

STUDENT JOURNAL

FATHOM BIBLE STUDIES

# FATHOM

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE STORY OF GOD

the bible

WHERE IT CAME FROM AND HOW TO READ IT

**FATHOM: THE BIBLE  
WHERE IT CAME FROM AND HOW TO READ IT  
STUDENT JOURNAL**

Copyright © 2017 Youth Ministry Partners and Abingdon Press.

All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission can be addressed to Permissions Office, 2222 Rosa L. Parks Blvd., P.O. Box 280988, Nashville, TN 37228-0988, faxed to 615-749-6128, or e-mailed to [permissions@umpublishing.org](mailto:permissions@umpublishing.org).

Scripture quotations unless noted otherwise are from the Common English Bible. Copyright © 2011 by the Common English Bible. All rights reserved. Used by permission. [www.CommonEnglishBible.com](http://www.CommonEnglishBible.com).

Writer: Bart Patton  
Editor: Ben Howard  
Designer: Keely Moore

Websites are constantly changing. Although the websites recommended in this resource were checked at the time this unit was developed, we recommend that you double-check all sites to verify that they are still live and that they are still suitable for students before doing the activity.

ISBN: 9781501837715

PACP10508408-01

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 — 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

# CONTENTS

About Fathom.....	v
Welcome.....	vii
Fathom Bible Genre Guide.....	viii
Fathom Bible Storylines Chart.....	ix
Introduction to The Bible.....	x
Lesson 1: A History of the Bible.....	13
Lesson 2: The Genres in the Bible.....	27
Lesson 3: The Storylines of the Bible.....	41
Lesson 4: How to Interpret the Bible.....	55
Takeaway.....	69
Explore More.....	71



# About Fathom

Fathom.

It's such a big word. It feels endless and deep. It's the kind of word that feels like it should only be uttered by James Earl Jones with the bass turned all the way up.

Which means it's the perfect word to talk about a God who's infinite and awe-inspiring. It's also the perfect word for a book like the Bible that's filled with miracles and inspiration, but also wrestles with stories of violence and pain and loss.

The mission of *Fathom* is to dive deep into the story of God that we find in the Bible. You'll encounter Scriptures filled with inspiration and encouragement, and you'll also explore passages that are more complicated and challenging.

Each lesson will focus on one passage, but will also launch into the larger context of how God's story is being told through that passage. More importantly, each lesson will explore how God's story is intimately tied to our own stories, and how a God who is beyond our imagination can also be a God who loves us deeply and personally.

We invite you to wrestle with this and more as we dive deep into God's story.



# Welcome

This book is yours. Or at least, it will be.

This book is designed to assist you as you explore, engage, and wrestle with everything that you'll experience over the next four weeks.

Each week during this study, this book will be filled with Scripture, activities, and questions to encourage and inspire you while you work your way through the Bible with your friends.

While we'll offer suggestions on how to use this journal, we want you to truly make it yours. Fill it with ideas and prayers. Take notes. Draw. Write poetry. Express yourself! Do whatever it is you need to do to help you remember what you've learned here.

Let this book be your canvas for creativity and self-expression. Let it be a place for honest questions and emotions that you may not feel comfortable expressing anywhere else, because at the end of this study, this book is yours.

You can use it to remember and reflect on what you learned, or you can use it to keep studying on your own, to keep questioning and exploring. We've included two sections at the end, "Takeaway" and "Explore More," to help you in that quest.

As you begin, we pray that you encounter the majesty and love of God through this study. We pray that you dive deep into the story of God and creation, and we pray that you find peace and hope in these lessons.

# The Fathom 66

Bible Genre Guide

ENTER ZIP OR LOCATION

## Stories

TICKETS



Showtimes: Parts of Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts

## The Law

TICKETS



Showtimes: Parts of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

## Wisdom

TICKETS



Showtimes: Job, Some Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, James

## Psalms

TICKETS



Showtimes: Psalms

## The Prophets

TICKETS



Showtimes: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Michah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

## Letters

TICKETS



Showtimes: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

## Apocalyptic Writings

TICKETS



Showtimes: Daniel, Revelation

# The Fathom Bible Storylines

**Create**

**1**

**Invite**

**I**

**Act**

**A**

**Redeem**

**R**

**Experience**

**E**

**Hope**

**H**

# Introduction to The Bible

## Background

The Bible we study today is a collection of 66 books—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament—comprised of laws, histories, stories, poems, and letters exploring God’s relationship with humanity. These books were originally written in three languages: Hebrew in the Old Testament, Greek in the New Testament, and Aramaic in the Books of Ezra and Daniel, as well as various other passages. Today the Bible is the most translated book of all time and is available in over five hundred different languages.

