

## Preface

The purpose of this book is to give parents and Sunday School teachers immediately useful ideas for teaching children about the Bible. This book presents an outline of the Bible and questions corresponding to the better-known stories and passages. The title of the book, a quote from Leviticus, summarizes the book's purpose: "that ye may teach the children" (see Leviticus 10:11). The underlying premise is that parents and Sunday School teachers can teach the fundamentals of the Bible by reading or telling the stories and then asking questions (although the questions presented herein are by no means an exhaustive treatment of the Bible). I have considerable experience using these questions as a teaching tool; the system is both child-tested and time-tested.

To make the questions easily retrievable, I have arranged them into a simple outline that follows the order of the sixty-six books of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The King James Version of the Bible is quoted most often, though I have often consulted other English translations of the Bible.

The questions are written for a wide range of ages. I have used some of these questions with a class of two-year-olds and some with high school students. Most are aimed at about the fourth to sixth grade level, though they can be adapted to children much younger or older. These questions are meant to be a springboard for many other questions that teachers and students will ask about the Bible.

This book is not intended to be formulaic. Each parent or Sunday School teacher needs to pray and prepare individually for teaching children at home or church. This book is simply my sharing of a rather simple idea that has worked for me. It has been my experience that the question and answer format allows for a lively class with many interactions, which is preferable to a lecture style presentation. Questions should go both ways, with pupils asking their own questions as well. The questions in this book are intended not only as a springboard for deeper discussions in Sunday School class, but for deeper study of the Bible. My hope is that others will find this system of using the outline of the Bible and selected questions helpful and inspiring.

### **Evolution of this book**

The idea to write this book came as a result of my Sunday School teaching experience. During my growing up years, I had some sincere, loving, well intentioned, and, occasionally, inspired Sunday School teachers. However, as a young adult with a desire to serve my church, I discovered that I actually knew very little about the Bible or how to teach effectively its contents to young people. I also observed that I was not the only member of my church with this problem. So, I delved into the Bible and reference books for guidance.

Among the first helpful books I read were a series of three paperbacks entitled *Guide for Bible Teaching* by Ann Putcamp. The author

suggested questions to use with Sunday School classes of various ages. I used those questions as examples of others I might write on my own. Soon, I was writing questions every week for use in my Sunday School class. Writing a good question, be it a simple comprehension question, a multiple-choice question, or a more thought-provoking question, proved to be a time-consuming process. Some questions were better than others. I eliminated questions that were poorly worded, ambiguous, or trivial. And I began saving the good questions.

I wrote each question on a four-by-six index card and put the answer, along with citations and related information, on the back of the card. One of my earliest classes included a group of bright four-year-olds who did not yet read but were rapidly acquiring reading readiness skills. I used larger cards for this class and printed simple questions on the cards with colored markers. Using this method of asking questions had a number of unexpected benefits. For one thing, the children sometimes weren't able to distinguish when I was asking them a question and expected an answer and when I was just sharing information. But once I used the cards, they knew when a question was directed at them. Also, by occasionally pointing to the words of the question, the children learned to sight-read easy words, such as God and love. Using the question cards enabled the children to identify the key points I was trying to teach.

Eventually, I had a large stack of cards that I intended to reuse on other occasions with my Sunday School class. At that point I was faced with the need to develop a way to retrieve questions on a particular topic. This is how the outline to the Bible evolved. On each card, I wrote the Roman numeral, letters, and numbers that corresponded with the Bible outline. The outline numbers enabled me to file and retrieve the index cards in a box. I

wrote the questions first, as a general rule, and then expanded my simple outline to include them.

This book does not include the answers for the questions. However, there are citations for most questions and most outline headings. The answers may be found in the Bible. Both teacher and child should turn to the Bible passages for answers. This book is intended for the teacher's use before entering the Sunday School. It should not be taken into class, because the emphasis should always be on the Bible texts themselves.

I have changed and expanded my outline numerous times over the years. It began as a single-page document. The process of outlining the whole Bible has been challenging, enriching, and inspiring. Although highlights of the entire Bible are included, I have gone into much more depth in some areas than in others. Two areas where I have a great many questions include the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount (including the Beatitudes and our Lord's Prayer.)

