

The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone



The Story of the Bible

The Bible is a very old book — as old, in fact, as the human race. It tells the story of mankind from the very beginning of time; it is our story, too.

The word *bible* comes from a Greek word that means "book." Yet the Bible is really a whole library of books. There are 73 books that make up the Catholic Bible as we know it today.

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. In them, we find the story of creation, stories of good against evil, stories about heroes, poetry and even songs. But the Bible is much more than stories. Otherwise, it would never have lasted for so long.

Another name for the Bible is "The Word." When we call someone a "person of his word," we mean someone we can count on, someone who lives up to his promises. When someone says, "I give you my word," it is another way of making a solemn vow.

The Bible or the Word is much more sacred than just another person's word. It is God's word and His promise to us. Through the Bible, God communicates with all of His people. The Bible is God's promise to us of everlasting life, a promise made on the condition that we will be faithful to Him and keep His commandments.

But let's go back to the very beginning. How did the Bible come to be written down in the first place? The Bible began with the Old Testament or ancient Hebrew scriptures. These scriptures, which were true stories about the Jewish people, showed how God had been present in their lives throughout their history.

These stories were not actually written down until about 500 B.C. Before that time, the stories were passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. Think for a moment about your own family of parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins. I'm sure you've heard all kinds of stories about the different generations of family members who lived before you were even born.

The first five books of the Old Testament were known as the Torah or law. This part of the Bible contains the story of creation, the story of Abraham and Moses and the Ten Commandments. The law was very important to the Jewish people. When they gathered at the synagogue, a large part of their worship involved reading from the Torah and explaining it to the people. It helped to show how God wanted them to live. In times of trouble, it helped to encourage them, too. In the very worst of times, when all hope was gone, God always came through for those who had been faithful to His law.

Besides the history of the Jews, the Old Testament also contains the writings of prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. At times, God's people really went off in the wrong directions in their lives. God spoke to the people directly through these prophets, whose most important message was the promise made by God to send a Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus Christ. John's gospel records the nativity of Jesus in this way: "The Word was the true light that

enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world" (John 1:9).

Jesus Christ is God's living word. He was sent by God in human form to change our lives forever. Jesus came to show us how to lead good lives that would be pleasing to His Father. The events of His life are written in the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. His disciples wanted to leave a permanent record of Jesus' life on earth. These writings contain a promise to us of eternal life, if we choose to follow the way of Jesus.

The Bible is not just a book of facts, but a way of life. In the Bible, God speaks to each of us in a very personal way. When we read the Bible, we will see just how much God loves us and how we are to act in return.

The message of the Bible is like a small seed that falls on good ground. Through careful reading of the Word, we will in time be provided with a rich harvest. If we are faithful to God's word, He will always be there in a very real way to help us in times of trouble.

For further reading:

Read the story of the birth of Jesus Christ in the first chapter of John's gospel. If it sounds familiar, that is because this is one of the readings we hear at Mass on Christmas.

A note to parents on Bible study:

Which Bible? There are so many editions available today. Listed below are a few popular and readable translations. These may be found at various local bookstores.

"The Way" (The Living Bible), Illustrated Catholic Edition. This version is published by Tyndale and is written in everyday English that is very easy to follow.

"The Jerusalem Bible," published by Doubleday and Co., is another very readable translation. It contains an introduction to each book and provides footnotes and margin references.

For children:

There are many editions published today specifically for children. They provide an excellent introduction to the

Bible, and many are illustrated, in order to stimulate children's interest. These editions are often abbreviated, however, and thus do not contain the complete Bible, although they will serve to provide an excellent starting point for Bible study.

"A Child's Bible," published by the Paulist Press, is contained in two books. The Old Testament is rewritten by Anne Edwards, and the New Testament is rewritten by Shirley Steen. This version, which contains excellent illustrations, is suitable for children eight to 10 years of age.

"The Book for Children" by Kenneth N. Taylor has recently been published by Tyndale. This edition is divided into 206 stories from the Old and New Testaments. It contains very good illustrations, as well as an index of important persons in the Bible. It is recommended for children aged 8-10.

For serious Bible study, daily guides are available that contain a short explanation of the daily reading from the Church's liturgical calendar. "The Word Among Us" (P.O. Box 3646, Washington, D.C. 20007) publishes an excellent monthly guide. The subscription rate is \$15.00 for the first year. In addition to the daily reading guide, this publication features articles and an interesting magazine section on related issues.

Biblical Concordances: A biblical concordance is an index in which the principal words of the Bible are arranged alphabetically, with references to the passages in which they occur. Strong's is the most popular, but many versions are available.

"The Guideposts Family Topical Concordance" is published by Thomas Nelson. This version not only contains the standard concordance, but also provides an index to ideas and concepts from the Old and New Testaments, as well as a dictionary.

Do you have a question about the Bible? Mail your questions to Cindy Cottone c/o the Courier-Journal.

Craft Sale

Christ the King parish Ladies' Rosary Guild will sponsor the Heavenly Boutique Craft Sale Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 19-20, in the school hall.

Saturday hours are from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. and Sunday, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Exhibitors are also welcome. Call (716)342-5817, 544-9488 or 342-8094 for information.

Young Adult Conference

Young adults from around the diocese are invited to a ministry leadership day Saturday, Oct. 19, at St. Stephen's School in Geneva from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Those already

involved and those interested in entering young adult ministry are welcome. Call Karen Rinefierd at (716)586-1919 for more information.

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