



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

Session 1

- In your own church experience, what did you learn (or what have you learned so far) about where the Bible came from?
- Does learning about the origins of the Bible matter? Why or why not?
- Do you believe that the stories in the Bible really happened? Is this the same as asking whether the stories in the Bible are true? Why or why not?

Session 2

- What is your favorite Bible translation, and why?
- What reasons can you think of for the large (and growing) number of Bible translations?
- In your view, what are the benefits and drawbacks of a Bible translation's use of gender-neutral language (for example, "everyone who belongs to God" [NRSV] instead of "man of God" [NIV] in 2 Timothy 3:17)?

Session 3

- Would you describe your method of interpreting the Bible as being literal, metaphorical, or something in between?
- Have you ever gotten into an argument over interpretation of a particular biblical passage? If so, what was the passage and how did you resolve the argument?
- How has your approach to interpreting the Bible changed over the years? What caused it to change?

Session 4

- In your view, is there an "Old Testament God" who is different from the "New Testament God"? Why or why not?
- If so, what accounts for the change that occurs from the Old to the New Testament? Are there two different Gods? Did God change?
- Is the New Testament more important (to you) than the Old? Why or why not?



What is your favorite book of the Bible?



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What is your favorite Bible story?



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What is your favorite Bible verse?



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If you have your own Bible, where and when did you get it?



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If you have your own Bible, what kind (translation, version) do you have?



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How often do you read the Bible on your own?



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Where did the Bible come from?



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How did we get our Bible?



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Who wrote the Bible?



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How do we know whether everything in the Bible really happened?



Are all the stories in the Bible real?



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HEBREW AND GREEK

HEBREW WORDS

Above: מֵעַל
Ark: אֲרוֹן
Bless: בֵּרַךְ
Build: בָּנָה
Call: קָרָא
Commandment: מִצְוָה
Covenant: בְּרִית
Day: יוֹם
Earth (or Land): אֶרֶץ
Fire: אֵשׁ
Hear: שָׁמַע
Holy: קָדוֹשׁ
House: בַּיִת
I am: יְהוָה
Israel: יִשְׂרָאֵל
Judgment: מִשְׁפָּט
Light: אֹר
Peace: שָׁלוֹם
Righteousness: צְדָקָה
Wind, Spirit, or Breath: רוּחַ

GREEK WORDS

Angel: ἄγγελος
Baptize: βαπτίζω
Blessed: μακάριος
Church: ἐκκλησία
Faith: πίστις
Forgive: ἀφίημι
God: θεός
Gospel: εὐαγγέλιον
Grace: χάρις
Hope: ἐλπίς
Joy: χαρά
Kingdom: βασιλεία
Light: φως
Love (noun): ἀγάπη
Love (verb): ἀγαπάω
Peace: εἰρήνη
Pray: προσεύχομαι
Righteous: δίκαιος
Seek: ζητέω
Water: ὕδωρ
Worship: προσκυνέω



***LECTIO DIVINA* GUIDELINES**

Lectio divina ("divine reading") is an intentional, contemplative way to connect with God's Word. This ancient spiritual practice involves listening to multiple readings of the same Scripture passage interspersed with short periods of silence.

Relax in God's Presence

Dim the lights. Light a candle or oil lamp. Sing a song or play contemplative music. Take a few minutes to relax in God's presence and to open the group members' hearts and minds.

Listen for God's Word

First Reading

Have a group member slowly read the hymn out loud while the rest of the group members listen for a word that "jumps out" to each of them. Include a time of silence after the reading. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her word (without comment or explanation) with the rest of the group.

If possible, invite participants with different types of voices (e.g., young and old, male and female) to be readers.

Second Reading

Invite each group member to think about his or her word during the next reading, exploring the question "How does this word and this hymn connect with my life?" Have a second reader slowly read the hymn out loud to the group, and allow for a time of silence after the reading. Give each person an opportunity to share his or her response to the question.

Third Reading

Invite each group member to think about the question "What is this hymn calling me to do?" or "Who is this hymn calling me to be?" during the next reading. Have a third reader slowly read the hymn out loud to the group, and end with a time of silence. Give each person an opportunity to respond to the question "What have you heard from God in this hymn?"



Why does it matter that God's Word was written?



Why does it matter that God's Word was published?



Why does it matter that God's Word was incarnated? (And who is the incarnation of God's Word?)



