

## God's Love Letter: The Bible as Sacred Scripture

### Introduction: Beyond Rules and Stories

*What do you think of when you hear the word "Bible"? A big book that was written thousands of years ago? A set of rules and regulations? Stories like Adam and Eve or Noah's Ark?*

The Bible is much more than a collection of moral teachings or childhood stories. It is **God's love letter to humanity** and a record of His saving plan.

In the Sacred Scriptures, our Father in Heaven reaches out to lovingly talk to His children. The Bible contains God's revelation, speaking to us in a deeply personal and intimate way. As one presenter noted, "Bible" can be thought of as "**Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.**"

- **The Big Picture:** Within its **73 books** (46 Old Testament, 27 New Testament), the Bible outlines God's plan of salvation, starting with Creation, moving through Israel, and culminating in the story of **Jesus Christ**, who put a human face on the Divine.

---

### Session Objectives

In this session, we will learn about the Divine and human nature of Sacred Scripture.

- The Bible as God's loving communication with each of us.
- What we mean when we say the Bible is **inspired by the Holy Spirit**.
- The **Catholic approach** to interpreting Scripture correctly.
- How the Church discerns which books are part of the Bible (the **canon of Scripture**).
- How we can know with confidence that the Bible contains God's revelation for our lives.
- How to start studying the Bible and praying with God's Word.

---

### The Divine and Human Authorship of Scripture

Every other sacred book is often the story of man's search for God, but the Bible is unique because it is **God's revelation to us**.

## 1. God is the Primary Author

- The Bible alone is **inspired by God**—He "breathed forth his Divine Word" (*Theopneustos*).
- God is the author of Sacred Scripture, and He gives us assurance that the books teach His saving truth **without error** (CCC 107).
- In the Bible, God himself speaks to us, revealing **who He is** and **what His plan is for humanity**.

## 2. The Human Authorship

- In order to reveal Himself to us, God communicates **in a human way** through Sacred Scripture (CCC 109).
- He inspired human writers who wrote as **true authors**, using their own language, style, and powers.
- God worked *in them and by them* so that they consigned to writing "**whatever he wanted written, and no more**" (CCC 105-106).
- The words of God are expressed through the **words of men** (CCC 101).

### Key Question: Why is it true that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”?

**Answer:** The Bible is a compilation of God’s interaction with mankind throughout history. God has been trying to teach us about Himself throughout human history. If we don’t understand the Scriptures—God’s primary form of revelation—we don’t understand the truths about God that He has been trying to teach us, truths which are fulfilled in Christ.

---

## Interpreting Scripture Correctly

### 1. The Catholic Approach: Reading Literarily, Not Literalistically

- The **fundamentalist view** reads Scripture in a purely literalistic way, often ignoring context.
- The **Catholic approach** interprets the Bible **literarily**, remembering that God speaks to us in a human way, through different literary genres.
- **Literary Context:** To discern the truth, we must consider the historical context, the culture, the literary genres (e.g., poetry, history, prophecy, letters), and the modes of expression common to the biblical writers’ time (CCC 109-110).

- **Example:** When the author of the Song of Solomon said, "Your eyes are doves," he did not intend the reader to think his beloved literally had doves in her eyes; he intended to convey that her eyes were **captivating**.
- However, when the writer intended to convey **historical truth** (e.g., Jesus's tomb was empty), we interpret those passages as **literal fact**.

## 2. Scripture, Tradition, and Authority

- The Catholic Church has always considered **Sacred Scripture, along with Sacred Tradition**, as part of God's **Divine Revelation** (CCC 96–100, 134–141).
- **Against *Sola Scriptura*:** Most Protestant denominations adhere to *sola scriptura* ("scripture alone"), which mistakenly holds that the Bible, outside of tradition or Church authority, contains all necessary truth.
  - **Catholic View:** The Scriptures always were meant to be read in light of **tradition** (2 Thes. 2:15) and the **teaching authority (Magisterium)** Jesus gave his Church (see Matt. 16:13-19).

**Personal Application: How is it possible that God speaks directly to me when I read the Bible?**

**Answer:** God is **outside of time**; His words are not merely in the past, but rather they speak *through* time. Reading the stories and words of God's revelation to mankind is a powerful way to allow the Holy Spirit to use His words to speak into our specific situations and guide our daily lives.

## Structure and Authority of the Bible

### The Single Story of Salvation

- All Scripture tells a single, unified story—the story of salvation that culminates in **Jesus Christ**.
- The **Old Testament prepares for the New**, and the **New Testament fulfills the Old** (CCC 122, 128-129).

### The Canon of Scripture

- The **canon of Scripture** is the definitive list of books recognized as authentic, inspired Scripture.

- The Catholic Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, **discerned** which books were included in this list (CCC 120).
- The Bible contains **73 books**: 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

### **Conclusion: Scripture's Essential Role**

- The Church has always seen the scriptures as **essential to nourish and govern Christian lives** (CCC 131).
  - By interpreting the Bible correctly, considering the human author's intention and what the Holy Spirit wishes to reveal, we will come to know the **saving truth God reveals**.
- 

### **Closing Prayer and Reflection** 🙏

*(SAY: Spend a few moments in prayer asking Jesus to help you learn to love Sacred Scripture and use it on your journey of faith.)*

### **Personal Reflection and Action**

Use your Participant's Guide to write down your thoughts on these questions:

1. **Scripture as a Lamp:** Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path." What does this passage mean to me? Am I willing to read God's Word in Scripture with an open heart and mind, expecting that God will give me insights for my life?
2. **Making Time for the Word:** What can I do this week to make the reading of Scripture a greater part of my life? *(Suggestion: Consider starting with the Gospel of Luke.)*
3. **The Bible as a Mirror:** Pope St. Gregory said: "The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind's eye. In it we see our inner face... And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection." How might thinking of the Bible as a **mirror** and as a way to learn about my spiritual progress make a difference in how I listen to the readings at Mass? What can I do to be better prepared for the Scripture readings each week?