

## Whats the deal with the Bible - why is it important?

### Welcome & catch up

#### Game - Pictionary

**Intro** - God invites us to be part of His story to follow him.

The Bible is the story of God's people from the beginning, it helps us understand why we're here, how God met with people in the past and how He meets with people now.

It helps us know how to live, who God is and this helps us understand who he has made us to be.



**Ask - What do we know about The Bible already?** Whichever facts they share give encouragement and the ones they don't, read out below.

#### What is it? - Bible facts -

- The Bible **is an old book but it's not outdated or irrelevant** to life today and its pages contain lots of useful information that we can't get anywhere else.
- God inspired the writers of the Bible and everything that was meant to be included is included. He wouldn't have let anything important get missed out or let rubbish get added in.
- The word "bible" is from the Greek *ta biblia*, means **"the scrolls"** or **"the books."**
- The **first Biblical stories were passed down orally** and only written down later by various authors. Most Biblical scholars believe the Book of Genesis was the first book to be written down.

- **The Bible contains 66 different books** including letters, poems, law, true stories, parables, metaphors, songs, eye witness accounts, & more.
- Thought to be written by **40 different authors**.

- **The Bible is split into two sections**, the Old Testament (before Jesus was born) and the New Testament (mostly after Jesus was born).

- The Old Testament is also the Hebrew Holy scriptures of the Jews. The first 5 books of the old testament (by Moses) and the psalms (by David) is in the Muslim Qu'ran and it also contains a section called, 'gospel' which is the teachings of Jesus who

An infographic titled "Books of the Bible" with a central image of a bookshelf. The bookshelf is divided into "Old Testament" and "New Testament" sections. The Old Testament section includes books like Law, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st Samuel, 2nd Samuel, 1st Kings, 2nd Kings, 1st Chronicles, 2nd Chronicles, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Isaiah. The New Testament section includes Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1st Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st Thessalonians, 2nd Thessalonians, 1st Peter, 2nd Peter, 1st John, 2nd John, 3rd John, James, Hebrews, and Revelation. Surrounding the bookshelf are various statistics: "Over 5 billion copies printed", "Translated into 532 languages", "Over 100 million copies sold each year", "The Old testament is also the Holy scriptures of the Jews", "Some of the books of the Bible are also in the Muslim Qu'ran", "approx. 40 human authors", "Contains approx 2,500 prophecies", "Old Testament written over 1000 years", "New Testament written over 50-75 years", and "Oldest Biblical text found is about 2700 years old". At the bottom, it says "The Bible isn't organised in chronological order but by type of writing".

- Muslims believe was a prophet (not God's son) in the same way as Moses, David, and Mohammed.
- There are lots of prophecies (God inspired truth) in the old testament that spoke of Jesus before he came, which came true. There are also other prophecies too, approx. **2,500 prophecies in total appear in the Bible**, about 2,000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter—no errors. 500 of them are things still expected to happen in the future.
- Over **100 million copies of the Bible are sold each year**.
- The Guinness Book of World Records estimates that more than **5 billion copies** of the Bible have been printed.
- The full Bible has been **translated into 532 languages**. It's been partially translated into 2,883 languages.
- The **old testament was written over 1,000 years**, the **New Testament was written over 50-75 years**.
- The **oldest Biblical text found is about 2700 years old**. Of course, this is just what we've been able to locate and date.
- The books within the **Bible are not organised chronologically** (in date order) but are organized by what type of literature they are—historical, poetic, prophetic, or letters of instruction. Then *within* those categories, they are in chronological order. Really useful timeline in the youth bible on page 14 to 17
- **The Bible has authority and contains God's truth.**

## Video How do we trust the Bible?

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/why-trust-the-bible/>

## How do we read it -

It was designed to be explored together not just read alone in your bedroom- we all see things differently and perspective can be really useful to unlocking some of the wisdom in the Bible.

Understanding the context of each part is important and asking why God put it there - what was he hoping we would learn from it, asking 'God what do you want to teach me?'

There are lots of ways we can read it:

- You can just open the book at the beginning and read the book - but this is probably one of the hardest ways!
- Pick a particular book of the Bible to read and work through, reading a bit at a time.
- Use a daily reading plan (word4u2day) or devotional
- Use a study guide pg 19/20 of youth bible has one
- Listen to an audio Bible.
- Use a Bible app
- Read it and explore it together with a friend as a family or with a group
- Search for a verse that helps you at a time you need it.
- Meditate on a particular verse (Lectio Divina) and let it sink in.

**HOW TO READ THE BIBLE?**

- \* You can just open the book at the beginning and read the book from start to finish - but this is probably one of the hardest ways!
- \* Pick a particular book of the Bible to read and work through, reading a bit at a time. One of the gospels (Matthew, Mark Luke or John, who all wrote biographies of Jesus) is a great place to start.
- \* Use a daily reading plan (word4u2day) or another devotional
- \* Use a study guide
- \* Listen to an audio Bible.
- \* Use a Bible app
- \* Read it and explore it together with a friend as a family or with a group
- \* Search for a verse that helps you at a time you need it.
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Images included: 'Word4u2day' magazine, 'SHE READS TRUTH' app, 'YouVersion' app, 'NEW BIBLE IN ONE Year' book, and 'BIBLE STUDY NOTES for Teens' worksheet.