Although this work includes at least one question on every book of the Bible, it is not a balanced treatment of all aspects of the Bible. I have emphasized stories and passages which traditionally appeal to children. There is also an emphasis on the history of the Hebrew people. I have had to omit some of my favorite Bible passages (Isaiah 54, for example) because they do not lend themselves to the type of basic comprehension questions presented here. Well-known stories, such as David and Goliath and Daniel in the lions' den, necessarily lay the foundation for Bible literacy.

As I developed my own outline of the Bible, I found two books of particular help: Russell Robinson's *Teaching the Scriptures: A Study Guide for Bible Students and Teachers* and *An Outline of the Bible: Book by Book* by Benson Y. Landis. They gave me the necessary infor-

mation to design my own Bible outline. Both books are still in print, reasonably priced, relatively short, and written by lay students of the Bible. Together with a good Bible dictionary, these resources offer solid information that is easily understood by someone without much previous background.

### **My background**

Since 1974 I have been a Sunday School teacher in various branches of The First Church of Christ, Scientist. I have also taught several years in a community ecumenical Vacation Bible School in Shepherdstown, West

Virginia. Most of my Bible teaching experience has been with children of elementary school age. I've also used the outline and questions in this book to teach the Bible to my own two daughters, Amy and Kim, who are now college students.

I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Principia College in Elsah, Illinois, where I double majored in elementary education and English. I have taught children in public and private schools and Head Start.

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Second edition, December, 2000

# Introduction

The following introductory pages are intended to give Sunday School teachers and parents some guidance in using this book. My hope is that a new teacher, equipped with this book, will immediately have some practical, helpful tools to employ for that very first class. However, the focus of this book is not teaching methods or a comprehensive treatment of how to teach Sunday School. Rather, I am sharing one method of teaching the Bible that has worked for me. Teachers should note that there are a wide array of options available to them, in the areas of teaching methods, techniques, and resources.

## **Content of this book**

Questions in this book are divided into six major sections:

- I Introductory Questions
- II Old Testament
- III New Testament
- IV Vocabulary Questions
- V Review Questions for Old and New Testaments
- VI Bible Study Worksheets

The questions in Section I constitute a simple introduction to the Bible in outline form. Knowing something of the Bible's design, authorship, chronology, and historical setting gives children a framework on which to hang the many stories and Bible facts they will learn.

## **Old Testament**

The next section of questions covers the Old Testament, book by book. Some of the

Bible stories appear more than once. Some scholars refer to the duplication of a story as a "doublet." Sometimes, biblical authors used different sources and a very early editor wove the two versions together into one written account. This practice accounts for some of the small contradictions in Old Testament stories. Many of the stories in the Chronicles are repeats of stories told in Kings. Scholars believe the accounts in Kings were written first. The Chronicler retold the stories, with an emphasis on the Southern Kingdom's point of view. Occasionally, a story appears three times, as is the case with Hezekiah, a king of Judah. Besides appearing in Kings and Chronicles, Hezekiah's story is also told in the book of Isaiah. (See *Who Wrote the Bible?*, Friedman, p. 22.)

## **New Testament**

Although most of the questions in this book follow a book by book organization, the questions concerning the Gospel stories from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are combined. The questions generally follow a "Harmony of the Gospels," outlined in *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 342–349. One of the reasons I elected this approach with the Gospels was so I could group the parables and the healings performed by Jesus. However, with high school aged students, I think it is helpful to consider the four Gospels separately, so that students can grasp the particular flavor of each of the four writers.

Although one section of this book focuses on the Acts, Paul's life and ministry merits an additional, separate section. Each of the fifteen

## 2 Introduction

epistles are listed separately in the New Testament outline, and there is at least one question about each of those epistles. The New Testament section concludes with questions about Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

### **Vocabulary Questions**

The fourth section of this book contains an alphabetical list of questions focused on vocabulary. Every Sunday School session should contain at least a couple of questions related to vocabulary. There are many words that are initially unfamiliar to children, and it is well to increase their familiarity with the meanings of Bible words, in the context of stories, every week. The vocabulary section of this book is not at all comprehensive but gives a sampling of words children will need to learn as their Bible knowledge increases.