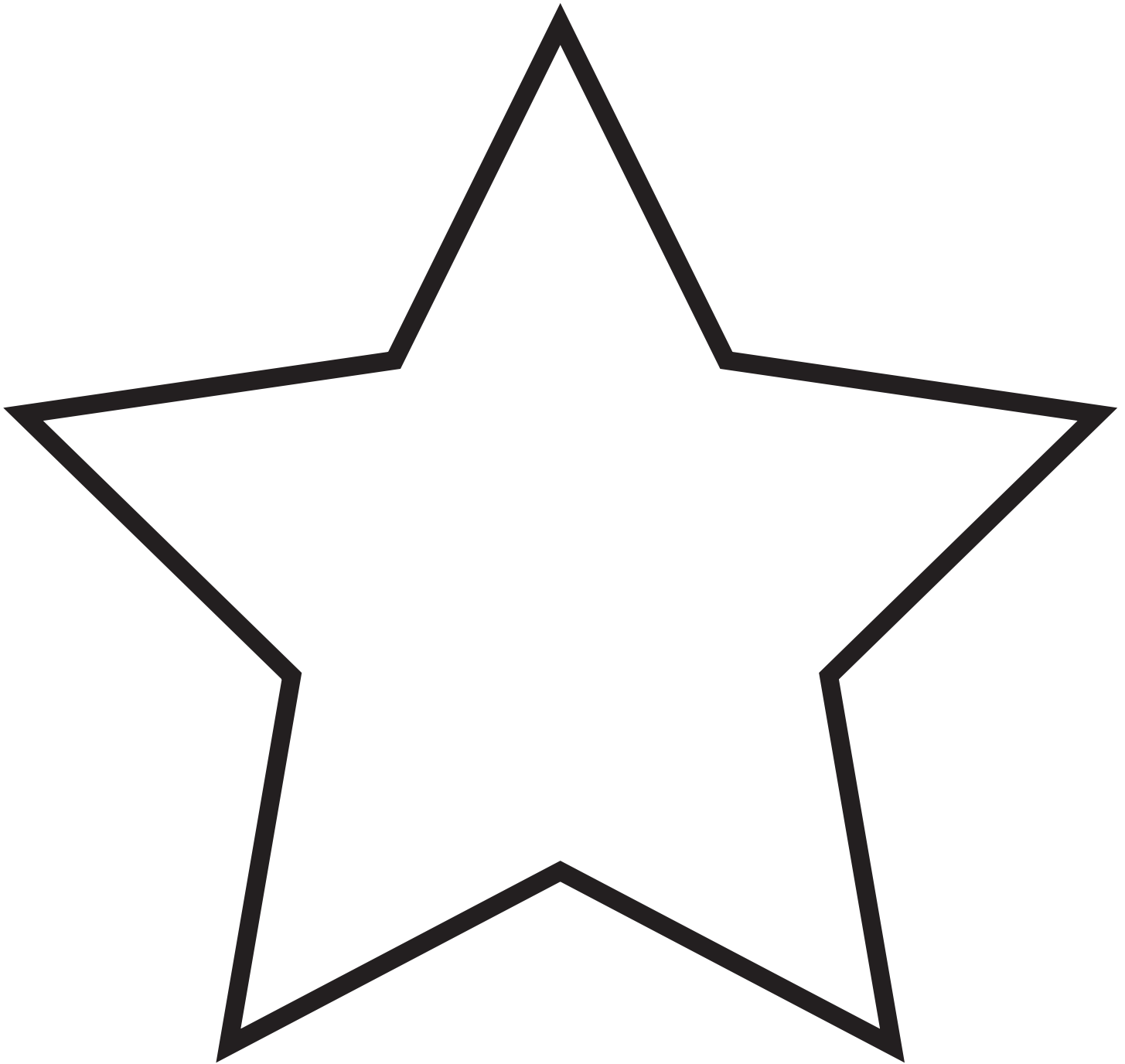
How else does God's Word come to us?



