



Is the Bible Relevant Today?

Plan



“Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth!”

Voltaire (1694 – 1778)

Aim/s

- To show how such an old book can be relevant to modern culture
- To show that despite cultural differences, people are essentially the same in many ways.
- For them to discover for themselves that they can find help, encouragement, guidance, purpose, answers to life from the Bible – meets holistic needs.

Resources: Print the quizzes and activity sheet or use the PowerPoints.

A Book of Stories

The Bible is seen as a holy book.

What would you expect to find within such a book?

The Bible

is a book of stories (and poems, proverbs, instruction, guidance, laws)
that teach us...

about life, who we are, our destiny,

how to treat each other, to look after the Earth

and how to have a relationship with our Creator God.

It is holistic and covers every aspect of life in various ways; spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional and physical. It had guidance on hygiene long before scientists knew about that, and even has a poem about sexual love.

Are the stories relevant today?

It is very old. Can such an old book be as helpful today?

Some people like to take verses out of context and laugh at it. What would be a more intelligent approach?

Rather than talk about it, let's read some of it.

Activities

Pick a problem: **Headline news**

If you walked into a newsagent or watched the news on TV, what sort of headlines/issues would you expect to see and hear about? Possibly:

war; refugees; murder; child abuse; scandals; politics; royalty; government; injustice;

poverty; finance; education; sport; racial discrimination; women's' rights; fair trade; special achievements; spy stories.

Would you expect to find stories about the same issues in a book as old as the Bible?

Give out pens and printed sheets with a list of headlines. They have to decide whether each one is **Current** headline, a **Bible** based one or whether it could be **Either**. If your group has strong Bible knowledge, you could ask them to identify the story. Avoid discussing the stories in detail or you won't finish.

OR - Use the PowerPoint to play a game along the lines of the 'Have I Got News for You' comedy news TV show where a headline is shown with part of it blanked out. They have to guess the missing words but it also creates an opportunity for humour.

Headlines quiz: Quiz sheets and full answers at the end.

1. *Princess* adopts abandoned baby
2. Man kills *brother* in jealous rage
3. Brothers reunited at *father's funeral*
4. Slaughter of the *innocents*
5. Crackdown on families of *foreign workers*
6. Thousands flee *Middle East* to escape oppressive regime
7. Widows supported by *traditional food bank system*
8. New kid defeats *seasoned player*
9. King champions *single mum's* plight
10. *Double agent* helps Israeli spies
11. Corruption at highest level
12. Mole hunt at *government HQ*
13. Government ignores breach of *fair trade regulations*.
14. King sacrifices *own son* in pagan ceremony
15. Royal family massacred by sadistic grandmother
16. Trapped by men but untouched by *lions*
17. *Beauty queen* foils minister's attempt at genocide
18. *Boy prodigy* astounds professors
19. *Miracle worker* raises the roof
20. New religious movement sees turnaround in *race relations*

"Not by accident is Genesis a book about the family. The family is where we learn emotional and spiritual intelligence. There is nothing simple or idealized about the families of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel. There are tensions, rivalries, setbacks and unfulfilled hopes as well as love, kinship and loyalty." Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Pick a Proverb:

Either play a game choosing chapter numbers and verse numbers at random. OR Use the printed sheets on page 6 or the PowerPoint. Discuss briefly whether each one is still relevant today

Pick a Psalm:

Within the Psalms, which are ancient hymns and poems based on real life experiences, we find every emotion known to mankind.

Share out some psalms for reading in small groups of 2-3. Requires Bibles or printed sheets
Suggestions: Psalm 8; 19; 27; 46; 84; 91; 103; 139; 145

Ask them to reflect and report back on whether this Psalm is still helpful today.

Invite them to pick a verse that is helpful to them

Or do the **Top Key Verses** activity on the printed sheet on page 4.

Application

A Challenge for the Mind

Can we still believe what **2 Timothy 3:16** says about the Bible?

“The Torah, as the Word of God who is beyond time, has a message for every time and each generation.” Much has changed over the centuries.

“In God’s word for all time [we must hear] His word for this time.” Rabbi Sacks

A Challenge for the Heart

“If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today.” Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948)

And Voltaire? His house is now a distribution centre for Bibles in many languages.

Reflection

How much relevance do you think the Bible has for your own life?

How do you think you could make full use of its’ potential to do so?

“Through reading the Bible, we see that there is far more to the world, more to us, more to what we see and more to what we don’t see – more to everything! – than we had ever dreamed, and that this ‘more’ has to do with God.” Eugene Peterson: the Message Bible

Extension for older groups

- Some parts of the Bible are easy to understand. Other areas are difficult. Is this good or bad?
- We have looked at areas that are relevant today but are there other areas which may no longer be so relevant? If so, how do we respond to these?
- Have some parts of the Bible been possibly misinterpreted?
- Which areas of the Bible are particularly difficult to interpret?
- Is the Bible intended to be open to different interpretations over some issues?
- What is the best way for Christians to handle controversies?

