



***Bible***

**Discussion**

**Bridge to Life**

**Making Bible Study Fun-The Imagination Method**

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Making Bible Study Fun — The Imagination Method

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## Some information about the Bible

When reading the Bible (World's best-seller), it is helpful to know some background information about it.

**1. How it was completed** - The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament was written in Greek. The word "testament" means "covenant." The theme in both Testaments is Christ (the Savior). In the Old Testament, the emphasis is on waiting for Christ, and in the New Testament, the emphasis is on the arrival of Christ.

Different scholars say different things about exactly when they were written, but the Old Testament was probably completed around 400 BC, and the New Testament was completed by the end of the first century. After various incidents, The Bible came to be in its present form — a compilation of 66 books (39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament).

**2. Composition** - There are 4 types of literature in the Old Testament (the Law, history, poetry, and prophecy), and there are also 4 types in the New Testament (the Gospels, history, epistles, and prophecy).

We can identify about 40 authors, who were kings, farmers, poets, fishermen, politicians, scholars, warriors, doctors, and so on. This wide variety of people wrote at different times, yet there is one theme in all their books, as though there was one editor.

This "mystery" is explained in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right" (NLT). That is why the Bible is called "The Word of God."

**3. Approach-** Some people cannot believe the miracles in the Bible, and therefore dismiss the Bible altogether. It is too bad that they get caught up on the topic of miracles. It would be more constructive to try to understand what we can from what the Bible is saying. As the Bible is not a natural science textbook, it would be better for us to have the attitude of "What is it saying to me?" in order to grasp the meaning rather than dwell on details.

**4. Chapters** - There were no chapter divisions in the Bible at first. It was probably difficult to read; therefore, chapters and verses were added. Now we can reference a specific part of the Bible by saying, for example, "John, chapter five, verse two." If one were to hear that, they would know that we are referring to John 5:2.

## Introduction

There may be many who have seen or heard of the Bible but have never personally read it. Some who have read it may think that the Bible says many good things, but do not fully understand the bigger theme expressed throughout all the books.

It is fun to read a passage and discuss it. For example:

- "Here is a passage that talks about marriage"
- "In this passage, we can learn how to value money"
- "This passage is helpful to make decisions about the future"
- "This passage may be helpful for someone who worries too much"
- "From this passage, I can gain encouragement when I struggle."

We can learn many things about living in the Bible. However, this is not the main reason for the Bible's existence. You may have heard people say that the Bible contains "good news." You may also have heard some say that "history" is "His story" (as in God's story). The Bible's good news comes from this perspective of how God has been working in history—or His story. When we can see the Bible from the same perspective, we can begin to understand what the good news is.

A historic turning point in the world was brought about by Jesus Christ. His birth and life were so significant that the Western calendar was divided into BC ("Before Christ") and AD ("Anno Domini," which means "the year of the Lord.").

Many may question why the appearance of Jesus was such a great event or why it brought about such a historic turning point. But as we will discover together through this study, Jesus is the reason we have this good news. It is beneficial to learn from the Bible for our personal lives; but it is also possible to find a deeper joy when we can better understand the bigger picture of history, as well as how we can play our part in it.

As we go through this study together, we may have startling discoveries. For some, their identity could be affirmed, and others may find a better purpose for their lives. Still, others may even understand their mission or calling in this world. Let us now explore His story and see how we can play our role in creating a better future through the "Bridge to Life" Bible discussions.

## 1. The Original World - Genesis 1:1-2:3

How did the world come to be? What did it originally look like? Although there are many opinions, they are essentially categorized into two theories. One is that the world was made by accident. The other is that it was made by intention. Although these two theories cannot be proven, our lives are influenced by what theory we believe in. What does the Bible have to say about this?

1. Your life was given and you are now alive. Do you think this is by accident? Why or why not?
2. It is said that the book of Genesis was completed around 1450 BC. Since it was completed such a long time ago, it is natural to think that it was written in a way so that people in that specific time could understand it. Of course, there was no printing technology back then, so many stories were probably passed down orally. Have someone read the passage (Genesis 1:1-2:3), slowly. Let us listen and imagine what it would have been like to hear this passage passed down to us orally. During the reading, the reader should let the listeners know when he/she reads Genesis 1:14-31. As you listen to that section of the passage, divide it up into different scenes in your mind, as if you were making a comic book (or you may write it out, if you like). How many scenes would you divide the passage into? Please explain your scenes?
3. What impression do you have about God's creation?
4. What do you understand about human beings? It is written that humans were created after *God's image* (1:26-27). Though you may not normally think about it, what do you think makes humans (including you and me!) wonderfully unique? ( It might be helpful to think of the difference between humans and animals to understand the human uniqueness. )
5. We all have responsibilities (such as school, work, family, etc.) and know what is expected of us. When something important is entrusted to us, we take it seriously because much is expected to us. What responsibility or work is entrusted (expected) to humans by God (Gen 1:26-28). What can we learn about human nature and God's nature from this passage?
6. In 1:31 it is written, "All of it was very good". If you were to describe the relationship between God, nature, and humans in one word, what word would you use?

