



**Discovering the contents and the
message of the Bible**

Introducing the Bible

This course will help participants understand:

the time-line of the Bible,
the relationship of the Old and New Testaments,
the varieties of literature in the Bible

And show:

A variety of ways to read the Bible for yourself.

Group Leaders Notes

Session 1:	One God, One Bible	<i>GLN Page 2</i>
Session 2:	The Old Testament as foundation for the Christian Gospel	<i>GLN Page 4</i>
Session 3:	The Bible as today's book	<i>GLN Page 8</i>
Session 4:	The varieties of literature in the Bible	<i>GLN Page 12</i>
Session 5:	Guidelines for personal reading and listening	<i>GLN Page 14</i>

Group Members' Resources

Session 1:	Timeline activity sheet	<i>GMR Sheet 1</i>
	A Bible time-line	<i>GMR Sheet 2</i>
Session 2:	Quiz True or False?	<i>GMR Sheet 3</i>
	The story of the Old Testament	<i>GMR Sheet 4</i>
	Verses from the Psalms.	<i>GMR Sheet 6</i>
Session 4:	What do these passages tell us about God's love?	<i>GMR Sheet 7</i>
Session 5:	The formation of the New Testament	<i>GMR Sheet 8</i>
	Bible Aids	<i>GMR Sheet 9</i>

One God, One Bible

One God in both Old and New Testaments, One Bible with many themes



Aim

To learn about the one God of the Old and New Testaments which are united by many themes in common.

Objectives

Building on previous knowledge of the Bible,
Helping participants reflect on their understanding of God's nature.

Programme

Suggested timing

1	Opening Prayer	
2	Welcome and Introductions Invite participants to recall one favourite passage from the Old Testament and one from the New to share with each other.	Up to 15 mins
3	The Group Leader shows where these passages occur on the Time-line Activity Sheet in the Group Members' Resources, (<i>GMR Sheet 1</i>), referring to the Bible Time-line (<i>GMR Sheet 2</i>). Record which book of the Bible the stories are found in and whether people have chosen piece of history, parable, poem, law or prophecy or some other kind of writing. The sheets can be both magnified on flip chart, and distributed to each participant.	20 mins
4	The Group Leader provides input on what it is helpful to know about a Bible verse or passage. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What kind of literature is it: history, law, poetry, parables, prophecy, etc? What are the differences between these 'genres?' ▪ What does it tell us about God's character and actions? ▪ The Bible is collection of material from many different sources. It contains history of the people of Israel, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and of the early church. ▪ Where does the passage come in the history of God's people? <i>(It is worth telling/reminding the group that the verses and chapters were not originally in the text but added in the 16th century).</i> 	15 mins

The Old Testament as foundation for the Christian Gospel



Aim:

To develop understanding of the Old Testament

Objectives:

Examining how the Old Testament was formed

Exploring the worship and beliefs of the people of Israel

Programme

Suggested timing

1	Opening Prayer	
2	Participants complete the quiz (<i>GMR Sheet 3</i>) in twos and threes or in two competing teams. <i>The Group Leader can decide whether the results are made public or not!</i> <i>Answers below in the appendix to this session, (GLN Page 6)</i>	10 mins
3	Group Leader input: The Group Leader talks about the nature of the Old Testament, using the information in <i>The story of the Old Testament (GMR Sheets 5)</i>	15 mins
4	<p>'The God of the Old Testament'</p> <p>The Old Testament records the relationship between God and the people of Israel over thousands of years and in many different situations. This relationship is understood in variety of ways.</p> <p>The Group Leader divides the group into four sub-groups and asks each to look at one of the following passages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy 10 17-22 • Psalm 103 8-14 • Ezekiel 34 11-19 • Isaiah 41 8-10 • Ezekiel 13 8-11 • Amos 6-8 <p>How is the relationship between God and the people of Israel described?</p>	20 mins
5	The Group Leader provides input on the God who calls the people into personal relationship with him, introducing the nature of the covenant between God and the people of Israel	10 mins

6	<p>The worship of the people of God.</p> <p>The 150 Psalms are unique in the Old Testament they are addressed, mostly, to God, rather than communication from or about God. We don't know exactly who wrote them or when they were said or sung but they do give an indication of what public and private worship was like. In that way they are like prayer book, hymn book or collection of poetry.</p> <p>What do the Psalms tell us about the faith of God's people? In whole group or in twos and threes, link the passage from psalm with the most appropriate description on <i>Verses from the Psalms (GMR Sheet 6)</i></p> <p><i>Answers in Appendix of this section (GLN Page 7)</i></p>	25 mins
7	Closing Prayer, reciting together one of the Psalms studied in this session.	

