



GO DEEPER

SESSION 7: CAN WE REALLY KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS?



Aim

To teach that, although the Bible is an ancient text written hundreds of years ago in a time and culture very different to our own, we can know what it means, and God speaks to us today through it.



Starter

Option 1: What is your favourite book and why?

Option 2: Quiz - see page 5

Answers - Part One: A2, B4, C1, D3

Part Two: 1. C, 2. C, 3. All of them!

Did you know?

- ◆ The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other piece of literature
- ◆ The YouVersion Bible app has been downloaded about 300 million times into over 1250 languages
- ◆ The Bible is the best-selling book of the year, every year, and the most popular book of all time
- ◆ In countries where the Bible has been outlawed, people risk fines and imprisonment to smuggle it in



Video

Watch the video [Can We Really Know What the Bible Means?](#) (Running time 3:41)



Questions

Encourage pupils to write any questions on sticky notes as they occur to them.

Answer questions of understanding about the video straight away unless these will be answered later in the session. If there is not time for a question, confirm you will answer it another time. Consider using the 'car park' so pupils know you will not forget.



Exploring the Bible

In the video Andy Bannister asks the question: can we really know what the Bible means? This is an ancient text set in very different times to ours so can I interpret it the way that suits me, and you interpret it the way that suits you? Surely a book written over a period of 1400 years by 40 different authors can have several different interpretations to it.

For a start it is important we understand the Bible makes claims about itself and about who God is.

Ask for volunteers to read out the following Bible verses. They are provided on page 5 to print or project. As each verse is read ask the group to identify what claims the Bible makes about itself.

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – ‘God-breathed’, ‘useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness’
- **Matthew 4:4** – ‘comes from the mouth of God’
- **Psalms 119:105** – ‘a lamp’, ‘a light’
- **Proverbs 30:5** – ‘flawless’

Read John 14:6

Discuss

From this verse, and anything else you know about the Bible, what claims does the Bible make about who God is?

Examples: There is one God; God is the creator; Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus is the only way to heaven; God is powerful and caring

This is a big claim for Jesus to make! In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis writes about Jesus as Lord, liar or lunatic. He cannot be both a good man and claim to be God if he is not in fact God. That would make him either a liar or a lunatic. Either he is who he said he was, or he is a madman, or something worse. But he cannot be just a great human teacher.

Read Luke 24:13-35

Discuss

What does this story teach us about the clarity of the Bible?

1. *Even when we know it well, it is not always obvious on first reading what Scripture is teaching.*
2. *Jesus does not blame Scripture for being complicated. He points to the men and their lack of understanding.*

The whole of the Bible points to Jesus. Knowing this will help us to understand it better.

Read Micah 6:8

Discuss

What do we do when the Bible says something really challenging like this?

Ignore it? Disagree with it? Actively go against it? Ask God to help us live it out?

The Bible is the story of a God in relationship with humans. His words are filled with love and an invitation into the fullness of life. However, our hearts can be deceitful and so sometimes we do not like what we read and so we disagree with what it says. The more we follow God the more he will help us to understand the Bible and follow what it says.



Reflection

Allow a time of reflection that is most appropriate to your group.

You may wish to reflect quietly or pray about the following:

Read Jeremiah 29:13. What does the verse say to this session's main question, 'Can we really know what the Bible means?'



Further resources

'How can I trust the Bible?' – video from Solas.

'How to Read the Bible' – a series of short videos by the Bible Project that helps you understand the Bible's unique design and literary devices.

'Eleven Killer Questions to Ask of a Bible Passage' – an article by Colin Adams.

'Reading the Bible as One Story' – an article by Michael Goheen



Quiz

Part One

Match the books in the left-hand column to the number sold so far in the right-hand column

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| A) The Hunger Games trilogy | 1) 150 million copies sold |
| B) The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe | 2) 50 million copies sold |
| C) Lord of the Rings trilogy | 3) 4 billion copies sold |
| D) The Bible | 4) 85 million copies sold |

Part Two

- The Bible was written over a period of
 - 600 years
 - 1000 years
 - 1400 years
- The Bible was written by
 - one author
 - 25 authors
 - 40 authors
- Who wrote the Bible?
 - fishermen
 - doctors
 - kings
 - scholars
 - tax collectors
 - poets
 - statesmen
 - philosophers
 - teachers
 - historians
 - prophets



Bible Verses

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."'

Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Proverbs 30:5 (NIV)

Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.