



Promises kept

THE WHOLE STORY OF THE BIBLE

by Carl Laferton

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introduction: good book guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- ➔ **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

why study Promises Kept?

One Saturday, less than a decade after the end of Jesus of Nazareth's life, a man named Paul stood up in a Jewish synagogue with a mind-blowing message.

"We tell you the good news," he said. "What God *promised* our fathers, he has *fulfilled* for us, their children, by raising up Jesus" (Acts 13 v 32-33).

In many ways, in these two sentences Paul was summing up the story of the whole of the Bible.

The God Paul was talking about is a *promise-making* God. Throughout history, He has made huge, extravagant, wonderful promises to humanity. We find many of those promises in what He said to the ancestors of the members of that synagogue—what He said to men such as Adam, Abraham, David. And as we see what God did, we see the shape of how He will fulfil what He has said.

Because, crucially, God is also a *promise-keeping* God. What He says, He does. And at a particular point in history, He fulfilled all of His promises in the life, death, resurrection and rule of one human—Jesus, a carpenter from a small Jewish town.

The Bible tells the story of what God promised. And it tells the story of how God has fulfilled those promises.

And so it's the story of the *good news*—the gospel. It's the story of how God has been at work for people, through people, and often despite people—and supremely it's the story of how He worked through one Person, Jesus.

This Good Book Guide will take you on a rapid tour of the whole story of the Bible. There won't be time to stop at every sight—only to point out some of the highlights. Over nine sessions, you'll travel from the beginning of the past, through our present, to the future.

Each session, you'll see what God promised, and something of how His promise was fulfilled. And each session, you'll be given a snapshot, an image which sums up that period of time. Put them all together and you'll have an album detailing the whole of history—the whole story of God's promises, and how He has fulfilled them in Jesus.

It's a whirlwind tour. It's a breathtaking tour. And it's a tour we're part of...

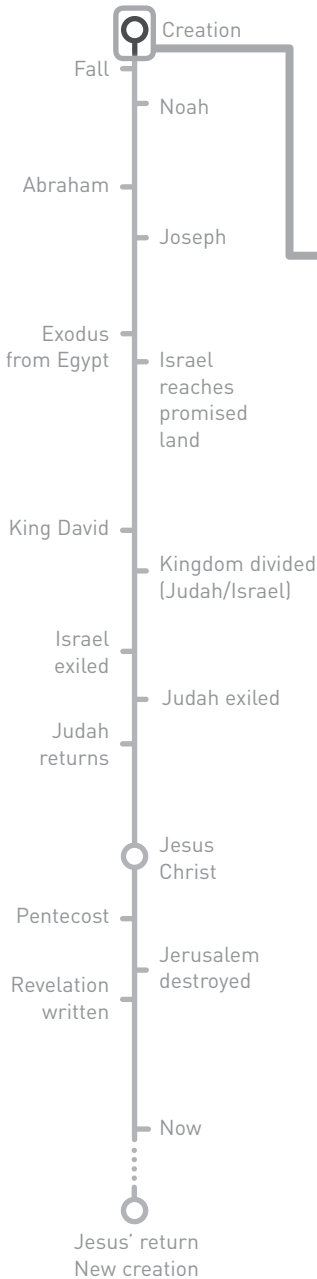
BIBLE TIMELINE

Where are we in the whole story of God's word?

SESSION ONE CREATION

BIBLE SECTION
Genesis 1 – 2

MAIN (HUMAN) CHARACTERS
The first man and woman



1

Genesis 1 – 2; John 1

A VERY GOOD WORLD

CREATION

talkabout

1. What is the most naturally beautiful or spectacular part of the world you've seen? How did visiting it make you feel?

What God promised...

investigate

Read Genesis 1 v 1-25

We are looking right back to “the beginning” (v 1): the very start of the world’s history.

2. What did God do (v 1)?

- How did He do it (v 3)? What does this show us about what He is like?

3. Split into pairs or small groups. Pick two or three of these sections each to have a look at: 1 v 6-8, 9-13, 14-19, 20-23.

- What is happening in each of the sections you've looked at?

- What similarities do you see between them?

4. What have we learned about God?

▶ Read Genesis 1 v 26 – 2 v 3

5. What is the last thing that God made?

- What is different about how this part of His creation is described? What does this mean, do you think?

- What job does God give them (v 28)?

6. What is God's verdict on His creation (v 31)?



apply

7. How does humanity's place in creation...
 - make us humble?

 - make us valuable?

 - give us purpose in life?

8. There are many issues in society today where knowing we are creatures—made in God's image—to rule His world, should shape our view. Pick a few now, and discuss what Genesis 1 v 26-31 has to say about them.

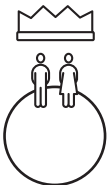


getting personal

Are there any areas in your life where you need to be reminded that you're not God, not in overall charge?

Where do you get your sense of value from? The shifting opinions of others, or the changing foundation of your looks, career, or health? What would change in your emotions and outlook if you based your identity on being made and valued by God?

What would change if your main purpose each day was to know God, live under His rule, and work in His world as He directs you?



SNAPSHOT: Genesis 1 – 2

The people God made enjoy perfect life with each other, under His rule, in His very good world.

The implicit promise of Genesis 1 – 2 is that the creation will be “very good” (1 v 31). That is what God says this world will be like. BUT today, our world is only a poor reflection of the world as it was created. Can the world God promised be recovered, or has His plan gone wrong?

... *He has fulfilled*

⏴ **investigate**

▶ **Read John 1 v 1-5, 9**

9. What similarities are there between these verses and Genesis 1 v 1-5?

10. What do we learn about “the Word”?

11. **Read verse 14.** What is amazing about these words?

- God’s word brought light to creation (Genesis 1 v 5)—here, the Word became flesh to bring “light”, too. What is that “light” (John 1 v 4)?

- This Word was called Jesus (v 17). And John wants us to see that Jesus’ coming is where God begins “creating” again. How is God “creating” through Jesus coming to earth?





getting personal

God's children (John 1 v 12) are not only part of His original creation, but also part of His new creation, begun when the Word became flesh to bring the light of life to the world.

What difference does that make to your life? Do you think about what can be enjoyed in this world too much, or too little? Do you care for it too much, or too little? Do you think of your future as part of God's re-creation too much, or too little?



pray

Praise God...

that He is the Creator, and for making you to enjoy life in His creation.
that He sent Jesus to bring life and begin recreating this imperfect world.

Confess to God...

ways you make too much, or too little, of His world.

Ask God...

to help you to be humble, to find your value in being made by God, and to live as He created you to each day (you might want to pray for specific ways in which you need His help in doing these things).



explore more

optional

Genesis 2 focuses on the climax of God's creation: humanity.

▶ Read Genesis 2 v 18-25

What is "not good"? What does God do about it (v 21-22)?

The man responds with a lovesong (v 23—you may not rate it much!).

What relationship have they been made for (v 24)?

What kind of relationship do they enjoy in God's creation (v 25)?

What do these verses tell us about men and women?





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We want to equip ordinary Christians to live for Christ day by day, and churches to grow in their knowledge of God, their love for one another, and the effectiveness of their outreach.

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