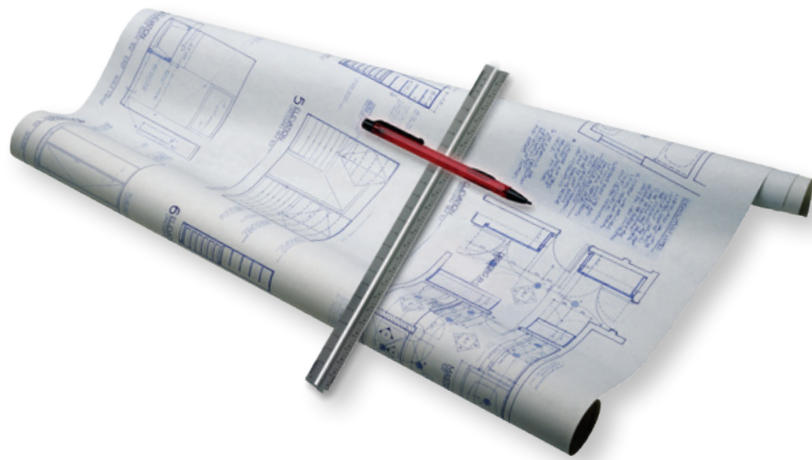


JOE PAPROCKI, DMin

THE BIBLE BLUEPRINT A LEADER'S GUIDE

A CATHOLIC'S GUIDE
TO UNDERSTANDING AND
EMBRACING GOD'S WORD



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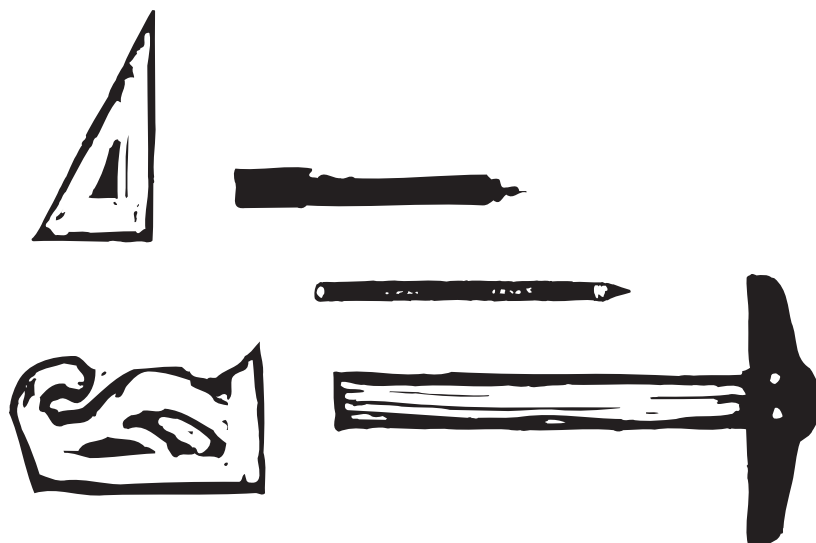
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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Bible Blueprint: A Catholic's Guide to Understanding and Embracing God's Word

Catholics are hungry for a greater knowledge of the Bible. By reading the Bible, we enter into a more intimate relationship with God who reveals himself to us throughout salvation history, culminating in the Incarnation of Jesus—the Word made flesh. Unfortunately, for many Catholics, reading and understanding the Bible can be intimidating. Many Catholics have grown up “biblically deprived” and have developed a sort of “bibliophobia”—a fear of reading the Bible! The good news is that, with a few tips and some practice, reading and understanding the Bible can become much easier and extremely fulfilling. *The Bible Blueprint: A Catholic's Guide to Understanding and Embracing God's Word* is designed to help Catholics overcome their initial fears of the Bible and to discover God's loving Word and its power for their lives.

The Bible Blueprint: A Leader's Guide

As a pastor, catechetical leader, RCIA coordinator, youth minister, adult faith formation coordinator, or diocesan faith formation director, you can use *The Bible Blueprint: A Catholic's Guide to Understanding and Embracing God's Word* in a variety of ways. To assist you in your efforts, this Leader's Guide provides you with nine faith formation sessions—one for each of the nine chapters of *The Bible Blueprint*. Each formation session includes the following features:

- **Focus**—A clear statement of the theme of the session.
- **Learning Outcome**—A description of what participants should be able to know and do as a result of the session.
- **Plan**—A step-by-step process for facilitating the formation session in conjunction with *The Bible Blueprint*. Each session includes
 - › an engaging opening activity.
 - › scripting to assist the facilitator.
 - › adult methodology that invites participants to interact in small groups.
 - › references to the corresponding pages of *The Bible Blueprint*.
 - › discussion questions for use in small groups or as a large group.
 - › references to further online Scripture resources pertaining to the chapter.
 - › a closing prayer and Scripture reading using the ancient practice of *lectio divina*, “sacred reading” (as described on p. 97 of *The Bible Blueprint*).

