

Belong

What do you know about the Bible? What are you curious to know more about?

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Faith Share:

Who shared with us today?

What did I learn? What inspired me? What questions do I have?

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Become

The Bible: God’s Story

The Bible contains the story of God and God’s people, and it invites us to find ourselves within the story of God’s love. While different parts of the Bible paint images of God in a variety of ways, they are all stories of one God. The same God who created the heavens and the earth, sent Jesus to redeem creation, and works in us today.

The first part of the Bible, called the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, is foundational to both the Jewish and Christian faiths. It is the story of God that Jesus knew and fulfilled. It’s the basis for a deeper and more meaningful understanding of everything that happens in the New Testament.

The New Testament contains the good news that God has shown up in a new way and tells the story of what God was up to in Jesus. Unlike the Old Testament that covers a huge span of history, most of the New Testament deals with the same small slice of time. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) tell four different accounts of the life of Jesus. Acts tells the story of the beginning of the Church. The New Testament also contains letters written to early followers of Jesus.

Getting to know the Bible

What the Bible is:

The Bible is God’s revelation to us. We consider the Bible to be holy because God “breathed life” into it, causing it to have more meaning or value than other books or writings. Over many years, God inspired human authors to record and write down their interactions with God.

As Methodists, we do not believe that God literally “dictated” every word of the Bible to human authors. The Biblical authors wrote in their own voices and they incorporated their own perspectives, cultures, and contexts into Scripture. We might say that the Bible is the Word of God in the words of humans. So the answer to the question, “Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?” is BOTH!

We believe that the Bible includes all the instructions and guidance necessary for us to have a relationship with God. It also shows us how we should be in relationship with other humans and with the world around us. Ultimately, the Bible points us toward God and shows us how God is present and active in our lives and in the world.

What the Bible is NOT:

Unfortunately, because the Bible was written by human authors living in a particular place at a certain time, it doesn’t answer all of our questions. While it does give us very important information on how to live our lives, it is not a comprehensive manual to all of life’s problems.

It is also important to know that while the Bible contains history, it is not primarily a history book. While the Bible contains passages that talk about creation and nature, it is not a science textbook either.¹

We find that as science expands human understanding of the natural world, our understanding of the mysteries of God’s creation and word are enhanced...Science and theology are complementary rather than mutually incompatible. -*United Methodist Social Principles: The Natural World*

Bible Structure

The Bible is a collective library of ancient books (66 in total) that were written and compiled over hundreds of years.

To help us navigate the Bible more easily, each book has been divided into chapters and verses. When you read a scripture reference (such as John 3:16) the number before the colon (“3”) is the chapter, and the number after the colon (“16”) is the verse.

Anytime you see a number in front of a book name (such as 1 John or 2 Samuel), it is referring to the first, second, or third book in a series. So, you would say, “First John” not “One John.”¹

¹Confirmation: The Story of God, The United Church of the Resurrection, rezlife Student Ministries, 2020

Scripture to read

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Old Testament

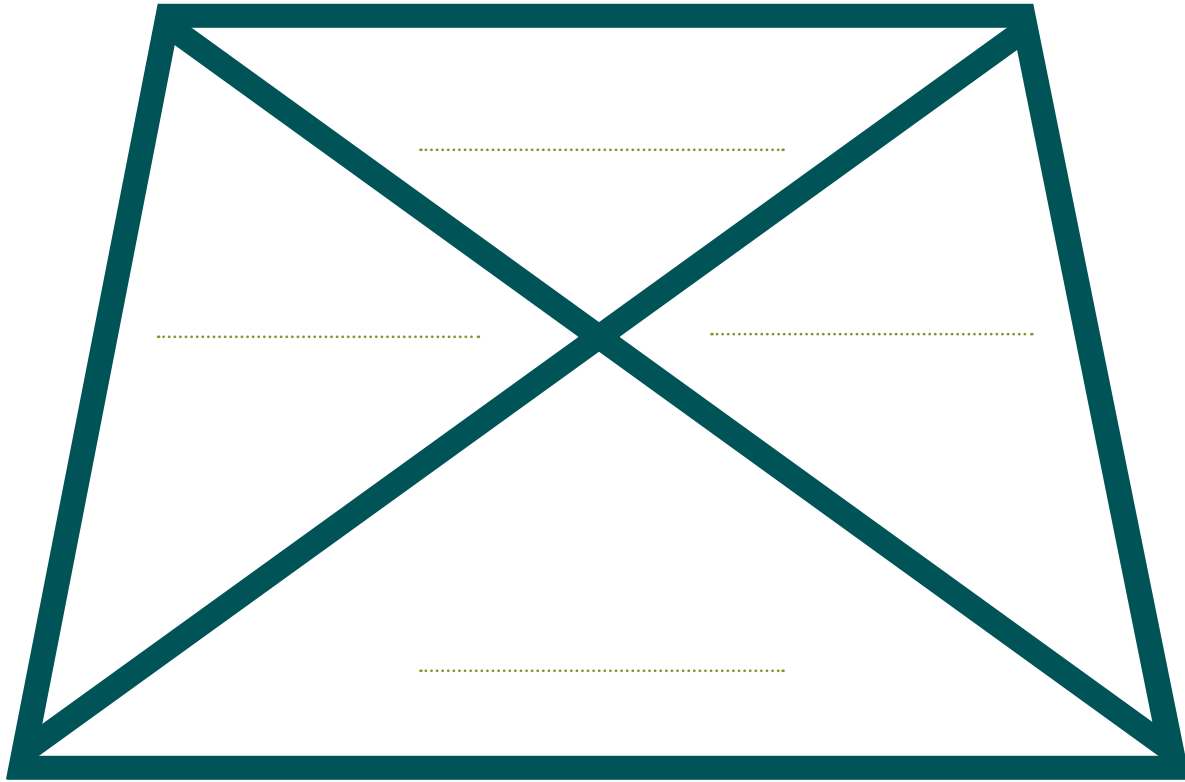
Also called the Hebrew Bible. Contains 39 books. First part of the Bible, containing ancient writings and stories important to Jewish and Christian faiths.