## Why should we read it? -

The Bible says this about itself:

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

**James 1:22 "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."**

It's not just a nice book, it contains useful guidance, teaching, training and advice for living the best life.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**  
you know those from whom you learned it,<sup>16</sup> and how from infancy<sup>17</sup> you have known the holy Scriptures,<sup>18</sup> which are able to make you wise<sup>19</sup> for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>20</sup> **All Scripture is God-breathed<sup>21</sup> and is useful for teaching,<sup>22</sup> rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,<sup>23</sup> so that the man of God<sup>24</sup> may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.<sup>25</sup>**

**4** In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead,<sup>2</sup> and in view of his

**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

- James 1:22 -

Christianity is about following and choosing to become more like Jesus. The only way we can understand who Jesus was and is, is from reading the Bible. Jesus himself was a Jew, people only started calling themselves Christians - 'Christ- like' after Jesus death to set themselves apart from others who didn't believe that Jesus was God's son.

The Bible is written by many authors over thousands of years, most of them never met each other and some of them won't have known or read each others writing or known each others experiences of God but

God's character and qualities are the same throughout the whole book. We understand who God is from The Bible, He's loving, he's kind, he is powerful, he is wise etc.

Reading and understanding The Bible is a huge part of us knowing who God is and its only when we know that, that we fully understand who we are and how we fit into God's story. The others are our own experience of God at work in our lives and the world around us, and prayer which keeps our connection with God going.

**Youth question** - How do we know God is looking down at us just because a book tells us?

**Answer - Personal story from a leader - Becky's story (example)**

*It's not just through the Bible that I believe God exists, it's also from personal experience. I've prayed and things have changed or prayers have been answered. I've felt God's presence. I've seen and heard real stories of him changing peoples lives and healing people. I've also found hope in what the Bible says, when I've felt alone, hopeless or had low self esteem I have cheered myself up by being reminded of the truth from God that I've learnt in the Bible - God will never leave me or forsake me, God loves me, God has caught every tear I've ever cried in a jar etc. There have been times in my life I've read the whole Bible in a year - using a plan, I've used study guide, read it in small groups, read it on my own, and times where I've not read it at all. When I have read it It's helped me know how to live, given me a purpose and at the moment I'm trying to read it every morning with breakfast, even though I've read it before God still continues to teach me new things through what I read.*

The Bible says:

Romans 1:20, Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made.

Matthew 7:7 <sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

If we look for God we can find Him.

**Any other questions?**

**Reflection video** - God is desperate for a relationship with us and wants to connect with us though The Bible <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/connection-with-god-bible/>

**Pray**

**extras:** <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/how-was-the-bible-put-together/>



## Prayer - what is the point of it?

### Welcome and brief catch ups. 5 mins

**Game - 5 mins** guess the Disney Movie from emojis via screen share <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8V7Bw-03ZJ0>



### Intro - What is prayer? 1 mins

Prayer is how we communicate with God, any time, anywhere, sometimes that might be out loud, sometimes in our heads and sometimes it might be recognising God with us. God is always listening to our prayers, it seems impossible, there are so many people in the world - how could God possibly hear everyone all at once - but God isn't a person - he's a spiritual being with more powers than you or I, and he can listen to everyone all at once.

*Prayer - What Is the Point?*

### Why should we pray? 2 mins

God created us to be in relationship with him. We can't see God physically but he promises he is always with us. Through prayer we connect with the God who made us. We understand more of God, we feel different and we keep that connection with God going and deepen it.

We can use prayer to ask God for things, thank God for things, recognise who he is and his power, help release our worries, carry other people to God, encourage others by praying for them and more.

It's very rare that people hear God's actual voice answering back but prayer does make a difference. When we spend time with God in prayer things happen - not just if our prayers get answered but more than that. Through the process of prayer we change, sometimes our perspective, sometimes the way we feel (we feel better, less worried, more peaceful, etc), sometimes we receive wisdom or inspiration about what to do, sometimes we understand more about God or ourselves.

**Video 2.56 mins:** <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/connection-with-god-prayer/>

### How do we pray? 1 mins

Prayer has many different forms, and as we are all different, we will probably find we all have a unique way of connecting with God. There are so many ways to pray - see picture (you might want to put this on a slide).

Prayer is an ongoing conversation and understanding of God being with us. It's being honest with God about the things we care about - its not about saying the right thing or what we think he wants to hear.



Praying out loud seems like a very scary thing at first. It's a way to encourage others, show our support in praying for them & something we share together. Sometimes we can feel full of nerves to pray out loud, but we shouldn't worry about saying the wrong thing, God knows what we mean even if we can't express it the way we want to and it doesn't matter if we pray for a long time or if it is short and sweet. The more we pray out loud the more confident we become at it.

### How do we even begin to talk to God? 5 to 10 mins

Some people start their prayers with Dear God, Dear Jesus, Hi dad, Heavenly Father, use whatever language you want that works for you.

The Bible gives us a great framework for how to pray in The Lords Prayer (we use this one at St Marks on Sundays each week after Communion); you can find it in the Bible in Luke and/or Matthew.

Jesus used it to explain to the disciples how to pray and we can still use it today as a prayer to read out together and as a way to structure our own prayers. We put this on a **Slide**.

