

# Reading the Bible

## session handout

### Why is the Bible special?

- *The Bible is the world's number one best-seller each year.*
- *This book has been translated into more languages than any other book in history.*
- *Millions of Christians the world over come to the Bible each week and each day in church services, in small groups and on their own.*
- *The Bible's teachings about God and humanity lie at the root of our entire civilization.*
- *Christians believe that, through this book, God has spoken to us in a unique way and, through this book, he still speaks to us today.*

Look up these verses in small groups and write down what each one is saying about the Bible:

- *2 Timothy 3.16*
- *Psalms 1.1-3*
- *Psalms 119.105*
- *Ephesians 6.17.*

### Reading the Old Testament

The Old Testament is a library of books written and collected over more than 1,000 years (the equivalent of a selection of English literature from William the Conqueror until now).

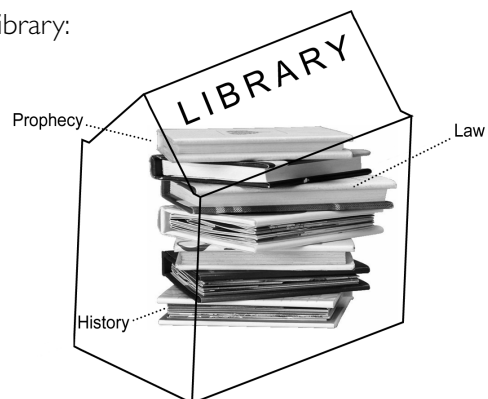
Many of the books were collected and added to gradually over this period.

The Old Testament is written mainly in Hebrew (with a little Aramaic). As a whole, the Old Testament tells the story of the nation of Israel and God's relationship with the nation.

The different sorts of books in the library need to be read in different ways. You will need help to understand the Old Testament because of the different cultures from which it comes.

You will find the following books in the Old Testament library:

- *Law*
- *History*
- *Prophecy*
- *Songs*
- *Wisdom.*



### A simple history lesson

In small groups mark alongside the time line when you think the following famous people from the Bible lived, or when the events happened.

- *King David*
- *Abraham*
- *Paul*
- *Moses*
- *Jesus*
- *The Exodus from Egypt*
- *Jeremiah.*

Then, either go through the answers as a whole group, or look up the events in the time chart in your own Bible to get a sense of 2,000 years of history.

## Reading the New Testament

The New Testament is a library, like the Old Testament – but with not as many sorts of books. It was written in Greek and was composed within 60 years of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The New Testament was written by Jesus' disciples and by the first generation of Christians.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus and the early Church.

The books in the New Testament library are:

- *Four Gospels*
- *Acts (by Luke)*
- *Lots of letters (by Paul and others)*
- *Revelation.*

## How to read the Bible

Some important things to remember:

- *Read the Bible in a form you can understand – use a modern version.*
- *Don't try to read through from Genesis to Revelation.*
- *Don't use it like a lucky dip.*
- *Try to listen to what God is saying to you as you read.*

And some ways of reading:

- *Many Christians use Bible reading notes – dated or undated.*
- *Read a book of the Bible at a time for background.*
- *Use your imagination and think yourself into a passage.*
- *Meditate on a single verse.*

## For reflection

Thank God for Scripture. Continue to work out your way of praying and build regular Bible reading in some form into your prayer time.