There are several ways you can approach vocabulary questions. Sometimes, as a child reads the Bible story aloud, I simply tell him the meanings of strange words as we go along. This method has the advantage of keeping attention on the narrative, without getting the child bogged down in turning to a Bible dictionary repeatedly. When those same strange words appear in subsequent questions during class time, the child will most likely remember the meaning. Sometimes, however, it is good practice to look up words in either a regular dictionary or a Bible dictionary. Although Barbara Smith's *Young People's Bible Dictionary* is designed specifically for children, many words in the vocabulary section of this book are not defined in her book. Teachers should always be sure a particular word is in the dictionary before having a child turn to it. Not finding a word consumes valuable class time and can be frustrating to a young child.

Another difficulty with the use of dictionaries is the sometimes long, complicated defi-

nitions given for a word. Teachers might want to prepare a list of new vocabulary encountered in the Bible stories they are teaching, and simply have simple definitions written out for each of those words. A collection of new vocabulary words could be kept at Sunday School in a box with index cards arranged alphabetically.

### **Review Questions for Old and New Testaments**

A section of Review Questions follows the Vocabulary section. Children benefit from reviewing some stories almost every week. I try to allow plenty of time for review, and I find that this period of our class time together is generally the children's favorite. Children enjoy showing what they remember and getting a chance to share what they have learned over a period of time. I try to make the review sessions rather fast-paced. We don't dwell long on any one character, story, or time period. Regular review reinforces the stories and builds the children's confidence about what they know. If a child stumbles on a question, have another child quickly tell the relevant story. Or, review the highlights of that story yourself. Or, just skip that question and go on to one that is easier. Sometimes, if no one remembers an answer, I tell the class the answer and promise that they will see that question again — either before class is over or the following week. Consistent review sessions will enable the child to effortlessly memorize the names of major Bible people and associate their names with important stories and passages. For instance, regularly asking questions about Moses and the Ten Commandments helps the children link the two.

### **Bible Study Worksheets**

The last section of this book consists of Bible study worksheets, which were designed as homework assignments. They are usually

fairly simple, and students should be able to do a worksheet in about fifteen minutes. I recommend using worksheets only to review material that has already been covered in class. In other words, before a child attempts the worksheet about Jacob, he should already be familiar with all the stories covered in that worksheet. When I teach Sunday School, we usually only have time to read and discuss two or three stories per class period. Therefore, even with a focus on Jacob, it would probably take at least two weeks before I would assign the Jacob worksheet for homework. When I begin teaching a new group of students, it is usually at least a month before I give the first homework assignment. Once I begin giving homework, I do not necessarily assign a worksheet every week.

The worksheets are arranged in the same order as the outline for this book. They begin with Introductory Information about the Bible, the Old Testament, the New Testament, Vocabulary, and Review. There are two basic types of worksheets. The first type covers one individual and asks a series of questions about that person. The second type of worksheet includes a set of review questions grouped thematically. This type usually has the answers at the bottom of the page.

There are five worksheets that correspond to Introductory Information about the Bible. The titles of those worksheets are: Bible Design, Bible Themes, Literary Styles in the Bible, Famous Quotations, and Chronology. Only the worksheet titled Bible Design is appropriate for younger classes. The other four are for more advanced students and would logically follow many of the worksheets which center on a particular individual and ask more in-depth questions. One of the most difficult worksheets is Chronology. Students normally do the Chronology worksheet after all forty-three of the other worksheets are completed. Ideally, the child should

already be familiar with a Bible timeline when he tackles the Chronology worksheet.

The largest group of worksheets focuses on the Old Testament. I generally start with Abraham and Sarah, followed by Jacob and Joseph. Those stories are all found in Genesis and provide a solid foundation for future Bible study. There are nineteen worksheets with an Old Testament emphasis. After doing the three worksheets about the patriarchs, I would recommend doing a New Testament worksheet next. The Christmas Story is a logical first choice. I think it is wise to keep a balance between the Old and New Testaments when assigning the worksheets. Staying with the Old Testament until all the topics are completed would require too many consecutive weeks.

