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SESSION ONE

What do I think about the Bible?



Aims

- To stimulate questions about the Bible which can be discussed and explored in future sessions
- To explore and discuss group members' opinions about the Bible.

This first session allows opportunity for young people to begin thinking about the Bible; what it is, its importance, what it means to them and to other Christians.

Recommended activity*

The **Best word?** activity enables young people to begin thinking and talking about their views of the Bible; the other activities allow young people to begin engaging with the Bible in a number of different ways.

The following four main sessions will provide opportunities to explore many of the questions raised here in more detail, so encourage your children and young people to remember their questions for later sessions.

Leaders' notes

Activity	Preparation and resources
General research	Read basic information about the Bible from Bible Society website if appropriate: www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/our-work/the-bible-style-guide/ .
DVD clip	Chapter 1 of the DVD and the means to play it
Best word?*	Photocopy and cut up a set of cards for each person. Photocopy target board sheet, one per person.
Banned Bible	If there is no internet access where your group meets, it might be helpful to find some facts from the website listed. Gather appropriate resources for the group to create a newspaper article – paper, pens etc.
Bible quiz	Quiz from the DVD and the means to play it
Judging a book by its cover	Show PowerPoint of Bible front covers from the DVD or collect images to show of Bible front covers. Gather appropriate art resources for creating Bible front covers.
I didn't know that	Photocopy and cut up sheet – enough for one per pair.

Activities

DVD clip

Begin the session by watching chapter 1 of the DVD.

Best word?*

Photocopy and cut up the 'Best word?' cards to separate them.

Provide a set of cards for each young person. If you are working with younger children you may find it helpful to choose just a selection of words.

Ask the young people to choose ten words from the cards that they think best describe the Bible. Then ask the young people to choose three words (or more if they wish) that they would strongly disagree with to describe the Bible.

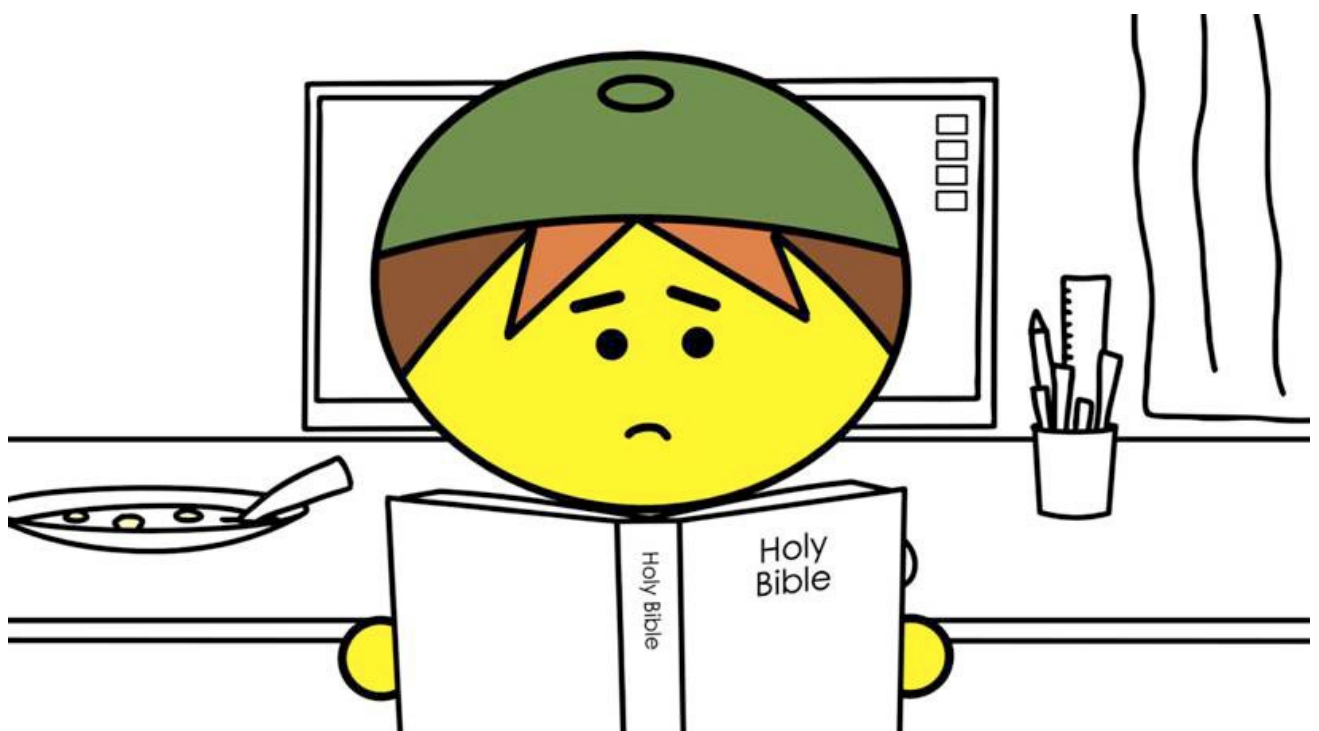
For the next stage, photocopy the target board on the following page. Ask the young people to write the ten words they have chosen onto the target board, the stronger they agree with the word the nearer the centre they should write it, the words they feel less strongly about will be further away

