

# WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE - PART 1

## HIGH SCHOOL

### GOALS

What is the Bible?  
How do I use the Bible?

### LESSON

**Materials Needed:** Orthodox Study Bible, whiteboard, dry erase markers

**Extended Learning Opportunity:** “Introduction to the Bible - Lesson 2”

by Dr. Jeannie Constantinou

[https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/searchthescritures/  
introduction-to-the-bible-lesson-2-inspiration-and-inerrancy](https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/searchthescritures/introduction-to-the-bible-lesson-2-inspiration-and-inerrancy)

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## WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The word *Bible* means “the Book” and is used in reference to all of the books included in the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is not a single book, but a collection of separate books placed together.

When we refer to *Holy Scripture*, we are talking about the holy writings that are included in the Bible.

There are two main parts to the Bible: 1) The Old Testament and 2) The New Testament.

The word *testament* is a translation of the word *covenant*. Covenant is the promise or formal agreement between God and us - the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. What is the difference between these two parts of the Bible?

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## THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is the covenant between God and the Israelites (the Jews). For us, as Christians, it points to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Around the year 250 B.C., the Jewish Law (the first 5 books of the Old Testament) was translated from Hebrew to Greek. This was done because Greek had become the dominant language of the time, much like English is the dominant language today. This happened after Alexander the Great had conquered an enormous area of land - the size of many countries - and hellenized them, which means he brought the Greek language and culture to all the lands he conquered. This is something to remember for when we have our introduction to the four gospels in a few weeks - these Jews, who spoke Greek and translated the Jewish Law from Hebrew to Greek, are called Hellenistic Jews. They kept their religion but had adopted the Greek language around them. (Inside of Palestine, the Jews still spoke Hebrew.)

The Greek translation of the Jewish Law (Torah or Pentateuch) is called the Septuagint. This name, the Septuagint (70), is in reference to the number of Jewish men who translated it from Hebrew to Greek. The Jewish High Priest had chosen six men from the twelve tribes of Israel to work on this project. (6 men x 12 tribes = 72 translators) One of those translators was the Prophet Symeon the God-Receiver.

When Symeon was translating the Old Testament and read, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son," (Is 7:14) he was going to scratch it out and write, "a young woman" instead, but an angel stopped his arm and told him that it was indeed correct and to leave it how it was already written. The angel also told Symeon that he would not die until he held the child.

Let's think about this for a minute. How does our dating of time work? Until recently, when it was changed in academia, we referred to time before the birth of Christ as B.C., which meant Before Christ. We referred to the time period after Jesus was born as A.D., which meant Anno Domini (In the Year of the Lord). The translation of the Jewish Law was done approximately 250 years before Jesus was born! We read about Symeon in Luke 2:25-35 when he finally gets to hold Christ. (*read to students*) Symeon was way beyond what we would consider an old man by this point! Is there any wonder at all that Symeon prayed, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation..."

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If you listen closely towards the end of many services, you will often hear Father read a prayer indicating to us that we are almost finished. This prayer is called the Prayer of Saint Symeon and we get it directly from the Bible.

Additionally, this event in the Bible is one of our major feast days - the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, which we celebrate on February 2nd. (And we commemorate Saint Symeon and Anna the Prophetess the day after.) Can you think of anything else that is related to the Presentation of our Lord into the Temple that occurs in our lives today? A 40 day blessing is when a mother brings her baby, who is 40 days old, to the church to be blessed, just like the Theotokos brought Christ to the Temple to be blessed as a baby.

The books of the Old Testament are divided into sections:

- The Law (The first five books or the Pentateuch)
- Historical Books
- Books of Wisdom
- The Prophets

This is a brief introduction to the Old Testament, but there is one more thing to keep in mind before we move on to learning about the New Testament. The Book of Psalms is found in the Old Testament. It is part of the section collectively called the Books of Wisdom. If you have the version of the Orthodox Study Bible that contains only the New Testament, you will find that Psalms is included in it. Why is it included here if it is part of the Old Testament? The Psalms are the songbook (the Psalter) of the Church. We use them extensively in our church services and they are extremely important to us.