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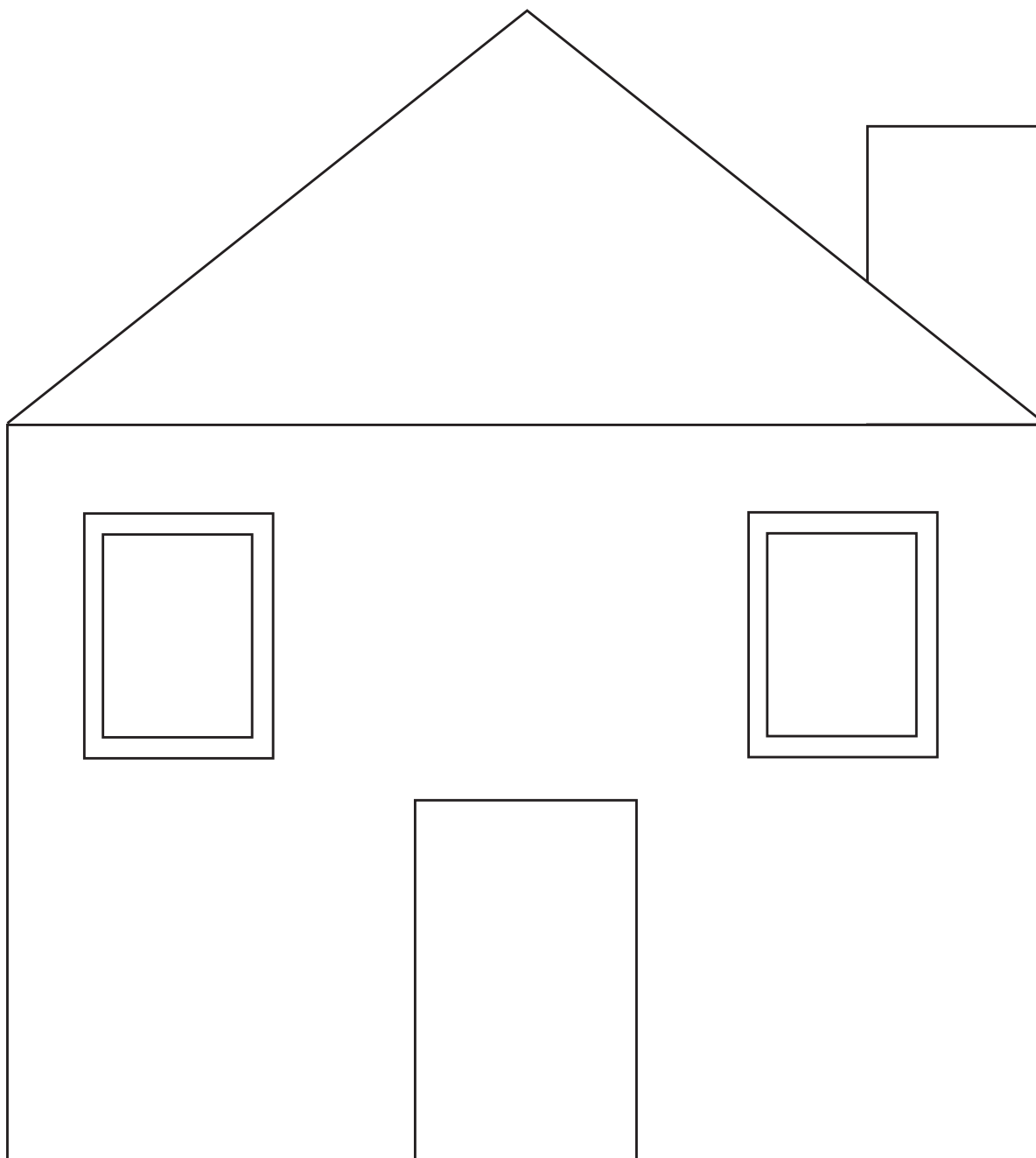


