

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Genesis - Revelation

### Opening

- Gathering: Give an example of how the Bible has helped you in your everyday life.
- Today's Focus: To understand what the Bible is, why God gave it to us and how it is organized to help us find and apply its truths to our lives.
- Key Verses: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 Timothy 3:16
- These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.* John 20:31

Opening Prayer

### Lesson

What We Believe (*John 20:31*)

Does it matter what we believe?

Acts 4:12 = *There is no other name ... by which we must be saved*

What does it mean to be saved, and what is this name by which we must be saved?

John 17:3 = We are saved from eternal death into eternal life by knowing Jesus

Is thinking about God enough to know Him and be saved? = Speaking to educated Sadducees

Mark 12:24 = *You do not know the Scriptures or the power of God*

How can we know God and Jesus enough to receive the life He offers?

John 20:31 = The Bible is written so we may believe in Jesus & have life in His name

The Bible for Everyday Life (*2 Timothy 3:16*)

Is the Bible given only to build our faith to receive eternal life?

Matthew 4:4 = The Word is given for our daily lives also

How can the Bible help us in our daily lives?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 = Useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training, equipping

Other than growth, what promise does God give to those who study His word?

Luke 11:28 = God will bless those who hear His Word and follow it

What is God's Word? (*John 1*) = Write the various manifestations of the Word on the board

How long has God's Word been around? = The Divine Word

John 1:1-3 = Even before the beginning - *through Him all things were made*

Why does John refer to the Word as "him"? = The Human Word

John 1:14 = Jesus is the Word - *The Word became flesh and dwelt...*

How were all things made through the Word? = The Spoken Word

Genesis 1:3, 5 = God created everything simply by speaking His word

How did the Word become flesh? = The Written Word

Luke 24:27 = The Scriptures point to Christ, from Genesis to Revelation

Note: *Moses and the Prophets* or *Law and Prophets* was name for Bible (OT) in Jesus' time

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 2

### Law and Gospel (*Romans 3:21-24*)

What two paths towards salvation are revealed in the Bible?

Romans 3:21-24 = God's Law (all fall short) and Gospel (justified freely)

Is God's Law only found in the Old Testament?

Matthew 5:17-18, 21-22a = No, it is found throughout the Bible

Is God's Gospel ("Good News") of grace found only in the New Testament? = Same God throughout

Genesis 12:1-3 = God gave His grace to Abraham, all he had to do was believe & follow

### God's Law (*Matthew 22:37-40*)

What are the three types of God's Law?

*Civil* - Exodus 22:1 = For the new nation of Israel, changes with government

*Ceremonial* - Exodus 34:22 = God relates to today's man, changes over time

*Moral* - Exodus 20:3-4, 7-8, 12-17 = God's standards for all time, never changes

How did Jesus summarize God's Moral Law?

Matthew 22:37-38 = Love the Lord your God - First Table of 10 Comm. (1-3)

Matthew 22:39-40 = Love your neighbor - Second Table of 10 Comm. (4-10)

Since all fall short of being saved by obedience, what are the purposes of God's Law?

Curb - 1 Timothy 1:9-10 = The Law reveals the limits for how we live our lives

Mirror - Romans 7:7 = The Law makes us aware of our sinfulness

Guide - Psalm 119:9 (119:1-9) = The Law shows us how we are to live as His people

What are the promises of God's Law?

Deuteronomy 6:24-25 = Obey them completely and always prosper & live & be righteous

What are the curses of God's Law?

Deuteronomy 8:19-20 (see Galatians 3:10-13) = Disobey and be destroyed

### God's Gospel (*Ephesians 2:8-9*)

How did Paul summarize God's Gospel?

Ephesians 2:8-9 = By grace you have been saved through faith, not by works

What purpose does God have in this Gospel?

John 3:16 = He offers His grace because He loves us so much

What are the promises of God's Gospel? = Chosen, His sons, free grace, redemption, forgiveness, ...

Ephesians 1:4-8, 13-14 = ... wisdom, understanding, salvation, truth, Holy Spirit, guaranteed

What are the curses of God's Gospel?

