

“I started in Genesis, but died in Leviticus”: Bringing Beginners to Bibles

3. **What do we want to accomplish?**
Help people to grow comfortable with the Bible
Find their way and interpret
Teach the faith
An aid to right living
Help people experience God
Assist people’s spiritual journey
4. **What’s going to help us? (1)**
Great respect for Bible
Liturgy
processions
ambo
incense, etc.
Encouragement from non-Catholics
Protestant reverence
Cultural devotion
5. **What’s going to help us? (2)**
The Bible is interesting!
Poetic: Eccl 3:1-4
Ironic: John 1:45-47
Pithy or disturbing: 2 Pet 2:22b; Mt 24:28
Tales of sex: Gen 38; 1 Cor 5:1
Intrigue, violence and murder: Jud 13:6-10; Joshua 11:12-13
6. **What Get’s in the Way?**
The Bible doesn’t read like a normal book, and requires a different reading strategy
Genealogies are only selectively helpful and need someone to identify key passages.
Ritual purity, concentrated in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, matters a *lot*, should be reserved for advanced Bible students.
7. **Where do We Focus?**
 - a. what we want people to know?
 - b. what people find interesting?
 - c. what people ask us about?
8. **The Problems**
Do we bring Bibles to things?
Unreflective about the Bible
Influenced by fundamentalists
9. **What must we do?**
#1. Understand our own motivations for leading the study
#2. Understand principles of Catholic interpretation
#3. Do good research
Emphasize the practical over the theoretical
10. **(#1) Understand Our Own Motivations**
Don’t focus on our issues
Be neither to the left nor the right
The Holy Spirit’s voice should be loudest
Be leaders with faith
Teach with evangelical zeal (Matt 28:19-20)
11. **(#2) Understand Catholic interpretation**
Read:
Dei Verbum:
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V2REVEL.HTM>
“The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” by the Pontifical Biblical Commission”:
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.HTM>
12. **(#3) Do good research**
Ask a lot of questions! Do good research!
Be suspicious of the obvious!
Commentaries:
New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Ray Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy
Introduction to the New Testament, Ray Brown
Anchor Bible Commentaries – Doubleday, Garden City, NY
Sacra Pagina Commentaries – Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN

13. Emphasize the practical over the theoretical

How do we
 live the truly *good* life?
 Succeed as a family?
 have integrity?
 forgive?
 Avoid jargon

14. How to Begin

NT before OT
 Gospels 1st – Mark then Matt
 Parallel readings observing changes
 Get to know *Jesus*:
 who he cares for, who disappoints, his
 patience
 Ask the deep questions
 Where do I meet Jesus?
 How do I apply?
 Do I need to change?

15. After the Gospels

Paul: 1 Thes, 1 and 2 Cor
 Investigate the human condition
 Perhaps Gen and Exod?
 Catholic inerrancy: The Bible is inerrant
 in regards to salvation!
Dei Verbum ch 3, para 11.
 Be willing to skim past...

16. Continuing with Beginners

Listen...and follow your students' needs
 Liturgy, prayer or worship? – Psalms, Isaiah
 and Lamentations
 History? – Exodus, 1 and 2 Sam, 1 and 2
 Kings, 1 and 2 Macc
 Social Justice? – the Prophets
 The Church? – 1 and 2 Tim and Titus
 Return to Luke and Acts: focus on Jesus

17. More Advanced Studies

Study of observance of the Law vs good
 works:
 Jewish ritual world: Lev and Deut
 The role of sacrifice, diet, illness
 purification and *death!*
 Level of commitment: 2 Macc 7
 Jesus the Jew: Matt 5:17-20; 9:20; Mark
 7:1-23
 History in the Church:

Acts 10-15
 Finally, Romans and Galatians
 Good works and judgment:
 Matt 25:21-46; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor
 5:10; om 2:5-111

18. Setting Up a Beginners' Study

Do good press
 Show good hospitality
 baby-sitting
 refreshments
 set up room
 comfortable chairs
 shrine of some kind
 Have spare Bibles

19. Explaining Different Translations

Isaiah 6:1-3
 See also Isaiah 7:30

20. Catholic and Protestant

NT: both contain 27 books
 HB:
 Catholic 46 books
 Protestant 39 books
 Greek speaking Jews from 3rd C. BC, after
 Alexander
 Septuagint: Greek trans.
 Quoting Sept. – Luke 3:4-6
 Hebrew 11:35 – 2 Macc 7

21. Bible Versions

Catholic
New American Bible (NAB)
 Study
 1970, 1986, & 2010
Jerusalem
 poetic
Navarre
Douay Rheims
 Trans. of a trans. – *Vulgate* 1752
 Protestant
King James
 beautiful, stilted
Revised Standard
 updated KJ 1901
New Revised Standard Version
 updated, inclusive
New International Version
Good News

Living Bible

Inspiration is everything
Fundamentalism

- 22. Navigating and Marking**
 Chapters: Archbishop Langton, 13th Century
 Verses: Stephanus, 1551
- 24. What is the Bible**
 OT – Hebrew and Aramaic
 Old Testament
 Jewish Bible
 Israelite Bible
 Hebrew Bible – the (inaccurate) winner!
 NT Greek
 Highbrow / lowbrow
- 25. Where did the Bible come from?**
 The clouds did *not* open up
 Divine *and* human authors
 A complicated history
- 26. Good Passages for Study**
 John 1:1-14
 John 20:30-31
 John 21:24-25
 2 Pet 1:20-2:3
 2 Tim 3:15-17
- 27. Understanding what we're reading**
 Kouzmanoff smacks 10th-inning homer as
 Padres beat Giants 3-2
- 28. What do we need to admit (before reading the bible)**
 Dei Verbum 12
 John 18:33-37
 Thucydides
 Peloponnesian War Chapter 22
 What we find in Scripture
 History: I Kings 16 ff./Acts 11:19
 Genealogies: I Chronicles 1 ff./Matt. 1
 Laws: Deuteronomy 12 ff.
 Prophetic Lit.: Ezekiel 3:17
 Apocalyptic: Daniel 7/Revelation 4
 Wisdom Lit.: Proverbs 12
 Songs: Exodus 15, Psalm 33/John 1
 Stories: Genesis 1 & 2/Gospels
- 29. Non-Catholics on "inspiration"**
 Inspiration is nothing
 Like reading Shakespeare
- 30. How Catholics view inspiration**
 Dei Verbum 11-12
 Judas Iscariot's death: Matt 27:3-5 and Acts 1:18
- 31. Strategies for Bible Studies**
 Topical
 tracing themes
 allows for depth and development
 Following a book
 easier context setting
 only need one commentary
 author creates agenda
- 32. Don't Forget the Big Picture!**
 Fig trees:
 Mark 11:13-14 and 20-21
 taken in isolation, and Jesus seems petty
 Don't forget Mark 11:15-19
 Mic 7:1-2; Jer 8:12-14