Suggested Uses for *The Bible Blueprint* and the Leader's Guide

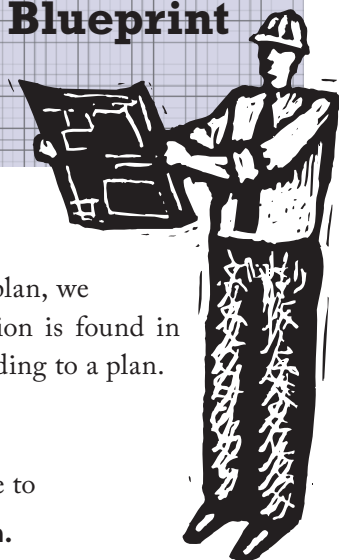
Consider facilitating faith formation sessions using *The Bible Blueprint: A Catholic's Guide to Understanding and Embracing God's Word* and the Leader's Guide for the following:

- **Parish Bible study programs**
- **Adult faith formation**
- **Diocesan catechist formation programs**
- **Parish catechist meetings and formation programs**
- **Parish book clubs**
- **Lay ministry formation programs**
- **RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults)**
- **Youth ministry**
- **Liturgical ministers (especially lectors)**
- **Parish pastoral council**
- **Small faith communities**
- **Follow-up to RENEW and Christ Renews His Parish**
- **And more . . .**

Formation Session One

Discovering the Bible Blueprint

PAGES 1-8



Focus

God has a plan for us, and, when we follow that plan, we become a new creation. The blueprint for salvation is found in the Bible, and the Bible itself is constructed according to a plan.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- explain that God has a plan for our salvation.
- describe how the Bible is arranged according to a plan and how the Bible can be compared to a library.
- define *revelation* as God's revealing of himself for the purpose of entering into a relationship with us.
- explain the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

Plan

1. Invite the participants to gather in groups of three or four and have them share with one another a major plan that they have in their life right now. For example, a plan to go on a cruise; a plan to throw somebody a surprise birthday party; a plan for a son or daughter to get married; a plan to return to school and get another degree; and so on.
2. Allow enough time for all participants to share their plans with their small groups. Then invite some volunteers to share their plans with the whole group.
3. Point out that making a plan is a very important task, and that it requires us to engage in an imaginative process: imagining a future that is different from the present.
4. Point out that, as people made in the image of God, it is natural for us to plan, to hope, and to imagine, because that's what God does: he imagined the entire universe and all of reality into being. Explain that Scripture teaches us that God has a plan for our salvation. Read aloud Jeremiah 29:11.

"For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (RSV)

5. Show an image of God depicted as the architect of the universe. (For an example, see “God as architect of the world,” included here.) Ask the participants to describe what we call the plans that architects draw up. (*blueprints*)
6. Next, show an image of Jesus as a boy in Joseph’s carpenter shop. For an example, see the image included on this page.
7. Point out that they may be surprised to find out that, at the time of Jesus, carpenters were capable of much more than making tables and chairs. Using pages 1–2 of *The Bible Blueprint*, explain how, during Jesus’ time, carpenters were comparable to architects: people skilled at designing buildings. Point out how it makes sense that Jesus’ earthly father was an architect since his heavenly Father is the architect of all of creation.
8. Say: God’s plan for us is no secret. He has provided us with a blueprint for our salvation: the Paschal Mystery—the suffering, death, and resurrection—of Jesus Christ. And where do we find this blueprint laid out for us? In the Bible.



13th-century French manuscript illustration from *Bible Moralisée*



The Holy Family, 19th-century French colored woodcut.

9. Invite participants to open up *The Bible Blueprint* to page 3, which shows a graphic of the floor plan of the Bible.

Old Testament	Catalog	New Testament
Pentateuch (Torah)	Table of Contents	Gospels
History		Acts
Wisdom		Letters
Prophets		Revelation

10. Use the text on page 3 to explain how the Bible can be compared to a library—God’s Library—and how the floor plan would look for such a building. Tell the participants that they will go into detail about each of these sections of the Bible in future sessions.

11. Show an example of an instruction manual (for any type of appliance) to the participants along with an example of a personal letter or greeting card that you have received from a friend or loved one. Ask them which of these two forms of literature would be more likely to touch their hearts. Most likely they will choose the personal letter/greeting card, which serves to deepen or intensify a personal relationship. Use the notes on page 4 to explain why it is best *not* to refer to the Bible as an acronym for “Basic Instruction Before Leaving Earth.”
12. Next, ask what subject people tend to talk about when they don’t know one another very well. (The weather.) Point out that the reason we do that is because we’ve yet to reveal much about ourselves to one another. If we want to get to know a person better, we reveal more about ourselves. If not, we keep talking about the weather! Write the word *reveal* on the board or on a piece of paper and use the notes on pages 4–5 to explain how the Bible is a source of revelation—God revealing himself to us in order to enter into a relationship with us.
13. Next, ask the participants to fill in the blank for the following:

One child finds another child occupying the swing he/she wants to use. The child tries to bully the one sitting in the swing, “Get off of that swing. It’s mine!” The other child replies angrily, “Oh yeah? _____?” (*Says who?*)
14. Point out that when someone exerts authority, we want to know where that authority comes from. In matters of religion and faith, people often ask the question (or some variation thereof), “Says who?” Explain that, as Catholics, we answer by saying, “Scripture and Tradition”; while Protestants would answer, “Scripture alone.” Use the notes on page 6 to explain what Catholics mean by Tradition and how it relates to Scripture.
15. Explain that many Catholics today are hungering for a deeper knowledge of the Bible and that it’s OK to come to this experience with little or no knowledge of the Bible. Share some of your own experience as a Catholic in relation to the Bible, especially if you yourself feel that you were brought up “biblically deprived.” Ask the participants to rate themselves on a scale of 1–10, with 1 being, “I’m totally biblically deprived,” and 10 being, “I’m practically a biblical scholar.”
16. Use the questions on page 8 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
17. Tell the participants that you will end each session by inviting them to pray with *lectio divina*. Ask if any are familiar with this form of prayer, which involves sacred reading of Scripture. Invite comments from any who are familiar with it. Use the notes on page 97 to describe *lectio divina* and then invite them to pray.

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Isaiah 55:10–11 (“My word . . . shall not return to me empty”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

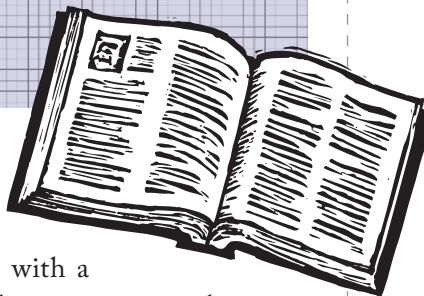
- [God’s plan for our salvation](#)
- [The Revelation of God](#)
- [Vatican Council II Document on Divine Revelation: *Dei Verbum*](#)
- [Scripture and Tradition](#)
- [The Bible from Square One](#)

The above resources are live links . . . unless, of course, you’re reading a printed copy! If so, download this PDF at www.loyolapress.com/blueprint to access the links.

Formation Session Two

Overcoming “Bibliophobia”

PAGES 9–18



Focus

For many of us, reading the Bible can be intimidating. Fear of the Bible can be overcome with a commonsense understanding of the Bible, such as how it is put together and how we are to read and interpret it.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- identify reasons why reading the Bible can be intimidating.
- assess their own level of comfort/familiarity with the Bible.
- explain that the Bible is not a book but rather a collection of books.

Plan

1. Arrange the participants in groups of three or four and have them brainstorm a list of the most common fears (phobias) that people have.
2. Have the groups report back and make a list of the fears and phobias on the board.
3. Introduce the concept of “bibliophobia”—fear of the Bible!
4. Invite the participants to look over the list of some of the intimidating aspects of the Bible on page 12 and to identify which one(s) they can most relate to.
5. Invite volunteers to share which aspect(s) of the Bible they find most intimidating.
6. Direct the participants to take the bibliophobia quiz on page 14 and then invite volunteers to share their scores with the group, using the scale on page 14.
7. Next, make sure that everyone has a Bible on hand. Tell them that you are going to have a contest to see who can find Scripture passages most quickly.
8. Use the quiz on page 15 to challenge participants to find stories and passages (one at a time) in the Bible in less than two minutes.
9. When you’ve completed the ten items, direct the participants to add up their scores using the scale on page 15. Invite volunteers to share their scores.

10. Emphasize to the participants that these exercises are not designed to make them feel bad but to come to the realization that they are in good company—many fellow Catholics are feeling biblically deprived and bibliophobic!
11. Use the notes on pages 16–17 to explain that the Bible was not written for scholars but for ordinary people so that we can come to know God better and deepen our relationship with him.
12. Use the notes on page 17 to explain how the first step in overcoming our fears or hesitations about the Bible is to understand the Bible not as a single book but as a collection of books: a library.
13. Introduce the concept of God’s Library and tell the participants that, in the upcoming sessions, they will learn to approach the Bible as a library by learning skills and techniques for locating and interpreting stories and passages.
14. Use the questions on page 18 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
15. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Matthew 28:1–10 (“Do not be afraid”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.

- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

[NOTES]

Online Resources:

- [Introduction to the Bible](#)
- [Catholics Need to Read Their Bibles](#)
- [Synod message says each Catholic should own—and use—Bible](#)

The above resources are live links . . . unless, of course, you're reading a printed copy! If so, download this PDF at www.loyolapress.com/blueprint to access the links.