*We're going to break down and explain what the different parts of the Lords prayer mean and why it's like a framework to help us know how to pray.*

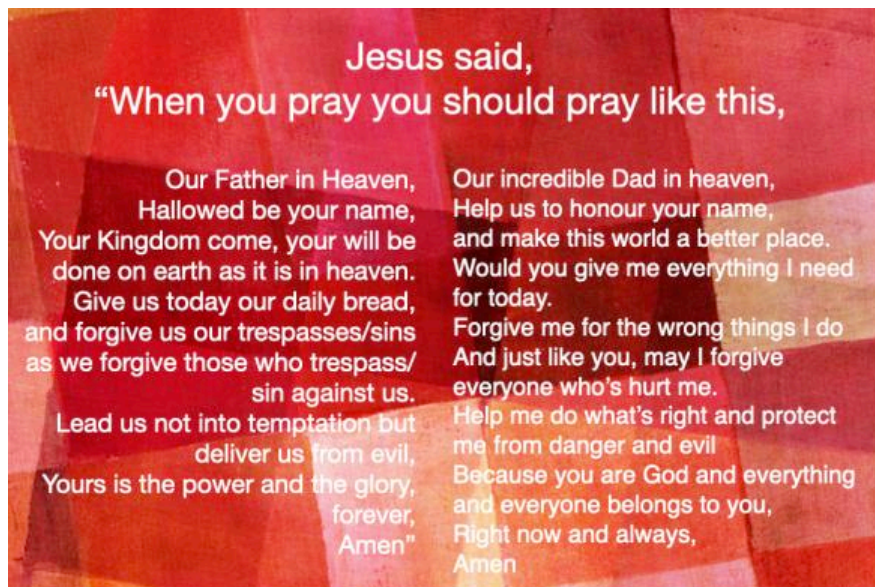
- There are some words in there that we don't use a lot so let's break it down, it starts by addressing God by one of his names, hallowed is an old word that means holy.
- Your Kingdom come is another way of saying - His way is better than ours.
- Give us today our daily bread is about asking him to give us what we need.
- We ask God for forgiveness for our sins or trespasses which means the things we've done wrong,
- We thank him for his forgiveness and we remember to forgive others and treat others well
- Deliver us from temptation is about asking God to help us with our struggles and lead us in the right direction,
- Lastly we remember his power - remembering he can do more than we ask or imagine,
- And we end with the word Amen. Amen definition: uttered at the end of a prayer or hymn, meaning 'so be it'. Also means 'I agree'.

We've also got a more youth version of the Lords prayer on the slide, which is in maybe a simpler language. The Lords Prayer framework helps us remember prayer is about asking, thanking, appreciation, listening to God, doing the right thing/being led by God and saying sorry to him when we've messed up.

### **Bible verses about prayer: 10 mins**

(ask different people to look up each of the verses, when everyone has found the verse they are going to read - take it in turns to read them out)

- Pg 1471, **1 John 5:14** <sup>14</sup> We have courage in God's presence, because **we are sure that he hears us** if we ask him for anything that is according to his will.
- Pg 1397, **Ephesians 6:18** <sup>18</sup> Do all this in prayer, **asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion,** as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people.
- Pg 1347, **Romans 12:12** <sup>12</sup> Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles, & **pray at all times.**
- Pg 1341, **Romans 8:26** <sup>26</sup> In the same way **the Spirit also comes to help us,** weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express.
- Pg 1403, **Philippians 4:6** <sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything, but **in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart.**
- Pg 1455, **James 5:13-15** <sup>13</sup> **Are any among you in trouble? They should pray.** Are any among you happy? They should sing praises. <sup>14</sup> Are any among you sick? They should send for the church elders, who will pray for them and rub olive oil on them in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> **This prayer made in faith will heal the sick;** the Lord will restore them to health, and the sins they have committed will be forgiven.



## Summary

You know, prayer isn't like a vending machine, where you put in your money and what you want always comes out. Imagine for a moment if everyone's prayers did get answered the way they wanted every time. The world would go crazy! Everyone who wanted to would win the lottery, God would say yes to everyone's selfish desires including revenge. Sometimes what we want is not always what's best for us.

**God does always answer our prayers**, but not always like we think. He sees the bigger picture, what would be best for us. He also wants to teach us patience, resilience and other things and we only learn patience through waiting, we only learn resilience through struggles, sometimes we have to go through difficult things to learn and grow - but through the midst of it God is there helping us by giving us strength, patience, and a different perspective - we can also use our stories of how God helped us persevere to help others. Sometimes we want the hard times to just end & go away but facing it might actually make us stronger than we were before.

Sometimes we don't get answers because we ask for the wrong reasons, Sometimes our motives are selfish. Sometimes what we think will make us happy won't actually make us happy. Sometimes what we want might have a really negative impact on someone else. Remember God is your heavenly Dad, and it is for your good he sometimes says no. He is in charge and he knows way more than we do, he knows the future.

Think of God answering prayers like a traffic light system...

STOP No – I know what's ahead and have something better for you.

WAIT. Yes, but not this instant. I'll give it to you at the perfect time.

GO. Yes, enjoy!

**Prayer is all about trust.** We believe God is listening and that he could do what we ask but we also trust that God knows the future and has the best for us and those around us. That is why some people pray, using language like, 'God if it's within your will, please can you do this'. Jesus himself prayed, 'not my will but yours be done.' We pray with faith that God can do things but knowing sometimes he won't because there is a bigger better plan in place that we cannot see. Sometimes our dreams and prayers are small and God wants to do much more.