Appendix for Session 2

Quiz True or False?

	True	False
The word 'Bible' comes from a Greek word meaning books	✓	
Most of the Bible was not written down at first, but learned by heart	✓	
Jesus knew about the Jewish scriptures and tradition	✓	
The Old Testament was written in Greek <i>No: most of it was written in Hebrew</i>		✓
The 'Torah' is the Jewish name for the first five books of the Old Testament	✓	
'The law and the prophets' that Jesus referred to were written to explain the Old Testament <i>No: These books are part of the Old Testament</i>		✓
The Psalms were all written by King David <i>No: many date from other periods of Jewish history</i>		✓
The books in the New Testament were written in the order in which they appear. <i>Most of the epistles were written before the Gospels and Mark was probably the first Gospel to be written</i>		✓
St Paul was not one of Jesus' original disciples.	✓	
Some of the early Christian communities worshipped in houses owned by women	✓	
The Gospels are the only accounts of Jesus' life and death <i>No: Jesus is also mentioned by Josephus, Jewish historian and Pliny and Tacitus, Roman politicians</i>		✓

Appendix for Session 2

Verses from the Psalms

Psalm 10-12, Psalm 58 1-5	>>	challenging rulers
Psalm 1,2	>>	personal
Psalm 13 1,2	>>	honest complaint
Psalm 16 9-11 Psalm 131	>>	trusting
Psalm 38 1-4	>>	confessional
Psalm 42 1-5 Psalm 63 1,2	>>	longing for God
Psalm 45 1-5	>>	poetic
Psalm 47 5-7	>>	noisy praise
Psalm 72 1-4	>>	prayer for the King
Psalm 92 1-5 Psalm 150 3-5	>>	musical thanks
Psalm 98 4-9	>>	the created world joining the people's praise
Psalm 119 1-3	>>	love of the Law of God
Psalm 137 1-4	>>	lament
Psalm 149	>>	dancing

The Bible as today's book

Aim

To explore how the Bible speaks to us

Objectives

Identifying with characters in Bible story to gain an emotional understanding
Using imagination as way of exploring bible passage

Programme		Suggested timing
1	Open Prayer	
2	<p>Identifying with characters</p> <p>Divide the group into four sub-groups and give each different topic to discuss. <i>It is very important to be clear that everyone is only asked to talk about what they are completely happy to share and may keep quiet if they want to.</i></p> <p>Group A shares stories of being victim of fraud, mismanagement or inefficiency,</p> <p>Group B shares stories of following an ideal and then not being sure where it would take them,</p> <p>Group C shares times they had doubted the wisdom of what friend or relative had done.</p> <p>Group D shares something they regretted and for which they tried to make amends.</p> <p>Each group member is asked to say how this felt, and what outcomes they wanted.</p>	20 mins
3	<p>Read the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19 1-10 Ask group members what reactions they expect from each person or group in the story. <i>Sample questions:</i></p> <p><u>Jesus:</u> Where does Jesus' compulsion to go to Jerusalem come from? What is He thinking and feeling about Zacchaeus?</p> <p><u>Jesus followers:</u> Do Jesus' followers understand Him? Do they resist what He is doing?</p> <p><u>Jericho's residents:</u> Why do the residents grumble?</p> <p><u>Zacchaeus:</u> Can you imagine how Zacchaeus feels after meeting Jesus?</p>	20 mins