Credits

The Bible Chronicle: Derek Williams, especially headlines 16 & 17

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Covenant and Conversation: Genesis

Writer: Brenda Lord, 2018

Image: iStock

Top Key Verses

This selection of a range of well-known verses covers spiritual, social and personal aspects of life.

- What meaning do any of them have for people today?
 - Would they have more meaning for some people than others?
 - Do some of them have any meaning for you personally?
1. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them;
Genesis 1:27
 2. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Psalm 8:3-4
 3. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8 NIV
 4. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Luke 10:27;
Deuteronomy 6:4-5
 5. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31;
 6. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, Ephesians 4:31-32 NLT & NIV mix
 7. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23
 8. If we say we have no sin, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done. NCV 1 John 1:8-9
 9. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. Ephesians 1:4-5 NLT
 10. Be still and know that I am God. I will be honoured by every nation. I will be honoured throughout the world. Psalm 46:10 NLT

Headlines quiz sheet

Is it a **Current** headline, a **Bible** based one or it could be **Either**?

1. Princess adopts abandoned baby
2. Man kills brother in jealous rage
3. Brothers reunited at father's funeral
4. Slaughter of the innocents
5. Crackdown on families of foreign workers
6. Thousands flee Middle East to escape oppressive regime
7. Widows supported by traditional food bank system
8. New kid defeats seasoned player
9. King champions single mum's plight
10. Double agent helps Israeli spies
11. Corruption at highest level
12. Mole hunt at government HQ
13. Government ignores breach of fair trade regulations
14. King sacrifices own son in pagan ceremony
15. Royal family massacred by sadistic grandmother
16. Trapped by men but untouched by lions
17. Beauty queen foils minister's attempt at genocide
18. Boy prodigy astounds professors
19. Miracle worker raises the roof
20. New religious movement sees turnaround in race relations

Headlines quiz answers

1. *Princess* adopts abandoned baby: Moses although his mother was actually trying to save him. Exodus 1:22 – 2:10
2. Man kills *brother* in jealous rage: Cain & Abel, Genesis 4:8
3. Brothers reunited at *father's funeral*: Isaac & Ishmael were both at Abraham's funeral. There had been a huge family rift when Isaac was young which was repaired in later years. Genesis 25:7-9
4. Slaughter of the *innocents*: Pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew baby boys should be killed. Exodus 1:22
5. Crackdown on families of *foreign workers*: Hebrews enslaved in Egypt. Exodus 1:11-14; 2:23-25
6. Thousands flee *Middle East* to escape oppressive regime: Hebrews escaped from slavery to Pharaoh. Exodus 12:37-38
7. Widows supported by *traditional food bank system*: Ruth and Naomi, Leviticus 19:9-10, Ruth 2
8. New kid defeats *seasoned player*: David and Goliath, 1 Samuel 17
9. King champions *single mum's* plight: Solomon with God's help gave justice to a prostitute. 1 Kings 3:16-28
10. *Double agent* helps Israeli spies: Rahab's faith in Israel's God caused her to help their spies, Joshua 2
11. Corruption at *highest level*. King Ahab and his wife Jezebel stole Naboth's vineyard by having him stoned on a fake charge. 1 Kings 21
12. Mole hunt at *government HQ*: Elisha helps defend Israel from Aram. 2 Kings 6:8-12
13. Government ignores breach of *fair trade regulations*: God gave Israel several warnings about cheating in business practice e.g. Amos 8:5-6 which is based on Leviticus 19:35-36.
14. King sacrifices *own son* in pagan ceremony: Manasseh, one of the worst kings of all time. 2 Chronicles 33:6
15. Royal family massacred by *homicidal grandmother*: Baby Joash rescued by aunt 2 Chronicles 22:10-12
16. Trapped by men but untouched by *lions*: Daniel 6:1-23
17. *Beauty queen* foils minister's attempt at genocide: Esther 7
18. Boy prodigy astounds *professors*: Jesus aged 12, Luke 2:41-52
19. *Miracle worker* raises the roof: Jesus, although it was others who took the roof apart. Luke 5:17-26
20. New religious movement sees turnaround in *race relations*: Peter and Cornelius broke the age old taboo on Jews socialising with Gentiles. Acts 10:28

Pick a Proverb

Is it in date or out of date?

1. The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favour with him. Proverbs 11:1
2. A loud and cheerful greeting early in the morning will be taken as a curse.
Proverbs 27:14 NLT
3. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23
4. A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. Proverbs 14:30
5. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1
6. Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs. Proverbs 10:12
7. The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
Proverbs 12:18
Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing. NLT
8. ...for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
Proverbs 8:11

Extra

9. The tongue has the power of life and death. Proverbs 18:21
10. As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. Proverbs 27:17 NLT
11. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; Proverbs 3:5
12. Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.
Proverbs 11:22

NIV Bible unless otherwise stated