

Lesson One: Introducing the Bible

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LESSON ONE Introducing The Bible

In this lesson we will look at the Bible as God's word: where it came from, how it is structured, and what its general story is. In the next lesson we will discuss how to read the Bible.



"What is the Bible?"

The Bible is a collection of 66 books.

► These books were written by about 40 different people over the course of about 1400 years from three continents in three languages.

- ► The Old Testament in Hebrew (and a little in Aramaic)
- ► The New Testament in Greek
- The Bible is God's word to us. It is where we find God's truth.

Four things that make the Bible hard to understand:

1. Culture: The Bible was written in particular times and places in particular languages and is therefore somewhat foreign to us.

2. Wording: the way the Bible speaks can be different from what we are used to.

3. Viewpoint: The Bible is God's perspective; not ours.

4. Complexity: The Bible is a network of truth about God and what He is doing in our world and that does not make for an easy read.



The Bible is a network of truth – its teachings are built from more than one place in its writings.

Key Terms

With the help of the video at the 10:26 mark, try defining these terms in your words. Just do your best— no need to be perfect.

Word of the Lord/God	Bible
Scripture	Passage

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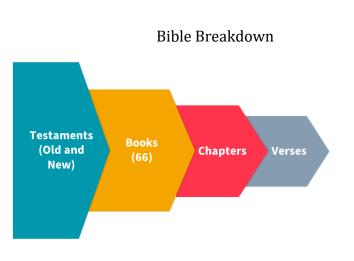
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NOT	ES		Old Testament New Testament
			Sword Genre
		REFLECT	What do you think is your most important takeaway from this video?
		REFLECT	What is the most important question for you to ask or something you need to think more about?
		DISCUSS	What is unique about Christian beliefs about the Bible and truth?
DOODLES	DISCUSS	What are some ways we can overcome the four things that make the Bible hard to understand?	

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"How is the Bible Structured?"



Books of the Bible

Old Testament – 39 Books		New Testament – 27 Books			
LAW (5) Genesis	POETRY (5)		History Life of Jesus	Paul's Letters to Churches (9)	
Exodus	Job	MINOR	(4)	Romans	Letters by
Leviticus	Psalms	PROPHETS (12)	Matthew	1 Corinthians	Others (9)
Numbers	Proverbs	Hosea	Mark		Hebrews
Deuteronomy	Ecclesiastes	Joel	Luke	2 Corinthians	1 Peter
100000 (12)		Amos	Luke	Galatians	2 Peter
HISTORY (12) Joshua	Song of Solomon	Obadiah	John	Ephesians	1 John
Judges	(Songs)	Jonah		Philippians	2 John
Ruth		Jonan	History		3 John
1 Samuel		Micah	The Church (1)	Colossians	Jude
2 Samuel	MAJOR PROPHETS (5)	Nahum	Acts	1 Thessalonians	Revelation
1 Kings	Isaiah	Habakkuk		2 Thessalonians	
2 Kings	Jeremiah	Zephaniah			
1 Chronicles	Jeremian			Paul's Letters to	
2 Chronicles	Lamentations	Haggai		Individuals (4)	
Ezra	Ezekiel	Zechariah		1 Timothy	
Nehemiah		Malachi		2 Timothy	
Esther	Daniel			Titus	
				Philemon	

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FRESH FAITH

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Types of Literature included in the Bible



References

References are like an address of where to find a particular part of the Bible. Page numbers are not helpful because different Bibles will have the same thing on different page numbers.

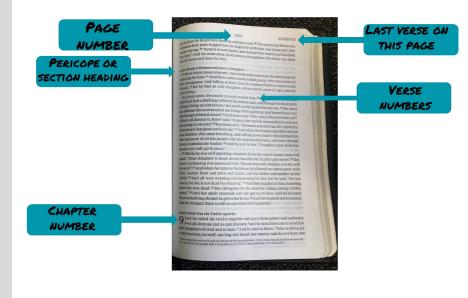
Working with Bible references (address of a verse in the Bible) is made easier when we are familiar with common abbreviations for Bible books. If you are new to the Bible, these will become like second nature over time. There is a comprehensive chart at the end of this section.

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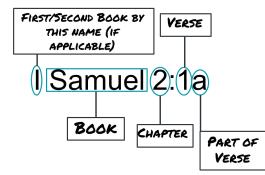


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Sample Bible Page



Sample Bible Reference



Practice

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Write the reference out in full. The first one is done as an example. Use the abbreviation chart at the end of the section if needed.

- I Jn. 3:1 <u>First John three one.</u>
 - 2 Pt. 1:3 ____
- II Tim. 3:16-17_____

Write the reference for the following verse. Try using book abbreviations.

