

## LESSON 26: Is the Bible True?



REFERENCE

Page 272 [CORRECT ORIENTATION]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Story: 'A Birthday Present'
- (2) LSM: 'Kinds of Truth'
- (3) Story: 'Cinderella'

### AIM

- To introduce learners to the different kinds of truth and to help them apply this knowledge to the documents contained in the Bible.

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners understand that there are different kinds of truth.
- SKL Learners apply different kinds of truth to documents in the Bible.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

By the time they are in Grade 8, many learners are aware of common objections raised against the truth of biblical texts. Two main targets for such objections are the historical and scientific accuracy of certain documents.

For example, recent investigations have disclosed that there is 'no scientific evidence' for the biblical claim that the walls of Jericho 'collapsed' during the Israelite attack on it (Joshua 6). In fact, the archaeologists involved in the research question whether Joshua's army attacked it at all. Some people seem to believe that if they can discredit one piece of information in the bible, they can discredit it altogether!

Now that the theory of evolution has gained ground (but is not completely proved yet), some people scoff at the story of creation in the opening chapters of Genesis. This attitude emanates from the incorrect belief that God told the author exactly how he had gone about it. Such people are apparently unaware that there are many 'layers of truth' in the story, including religious and symbolic truth.

This lesson explores the concept of truth. A story may be symbolically or morally true without being historically true. Most of the folklore stories of the world fall into this category. It is more important for the learners to have a firm conviction for themselves than to be able to 'answer the critics'.

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### I A Birthday Present

Begin this lesson with a true story.

*Tim was a twelve-year old boy who loved his mother very much. She meant everything to him and there wasn't anything in the world he wouldn't do for her. He had often heard*

*her say that she wished she had an orange-squeezer. So when her birthday came around, he went out to the shops to buy the best orange-squeezer on the market.*

*He found what he was looking for, a bright, shiny orange-squeezer in a brand new box and wrapped in birthday wrapping paper. He took it home and saw the pleasure on his mother's face when she opened it. She was deeply touched that he had taken notice of something that she had wished for and that he had spent his precious time searching for it. He saw the tears of pride and love in her eyes.*

*But – the orange-squeezer didn't work! After all that thought, and all that trouble, and all the joy it had given, it didn't work because it had faults.*

*When she discovered that it didn't work properly, Tim's mother didn't say, "Tim didn't love me after all. He bought me a useless gift." No, she heard the **message** of the gift: *I love you and I want to be a son you can be proud of.* Her experience of Tim's love was true even if the manufacturer of the gift had not been successful in making a perfect orange-squeezer. It was the squeezer that had faults, not the message.*

Invite few learner to comment on the story. Clarify any questions and then make the input given below

The Bible is like that. The *message* remains true even though those who wrote it sometimes made mistakes. The authors were limited by the knowledge that was available to them thousands of years ago. They were also limited by their culture and by their social and historical circumstances. We need to appreciate these limitations and give the authors credit for doing the best they could to record how their relationship with God grew in understanding and commitment.

## 2 How true is the Bible?

- i. Invite learners to share their views on the above question.
- ii. An answer to the question depends on how we understand the idea of truth. Introduce learners to the idea of different kinds of truth, by asking them in groups to study the Lesson Materials page 'Kinds of Truth'. Monitor the groups to ensure that they understand any unfamiliar terms in the text.
- iii. The groups then formulate a paragraph in response to the question: Is the Bible true?

## 3 Appropriate Questions

Tell the learners the story of Cinderella.

*Many of you will be familiar with the story of Cinderella. She was a young and attractive woman who was prevented from going to a ball by her selfish stepsisters. A fairy godmother transformed her into a beautiful princess who wore a stunning dress and shoes made of sparkling glass. The fairy made sure that she got to the dance but warned her not to stay later than midnight when all her radiance would disappear.*

Does this story tell us about the danger of wearing glass shoes, or the rightness or wrongness of dancing after midnight? These are *inappropriate* questions to ask of a fairy story. We can sometimes ask inappropriate questions of the Bible – about evolution, science, history and geography, for example. To ask why God authorised the killing of whole groups of people is *inappropriate* because we are not taking the limited understanding of the people into account. They did not yet realise that God never supports violence.