Formation Session Three

Preparing to Enter God's Library

PAGES 19–27



Focus

As we approach the Bible, it's good to know that there is a plan to how the Bible is put together. The Bible—God's library—has a blueprint that, if followed, can make it easy to “walk through it” without getting lost.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- **apply the metaphor of a library to the Bible.**
- **use their Bible's table of contents to navigate through the Bible.**
- **understand and use biblical citation.**

Plan

1. Arrange the participants in groups of three or four and have them share with one another what books they have read recently, are reading now, or consider to be favorites.
2. After they have had a chance to share in groups, invite a few volunteers to share with the large group.
3. Comment on the fact that some books are more difficult to read than others. Refer to examples such as *War and Peace* or *Crime and Punishment* or *Ulysses*. Explain that, even with books such as these, they all have one thing in common: you start reading on page one and work your way to the last page.
4. Hold up a copy of the Bible. Point out how many pages your edition has and the fact that, obviously, reading it presents a challenge.
5. Ask if any participants have read the entire Bible from cover to cover. Invite them to share their experience. Congratulate them on completing such a great accomplishment and tell the group that, although reading the Bible in this fashion is an option, it is not the recommended way to read it. Use the notes on page 20 to explain that the Bible is not meant to be read from cover to cover.
6. Reintroduce the concept of the Bible as God's Library. Use the notes on page 21 to explain how we can learn to approach the Bible by comparing it to our approach to using a library.

7. Invite participants to open their Bibles to the table of contents (this will be most effective if all the participants are using the same edition of the Bible; however, this is not absolutely necessary). Use the notes on page 22 to point out the following:
 - a list of the books of the Bible in the order in which they appear.
 - the distinction between the Old Testament and New Testament.
 - a list of the books of the Bible in alphabetical order (if included).
 - the abbreviations for each of the books of the Bible. (If Bibles are not available, draw their attention to “Books and Their Abbreviations in Biblical Order” on p. 118 and to “Books and Their Abbreviations in Alphabetical Order” on p. 119.)
8. Next, write the following on the board: **Zep 2:1–3, 7, 3:2**. Ask if anyone can decipher this citation. (the book of Zephaniah, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3 and verse 7, and chapter 3, verse 2)
9. Point out that this can seem very confusing to us until we learn the art of Scripture citation. Use the notes on page 24 to explain Scripture citation and how it helps us to locate passages in the Bible.
10. Lead them through the examples given on page 25 and then invite them to take Quiz 1 on page 26 to practice deciphering Scripture citation.
11. Next, have them take Quiz 2 on page 26, which invites them to take passages described in prose and write them in citation form.
12. Tell the participants that locating Scripture passages by using Scripture citation is one way of finding our way through the Bible. Point out that, in the next session, they will be learning how to find stories and passages in the Bible even when they have no Scripture citation to guide them.
13. Use the questions on page 27 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
14. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Psalm 19:7–11 (“The law of the Lord is perfect”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).

- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

- [Finding A Bible Verse—Bible Gateway](#)
- [The Bible and You—How Can You Find a Passage in the Bible?](#)
- [New American Bible Table of Contents](#)

The above resources are live links . . . unless, of course, you're reading a printed copy! If so, download this PDF at www.loyolapress.com/blueprint to access the links.

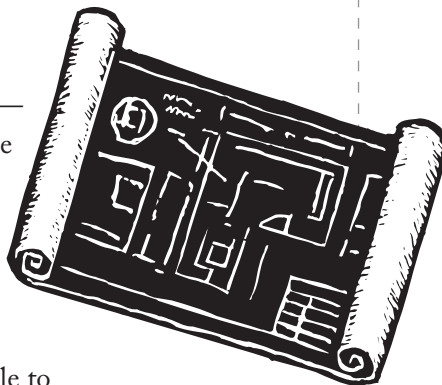
Formation Session Four

The Bible's Floor Plan

PAGES 29–41

Focus

As we look at the blueprint for God's Library—the Bible—a good place for us to start is with the floor plan, or arrangement, so that we can come to recognize the foundation upon which the structure of the Bible rests.



Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- **explain the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament.**
- **identify the four sections of the Old Testament (Pentateuch, History, Wisdom, and Prophets) and the four sections of the New Testament (Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Letters, and Revelation).**
- **use bookmarks to mark off these sections of the Bible and get to know them better.**

Plan

1. Distribute a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil to each of the participants and invite them to sketch a quick floor plan of their home or place of work.
2. Invite volunteers to share their drawings with the large group.
3. Explain that a floor plan helps us to navigate our way through an area that we are unfamiliar with. Point out how we rely on directories at the mall to show us a floor plan of the various stores and their locations.
4. Explain that, in this session, they are going to take a closer look at the floor plan for God's Library—the Bible.
5. Direct the participants to turn to page 30 in their books to view the illustration of the floor plan for the Bible. Point out that the first distinction to make is between the Old Testament and New Testament.
6. Have the participants take hold of their Bibles and invite them to find where the Old Testament ends (last page of the book of Malachi) and the New Testament begins (first page of the Gospel of Matthew).

7. Direct them to hold up their Bibles, displaying the two parts of the Bible—Old and New Testaments. Point out how much larger the Old Testament is compared with the New Testament.
8. Use the notes on page 30 to explain the clearest distinction between the two testaments.

The Old Testament is the story of God's relationship with the people of Israel *before* the birth of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament is the story of God's relationship with the People of God beginning with the life, death, Resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and continuing with the early Church.

