

# Unit 3D What is the Bible and why is it important for Christians?

## ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit focuses on the composition of the Bible and its significance and use in the lives of believers today. The Bible includes a number of genres which describe the history of Jewish people and the foundations of the Christian church.

## WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on previous units on Christianity, including 'What does it mean to belong in Christianity?' (1B) and 'What can we learn from visiting a church?' (1F) in year 1; 'Why did Jesus tell stories?' (2B) and 'Celebrations' (2C) in year 2; and 'What do we know about Jesus?' (3C) in year 3. Children should be familiar with some of the parables of Jesus, and the significance of the Torah in Judaism.

## PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- learnt that many religions have holy books
- learnt that there are different types of books for different purposes

## VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- the Bible, *eg Old and New Testament, parable, history, law, poetry, letters*

## RESOURCES

- a variety of library books and good access to the library
- different types of Bibles, *eg for the very young, illustrated*
- an order of service containing Bible readings
- visitors

## EXPECTATIONS

### At the end of this unit

*most children will:*

know about the compilation of the Bible, ie the Old and New Testaments, and identify some of the types of writing, *eg history, law, poetry, parable, letters*; know that the Bible is important for Christians as a source of guidance and teaching; understand some of the ways in which the Bible is used by Christians both in church and at home

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

know that the Bible is composed of different types of writing; understand that the Bible is used by Christians for guidance and teaching, both in church and at home

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

identify a wide range of different types of writing; begin to recognise the difference between the Old and New Testaments and to understand the importance of the Bible for Christians; understand the significance of the Bible within the Christian faith

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FAVOURITE BOOK AND THE BIBLE TO A CHRISTIAN?

- that the Bible is a sacred/holy book which forms the basis of the Christian faith
- Through discussion and brainstorming encourage children to explain why they think the Bible is important to Christians. *What makes it different from most other books?* The story of Mary Jones, *eg in books or videos*, is a useful example of how the Bible is valued. *How does this story make you feel? Would you be prepared to give up your time or money for something?*

- identify and describe ways in which the Bible is important for Christians
- reflect on their own feelings about the use of time and money

- Some children could undertake further research into different translations of the Bible.
- Emphasise that many of the stories in the Old Testament are shared by Muslims, Jews and Christians. It would not be advisable to teach them as common to all, as they are different both in content and in interpretations of their meanings.

## HOW DO CHRISTIANS USE THE BIBLE?

- that for Christians, the Bible is the main reference for teaching, guidance and worship
- Discuss how Christians use the Bible, *eg for both public and private worship; in church and at home; for guidance, teaching, prayer; as a basis for songs*. Listen to some modern Christian music followed by reading original Bible verses. Invite a Christian visitor to talk about the use of the Bible in his or her life. *Are there any differences in the way they use the Bible?* Discuss whether there is anything in the children's lives that they would value in the way that Christians value the Bible.
- Show a video of the Bible being read in an Orthodox or Catholic church.

- identify that the Bible is used by Christians in church and at home
- reflect on what is of value in their own lives

## WHAT MAKES A BOOK SPECIAL?

- that certain Bible passages have special significance to different Christians
- Make a class 'special book', showing comparisons between the children's own writing and extracts from the Bible, *eg poetry plus extracts from Psalms or Isaiah, a history of the school, extracts from class rules, the Ten Commandments from a modern translation, Paul's letter to Philemon in the New Testament and letters written or received by the children*. Discuss the reasons for selecting the extracts. Present them attractively and encourage the children to use illuminated writing and decorative borders. Include examples chosen by teachers and other adults in the school.

- identify the significance of special texts both to themselves and to Christians

- The Ten Commandments are in the Old Testament in Exodus 20.
- This task could be organised in groups with an 'editorial team' coordinating the finished product.

## WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE?

- how religious beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed through the Bible
- Focus on some particular types of writing, *eg history, psalms, proverbs, prayers, letters*, and identify what the writers are trying to express. Give children short extracts, *eg Psalm 23<sup>1-3</sup>, Proverbs 15<sup>1-2</sup>, The Lord's Prayer*.
- Compare different versions of the same passage. *What is gained and/or lost in the different versions?*

- make links between religious language and stories and the beliefs/ideas which lie behind them

- Select examples which are accessible to the children. Use a variety of versions, including the Revised Standard version, Good News, New International.

## WHAT DIFFERENT TYPES OF BOOKS ARE THERE IN THE LIBRARY?

- how different genres convey different aspects of God
- Talk about the different types of books in the school library. *When would you use these books (eg for instruction, for pleasure, for reflection)? What types of books are there in the Bible (eg history, law, Gospels, Psalms)?* Explain that there are two languages used in writing the Bible, Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament. Explore the different scripts with the children.
- Focus on different types of writing in the Bible, *eg a parable, a prayer, poetry*. *What words/phrases tell you something of how the writers see the character of God?* Through poetry, prose, music or art, ask the children to express their thoughts, feelings and questions about how believers might portray God.

- explain how different genres of writing convey different aspects of God's relationship with humankind
- communicate their ideas and feelings about the nature of God using a variety of media

- Extended time could be spent on this topic in order to allow children to explore a range of examples in greater depth.

## WHAT ARE THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS?

- about the composition of the Bible and its variety
- to find Biblical references
- about the differences between the Old and New Testaments
- Use a chart to show the two parts of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, as being those written before and after the birth of Jesus. Using a prepared sheet and working in small groups, ask the children to tick off the Old Testament books as they find them in the Bible, encouraging them to use referencing skills.
- As an extension task, children could do some research to help them to compose character studies of some of the exciting men, women and children in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, or to produce a short guide to finding the contents of the Bible.

- identify the Old and New Testaments and understand that the birth of Jesus marks the two sections
- recognise that the Bible is one book, containing many separate books
- identify some of the characteristics of key figures in the Bible and communicate these through writing

- Use a modern translation of the Bible as well as examples of on-line Bibles and Bibles in different languages. There is a wide range of texts from various authors on teaching about the Bible. Many contain photocopiable activities and aids for portraying the Bible as a library.
- This lesson could also be extended to cover two or three sessions, allowing for greater depth of study.
- There are clear links to work covered in the *National Literacy Strategy: Framework for teaching* on different genres and different ways of writing about characters.

## **FUTURE LEARNING**

Children could go on to:

- study the Bible in greater depth, developing an understanding that it was written by different writers, writing at different times for different purposes