- The twelfth verse of the eighth chapter of John ______
- First Timothy chapter two verse one _
- Romans one, verses sixteen and seventeen ______

BIBLE BOOK ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

- Most common: Gen. • Ge. • Gn. Exodus
- Most common: Ex. • Exod. • Exo.
- Leviticus
- Most common: Lev. • Le. • Lv.
- Numbers • Most common: Num.
- Nm.
- Most common: Deut.
- De. • Dt.
- Joshua
- Most common: Josh. • Jos.

Judges

• Most common: Judg. • Jdg. • Jg.

Ruth

• Most common: Ruth • Rth. • Ru.

1 Samuel

- Most common: 1 Sam. • 1 Sm. • 1 Sa. • 1 S.
- I Sam.
- I Sa.

2 Samuel

- Most common: 2 Sam.
- 2 Sm. • 2 Sa.
- 2 Sa • 2 S.
- II Sam
- II Sa. • 2Sam.

1 Kings

- Most common: 1 Kings • 1 Kgs • 1 Ki
- 1 Ki • 1Kgs
- 1Kin
- I Kgs • I Ki
- 1 141

2 Kings

- Most common: 2 Kings
- 2 Kgs.
- 2 Ki.
- 2Kgs.
 2Kin.
- 2K.
- II Kgs.
- II Ki.

- 1 Chronicles • Most common: 1 Chron. • 1 Chr. • 1 Ch. • 1 Chron. • 1 Ch. • I Chron. • I Chr. • I Chr. • I Ch. 2 Chronicles
 - Most common: 2 Chron. • 2 Chr. • 2 Ch. • 2 Chron. • 2 Chr.
 - II Chron. • II Chr. • II Ch.
 - Ezra
 - Most common: Ezra • Ezr.
 - Ez. Nehemiah
 - Most common: Neh. • Ne.
 - Most common: Est.
 - Esth. • Es.
 - Job
 - Most common: Job • Jb.
 - Psalms
 - Most common: Ps. • Psalm • Psa.
 - Pss.
 - Proverbs • Most common: Prov
- Pr.
 - Ecclesiastes

• Pro.

- Most common: Eccles. • Eccle.
- Ecc. • Ec.
- Song of Solomon
- Most common: Song
 Song of Songs
 SOS.
- Isaiah
- Most common: Isa. • Is.
- Jeremiah
 - Most common: Jer. • Je.
 - Jr.

- Lamentations

 Most common: Lam.
 La.
 - Ezekiel
 - Most common: Ezek. • Eze. • Ezk.
- Daniel
 - **Most common**: Dan. • Dn.
 - Hosea
 - Most common: Hos. • Ho. Joel
 - Most common: Joel • Jl.
 - Amos
 - Most common: Amos • Am.
 - Obadiah • Most common: Obad. • Ob.
 - Jonah
 - Most common: Jonah • Jon.
 - Micah • Most common: Mic.
 - Mc.
 - Nahum • Most common: Nah. • Na.
 - Habakkuk
 - Most common: Hab. • Hb.
 - Zephaniah
 - Most common: Zeph. • Zep. • Zp.
 - Haggai
 - Most common: Hag. • Hg.
 - Zechariah
 - Most common: Zech. • Zec. • Zc.
 - Malachi
 - Most common: Mal. • Ml.

NEW TESTAMENT

6

2 Timothy

• 2 Ti.

• II Tim.

• II Ti.

• 2Tim.

Titus

• Tit • ti

Philemon

• Phm.

Hebrews

lames

• Jas

• Im

1 Peter

• 1 Pe.

• 1 Pt.

• I Pet.

• I Pt.

• I Pe.

• 1Pe.

• 2 Pt.

• II Pet.

• II Pt.

• II Pe.

• 2Pet.

• 2Pt.

• 1 Jn.

• 1Jn.

• 1Jo.

• I Jn.

• 2 Jn.

• 2Jn.

• 2Io.

• II In.

• 3 In.

• III Jn.

• Jud.

Revelation

• Jd.

• Re

Jude

3 John

2 John

1 John

2 Peter

• II Timothy

• Most common: 2 Tim.

• Most common: Titus

• Most common: Philem.

• Most common: Heb.

• Most common: James

• Most common: 1 Pet.

• Most common: 2 Pet.

• Most common: 1 John

• Most common: 2 John

• Most common: 3 John

• Most common: Jude

• Most common:Rev

- Matthew • Most common: Matt. • Mt.
- Mark
 - **Most common**: Mark • Mrk • Mk
- Most common: Luke • Lk
- John • Most common: John • Jn
- Acts • Most common: Acts • Ac

• Most common: Rom.

