

LESSON 23: Why Study the Bible?



REFERENCE

Page 272-276 [CORRECT
ORIENTATION]

WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Bible
- (2) LSM: 'Bible Sayings'

AIM

- To introduce the Bible as a source of divine revelation and practical wisdom

OUTCOMES

- KUI The learners understand why the Bible is an important book of literature.
- KUI The learners understand the concept of inspiration.
- DAP The learners revere the Bible as the inspired word of God for Christians.

TEACHER'S NOTE

By the time they are in Grade 8, young teenagers are beginning to question the validity of the Bible. One of their concerns is that the Bible is very old; this leads them to conclude that it has little or no relevance to modern times. This lesson tries to provide them with reasons for reading the Bible as a guide to living in relationship with God.

Keep the introduction short. Its purpose is to develop an understanding that God's revelation is like a river that flows through the centuries. While on its journey, it supports and nourishes all kinds of developments along its banks – but without the river, the developments would wither and die. The Bible is a source of relationship with God. If we cut ourselves off from this source, the potential for growth and development in our spiritual lives will be diminished.

Much of this lesson is based on *Discovering the Promise of the Old Testament* by Michael Pennock (pp 9-11). Note that recent scripture scholars refer to the Old Testament as the *Hebrew Scriptures/Writings* and to the New Testament as the *Christian Scriptures/Writings*. Please encourage your learners to refer to them in this way.

LESSON OUTLINE

I The Source

Begin the lesson by asking learners to answer the following questions:

- Mention any big rivers in South Africa that you know?
- Where does a river begin and where does it end?
- Why is water important to us?
- Why is the source of a river important?

Then read the story below for the learners:

South Africa has very few rivers. This means that we have to take great care of our water supply because without water, all living things would die. One of the ways we have learned to deal with this problem is to construct dams so that we can conserve the water and use it to irrigate our land and supply human and animal needs during the times when there is no rain.

All rivers have a source, a place where they begin. Streams can begin from fountains that draw on the water already under the earth, but rivers begin in mountains where water collects the most as snow or rain. When the snow melts, the water rushes down the mountainside in rocky channels and these become rivers.

As we follow the river 'downstream', we pass irrigated fields and towns cities with industries that depend on water. From time to time, we will find leisure spots where people find joy in swimming and other water sports. Eventually, the river flows into the sea (mouth) where the sun evaporates the water and turns it into rain, which again will fall on the mountain and feed the river. But without the source of the river, none of this would be possible.

Conclude the introduction by making the input below:

The Bible can be compared to a river. It is the source that nourishes and conserves our faith in God. As we follow the river downstream (i.e. through the centuries), we pass signs of how the river has nourished and developed the faith of all the people who have lived close to it. Many have found refreshment and joy in its promises and blessings. But those who have cut off themselves off from the source have found it difficult to keep their faith alive.

2 The Importance of the Bible

Do this exercise in groups, calling for feedback and discussion where you think useful.

- i. It has given rise to some of our common English expressions. Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'Bible Sayings'. Ask learners to look up the sayings in Part A, and then suggest what the meaning of each one is. Suggested meanings are given on the reverse side of the page.
- ii. It contains words of wisdom. Refer learners to Part B of 'Bible Sayings'. Again, ask them to look up the references, and then to answer the questions below:
 - Which sayings have you heard before, and on what occasion?
 - Which seem important to you, but you have never heard before?
- iii. It is one of the major foundations of societies in western civilisation. Ask the learners to answer this question: Why do you think the Bible is regarded as a major founding document of societies in western civilisation? Give some input, such as the following:

The Bible contains a record of ancient times. By studying this record, we come to understand how western social institutions and legal systems came into being. For example, schools, hospitals and welfare organisations are a response to the biblical injunction to take care of the needy and provide them with an acceptable quality of life; the legal system is based on justice – a major theme of the Bible. It contains God's revelation.

Invite learners to read Part C of the Lesson Materials page.

3 Why study the Bible?

- i. Ask learners in their groups to discuss the following question: Why is it important for Christians to study the bible?
- ii. Invite group leaders to respond.
- iii. Conclude by making the following input: The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is the written word through which God speaks to us. By reading it often, we will grow in faith

and deepen our relationship with him. If at all possible, we should own our own copy and mark the passages that stand out for us in some way.