4	<p>The group can then consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What makes you angry? Are there issues of injustice to other people that really stir you up? ▪ Have you ever seen one of your close friends set upon course that you thought was wrong? ▪ How do you cope when you feel you have justified reason to complain about someone? ▪ How can anyone make amends? <p>Then consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who you identify with in the story of Zaccheus? ▪ The group might like, briefly, to think about whether personal and emotional approach to the Bible has made difference to them. 	20 mins
5	<p>Imaginative Bible reading</p> <p>Jesus by the lake-side: John 21 1-13</p> <p>The Group Leader can use the script in the Appendix to this session (<i>GLN Pages 10 11</i>) or frame their own imaginative reading of the passage. There should be some words of introduction and explanation.</p> <p>The passage should be said slowly so participants have time to imagine the scene. They are encouraged to close their eyes to shut out distractions. The aim is to encourage the listeners to enter the scene described in the Gospel and encounter Jesus.</p> <p>Silence should be left at the end for people's own prayers.</p> <p>Group members should be offered the opportunity to talk about this experience, in confidence, if they wish to.</p> <p>The Group Leader will end this period of quiet, perhaps by saying The Grace.</p>	20 mins
6	<p>Preparation for Session 4: <i>Bible passages that speak of God's love for us.</i></p> <p>If group members want to, they can read the following passages before the session. The passages will be discussed in the session.</p> <p><i>What do these passages tell us about God's love? (See GMR Sheet 7)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psalm 107 Hosea 11 1-4 Mark 1-12 Luke 15 11-24 Romans 6-8 1st letter of John 1,2. 	
7	Closing Prayer	

Appendix for Session 3

An imaginative reflection based on John 21 1-14

You have been out on the water all night with your friends. It felt good to get back to fishing, something you haven't done much for quite some time. Once you decided to follow the teacher, other things in your life receded.

And then, all that happened recently—you are still trying to understand it. Scenes of Jesus' trials and death still haunt you, even though you know he has risen from the grave. And, even though you have seen his resurrected self, he is not with you all the time. Something fundamental has changed. He has gone to another way of being, and you're still here.

No surprise that it was bad night for fishing. You all tried to go back to the way things used to be. But of course, that was impossible. You were fishing, but you were talking, too. Just being out on the water brought back those vivid memories—Jesus teaching from the boat, the lakeshore crowded with people listening to him, seeking him, needing him. Jesus calming the storm that time you all knew you would drown. Jesus walking across the surface of the lake in the dead of night.

In fact, everything you do now has some Jesus memory connected to it. But still, it's not the same as having him right here, right now.

It's not so unusual for someone to cook breakfast on the shore. Nothing better than fish cooked on spit—a fish pulled from the water just moments before. So as you bring the boat closer to shore, you don't pay much attention to the man there by the little fire.

The man calls to you: "Children, you have no fish, have you?" He has noticed that the boat rides high in the water—no weighty catch.

"No," you answer.

"Cast the net to the right side of the boat; then you will catch some."

You have heard something like this before.

What does it feel like to recognize the voice but not be able to place it?

The last time someone told you where to cast your nets; there was great miracle.

What is spinning through your mind right now?

You throw the nets off the right side of the boat. Within moments, the nets are full. You look toward the man on the beach. He looks back at you.

What look is on his face? Is he smiling? Is he serious?

It doesn't take long, even with the overload of fish, to get to the shore and make your way up to the little fire. The man speaks again: "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

Of course, by now you know it is Jesus. You approach him and the fire. Everything about the morning is so clear, so palpable.

What does the air feel like? What scents are in the breeze? Is it warm or cold?

What does the sandy earth feel like as you walk closer and closer to that fire?

You hand Jesus several fish. He reaches to take them. Those are real, flesh-and-blood hands. You notice, though, the scars on his wrists, clear marks where the spikes had gone all the way through. Then you dare to look up at his face.

*What does his face look like on this early morning?
What emotions do you read in his eyes?*

You watch the body, once dead and damaged, go through these ordinary motions of putting the fish on spit and positioning it above the flames. You see the man squatting there in the sand, one knee on the ground, tending the fire as if this were typical kind of thing to do on typical day.

*What does it feel like to be just inches from this mysterious, marvellous human,
who was dead but now lives?*

What is the first thing you say?

What does Jesus say in response?

Taken from www.ignatianspirituality.com

The varieties of literature in the Bible

Aim

To consider how some basic truths about God are expressed in the Bible through different types of literature.

