

BreakThru

From Catechism to *Christ*

SCRIPTURE: A MAD DASH

LEARNING EVENT MAKE-UP

A MAD DASH THROUGH A GOOD BOOK

The Bible is not a single book, the way Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is—or even the whole Harry Potter series—a story from one author with a beginning, middle, and end. Instead, the Bible is more like what would happen if we took the story that you just wrote and shoved it into a file folder with stories from everyone else in your confirmation class—it's a collection of stories from many different people who share the same faith.

You can think of the Bible as a filing cabinet with two drawers. The first drawer is the Old Testament, and it could be labeled "Israel's relationship with God." It was written over the course of roughly a thousand years, starting in about 1400 Before the Christian Era, or BCE, with each generation adding something new to the story until about the mid-100s BCE, when the final story (that of Daniel) was written down.

Many of the stories written during that time tell of even older events, starting with the creation of the world. They were stories people told one another and passed down from generation to generation. In that drawer are all sorts of things—campfire stories, eyewitness accounts of events, battle plans, family histories, building instructions, clothing catalogs, expense accounts, romance novels, poems—pretty much everything you can imagine. And what they all have in common is that they talk about God's relationship with the people of Israel.

So, you don't read the Old Testament from one end to the other; it's not a book. Instead, you pull different books, or files, out of this filing cabinet drawer and read what's in them. When you're done, you can choose another file. The Old Testament is the Bible of Judaism: it contains all the sacred texts for the Jewish faith. Many people call the Old Testament the Hebrew Bible.

The second drawer is the New Testament, and it could be labeled "Jesus Christ and the Church." It was written in the first 200 years after Jesus' death, much closer to the events it describes. The first four files in the New Testament are the gospels.

The four gospels are four different versions of the same story—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Reading them is like talking to four friends who saw the same movie: each one will tell you the plot, but the way they tell it will be different.



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A MAD DASH THROUGH A GOOD BOOK (CONT.)

The next file is called The Acts of the Apostles (often just called Acts), and it's a report on the early years of the church after Jesus' death. It's full of miracles, people getting arrested, angry mobs, sailing stories, and important debates. It's a great story.

The rest of the files, except for the very last one, are all copies of letters. These were letters written by real people to real people.

Many of the letters in the New Testament were written by a man named Paul, who was writing to small churches in faraway places, trying to help new Christians see how God was acting in their lives. Some of the churches were fighting with each other; some were very exclusive, and tried to keep poor people from being involved; some were confused about what God had promised and why it hadn't happened yet. Paul and others wrote to them all, and these letters (often called epistles) are the oldest Christian documents we have; they were even written before the four gospels were.

The last file is pretty wild. It's basically someone's notes on a vision he had, and it's quite a dream. The file is called The Revelation to John (or Revelation for short), and it's full of mythical beasts, angels, fire, and swords. At the center of it all is God, who will "wipe away every tear."

So the Bible contains both the Old Testament and the New Testament, files on God's relationship with Israel and the story of Jesus Christ and the church. The Bible is unique in that it is the only sacred text of one religion—Christianity—that contains with it foundational sacred texts of another religion—Judaism.

What the whole Bible is about is the way in which God is in relationship with us, from the first day of creation to this very instant. In both the Old Testament and the New, we see a cycle in which God blesses the people, they forget the blessing and rebel, something happens that makes them realize that they have forgotten God, they ask for forgiveness, it is granted, and then the whole cycle begins again.

The message is clear: God loves us and wants to be with us, but we get tempted by other things, like power or money, and forget what God has taught us. Then, because we're on the wrong road, something happens and we need help. And what we discover is that God is still waiting for us, still loving us, and still wanting to help us get things right.



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GOD'S STORY

Grab a couple sheets of paper and pens, and set a timer for three minutes. In three minutes, both you and your parent (separately) should list as many stories from the Bible as you can. You don't need to have scripture references, just a basic recognizable title for the story.

DISCUSSION

Take some time to discuss these questions as a family during the course of the week. Take advantage of drive times, meal times, and bed time to build in these important faith conversations.

- What is your favorite book series? (Harry Potter, Hunger Games, etc.)?
- Do you have any stories that have been passed down in your family from your grandparents or great-grandparents? What is your favorite?
- Who is the last person who wrote you a letter? What was the occasion? How was it sent?
- The whole Bible is about the way in which God is in relationship with us. There is a cycle in which God blesses the people, they forget the blessing and rebel, something happens that makes them realize that they have forgotten God, they ask for forgiveness, it is granted, and then the whole cycle begins again. Have you experienced this cycle in your own life?

PROJECT

(Choose One) - Submit by Email or Text

WRITE

Choose one of the Bible stories from the list you created. Use a few Bibles or a website like www.biblegateway.com to read the story in several different translations. (Suggestions: NRSV, The Message, NIV). Then, write a 1-2 paragraph response to these questions: What does this Bible story tell me about God? What does this Bible story tell me about me? What does this Bible story tell me about my relationship with God? Send your response to Erin.

CREATE & REFLECT

Choosing one of the Bible stories from the list you made, create a visual representation (drawing, painting, sculpture, etc.) of what that story means to you. Write a short 3-4 sentence reflection. Take a picture and send it to Erin.



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