OTHER IDEAS

4 Invite a Religious Leader

You can invite a religious leader of any of the five major world religions to come to your school and explain to the learners the importance of their sacred writing.

5 Other Sacred Writings

Below is a list of major world religions. Choose one religion and prepare a lesson about the importance of its sacred writing, and why it should be studied.

Religion	Followers	Sacred Writings
Judaism	Jews	The Torah, The Prophets, The Wisdom Literature
Islam	Moslems	The Qur'an
Hinduism	Hindus	The Bhagavad Gita
Buddhism	Buddhists	Tripitaka

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'Bible Sayings'



Lesson Materials



Bible Sayings

Part A

- (1) "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9)
- (2) "feet ... of clay" (Daniel 2:34)
- (3) "four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12)
- (4) "holier than thou" (Isaiah 65:5)
- (5) "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8)
- (6) "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9)
- (7) "escaped by the skin of my teeth" (Job 19:20)

Part B

- (8) "If you stay calm, you are wise, but if you have a hot temper, you only show how stupid you are." (Proverbs 14:29)
- (9) "Righteousness makes a nation great; sin is a disgrace to any nation." (Proverbs 14: 34)
- (10) "Intelligent people want to learn, but stupid people are satisfied with ignorance." (Proverbs 15: 14)
- (11) "Only a person with no sense would promise to be responsible for someone else's debts." (Proverbs 17:18)

Part C

- God creates, forgives, blesses and loves all people; God is faithful forever.
- The Bible reveals our identity as God's children – created out of love and called to love. Our own personal stories as individuals and as human communities are reflected in the Bible. It shows us both our good and bad sides and challenges us to become the best that we can be.

The Bible records/...

Lesson Materials

BIBLE SAYINGS (cont)

- The Bible records the experiences of our ancestors in the faith. Jews, Moslems and Christians all look to Abraham as the father of their faith. Christians also look to Christ as the model of what their lives should be like.
- The Hebrew Scriptures (commonly known as the Old Testament) were the ones Jesus knew; they inspired Jesus to follow God's plan for his life, even when this led to his death. If the Hebrew Scriptures inspired him, they will also inspire us.
- God speaks to us (as individuals and communities) through the Bible. We refer to this as the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Part A – Meanings

- (1) Am I responsible for what others do or what happens to them?
- (2) Although people may be praised for great achievements, they often reveal that their virtue is skin deep when they are put to the test.
- (3) The four corners of the earth are north, south, east, and west. The expression means that something spreads all over the world.
- (4) People who constantly give advice about how others should behave give the impression that they are better (holier) than others.
- (5) A place of total contentment.
- (6) Everything has happened in one way or another before.
- (7) I only just managed to reach safety.

LESSON 24: Finding Our Way



REFERENCE

Page 277 [ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE STORYLINE]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1)(3) Bibles
- (2) Flash cards
- (3) LSM: 'The Hebrew Scriptures'
- (5) LSM: 'Diagrammatic Summary'

AIM

- To give the learners a broad overview of the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners identify three distinctive collections in the Hebrew canon, namely the historical, wisdom and prophetic books.
- KUI Learners know and understand the concepts 'testament' and 'covenant'.

TEACHER'S NOTE

The purpose of this lesson is to give the learners a 'guided tour' through the Bible so that they will become aware of its major divisions and contents. This lesson notes the division between the Hebrew and Christian collections but concentrates on the former. Lesson 25 deals more specifically with the Christian collection.

It is important that the learners each handle a Bible physically during this lesson. Ideally, the school will have a set of Bibles so that each learner will have a copy of the same translation. Failing this, the learners could be encouraged to bring Bibles from home. However, this may slow the lesson down, as there are several minor discrepancies as to the naming and position of the books depending on the translation used.

It is recommended that teachers prepare for this lesson by means of a 'dry run' in order to anticipate learners' questions. Bibles originating in the Catholic tradition draw on the Alexandrian (Septuagint) collection of sacred writings; this is larger than the Hebrew collection used by Protestants. Nowadays, many Protestant translations contain the 'extra' books in an appendix. Teachers need to be aware of this.

