

3

SESSION Three

How do I read it?



Aims

- To explore different ways to engage with the Bible and reflect upon which are most helpful
- To gain greater awareness of Bible translations and interpretation

Recommended activities*

The **I read the Bible...** activity starts with a clip from the DVD with people explaining how they read the Bible. This creates an opportunity for the young people to express how they read the Bible, or indeed difficulties they may have in reading the Bible. Following that is an opportunity to try a different approach to reading the Bible.

Leaders' notes

Activity	Preparation and resources
General research	If needed research other world faiths' holy books.
DVD clip	Chapter 3 of the DVD and the means to play it.
In or out?	Look up the different Bible passages in preparation if you need to.
Different translations	Gather different translations of the Bible. Choose one passage that can be looked at in different translations.
Which language?	Ensure you have read and understand the information point, and do any further reading you think is necessary. Familiarise yourself with the stories mentioned. Have copies of the stories if you need them.
My translation	Creative resources for the group to write/draw their own Psalm eg pens, paper, felt tips.
I read the Bible...*	Second clip from chapter 3 on the DVD entitled "I read the Bible" Prepare to talk about the ways you read the Bible. Gather the appropriate resources to enable the different methods of reading the Bible as listed in the activity.
Challenge	Photocopy the "Don't know where to start?" sheet, enough for one per person.

Activities

DVD clip

Start the session by showing chapter 3 of the DVD.

In or out?

Read out the stories below. The young people have to decide which ones are in the Bible and which ones aren't. You could vary this activity by splitting the group into two teams. One team reads out a story and the other team has to guess if it is in the Bible or not. Continue taking turns until all the stories have been read out. Reveal all the answers at the end. You may choose to look up the references and read the stories in more detail.

1. God made a donkey talk to get him to speak to a man called Balaam.

IN (Numbers 22:28-30)

2. Zerubbabel was running away from the opposing army and hid in a cave. God sent a spider to spin a web over the entrance of the cave to hide the man, and the soldiers were fooled into thinking no one had been in the cave for days and ran straight past.

OUT

3. A man called Eutychus fell out of a third floor window because he fell asleep at Paul's preaching.

IN (Acts 20:8-10)

4. God turned the wife of a man called Lot into a pillar of salt.

IN (Genesis 19:23-26)

5. Jesus stepped out of the boat to walk on water; Peter followed but fell in and got swallowed by a whale.

OUT

6. Peter cut off a Roman soldier's ear when he was fighting with them in the Garden of Gethsemane.

IN (John 18:10)

7. God was so angry that he decided to make a volcano erupt, but Abraham raised his staff and stopped the volcano from erupting and wiping out a generation.

OUT

8. A whole herd of pigs drowned because they were demon possessed and the demons made them run into the water.

IN (Matthew 8:32)

Different translations

Have available copies of the same passage from a number of different translations and versions. The following is a list which provides a good range, some of which are available from websites such as www.biblegateway.com.

- King James Version
- New International Version
- The Message
- Action Bible
- Word on the Street
- Good News Bible
- Tabloid Bible
- New Revised Standard Version

If possible spread these translations around the room to allow the young people space to walk around and read the translations. If you want you could give each young person coloured stickers and they can put a yellow sticker on the translation that they liked the best and a red sticker on the translation they liked the least.

Gather the group back together and discuss:

- Which one appealed to them the most and why?
- If they didn't like any, why not?
- What is the difference between translation and interpretation?

Which language?

As a group, discuss what you know about the holy books of the different world faiths, and what some of the differences are between the Bible and the other holy books. (The young people may have a wealth of knowledge gained from RE lessons at school.) For a brief, simple overview of the different holy books see www.reonline.org.uk/specials/ks3_holybooks/.

Information point

One of the differences between the Bible and the holy books for other world faiths is that the Bible has been translated into over 2,000 different languages and dialects. The Qur'an, the holy book of the Islamic faith, is never translated but the text is kept in the original language, meaning that anyone who wants to read it has to learn Arabic. The Jewish Scriptures are hand written by scribes onto scrolls in the original Hebrew language and are read out loud in the synagogue each week.

Discuss...

- Why do you think it is important for some faiths to keep their holy book in the original language?
- Why do you think the Bible gets translated into a number of different languages?
- Do you think it is important to have the Bible in different languages for everyone? Why?

Look at these stories...

- William Tyndale www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/william_tyndale
- Mary Jones www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/our-work/mary-jones
- There are many modern stories of the importance of Bible translations to different communities available on the Bible Society website, for example: www.biblesociety.org.uk/uploads/content/wia/files/WiA_2013_Summer.pdf
www.biblesociety.org.uk/uploads/content/appeal/files/middle_east_note.pdf
www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/appeals/help-take-this-bible-past-the-finish-line

What difference, if any, does looking at these stories make to your answers to the previous questions?