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The Gospels tell us about the life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts tells us about the apostles' ministry. The epistles are letters written to individuals or groups of people providing them instruction from Saints Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude. The last book of the New Testament is the book of Revelation which was written by Saint John.

The books of the New Testament are:

- **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John** (the Gospels)
- **Acts** (Book of History of the Apostles)
- **Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews** (The Epistles of Saint Paul)
- **James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude** (The Universal or General Epistles)
- **Revelation** (Book of Prophecy)

We learn about many of our major feast days from the New Testament - the Nativity of Christ (December 25th), the Presentation of Christ into the Temple (February 2nd), the Annunciation (March 25th), Palm Sunday, Pascha, the Ascension of Christ (40 days after Pascha), Pentecost (50 days after Pascha), and the Transfiguration (August 6th).

During the Divine Liturgy, we will hear a reading from the epistles by one of our chanters and then from one of the Gospels by either Deacon George or Father Vasile. Additionally, during Holy Week, we will learn about the death and resurrection of Christ from the gospels.

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## HOW TO USE THE BIBLE

Let's open up our Bible to the Table of Contents. In this section, it will tell you what is included in this Bible. *(Briefly go over it)*

Let's find:

- Maps - Where are they located?
- Icons - Where are they located?
- The Glossary - It can be used to look up the definition of words.
- The Index - It can be used to find the location of a topic or person in the Bible.
- What else is included in your Orthodox Study Bible? *(Let students flip through it and tell you.)*

*(In the following sections, write notes on the white board to help students follow along)*

When the apostles wrote the books of the Bible, they did not number the sections or sentences. This is something that we did, much later, in order to make it easier for us to look up specific parts of the Bible as we study it.

Let's find the beginning of the Gospel of Mark. It is the second book of the New Testament and will be found after Matthew. Look at the very top of each page until you see *Mark*. Turn to the first page of the Gospel of Mark.

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters, just like you find in books you read today. There are a total of 16 chapters in the Gospel of Mark, which we will be studying this year. Find Mark 1. (This means the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Mark.)

Within each chapter, you will find additional, smaller numbers marking a section of words or a sentence. These numbers indicate the verse number.

When we ask you to find Mark 1:1, we are asking you to find the first chapter in the Gospel of Mark and then the first section (verse) in that chapter. Find it in your Bible.

Now, if we ask you to find Mark 1:1-8, we are asking you to find the first chapter in the Gospel of Mark and then the verses 1-8. Find it in your Bible.

Let's try this one more time. Find Mark 4:22.

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## REVIEW

- Is the Bible one single book or a collection of separate books written by many different people? (*A collection of separate books written by many people*)
- What does Holy Scripture mean? (*The holy writings included within the Bible.*)
- What are the two main parts of the Bible? (*Old Testament and New Testament*)
- The Old Testament points to the coming of the Messiah. Who is the Messiah? (*Jesus Christ*)
- What is the New Testament about? (*It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It is about Jesus Christ.*)
- (*Write on the whiteboard*) Find Mark 2:1

# WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE - PART 1

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### GOALS

What is the Bible?  
How do I use the Bible?

### LESSON

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The books of the New Testament are:

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- **James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude** (The Universal or General Epistles)
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We learn about many of our major feast days from the New Testament - the Nativity of Christ (December 25th), the Presentation of Christ into the Temple (February 2nd), the Annunciation (March 25th), Palm Sunday, Pascha, the Ascension of Christ (40 days after Pascha), Pentecost (50 days after Pascha), and the Transfiguration (August 6th).

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During the Divine Liturgy, we will hear a reading from the epistles by one of our chanters and then from one of the gospels by either Deacon George or Father Vasile. Additionally, during Holy Week, we will learn about the death and resurrection of Christ from the gospels.