Objectives

Comparing passages that depict the love of God in different ways

Considering both public and private reading of Scripture

Programme

Suggested
timing

1	Opening Prayer	
2	<p>Group discussion: What did the passages tell us about God's love?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psalm 107 ▪ Hosea 11 1-4 ▪ Mark 1-12 ▪ Luke 15 11-24 ▪ Romans 6-8 ▪ 1st letter of John 1,2. <p><i>(From GMR Sheet 7, handed out at the end of the last session)</i></p>	30 mins
3	<p>How did they do this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the passage story, parable, poetry, metaphor, pronouncement or some other form? ▪ What is the effect of each different kind of literature? ▪ Do group members prefer one to another poetry rather than law, for example? ▪ Why does God communicate in variety of ways? 	20 mins
4	<p>Group members, in twos and threes are asked to list the advantages of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hearing the Bible read in public worship ▪ Learning in small group ▪ Reading it for themselves (or listening to recording). <p><i>Some of the disadvantages of each may become apparent as well.</i></p>	15 mins
5	<p>As whole group discuss how the advantages of each can be strengthened and the disadvantages minimized. How could group members encourage and support each other's Bible reading?</p>	25 mins

6	<p>Preparation for next session</p> <p>Read the whole of Mark or the whole of Philippians. Group members can choose which they do.</p> <p>If possible, the Group Leader should bring range of aids to understanding the Bible, such as daily notes, commentaries and websites. There are suggestions of these in the Group Members' Resources for Session (<i>See GMR Sheets 10</i>).</p>	
7	Closing Prayer	

Guidelines for personal reading or listening



Aim

To gather information on how group members may learn more about the Bible

Objectives

Reflection on reading whole book of the Bible

Comparing different approaches to understanding Bible passage

Gathering ideas about further ways to learn more

Programme

Suggested timing

1	Opening Prayer	
2	<p>Review of preparatory reading</p> <p>With others who have chosen the same book ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What overall picture of the message of the book did you get? ▪ What was different in reading long passage to reading shorter passages of Scripture? ▪ Did any passage stand out? ▪ What more would you like to know? 	40 mins
3	<p>With the whole group together the Group Leader will lead discussion about what else the group members would have liked to have known.</p> <p>This might echo what was said in the first session about the usefulness of knowing the context, rough date, type of literature and theme of the passage.</p>	20 mins
4	<p>The Group Leader will give an account of the formation of the New Testament. Group Members Resources for Session 5, '1: The formation of the New Testament' (<i>GMR Sheet 8</i>) may be used</p>	10 mins
5	<p>The Group Leader will introduce the various aids and ideas that help us to know more about the Bible.</p> <p>There is useful list in the Group Members' Resources for Session 5, '2: Bible Aids' (<i>GMR Sheets 10</i>).</p>	10 mins
6	<p>Closing Prayer</p> <p>As the group ends in prayer, participants are encouraged to choose one of the possible ways of growing in knowledge of the Bible to follow up for themselves.</p>	

One God, One Bible

One God in both Old and New Testaments, One Bible with many themes



Time-line Activity Sheet

Pre-history	Passage	Book of Bible	Type of Literature
2000 BC			
1700 BC			
1500 BC			
1300 BC			
1200 BC			
1000 BC			
950 BC			
800 BC			
700 BC			
600 BC			
500 BC			
400 BC			
The inter-testamental period			
0-10 AD			
30 AD			
50 AD			
70 AD			
100 AD			

A Bible time-line

(This is an approximation of what is known about dating but much is disputed!)

Pre-history	Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah
2000 BC	Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Leah and Rachel.
1700 BC	Joseph
1400 BC	Slavery in Egypt
1300 BC	Moses, Exodus
1200 BC	Joshua, entry to Promised land, Judges
1000 BC	David, Solomon, Building of Temple
950 BC	Jeroboam and Rehoboam and The Division of kingdom into North (Israel) and South (Judah).
850 BC	Ahab and Jezebel, Elijah and Elisha, Amos, Hosea,
730 BC	Fall of Samaria, exile of Northern kingdom (Israel) to Assyria The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah
600 BC	Fall of Jerusalem and Southern Kingdom (Judah)
530 BC	Return of Judah from exile
520 BC	The Second Temple built
450 BC	Ezra and Nehemiah return to Jerusalem.
<i>The inter-testamental period</i>	
0-10 AD	Birth of Jesus
30 AD	Ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus
50 AD	First epistles written
60s or early 70s AD	Mark's Gospel written (Mark is generally assumed to be the first gospel to be written)
70 AD	Rebellion in Judah against Romans, the destruction of the temple and the Jewish community spread throughout the world.