My translation

Choose a passage from the Bible, maybe a Psalm (eg Psalm 23). Spend some time reading it through together as a group and discussing what it means. Then ask the young people to put this Psalm into their own words – the style is up to them. They don't necessarily have to write it – they could represent it as a picture or a song, or they could record themselves/make a short film about it. Ask them whether they prefer the original version or their own version.

I read the Bible...?*

Watch the clip on the DVD entitled "I read the Bible..." This shows a number of people briefly saying how and when they read the Bible.

Discuss with the young people whether they think it matters how and when the Bible is read. Did any of the ways mentioned in the clip appeal to them?

If appropriate, ask the young people to share how and when they read their Bibles. You may choose to share how and when you read your Bible.

Ask each member of the group to spend 15-20 minutes reading their Bible. This may seem like a long time to focus for some; however it will give enough time to engage in different and deeper ways. It will be useful if the young people can find a quiet space where they will not be disturbed by others in the group. Each person will read the story of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41) but they can choose one of the following methods to do so:

- Read the passage in the style of *Lectio Divina* – an ancient way of meditating on the scriptures (see *the Bible Study in the Extra Session for instructions on this*)
- Read the passage through and then use coloured pens/pencils to highlight words, or draw images/doodles about thoughts raised by the passage

- Listen to the passage and think about what images this forms in your mind (*There is a version of Mark read by DJ Chip K available to download from the Bible Society www.biblesociety.org.uk/search/chip+k or you could record your own version of the passage.*)
- Use a picture to reflect on the passage. (*There are many paintings of this story available on the internet. There is one available within the Methodist Art Collection www.methodist.org.uk/static/artcollection/image6.htm*)

After the 20 minutes has finished, ask the group for feedback on the experience:

- what did they learn?
- What did they struggle with?

- How might they do it differently another time?

Challenge!

Set the young people a challenge to read the Bible in a different way for a week. It may be one of the ways spoken about in the DVD clip, one from the following list, or another way they have thought of. Ask them to feedback their thoughts after completing the challenge the following week. You may find it helpful to photocopy the sheet entitled “Don’t know where to start?!” on the following page to give to the young people in your group.

Don't know where to start?!

Ways to read the Bible:

1

Sign up to a blog: this can help guide your reading of the Bible, but some also give you the opportunity to post comments, allowing you to share your thoughts and ask questions. Good examples include:

- Heartlight, a daily devotionals page www.heartlight.org
- Soul Survivor run a Bible in a year scheme. They suggest three short passage to read from the Bible each day, then in a year you have read the whole Bible! Plus they have a Bible study online for each day! thebibleinoneyear.wordpress.com



2

Speak to your youth worker, can they help you set up a weekly Bible study group?



3

Work your way through the Gospels. Choose key moments in Jesus' ministry that is reported in more than one Gospel, what are the similarities and differences? What do you learn from each account?

4

There are many good Bible commentaries available, these are books which you read with your Bible which help explain the meaning, and historical context of the Bible.

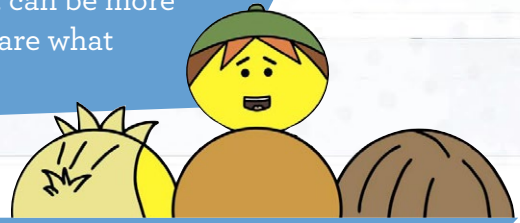
Good commentaries to use include:

- Commentaries by authors such as Tom Wright
- *The Lion Handbook to the Bible*
- Good News Bible App



5

Try meeting with your friends. You can use any of the forms of Bible study listed above, but meeting as a group can make sure you do it! Plus it can be more fun! And there is a chance to talk about and share what you have just read.



6

In a group or by yourself try the E100 Challenge. The E100 challenge is a list of 100 short passages from the Bible, 50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. They should only take you about ten minutes to read and will really help you get an understanding of the Bible! www.e100challenge.org.uk



7

The best advice is just to sit down and try. Make time in your week to sit and read the Bible. Reading the Bible is something you have to make a habit. But like with anything new you have to learn how to do it, so start off by picking up your Bible and reading it once a week, and increase this by a day each week. Before you know it you will be looking forward to the time of the day, every day you get to read God's word!

- Begin by sitting down closing your eyes and praying.
- Ask God to reveal God's message to you through what you are about to read.
- Choose a section to the Bible to read. Try not to just choose random sections; pick a book of the Bible to work through. Maybe start with the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John (Mark is the shortest!) and read a bit every day.
- Then use a commentary book, or a website to look at what that passage you have read might mean. Finish by spending a moment in prayer giving thanks for guidance and asking that God will help you to understand what you have learnt as you continue with your day.