

THE BIBLE

The word *Bible* means *book*. Actually, the Bible is a collection of sixty-six books, written over a 1500 year period. However, the Bible isn't just another book. It is one-of-a-kind. It is the perfect, 100% reliable written record of God's own communication to humanity. God used many different people with their own personalities, writing styles, talents, and cultural backgrounds to write the Bible exactly the way He wanted it written.

The Bible is recorded history or "His story" – the "true story of the whole world."* It is the written record of:

- how the one true God created the entire universe from nothing;
- how He created human beings to enjoy and serve Him together in His perfect world;
- how the rebellion of our first parents, Adam and Eve, plunged us and all creation into misery and ruin and;
- how He sent Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit to restore broken, guilty, rebellious humanity to enjoy and serve Him and others in meaningful relationship again, in a restored creation.

Creation – Fall – Redemption – New Creation:

that's the 'plot line' of what God is up to in history, laid out in the pages of the Bible.

In the Bible, God tells us everything we need to know to be saved to enjoy restored life in relationship with Him and others and to enjoy serving Him and others forever.

*Recommended Resource:

Bartholomew, Craig G. and Goheen, Michael W. *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama*. Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive, © 2009.

The following Bible verses and faith statements also communicate what we believe about the Bible at Cottage Grove Christian Reformed Church.

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

You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about
by the prophet's own interpretation.
For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,
but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
2 Peter 1:20-21

Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4

But these things are written that you may believe
that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,
and that by believing, you may have life in his name.
John 20:31

Your word is a lamp for my feet, and a light for my path.
Psalms 119:105

Belgic Confession, Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God

We know him by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government
of the universe,
since that universe is before our eyes
like a beautiful book
in which all creatures,
great and small,
are as letters
to make us ponder
the invisible things of God:
his eternal power
and his divinity,
as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20.

All these things are enough to convict men
and to leave them without excuse.

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly
by his holy and divine Word,
as much as we need in this life,
for his glory
and for the salvation of his own.

Belgic Confession, Article 3: The Written Word of God

We confess that this Word of God
was not sent nor delivered by the will of men,
but that holy men of God spoke,
being moved by the Holy Spirit,
as Peter says.^{^1}

Afterwards our God--
because of the special care he has
for us and our salvation--
commanded his servants,
the prophets and apostles,
to commit this revealed Word to writing.
He himself wrote
with his own finger
the two tables of the law.

Therefore we call such writings
holy and divine Scriptures.

^{^1} 2 Pet. 1:21

Belgic Confession, Article 4: The Canonical Books

We include in the Holy Scripture the two volumes
of the Old and New Testaments.
They are canonical books
with which there can be no quarrel at all.

In the church of God the list is as follows:

In the Old Testament,
the five books of Moses--
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;
the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth;
the two books of Samuel, and two of Kings;
the two books of Chronicles, called Paralipomenon;
the first book of Ezra; Nehemiah, Esther, Job;
the Psalms of David;
the three books of Solomon--
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song;
the four major prophets--
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel;
and then the other twelve minor prophets--
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,
Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,
Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

In the New Testament,
the four gospels--
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;
the Acts of the Apostles;
the fourteen letters of Paul--
to the Romans;
the two letters to the Corinthians;
to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians;
the two letters to the Thessalonians;
the two letters to Timothy;
to Titus, Philemon, and to the Hebrews;
the seven letters of the other apostles--
one of James;
two of Peter;
three of John;
one of Jude;
and the Revelation of the apostle John.

Belgic Confession, Article 5: The Authority of Scripture

We receive all these books
and these only
as holy and canonical,
for the regulating, founding, and establishing
of our faith.

And we believe
without a doubt
all things contained in them--
not so much because the church
receives and approves them as such
but above all because the Holy Spirit
testifies in our hearts
that they are from God,
and also because they
prove themselves
to be from God.

For even the blind themselves are able to see
that the things predicted in them
do happen.

Belgic Confession, Article 6: The Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books

We distinguish between these holy books
and the apocryphal ones,
 which are the third and fourth books of Esdras;
 the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch;
 what was added to the Story of Esther;
 the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace;
 the Story of Susannah;
 the Story of Bell and the Dragon;
 the Prayer of Manasseh;
 and the two books of Maccabees.

The church may certainly read these books
and learn from them
as far as they agree with the canonical books.
But they do not have such power and virtue
that one could confirm
from their testimony
any point of faith or of the Christian religion.
Much less can they detract
from the authority
of the other holy books.

Belgic Confession, Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture

We believe
that this Holy Scripture contains
the will of God completely
and that everything one must believe to be saved
is sufficiently taught in it.
For since the entire manner of service
which God requires of us
is described in it at great length,
no one-- even an apostle or an angel from heaven,
 as Paul says--¹
ought to teach other than
what the Holy Scriptures have already taught us.
For since it is forbidden
to add to or subtract from the Word of God,²
this plainly demonstrates
that the teaching is perfect
and complete in all respects.

Therefore we must not consider human writings--
no matter how holy their authors may have been--
equal to the divine writings;
nor may we put custom,
nor the majority,
nor age,
nor the passage of time or persons,
nor councils, decrees, or official decisions
above the truth of God,
for truth is above everything else.

For all human beings are liars by nature
and more vain than vanity itself.

Therefore we reject with all our hearts
everything that does not agree
with this infallible rule,
as we are taught to do by the apostles
when they say,
"Test the spirits to see if they are of God,"^{^3}
and also,
"If anyone comes to you
and does not bring this teaching,
do not receive him
into your house."^{^4}

^{^1} Gal. 1:8

^{^2} Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19

^{^3} 1 John 4:1

^{^4} 2 John 10