Build up the diagrammatic summary given at the end of the lesson notes on the board as the lesson progresses.

LESSON OUTLINE

I Introduction

Hold the Bible in your hands and ask the learners to answer the following questions:

- What is a Bible?
- Into how many parts is the bible divided? Mention the divisions – Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) and New Testament (Christian Scriptures).

GRADE 8 Scripture

Make the input given below to help consolidate and clarify answers given by learners.
The Bible is a collection (library) of books written by different people at different times. It has two major divisions:

- **Old Testament** (Genesis – Malachi): Most of this collection was written before the time of Jesus. The books were written originally in Hebrew and are now referred to as the Hebrew collection.
- **New Testament**: This collection was written down some 25 – 70 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The books were written in ancient Greek and are now referred to as the Christian collection.

Ask the learners to find the division between the Old and New Testaments and to hold them apart with their hands. Explain that modern scholars prefer to name these the Hebrew and Christian collections or scriptures.)

Note that the Hebrew collections were the scriptures used by Jesus. This is one of the reasons that they are also important for Christians since they reveal the source of his inspiration and teachings.

2 Testament and Covenant

- Divide learners into groups of five.
- Display two flash cards, one with the word 'testament' and the other with the word 'covenant'.
- Ask the learners to come up with the difference between the words testament and a covenant.
- Round up the discussion by giving the input below:

***Testament:** A person who gives testimony in a court of law provides evidence relating to a certain case. The Hebrew Scriptures provide evidence of the relationship between God and the Hebrew (Jewish) people. The Christian scriptures consist of evidence concerning the facts and significance of the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus.*

***Covenant:** Sometimes the Old Testament is referred to as the Old Covenant and the New Testament as the New Covenant. A covenant is a formal agreement that establishes a relationship between two parties. In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15). This was renewed at important turning points in the people's history. In the New Testament, God made a new covenant with us. Essentially, this is an agreement that we will pattern our lives on that of Jesus.*

Marriage is an example of a covenant. When two people get married, they agree and promise that they will love, support and be faithful to one another for as long as they are both alive. A covenant is a very serious commitment, especially when it is made in the presence of God and is blessed by him.

3 The Hebrew Scriptures

- The historical collection (Genesis – the Second Book of Chronicles). Ask the learners to hold this section in their hands and to identify the relevant books as they page through it. There are 5 major divisions in this part of the collection. Learners can read about this in the Lesson Materials page 'The Hebrew Scriptures'.
- The books of wisdom (Job - Ecclesiastes). Instruct the learners to hold this section in their hands and to identify the names of the books contained in it in order. They then read the relevant section on the Materials page.

- iii. The books of the prophets (Isaiah - Malachi). Instruct the learners to hold this section in their hands and to identify the names of the books contained in it in order. (The concept of 'prophecy' as used in scripture is a complex one. Prophets did not foretell the future - which is our understanding of the word. Christian writers – e.g. those who wrote the gospels – used the prophetic writings in order to convey what *they* believed about Jesus.)
- iv. The books of the Maccabees. These were heroes who resisted the Greek invasion of Israel about 500 years before the time of Jesus. The books really belong in the historical section but were probably placed here because they are only found in the Alexandrian (Septuagint) collection (that is, the collection of sacred books favoured by Catholics).

4 Other Hebrew Books

Please note that the books contained in the Bible are not the only ones written by the ancient Jews. There are many more titles that originate in ancient times, including commentaries on the biblical books. These are very helpful to modern scholars since they often throw light on the biblical collection.

5 Summary

If you have not already done so, give each learner the Lesson Materials page 'Diagrammatic Summary'. Conclude this lesson by asking learners to look at this summary, and to ask any questions for clarification.

OTHER IDEAS

6 Invite a Speaker

Invite a person from your community who is involved in Bible translations to come to your school and give your learners an overview about the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures and also explain to your learners the difficulties they face in translating the Bible into South African languages.

Or you can invite somebody from the Catholic Bible Foundation to come to your school to talk about the Hebrew Scriptures and why they are still relevant in the Church today.