PHYSICAL GOSSIP PICTURE 1



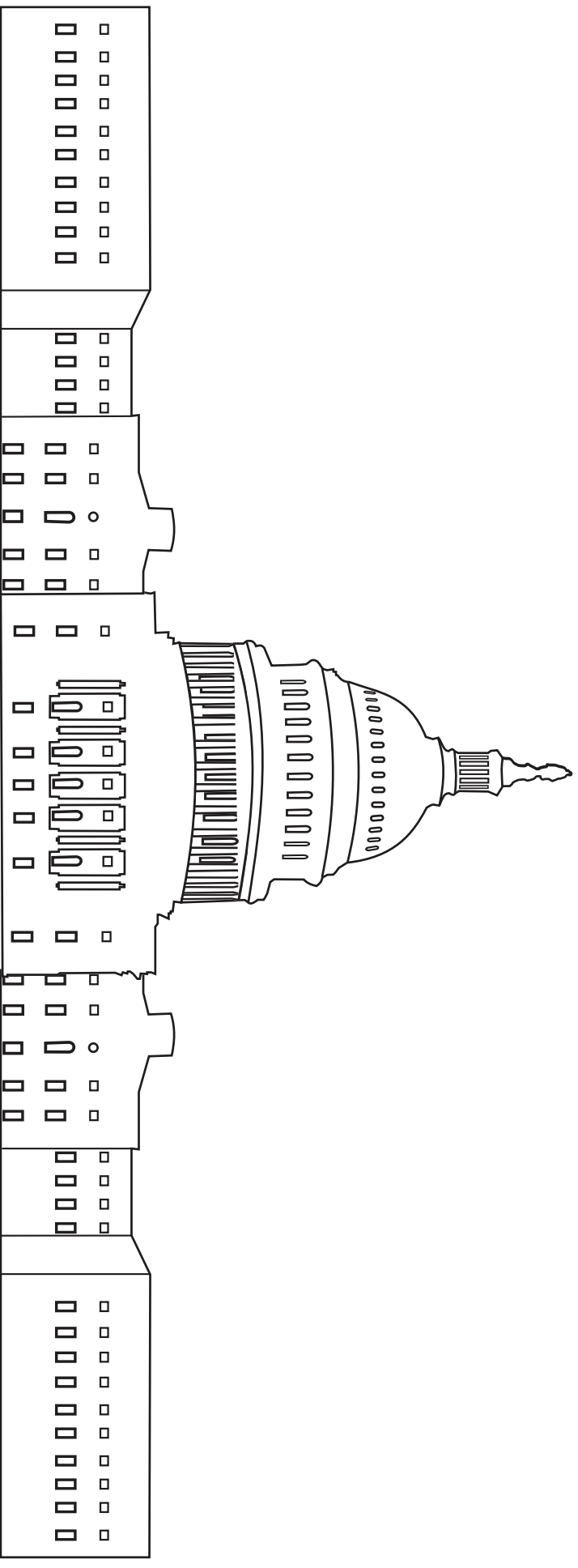


PHYSICAL GOSSIP PICTURE 2





PHYSICAL GOSSIP PICTURE 3





2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

Wycliffe Bible (1382)

For al scripture inspirid of God is profitable to teche, to repreue, to chastice, to lerne in riytwisnes, that the man of God be parfit, lerud to al good werk.

King James Version (1611)

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

New International Version (1984)

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

New Revised Standard Version (1989)

All scripture is inspired by God and is^a useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

The Message (2002)

Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

Today’s New International Version (2005)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God’s people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

a. Or Every scripture inspired by God is also



SESSION 2 FAITH STATEMENT

The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of human beings, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken the divine word in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that God will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture.

— *The Confession of 1967* (9.29),
inclusive language version





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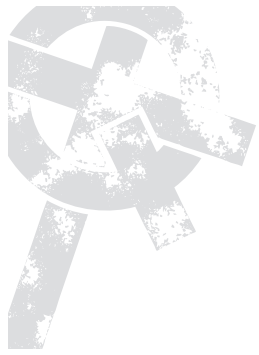
Third Reading

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“Take a hike!”

If someone says this to you, what do they really mean?



“Then God said,
‘Let there be light’;
and there was light”
(Genesis 1:3).

Is this referring to a literal act of God, to the “Big Bang,”
or to something else altogether?



“Make my day!”

If someone says this to you, what do they really mean?



“God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night” (Genesis 1:16).

Does this mean that the moon generates its own light?





“Break a leg!”

If someone says this to you, what do they really mean?



“God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it . . .’ ”
(Genesis 1:27–28).

What does “subdue” mean? Defeat? Suppress? Tame? Smother? Control?





“You’re beating a dead horse!”

Why would you beat a horse that is dead?



“And on the seventh day,
God finished the work
that God had done . . .”
(Genesis 2:2).

Did God really create the world in six literal days,
or is there another interpretation?





“You don’t have
a cell phone?
What a dinosaur!”

What do I mean when I call you a dinosaur?





“[T]he LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

Is this really how the first human was created, or is it just a metaphor?



REFORMED PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

- Centrality of Jesus Christ (all of Scripture should be understood with reference to the central revelation of God in Christ).
- Priority of the plain sense of the text.
- Interpretation of Scripture by Scripture (the entire biblical canon is the context for understanding the fullness of Christian faith and life).
- Rule of love (any interpretation needs to offer and support the twofold commandment to love God and neighbor).
- Rule of faith (we interpret Scripture in light of the doctrinal consensus of the church, past and present).

