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#### THE BIBLE, MY CHURCH, AND ME!

A quick-start guide to reading your Bible .....19

# INTRODUCTION

Stare up at the night-time sky and you might wonder, "Who made all this?" The stories of the Bible tell us who. They tell us who God is. These stories come to us in human language, because that's what we understand. They don't always explain God perfectly because human language isn't perfect. But it can tell the truth. When you read the Bible with care you will hear this truth: God is love and God loves you.

But the Bible isn't like the books you read in school. Like those books, it has information and truth in it, but God speaks to you through its pages, because God wants to change you. God wants to set you free from your mistakes. God wants to lift you up when you fall down. God wants you to help people who need help. God wants to know you and to be known by you. If you let it, the Bible will speak God's voice to you. And God's voice will change your life. Get ready. This book is dangerous. And beautiful. And exciting. Congratulations on receiving your first Bible!



## 12 GREAT STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### **ONE SHIFTY SERPENT—GENESIS 3**

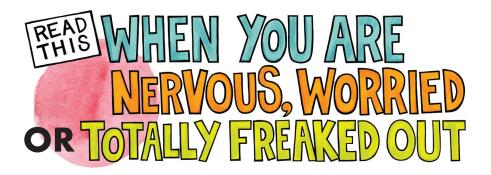
The world starts out as a permanent vacation for Adam and Eve until a crafty belly crawler messes with their heads and God's original plan.

#### NOAH SAVES FOR A RAINY DAY-GENESIS 6-8

Noah builds a boat, loads up his family and two of every kind of animal for a long (and smelly) trip to a renewed world.

#### STEALING FROM BIG BROTHER—GENESIS 27

Jacob, the younger brother, out-maneuvers Esau, his older brother, by tricking their blind father into making him the head of the family.



#### **PSALM 23:4**

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-they comfort me.

#### PSALM 121:1-2

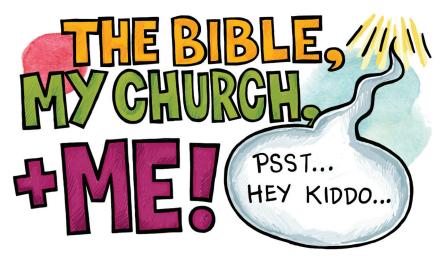
I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

#### PROVERBS 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge God, and God will make straight your paths.

#### ISAIAH 43:1-3

But now thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy



### A QUICK-START GUIDE TO READING YOUR BIBLE

#### NO WAY! SERIOUSLY?!? Is God really talking to me?

Yep! We believe that God *really* still speaks to us. One way is through the Bible. When we read the Bible it is like listening to a conversation between God and the people. Think of it something like:

**God**— "Hey people...be kind, love your neighbor, and hang out with me!"

People— "Hi God, we can try!"

**The Bible = Awesome & Amazing.** The Bible is very special to Christians. It has great stories by important and interesting authors.

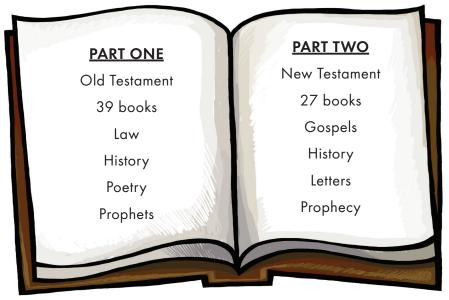
Reading the Bible teaches us **L**about our faith (what we believe about God) **and** 2 about how we should live (do good in the world and make good choices).



## THE "WHAT"

#### The Bible is God's story. Bible means "book of books"

The Bible-66 books



The Old Testament is mostly written in Hebrew. It tells the story of God and the people of Israel. The New Testament is mostly written in Greek and Aramaic. It tells the story of Jesus and the church that followed him.

#### A NOTE TO PARENTS READING THE BIBLE WITH KIDS

So much of being a parent is an exercise in being made better than you were.

You swear less, because even "butt" sounds terrible coming from your two-year-old's mouth. You pick up more trash, because you want your child to be that kind of girl. You stop at more Salvation Army buckets, you're kinder to your spouse, you say "please" and "thank you" more, because you want a kid who does those things.

If you're like most of us, that's probably how it's going to be with Bible reading, too. If you want a kid who reads the Bible, you're going to have to become a parent who reads the Bible. If you want your kid to have a chance of believing that Scripture is a worthwhile pursuit, you're going to have to be seen reading it yourself once in a while.

It's best to start this when they're young if you can, with board books and picture stories. But if you're holding this booklet because your kid just got his fourth grade Bible or confirmation gift or something, don't worry; it's not too late! No matter how old your kid, here are some tips to get you started:

• Cut a deal. If your kid's young enough, they'll be happy to read anything with you, especially if it has good pictures. If he's a little older, you're going to need buy-in at the front end. Explain that this is important to you. Say that you'd like to explore the Bible, and that you'd like to do it together. Agree to a time frame to try this out, and maybe a little bribe, of the sticker-chart or trip to the mall variety, depending on the age.

2 Choose a good translation. The New Revised Standard Version is the basic, clear-English one. A more dynamic version that is less true