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- The Index - It can be used to find the location of a topic or person in the Bible.
- What else is included in your Orthodox Study Bible? *(Let students flip through it and tell you.)*

*(In the following sections, write notes on the white board to help students follow along)*

When the apostles wrote the books of the Bible, they did not number the sections or sentences. This is something that we did, much later, in order to make it easier for us to look up specific parts of the Bible as we study it.

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Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters, just like you find in books you read today. There are a total of 16 chapters in the Gospel of Mark, which we will be studying this year. Find Mark 1. (This means the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Mark.)

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When we ask you to find Mark 1:1, we are asking you to find the first chapter in the Gospel of Mark and then the first section (verse) in that chapter. Put your finger on it when you find it.

Now, if we ask you to find Mark 1:1-8, we are asking you to find the first chapter in the Gospel of Mark and then the verses 1-8. Point your finger on verse eight.

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## REVIEW

- Is the Bible one single book or a collection of separate books written by many different people? (*A collection of separate books written by many people*)
  - What does Holy Scripture mean? (*The holy writings included within the Bible.*)
  - What are the two main parts of the Bible? (*Old Testament and New Testament*)
  - The Old Testament points to the coming of the Messiah. Who is the Messiah? (*Jesus Christ*)
  - What is the New Testament about? (*It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. It is about Jesus Christ.*)
  - (*Write on the whiteboard*) Find Mark 2:1. Put your finger on it when you have found it.
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# WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE - PART 1

3RD - 5TH GRADES

## GOALS

What is the Bible?  
How do I use the Bible?

## LESSON

**Materials Needed:** Orthodox Study Bible, whiteboard, dry erase markers

**Extended Learning Opportunity:** “Introduction to the Bible - Lesson 2”

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### \*NOTE TO TEACHERS

This age group is quickly becoming strong readers, but keep in mind that the names, places, and vocabulary used in the Bible are still predominantly new for them. There’s nothing wrong with having your students read from the Bible at this age, but recognize it may be more difficult for some kids than others. If they are having to spend an enormous amount of time sounding out the words, they are reading for the sake of reading at that point instead of for content. Given that we have such a short amount of time with them each Sunday for religious education, our focus is on learning and understanding content, instead of teaching reading skills. It may be best to read the Bible passages to them and let them follow along in their own book, at least for the beginning of the year, until their vocabulary and reading skills improve with more exposure to the Bible.

Use the whiteboard as much as possible this year to write down brief definitions of new vocabulary words for your students. This will help your visual learners remember and process it better.

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## WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

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When we talk about *Holy Scripture*, we are talking about the holy writings that are inside the Bible.

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## THE OLD TESTAMENT

For us, as Christians, the Old Testament tells us about the coming of the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ. Jesus has come to save the world!

A long time ago, Alexander the Great wanted to rule over all the lands around him. Each time he conquered a new area, he left behind some of his men to rule over it. It's quite common for the new ruler to want the people in their lands to speak the same language as them and Alexander the Great was no different! All of the Jews outside of Palestine (an area where Jesus would live) now spoke Greek. This was a problem for them because their Bible (our Old Testament) was in Hebrew and very few people could read it anymore. These Jews were called Hellenistic Jews because they had kept their religion, but now spoke Greek instead of Hebrew.

Around the year 250 B.C. (meaning Before Christ), the Jewish High Priest had chosen six men from the twelve tribes of Israel to work on translating the first five books of the Jewish Bible from Hebrew to Greek. (6 men x 12 tribes = 72 translators) We call this Greek version of the first five books of the Old Testament the Septuagint. Septuagint means 70, for the number of men it took to translate it. One of those translators was the Prophet Symeon the God-Receiver. (*Read page 102 to students from “101 Orthodox Saints.”*)

If you listen closely towards the end of many services, you will often hear Father read a prayer indicating to us that we are almost finished. This prayer is called the Prayer of Saint Symeon and we get it directly from the Bible after he holds baby Jesus in the Temple. “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation...”