MATERIALS

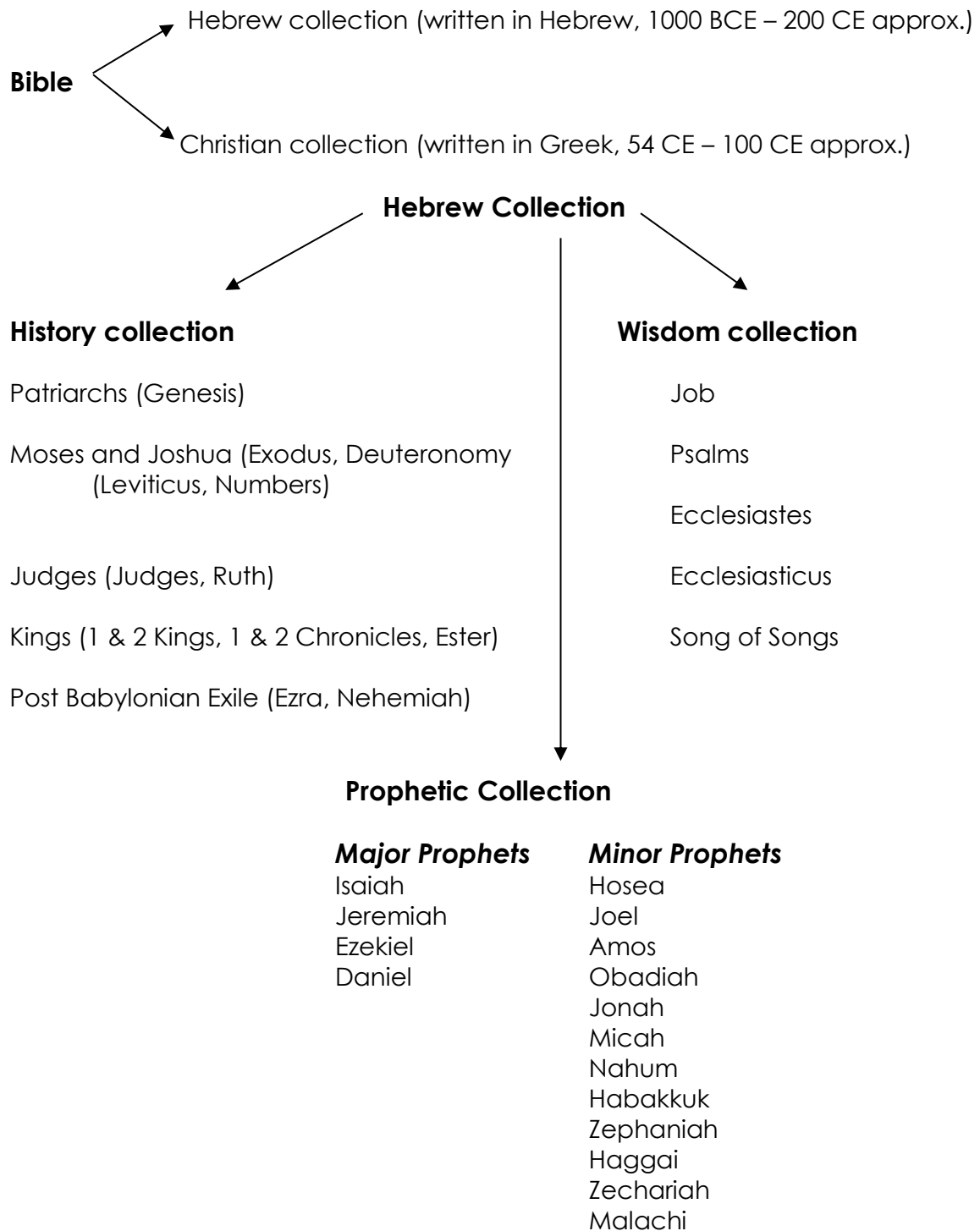
LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'The Hebrew Scriptures'
- CIE. 2005. "Diagrammatic Summary"



Lesson Materials

Diagrammatic Summary



Lesson Materials

The Hebrew Scriptures

I

The historical collection (Genesis – the Second Book of Chronicles).

There are 5 major divisions in this part of the collection.