There are twelve worksheets focusing on New Testament topics. Some of the individuals mentioned are somewhat minor, compared to major figures such as Jesus, Abraham, Moses, David, and Paul. I recommend that as a general rule, a teacher cover the most important people and stories first, followed by the lesser known individuals.

The next two worksheets have to do with vocabulary: Biblical Vocabulary and Vocabulary Match. Again, the child should have encountered at least a few of these words during class sessions before they are given the worksheets. I recommend spacing these worksheets. A child will probably not enjoy doing vocabulary homework two weeks in a row.

Finally, there is a section of review worksheets. They include these titles: Prayer, Kings, Mothers, Women of the Bible, Who Said This?, and Z Words. Perhaps the easiest and most logical first choice for a review worksheet is the one entitled Prayer. Who Said This? requires the student to look up a series of quotes and is relatively easy for good readers.

The worksheets may be reproduced and used in any order by the teacher. Although the worksheets with one or two word answers at the bottom of the page tend to be the easier ones, they usually cover five to eight Bible stories and should be used for review.

### **Ideas for using the questions in Sunday School teaching**

Many of the comprehension questions in this book center on small details within the Bible stories. By looking carefully at the Bible verses, the children build a broad understanding from a simple beginning. Learning the details of a story often makes that story more alive for the children. The first step in Bible study is a simple comprehension of the vocabulary, plot, and characters.

Questions, particularly in areas of emphasis, are deliberately repetitive, asking the same thing in a new way. This varying of the questions is important to prevent boredom. It is certainly not intended that every question be used with every retelling of a particular story. Sometimes it happens that just one or two questions on a given passage are all that is necessary during one Sunday School session. The questions in this book are generally written to stand alone, and this means that they can be pulled out of the outline's order and asked as a review question without revision.

Using a question-and-answer teaching method with children has worked well for me. It is important to keep in mind, however, that knowing the "right answers" is not the goal. The goal is gaining familiarity with the Bible, "the Book of books."

The questions in this book may be used in a variety of ways. The first step in the teaching process is to read or tell a passage or story to the children. For the youngest children, stories such as Noah's ark, Daniel in the lions' den, or the Good Samaritan parable are excel-

lent first choices. Immediately follow the narrative with questions.

The children generally read aloud a card with the printed question on it, and then answer it. If they have trouble, other children are asked to help. In younger classes, a limited number of question cards are used over and over again. This gives the children the opportunity to master a few basic stories or verses and their correlative questions. The repetition enables the children to learn the answers during a class period or two. If the children are too young to read, I select simple, short questions and read them aloud to the class, pointing at the card (or, sometimes, each word on the card.)

At first, the children may have difficulty answering even the easiest comprehension question. Once they understand the teacher's expectations, however, the children will learn to listen carefully, both for the main ideas of the story and for details. With practice, the children will be able to demonstrate their comprehension of vocabulary, chronology, and the story's spiritual significance by answering simple questions. Children love to recite the facts of a story. Soon they are able to tell the story themselves. Once they have mastered the plot and characters of two or three Bible stories, the questions for those stories may be combined and used as a review tool.

Before teaching a Sunday School class, I make a short outline of material I plan to cover. Then, I pull from the card file questions that correspond to the given stories or passages for that day's lesson. Having the questions written on cards enables the children to read the questions aloud, allowing them to have the floor during class time more often. The written questions also serve as a signal that this is an important point — one the child is likely to see again sometime. Also, when things get bogged down in class (when I'm spending too long on one point), I can sense

the need for a change and simply move on to the next question, without having to give much thought to what should come next.

I have found it most effective to use a combination of *new* stories and *review* stories or passages during each class period. Children need to review the basics over and over again, both to recall a given passage and to provide a foundation for new insights on the material. The introduction of new material keeps the class dynamic. Reviewing familiar material, the children can demonstrate their mastery of a topic.