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Did you know that this event in the Bible (when Symeon holds Jesus in the Temple) is one of our major feast days? It's called the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple and we celebrate it every year on February 2nd. (And we commemorate Saint Symeon and Anna the Prophetess the day after.)

What happens after a mom has a baby and brings her new baby to the church for the first time? We have a 40 day blessing! This happens when a mom brings her baby, who is 40 days old, to the church to be blessed just like the Theotokos brought Jesus to the Temple to be blessed as a baby.

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament tells us about the life and miracles of Jesus and is also about the apostles traveling all over the world to teach others about Jesus.

There are four parts to the New Testament:

- The 4 gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
- Acts (It's a book of history about the apostles.)
- Epistles (These are letters from the apostles to specific people or churches)
- Revelation (This is a book of prophecy written by St. John)

We also learn about many of our major feast days from the New Testament - the Nativity of Christ (December 25th), the Presentation of Christ into the Temple (February 2nd), the Annunciation (March 25th), Palm Sunday, Pascha, the Ascension of Christ (40 days after Pascha), Pentecost (50 days after Pascha), and the Transfiguration (August 6th).

During the Divine Liturgy, we will hear a reading from the epistles by one of our chanters and then we will hear either Deacon George or Father Vasile read from the gospel. During Holy Week every year, we will also learn about the death and resurrection of Christ from the gospels.

We are going to be spending a lot of time learning about the stories in the gospels because they teach us how we should live and that Jesus came to save us.

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## HOW TO USE THE BIBLE

There are two main parts to the Bible: 1) The Old Testament and 2) The New Testament. The Old Testament teaches us about the people who lived before Jesus. It is the biggest part of the Bible and comes first. The very first book of the Old Testament is Genesis. Open up your Bible and I want each of you to look for it. When you find the first page of Genesis, put your finger on it.

*(Some Bibles will only have the New Testament. That's fine. Just explain to the children that their version didn't include the Old Testament.)*

The New Testament teaches us about people who lived at the same time as Jesus. It is much smaller than the Old Testament and comes after it. The very first book of the New Testament is the Gospel of Matthew. Let's look for the Gospel of Matthew now. When you find the first page, I want you to put your finger on it.

Let's find:

- Maps - Where are they located?
- Icons - Where are they located?

*(\*When looking up a Bible story or verse, always write where you're going in the Bible on the whiteboard to help them follow along. For example, Mark 1:1-2)*

When the apostles wrote the books of the Bible, they did not number the sections or sentences. This is something that we did, much later, in order to make it easier for us to look up specific parts of the Bible as we study it.

Let's find the beginning of the Gospel of Mark. It is the second book of the New Testament and will be found after Matthew. Look at the very top of each page until you see *Mark*. Turn to the first page of the Gospel of Mark and put your finger on it.

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## REVIEW

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  - What does Holy Scripture mean? (*The holy writings included within the Bible.*)
  - What are the two main parts of the Bible? (*Old Testament and New Testament*)
  - The Old Testament points to the coming of the Messiah. Who is the Messiah? (*Jesus Christ*)
  - What is the New Testament about? (*It is about Jesus Christ and the apostles teaching people about Jesus.*)
  - (*Write on the whiteboard*) Find Mark 2:1. Put your finger on it when you have found it.
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# WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE - PART 1

1ST - 2ND GRADES

## GOALS

What is the Bible?

## LESSON

**Materials Needed:** Orthodox Children's Bible Reader

**Extended Learning Opportunity:** "Introduction to the Bible - Lesson 2"

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### \*NOTE TO TEACHERS

This age group are emergent readers, meaning that they are just beginning to learn how to read and will need to spend a great deal of time sounding out almost all words, especially ones they've never seen before in the Bible.