Plus:

- Interpretation of the Bible requires earnest study.
- We rely upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting and applying God's message.¹

For the complete General Assembly position statement, "Presbyterian Understanding and Use of Holy Scripture," go to pcusa.org/oga/publications/scripture-use.pdf.

1. Reprinted from *Seeking Peace, Unity, and Purity: A Leader's Guide*, pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity/resources/vid1book.pdf.



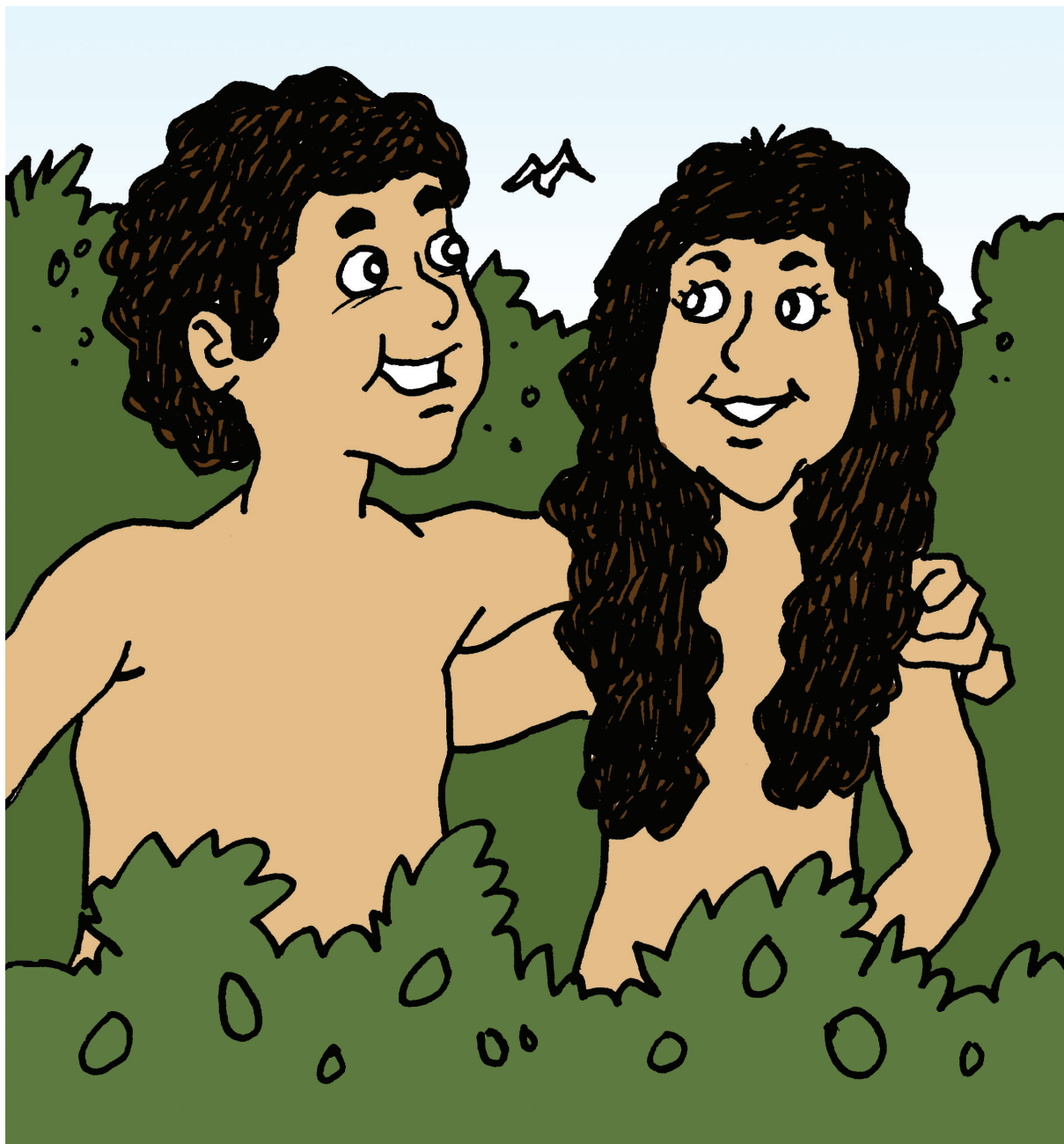


SESSION 3 FAITH STATEMENT

But we hold that interpretation of the Scripture to be orthodox and genuine which is gleaned from the Scriptures themselves (from the nature of the language in which they were written, likewise according to the circumstances in which they were set down, and expounded in the light of like and unlike passages and of many and clearer passages) and which agree with the rule of faith and love, and contributes much to the glory of God and humanity's salvation.