John 3:36 = Whoever rejects the Son will not see life

### Contrasts of Law and Gospel (*Galatians 3:10-25*)

#### LAW

Galatians 3:10 = Under a curse

Galatians 3:12 = Based on works

Galatians 3:19 = Reveals our sin

Galatians 3:22-23 = Imprisoned in sin

#### GOSPEL

Galatians 3:13-14 = Under a blessing

Galatians 3:11 = Based on faith

Galatians 3:19b = Reveals our Savior

Galatians 3:24-25 = Set free (forgiven) in Christ

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 3

### The Bible

Not one book, but a book of books (66) = A library

*biblion* = Greek for book

*Canon* = Means cane, or measuring rod

List of books recognized as the genuine, original inspired, authoritative Word of God

What did Peter explain to be the source of the books in the Bible?

2 Peter 1:20-21 = *Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*

How did Paul, the author of nearly half of the New Testament books, feel about the message he gave?

Galatians 1:11-12 = He received it by revelation from Jesus Christ

How seriously should we consider the words in the Bible to be the exact Words of God?

Galatians 1:8 = Anyone who tries to change it should be eternally condemned (go to hell)

### The Old Testament

*Testament* - A covenant or agreement between two parties, especially between God and His people.

Implies a strong relationship between the two.

What was God's old testament?

Leviticus 26:3, 6, 9, 12 = If you keep My Law, I will protect and bless you

What is the focus of the Old Testament books of the Bible?

Genesis 28:13-15 = God's revelation of Himself and His love thru a people chosen by grace

Current Old Testament canon selected soon after return from Babylon, around the time of Ezra

Books organized mostly chronologically within 5 categories (39 books): = see page 5

The Law (Torah) - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

History - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Poetry - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs

Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

### The New Testament

What was God's new testament?

Hebrews 9:15 = We simply just receive the promised eternal inheritance won by Jesus

Is this new covenant still restricted to the children of Abraham?

Galatians 3:6-9, 14, 29 = Yes, but to Abraham's children by faith, not by blood

What is the focus of the New Testament books of the Bible?

Ephesians 3:4-6 = God's revelation of Himself and His love to a people chosen by grace

Current New Testament canon selected in 397 AD at the Council of Carthage

Were any of our New Testament books regarded as Scripture before this time?

2 Peter 3:15-16 = Peter saw Paul's writings as Scriptural; Matthew & Luke drew from Mark

Books organized thematically within 5 categories (27 books): = see page 6

Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

History - Acts

Letters of Paul - Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

Letters of Others - Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

Apocalypse - Revelation

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 4

Versions = See comparisons on page 8

Old Testament originally written in Hebrew, New Testament originally written in Greek

*Translation* - A rendering of the original text into another language

*Paraphrase* - A careful restatement of the authors thoughts

*Literal Bible Versions* = Useful for careful word-by-word study

Translations aimed at word-for-word accuracy

Septuagint (Old Testament Hebrew translated into Greek) - 285-132 BC

Vulgate (Bible translated into Latin by Jerome) - 405 AD

German Bible (Translated by Martin Luther) - 1522-1534

King James Version (KJV, Authorized) - 1611

Revised Standard Version (RSV) - 1952

New American Standard (NASB) - 1960

*Dynamic Bible Versions* = Easier to read than literal, Useful for serious study

Translations aimed at dynamic equivalency (phrase-by-phrase)

New International Version (NIV) - 1978

*Paraphrases* = Especially helpful for first-time and casual Bible readers

Sentences and verses rewritten to maximize readability in today's language

The Living Bible (TLB) - 1971

Today's English Version (Good News) - 1976

The Message - 2002

### How To Take Advantage of God's Word

Why should we study the Bible?

Matthew 22:29 = To know God and His right plan for our lives

How should we begin to study the Bible?

Colossians 1:9 = Pray that God will fill you with knowledge, wisdom and understanding

How can praying help us better understand the deep truths of the Bible?

John 14:26 = He will send the Holy Spirit who will teach you all things

But what if what we read is too difficult to understand?

Hebrews 5:11-14 = Keep studying and you will grow to where you can handle the solid food

What are three main ways we are to study the Bible?

Acts 17:2-3 = Learn from teachers gifted by the Spirit (large-group study)

Acts 17:11 = Search the Scriptures regularly with others (small group study)

2 Timothy 3:14-15 = Continue on your own (personal study)

Closing Prayer

### Response

1. Why should I regularly read and study the Bible?

(John 16:12-15; 20:31; Romans 15:4; Hebrews 5:11-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2. How seriously should I take and trust the words in the Bible?

