

One book, many voices

MASSACHUSETTS BIBLE SOCIETY

HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO AND GUIDE

One Book, Many Voices is a film designed to help individuals and groups think about the many ways people approach the Bible. It is not meant to provide answers, as we believe answers properly come from the prayerful consideration of each person and each faith community. This is a video designed to help focus the questions.

This video is also not exhaustive. There are other perspectives that were not included, simply due to the restrictions of length. In the religious climate of 2009 those most engaged in the public debates of biblical interpretation come from a Protestant background, and our video reflects that. We are actively pursuing a series to follow this initial video, and the series format will give us space to explore the large variety of other voices with important things to say about the Bible.

Given that limitation in the current video, one way to use it might be to show it in an ecumenical (and ideally multicultural) setting where those with different perspectives might have a chance to offer additional ways of viewing the biblical texts.

We purposely set the length at 30 minutes to facilitate use of the video in Sunday School classes, Bible studies, or other small groups that might typically meet for an hour or an hour and a half, leaving time for discussion after the showing of the film. You might also consider gathering a group for a one-time event, especially if questions of how to interpret the Bible are raised frequently in your setting.

The Massachusetts Bible Society is also prepared to facilitate a discussion or bring a workshop or retreat built around the video to your church or group. If you are in or close to Massachusetts, please contact us for more information on these options.

Lastly, we hope that the video can also be instructive for individuals thinking through the issues for themselves. With the video available as a download, it can easily be watched on a computer at home by those who either cannot attend a group or are not inclined to do so. Many of the reflection questions relate simply to the individual's view and background and hopefully will be helpful to those without a group or who do not have a church affiliation. Questions specifically dealing with church issues are in their own section.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION

RESPONSE TO THE VIDEO

1. Did you hear or see anything in the video that was either new information or a new perspective for you? What was your reaction?
2. Tony Campolo, Peter Gomes, and Bart Ehrman presented different ways of looking at the Bible. Which is the most like your own? Which is the least like yours?
3. Was there any part of the video that made you uncomfortable? Why?
4. Was there any part of the video that you especially appreciated? Why?
5. The scholars were asked what one thing they wanted people to know about the Bible. Is there one thing *you* want people to know about the Bible?

THE BIBLE AND YOU

1. List the words that come to mind when someone says "Bible."
2. Do you own a Bible? Is there a Bible that is special to you? If you have a Bible, where did it come from and how did you select it?
3. When and how did you first encounter the Bible? What impressions did you have from that encounter? Were they impressions that you kept, or did they change over time?
4. Have you ever read any of the Bible on your own?
5. Have you ever tried to read the Bible through cover to cover? If so, did you succeed? What made you do it? What was the experience like? Would you recommend that others try it? If you haven't tried it, is there something in particular that stopped you from trying?
6. Have you had any training in the Bible, either in a Sunday School or church setting or more formally in academic study? How do you feel generally about studying the Bible?
7. Have you ever heard or been part of a discussion about the Bible where people strongly disagreed? How was it handled? Was it helpful to you?
8. What questions do you have about the Bible? Where do you look for answers to your questions?
9. Finish this sentence: "The Bible is..."

THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH

(For the following questions, think about the particular local church or churches with which you have the most experience)

1. How is the Bible used in worship?
 - a. Is it read aloud? By whom? If lay readers are used, how are those readers selected? Are children allowed to read? People with special needs?
 - b. Are there Bibles in the pews? Do people bring their own Bibles? Are they used during the service? Is their use encouraged?

- c. Is a physical Bible visible throughout worship? Where is it placed? Is it touched or otherwise made the focus at any point?
 - d. If Scripture is read during worship, how many passages are used? Who selects them? Are there differences in the treatment of different parts of the Bible (for example, do people stand to hear the Gospel reading but not other readings)?
 - e. Does the sermon relate to the Bible passage(s) read aloud? If not, does it relate to another text or does the sermon generally not include Bible references?
 - f. The Bible contains stories of rape, murder, war, and blatant sexuality. Are these passages ever read or preached about on Sunday morning? If not, should they be?
 - g. If someone who had never so much as opened a Bible came to worship at your church, what helps or obstacles would they encounter?
2. In what ways does your church encourage the reading and study of the Bible?
- a. Is the Bible taught in Sunday School? Is it taught to both adults and children?
 - b. Are there other times outside of worship and/or Sunday school that Bible study is offered? If so, who comes? Is it regular or occasional? How are leaders/teachers selected?
 - c. Has your church ever had a conflict over the interpretation of the Bible? Was it resolved? How?
 - d. When you think about both the clergy and any lay people who teach about the Bible in your church, do you feel they have adequate training? Is training necessary or should they rely solely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
 - e. Is there one particular translation used and/or recommended by your church?
 - f. How are questions about the Bible and its contents handled in your church? Do people ask them? Of whom? Are the questions welcomed or dismissed? Does it depend on the question or the questioner?
 - g. What could your church do to encourage more Bible study and reflection?
3. Which of the following approaches to the Bible comes closest to that taught by your church?
- a. The Bible is the inerrant Word of God. It should be taken literally and contains no errors or contradictions in matters religious, scientific, historical, or otherwise. Any seeming contradictions can be reconciled through greater study and understanding.
 - b. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Holy Spirit worked with and through human authors to teach religious truth. It is an infallible guide for faith and practice but reflects historical and cultural

understandings—and sometimes misunderstandings--of science, history, society and other issues.

- c. The Bible is a collection of writings by human authors who have preserved a record of Judeo-Christian history that has influenced culture, politics, and religious life around the globe. It is on par with other sacred texts and reflects the cultural biases of the age in which each book was written as well as the agendas of its individual authors.

SO WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

We hope this video has piqued your interest in the Bible. Should you want to learn more, the Massachusetts Bible Society can help.

On the Web:

- Ask-a-Prof: Got a question about the Bible or something you've read in it? Thirty-five seminary and religion professors are ready to respond to your questions. See who they are, see what questions have already been asked and answered, and ask your own question at <http://www.massbible.org/ask-a-prof>.
- Daily Bible Reading Guide: With this guide from the American Bible Society you can read through the Bible in one year. Find it and other resources here: <http://www.americanbible.org/brcpages/resources-eBulletin>
- Need help choosing a Bible? Check out these tips: <http://www.massbible.org/how-to-choose-bible>.
- For tips and resources for Bible study, look here: <http://www.massbible.org/how-to-study-bible>.
- Want to watch lectures by other biblical scholars? Check out our program videos: <http://www.massbible.org/program-videos>.
- Follow the Lectionary? Check out what our bloggers are saying about this week's passages: <http://www.massbible.org/lectionary-blogs>.
- If you subscribe to our @massbible Twitter feed, you'll receive daily featured books and religious news from around the world. You can also join our Facebook group and Fan page to keep up with our latest events and offerings.
- Simply want to have fun? Check out our puzzles, games, and bible quiz at <http://www.massbible.org/bible-play>.

Meet face to face:

- Want to find a church community? Find one of our partner churches here: <http://www.massbible.org/partner-churches>.
- Want to meet with a small group in your area or maybe start one? Check out the MBS Meetup Groups: <http://www.massbible.org/meetup>.
- Keep up with our events at <http://www.massbible.org/special-events>. We'd love to meet you!

Contact Us:

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