BE ONE
Essential Truths

SESSION 8:
Why the Bible?

PART 1
Hebrews 1:1, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.”

**GOD SPOKE!** God is _________________ God uses a variety of ways to _________________

Hebrews 1:2, “. . . but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”

**GOD SHARES SOMETHING NEW:** Jesus has a ___________ role; Jesus is ___________

cause (cf. Col. 1:16-17)

Hebrews 1:3, “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

**GOD OFFERS PERSPECTIVE:**
The story begins in Glory, leads us to the __________________, and returns to the Throne of God

Jesus offers us a look ____________, a look _____________, and a filter to understand our _______________

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (Luke 24:25–27) Ever wonder what Jesus may have shared? We have a whole Bible that tells His story . . .

**GENESIS:** He is The Seed of the Woman **EXODUS:** The Passover Lamb **LEVITICUS:** The High Priest **NUMBERS:** The Cloud by Day and the Fire by night which led Israel in the desert **DEUTERONOMY:** The Prophet greater than Moses **JOSHUA:** The Captain of our salvation **JUDGES:** He calls us to account **RUTH:** Our Kinsman Redeemer  
**1 SAMUEL:** The Prophet of the Lord **2 SAMUEL:** The Seed of David **1 KINGS:** Wisdom Greater than Solomon  **2 KINGS:** The Remnants King **1 CHRONICLES:** The Head of the family of God **2 CHRONICLES:** The Foundation of the Temple **EZRAS:** The Faithful Scribe **NEHEMIAH:** The Re-builder of the walls **ESTHER:** the Lord of the Queen **JOB:** The God of Wonders **PSALMS:** He is the Hallelujah Chorus **PROVERBS:** the One Who Makes Our Crooked Paths Straight **ECCLESIASTES:** The Master Teacher **SONG OF SONGS:** the Lover of Our Souls **ISAIAH:** The Prince of Peace **JEREMIAH:** the God Who Is Near and Far **LAMENTATIONS:** the One Whose Mercies Are New Every Morning **EZKIEL:** He is the Breath That Makes Dry Bones Live **DANIEL:** the Fourth One Standing in the Fiery Furnace **HOSEA:** the Faithful Husband **JOEL:** The Baptizer With the Holy Spirit **AMOS:** The Burden Bearer **OBADIAH:** More than a Conqueror **JONAH:** The Pursuer **MICAH:** the One Who Loves Justice, Mercy and those who walk humbly with their God **NAHUM:** A Jealous God **HABAKKUK:** The One Who Rights the Wrong **ZEPHANIAH:** The Avenger **HAGGAI:** The Dream Worth Building **ZECHARIAH:** The One Who Measures the Land **MALACHI:** The Unblemished Sacrifice **MATTHEW:** The Messiah **MARK:** The Herald **LUKE:** The Son of Man **JOHN:** The Son of God  
**ACTS:** The One working in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world **ROMANS:** The Justifier  
**1 CORINTHIANS:** Love Defined  **2 CORINTHIANS:** God of All Comfort  **GALATIANS:** The One Who Was Sent in the Fullness of Time  
**EPHESIANS:** The Head of the Church **PHILIPPIANS:** The One who left the Throne of Heaven  **COLOSSIANS:** The Fullness of the Godhead **1 THESSALONIANS:** the reason why we do not grieve as those who have no hope **2 THESSALONIANS:** The Soon and Coming King  
**1 TIMOTHY:** The Mediator Between God and Man  **2 TIMOTHY:** He who remains faithful **TITUS:** The Blessed Hope **PHILEMON:** The Friend, Closer Than a Brother **HEBREWS:** The answer to the question “what can wash away my sins” Nothing but the Blood of Jesus **JAMES:** The Mirror of God's Word **1 PETER:** The reason we are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy  **2 PETER:** The One Who Calls Us by His Glory and Goodness **1 JOHN:** The God who Loves First **2 JOHN:** The teaching that brings reward  **3 JOHN:** Truth  
**JUDE:** The One Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His presence without fault and with great joy **REVELATION:** The King of Kings and Lord of Lords
Why the Bible?
The Bible is God’s Story
that has the power to
shape our story.

The Bible has been around for centuries, and it has faced more than its share of critics. Despite all of these attacks, however, the scriptures remain a perennial source of inspiration, direction and encouragement for billions of people all over the world. This ongoing power of the Bible may be traced to its divine origins. At its root, the Bible is God's story that has the power to shape our story.

1. God's Story in Nature

Revealed in Creation

God has been telling a story ever since these very first words were spoken:

"And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3)

Because God is the designer of our universe, signs of His being constantly appear around us. King David writes that:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” (Psalm 19:1-4)

This revelation of God's glory in creation should inspire us to praise Him, and it should also humble us. When God confronts Job, He asks:

"Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” (Job 38:2-7)

The answer is obvious. We were nowhere to be found. Human wisdom and power had nothing to do with the original creation of the world in which we live.
Revealed in Human Nature

And yet, as we reflect on human nature, we notice that we are somehow different from the rest of God’s creation. David observes:

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.” (Psalm 8:3-8)

And elsewhere David says:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

Humans are uniquely fashioned to know and to carry on a conscious relationship with their creator, and a properly tuned human mind should be able to recognize God through His works.

