

WHAT IS THE BIBLE AND HOW DID WE GET IT?

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

In the year 303, Diocletian issued an edict that resulted in the worst Christian persecution ever. It included the decree that all Christian literature was to be turned in and destroyed. Hundreds of Christians risked and lost their lives protecting, not the Bible, but fragments of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as the letters of Paul. They died rather than give up those sacred documents.

By 324, Constantine cancelled those edicts and allowed Christians to worship freely. Christianity became the favored religion. For the first time ever, Christian scholars were able to work in the open. The stage was set for the very first Bible.

Most of us know some Bible stories, but very few of us know the story of the Bible. And you may be surprised to discover that it's a story that doesn't actually begin in the beginning. It begins with the accounts of a few men who sat down to record the death and resurrection of Jesus. It begins with the words of his followers who were compelled to document the events that had changed everything for them. Because they knew it could change everything for us.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. How were you first introduced to the Bible? What people and ideas do you associate with that time?
2. It's possible you or someone you know left your faith because of something in the Bible. The question is, what is the "it" that you or they don't believe? **Read John 20:30-31** to find out the only "it" that really matters.
3. Luke was a first-century Greek doctor who documented the life of Jesus. **Read Luke 1:1-4**. Why do you think it was unusual in ancient times for "many" people to write about an event? How does Luke describe his purpose in documenting Jesus's life?

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APPLY IT

Many of us carried our childhood understanding of the Bible into adulthood. Faced with questions we couldn't answer and doubts we couldn't ignore, we walked away. If that's your story, there's another approach. One that John offers in his personal account of the life of Jesus. And if this account was all we had, it would be enough. This week, approach your faith in a new way by reading the book of John (John's account of Jesus's life) as though it's the only Scripture you have.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION (IF DESIRED)

1. If you had the chance to read the personal journal of someone in the past whose life has influenced yours (a grandparent, historical figure, etc.), who would you choose? Why would their stories and ideas be meaningful to you?
2. What if John's account of Jesus's life was all we had? What might change about how you approach Jesus and how you encourage others to move toward him?