### Note

The leading theory that the creation of the world and humans is an accident is evolution. The theory of creation insists that there was a purpose. Although Scientists on both sides argue that their theory is correct, neither can be proven. The question, then, is not "which is more scientific?", but rather, "which is more reasonable?" If we can focus on what is reasonable, then we can have a clearer understanding of the mystery of human life.

## 2. What happened? - Genesis 3:1-21

Not many would say that the present state of the world is in good condition. Needless to say, science has developed dramatically. But if we imagine the original creation of the world as “all of it was very good,” it is obvious when we see the world now that “something is wrong.”

1. When you read Genesis 3:1-21 imagine different scenes in a cartoon comic. How many scenes would you divide the story into? Who are the main characters and what is happening in each scene? Please draw the scenes for yourself, then share it with the group.
2. The first scene would start with the conversation between the serpent and the woman. The man and woman were given one “Do not” command and there was also a warning about what would happen if the man and woman disobey God (Gen 2:15-17). But the temptation of the evil one (Satan) is well planned (Gen 3:4,5). What do you think are the main points of the temptation? What intention do you think Satan had?
3. Humans (Adam and Eve) gave in to the temptation and the Bible says that they sinned - they trusted in something or someone other than God. If you were in Adam and Eve’s position, do you think you would have done as they did? Why or why not?
4. As a result of human choice, the world (originally “all of it was very good”) became broken. How are the different relationships listed below affected by human choice? Which of these relationships do you think is most important?
  - Humans with themselves (self-identity)
  - Humans and God
  - Humans and other people (family, friends, communities, countries, etc.)
  - Humans and work
  - Humans and nature
5. When humans put their trust in something/someone other than God—in other words when humans sin—what do you imagine God thinks about it? (It might be helpful to think in terms of the relationships between parents and children.)

### 3 Our Solution - Ecclesiastes 1:16-2:17

As a result of human choice to trust something/someone other than God (to sin), the world "All of it was very good" was broken. When people suffer, they either try to escape or to find the solution. In a sense, history is a footprint of people who tried to solve problems. Humans made some progress in their effort to solve problems in the world; but amid that, a new problem arose.

1. We are living in a world of various issues. Thinking about your own life, can you identify any core problems (within your family, job, country, etc.)? Can you think of any good solutions?
2. Now, let's think about the core problem within. The Bible says that some big changes had happened in people themselves, as a result of them trusting in something/someone other than God (sin). Blaise Pascal, the mathematician, and the physicist pointed out one of these changes: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus." If this is true, what kind of vacuum do you imagine it is? How do you think people have been trying to fill the vacuum?
3. Let's read Ecclesiastes 1:16-2:17. When Solomon was a king, Israel was extremely prosperous. It is said that Solomon was a man of wisdom and Ecclesiastes could be considered a book of his confessions. If you were to illustrate this passage on one sheet of paper, what might it look like? Draw it out for yourself, then please explain your illustration to the group.
4. Suppose you had all that king Solomon had. What would you do with it all?
5. Solomon had all he could ever need. After all his life experiences, what conclusion do you think he came to? Why do you imagine he thought so? If you were him, what would you have thought? At the end of Ecclesiastes, Solomon states his simple conclusion (12:13,14). What do you think of it? Why do you think he came to this conclusion?

#### Note

- **Sin:** It means to "miss the mark", like in archery when you want to hit the bullseye but may be off the mark. Many people work hard toward the direction in which they believe is right. They tend to think much of working hard itself. But, despite working hard, if they miss the mark, they will not truly be happy in life.
- **Solomon:** After David, he became the king of Israel (around 970 BC). Under Solomon's rule, the kingdom was very prosperous. He died around 931 BC.
- **One thought:** Someone once explained the man's action in this way. Because mankind's relationship with God was broken when we trusted something/someone other than God (sinned), then the heart of man became defiled; therefore, our words and actions also became defiled.

## 4 Solution(restoration) by Christ - Luke 23:32-47

The history of people attempting to solve problems has been like a whack-a-mole game. —when one problem is solved, another problem pops up. So what is God's solution? That is what people could never think of on their own—a solution by Christ. This is the Good News! Let's look at this in the Bible.