The Old Testament as foundation for the Christian Gospel



Quiz True or False?

	True	False
The word 'Bible' comes from a Greek word meaning books		
Most of the Bible was not written down at first, but learned by heart		
Jesus knew about the Jewish scriptures and tradition		
The Old Testament was written in Greek		
The 'Torah' is the Jewish name for the first five books of the Old Testament		
'The law and the prophets' that Jesus referred to were written to explain the Old Testament		
The Psalms were all written by King David		
The books in the New Testament were written in the order in which they appear.		
St Paul was not one of Jesus' original disciples.		
Some of the early Christian communities worshipped in houses owned by women		
The Gospels are the only accounts of Jesus' life and death		

The story of the Old Testament

□ **The Old Testament is not, primarily, Christian document but Jewish one.**

What Christians call the 'Old Testament' are the Jewish Scriptures that Jesus would have studied as he grew up. Christians believe that they were fulfilled by the Good News of Jesus. They include ideas and stories that the New Testament writers knew and referred to, so they are still important in for understanding of our Christian faith.

These scriptures were compiled gradually over many hundreds of years. In their earliest form they were passed on verbally by being retold, not by being written down and read. The skills of storytellers, judges and priests were used to memorise the text and transmit them accurately. It is thought that it was about 1000 years before Christ that some were written down, on rolls of parchment or papyrus.

The nation of Israel was at its wealthiest at this time, during the reigns of David and Solomon. It's not easy, though to know the names of the authors of the books. They might be named after an earlier leader, or an important person of the day, as way of honouring them. People would have been less likely to want to see their own name in print than we are today, and there was no deception involved.

□ **The original language of most of the Old Testament was Hebrew.**

Unlike most ancient languages, this Hebrew is very similar to what is spoken and written in Israel today, because the ancient language was revived as the nation of Israel was restored in the middle of the 20th century. The Hebrew language consisted only of consonants. A group of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes, working in the 6th 10th century AD, devised set of vowels and guide to pronunciation. They produced the oldest surviving complete Hebrew texts. Hebrew is written from right to left and the original texts had no division of chapters and verses.

The books of Daniel and Ezra and few other verses are written in Aramaic, the official language of the Persian empire, which was the occupying power of the time.

By 200 years before Christ Greek was the universal language, even though it was the Romans who were now the major power in the region. Since many Jews, living in other countries, didn't know Hebrew, a translation into Greek was made, known as the Septuagint (You may see it written as 'LXX'). This was begun in the 3rd century before Christ. Many early Christian translations of the Old Testament used the Septuagint, rather than the Hebrew text and it is usually the Septuagint that New Testament authors use when quoting the Old Testament.

In the 20th century the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls included manuscripts dating back to 100 years before Christ.

□ **The Hebrew Scriptures consists of three sections:**

The Law, known as *Torah*

The Prophets, known as *Nebiim*

The Writings, known as *Ketubim*.

These initials give the word TaNaK, the word by which the Hebrew scriptures are often known.

The Law, the books of the Torah are the most highly valued part of TaNaK. They are the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy and are sometimes called the Books of Moses. Sometimes scholars refer to them as the Pentateuch, which is the Greek for five scrolls. The Torah, or Law, means far more to Jew than set of regulations. It is God's gift of guidance and instruction.

The Prophets were books seen in Judaism as commentary on and elaboration of the Torah. In the synagogue each appointed reading from the Torah was accompanied by reading from the Prophets. 'Prophet' is used to describe God's words to us, sometimes predictions of the future but also words about the present and past. Some of the books included in the classification of 'prophets' would be described by us as history Samuel and Kings, for example. Books of history are seen by Jews not just as an account of the past, but also as record of God's dealings with the people of Israel. They are a source of knowledge and insight into God's ways. God speaks through history as well as through the words of his people.

Jesus' many references to the Law and the Prophets are to these books.

The Writings are a miscellaneous collection:

Compilations Psalms and Proverbs

History books Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles

The books of Job and Daniel

Five *megilloth*, now read at festivals:

- Ruth, at Pentecost,
- Song of Solomon, at Passover,
- Lamentations, at the commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem
- Ecclesiastes, at the feast of Tabernacles
- Esther, at the feast of Purim.