In a 45-minute Bible teaching session, I try to divide the time into sections. The first of these is a time to tell or read stories and passages. The next section is the time for questions and answers, with periods of extended discussion occurring naturally. In other words, the teacher can expand on a point raised in a question and try to lead the group into a discussion. Once finished, the class can move on to the next question. Finally, once the questions on the stories or passages featured that Sunday are finished, reviewing material from previous weeks is a good way to end the class.

Using the cards with questions on them in a Sunday School class in a competitive way usually is not a good idea. The weight of a right or wrong answer becomes too great, and wondering who answered the most questions correctly becomes an unnecessary distraction. What has worked best for me is to give each child a question/card in turn. The child gets to hold the card, whether he or she can answer correctly alone or not. By the end of a class period, each child has had the opportunity to focus on the same number of questions as every other child. Thus, when you have a newcomer in a class with some regular attendees, that newcomer has as many cards to hold as does anyone else. I try to give the easier questions to the newcomers, even if this means altering the order of who

gets the next question. The children understand and easily adapt.

Although most of the questions have one factual answer, some have the possibility of several different correct answers. Often interpretive questions elicit a wide variety of correct answers.

### **Using the Illustrations**

The illustrations in this book may be used in several different ways. For young children, these line drawings by Kristin Pratt Serafini may be copied and used for coloring. For all ages, the illustrations can be copied and used as a tool for teaching chronology. For example, teachers can point to the picture of Joseph in his coat of many colours and the one of baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph and ask, Who lived first? As children gain an understanding of who lived first, teachers may ask them to sort a group of five pictures chronologically, arranging them in order from left to right.

### **English Versions of the Bible and Bible Resources**

Any student of the Bible has to make decisions about what to read among the vast amount of material available regarding the Bible. Among the first of these decisions is which Bibles to use. There are numerous versions and translations of the English Bible available, including condensed, chronological, reference, study, retold, paraphrased, illustrated, online, and children's. Most Bible students use more than one type of Bible.

One source with a helpful, annotated list of Bibles and study aids is Robinson's *Teaching the Scriptures*, pages 119–136. Blair's *Abingdon Bible Handbook* gives a full description and history of many English versions in use today on pages 38–56.

Students of the Bible need a few basic tools, including a Bible dictionary and a concordance. Beyond that, there are numerous

books offering insight and background on the Bible. A visit to the library (public, college, or church) is one good way to learn what is available. Most books have bibliographies which will point to other sources. *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible* has four lengthy bibliographical essays, for example.

With young children I have enjoyed using some retold and simplified story books with illustrations. Usually, however, I prefer telling the Bible story in my own words or having the older children read directly from the Bible itself. In my view, gaining familiarity with the actual text of the Bible is one of the purposes of Sunday School.

### **Citations**

In most cases, if a child cannot answer a question, this book makes it easy for teacher and student to turn to the appropriate place in the Bible to find the answer. Citations for Bible stories are included for most questions. If there are no citations listed, as in the case of some of the review questions, teacher and child should consult a Bible concordance in book form (for example, *Cruden's*) or on a computer.

Very occasionally in this book, there will be a question without a citation because the child is expected to find the answer or verse without aid. These rare questions are for the more advanced student who is very familiar with the Scriptures. Generally speaking, I require very little memorization. I do point the students in my classes to Exodus 20 and Matthew 5 frequently and expect that they will know how to locate the Ten commandments and the Beatitudes without prompting after a few sessions.

### **The design of the Bible**

The outline of this book follows the order of English Bibles. For this reason, it is impor-

tant to consider how the sixty-six books of the Bible came to be organized the way they are.

The Bible is not just one book written by one author. It is more like a library of books. It was written over a period of many years by a number of different writers. Writing styles in the Bible vary considerably. One can find history, poetry, short stories, laws, prophecy, drama, letters, genealogy, biography, theology, essays, songs, revelation, sermons, and parables. The Hebrew Bible is arranged in three parts: the Law or Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings or Hagiographa.