- The period of the Patriarchs (clan leaders such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob); found in the Book of Genesis
- The period of Moses (charismatic leaders such as Moses and Joshua); found in books such as Exodus, Joshua and Deuteronomy. Leviticus and Numbers are expansions of these.
- The period of the Judges (occasional leaders who sorted out problems after the time of Moses and Joshua); found in the book of Judges. The book of Ruth also relates to this period.
- The period of the Kings (national leaders who came after the Judges); found in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.
- The Post Babylonian Exile period (priestly leaders, Ezra, Nehemiah, Maccabees, Esther)

II

The books of wisdom (Job - Ecclesiastes).

The books contained in the Wisdom collection teach us the philosophy of the ancient Hebrew people – that is, how they lived their lives in response to the covenant they had made with God. This was the philosophy on which Jesus based his life and teachings.

Note especially the book of Psalms – a collection of prayers, many of which express the people's deepest feelings about God. These prayers are like a window into their souls.

III

The books of the prophets (Isaiah - Malachi)

The prophets named in this collection lived during the period of the Kings. The kings were the political leaders of the people; the prophets were spiritual leaders who spoke out against injustice and the abuse of religion.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel/...

Lesson Materials



THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES (cont)

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are called the Major Prophets because their books are so long. The remaining twelve are called the Minor Prophets. However, all the prophets were important in their own circumstances and times.

The concept of 'prophecy' as used in scripture is a complex one. Prophets did not foretell the future - which is our understanding of the word. Christian writers – e.g. those who wrote the gospels - used the prophetic writings in order to convey what they believed about Jesus. It is very important to undermine the modern day misconception of 'prophecy' as it is used in scripture.

IV

The books of the Maccabees

These were heroes who resisted the Greek invasion of Israel about 500 years before the time of Jesus. The books really belong in the historical section but were probably placed here because they are only found in the Alexandrian (Septuagint) collection (that is, the collection of sacred books favoured by Catholics).

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LESSON 25: The Christian Scriptures



REFERENCE

Page 277 [ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE STORYLINE]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) (3) (4) (5) Bibles
- (6) LSM: 'The Christian Scripture Collection'

AIM

- To give learners a broad overview of the contents of the Christian scriptures.

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners identify five distinct kinds of document in the Christian canon, namely gospel material, Pauline letters, other Christian letters, Hebrews and Revelations.

TEACHER'S NOTE

This lesson aims to make learners know the books that constitute the New Testament. The lecture or telling method will be used, but make sure that you give learners chance to express their views and opinions.

There are five different kinds of writing in this collection. Scholars differ with regard to their exact dates of composition but three factors are important:

- The letters of St Paul were the first to be written and so represent the earliest Christian tradition. All were completed before the first gospel (Mark) reached its final form.
- All of the writings predate 110 CE.
- All represent the teaching of the apostles, men who were 'with Jesus from the time that John (the Baptist) preached his message of baptism until the day that Jesus was taken up from us to heaven' (Acts 1: 22).

Make sure that you build up the diagrammatic summary given at the end of the lesson notes on the board as the lesson progresses.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

Divide learners into groups of five. Begin the lesson by asking learners some questions regarding the New Testament. You can include the following questions:

- Mention any book of the Bible, which forms part of the Christian Writings or the New Testament?
- Which of the books mentioned are regarded as the Gospels and how many are they?

2 The Pauline Collection

- After St Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, he became a dedicated apostle. His aim was to spread the message of Jesus in the main centres of the then known world. He

travelled to distant communities in Italy (Rome, possibly Galatia), Greece (Corinth) and Asia Minor (e.g. Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonika) where he instructed people and founded Christian communities. After he left, he wrote letters to them explaining points of doctrine and giving advice.

- ii. Ask the learners to identify this collection. One hasn't been named. Which one? (Philemon, which is a personal letter)
- iii. Using the example of the letter to the Philippians, draw attention to the 'address' in Chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 and to the final greetings in Chapter 4 verses 21-23. This is clearly written in a letter format. It would be worth pointing out to the learners that the letter quoted above was addressed to the Christians who lived in Philippi – a city in Asia Minor. Ask the learners to identify other open or closing greetings in these letters.
- iv. Ask the learners to answer the questions below, and to give feedback:
 - a. Did Paul write all the letters in the New Testament? (No)
 - b. Identify other apostles who wrote letters to Christians of their time. (James, John, Jude and Peter)
 - c. How many letters were written by each of the above?