It only makes sense that a book written and compiled over hundreds of years by dozens of writers would be complicated and sometimes confusing. Add to that language differences and the need to wade through a variety of genres, and the Bible can look downright daunting.

This study is about empowering you to begin that task. Over the next four lessons, you’ll learn about the history of the Bible and the types of stories it tells. More importantly, you’ll learn and practice the methods you’ll need to read and understand the Bible for yourself.

In some ways, the Bible is like a treasure chest. It’s filled to the brim with riches, if only you can find the key to unlock it. It’s a book filled with stories of courage and wisdom, inspiration and practical advice; but above all, it’s a book that gives us insight into a God who is both far bigger than we can ever imagine and by our side at all times. This study, if you’re willing, will help you find the key to unlocking this holy book and all that it has to offer.

# Fathom Strategy for Reading and Understanding the Bible

“The Bible is written for us, but not to us.”

This where we start on our quest. When we read the Bible, we have to constantly remember that the Bible is written for us, but not to us. Understanding the original context of the Bible helps us ask the right questions when interpreting Scripture.

For the first steps in our process, we need to understand how each passage we read functions in context and examine the historical background. When we read a passage, we should ask questions about the era, location, and culture of the original audience, as well as how a particular writing relates to the larger narrative of the Bible. This strategy not only helps us understand a passage’s primary meaning, it also gives us guidance on how to translate that meaning into our specific circumstances today.

## Working Definitions

**Canon**—the books of the Bible collectively recognized by the Christian church throughout time as inspired by God

**Covenant**—a solemn promise between God and God’s people that defines their relationship to one another

**Exegesis**—the critical process of explaining and interpreting the Bible

**Inductive Bible Study**—a type of study that moves from generalized thoughts to specific application by using the Bible as the primary source of understanding

**Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)**—an ancient Latin practice of reading Scripture that involves reading, meditation, and prayer



# A History of the Bible

## Summary

I will gain an understanding of how we have come to have the Bible we read and use today.

## Overview

- **Sync** with the concepts of transmission and translation through a group activity.
- **Tour** through the history of the Bible, exploring the key concepts of inspiration, transmission, and translation.
- **Reveal** how inspiration, transmission, and translation can affect our faith through journaling.
- **Build** understanding of the Christian tradition of translation through an activity allowing us to personalize the history we have learned.
- **After** the lesson, apply these ideas through activities that encourage the use of multiple translations of the Bible.

## Anchor Point

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17—*Every Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.*

**So You Think You Can Dance**

## Dance Teacher Instructions

This activity involved three processes: inspiration, transmission, and translation. The three dance teachers were inspired when they saw the original dance. Their writings transmitted the instructions of the dance. Then, your group translated the teacher's writings into a dance.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17—*Every Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character, so that the person who belongs to God can be equipped to do everything that is good.*

Inspiration—

Transmission—

Translation—

---

## Translations of the Bible

### **Verbal Equivalence**

(Word for Word)

NASB

KJV

NKJV

NRSV

NIV

CEB

### **Dynamic Equivalence**

(Thought for Thought)

NLT

Paraphrase

THE MESSAGE

## History of the Bible Timeline

Pre-History	Oral traditions and storytelling
3200 BC	Early Mesopotamian/Sumerian writings
2000 BC	Birth of Abraham
2000–1500 BC	Book of Job written (possibly)
1500 BC	Moses receives the Law on Mount Sinai
1000 BC	Israel begins recording history; David is king
621 BC	Book of the Law discovered in temple by King Josiah (2 Kings 22)
587 BC	Jerusalem destroyed; ancient Israelite writings compiled in captivity
250–135 BC	Books of the Old Testament translated into Greek Septuagint
200 BC–AD 70	Dead Sea Scrolls transcribed in Essene community
AD 30	Ministry of Jesus
AD 52	Paul writes first letter to Thessalonian church
AD 70	Mark writes his Gospel
AD 80–90	Luke writes his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles
AD 80–100	Matthew writes his Gospel
AD 100	Last of the New Testament books written
AD 350	Books and segments of the Bible translated into Latin
AD 383–405	Jerome translates the entire Bible into Latin, referred to as the Vulgate Bible
AD 393	Council of Hippo defines New Testament books
AD 397	Council of Carthage issues a complete canon of the Bible