from the centre. It will be helpful to keep these target boards for the final session, where there is an exercise to see if their opinions have changed in any way by the end of the five sessions.

Ask the young people to choose just one of their ten words and explain to the rest of the group why they have chosen it. If your group like debating, ask the young people to put together a 30-second defence for their choice of word, and allow others to put forward arguments in opposition.

As a group decide which ten words best sum up what the group thinks about the Bible. This could cause some interesting discussions as a decision is reached. Find appropriate ways to make sure everyone gets the opportunity to voice their opinion.

If these discussions raise questions about the Bible, take some time to talk about these with your group, or it may be that some of their questions will be discussed in more depth in the following sessions. It does not matter if you don't have all the answers but having the space to ask questions is important.



Best Word?

Which words best describe the Bible?

Confusing	Trustworthy	Weird
Exciting	Life changing	Healing
Boring	Relevant	Heroic
Out of date	Irrelevant	Untrue
Guidance	Jesus	Fake
Rules	God	Mad
Inspiring	About ordinary people	Misunderstood
Challenging	Supernatural	Controversial
Sexy	Promise	Contradictions
Shocking	Encouraging	Exclusive
Transformative	Violent	Inclusive



Further activities

You may choose to do one or more of the following activities. Choose activities that would best suit the age and style of the group.

Banned Bible

Imagine a new government came to power and they decided to ban the Bible! No more Bibles were to be produced, bought or sold.

- What would you do if the Bible was banned?
- How would you feel?
- How would the people around you react/feel?
Your family? Friends? Neighbours?
- What impact do you think it would have on you?
Your friends? Society?

Create a newspaper front cover reporting on the banning of the Bible.

What's your angle? Do you agree/disagree? Why? Try to include a quote from someone highlighting their opinion. Would it help your report to put in some historical context about the history of published Bibles in this country? What about some statistics?

Let your imagination go wild and create a headline and story that you think captures the magnitude of what would happen if the Bible was banned! (If you have a group that like drama you may prefer to act out the news coverage of this story.)

Some useful links...

www.aloha.net/~mikesch/banned.htm

This is a list of facts, statistics and items documenting the restrictions placed by the Catholic Church on the reading and distribution of certain books; including restrictions on the Bible.

www.presentationmagazine.com/editable-powerpoint-newspapers-407.htm

This link takes you to a page that allows you to download PowerPoint templates for making your own newspaper cover stories!

Bible quiz

On the DVD is an electronic version of this quiz, where the four possible answers are revealed for one to be chosen. The correct answer is then revealed at the click of a button! If you prefer not to use the electronic version, the script of the quiz is below with the correct answer highlighted.