3 The Stand-Alone Document - Hebrews

This can be compared to a theological pamphlet that deals with the priesthood of Christ. Until quite recently, scholars thought it was one of St Paul's letters and so it is still often referred to as 'the letter to the Hebrews'. However, it does not have the format of a letter and the style of writing is very different from that of St Paul. We do not know who the author was.

4 The Four Gospels

Begin this part by asking learners to give responses to these questions:

- (a) How many books are regarded as the gospels in the New Testament? Name them.
- (b) What is the focus of the gospels?

Invite a few learners to respond and then continue, giving the input about the gospels given below:

These contain the testimonies of people concerning what Jesus said and did. Many of these had known Jesus, or had at least been influenced by his teaching. However, the documents were all written many years after his death and resurrection and not during his lifetime. They therefore contain what people remembered most about Jesus together with what they had come to believe about him after they had had time to think things over and discuss important points with others.

Take the following story as an example of what this means:

One day, my grandmother who had been a widow for ten years came to visit me. She was wearing a pair of gloves even though it was a very hot day. I invited her to take them off but she refused saying, "You see, dear, as I've grown older my fingers have become thinner. I'm afraid that if I take my gloves off, my wedding ring will slip off without my noticing it and I don't want to lose it."

*Those were the **facts**, the eye-witness account. However, I also thought about it and told other members of my family about what had happened. It made us all realise a deeper message that my grandmother had loved my grandfather so much*

and that her marriage had meant so much to her that she would wear gloves on an extremely hot day to avoid losing her wedding ring. This encouraged us to honour our own life commitments.

The gospels often contain information similar to the second paragraph of the story but sometimes we are just given the facts and left to 'think things over' for ourselves. The gospels won't mean much to us unless we take time to 'think things over' and apply the insight and encouragement we receive to our own lives.

Mark, Matthew and Luke are called the *Synoptic Gospels* because they deal with very similar material (syn = with, optis = one view). (This will be dealt with in Grade 11.)

Luke is made up of two volumes: the Gospel deals with the life of Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of what happened to some of the apostles after the Ascension. Because of the way that the Acts ends, it seems that Luke intended to continue the story in a third volume. He may have died or he may have written it and it was lost. It would be very exciting if we discovered a third volume one day.

The Gospel of John is very different from the others. Most scholars believe that it was the last one to be written and that it drew on many sources that were already in circulation. It contains sermons of Jesus (called 'discourses') such as the one about his being the Living Bread (Jn 6: 25-59) and the one he spoke during the Last Supper (Jn Chapters 14-17). It also contains seven 'signs', one of which is the Marriage Feast of Cana (Jn 2: 1-12).

5 The Book of Revelation

Some scholars believe that this document was written by St John when he was a very old man and under house arrest on the island of Patmos but we are not really sure who the author was. It is presented as a vision in the form of writing called apocalyptic literature. Much of the material is difficult to understand and one theory is that the author wrote it in a code language to encourage Christians who were in prison and being persecuted by civil authorities. Another theory is that its meaning will become clear to when the time is right.

Some people claim that it is a book of prophecy and that it foretells the future. *There is no book in the Bible that foretells the future.* The only thing that God has ever told us about the future is that we need to trust that he will be with us and that we should go forward with confidence.

6 Conclusion

Conclude this session by giving each learner a copy of the Lesson Materials page 'The Christian Scripture Collection'. Invite learners to ask any question they may have.

OTHER IDEAS

7 Media: Past and Present

The writings contained in the Christian scriptural collection tell us about the life and teachings of Jesus and give us practical ways of living a truly Christian life. Like the apostles, we need to use every opportunity for spreading the Good News that Jesus has reconciled us with God and that we have the power to make the world a better place by putting his message into practice. In the days of Jesus, 'good news' could be

spread by preaching, teaching and writing. What are the modern means of communication that could be used in addition to the ones used by the early Christians?

8 Invite a Speaker

Invite an ecumenical organization involved in distributing the New Testament to Grade 8 learners, such as the Gideons, to come to your school and give your learners an overview of the contents of the New Testament. They might also explain what their organisation is doing to promote the reading of Scripture.

