom and follow her ways of love.

Word

We learn of the Word in the prologue of John's Gospel. *"In the beginning*

sort of internal moral barometer.

Solidarity

Being united with others particularly those who are on the margins of society.

was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." (John 1:1) Word here means more than just part of a sentence; there is a sense of the effect-making Word that comes forth from God's mouth, the Word that is also a plan in action. Jesus is, of course, the Word.