• Most common: 1 Cor.

• Most common: 2 Cor.

• Most common: Gal.

• Most common: Eph.

• Most common: Phil.

• Most common: Col.

• Most common: 1 Thess.

• Most common: 2 Thess.

• Most common: 1 Tim

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

Romans

• Ro.

• Rm.

• 1 Co.

• I Cor

• I Co.

• 2 Co.

• II Cor.

• II Co.

• 2Cor.

Galatians

• Ga.

Ephesians

• Ephes.

Philippians

• Php.

Colossians

• Co.

• 1 Thes.

• I Thess.

• 2 Thes.

• II Thess

• II Thes.

• II Th.

1 Timothy

1 Ti.
I Tim.
I Ti.
1 Tim.
1 Ti.

• 2 Th.

• 1 Th.

• I Th.

• 1Th.

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

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"Bible Translation"

The Bible is translated from Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New

Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אַת הַשָּׁמֵיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:

Greek Text of John 17:17 ἀγίασον αύτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθεία̥· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν

Translations run a spectrum from those attempting to be very close ("word-for-word") to the original language to those written "thought-forthought" which attempt to communicate the idea of the scripture in words more easily understood.

"Word-for-word" translations may also be known as "literal translations". "Thought-for-thought" translations may also be known as "paraphrases".

Examples of more literal translations include the New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and English Standard Version (ESV).

Examples of more paraphrased translations include the New International Version (NIV) and New Living Translation (NLT).

Notice the differences in this example: John 1:10

- (ESV) He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.
- (NIV) He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.
- (KJV) He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- (NLT) He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.
- (The Message) He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice.



It does not matter which Bible translation you use, but if you have a hard time understanding the language of the Bible and are more comfortable with something closer to a literal translation, try the New Living Translation (NLT) or the English Standard Version (ESV).

REFLECT

Would you benefit more from a simpler or a more precise translation of the Bible?

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"The Bible's Authority"

Canon: Do we have the right books?

People often ask if the books we have in the Bible are all correct, especially those who come from a Catholic background where there are more books listed in the Bible. When the early Church and believers today ask if we have included the correct books these questions have served as a test:

- Was the book written by a prophet or apostle (one who had been part of Jesus's ministry who was commissioned by Him)?
- Does the book tell the truth about God, with no falsehood or contradiction?
- Does the book have a divine capacity to transform lives?
- Was the book accepted as God's Word by the people to whom it was first delivered?
- Was the book written long after the other New Testament books?
- Does the book align with the rest of Scripture?

Revelation

Revelation means that we know God's truth only because He tells us. Some people would say that we know truth through scientific observation or artistic expression or the teachings of man-made religions; but the Bible says that God speaks to us in the Bible what we would otherwise not know.

General Revelation:

truth about God that everyone has access to whether they have the Bible or not. This can be external through observing how God designed things or internal through experiencing an understanding of morality, longing for meaning, or appreciation of

beauty.

Special Revelation:

truth about God that we get only from the Bible. Specifics about God and His plan for us need to be spelled out for us in writing.

Take a Look:

Psalms 19 talks about how these are both ways we see God.



What is something you can figure out about God without the Bible?



What is something you are hoping to learn about God or yourself that you can't find just from your own vantage point?

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Our most full revelation comes through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3) since He lived as one of us, showing us and teaching us who God is (John 14:9). We learn about Jesus through the Bible, God's revelation to the writers of Scripture. Both Jesus and the Bible are referred to as God's Word because they reveal God to the world (John 1:1-2; Hebrews 4:12).



Let's practice looking up a verse. Find I Corinthians 1:18. What does it tell us about how we will see truth about Jesus if we are against Him?

Inspiration

Inspiration means that the Bible is "God-breathed." God directed human authors in what to write without erasing them from the process so that the Bible is both human and divine: God's Word to us through humans.

II Timothy 3:16-17

^{"16} All Scripture is *breathed out by God* and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."



If the Bible is divine and human, how should we approach it?

DISCUSS

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REMEMBER!

The Bible books were written in the culture of their day and speak to our culture as well. Some of the way the Bible is written seems foreign to us but would have been very natural when it was written. We are looking for the underlying truths and shouldn't get caught up in cultural ways of saying things.

Reasons to believe the Bible is God's Word

The Bible is no ordinary book. Here are eleven reasons why. Each one can be researched further if you wish. This list is by Charlie Campbell of Always Be Ready.