—*The Second Helvetic Confession* (5.010)









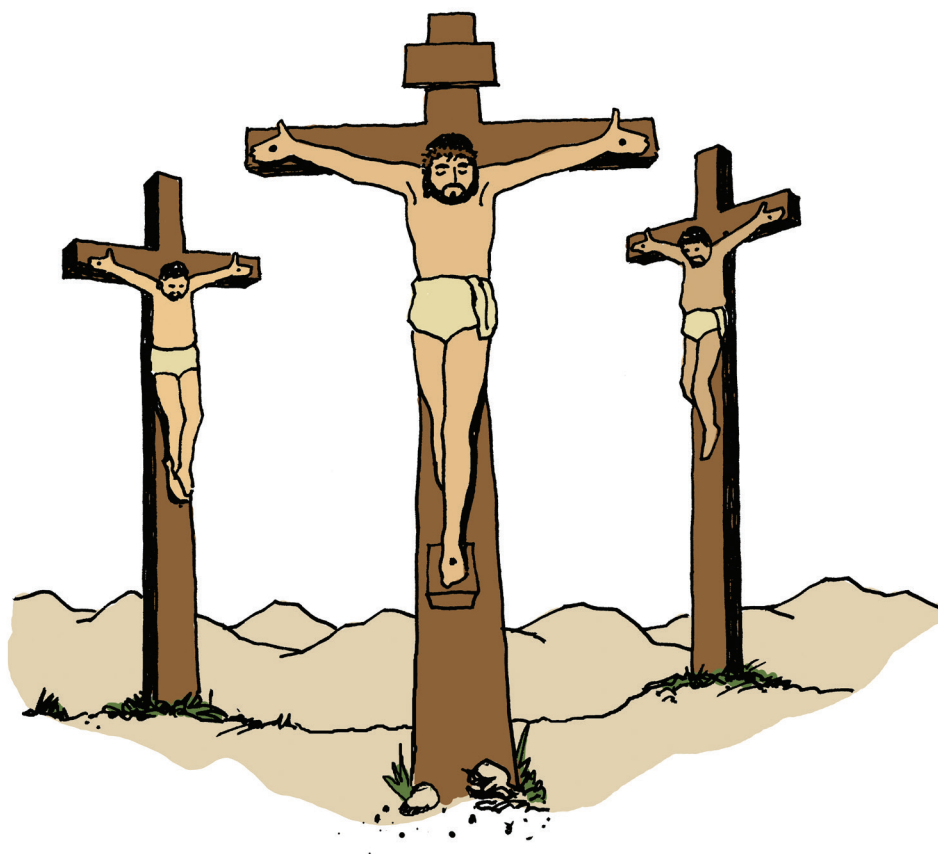








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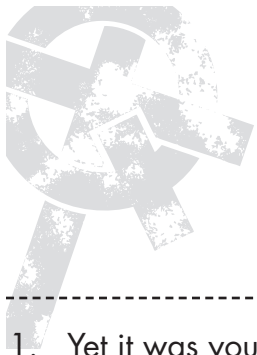


SESSION 4 FAITH STATEMENT

The New Testament is the recorded testimony of apostles to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church. The Old Testament bears witness to God's faithfulness in God's covenant with Israel and points the way to the fulfillment of God's purpose in Christ. The Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New, and is not itself fully understood without the New.

— *The Confession of 1967* (9.28)





ANONYMOUS BIBLE VERSES

1. Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
2. You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.
3. I am the good shepherd.
4. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.
6. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"
7. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders—flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great."
8. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed; take all the fighting men with you, and go up now to Ai. See, I have handed over to you the king of Ai with his people, his city, and his land. You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king; only its spoil and its livestock you may take as booty for yourselves. Set an ambush against the city, behind it."
9. And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy.
10. For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days.



KEY

1. Psalm 22:9–10
2. Deuteronomy 32:18
3. John 10:11a
4. Luke 13:34
5. Psalm 23:5–6
6. John 2:15–16
7. Revelation 19:17–18
8. Joshua 8:1–2
9. Hosea 2:19
10. Mark 13:19–20



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