#### 4 Conclusion

We need to value the Bible as an ancient work of literature that tells us about how the relationship between God and the people of Israel developed up until the first century of the Common Era. We also need to understand the characteristics of ancient writings. The question that remains is in what way the Bible is *special* and *different* from other books that were written in ancient times. We will deal with this question in the next lesson.

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### OTHER IDEAS

#### 5 Class Debate

Divide the class into two groups and ask them to prepare a debate in which one group supports the idea that the Bible is true and the other group opposing the motion. Conclude this session by introducing learners to the different kinds of truth and how they contribute to the validity of the Bible as the inspired word of God.

#### 6 Questions for Discussion

One of the prescriptions of the Ministry of Education is that the history of South Africa must be rewritten for use in South African schools. Why is this probably necessary? When this history is rewritten, on what kind of 'evidence' will the historians be able to draw? What would be the drawbacks of these resources?

#### MATERIALS

##### LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'Kinds of Truth'



## Lesson Materials



### Kinds of Truth

#### a) Religious Truth

The Hebrew Scriptures are a record of how God revealed himself to Abraham and his descendants, how he treated them and how they responded (or failed to respond) to him over a period of 2000 years. The Christian scriptures are a record of how God revealed himself to the world through the life, death and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ, and how the early Christians understood and responded to his message and the example of his life. All of this is *religious truth*. We can trust it completely.

#### b) Moral Truth

The Bible contains many moral prescriptions. The Ten Commandments, for example, advise us that well-ordered and peaceful societies can exist only if people honour God (Commandments 1-3), respect authority (Commandment 4), respect the lives and sexual commitments of themselves and others (Commandments 5 and 6), respect property rights (Commandment 7) and are committed to the truth (Commandment 8). Commandments 9 and 10 are refinements of 6 and 7. These are moral principles that will remain true for all time. The evidence is that individuals and societies that do not uphold them become exploitative and repressive.

However, the Hebrew Scriptures also support ideas such as slavery and the subordinate role of women. In the Christian scriptures, St Paul found slavery acceptable but both he and Jesus did a great deal to promote the position of women in society. Nowadays, we do not accept slavery and we realise that women have the right to play a prominent role in public life. These reflections show that people gradually grow in moral sensitivity and maturity in the light of the gospel. Maturity does not permit individuals to 'bend the rules' in favour of what they would like but challenges them to become increasingly more moral in what they think and in how they behave. Would Jesus give his consent to a law permitting abortion, for example? The answer must surely be No.

#### c) Symbolic Truth

Poets often make use of symbols to convey their message. When Shakespeare said, "My love is like a red, red rose" he didn't intend us to take his words literally; he meant us to interpret them. In his view, the person he loved had the beauty and perfection of a rose in full bloom. Much of the truth in scripture is told in symbols, parables, myths and allegories. We have to read between the lines to discover the truth being presented. Was the story of the Good Samaritan literally true? No, but the religious truth conveyed in it, namely that we should help people who are in need, is true.

#### d) Proverbial Truth/...

**Lesson Materials**  **KINDS OF TRUTH (cont)**

d) Proverbial Truth

The Wisdom literature of the Hebrew collection contains many proverbs. Even though they are thousands of years old, they are still true today. Discover this for yourselves by reading Proverbs Chapter 15. Which of these do you consider are still valid? Which would you question and why? Can you suggest a proverb of your own?

e) Historical Truth

As you have seen in previous lessons, the Bible contains historical writings. Much of this history is surprisingly accurate - as archaeological discoveries have shown. But people living today have different expectations of history compared with those who lived long ago. Consider the following:

<b>Comparison: Today and Biblical Times</b>	
People of today can rely on written records of events.	The people of early biblical times could only rely on oral traditions.
People of today expect that events will be reported in an accurate and unbiased way.	The people of early biblical times were more concerned with the inner significance of events for their personal lives than with accuracy of reporting; they were also biased in favour of their own perspectives and interpretation.
People of today expect historians to analyse the records in order to uncover the human causes and consequences of events.	For the people of early biblical times, it was God who caused historical events; consequences were the result of co-operation with him or turning away from him.
People of today have a global view of history.	The people of early biblical times were limited by their lack of knowledge of the rest of the world.
<p><b>Questions for discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the prescriptions of the Ministry of Education is that the history of South Africa must be rewritten for use in South African schools. Why is this probably necessary?</li> <li>• When this history is rewritten, on what kind of 'evidence' will the historians be able to draw? What would be the drawbacks of these resources?</li> </ul>	

f) Scientific Truth/...

*Lesson Materials*    
KINDS OF TRUTH (cont)

f) Scientific Truth

The biblical writers reflect the scientific understanding of their day, which was not nearly as advanced as ours. The biblical writers had no idea that the Earth was a planet revolving around the sun and that it was subject to numerous scientific laws such as the Law of Gravity. They believed that the Earth was flat and that a dome placed above the earth prevented the water above it from falling down. In their view, rain was caused by God opening the 'floodgates of heaven' and this allowed some water to pour through the opening.

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## LESSON 27: Inspiration and Scripture



REFERENCE

Page 273 [CORRECT ORIENTATION]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Story
- (2) Bibles
- (4) LSM: 'Inspiration and Scripture'

### AIM

- To help learners explore the meaning of the term 'inspiration' as applied to the Scriptures, and gain an understanding of its significance for their lives

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners know and understand the specific meaning of inspiration as it is applied to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

The true story used to introduce the lesson is taken from a tape prepared by Dr Caroline Myss. The point of this story in the present context is that God speaks to us in many ways within the circumstances of our lives. When the scriptures say 'God spoke to Moses' (for example), the words may have been audible to his ears but it is much more likely that he spoke to him in much the same way that he speaks to us – through our thoughts, feelings, intuition, conscience and inner being.

What makes the Scriptures distinctive is that besides speaking to us on an individual level, they also contain God's intimate revelation of himself. The religious truths and values contained in them are true because they are revealed by God. Theologians have derived many doctrines and theological insights from these writings, and Christians give their assent or attention to these doctrines and interpretations. However, it is more important for the learners to grasp that the Scriptures are a means of communication between themselves and God on a personal level - in the context of personal prayer and in the liturgy.

Note the following quotation from *Dei Verbum*, the document on Sacred Scripture of the Second Vatican Council:

*The Church has always venerated the divine scriptures as she venerated the body of the Lord, in so far as she never ceases, particularly in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the word of God and the body of Christ.* (Paragraph 21)

The implication of this quotation is that the Catholic Church believes that the divine presence is as much in the Scriptures (i.e. the Word of God) as in the consecrated bread and wine during the celebration of the Mass.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### I Mission Control

Tell the following story:

*Recently I heard of a seven-year-old boy who had an inoperable brain tumour. When he was told the news, he asked his father if he could die. 'Yes, Gareth, you can,' he replied. That night, he heard a voice in his head that said: 'What are you going to do, Gareth? You can choose life or you can choose death.' 'I choose life,' he responded. 'All right,' the voice said, 'but there aren't any guarantees.'*

*The boy told his mother of his experience but was cautious of raising her hopes. He did not want her to be disappointed if he didn't recover.*