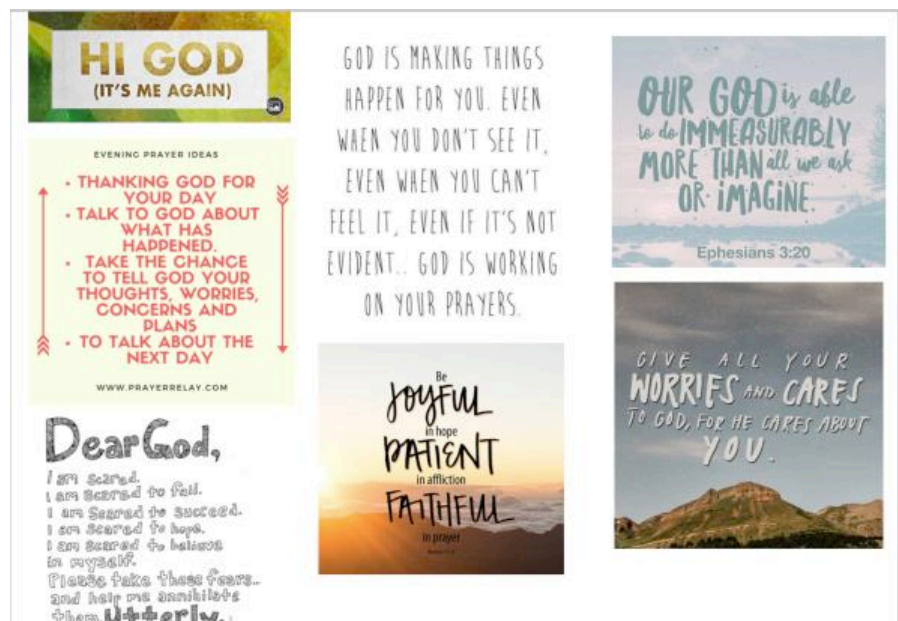
Prayer is a habit that we can get better at and we each have to figure out what works for us in our rhythm of life. None of us will always get it right, but each day we can try again.

**Remember:**

**God is able to do way more than we ask or imagine.**

**God is working even when we don't feel it or see it.**

**God loves us and wants to hear about our cares and worries.**



extras:

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/helpmepray>

<http://www.trypraying.co.uk/stories/>

<https://vimeo.com/96901767> - Josh's story praying in the holding cell



# What does it mean to be transformed?

**Hellos and catching up:** 10 mins

**How have your weeks been?**

**Intro:** As Christians we believe in a God of transformation but how can God change our lives and the world we live in? We're going to be exploring that today together.

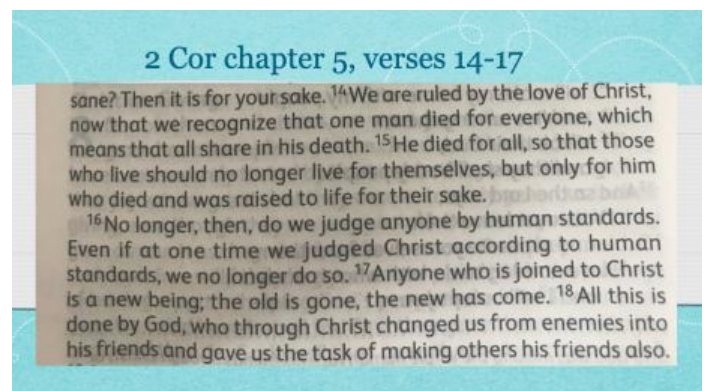
Today's video shows young people sharing their stories of how God has transformed them through reading the Bible. <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/peoples-stories/3mins>

It's not just the Bible that transformed those young people but God working through it. The Bible says that when we become Christians we don't live for ourselves anymore but instead we choose to live for God. We don't judge anymore by human standards. We become new beings. [Pg 1375, 2 Cor 5:14-17](#)

Some translations say we become new creations. When we choose to believe in God and follow him, we begin to change, our behaviour, our thinking, how we view and treat others, our outlook on life and our decisions. When we follow God's way we become angry at injustices, we have more empathy for others and we want to fix the problems in the world.

But God doesn't just take over and change us - we have to allow ourselves to be transformed. Each day we wake up and choose to follow God, each time we make an

important decision we can either do our own thing or try to follow what we think God would want us to do.



## Romans chapter 12, verses 1 to 2

**Life in God's Service**  
**12** So then, my brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. **2** Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God — what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

Pg 1346, **Romans 12:1-2** *Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.*

God wants to transform us and use us to transform the world around us. Part of the

Lords Prayer that we looked at last time is 'Your Kingdom come' - bringing God's kingdom here. God's Kingdom is hope, love, peace, calm, equality, justice, joy etc. We have a part to play. Our choices matter and we can get wisdom and learn how to make them in the best way from The Bible and praying to follow God's way instead of our own. We've got a second short video today to help us think about how we make wise decisions.

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/making-wise-decisions/>

We might think we know best, but we can't see the big picture, God knows it more than anyone because he made the world and everything in it. He knows which choices will work out badly and which ones will be good for us. God's way is never selfish and sometimes our own way is. God knows how our choices will affect us and those around us, he is the only one with enough knowledge and wisdom to help us know what to do.

Jesus on the night before he died, prayed 'Not my will but Gods will be done'.

Pg 1246, Luke 22:39-46. Jesus prayed that God would help him but if he had to suffer then he would follow God's bigger plan. When we pray and make decisions it should be the same kind of thing, we know God has the power and the ability to answer our prayers exactly as we want but also we know God is the only one who sees every outcome and knows the best one, so we pray for God's way to happen.

When it comes to wisdom and how we make decisions we can pray for God to lead us or prompt us to make the right choices. Deep down most of the time we all know what the right thing to do is, but sometimes it's hard to know exactly what to do because it might not be clear cut. We can find wisdom in the Bible, by asking other people who share your faith who could help you decide what to do, and we can pray for wisdom too. Sometimes we have to pray for help to see the world through God's eyes so we can learn to be bothered about what he is and love people like he does without judgement.