Most assuredly, we want to encourage our kids to learn how to read the words in the Bible, but given the short amount of time we have with them for religious education each Sunday, our goal for this class is to teach content rather than reading skills.

It would be best for the teachers to read the Bible stories to the students this year and encourage parents to have their children sound out new words from the Bible at home during the week.

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## WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

*(Hold up the Orthodox Children's Bible and show it to the students as you explain:)*

The word *Bible* means “the Book” and is used when we are talking about all of the books included in the Old and New Testaments. It teaches us about God.

When we talk about *Holy Scripture*, we are talking about the holy writings that are inside the Bible.

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## THE OLD TESTAMENT

For us, as Orthodox Christians, the Old Testament tells us about the coming of the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ. Jesus has come to save the world!

There are two main parts to the Bible: 1) The Old Testament and 2) The New Testament. The Old Testament teaches us about the people who lived before Jesus. It is the biggest part of the Bible and comes first. The very first book of the Old Testament is Genesis. We are going to read a story from here today. *(Read pages 17-20 in the Orthodox Children's Bible)*

The Old Testament was first written in a language called Hebrew. As time passed, less and less people were able to read Hebrew and knew Greek better. Saint Symeon was one of 70 men who translated the first five books of the Old Testament into Greek for the Jewish people. *(Read page 102 in “101 Orthodox Saints.”)*

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## THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament teaches us about people who lived at the same time as Jesus. It is much smaller than the Old Testament and comes after it. The very first book of the New Testament is the Gospel of Matthew.

What happens when a mom has a baby and brings him or her to the church for the very first time? We have a 40 day blessing! We bring our babies, who are 40 days old, to the church to be blessed just like the Theotokos brought Jesus to the Temple to be blessed as a baby. Let's read about this story in the New Testament. (*Read pages 173 - 174 in the Orthodox Children's Bible.*) Do you remember who held baby Jesus in the story we just read? It was Saint Symeon!

This is one of our major feast days. It's called the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple and we celebrate it every year on February 2nd. (And we remember Saint Symeon and Anna the Prophetess the day after on February 3rd.)

We are going to be spending a lot of time learning about the stories in the Bible this year because it teaches us all about God.

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## REVIEW

- What is the name of the book we read that teaches us all about God? (*The Bible*)
  - What are the two main parts of the Bible? (*Old Testament and New Testament*)
  - The Old Testament tells us about the coming of the Messiah. Who is the Messiah? (*Jesus Christ*)
  - What is the New Testament about? (*It is about the life and miracles of Jesus.*)
  - Who did St. Symeon hold as a baby? (*Jesus*)
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# WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE - PART 1

PRE-K - KINDERGARTEN

## GOALS

What is the Bible?

## LESSON

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The New Testament teaches us about people who lived at the same time as Jesus. It is much smaller than the Old Testament and comes after it. The very first book of the New Testament is the Gospel of Matthew.

What happens when a mom has a baby and brings him or her to the church for the very first time? We have a 40 day blessing! We bring our babies, who are 40 days old, to the church to be blessed just like the Theotokos brought Jesus to the Temple to be blessed as a baby. Let's read about this story in the New Testament. *(Read pages 173 - 174 in the Orthodox Children's Bible.)* Do you remember who held baby Jesus in the story we just read? It was Saint Symeon!

This is one of our major feast days. It's called the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple and we celebrate it every year on February 2nd. (And we remember Saint Symeon and Anna the Prophetess the day after on February 3rd.)

We are going to be spending a lot of time learning about the stories in the Bible this year because it teaches us all about God.

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## REVIEW

- What is the name of the book we read that teaches us all about God? (*The Bible*)
- What are the two main parts of the Bible? (*Old Testament and New Testament*)
- The Old Testament tells us about the coming of the Messiah. Who is the Messiah?  
(*Jesus Christ*)
- What is the New Testament about? (*It is about the life and miracles of Jesus.*)
- Who did St. Symeon hold as a baby? (*Jesus*)