*From that time on, the boy called his tumour Planet Meatball because that is the way he pictured it in his mind. He imagined that he was a pilot sent on a mission to destroy the planet with nuclear missiles. This mental picture gave him a sense of power and control. Day after day, he bombarded the planet in his imagination. Eventually a day came when his missiles jammed and he couldn't fire them. This was an emergency. He contacted Mission Control. 'My guns are jammed,' he said, 'What must I do?' 'Everything's all right, Gareth,' Mission Control responded. "We stopped your guns and we're sending help.' At those words, he saw a huge meteor coming out of the sky. It made straight for the planet and shattered it into small pieces which disappeared into the air. It was completely gone.*

*The brain specialists couldn't find it either. The tumour **was** completely gone.*

This is an amazing story and an inspiring one. Invite the learners to respond to it. Draw the essential points from their discussion but ensure that they touch on the following:

- Whose was the voice that asked him to choose?
- Where does one hear this voice?
- We all hear this voice in our heads, but we often don't trust it. We judge that it is 'just our imagination'. But how else does God speak to us?

*(God can use anything to communicate with us, even the picture of a pilot racing through the sky with a mission to destroy a planet. God also speaks to us through our life circumstances, through significant things that happen to us, and through our intuition. The voice gave the boy permission to live, but he had to do something himself. There were no guarantees that he would be successful.*

*No one can visualise God. This boy instinctively seized on images that were familiar to him. He had to drive the plane, He had to make a determined effort to destroy the planet. This gave him a sense of power and control. But in the end, it was 'Mission Control' (God) who saw to the total destruction of the planet.)*

### 2 Hebrew Scriptures

Early on in their experience, the Jews recognised a 'voice' speaking to them through the written word. They concluded (as we do in the story of Gareth) that the voice was God's. Certain sacred writings seemed to have this quality more than others and so the Jewish Council of Jamnia (70 CE – i.e. after the lifetime of Jesus) decided to put them into a special collection. This has come down to us as the Hebrew collection of sacred writings (i.e. the Old Testament.)

Ask the learners to look up and read the following scripture references.



## GRADE 8 Scripture

- In referring to the Hebrew Scriptures, St Paul says '*All scripture is inspired by God*'. (2Tim 3:16)
- St Peter says of the same collection '*No prophetic message ever came just from the will of man, but men were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.*' (2 Peter 1:21)
- Jesus taught: *The Holy Spirit inspired David to say: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit here at my right hand.'* (Mark 12:36)

Make the point that beliefs originate in communities before they are expressed in official statements. The Council of Jamnia only formulated a belief that was already widely held in the Jewish faith community.

### 3 Christian Scriptures

When Paul and Peter and Mark instructed the early Christians about the inspiration of scripture, they had no idea that their own writings would be considered 'inspired' one day.

St Athanasius – an early theologian and Father of the Church – fixed the collection of Christian writings at 27 books in 367 CE. This collection was ratified later (i.e. approved and validated) by several early Church Councils as well as by the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563). What kind of criteria were used in deciding on the collection?

- People believed that the books were inspired. (All official doctrines of the Christian Church carry the weight of belief that is commonly held by the Christian community. Faith is the most important criterion.)
- These particular writings were widely circulated in the early Church.
- They were based on the witness of the apostles.
- They were read regularly during the liturgy.

It should also be noted that those who decided on the collections were elders and leaders of the Jewish and Christian communities. They had authority to make the decision on behalf of people who already believed that the decision was correct.

### 4 Inspiration

- i. Ask learners to give you their understanding of the word 'inspiration'. The word literally means 'breathing in'. What does breathing do for a living person? How might this idea apply to Scripture? Consider the Holy Spirit as the Breath of God.
- ii. Distribute the Lesson Materials page 'Inspiration and Scripture'. Learners read the page, and then write down their understanding of the idea that the Scriptures are inspired.
- iii. Conclude by posing a definition of inspiration, such as the following: Inspiration means that "the Holy Spirit guided the writing and putting-together of the Bible, in such a way that it contains what God wanted written down for our guidance." (*Connections*, paragraph 10)

### 5 Personal Prayer

Since God is the author behind these collections, it follows that he uses them to speak to us on a personal level. By reading the Scriptures, we are able to enter into a personal conversation with him and he with us. We should treasure them and use them as the 'jumping off' point of our daily personal prayer.

