



Making Sense *of* **Scripture**



Leader Guide



AUGSBURG FORTRESS
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MAKING SENSE OF SCRIPTURE Leader Guide
Book of Faith Adult Bible Studies

This Leader Guide is intended for use along with the book *Making Sense of Scripture: Big Questions about the Book of Faith* (978-0-8066-9953-0). Session Introductions by author David Lose are also available on *DVD* (978-0-8066-9620-1). These resources are also available for purchase online at www.augsburgfortress.org

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session 1

What Is the Bible?

Prepare

FOCUS STATEMENT

The Bible is a collection of confessions of faith that, taken together, offer a story that seeks to make sense of everything, including our lives.

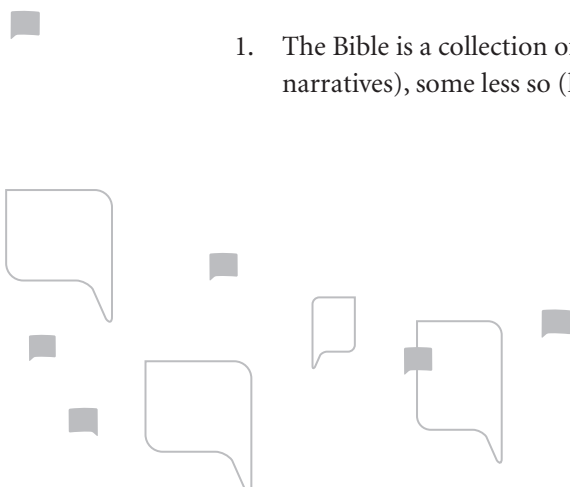

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Before we get into a discussion about the Bible, it will be helpful to touch briefly on two convictions—one about faith and one about ourselves—that run throughout this book and are introduced in this first chapter.

1. Faith is not the opposite of doubt, but is the ability to hope and believe in spite of our honest doubts. It is important to share our honest questions and to listen to each other with compassion and respect.
2. We make sense of our lives in and through the stories we tell—about our lives, our families, our country and world, our faith. As we listen to each other's stories, we come to know one another better and grow in relationship. As we listen to the stories of the Bible, we come to know God and the people of God better and grow in our relationship with God and each other.

The Bible can be very challenging to understand because it is different from most of the books we regularly read. It contains poetry, legal codes, narratives, wisdom sayings, and more. It was written centuries ago in different languages (so what we are reading is a translation) and came from cultures very different from our own. We do not, as a rule, see books written today that resemble the Bible. For this reason, many Christians struggle to make sense of the Bible. This is nothing to be embarrassed about.

Keeping three things about the Bible in mind will aid us in our reading:

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1. The Bible is a collection of books made up of all kinds of literary documents, some familiar (like narratives), some less so (like legal codes).
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TIP

Throughout the study, some participants may be reluctant to share their questions. It can help if you lead by example, volunteering your own questions. You may also want to help participants understand that questions are a key ingredient of faith.

TIP

If possible, distribute copies of *Making Sense of Scripture* to participants before the first session, and ask them to read the introduction and chapter one, "What Is the Bible?" Be prepared to recap the chapter for any group members who did not have the book or were not able to do the advance reading.

2. All of these different kinds of writing are confessions of faith: confessions about God, the world, and human life, made by people who were so gripped by their experience of God that they couldn't help but tell someone about them.
3. Together, these varied confessions of faith are like a family scrapbook that tells the story of God's people and their experiences of the living God.

When we read the Bible as a family scrapbook, we better understand who we are and where we fit into the ongoing story of God's people. Sometimes the story is complicated, even confusing. But if we bring our honest questions and wrestle with them together, we also will be encountered by the living God and invited to take our part in the story.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Take a few moments to think about some of the questions participants will explore in this session.

First, name some of the questions you have had about the Bible. What has your experience of reading (or listening to) the Bible been like—Rewarding? Confusing? Frustrating? Enjoyable? All of the above? What questions do you have about the Bible? What has made sense, and what hasn't?

Second, take a moment to think of a story that has shaped how you think about yourself and the world. (Possibilities may be a favorite book, a family story, or something from history.) Choose one to share with the group. Why has this story been important to you? How has it shaped how you look at life?

SESSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Read chapter one in *Making Sense of Scripture* and this Leader Guide session completely. Highlight or underline any portions you wish to emphasize with the group. Note also any bonus activities you wish to do.
2. If you plan to do any special activities, collect all the materials you'll need. Each session will call for chart paper and markers or another means to collect insights and questions.

FACILITATOR'S PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer for those who will be coming to this class, for yourself, and for the session ahead. If it is helpful, you may use this prayer as a guide:

Dear God, bless each one who comes to this study, and bless me as a leader. Open our ears, hearts, and minds so we may come to know you more deeply as we study your Word, ask questions, and join in conversation. Amen.

Gather (10 minutes)

WELCOME AND CHECK-IN

Welcome the group. Bible study may be a new experience for some, and it is important for people to feel welcome and secure. Provide name tags and make time for introductions. Snacks, or even a meal to celebrate this new venture, can help the group feel more comfortable together.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, for generations you have gathered your people around the sacred stories of your life with them and in the world. As we gather around these same stories, give us courage to name our hopes, fears, and questions. And give us compassion to listen and learn from each other. Bless our time together, and as we listen to the confessions of your people of old, help us hear a story of hope and love that inspires us today. Amen.

INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS (IQ) TIME

Invite participants to share any insights they had while reading chapter one. What points shed some light on the Bible and how we might read it? List these insights on chart paper where all can see.

Ask the group to share any questions they have about what they read. Collect these on chart paper as well.

Set the lists aside so you can return to them at the end of the session.

SUPPLIES

- Name tags
- Pens
- Snacks or a meal (optional)
- Chart paper
- Markers

TIP

Reassure group members that there are no “wrong” questions or insights.

TIP

If you go around the room to give everyone a chance to participate, make sure people know it's alright to “pass” or not offer an insight or question.