---

AD 600–1100	Masoretic Text of Hebrew Scriptures compiled
AD 1225	Present system of chapters added
AD 1382	Bible translated into Middle English by John Wycliffe
AD 1455	Gutenberg makes first printed Bible with movable type (in Latin)
AD 1516	Erasmus publishes a Greek-Latin parallel New Testament
AD 1517	Luther starts the Protestant Reformation
AD 1526	Tyndale publishes the first English New Testament from Greek
AD 1539	The Great Bible published in English as the first authorized Bible of the Church of England
AD 1551	Present system of verses added
AD 1611	King James Version published in English
AD 1946–1956	981 Essene manuscripts found in caves near the Dead Sea (Old Testament)
AD 1978	New International Version published in English
AD 1989	New Revised Standard Version published in English
AD 2011	Common English Bible Version published in English

## Journal Questions

1. How do you think differently about the Bible after today's lesson?

2. What is your personal understanding of inspiration?

3. What are some ways that you think other people understand inspiration, and how does that affect the way they treat the Bible?

4. Does God still speak to us through the Bible today? How?



## Jerome

Jerome was a church elder and theologian—the protégé of Pope Damasus I—who lived in the fourth century. He is recognized by the Catholic Church as the patron saint of translators and librarians. As a young adult, he was a devoted scholar. While battling a grave illness in the year 374, he received a vision that caused him to surrender his life to God and the study of theology. After a stint with a monastic order in the Syrian desert, he came to be the secretary of the Pope. In Rome, he was assigned to translate the New Testament and Psalms into Latin from the Greek New Testament and Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Old Testament). The Church used this translation, called the Vulgate Bible, for centuries.

---

## John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe was an English theologian, philosopher, and Oxford seminary professor during the fourteenth century. At the time, the Bible was only available in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and Wycliffe believed that the Bible should be translated into the common spoken language of the people. In this belief, he was at odds with the powerful Roman Catholic Church. He was disgusted by the corruption that he saw in church leadership, and believed that everyone should have the ability to read the Bible themselves, without it being interpreted for them by priests. In 1382, he and his followers, known as Lollards, completed a translation of the Latin Vulgate into Middle English. His translation was considered a rebellious act against the Church. This act, along with his sermons against excesses and abuses within the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, led the Church to declare him a heretic at the Council of Constance in 1415, thirty-one years after his death. The Council also ordered all of his books and writings be burned. In 1428, Pope Martin V ordered that his body be exhumed and burned, and his ashes cast into a river. His work made the Bible accessible to laypeople and heavily influenced the early leaders of the Protestant Reformation.

## King James

---

King James was raised in Scotland and was influenced by the early Presbyterian movement. When he took the throne of England in 1603 after Queen Elizabeth's death, there was a great division within the Church of England. Papists, Puritans, Presbyterians, and Separatists were all in disagreement over Christian traditions and matters of control within the state. Papists wanted England to return to the Roman Catholic Church. Puritans wanted to take the Reformation even further, eliminating all Catholic elements from the church. Presbyterians wanted to eliminate the hierarchy of church leadership. The Separatists wanted the state totally out of the church's affairs. Desperately desiring unity within the church, King James called together a conference to bring together leaders from all of the divided parties. Instead of addressing the petitions from the rival factions, James ordered a new, accurate, readable translation of the Bible, to be "read by the whole church." James believed a standard text could be unifying amidst a culture of discord. Before the King James Bible, different religious groups were further divided by their use of unique translations, commentaries, and prayer books. The King James Bible's authorization, as well as its beauty and scholarship, satisfied the demands of many diverse religious groups within England.

---

## The Essenes

The Essenes were a small sect of religious Jews who held to a strict communal life. They were contemporaries of the Pharisees and Sadducees during the first century AD. They practiced voluntary poverty and daily washing rites for purification. They were devoted to charity as well as to communal prayer and meals. They did not believe in personal property and had strict laws concerning the sabbath. They often practiced celibacy. They were dedicated to a life of holiness and purity, and the study of the Scriptures was an important part of their daily life. The Essenes copied and preserved thousands of sacred Hebrew texts. Many of these were discovered in the mid-twentieth century in caves near the Dead Sea. These documents, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, are some of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the biblical texts.

## **My Favorite Verse**

Look up a favorite Bible verse on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Select three different translations of the verse and note the differences and similarities. Finish by writing the verse in your own words.

## **An Encouraging Word**

Find a Bible verse that would be an encouragement to a friend. Use [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) to choose the most appropriate translation. Text or direct-message this verse to your friend.

## **Inspiration Transmitted**

Take a picture, or series of pictures, representing how you feel about God's faithfulness in the history of the Bible. Post it on social media with [#fathombible](https://twitter.com/fathombible). What image helps you to reflect on inspiration, transmission, and translation?

# PRAYER FATHOM

---

God over all of time, we thank you for your great kindness and care in providing us with the Bible. Help us, in Jesus' name, to understand its life-changing message of love. Amen.