## OTHER IDEAS

### 5 Other Sacred Writings

World religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism also have collections of sacred writings. These traditions do not claim to be inspired in the same way that Jews and Christians believe their scriptures are. Nevertheless, they *are* sacred writings and they certainly contain declarations of faith in God. The Second Vatican Council instructed us to revere and respect them as “often reflecting a ray of that truth which enlightens all people.” (*Nostra Aetate*, Paragraph 2)

### 6 Research

Divide learners into groups of five and ask them to visit different preachers, pastors, priests, deacons, Bible scholars and ministers of other religions in their community to find out how those people understand the inspiration and interpretation of their respective Scriptures. You can provide them with a series of questions that they can ask the people. Each group will be asked to provide a report to the class about what the people said and what they as a group had agreed. After the group reports the teacher should clarify any misunderstanding that may arise during the presentations.

#### MATERIALS

##### LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. ‘Inspiration and Scripture’



## Lesson Materials



# Inspiration and Scripture

Inspiration means:

Christians understand that *inspiration* means that God is the author of both the Hebrew and Christian collection of sacred writings in a way that does not deny the free and personal activity of the human writer. As one writer has put it:

The Biblical writers were true authors, thinking their own thoughts freely and individually – and their writings were part of God's plan.  
(CORD p. 273)

The Second Vatican Council had this to say:

In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which he wanted.

(*Constitution on Divine Revelation, No 11*)

*Inspiration does not mean:*

- God dictated what he wanted the authors to say, much as a businessman dictates to his secretary.
- The writers were inspired in a 'religious' way, much as a songwriter is inspired in a musical way.
- The complete Bible came directly from heaven by means of a vision or an angel.

The fact that God chose human authors to do the work implies that the possibility of factual errors (e.g. of History or Science) was inevitable. There was no possibility of religious and spiritual errors. All the same, the books show spiritual development from a primitive understanding of God to a greater knowledge and appreciation of him.

## LESSON 28: The Bible as Literature



REFERENCE

Page 274-276 [CORRECT ORIENTATION]



### WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Flash Cards
- (2) Bibles
- (3) LSM: 'Name the Genre'

### AIM

- To introduce learners to the literary genres used in the Scriptures

### OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners know and understand a variety of literary genres
- SKL Learners can identify familiar scriptural genres.

### TEACHER'S NOTE

Most of the definitions of the different genres are taken from *Discovering the Promise of the Old Testament* by Michael Pennock (Ave Maria Press, 1992, pages 15 and 16)

### LESSON OUTLINE

#### 1 Introduction

Now that learners have been studying languages for the past seven or eight years, they will know that the written word can be presented in different ways. These are called 'genres' (a word borrowed from the French meaning 'kinds' or 'types'). Ask the learners to name familiar genres (types or kinds) used in English today. Examples commonly used today include letters, greeting cards, postcards, invitations, e-mails, essays, articles, novels, biographies, fables, fairy stories, plays, poetry, book and film reviews, reports, notices, memos, shopping lists, advertisements, telephone and other directories, and several others. We can recognise them easily because they have a different appearance (i.e. formats, ways of setting them out).

#### 2 Exercise

There are also a variety of 'genres' in the Scriptures. This lesson will deal with the most important ones listed alphabetically below.

- i. Present each genre by means of a flash card.
- ii. Invite learners to give an explanation or an example (preferably from Scripture, if they can).
- iii. Ask the learners to look up the references marked with an asterisk (\*).
- iv. Clarify before moving on to the next genre.

**Allegory** (e.g. Proverbs 9: 1-6): an extended comparison in which the details of a story stand for deeper realities such as abstract ideas, moral qualities, or spiritual realities.