9. Next, direct the participants to carefully remove the bookmarks from the back of their *The Bible Blueprint* books. Explain that they are going to use these bookmarks to divide the Bible into smaller parts, learning what can be found in each of its sections.
10. Use the notes on pages 31–38 to lead the participants through the experience of placing the bookmarks in the designated locations in their Bibles while highlighting for them the overall flavor of each section and some of the characters and stories that can be located in each.
 - **Pentateuch (p. 31)**
 - **History (p. 32)**
 - **Wisdom (p. 33)**
 - **Prophets (p. 34)**
 - **Gospels (p. 35)**
 - **Acts of the Apostles (p. 36)**
 - **Letters (p. 37)**
 - **Revelation (p. 38)**
11. Depending on the age and level of playfulness of your group, challenge them to locate specific passages and stories that you've chosen ahead of time and provide silly prizes to all those who locate them in less than a minute. Explain that this activity can be found as part of a more in-depth outline on page 109 titled "Conducting a Bible Workshop for Young People (Middle and High School Students)." Recommend this for those who are preparing to teach Scripture to young people.
12. Use the notes on page 39 to explain how the participants can use these bookmarks as "training wheels" until they have a better grasp of where things are located in the Bible.
13. Direct them to take the quiz on page 40, which invites them to indicate in which of the eight sections of the Bible the twenty examples can be found.
14. Have them add up their scores using the answer key on page 40. Invite volunteers to share how they did on the quiz.

15. Draw attention to the “Salvation History Timeline” on page 120 to provide a chronological context for the Scripture passages and stories you’ve highlighted. Likewise, draw attention to the “Map of the Holy Land” and the “Map Glossary” on pages 122–123 to provide a geographical context for the passages and stories you’ve presented thus far.
16. Use the questions on page 41 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
17. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to John 6:66–69 (“You have the words of eternal life”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

- [Old Testament Statistics](#)
- [New Testament Statistics](#)
- [Overview of the Old Testament](#)
- [Overview of the New Testament](#)
- [Pentateuch](#)

The above resources are live links . . . unless, of course, you're reading a printed copy! If so, download this PDF at www.loyolapress.com/blueprint to access the links.

[NOTES]

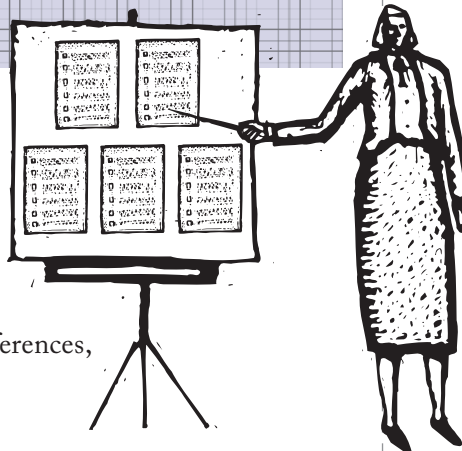
Formation Session Five

Information Blocks: Footnotes and Cross-References

PAGES 43–56

Focus

The Bible can be compared to a time capsule that is difficult to understand in our contemporary times. However, the secrets of the past can be revealed to us in a variety of ways, most notably by using footnotes, cross-references, concordances, and commentaries.



Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- compare the Bible to a time capsule.
- master the use of footnotes and cross-references in the Bible.
- identify the necessity and benefits of using biblical concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries.

Plan

1. Bring in some examples of outdated gadgets: an 8-track tape, a 45 rpm record, an instamatic camera, and so on. Show them to the participants and explain what they are for those who may not recognize them.
2. Arrange the participants in groups of three or four and have them brainstorm a list of items that were considered state of the art just a decade or two ago but now are considered ancient and obsolete.
3. Invite each group to report to the large group.
4. Explain that these are the kinds of items that one may come across in a time capsule from another era. Explain the purpose of a time capsule using the notes on page 44.
5. As a large group, brainstorm a list of items that would go into a time capsule to represent the experience of the present age. List the items on the board.
6. Point out that the Bible can be compared to a time capsule, capturing for us the experience of the people of Israel and the early Church in relation to God. Explain that there are a number of references in the Bible that are foreign to us because they are not of our present-day experience. Read the list of examples from page 45.

7. Direct the participants to take the quiz on page 46 and to add up their scores using the answer key on page 47.
8. Invite volunteers to share their scores with the large group.
9. Explain that we have many tools available to us to help us understand what we are reading in the Bible.
10. Use the notes on the specified pages to describe how to use the following Bible tools:
 - **Footnotes (pp. 48–51)**
(practice looking up footnotes using the list on page 51)
 - **Cross-References (pp. 52–53)**
(practice looking up cross-references on page 53)
 - **Biblical concordances and dictionaries (pp. 54–55)**
 - **Biblical commentaries (p. 55)**
11. Draw attention to the “Annotated Bibliography for Catholic Scripture Study” on pages 114–117. If possible, bring in some examples of these resources and allow participants to peruse them.
12. Use the questions on page 56 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
13. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- **Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.**
- **Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Luke 4:16–21 (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.**
- **Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).**
- **Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.**
- **Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.**
- **Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.**

- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

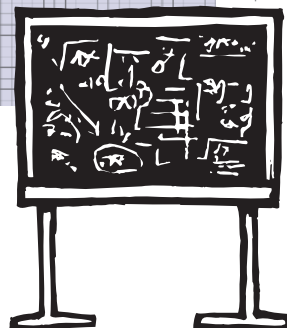
- [Biblia Clerus—Search a Biblical Text and its Commentary](#)
- [Archeology and the Bible](#)
- [Concordances—Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#)
- [Bible Gateway](#)

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Formation Session Six

Recognizing Symbolic Language in the Bible

PAGES 57–67



Focus

When it comes to reading and understanding the Bible, we need to be able to decipher some of the symbolic language that it contains.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- explain that everything in the Bible is true but not necessarily fact.
- describe the role of myth in biblical culture and present-day culture.
- identify examples of symbolic language in our everyday lives as well as in the Bible.
- summarize the spiritual/theological truth conveyed in certain biblical passages that rely on figurative language.

Plan

1. Bring in a copy of any book from the Amelia Bedelia series (a series of children's books published by HarperCollins that features a lovable housekeeper who is literal minded).



2. Read several pages of the book to the participants. Ask them what it is that makes the book (and the character) so amusing. (Amelia takes everything literally).
3. Point out that when it comes to understanding some parts of the Bible, being literal minded like Amelia Bedelia will not serve us well.
4. Read the list of "Is it true that . . ." questions on page 57.
5. Use the notes on pages 60–61 to introduce the concept of figurative language in the Bible.

6. Write the following statement on the board: “Everything in the Bible is *true*—but not necessarily *fact*.”
7. Using the notes on pages 58–60, explain how the following summarizes the Catholic approach to the inerrancy of the Bible: We believe that when it comes to religious/spiritual truth, the Bible contains no error. However, when it comes to historical and scientific information, the Bible is not always accurate.
8. Use the notes on page 59 to explain the role of myth in biblical culture (a vehicle for transmitting sacred truths) in contrast to our understanding of myth today (a falsehood).
9. Arrange the participants in groups of three or four and have them come up with a list of examples (phrases) of figurative language that we commonly use in everyday conversation.
10. Have the groups report their lists to the large group.
11. Using the same groupings, assign each group one of the explanations of Scripture passages (pages 61–66) that use figurative language and have them read, discuss, and summarize in their own words the explanations from the book.
12. Invite each group to present their summary to the large group.
13. Use the notes on page 62 to explain how we can determine when figurative language is being used in the Bible.
14. Use the questions on page 67 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
15. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Genesis 1:31–2:3 (God created the heavens and the earth) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.

- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

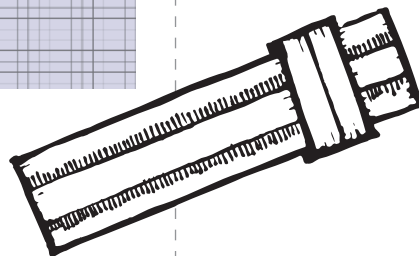
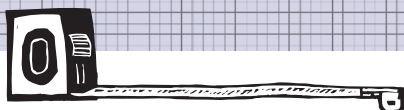
- [Catholic Biblical Interpretation](#)
- [Interpreting the Bible: The Right and Responsibility](#)
- [Is Everything in the Bible True?](#)

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Formation Session Seven

Do the Math—Numbers in the Bible

PAGES 69–80



Focus

Numbers play a significant role in the Bible. Just as a craftsman needs to know what to do with numbers in a blueprint, we need to know what to make of the various usages of numbers that appear throughout the Bible

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- explain that numbers and locations are often used symbolically in the Bible.
- describe the symbolic significance of the following numbers in the Bible: three, six, seven, twelve, and forty.
- identify examples of locations in the Bible that have symbolic significance.
- identify the document “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993) as a Church document that provides guidance for biblical interpretation in the Catholic Tradition.

Plan

1. Invite four volunteers to go to the board to solve the following math equations:

$$3,467 \times 764 = (2,648,788)$$

$$83,376 \div 12 = (6,948)$$

$$17 \times (4 + 9) = (221)$$

$$762 \times 99 \div 2 = (37,719)$$

2. Check over the answers, thank the volunteers, and have them return to their seats. Then, ask the participants to raise their hands if they feel they did well in math when in school. Point out that, for some of us, working with numbers comes easy; while for others, it can be a challenge.

3. Explain that, when it comes to the Bible, numbers play a significant role. Have volunteers look up the following passages and read them aloud:
 - **Gn 7:12**
 - **Ex 24:18**
 - **Ex 34:28**
 - **Nm 13:25**
 - **1Sam 17:16**
 - **1Kgs 11:42**
 - **Jonah 3:4**
 - **Mk 1:13**
 - **Acts 1:3**
4. Ask: What do all of these passages have in common? (*the number forty*)
5. Use the notes on pages 70 and 72 to explain the significance of the number forty.
6. Use the notes on the specified pages to explain the significance of the following numbers:
 - **The number three (p. 71)**
 - **The number six (p. 71)**
 - **The number seven (p. 72)**
 - **The number twelve (p. 72)**
7. Next, invite the participants to play word association with the following locations (possible answers are shown in parentheses):
 - **Las Vegas (casinos)**
 - **New Orleans (Mardi Gras)**
 - **Florida (vacation, retirement)**
 - **Siberia (frozen tundra)**
 - **Paris (romance, the Eiffel Tower)**
 - **Others**
8. Point out that locations often have reputations and that, when we refer to these locations, listeners can have certain reactions (either positive or negative). Explain that the biblical authors often used references to locations to provoke a response from their audience. Say: **Often, the significance of these locations is lost on us since most of us are not familiar with the geography of the region.**
9. Use the notes on pages 73–76 to describe the significance of locations referred to in the Bible. See the “Map of the Holy Land” and the “Map Glossary” on pages 122–123.