Or you may invite somebody from the Catholic Bible Foundation to come to your school to talk about the New Testament and what the foundation is doing in order to make people know and understand the New Testament.

MATERIALS

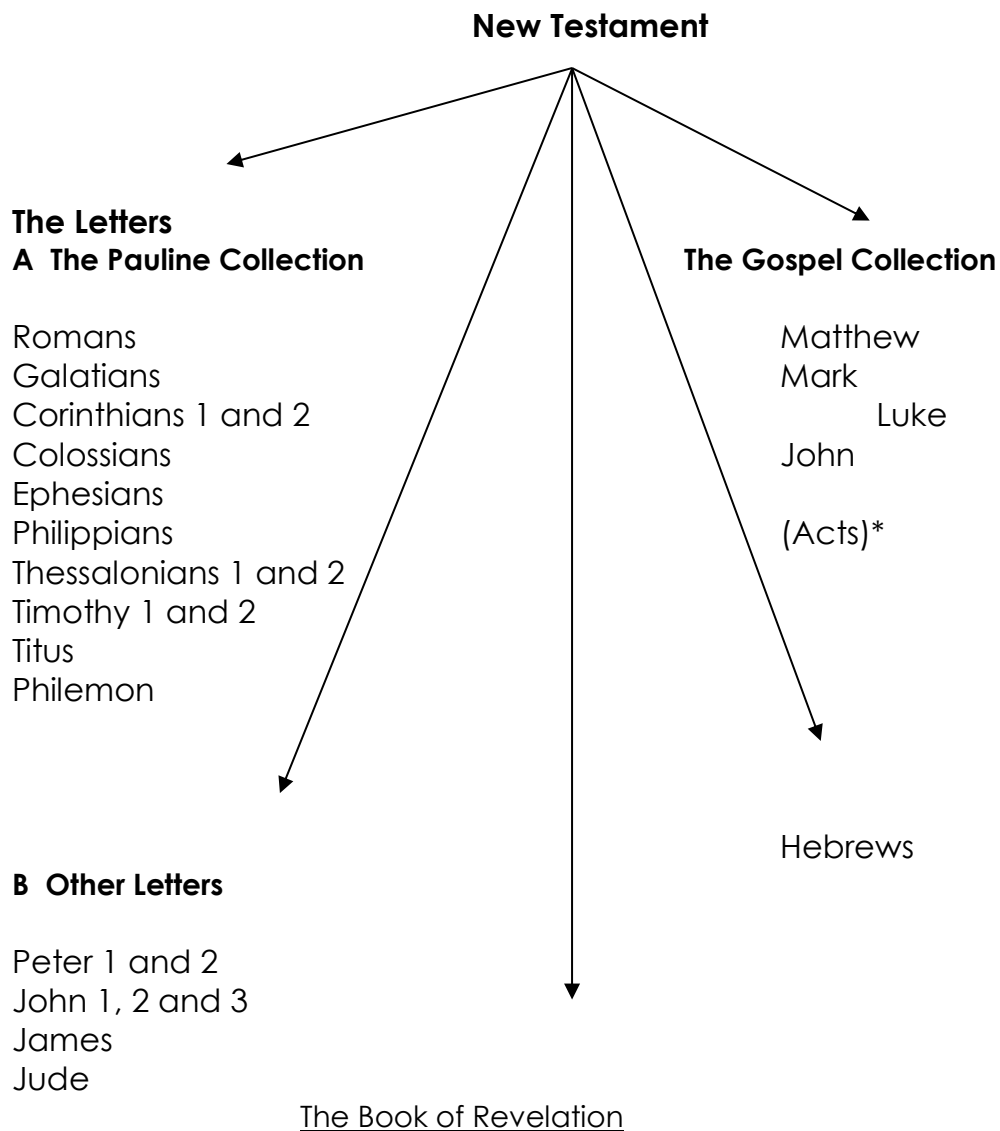
LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'The Christian Scripture Collection'.



Lesson Materials

The Christian Scripture Collection



* Acts of the Apostles is not strictly a gospel, but it does continue where Luke's gospel account leaves off.