**Biography** (e.g. Jeremiah 26): a written account of a person's life.

**Creed** (e.g. Deuteronomy 26: 5-10): a formal statement of belief.

## GRADE 8 Scripture

Epic	(e.g. the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis): A very long story that explains how a nation (or family) came into being.
Etiology*	(e.g. Genesis 32: 23-33): a story that gives the cause of something.
Fable	(e.g. Judges 9: 7-15): a brief story with a moral; fables often use animals that act and speak like human beings.
History	(e.g. 1 Kings: 1-2): a chronological narrative or record of events, as in the life or development of a people, country, or institution.
Law	(e.g. Exodus 20: 1-17): a rule of conduct or standard of behaviour established by proper authority, society or custom.
Letter	(e.g. Philippians): Greeting and messages addressed to particular people.
Lists	(e.g. the genealogy of Jesus in Mt 1: 1-17). In the bible, most lists refer to the ancestors of people
Myth	(e.g. the stories contained in Genesis 1-11): A myth expresses spiritual truth or the basic beliefs of a particular culture by means of a story. A myth is not historically true but its message is true.
Parable	(e.g. Mt 13: 1-9): a short story that contains an important lesson.
Prayers/Poetry	(e.g. Ps 100): Formalised words of praise, thanksgiving or request that are said to God, often within the context of liturgical worship.
Prophecy*	(e.g. Amos: 7: 4-6): An inspired utterance made by a prophet and which expresses God's will.
Proverb*	(e.g. Proverbs 16: 1-3): A pithy and 'folksy' saying that contains wisdom.
Sermon*	(e.g. Mt 6: 5-14): a speech that has religious/spiritual content.
Story	(e.g. Book of Ruth): The story of a Moabite woman who became one of the ancestors of Jesus.

### 3 Group Activity

- Give learners the Lesson Materials page 'Name the Genre' and ask them to complete the exercise in pairs. Give them 10-15 minutes to complete it.
- Invite a few learners to give their answers
- Conclude by clarifying any misunderstandings.

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## OTHER IDEAS

### 4 Matching

Another way of presenting the different genres would be to distribute two sets of cards to each group. One set contains the names of the genres. The second set contains descriptions that the learners have to match with the names.

### 5 Scripture Passages

A more difficult matching exercise would be to replace the descriptions with Scripture passages which the learners would look up in order to identify the corresponding genre.

#### MATERIALS

#### LEARNER

- Thomas Zimmerman. 1977. No 8 in *Bible Probes*. Wm. C Brown Company Publishers (adapted)



# Lesson Materials



## Name the Genre

Legal manuscript	Letter	Proverb	Prophecy	List
Sermon	Prayer	Poetry	Parable	Myth
Legend	Narrative	History	Political speech	Epic

**Instructions:** Using the list of literary genres above, identify the literary genre of the scripture quotes given below. Write your answer in the spaces provided on the left.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. 'A farmer went out to his field to sow grain. As he scattered the seed on the ground, some of it fell on the footpath ,, other seed fell on shallow soil ... other seed landed in thistle patches ,, still other fell on fertile soil.'

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. 'Flattery is a trap; evil men are caught in it, but good men stay away and sing for joy.

'The good man knows the poor man's rights; the godless don't care.'

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. 'When God began creating the heavens and the earth, the earth was at first a shapeless, chaotic mass, with the Spirit of God brooding over the dark vapours.

Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and light appeared. And God was pleased with it, and divided the light from the darkness.'

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. The almighty Lord says this: Woe to those who are sitting comfortably in Zion ... lying on their ivory beds and sprawling on their divans ... who bawl to the sound of the harp ... and drink wine by the bowlful ... They will be the first to be exiled; the sprawlers' revelry is over.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. 'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd.'

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Dear friends, This ... is from me, Paul, appointed by God to be Jesus Christ's messenger; and from our dear brother Timothy ... May the God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ bless each of you and give you peace.