



New England Catholic Biblical School 2-Hour Bible Basics Presentation

I. Prayer: Face of Love – An Imaginative Encounter

A guided imagery moving into prayer



- Movement One: Be guided to imagine an encounter with someone beloved to you.
- Movement Two: In silence, speak with God about this encounter.

II. Sharing Your Encounter

Share with one other person:

Who was the person you imagined? Why do you think that particular person came to mind this evening?



III. What is the Bible?

- “God’s love letter to his people”? (But much more!)
- Riddle: How is the Bible like a balloon?
- Guided Tour of the Bible
- What is the difference between the original meaning (what the Bible *meant*) and the fuller meaning of a biblical text (what the Bible *means*)?

IV. The Bible Is a Library

- Many literary forms
- Who are our guides?
- Commentaries, Dictionaries, other resources

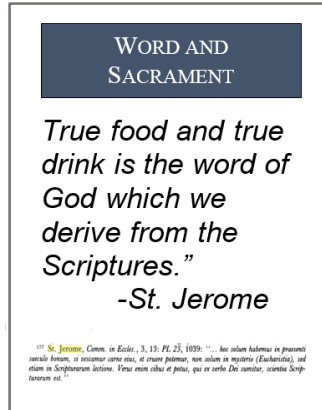
V. Authorship in the Bible

- How do we come to know the human, inspired writers of the Bible?
- A story demonstration: Isabel Nist
- Some elements to consider:
 - *Oral composition / Development of Written Texts / Editors*
 - *Family gatherings / Formal gatherings / Liturgical/worship gatherings*
 - *Changes in location: Mesopotamia, the Levant (Israel/Palestine), Egypt, Asia Minor (Turkey), Greece, Rome*
 - *Changes in language: Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic*
- Three Stages of Gospel Writing
 1. Original Experience: Life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus
(ca. 30 AD – exclusively oral tradition)
 2. Proclaiming the Good News
(30-95 AD – oral traditions collected)
 - Preaching of Jesus’ followers to hand on faith in Jesus
 - gathering communities of faith
 - *living* the gospels in those early communities (action, worship)

3. Gospel Writing

(65-95 AD – written/edited traditions)

- Eyewitnesses to direct experience of the earthly Jesus dying/dead
- Traditions preserved in writing, collected and edited
- PURPOSE: handing down the faith to new generations



VI. A Question and a Challenge

The Question: What difference does it make? What kind of impact do you think understanding the development of biblical texts, within historical times and places, have on your understanding of God or our faith community?

The Challenge:

1. Choose one text (story or section) in the Old Testament that you have found difficult in some way.
2. Online or in a Study Bible, read a good introduction to the book in which your chapter or story appears. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops website has excellent introductory material for every book of the Bible.
3. THEN read the biblical chapter you've chosen, together with the explanatory footnotes.
4. Tell one person, or write down in one paragraph, what God might be wanting you to understand in that chapter.

Further Resources:

Study Bibles

- Online: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/>
- Oxford: Catholic Study Bible (New American Bible Revised Edition)
- Oxford: The New Oxford Annotated Bible (New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha)
- The HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV with Apocrypha)

New England Catholic Biblical School

- Core program: Study every book of the Bible in four years
- Making Sense of the Bible: Six-week introduction to Sacred Scripture

Commentaries such as:

- *New Collegeville Bible Commentary* (Good starting point)
- *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (If you're up for a scholarly challenge)

Textbooks

- ***Bible Blueprint*, by Joe Paprocki**
- *Introduction to the Bible, A Catholic Guide to Studying Scripture*, by Stephen J. Binz

Bible Atlases and Maps

Archbishop O'Brien Library at the Pastoral Center has a strong collection of biblical materials and commentaries. Open Mon-Fri, 9:30 a.m.-noon and 12:30-2:30 p.m.