God loves you and wants the best for you.

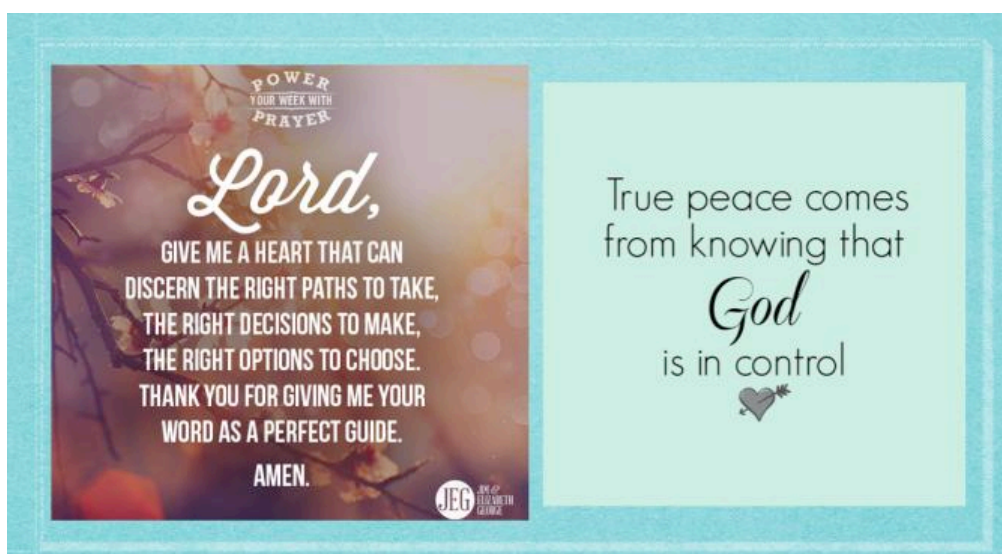
God wants to help you become the best version of who you are.

God wants to use you to transform the world we live in.

Guilt doesn't come from God but freedom, joy and hope do.

**How could God transform you and your life in amazing ways?**

**What can we pray for today that needs transforming by the power of God?**



Pray

Game: Guess the logo [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tux4\\_N-tM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tux4_N-tM) (5 mins)



## What is God's Big Story?

How are you? Catching up 5 mins

**Game: Read my Lips?** (choose a player and give them a phrase or sentence to share if using zoom you can do this by directly messaging them in the chat feature, they then mute their video and say the line - the other players have to guess what they are saying just from lip reading. Take as many guesses until the correct answer is guessed or the players give up!) 5 mins

**Intro:** Have you ever wondered, what is the overarching story in The Bible and how do we fit into God's big story? We're going to be exploring that today.

God wants us to choose to follow him. God wants to use us to bring hope to the world.

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/the-timeline/>

## How do we fit into God's big story? 10 mins.

(Use the images on the right to tell the whole quick version story of The Bible)

The story of The Bible is essentially this:

**Creation** - God, the three in one, the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit create the universe and everything in it.

God chooses to make people out of love because he wants someone else to share relationship with. He makes us with choices and free will because otherwise we would be robots and real love is a choice and can't be forced. Humans and God live together in a perfect place.

**Fall** - Humans mess up, they make choices that go against God & those choices lead them away from God. As a result of those choices, Sin, everything changes, instead of living with God they are separated, instead of things being easy they become hard. God confuses the language of the world and scatters humanity.

**Promise** - The Bible tells us about lots of different people some who choose to follow God's way and some who go their own way. Those who follow God's way are called God's people also referred to as Israelites, Jews, Judeans, etc. God gives his people a promise first through Abraham and others after him that he will be with them, sustain them and eventually rescue them.

God appears to some people some of the time. People mess up a lot and do all sorts of nasty, selfish things. Joseph's brothers sell him as a slave and instead of worshipping God, people make gold statues and worship them instead.

**Exodus** - But God keeps using people to change the world. God's people are enslaved by the Egyptians and God chooses Moses to rescue them. Moses has doubts about his ability to lead.

**Law** - While living in the desert, God gives his people 10 commandments to try and help them live better. We see how God uses His people to do good and share light and life with the world.

In order to get right with God people have to sacrifice animals to wipe their wrong doings away.

**Judges & Kings** - God gives his people judges to rescue them from their enemies and then kings to lead them because they say they feel left out by the other nations who have kings.

David one of those kings teaches us a lot of good things about prayer and worship but David has an affair with another man's wife and gets him killed.



**Exile** - God's people are exiled to Babylon and live in oppression from those with other customs. We see lots of prophecies aka promises about God sending someone special to change things.

**Incarnation** - Hundreds of years go by and then a baby is born in Bethlehem amongst the animals in a humble beginning. God has come to be with his people in the form of Jesus.

**Jesus ministry** - Jesus grows up, chooses 12 followers and does all kinds of amazing miracles that point to him being pretty special. He teaches huge crowds who come to hear him speak and talks of another way to live and treat people.

Some people realise he is the special one, the messiah they've been waiting for who God has sent to rescue his people.

Many of the Jewish leaders are not happy, who is this guy who seems to be going against their rules, healing people on Sundays and claiming to be God's son. They are offended massively and plot to kill him. When he is 33 Jesus is betrayed by one of his 12 followers and is arrested. Even though he has warned the disciples they don't understand what is happening.

Jesus is killed, executed Roman style, by being hung on a cross.

**Death to new life** - When everything seems over, 3 days later he comes back to life and appears to some women who've come to visit his grave.