In his book *How Came the Bible?*, Edgar J. Goodspeed notes that "Deuteronomy was the first presentation of the Hebrew law in anything resembling a book, and this book became the kernel of the Old Testament" (p. 24). He adds: "Wherever the Jews wandered, they organized synagogues and read and studied the Law. It became their supreme treasure" (p. 26). Eventually, the Law was translated from Hebrew into Greek. At this point, the Law was divided into five rolls and given the names we know them by today — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books are also referred to as the Pentateuch.

Hebrew literature that ultimately constituted Old Testament canon "grew up by degrees and was carefully preserved" (see "canon" in *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 143). Writings by the Prophets were next added to the Old Testament. In the Hebrew canon, the Prophets are divided into the Former (Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings) and the Latter (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve or "minor prophets," which follow directly after Ezekiel and have the same order as in the English Bible).

According to Blair's *Abingdon Bible Handbook*, "In Jewish circles at the time of Jesus much literature not in the Law and the

Prophets also was read, including the eleven books now in ‘the Writings’” (p. 30). The Writings (listed in the traditional Jewish arrangement) include these books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I and II Chronicles.

The canon of the Old Testament in the English Bible contains the same books as the Hebrew Bible. The main differences are the order, how they are counted, and how they are categorized or divided.

The English Bible is made up of two Testaments, the Old and the New. The Old Testament is further divisible into four parts: The Law (also called the Pentateuch or Books of Moses), the Books of History, the Books of Poetry and Wisdom Literature, and the Books of Prophecy. *That Ye May Teach the Children* uses these four divisions to help children see the relationship of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. Having children learn the names of all thirty-nine books in order is desirable, but rarely accomplished. Therefore, learning the four major categories of each Testament is a more reachable goal.

Teachers should be cautious about presenting this arrangement as the only acceptable one. Although helpful to beginning students of the Bible, it can be misleading. For example, a number of the Books of Prophecy were written in poetry. Proverbs is a collection of maxims or wise sayings and is not technically poetry. Designating the first five books as the Books of Moses makes the designation parallel with the Books of History, but is not accurate since Moses himself wrote little or none of the books. Still, I have concluded that categorizing the Old Testament books is helpful to children. For more information on the arrangement of the books of the Bible, please consult one of the many reference books which address this issue more fully.

The **Old Testament** consists of thirty-nine books divided as follows:

**the Law**, also called the Books of Moses or the Pentateuch (five: Genesis through Deuteronomy)

**the Books of History** (twelve: Joshua through Esther)

**the Books of Poetry and Wisdom**

**Literature** (five: Job through the Song of Solomon)

**the Books of Prophecy** (seventeen: Isaiah through Malachi)

The **New Testament** consists of twenty-seven books divided as follows:

**Gospels** (four: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

**history** (one: The Acts of the Apostles, a sequel to Luke)

**epistles or letters** (twenty-one: Romans through Jude)

**Revelation or Apocalypse** (one: Revelation, the last book of the Bible)

### **Who wrote the Bible?**

With very young students I spend very little time on the topic of the Bible’s authorship. I explain that many different people wrote the Bible over a long period of time. When I ask the question, “Who wrote the Bible?” I am simply checking to see that the children understand this simple point. Young children accept the explanation that we don’t know the names of many of the Bible writers.

Older students might enjoy exploring the subject of the Bible’s authorship in more detail. One source I have found helpful is Richard E. Friedman’s book, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, which is available in paperback.

### **Scripture quotations, spellings, capitalization and abbreviations**

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible. The spellings of personal names, geo-

## 8 Introduction

graphical place names, and various other words are those used in the King James Version of the Bible. I have usually retained the spelling and capitalization of words used in the King James Version of the Bible to enable users of my book to quickly find words in a Bible concordance. These spellings are frequently the British spelling or a less used spelling, and they include such words as: colour, neighbour and recompence.

CE, meaning “of the common era,” and BCE, meaning “before the common era,” are equivalent to A.D. and B.C.

### **A note about the Gospel of Mark**

Bible scholars question whether the last twelve verses of Mark were an original part of this Gospel. The Revised Standard Version prints these verses (*Mark 16:9–20*) in small, italic type as a marginal note. Thus, questions in this volume relating to these Mark citations are enclosed in parentheses.