(Matthew 5:18; 24:35; Acts 24:14; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

3. When and how have I been blessed by studying God's Word?

(Deuteronomy 4:1-14; 8:1-10; Psalm 119; Ezekiel 3:1-3; Matthew 4:4)

4. When and how have I been cursed by ignoring God's Word? (Deut 8:11-20; 11:26-28; Prov 30:5-6)

5. What steps can and will I take to learn more about God's plan for my life and my future with Him?

(Proverbs 1:7; Colossians 3:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-15; James 1:21-25)

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 5

### Books of the Old Testament

**The Law** - *Torah* (Hebrew for "law" or "teaching"), *Pentateuch* (Greek for "five volumes")

- Genesis** - Beginnings of God's People
- Exodus** - Birth of God's Chosen Nation
- Leviticus** - Instructions for Living as God's Holy People
- Numbers** - Israel's Journey to the Promised Land
- Deuteronomy** - Moses Reminds Israel of Her Calling

**History** - *Stories of the Jews before Christ*

- Joshua** - Israel Enters, Conquers and Settles the Promised Land
- Judges** - Israel's Early Years as a Confederacy
- Ruth** - Story of God's Love and Care to Ancestor of David and Jesus
- 1 Samuel** - God Gives Israel a King - Saul
- 2 Samuel** - Israel's Second and Most Faithful King - David
- 1 Kings** - Israel Under Solomon and Divided into Two Kingdoms
- 2 Kings** - Kings and Fall of Israel and Judah
- 1 Chronicles** - Chronicle of the Reign of King David
- 2 Chronicles** - Chronicle of the Reigns of Solomon and Kings of Judah
- Ezra** - Jews Return from Exile and Commit to God
- Nehemiah** - Jews Rebuild Jerusalem and Rebuild Holy Nation
- Esther** - Story of God's Protection of His People

**Poetry** - *Also called Wisdom Literature*

- Job** - Faithful Man Tries to Understand God's Will Through Suffering
- Psalms** - Hymns, Poems and Prayers of Israel
- Proverbs** - Words of Wisdom from Solomon and Other Wise Israelites
- Ecclesiastes** - Solomon's Thoughts on the Vanity of Earthly Life
- Song of Solomon** - Love Songs Symbolizing God's Relationship With His People

**Major Prophets** - *Pointed Israel Back to God, Warned of Judgment, Promised Hope*

- Isaiah** - Prophet to Southern Kingdom During Northern Kingdom's Destruction, Foretold of the Messiah
- Jeremiah** - Prophet to Southern Kingdom of Judah During its Last Days
- Lamentations** - Songs of Mourning by Jeremiah Over Exile of Judah
- Ezekiel** - Prophet of Judgment and Hope to Jews During Exile in Babylon
- Daniel** - Prophet of God's Plans to Jews During Exile in Babylon

**Minor Prophets** - *"Minor" Because Books are Smaller*

- Hosea** - Prophet to Northern Kingdom of Israel During its Last Days
- Joel** - Prophet to Judah Compares Famine to the Day of the Lord's Judgment
- Amos** - Prophet of Judgment Against Social Injustice
- Obadiah** - Prophet of Judgment Against Judah's Neighbor Edom
- Jonah** - Story of Unwilling Prophet to Ninevah (capital of enemy, Assyria)
- Micah** - Prophet Against Social, Political and Religious Evils
- Nahum** - Prophet Foretells Destruction of Ninevah (capital of enemy, Assyria)
- Habakkuk** - Prophet Questions God's Purpose in Imminent Babylonian Conquest of Judah
- Zephaniah** - Prophet Proclaims God's Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem For Evils
- Haggai** - Prophet Reprimands Jews to Return to Rebuilding the Temple
- Zechariah** - Prophet Calls Jews to Rebuild Temple and Reveals God's Future Plans
- Malachi** - Prophet Calls Jews to Commitment and Obedience While Awaiting the Messiah