He sticks around for a bit and meets his disciples, encourages them to continue, re-explains why he had to die - as the ultimate sacrifice - to make it possible for everyone's wrongs in the past, now and in the future to be forgiven and make it possible for all people to have a connection with God again. Instead of death being the end, those who believe have the gift of living eternally with God. Eventually he floats off and leaves but not before he explains he has to go so that a new helper can come.

**Church** - On a day we now refer to as Pentecost, God sent his Holy Spirit to earth to be with all God's people all the time. People spoke languages they hadn't been taught, began doing miracles with God's power working through them and all kinds of amazing things.

His disciples continue spreading the news about Jesus and loads of people who weren't part of God's family choose to follow and join. They start calling themselves Christians.

The disciples and the new followers meet in each other's homes and share everything and eat together. They do miracles too and God uses them to show himself to more people.

These gatherings of people become churches and a bunch of people called the apostles write them letters to make sure they are doing the right things and sharing God to the world in the best ways.

**New creation** - Some people write about a battle going on between good and evil and the importance of sticking to the good.

There are some prophecies about the future which say one day Jesus will come back again, he'll end the world and make a brand new heaven and earth as it was intended in the beginning so people can dwell with God forever. In that place there won't be any more tears or pain but all that is broken will be fixed. In the end good will win.

We aren't in the Bible but we become a part of the story, we have a choice to believe in God or not and to follow him or not. We're part of the church - and we are living between the **church** and **new creation**.

God's story isn't over and He wants to use us to bring hope to the world.

God could choose to take us straight to heaven when we become Christians but he doesn't, because he wants to use us to change the world. We can use our own part in the story to inspire others and we can have a positive impact on the way things are.

**Mark 12:28-31, 28** .....**"Which commandment is the most important of all?"** **29** Jesus replied, **"The most important one is this: 'Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'** **31** **The second most important commandment is this: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment more important than these two."**

2 Peter 3, <sup>8</sup> But do not forget one thing, my dear friends! There is no difference in the Lord's sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.

Jesus said the most important thing is to love God, and love others like we love ourselves.

Our purpose, the reason we exist, is to honour God with what we do and spread hope, love and joy in the world. God will equip us and transform us and be with us to help us.

**Discuss:**

(You might want to put these on a slide)

Have you ever thought about why we exist?

Have you decided yet if God exists?

What if anything encourages you to believe?

What if anything is holding you back from deciding or believing?

**Pray**



- Have you ever thought about why we exist?
- Have you decided yet if God exists?
- What if anything is holding you back from deciding?



# Who is God?

## Welcome & catching up

**Game** - Treasure hunt - name items the group have to grab from around the house, fastest to return wins!

**Intro** - Our lives and this world could be completely random, we and all of creation could be unintentional products of an accidental combination of elements assembled in the universe. But maybe like me you find the idea that your existence is merely a coincidence not very likely or satisfying?

Many believe there must be some kind of being that transcends humanity—a God of some sort.

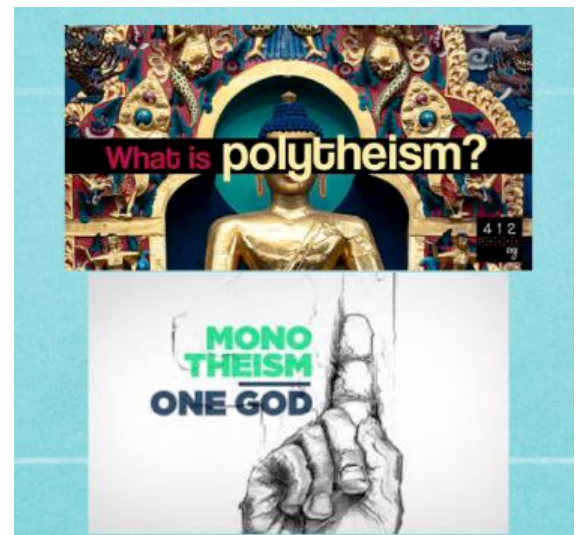
Slide 2 - As far as records go back people have always believed in some kind of God or gods. Some of the oldest pieces of literature that exist include vivid explanations of a world run by a collection of selfish and even reckless gods. In these early accounts, most descriptions of the world include a whole host of gods or divine beings who influenced people's experiences. The gods and goddesses of the Greek pantheon like Aphrodite, Apollo, Athena, Hades, and Zeus, had personal histories, strengths, and flaws. The Roman gods and goddesses did too. Hindus worship gods with names like Lakshmi, Vishnu, Shiva, and Brahma. Some people debate whether the Hindu gods are many distinct gods or different forms of a single Supreme Being.



Slide 3- The belief in more than one God is called Polytheism. These views (or religions) dominated culture until the rise of Judaism and the other monotheistic religions. Monotheistic = belief in only one God.

In Judaism we see the first widely recognised explanations for the world's existence as attributed to one divine Creator and Sustainer.

Christianity sprang out of Judaism after the death and resurrection of Jesus. More than half a millennium later, after Muhammad's revelations began circulating around Arabia, Islam became the third major monotheistic religion in the early seventh century.