- 1. Fulfilled prophecy. The Bible contains predictions fulfilled hundreds of years before the events they prophecy.
- 2. Archaeology. Archaeological discoveries have consistently proved the biblical accounts to be historically accurate.

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- 3. **Internal consistency.** Although compiled of 66 books by approximately 40 authors in 3 languages over 3 continents and 1500 years and addressing the key questions of life and meaning; there is a miraculously consistent message and overall storyline in the Bible.
- 4. **Extra-Biblical writings.** Writers who lived at the same time as the Bible's writers refer to events described in the Bible as being historically accurate. The early church leaders also consistently quoted large portions of the New Testament in their commentaries and letters.
- 5. **Scientific accuracy.** The Bible contains scientifically accurate information long before those facts were discovered.
- 6. **Manuscripts.** With 25,000 handwritten portions of the New Testament and thousands of the Old Testament, there is more manuscript evidence for the accuracy and consistency of the Bible than of most ancient writings.
- 7. Honesty about the authors and subjects. The Bible makes no attempt to ignore the sins of its writers and characters.
- 8. Accuracy about human nature. The Bible shows an amazing level of understanding and explanation of the workings of human hearts and relationships.
- 9. **Testimony of Jesus.** Jesus referred to the Bible as given by God and as God's revelation to people.
- 10. **Persecution of the early believers.** The earliest Christians, some who even penned the Biblical books, went to violent deaths professing the truth of the scriptures.
- 11. **Power to transform lives.** We are evidence for the divine inspiration of the Bible in that we see our lives changed by its message of who God is.



Are any of these particularly surprising, helpful, or doubtful to you?

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"Story and Message"

The Bible tells a long story of God creating the world, people rebelling against God and living in the consequences of that rebellion, and God giving Himself as a sacrifice to allow for peace between God and people again. When we start reading the Bible, we may expect to find a list of truth statements or maybe sayings from Jesus, but we find a story. The message of the Bible is in that story. The story is found in the totality of the Bible and takes time to be familiar with. This is a basic highlight version.



God creates a good world with mankind made in God's image but gives mankind the ability to choose to obey God's commands. God tells the first people to have many children and oversee the earth. The plan is for a multitude of people who have a perfect relationship with God and each other as they enjoy Him and live with purpose in the world.



The first people, Adam and Eve, choose to disobey God. At the prompting of the devil, they want to put themselves in God's place by doing what they want in order to become like God. However, this causes them to experience the difference between good and evil. That experience comes with the experience of shame, guilt, and fear. Their once good relationship with God and each other is now bent and broken. Instead of punishing them on the spot, God promises that they will live lives of difficulty. Where they are still to have many children, that will now come with difficult conception and painful childbirth. Where they are to oversee the world and let it feed them, that now comes with hard labor, fruitlessness, weeds, and thorns. But one of their descendants will come who will be wounded in the process of overcoming the evil that was separating people from a full, intimate relationship with God and each other.

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After the people of the world increasingly reject God's ways in favor of corruption and violence, God resets almost back to when the world was brand new by flooding the earth and saving only one family, the father of which was faithful to God. God uses this family to repopulate the world as part of His purpose of having many people to enjoy relationship with Him.



Tower of Babel

As the population grows, the people decide to stay in one location rather than filling the earth with people and make a name for themselves rather than honoring God. The people begin building a great tower to display their power and God separates their languages in order to bring enough confusion to stop their work and spread them out by language groups.



Abraham

God commands one man, Abraham, to come out from one of these groups in order to go to a new land and promises to make his descendants a great nation through whom all the world will be blessed. Abraham trusts God and is called God's friend and deemed righteous because of his faith.



Exodus

About 400 years after Abraham, the population of Abraham's descendants (now called Hebrews or Israelites) has been subjugated under the Egyptians but through a series of punishments on the Egyptians, God releases His people in order that they may worship God freely. God miraculously leads them out of slavery in Egypt showing His power over Egypt and her gods. People from various cultures leave with the Israelites.

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The Israelites in the Wilderness

After escaping Egypt, the Israelites are given God's law for how to a have proper relationship of worship with Him, as well as how to treat their fellow Israelites and those outside their people. These laws were like training wheels to help the people have a restored relationship with God and each other but also showed that external behavior is not the same as internal true change. The Israelites quickly desire tangible idols (fake gods made by human hands) to worship rather than God. They don't trust God to safely bring them into the land He had promised Abraham many years before so God has them wait in the desert until the next generation is ready to receive the land God promised.



