**God’s Story (6 June 2021)**

Lesson Aims:

* to understand that all Scripture is God-breathed
* to believe that the Bible is God’s revelation, our only rule of faith and practice
* to discover that all Scripture points to Christ

The Bible:

The English word Bible is derived from Greek *ta biblia*, meaning "the books"

* 66 books
* 1,189 chapters
* 31,173 verses

The Bible:

* Old Testament (39 books):
  + Pentateuch, books of Law (5 books)
  + Historical books (12 books)
  + Wisdom literature (5 books)
  + Major and minor prophets (17 books)
    - Major prophets (5 books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel)
    - Minor prophets (12 books, from Hosea to Malachi)
* New Testament (27 books):
  + The Gospels (4 books)
  + Acts
  + Epistles (21 books)
  + Revelation

The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and has been fully translated into more than 500 languages and partially translated to about 2000 languages.

The big question: How can I be sure the Bible is the true Word of the true God?

Since God created man, He wanted to relate with us. God took the initiative to disclose or reveal Himself to us. There are 2 distinct places where God gives revelation of Himself:

* Natural revelation or general revelation: the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handywork (Ps. 19:1). The revelation of God in nature shows the glory of the true God so that man ought to worship and serve Him
* Special revelation – God’s word.
  + Written revelation: Bible
  + The Word becomes flesh: Jesus Christ

We believe that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice:

* Infallible, means perfect, flawless, faultless.
  + The ultimate source of its content comes from God and God is perfect, God cannot be possibly wrong.
  + There is no error in the original writing, but when the Bible is translated to other languages, there are limitations in vocabulary of languages, so some words cannot be precisely translated to have the same meaning and interpretation of the original words.
* The only rule of faith:
  + All truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught in the Bible
* The only rule of practice:
  + All truth necessary on how we should live our life is taught in the Bible

The Bible is the Word of God. We cannot hear God’s voice physically, so the Word of God is transmitted to us through human writings, but every single word in the whole Bible is inspired by God Himself. No part is uninspired. It is the word of God from cover to cover.

The Bible was written by approximately 40 men of diverse backgrounds over the course of 1500 years (Pentateuch by Moses ca. 1405 B.C. to Revelation by John A.D. 95). Isaiah was a prophet, Ezra was a priest, Matthew was a tax-collector, John was a fisherman, Paul was a tentmaker, Moses was a shepherd, Luke was a physician.

Despite being penned by different authors over 15 centuries, the Bible does not contradict itself and there’s one central point in the books of the Bible. All books in the Bible point to one central figure, that is Jesus Christ. The Bible is God’s story of salvation from Genesis to Revelation. The authors all present different perspectives, but they all proclaim the same one true God, and the same one way of salvation—Jesus Christ. This fact is a profound evidence that shows there must be a master author that guided all these different authors to write in the same theme over 1500 years!

In the history, the Bible went through a process called canonicity to determine which books belong to the Bible. The canon process was conducted first by Jewish rabbis and scholars and later by early Christians scholars. The process was completed by the end of 4th century. Ultimately, it was God who decided what books belonged in the biblical canon.

Protestant Bible vs. Catholic Bible

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|  | Protestant Bible | Catholic Bible |
| Old Testament | 39 books | Contains additional books (e.g. Tobit, Judith) and additional sections in certain books (e.g. Esther, Daniel) not found in the Protestant Bible |
| New Testament | 27 books | Same as Protestant Bible |

Old Testament:

* Once the entire Bible of the Jews, written in Hebrew
* 3rd century BC: Septuagint: Greek translation of this Hebrew Bible, more extensive than Hebrew Scripture, and its additions are called apocryphal (or hidden) writings
* 2nd century AD: Latin translation of the Septuagint
* 382 AD: the Vulgate: Latin translation of the original Hebrew Bible by Jerome. However, Augustine urged Jerome to include translations of the apocryphal writings. Vulgate become the church’s new Bible.
* 5th century AD: several church councils ratified the Latin Vulgate.

Reasons why the apocryphal writings should not be included in the Bible:

* These writings were not found in the Jewish Bible
* The Jewish Bible had been the Scripture used by Jesus and the disciples; therefore, it must be considered the basis of the church’s Bible.
* Some of the apocryphal writings included incorrect historical or chronological information.

Different interpretations of the Bible:

* Different theology: different ways of study of the Bible, detailed and deep examination of the biblical text
* It is very important to have the right theology, because wrong theology will cause wrong interpretation of the Bible, wrong understanding of God’s commandments, and wrong applications of God’s Word. Reformed theology is the closest interpretation of the Bible, most faithful, and most consistent in studying the Bible in its entirety.

Not only that God gives us the Bible, but God also preserves the Bible. It was written over a period of 1500 years, passed down since then for almost 2000 years, and translated into hundreds of different languages, but we can see that the Bible is not changed by the carelessness or any ill motives of men.

Conclusion:

* The Bible contains the mind of the Holy God, the state of sinful men, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the joy of believers.
* Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved and practice it to be holy.
* 2 Timothy 3:16–17: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
* 1 Thessalonians 2:13: And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

**Group Discussion**

Where do you stand?

* Do you believe that every word of the Bible is the truth of God?
* Do you submit to the authority of the Bible:
  + that teaches the only way of salvation is through Jesus Christ
  + that teaches the duty God requires of man
* How do you respond if your friends mention things that do not follow Bible teaching? For example: evolution vs. God created human beings and all other creatures.
* What do you need to do to know more of the truth of God?