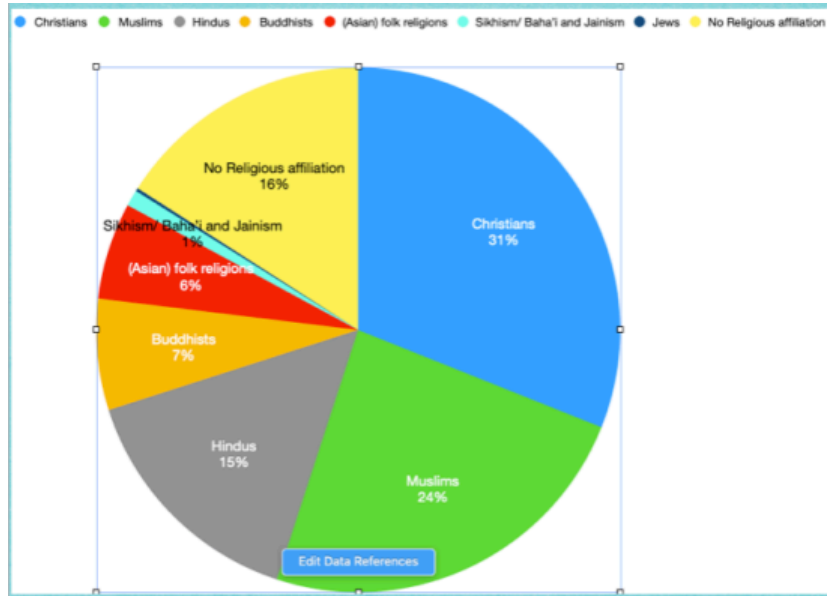


Slide 4 - According to the latest worldwide figures back in 2015: (<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/27/religion-why-is-faith-growing-and-what-happens-next>)

- Christians 2.3 billion or 31.2% of the total world population (7.3 billion).
- Muslims (1.8 billion, or 24.1%),
- Hindus (1.1 billion, or 15.1%)
- Buddhists (500 million, or 6.9%).
- folk or traditional religions; there are 400m of them, or 6% of the global total. (90% of them are in Asia)



- Lesser-practised religions, including [Sikhism](#), Baha'i and Jainism = 58m, or well below 1%.
- 14m Jews in the world, about 0.2% of the global population, and they are mostly concentrated in the US and Israel.
- But the third biggest category, 1.2 billion people in the world, or 16%, said they have no religious affiliation at all. This does not mean all those people are committed atheists or all of them don't believe in God; at least some – have a strong sense of spirituality or belief in God, gods or guiding forces, but they don't identify with or practise an organised religion.



### Slide 5 - What sets Christianity apart?

Christianity is unique in many ways, it's the only religion that teaches God is love and the only religion with the concept of grace - we are forgiven not by anything we have done or can do but by the gift of forgiveness through what Jesus did in dying for us. Grace is a loving God's desire to reach and restore humanity that led to God sacrificing something for us and giving us a gift that we don't deserve. The other religions all require followers to earn favour with a higher power to earn a place in the afterlife, (there are things they must do). Christians on the other hand choose to follow because God already did what must be done. We follow and choose to live differently because of what God has already done for us. Jesus' followers often fail to extend God's loving grace to the world, God remains resilient and determined. He extends his unconditional love to every human being and pours out immeasurable grace.



The Bible says, **Romans 3:23**, "everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. <sup>24</sup> But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. <sup>25-26</sup> God offered Jesus, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous."

### But who is God? Is he the same in the old and new testament?

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/study-the-bible/gnb-youth-edition/videos/the-same-god/>

Slide 6 - The Bible begins with God. It assumes he exists. Partly because when the Bible was written no one said he didn't. Why answer a question no one is asking? What the Bible does tell us, is that the God who exists speaks and reveals himself in and through creation. This isn't necessary, God could have created and stepped back to see what would happen next and been absent from creation. But the Bible clearly portrays God as still here, speaking, instructing, caring, and redeeming, he isn't separate but he is still very much involved in creation and with us.

God reveals himself because he wants to be





known, but for us to know God completely is impossible. Sometimes we don't see God in the moment but when we look back we see exactly where He was. This comes as no surprise, if you think about it we don't know anyone or anything completely. As finite creatures, all our knowledge is limited. But even if we can't know God completely, that doesn't mean we can't know him at all. It's not all or nothing. Just as a painting reveals something about the soul of the artist or a poem reveals the heart of a poet, creation tells us something of the nature of God.

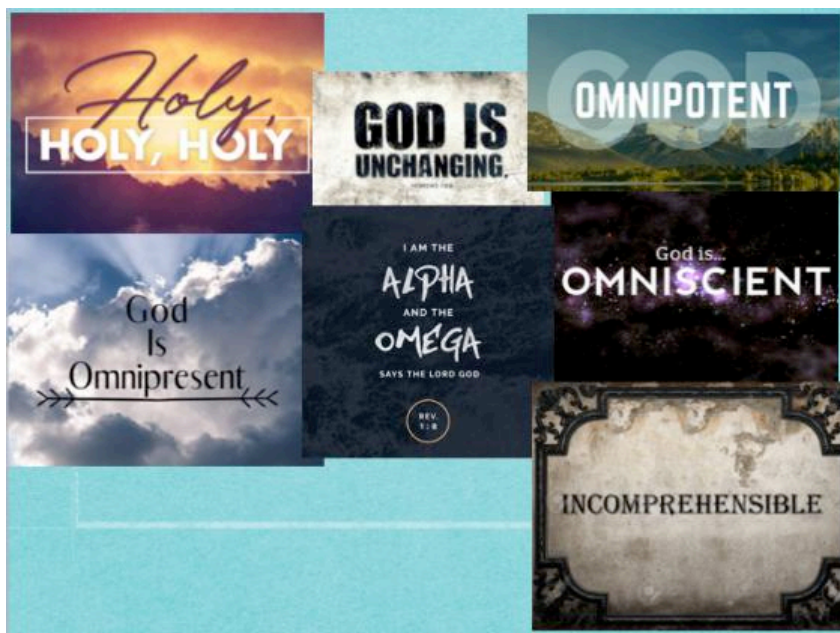
Whatever we see that has power, God has more. Whatever we see that is good or lovely, God is better and lovelier. Wherever we see creativity, we know it started with God. Paul wrote in the Bible, "God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made."