Genesis	5 books of the Torah (“law”), also called the Pentateuch (“5 books”)
Exodus	
Leviticus	
Numbers	
Deuteronomy	
Joshua	12 Historic books
Judges	
Ruth	
1 Samuel	
2 Samuel	
1 Kings	
2 Kings	
1 Chronicles	
2 Chronicles	
Ezra	
Nehemiah	
Esther	
Job	5 Wisdom/Poetry books
Psalms	
Proverbs	
Ecclesiastes	
Song of Solomon	
Isaiah	17 Prophetic books
Jeremiah	
Lamentations	
Ezekiel	
Daniel	
Hosea	
Joel	
Amos	
Obadiah	
Jonah	
Micah	
Nahum	
Habakkuk	
Zephaniah	
Haggai	
Zechariah	
Malachi	

New Testament

Contains 27 books. Written in the 1st and 2nd centuries, the New Testament contains the story of the life and teachings of Jesus and the early church.

Matthew	4 Gospels
Mark	
Luke	
John	
Acts	1 Early Church Account
Romans	21 Letters (Epistles)
1 Corinthians	
2 Corinthians	
Galatians	
Ephesians	
Philippians	
Colossians	
1 Thessalonians	
2 Thessalonians	
1 Timothy	
2 Timothy	
Titus	
Philemon	
Hebrews	
James	
1 Peter	
2 Peter	
1 John	
2 John	
3 John	
Jude	
Revelation	1 Apocalyptic Book



John Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.

Scripture to read

Psalm 19:7-11 • Psalm 119:105-106 • Romans 15:4 • Hebrews 4:12

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

While John Wesley never used the term “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” in any of his writings, Methodist Scholar Albert Outler gave that name to a pattern he discovered in Wesley’s work. Wesley often used four resources to arrive at reliable conclusions regarding issues of faith: Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. We need all four parts of the Quadrilateral to help us learn and live our faith well.

Scripture

For Wesley—and for Methodists today—the core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture. Methodists, like other Christians, believe that through Scripture we meet the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, and discover the story of God and God’s people.

Reason

Wesley was a scholar, and he read books on Scripture, history, and theology to help him understand what he read in the Bible. In the same way, our understanding of Scripture is informed by what we know about history, science, and culture. We are able to learn about the context of Bible passages and use critical thinking to understand and live out our faith.

Tradition

We aren’t the first people to read the Bible or ask questions about what it means. By “tradition” we mean the thoughts and teachings of the church at all times and places before we got here, including the creeds, hymns and prayers that guide us. Tradition reminds us that we are not the first to walk with Jesus as disciples, and we do not walk alone. Understanding how Christians throughout history have understood the Bible and used it to inform their faith practices can help us in our faith as well. Sometimes we may even learn what not to do.

Experience

It’s one thing to read about God’s grace, but something else to experience it at work in your life and the lives of others. Experience is the way in which God’s, creative, transforming, revealing work is demonstrated and made real in our own lives. We all practice theology, read scripture, and make decisions in light of the situations and events that shape who we are.

Adapted from *colaborate leader guide*, Sparkhouse, 2016 and *United Methodist Beliefs, A Brief Introduction* by William H. Willimon

Spiritual Practice: Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading the Bible and meditating on Scripture. The words *lectio divina* are Latin for “divine reading.” It can be a great way to learn something new from Scripture as we open up our hearts and minds to hear from God. Lectio Divina is a way to encounter God as you listen with an open mind and with an open heart, mark or write down what sticks out to you, and reflect on what God is saying to you through the experience.

1. Start by silently praying, “God, show me what you would like me to hear from you today.”
2. Find the passage in your Bible and read it out loud slowly and carefully. Write down what words or phrases are speaking to you.

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3. Read the passage out loud a second time. This time, write down the answer to this question: “What does this word or phrase mean to me?”

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4. Read the passage a third time. Now write down the answer to the question, “How is God nudging me to respond to this passage?”

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5. Read the passage a fourth and final time. Silently reflect on the words for a few minutes before ending your time in prayer to God.

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Reflect:

How was this spiritual practice for you?

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Psalm 119:9-16 (CEB)

How can young people keep their paths pure?
By guarding them according to what you've said.

I have sought you with all my heart.
Don't let me stray from any of your commandments!

I keep your word close, in my heart,
so that I won't sin against you.

You, Lord, are to be blessed!
Teach me your statutes.

I will declare out loud
all the rules you have spoken.

I rejoice in the content of your laws
as if I were rejoicing over great wealth.

I will think about your precepts
and examine all your paths.

I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget what you have said.

Your word is a lamp before my feet
and a light for my journey.

-Psalm 119:105

Bless

How were you a blessing this week?

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How were you blessed?

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