10. Invite volunteers to summarize what has been learned in this session and the last session about the use of figurative language in the Bible.
11. Download a copy of “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm) from the Pontifical Biblical Commission to present. Explain that the approach being taught in these sessions is encouraged by this document.
12. Invite volunteers to read aloud the quotations from this document on pages 78–80.
13. Use the questions on page 80 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
14. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Genesis 7:1–12 (the great Flood) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

- [The Symbolism of Numbers in the Bible](#)
- [Fundamentalism](#)
- [Numbers in the Bible](#)
- [Bible Map](#)

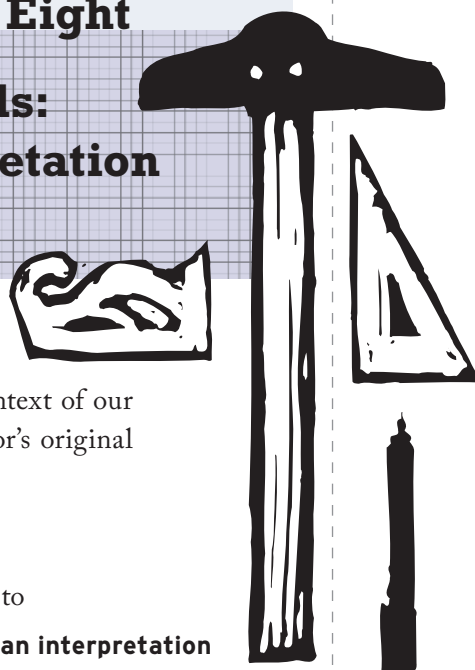
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[NOTES]

Formation Session Eight

Draftsman Tools: The Tools of Interpretation

PAGES 81–93



Focus

We are called to interpret the Bible within the context of our faith tradition and within the context of the author's original intent as best we can through scholarly research.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- explain that every translation of the Bible is an interpretation of the original text.
- list criteria for identifying a Bible as Catholic.
- explain basic differences between Catholic and Protestant Bibles and how those differences came to be.
- describe what the apocryphal Gospels are.
- identify and describe various forms of criticism: historical, textual, form, source, and redaction.

Plan

1. Ask participants if they can identify what language is being used for the following Christmas greetings:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Joyeux Noel (<i>French</i>) | ■ Linksmu Kaledu (<i>Lithuanian</i>) |
| ■ Buone Feste Natalizie (<i>Italian</i>) | ■ Feliz Navidad (<i>Spanish</i>) |
| ■ Mele Kalikimaka (<i>Hawaiian</i>) | |

(Visit <http://www.worldofchristmas.net/merry-christmas.html> for more examples.)

2. Invite participants who speak various languages to offer a Christmas greeting in their native tongue.
3. Ask those participants who can speak more than one language to confirm the fact that translating from one language to another is not always easy. Sometimes a word or phrase that exists in one language has no direct translation in another language.
4. Point out that, when it comes to interpreting the Bible, we need to begin with the fact that the Bible was not written in English: every Bible is a translation from the original Hebrew and Greek texts.

5. Use the notes on page 81 to explain how the English version of the Bible came to be.
6. Explain that not all English Bibles have the same translation and that significant differences exist among various translations, especially between Catholic and Protestant Bibles.
7. Use the notes on pages 82–85 to point out the differences between Catholic and Protestant Bibles.
8. Ask if anyone knows how one can tell if a Bible is acceptable for Catholic use. Point out how to locate an *imprimatur* at the front of a Bible.
9. If possible, show some different examples of Catholic Bibles and use the notes on pages 84–85 to describe them.
 - a. **New American Bible (NAB)**
 - b. **The Catholic Study Bible (NAB)**
 - c. **The Catholic Bible: Personal Study Edition (NAB)**
 - d. **Jerusalem/New Jerusalem Bible (JB/NJB)**
 - e. **Revised/New Revised Standard Version (RSV/NRSV)**
 - f. **Good News Bible—Catholic (Today's English Version—TEV)**
10. Ask if any of the participants have read the book or seen the movie *The Da Vinci Code*. Point out that this fictional story makes references to gospel accounts that are not part of the gospel and claims that the Church is covering them up. Use the notes on page 85 to explain the apocryphal Gospels and why they are not included in the canon of the Bible.
11. Next, assemble a variety of different types of books: a novel, a history book, a book of poems, a work of classical literature, a cookbook, a reference book, a how-to book, and so on. Point out how we approach different types of literature in different ways; that is, we don't read poetry the same way we read a reference book, and vice versa.
12. Explain that the Bible is filled with many different forms of literature. Use the notes on pages 85–88 to illustrate this.
13. As a large group, brainstorm a list of various medical tests: EKG, CT scan, X-ray, allergy test, blood test, MRI, and so on. Point out that all of these different tests seek to shed light on the condition of a patient by focusing on various aspects of that patient's physiology. Explain that, when it comes to shedding light on a particular Scripture passage, there are a variety of approaches that can be employed. Use the notes on the specified pages to explain the following forms of criticism:
 - a. **Historical criticism (pp. 89–90)**
 - b. **Textual criticism (p. 90)**
 - c. **Form criticism (pp. 90–91)**
 - d. **Source criticism (pp. 91–92)**
 - e. **Redaction criticism (pp. 92–93)**