But God has given us more than creation to tell us about himself. He has spoken to people and given us his written Word.

The Bible says we were made in God's image so we know something about God is similar to us - his character, maybe his visual likeness? But unlike us, God is not human, he has many forms and can be invisible, has the ability to hover, appear as bright light, is not bound by the laws of nature (Jesus walked on water), came to earth in human form (Jesus) which hints at the fact that most of the time he doesn't look human, and He has other attributes that are very different to humans.

#### Slide 7 - The Bible tells us about Gods attributes - these are things that God is, that no one else is

- Holy - the very meaning of holiness is incorruptible, set apart, divine and separate from sin. God is the holiest of holies and unable to sin, lie or do anything wrong. He is endlessly always perfect.
- Unchanging - "the Greeks assumed the gods were 'free' to become demons if they so chose," the God of the Bible "is 'free' to act only in conformity to His nature. God cannot be or do anything in contradiction to his nature.
- Omnipotent - all powerful, almighty
- Omnipresent - he is everywhere, he is also transcendent - outside of space and time and not bound by the laws of nature.
- Alpha and Omega - beginning and end or first and last - he has always been and always will be. He is infinite. As the eternally existent One, he is self-existing and self-sufficient. That means that, unlike human beings, God needs nothing outside himself. He did not create the world to fill a void within himself, and he doesn't need help from anyone or anything in order to exist.
- Omniscient - all knowing and wise
- Incomprehensible - our knowledge of God is subject to human limitations and He is beyond our understanding. We can know Him in part but may never know him fully.



#### Slide 8 - What do we know from The Bible about God's character?

- Creator - he made all things and was there before all things. As creator, God himself is not created. He exists eternally. He is before all things and the source of all things, having created them out of nothing. All



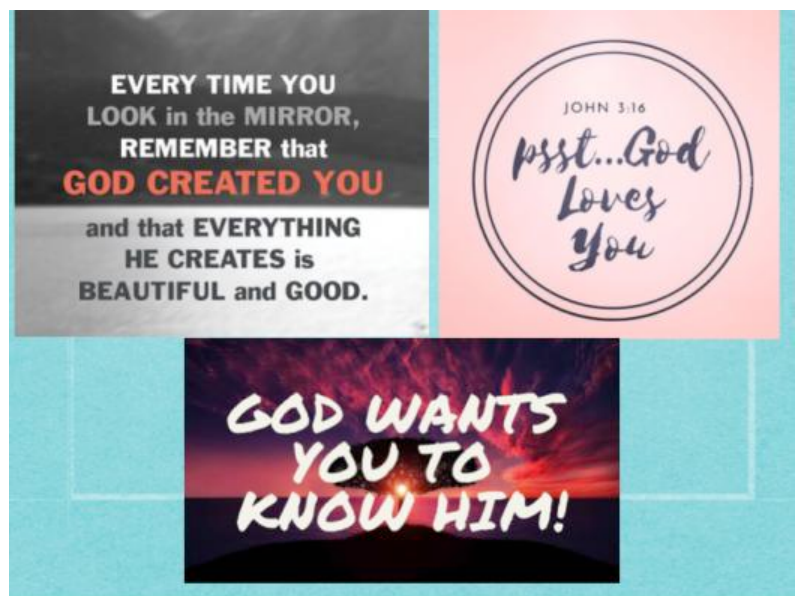
he had to do was speak and things were created.

- Good - everything he created in the beginning was good, therefore He himself is good all the time.
- Just - wrong and bad things don't go unpunished and as the only 100% good thing and only all knowledgeable being he is the only one with a right to judge.
- Saviour - when things went wrong and people chose their own will instead of God's way he could have destroyed everything but instead he came up with a rescue plan. In fact Jesus took all of the punishment on himself.
- Love - he made the world and everything in it out of love. He keeps sustaining life because of love. He wants the best for us because of love. He chose to rescue us because of love. The Bible says God is not just loving, but He is love. Everything he does is loving always.
- Gracious/ forgiving - instead of us getting what we deserve each time we mess up, hurt someone or do wrong Jesus took our punishment and we receive grace and forgiveness as a free gift. God's grace, compassion and mercy never run out.
- Faithful - because he is unchanging and cannot lie (attributes) he is unable to not keep a promise and won't let us down.
- Glorious - his beauty and greatness is eternal and we are to glorify Him through our choices and actions.



**Slide 9** - There is so much to learn about who God is, we've only touched on a small bit of it today. We find out more by reading the Bible, speaking to other Christians about their experience, praying/growing our connection with him. We are all on a journey of discovery.

If you remember nothing else, know,  
God created you, you don't exist by chance or by accident  
God loves you  
God wants you to know Him  
Seek him and you will find Him.



#### Other info:

- Possible additional video <https://www.exploreGod.com/videos/how-can-we-know-god>
- <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/15-amazing-attributes-of-god-what-they-mean-and-why-they-matter.html>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAvYmE2YYIU>
- <https://www.exploreGod.com/articles/a-deeper-look-at-what-the-bible-says-about-who-god-is>
- <https://www.exploreGod.com/articles/who-is-god>