1. What has been one of the most difficult (or painful) experiences of your life? What were you thinking during that time?
2. Crucifixion was the most agonizing execution in the time of Jesus. There were Jewish leaders, angry people, and crowds who scoffed at Jesus while he was being crucified. Being struck down with excruciating pain, he forced the words from his lips, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." If you were in his situation, what would you have said? What do you imagine was in Jesus' heart?
3. There were two criminals crucified beside Jesus, one on Jesus' right hand and the other on his left. Those two men showed contrasting responses. One said to Jesus, "This man has done nothing wrong." Why do you think he understood Jesus in this way?
4. Jesus responded to that criminal, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." Why do you think he could say that with confidence? Here Jesus didn't behave like a criminal at all; he didn't hold any grudge against those who crucified him, even though he was innocent.
5. Before Jesus died, he cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). According to the Bible, Jesus solved the core problem of sin (trusting in something/someone other than God, missing the mark). Sinless Jesus sacrificed his life for our (your and my) sin and then he was resurrected (Romans 4:25). The road was opened before us who are sinful(off the mark) to be alive(on the mark). Jesus Christ made our restoration and restoration of the world possible!

What do you think of the solution by Christ?

*"He died for our sins and rose again to make us right with God,  
filling us with God's goodness." (Romans 4:25,TLB)*

[Please look at the following personal story on the next page as a reference.]

### Note

**Paradise:** It is possible to think of paradise as a certain place, but we can also think of it as a situation in which we will get close to God as we enjoy the companionship with our friends.

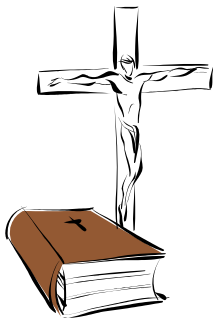


## Jesus who died for me

I was living without a purpose in my life. As I began to interact with those who were reading the Bible and living according to its commands for their guidance, I came to have a desire to live like them. Yet it didn't mean much to me when they said that I was a sinner. Therefore, I was not thankful at all when I heard that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. This continued for a while, and I would pray (even though I didn't believe in God) on my own "God, if you exist, show me."

God may have listened to my prayers. Around that time, there was a conference for college students. At the conference, the speaker said, "We can hurt others by our words, and we can even kill them." That spoke to my heart; for I was sarcastic, and I often said negative words to others.

The speaker also said that Jesus prayed for those who put him on the cross, "Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing." In the middle of severe pain on the cross, Jesus prayed for those who cursed at him. When I heard that, I thought about how different Jesus was from me. It was as if I was wearing a dirty shirt, but I couldn't see how dirty it was. I didn't have a clean shirt to compare it to, so I thought my shirt was fine. It wasn't until Jesus came by with his clean shirt that I realized how dirty my shirt was. My situation was something like that.



When I did something, I would always think about how people would see me, or how I could benefit from it by calculating the pros and cons in my mind. How different Jesus is from me! At that moment, I realized that this self-centeredness, this lack of concern for others, was sin which the Bible talks about. I understood that Jesus died for my sins and I prayed to God, "Please forgive my sins." It was at that time when I realized that all my sins were forgiven. That was spring and I was 21 years old.

I have started to gradually change and to think more of others. When I am with someone, I try to think about what he/she needs or what I can do for that person. For others, this may come naturally; but for me, who was living a self-centered life, it was a big change.

I was living without any purpose; but I was changed through my encounter with Jesus, through the Bible. Not only I but also my family members have changed. I still have weaknesses and hit many walls in my life, but I am very thankful that I found the most important thing in my life.

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## 5 Your Response - Acts 9:1-21

God gave us the solution to our problems by Jesus Christ, which nobody ever had thought. And now it is up to us to respond to His work. Either we receive the solution by Christ as a gift from God and make a step forward toward restoration(of ourselves and of the world), or we continue to walk as we have been.

1. Can you recall any sort of turning point in your life? What was it? (You will have time to explain in detail later.)
2. Paul's turning point was described in Acts 9:1-21. How many scenes would you divide this passage into, if you were to make it into a cartoon or picture-card show? Who would appear and what would be happening in each scene? Please draw simple illustrations for yourself, then explain or share your scenes with the group.
3. Paul went into Damascus and spent three days there without eating and drinking (9:8-9). What do you imagine he was thinking?
4. Not many people have such a dramatic experience, but everyone has some kind of turning point in their lives. Have one to three people share about their turning point experience – allow for about 5 minutes each. After you listen to their stories, please ask any questions you may have.
5. Paul's life was changed greatly by Christ, from the life of missing the mark to the life on the mark. As a result, many other people's lives have been changed. I think we can go as far as to say that the world was changed(2Corinthians5:17).

How have you responded so far to God's solution to our problem, this "good news"? Have you received it? Are you wondering how to do with it? Are you not very interested in it? What are you going to do with your knowledge of God's good news?

### Note

**Paul:** Paul is his Roman name. His Jewish name was Saul. He was from Tarsus in Cilicia. It was not uncommon that the Jews who lived outside of Judea had two names. Without Paul's work, the good news of Christ would not have been spread over the world.

**Scales fell from eyes:** These words in verse 18 became a common saying, but, originally, it's from the Bible.