

**“BIBLE 101”**  
**“What is this Bible and How Can I Understand It?”**

The Bible, the Holy Scriptures contains some of the most hotly debated topics. What can you believe? Do you have to believe every word? If you don't, does that mean you are not a Christian? Over the next two weeks we will reflect and study what it means to take the Bible seriously but not literally. The time that our scriptures reflect is several thousand years, but what has been written and passed down, was written over a couple of thousand years and then canonized in its current form in the early fourth century. These scrolls (they became books later) were shared in many communities in various forms prior to the Synod of Hippo in 393 when the 27 books of our current New Testament were considered the “canon.” or followers of Jesus, deepening one's faith means wrestling with scripture. This “Word” of God is a living word and one that invites us into a deeper spirituality and a deeper faith. For two weeks we will dig deep, learn some history of how scripture came to be and how we, in the twenty first century can still be led by these words that become the Word. May this week, the Word found both in our Bible and in Jesus be made real in new and wondrous ways.

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“What is this Bible and How Can I Understand It?”**

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**Prayer for the Week**

*O gracious and holy God, give us diligence to seek you, wisdom to perceive you, and patience to wait for you. Grant us, O God, a mind to mediate on you, eyes to behold you, ears to listen for your Word, a heart to love you, and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Benedict of Nurnia, 6<sup>th</sup> century*

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This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

## Study Guide

### Monday, September 10, 2018 Psalm 119: 1-3

These verses were not read in worship Sunday. When the Psalmist was writing, scripture would have included the Torah (the first five books of Hebrew Scripture) and perhaps some of the prophets and writings. This psalm was a teaching psalm. It is an “acrostic” poem and has 22 stanzas each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This poem/psalm was used to teach Hebrew letters as well as encouraging a commitment to the law and the faith. The name of God appears 24 times and almost every verse has a word that is synonymous with the Torah or the law. The prayer of this psalm is to keep God’s word first and foremost in the life of the psalmist. Why? Because when we walk in the way of God we are wise, we have understanding and we keep from doing evil. We give Bibles to our children (usually in third grade), our confirmation students and often those graduating from high school because we want them to begin at a young age learning and studying and meditating on this Word that has been passed down to us. Today, people often read the bible on their phone or tablets or computers. That doesn’t discount the need for a physical book. One is not better than the other, as both can invite us into a deeper relationship with God. *Today, write down your favorite verse and meditate on it. Then, say a prayer for all who study and desire to learn how to be more faithful to God.*

### Tuesday, September 11, 2018 Psalm 119: 97-102

As an “acrostic” psalm, each section (all twenty two with about 8 verses each) begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In our reading, the Hebrew letter is “mem” with an early symbol for water. The meaning of the word includes chaos, blood and mighty. These verses proclaim understanding and wisdom by keeping close to God’s law and following the commandments. *As you meditate upon these verses, can you name times in your life when you had greater wisdom and insight by keeping close to the scriptural truths? What are those particular truths for you?* The law, or Torah can be condensed into two phrases: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself. *If the love of God and neighbor are the basis of the law, how does that affect your behavior and mind and spirit?*

### Wednesday, September 12, 2018 John 1: 1-5

This passage of John is tied into Genesis 1, the first of the five books of the Torah or the Law. John’s preamble invites the reader to understand that Jesus is not separate from God, and instead is one with God as well as the reader finds out later, one with humanity. Unpacking this passage is not easy and yet it is certainly a favorite for many. In Christ, people see life and light and no matter how much darkness is around, “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.” Jesus as the Word of God, becomes another scripture for us to read. In fact, how often have we heard the phrase, “you may be the only Bible people read.” Jesus is that Bible for us first and foremost, and we become Christ like and become the word for others. The promise of this passage is that Christ is there always, and in Christ is not just light but life itself. *Today, spend some time in this WORD, both the verses written on the page and the presence of Christ, that your life might be grounded in Christ.*

### Thursday, September 13, 2018 John 1: 14-16

The first verses of John speak of the “Word” being one with God and being God. These verses remind us that the “Word” is also fully human. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian faith that believers embrace the understanding that Jesus was “fully God and fully human. God was willing to give up being infinite and all-knowing to become finite and human. From this, John writes, “we have all received grace upon grace.” Even if people do not understand what all this means, the gift is that God was willing to experience life as all human beings do: with joys and sorrows, hopes and despairs, with life and death. As I often say, in Jesus I see the face of God. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. *How do you understand this truth: Jesus as the Word for us is both human and divine? Write down the ways you experience that grace and love found in both Jesus and the Bible.*

### Friday, September 14, 2018 Psalm 119: 103-105

These verses are so well known from this psalm. So many hymns and songs have been created around these verses. The psalmist describes how helpful and wonderful and delightful God’s word is for God’s people. These verses encourage believers to treasure and savor the Word of God. The scriptures are “sweet like honey” and a “lamp and light” to guide our lives. The truth is that sometimes scripture is not sweet and is difficult to comprehend and understand. Scripture also is felt and experienced differently at different ages and stages of our lives. For the psalmist, the love of God’s word creates a space in his life to study to pray and to mediate. The Word guides and directs his thoughts and actions. WE are invited to have this same thirst, this same hunger, this same desire to open to the movement of god’s spirit. *Today, list some ways that you will make a place and space in your life to study, mediate and learn from our Sacred Scriptures.*