14. Use the questions on page 93 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
15. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to 1 John 1:1–4 (“The Word of Life”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

- [Don't Get Lost in Translation](#)
- [English Translations of the Bible](#)
- [About the Bible Gateway Searchable Online Bible](#)
- [The New American Bible Online](#)
- [Choosing a Bible Translation](#)

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Formation Session Nine

First Steps and Next Steps

PAGES 95–101

Focus

When it comes to reading the Bible, it's good to know where to begin and what some of the next steps are.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants will be able to

- identify good starting points for reading the Old Testament and New Testament.
- outline steps for reading and praying a Scripture passage.
- describe the practice of *lectio divina*, "sacred reading."
- outline steps for applying the Bible to our own lives.
- make a commitment to reading and praying the Bible.



Plan

1. Invite the participants to recall the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. Ask if anyone can recall the advice that Glinda, the good witch, gave to Dorothy when Dorothy asked the question, "But how do I start for the Emerald City?" ("*Follow the Yellow Brick Road.*")
2. Explain that, as we look at the task of approaching the Bible, we may feel like Dorothy, needing to ask, "But how do I start?"
3. Say: I may not be able to point you to a yellow brick road, but I can certainly offer some tips for how to begin your own journey into the Bible.
4. Use the notes on pages 95–96 to identify passages in the Old Testament that are good places to begin. Do the same with the notes on pages 96–97 to identify places in the New Testament that are good starting points.
5. As a group, brainstorm some of the ways that one prepares a space (living room or dining room) for the arrival of a date for a romantic evening: dim the lights, light a candle, put on some soft music, and so on.

6. Explain that, when it comes to reading the Bible, we can use a similar approach: we can take steps to enhance the encounter. Use the notes on page 96 to outline steps for reading—praying—the Bible.
7. Remind the group that you have been practicing the ancient art of *lectio divina* at the close of each session. Invite volunteers to summarize in their own words the steps involved in *lectio divina*. Use the notes on page 97 to fill in anything they may miss.
8. If possible, play a recording of the traditional hymn “Blessed Assurance” or lead the group in singing the song. Point out that the refrain of that hymn proclaims the words, “This is my story!” Explain that this is the mind-set that we need to take when we are reading Scripture: this is *my* story. Use the notes on pages 97–100 to describe how the Scripture story is the story of each and every one of our lives.
9. Invite and challenge participants to continue reading, studying, and praying the Bible on their own.
10. Share information about local Bible studies that are available to them. If participants are seeking to begin Bible programs in this or other parishes, draw their attention to “How to Begin a Bible Program in Your Parish” on pages 104–108 and lead them through the recommended steps.
11. Use the questions on page 101 for further discussion and to summarize/review the session.
12. Close the session by leading the participants in *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina

- Invite the participants to find a comfortable position and to quiet themselves. Invite some deep breathing and enjoy silence for a few moments.
- Direct the participants to open their Bibles to Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (“Take to heart these words”) or to another appropriate brief passage. Invite them to allow a word or phrase from the passage to speak to them as you slowly and prayerfully read the passage out loud. Pause briefly and then read the passage out loud again more slowly.
- Pause in silence for one or two minutes and then invite participants to repeat out loud the word or phrase that is speaking to them (without elaboration or explanation).
- Invite a participant to slowly read the passage out loud again as you invite participants to ponder what Christ is saying to them personally through this passage.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.

- Invite another participant to slowly read aloud the passage again as you invite participants to listen for a word or phrase that best reflects their response to Christ.
- Pause again for one or two minutes and then invite participants to share out loud.
- Pause for a moment and then invite the participants to pray (either silently or out loud) that the person sitting to their right will be empowered to do or be what Christ is asking of them.
- Pause for a moment of silence before concluding the prayer with an Amen or with the Sign of the Cross.

Online Resources:

- [Ways of Reading the Bible](#)
- [Why You Need to Read the Bible: A Catholic View](#)
- [Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of *Lectio Divina*](#)
- [The Sunday Connection](#)
- [Six Weeks with the Bible \(for adults\)](#)
- [Six Weeks with the Bible \(for teens\)](#)

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