

Into the Deep—the Bible: What is it? What does it show?

What is the Bible?

The Bible is actually a collection or library of books: with ___ books in the Old Testament and ___ in the New Testament.

“In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talk with them.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 104)

These books were composed by _____ authors inspired by the _____ .

A message behind enemy lines

Since the fall of our first parents, God speaks to us in three ways:

1. By his _____, which, though wounded by sin, did not lose all of its truth, goodness and beauty.
2. By our own _____. We are made to seek happiness and truth, and God also speaks to us through his natural law, which is perceived by our conscience.
3. In _____ to a particular group of chosen people through many centuries.

How the Bible came to be

These words were not divine _____: God employed the human language, human gifts, human experiences of those he inspired to write down the truth he wished to speak to his people.

While these words were most likely given _____ at first, and committed to memory, they were at some point written down so that the memory of these words might not fade.

These words, which tell the history of our salvation, unfolded according to God’s plan over many centuries, are marked by a series of _____ that grow in successively widening circles, like ripples in a pond.

Principles and resources for interpreting the Bible from the heart of the Church

“In Sacred Scripture, even though God speaks to us in human words, to interpret Scripture correctly, we must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by his words.” (CCC 109)

The Second Vatican Council (in *Dei Verbum*) teaches that when interpreting a given passage of Scripture, we should be especially attentive to the _____ and _____ of the whole of Scripture. We should also read Scripture within the living _____ of the whole Church. (CCC 112-14)

One passage of Scripture can have multiple senses. For example, let us consider the temple in Jerusalem in these different senses:

1. **Literal:** the meaning of the text, as intended by the human author. In this sense, the temple was the actual building that once stood in Jerusalem.
2. **Spiritual:** the realities and events spoken about in Scripture can themselves be signs of other truths that God wishes us to know. The spiritual sense includes three subdivisions:
 - a. **Allegorical:** how this points to Christ. The temple points to Jesus, who said He was the true temple which would be destroyed and raised up in three days (John 2:19-21).
 - b. **Moral:** how this points to the Christian life in the Church. The moral sense of the temple is found in the Christian, whose body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).
 - c. **Anagogical:** how this points to the Christian's heavenly destiny and the last things. The anagogical sense of the temple is the heavenly sanctuary, where God will dwell with his people forever, as described in the Book of Revelation (Rev 21:22).

Easily available resources for interpretation

Start with a good Catholic Bible, preferably with good notes. For example, the Ignatius Study Bible. Another is the New American Bible.

You may want to consult a commentary—there are many. One that Bishop Fulton Sheen recommended, though not a Catholic commentary, is the series by William Barclay. While as a Protestant he will differ from Catholic teaching on key points, such as the Eucharist, his commentary is easy to read and provides many practical and historical insights.

For more theological reference, consult the Scriptural index in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Another great series is Pope Benedict XIV's *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy. More theological, but worth the extra effort for those wanting more depth.

And there are some great online resources too. Here are a few:

St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies/courses>

Formed.org

Great Adventure Series: <http://biblestudyforcatholics.com/bible-study-resources/>

Praying with Scripture and hearing God speak to you: *Lectio Divina*

God might be called a Prodigal _____.

Praying with Scripture through *Lectio Divina* helps the seed of God's word find good _____ where it can spring into life.

A practice text:

The Healing of a Paralytic. ^{1 [a]}When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. ^[b] ²Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. ³They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. ^{5 [c]}When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." ^{6 [d]}Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, ⁷"Why does this man speak that way? ^[e] He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" ⁸Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'? ^{10 [f]}But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" — ¹¹he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." ¹²He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

1. What words or phrases stand out to you?
2. Try reflecting on this event from the perspective of
 - a. The friends
 - b. The paralyzed man
 - c. Jesus
3. Where do I recognize this in myself; in my life?