Conquering the Promised Land

The Israelites enter the land God had originally promised to Abraham to give his descendants. First, they had to drive out the peoples that were worshiping false gods through violence and sexual immorality. Once established in the land, the people went through cycles of obeying the Lord and then worshiping false gods and becoming enslaved to the local peoples. While they had received things God promised long ago – a multitude of people who knew Him in a blessed place where their needs were provided for - their sin was still causing them to have a broken relationship with God. This land is a temporary substitute for God's plan of having a perfect, blessed place where His people will relate with Him.



Kingdom of Israel

Instead of having God and any of His human representatives (called prophets) as leaders, the Israelites decide they want a king like other nations have. God gives them kings and instructs them to build a temple, a building where the people go to worship and make sacrifices for their sins. The sacrifices are still another way to put the consequence of sin on something else besides the people themselves. Likewise, the temple is still just a small picture of God's plan to have people relate with Him in a perfect place.

Due to strife as well as part wanting to worship idol gods, the kingdom splits in two. The northern half continually rebels against God and the southern half is mediocre. God remains very patient but the people continually move away from Him.

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God allows the foreign empires of Assyria and Babylon to take the Israelites captive and remove them from their land. The temple is destroyed. Even the temporary blessings of a place and way to worship God are taken away. However, those from the southern kingdom of Judah which was more faithful to God are allowed to return after 70 years and rebuild the city walls and temple in Jerusalem. However, this is just a return to the temporary version of relationship with God through sacrifices at a temple in obedience to external laws. God was about to relate with His people much more directly.



About 400 years later, Jesus is born in Israel. Jesus was God come as a human to relate directly with us. He teaches the true meaning of the Scriptures, which were never about just obeying external laws but about our need for a right relationship of loving trust in God. Jesus performs many miracles of healing and help, showing a glimpse of God's original design for the world and what will one day be normal in a healthy and whole earth. He leads a small band of disciples who are a restart of God focusing on a small group of faithful people who would carry His message to others. Jesus is executed for calling Himself God and the true King of Israel. By dving, He takes on our identity as blasphemers which we got when Adam, Eve, and all of us originally and continually began putting ourselves in God's place. In Jesus, God then takes our place and bears our punishment so we could have Jesus' place of honor and holiness. Jesus does not simply die but rises again from the dead to show that death will not permanently overcome those who trust Him enough to let Him take their place of punishment. This is much better than the temporary sacrifices for sins the Israelites had always done. He ascends into heaven with a promise that He is always with us and will one day come again. Jesus says that He leaves God the Holy Spirit with His followers who is God living inside them to guide and change them. This is much better than approaching God at a temple – we now can approach Him right in our hearts. This is also much better than the external set of laws, as the Holy Spirit makes true inner change in us.

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Church

The followers ("disciples") of Jesus begin expanding the message of Jesus's salvation and establishing communities of Jewish followers of Jesus. Eventually, the followers of Jesus realize God wants them to go and bring new disciples from all peoples, not only the Jews. The community of disciples of Jesus expands to new areas. More and more, God's plan of having a multitude of people who know and love Him. We live in this period of time, looking back to Jesus' life and forward to His coming again.



Return of Jesus

While it hasn't happened yet, the Bible predicts Jesus' return to earth to collect His people (all who believe in Him) to Himself. Then will come a time of great troubles for those who have not believed in Christ. This is followed by Jesus returning with the believers to finally conquer and judge the world. Eventually He will create a new heaven and earth where all is good again. God's original purpose of having people who relate perfectly with Him in a blessed place and purpose will finally be realized.

The Message of the Bible

The message of the Bible is found in the story you just read. But we can also describe the Bible's message without telling the whole story of Scripture. The Bible's message is that God is good and glorious and the Bible describes Him to us. We are separated from this perfect God because we disobey (sin) against Him and cannot be in right relationship with Him without help. Not only that, but we must be punished for our sin. If God does not punish sin, He is not just. If He only punishes us, He is not merciful. While God gave limited and temporary means of righteousness through sacrifices and laws, these would not permanently or fully deal with our sin and change us. Because God is both just and merciful, He comes as a man, Jesus, to be punished in our place so we could be given a place of blessing as if we were as righteous as Jesus. When we give up our ways and our attempts to be perfect and be in control and put our full trust in Jesus to be all those things on our behalf, we are adopted as children of God. Our relationship with Him is always in good standing even when we remain imperfect. God lives in us, changing us to be like Him. We fall more in love with Him as we get to know Him more and more and we help other people follow Him as well until God makes all things good eternally for those who let Him be God in their lives.

Memory Verse

II Timothy 3:16-17 (New Living Translation)

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

II Timothy 3:16-17 (English Standard Version)

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."