



Is the Bible Relevant Today?

Plan



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

Voltaire (1694 – 1778)

Aim/s

- To ‘show not tell’ that the Bible, although very old, is relevant to modern life.
- To consider whether some of it is irrelevant.
- To show briefly that the Bible can be meaningful for them personally. (Or cover this next time)

Starter: Pick a problem: **Headline news**

On the whiteboard, write down topics you would expect to see in news headlines. Possibly:

- refugees/migrants
- slavery
- health
- murder
- domestic abuse
- scandals
- politics/government
- royalty/celebrities
- environment
- injustice
- poverty/ social justice
- genocide
- education
- sport
- racial discrimination
- human rights
- fair trade
- achievements

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

Headlines quiz: quiz sheets and answers on separate document / PowerPoint

Ask them whether each headline sounds a) modern, b) from Bible times, or c) both. Avoid discussing the stories in detail, but demonstrate that all of them could be both.

1. Princess adopts abandoned baby: Moses Exodus 1:22 – 2:10 - c.f. celebrities
2. Brothers reunited at father’s funeral: Isaac & Ishmael Genesis 25:7-9
3. Crackdown on families of foreign workers: Hebrews enslaved in Egypt. Exodus. Windrush, slavery
4. Thousands flee Middle East to escape oppressive regime: Hebrews Exodus 12:37-38
5. Self-isolate to protect your family: Leviticus 13 has regulations about such issues.
6. Save the environment before it’s too late: Sabbath year, Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 20:19
7. Working animals to have regular rest & relaxation: Care for animals Exodus 23:4-5, 10-12
8. Widows supported by traditional food bank system: Ruth and Naomi, Leviticus 19:9-10, Ruth 2
9. New kid defeats seasoned player: David and Goliath, 1 Samuel 17
10. King champions single mum's plight: Solomon: prostitutes fighting over a baby. 1 Kings 3:16-28
11. Corruption at highest level. King Ahab stole Naboth’s vineyard via false charge. 1 Kings 21
12. Government ignores breach of fair-trade regulations: Amos 8:5-6, Leviticus 19:35-36.
13. Beauty queen foils minister’s attempt at genocide: Esther 7. Holocaust, Rwanda, Yugoslavia
14. Boy prodigy astounds professors: Jesus aged 12, Luke 2:41-52

“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 Sacks

What about the ‘irrelevant’ parts?

‘All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and for teaching how to live right.’ 2 Timothy 3:16

- Does this mean that every verse, is relevant to every person, in every culture, in every century?

“As western Christians, we sometimes forget that other cultures still experience realities not unlike the biblical world, and they can point out perspectives that might never occur to us.”

Lois Tverberg (professor) OurRabbiJesus.com

One example of this is the guidance about offering eating meat that has been offered to idols. Friends in my home group who grew up within an eastern culture have no difficulty seeing this as being helpful. The western world is not the centre of the universe!

Application and Reflection

“The Torah¹, 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

Activity & discussion

What is one key to good health? Balanced living!

Re-write Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 to make it applicable to your life.

Is the Bible is not only relevant, but essential for our spiritual and mental/emotional well-being?

Take one day off work in seven. Maybe even take a break from technology or social media.

How do you top up your spiritual health? Daniel prayed 3 times a day. It helped him to stay healthy in an extremely pagan culture, in a job with much responsibility.

Within the Psalms, which are ancient hymns and poems based on real life experiences, we find every emotion known to mankind. Try reading a psalm or part of proverbs every day.

Own stories of how the Bible has helped us.

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

Credits

The Bible Chronicle: Derek Williams

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Covenant and Conversation: Genesis

Lois Tverberg quote is from Christianity magazine January 2021

Writer: Brenda Lord, 2018; updated 2021

Image: iStock

¹ ‘Torah’ is often translated as law but it is rather fatherly instruction and guidance from God to mankind. Aka the 5 books of Moses.