Verses from the Psalms.



Link the Psalm with the most appropriate description.

Psalm 2 10-12, Psalm 58 1-5

trusting God

Psalm 6 1,2

challenging rulers

Psalm 13 1,2

poetic

Psalm 16 9-11 Psalm 131

the created world joining
the people's praise

Psalm 38 1-4

personal prayer

Psalm 42 1-5 Psalm 63 1,2

noisy praise

Psalm 45 1-5

honest complaint

Psalm 47 5-7

dancing

Psalm 72 1-4

lament

Psalm 92 1-5 Psalm 150 3-5

longing for God

Psalm 98 4-9

confessional

Psalm 119 1-3

love of the Law of God

Psalm 137 1-4

musical thanks

Psalm 149 3

prayer for the King

The varieties of literature in the Bible



Session
Four

What do these passages tell us about God's love?

Psalm 107

Hosea 11 1-4

Mark 1-12

Luke 15 11-24

Romans 6-8

1st letter of John, 1,2.

1: The formation of the New Testament.

After Jesus died and rose again nothing was written down for some time. The apostles were used to using their memories to relate stories and ideas. The Gospel was proclaimed by word of mouth, using their experiences.

The letters which Paul wrote to the young Christian communities are the first written texts. Most of these letters have been kept and are known as the Epistles.

As the church grew and it became necessary to preserve the eyewitness accounts the Gospels were written. It is now thought that Mark was the first, that Matthew and Luke knew of Mark's account, which they adapted and also added other material. John then gave theological interpretation. There were other 'gospels' in existence, some of which we still have, such as the Gospel of Thomas. There was a growing need to establish which were authentic, God-inspired, sources of revelation.

In many ways the twenty seven books that we know as the New Testament chose themselves. Collections of the Epistles and Gospels circulated amongst the young churches. At first not all contained all the books (each of which had to be written out by hand), but consensus emerged. Recognition by one of the leading churches, association with an apostle and the orthodoxy of the contents were key criteria.

2: Bible Aids

Daily Notes

There are large variety of daily Reading notes that give you passage of Scripture and short commentary. The ones that take you through book are better than those with random selection of passages.

Bible Commentary

There are several one volume books on the Bible:

The Lion Handbook to the Bible has proved popular and immensely helpful over several decades. The short commentaries on each book by John Goldingay and Tom Wright, published by SPCK have proved very helpful.

Bible Dictionary

Formatted like an encyclopaedia with short articles arranged in alphabetical order.

Concordance

A concordance is good for finding cross-references, determining where else the author used particular word, and for looking up the meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek.

Cross-Referencing Bible

Some Bibles include cross-references in the margins or as footnotes. This is particularly helpful in finding allusions in the New Testament to parts of the Old Testament that would have been familiar to the original hearers.

Dictionary of Biblical Imagery

Whereas a Bible dictionary is indispensable for filling out historical and cultural context, the Dictionary of Biblical Imagery provides understanding of the connotations of biblical images such as 'shepherd' or 'water'.

English Dictionary

Never hesitate to use standard dictionary when you are unsure of the meaning of word!

Interlinear Bible

An interlinear Bible can help you determine which Hebrew or Greek word is used in passage.

Maps

These are an invaluable resource in helping students of the Bible to locate the places referenced, understand distances and perceive relationships between them.

Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts is comprehensive collection.

Study Bible

There is a wide variety of types and quality of study Bibles on the market. Many have useful maps and introductory material for each biblical book. There is danger, though that the reader is more drawn to the explanatory notes than to the Scripture text itself.

Websites

Many of the tools listed above can be found on the Internet and so can lot of misleading material. Here are some reliable websites:

www.biblegateway.com

www.biblesociety.org.uk

www.ignatianprayer.org.uk

Listening to the Bible

Many find it easier to listen to the Bible rather than to read it. Both www.biblesociety.org.uk and www.biblegateway.com enable this.

David Suchet has recorded the entire Bible, which can be obtained from www.audible.co.uk

The Course in Christian Studies

Over 3000 people in the diocese have completed the Course in Christian studies. It will give you good understanding of the Old and New Testaments and also of prayer and your place in God's mission.

Go to www.chelmsford.anglican.org/ccs for more details.