1. How many books are there in the Bible we use?
74, 76, **66**, 64
2. Which of these languages was the Bible not originally written in?
Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, **Latin**
3. Which of these is not a book in the Bible?
Hezekiah, Malachi, 3 John, Jude
4. The Bible was not originally written in which of these continents?
Africa, **America**, Asia, Europe
5. Which of these people was Jesus directly related to?
Mary Magdalene, Peter, **John the Baptist**, Matthew
6. Roughly how many people wrote the Bible?
Around 300, **around 40**, around 10, around 6
7. Which of these books in the Bible doesn't mention the word God?
Esther, Ruth, Numbers, Job
8. Roughly how many of the over 7,000 languages in the world has the Bible been translated into?
Around 3,000, around 6,000, around 1,000, around 5,000
9. Which books of the Bible are written by Jesus?
All of them, **none of them**, all the New Testament, the Gospels
10. Who led Israel out of Egypt?
Joshua, Abraham, **Moses**, Paul

Judging a book by its cover

Show the selection of front covers taken from a variety of Bibles. These are available as a PowerPoint on the DVD. (You may choose to show extra Bible covers from Bibles you own or examples you find on the internet – make sure you choose a good selection with a range of titles and different imagery.)

Pick out two or three covers and discuss why they think the front cover was designed in that way – what message is it trying to put across? Who is it trying to appeal to? Why have particular symbols/colours been used?

Ask the young people to choose which design they prefer and why, and then which design they dislike and their reasons why. This could be discussed in twos or threes first and then fed back to the whole group.

If your group is creative ask the young people to design their own front cover for a Bible, thinking carefully about the title they use and the colours and symbols/images chosen. After they have designed it they could say why they have chosen that design. If you felt it appropriate these designs and explanations could then be displayed somewhere in your church/community for others to read.

I didn't know that!

Photocopy the page “I didn't know that!” so that you have enough for one sheet between two people, and then cut it up so the facts are on separate pieces of paper/card. Ask the young people to look at the facts and then ask them to move the cards into various lists and piles; each exercise can be discussed as a group.

For example:

- arrange the cards from the most interesting to the least interesting facts;
- pick out three facts which really surprised you;
- pick out one fact that you would like to know more about;
- put the facts that raise questions for you into one pile (and then explain the questions);
- pick out any facts that challenge you.

Take some time to discuss the outcomes of the activity; it may be that you want to further explore some of these topics in a later session. If you need more factual details look at the Bible Society website for more information.

I didn't know that!

<p>The Old Testament books were written by a range of authors over hundreds of years.</p>	<p>Jewish people don't use the phrase Old Testament, but those same books are their Jewish Scriptures.</p>	<p>The word 'Testament' means covenant. A covenant is an agreement and refers to the agreement that God made with humans.</p>
<p>The stories of Jesus initially were passed on by word of mouth and weren't written down as books until years later.</p>	<p>Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the Gospels. The Gospels were not written until at least 30 years after the death of Jesus.</p>	<p>The New Testament would have been written in Greek.</p>
<p>There were other gospels and writings about Jesus which are not included in the New Testament. Many of these, such as the Gospel of Thomas, were thought to be heretical (as they went against the beliefs of the Church).</p>	<p>The books which were to be included in the New Testament were not decided immediately. It was not until approx 350 years after the death of Jesus that the books of the New Testament were officially fixed.</p>	<p>The Apocrypha is a collection of extra books that are in a separate volume to the Old Testament. The Protestant Churches do not have the Apocrypha as part of the Bible.</p>
<p>The Bible would originally have appeared as a scroll. It did not appear as a book in its complete form until the 16th Century.</p>	<p>William Tyndale made the first printed translation of the Bible into English, but was burned at the stake for doing so in 1536 because it was against the law.</p>	<p>The first legal Bible in English was allowed in England in 1539.</p>