



you, me and the **Bible**

A READING GUIDE TO THE SIX CENTRAL IDEAS OF THE BIBLE

Tony Payne



It's strange how often we form strong opinions about things that we actually don't know very much about—whether in politics or sport, or about whether that famous person on trial at the moment is really guilty or not.

The teaching of the Bible falls into this category for many people. We know it as a big black book that Christians look to as the source of their beliefs. And we might have our own opinions about it. But it's amazing how many of us have never actually read it for ourselves.

That's the aim of *You, Me and the Bible*. It provides an opportunity for friends to sit down together in an informal way, and see for themselves what the Bible really says about God, and the world, and life and death, and what our lives are about.

You don't even need a Bible to get started. Each of the six sessions contains the text of two short passages from the Bible, along with some discussion starter questions to stimulate your conversation, and a linked video clip to help pull the ideas together.

You, me and the Bible. Sounds like a great combination.



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you, me and the Bible

A reading guide to the six central ideas of the Bible

based on
Two Ways to Live 

Tony Payne



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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

You, Me and the Bible

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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Part 1	7
Part 2	11
Part 3	15
Part 4	19
Part 5	23
Part 6	27
Where to from here?	31
Further reading	33

Introduction

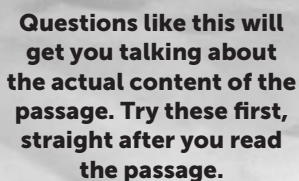
It's strange how we often form strong opinions about things we actually don't know very much about—whether about politics or sport, or about whether that famous person on trial at the moment is really guilty or not.

The teaching of the Bible falls into this category for many people. We know it as a big black book that Christians look to as the source of their beliefs. But it's amazing how many of us have never actually read it for ourselves.


That's the aim of *You, Me and the Bible*. It provides an opportunity for friends to sit down together and see what the Bible really says about God, and the world, and life and death, and what our lives are about.

Over the next six sessions, you'll do this by reading a number of key passages from the Bible and discussing them together. The passages we've selected cover six of the most foundational ideas and events of the Bible, and provide a good overview of its central message.

Each session contains two short Bible passages in a modern English translation, along with some discussion questions to kick off the conversation. Please use these questions as a guide and help to talk about what the passage means, not as a rigid set of tasks you must complete.



Questions like this will get you talking about the actual content of the passage. Try these first, straight after you read the passage.

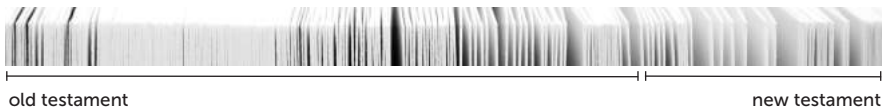


Questions like this will help you think further about what the passage means for us and for our world.

After reading the two passages in each session, there is also a summary of the main ideas for you to discuss.

Some basic Bible facts to get you started:

- The Bible presents itself as the record of God's personal revelation to the world—starting with his creation of the world and finishing with a vision of how God's plans for the world and humanity will finally be fulfilled at the end of time.
- The Bible is one long story, but is composed of 66 separate books written between approximately 1300BC and 80AD.
- These books are divided into the 'Old Testament' and the 'New Testament'.



- The Old Testament is made up of 39 books written between approximately 1300BC and 450BC, and largely focuses on God's dealings with the nation of Israel and his promises for the future of the world.
- The New Testament comprises 27 books written between approximately 50AD and 80AD, and is mainly about Jesus Christ and his fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament.
- There are many different kinds of writing in the collection of books that makes up the Bible: history, poetry, biography, letters, prophecy, and so on.
- In *You, Me and the Bible*, you will be looking at a number of these different types of writing, ranging from Genesis (the first book of the Bible) all the way through to Revelation (the last book).
- For the convenience of being able to refer easily to particular sections, the individual books of the Bible are divided into chapters and verses. So 'Genesis 12:14-16' means the book of Genesis, chapter 12, verses 14 to 16.

For a brief video introduction to *You, Me and the Bible*, go to matthiasmedia.com/ymb/introvid.

Part 1



PASSAGE 1

Genesis 1:26-28, 31

Genesis is the first book of the Bible. This passage is part of the account of God's creation of the world. In the verses just before our passage, God has created the world, the land, the seas, the sun and stars, and the plants and animals.



Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground".

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground"...

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

1

What do we learn about humanity in this passage?

2

What responsibility does God give to mankind?

3

What does God think of all that he has made?

What picture of God do we get in this passage?

Do you see the world as "very good"? Why/why not?

What do you think might be the implications of us being made 'in God's image'?

If humanity is supposed to be 'in charge' of the world (under God), what sort of job are we doing, do you think?

PASSAGE 2

Revelation 4:6-11

We now move from the first to the very last book of the Bible.

Revelation is a bit like a dream sequence in a movie—where the author (the apostle John) is shown a vision of what is taking place in heaven, and of what the future holds. Many passages in the book of Revelation are full of rich imagery and symbolism, including this passage from chapter 4. It features a picture of all of creation (represented by four symbolic ‘living creatures’) and the leaders of God’s people (the ‘24 elders’) assembled around God’s throne.



In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”*

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.”*

The Bible presents God as both creator of all and ruler over all. What's the connection between these two ideas, do you think?

Do you believe that a king or ruler can be truly good?

What does God need from us?

* ‘Holy’ means ‘distinct’ or ‘set apart’—in this case referring to how unique and completely different from us God is.

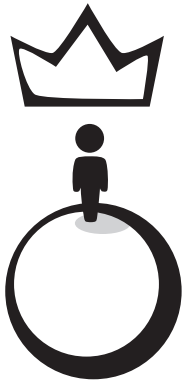
1
What sort of
God is described
here?

2
What responses do
you see in the passage
to this God?

3
What does the
creation owe to
its creator?

Pulling it together

How would you use the following diagram to summarize the key ideas of the two passages we've read?



For a brief video summary, go to matthiasmedia.com/ymb/vid1.

What's your own reaction to the idea of God being the creator and ruler of the world?

Do you ever think of yourself as a 'creature' (that is, as having been created by Someone)? How do you feel about this?

How do these passages compare with your experience of the world?

Want to read more?

Acts 17:24-25
1 Corinthians 8:5-6
Colossians 1:15-20