Distorted by Sinful Minds

The problem is, however, that sin has distorted our thinking to such a drastic degree that we no longer see God clearly by simply looking at creation. The Apostle Paul says:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.” (Romans 1:18-25)

Here Paul is clearly linking all these false ideas about God to the way in which sin corrupts our minds and our passions. Sin causes us to create a god that meets with our own desires, a god made in our own image.
Moses, the First Prophet

Despite our sinful perspective, however, God will not give up on us. Besides revealing Himself to us generally, through nature, He also reveals Himself specifically through a concrete story. He chooses certain individuals, called “prophets,” to be the primary communicators of this divine story. The first prophet was Moses, whom God explicitly asks to record parts of this story. We read, for example, that:

“…[T]he LORD said to Moses, ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’” (Exodus 34:27)

Moses thus becomes a key figure in the telling of God’s story. In fact, the first five books of the Bible are collectively known as the “Law of Moses”. In these books, we find the beginning of God’s story, from creation until the time that God’s people are about to re-enter the land that He originally promises to Abraham.

While some critics have expressed doubt about the role that Moses actually played in composing these works, Jesus seems to have embraced these books as coming from his hand. For example, when several religious teachers asked Jesus about divorce laws that are found in the book of Deuteronomy, Jesus asks:

“What did Moses command you?” he replied. They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied.” (Mark 10:3-5)

Jesus, it seems, sees Moses as the author of the whole body of work collectively known as the “Law of Moses.”

Other Inspired Prophets

Following Moses, God calls a whole line of people, one after another, to tell His story. In all, some 30 people contributed to the writings currently known as the Old Testament. Some of these authors, like Moses, David and Isaiah, are clearly named and described. Others remain anonymous, however, like the authors of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. Together, however, these authors weave a story that covers thousands of years. The result is a beautiful, complex and intricate tapestry of themes and images that reveal God as He wishes to be known.

Collectively, these human authors tell a divine story. The Apostle Peter says:

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

The human prophets are speaking and writing human words, but the Holy Spirit works within them in such a way that what they produce is in fact the very word of God. The apostle Paul says it this way:
“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Scholars therefore say that the Bible is “inspired” by God’s Spirit, which means that it is God’s true, accurate and perfect word for us.

3. God’s Story in Jesus

1. Jesus, the Word of God

The inspired story that God is telling in the Bible grows and develops over time. The story builds to a climax in the person of Jesus. As the writer to the Hebrews says:

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s revelation to His fallen world. The Apostle John makes this point in the opening words of his gospel, by referring to Jesus as the Word of God:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

But then he adds that:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

Jesus is, in fact, the very Word of God for us. All the words of scripture are fulfilled in this one Word, this one person. He is the fullest expression of God’s message to us, about who He is, about who we are, about what He wants for us.

2. Jesus in the New Testament

In order to preserve this story of Jesus, God chose a new group of inspired writers. Collectively we refer to their writings as the New Testament. These writers tell us who Jesus is and what He means for us.

• Clear Statements by John

For example, the apostle John writes in his first letter:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:1-3)
And in his gospel, John writes:

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

(John 20:30-31)

• Clear Statements by Luke

Likewise, in the beginning of his gospel, Luke writes:

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)

And, while we do not know who this person, Theophilus, was, it is interesting that Luke also refers to him in his second book, called Acts, which we find in the New Testament. There, Luke says:

“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:1-3)

And then Luke goes on to tell the story of how this message spread from the towns around Jerusalem throughout most of the Roman Empire, even into Rome itself.

• Clear Statements by Paul and Peter

The apostle Paul plays a major role in spreading this story of Jesus into the rest of the world, and he is keenly aware of his divine calling. For example, he writes to the church at Corinth:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.”

(1 Corinthians 15:3-10)

When Paul writes, he writes under the direction of the same Spirit who inspired the prophets. Note what the apostle Peter says regarding Paul’s works:

“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

(2 Peter 3:15-16)

Here Peter explicitly includes Paul’s writings among “the other scriptures”.

Conclusion

This then is what the Bible generally says about itself. The Bible is God’s Story that has the power to shape our story. In our next session, we will focus on the way that this story can change our lives, but for now, thank you for listening, and may God bless you as you continue your spiritual journey.
Discussion Questions

After completing Session 8, Why the Bible?, Part 1, you can use the following questions to encourage discussion within your group.

Opening

How familiar are you with the Bible? What can you share about God’s story?

Going Deeper

1. God’s Story in Nature

✓ As we reflect on human nature, how are we different than the rest of God’s creation (see Psalm 8:38; Psalm 139:13-14)?
✓ How has our thinking been so distorted that we no longer see God clearly by simply looking at creation (see Romans 1:18-35)?

2. God’s Story through the Prophets

✓ What is the purpose of the Old Testament? Why is it relevant to our lives today?
✓ What role does God the Holy Spirit play in the giving of God’s story? Why does His participation mean that God’s word for us is true, accurate and perfect?

3. God’s Story in Jesus

✓ What does it mean that Jesus is the fullest expression of God’s message to us?
✓ Why was it important for God to inspire a new group of writers?

Next Steps

How would you summarize God’s Story in one paragraph? Try writing this out on paper or on a computer.