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 6

### Books of the New Testament

#### **Gospels** - *"Good News" of Jesus, the Christ (Messiah)*

**Matthew** - Story of Jesus as the Promised Messiah, Directed to Jews

**Mark** - Story of Jesus as the Active Son of God, Directed to Romans

**Luke** - Story of Jesus as the Perfect Son of Man, Focuses on Jesus' Humanity

**John** - Story of Jesus as the Full Son of God, Focuses on Jesus' Divinity

#### **History** - *Story of God's New Covenant People*

**Acts** - Formation and Expansion of the Christian Church

#### **Letters by Paul**

**Romans** - Explanation of Christianity, Saving Righteousness Comes Through Faith

**1 Corinthians** - Exhortations Against Disorders Within the Church

**2 Corinthians** - Reconciliation Between Christians and With God

**Galatians** - Christians Are to Live By Grace, Not By Law

**Ephesians** - Live As Members of Christ's Body, the Church

**Philippians** - Be Joyful and Thankful in all Circumstances

**Colossians** - Salvation is in Christ and in Christ Alone

**1 Thessalonians** - Remain Steadfast While Awaiting Christ's Return

**2 Thessalonians** - Misconceptions of Christ's Second Coming Corrected

**1 Timothy** - Advice for Pastor of Christian Congregation

**2 Timothy** - Persevere in Faith Despite Persecution and Godlessness in the World

**Titus** - Guidance to Pastor in Handling Opposition

**Philemon** - Forgiveness and Acceptance of Runaway Slave as Fellow Christian

#### **Letters by Others**

**Hebrews** - Christ Supersedes All Things of God's Old Covenant

**James** - True Faith is Evident in its Resultant Good Works

**1 Peter** - Encouragement to Stay on the Narrow Road Despite Persecution

**2 Peter** - Condemnation of False Teachings Within the Church

**1 John** - Avoid False Teachings and Live Out God's Love For Others

**2 John** - Avoid False Teachers and Obey God's Commands

**3 John** - Hospitality Commended in Face of Opposition From Church Leader

**Jude** - Defending the Faith Against False Teachers

#### **Apocalypse** - *Highly Symbolic Writings that Describe Future Times*

**Revelation** - Visions of Heaven and the Last Days Given to John

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 7

### Books of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

#### Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha

Religious writings not accepted as divinely inspired (not in *canon*)

Old Testament canon defined by rabbis at Jamnia in 90 AD

Produced and circulated during period of 200 BC - 100 AD

Contain various historical references and stories

Recommended by Jerome & Luther for ethical but not doctrinal teaching

Many apocryphal New Testament writings also exist, such as:

*Gospel of the Infancy, Gospel of Thomas, ... Nicodemus, ... Bartholomew*

*Acts of John, ... Paul, ... Peter, ... Andrew, ... Philip, ... Thomas*

#### Apocrypha - Greek for *hidden things*

Contain ideas that disagree with Protestant doctrine

Purgatory, masses for the dead, good works earn merit with God

Roman Catholics accept 12 of these 15 books as *Deuterocanonical*

Accepted at *Council of Trent* in 1546 in response to reformers

Eastern Orthodox accept all but 2 Esdras as canonical

*1 & 2 Esdras*

*Tobit*

*Judith*

*Additions To Esther*

*Wisdom of Solomon*

*Ecclesiasticus*

*Baruch*

*Letter of Jeremiah*

*Song of the Three Young Men*

*Susanna*

*Bel and the Dragon*

*Prayer of Manasseh*

*1 & 2 Maccabees*

#### Pseudepigrapha - Greek for *false authorship*

Falsely claimed to be written by a well-known ancient figure

Given even less credence than apocrypha

Called Apocrypha by Roman Catholics

Eastern Orthodox accept 3 & 4 Maccabees as canonical

*Enoch*

*Psalms of Solomon*

*Books of Adam and Eve*

*Martyrdom of Isaiah*

*Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Word of God

Page 8

### Bible Versions

#### King James Version

(A Psalm of David.)

- 23** THE Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his names sake.  
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.  
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.  
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

#### The Living Bible

- 23** Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need!  
2,3 He lets me rest in the meadow grass and leads me beside the quiet streams. He gives me new strength. He helps me do what honors him the most.  
4 Even when walking through the dark valley of death I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me, guarding, guiding all the way.[b]  
5 You provide delicious food for me in the presence of my enemies. You have welcomed me as your guest;[c] blessings overflow!  
6 Your goodness and unfailing kindness shall be with me all of my life, and afterwards I will live with you forever in your home.

#### New International Version

A psalm of David.

- 23** The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.  
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
3 he restores my soul.  
He guides me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.  
4 Even though I walk  
through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.  
5 You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
6 Surely goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

#### Revised Standard Version

A psalm of David.

- 23** The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want;  
2 he makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters;  
3 he restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.  
4 Even though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death,  
I fear no evil;  
for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff,  
they comfort me.  
5 Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
thou anointest my head with oil,  
my cup overflows.  
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.