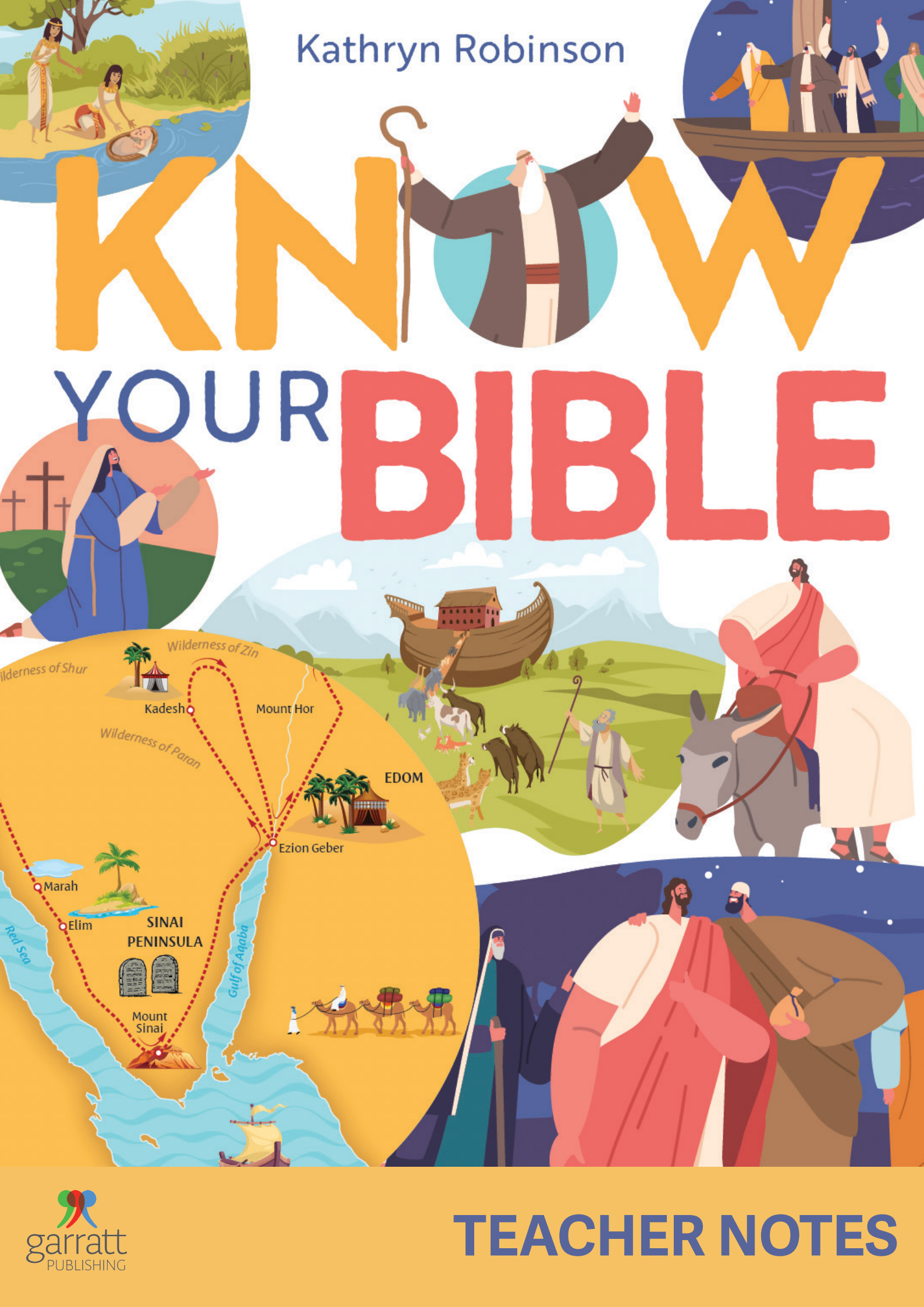


Kathryn Robinson

KNOW YOUR BIBLE





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Section 1: The Old Testament



What is the Bible?

Pg 2



Teacher Information

In introducing a unit of work focussing on the Bible, as a starting point:

- allow students to raise questions
- collect quotes or stories they may already know
- create a class Inquiry board that can be added to as the unit unfolds.

Activity

Consider the variety of languages spoken within the class and invite, students, with their families' input to choose a particular quote that they could translate into their own language. This could then be added to the Inquiry Board.

How many books are in the Bible?

Pg 3–4



Teacher Information

Explore the differences between the Christian Bible and the Roman Catholic Bible.

If possible, have different Bibles available for the students to work with.

There are Books in the Catholic Bible that are omitted from the Christian Bible.

The **Roman Catholic** tradition includes:

- 1 and 2 Maccabees,
- Ecclesiasticus also known as Sirach
- the Wisdom of Solomon
- Judith
- Tobit
- Baruch
- additions to Daniel and Esther.

Reference: A Friendly Guide to the Old Testament, Marie Turner, Garratt Publishing.

From a historical point of view, the Council of Trent held between 1545 and 1563 defined the Canon of Scripture that we find in the Roman Catholic Bible.

Further extension in regard to the significance of Ecumenical Councils.

Activity

- Provide students with an overview of the Second Vatican Council and the changes that came about in the Liturgy following the Council.
- Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI.

Who wrote the Bible and why? Pg 5-9



Teacher Information

In examining the authors of the different books we find listed in the Bible, we must remember they come to us from a faith perspective.

The books are written by people of faith for people of faith. Each author in their own way speaks of God's continuing presence and love for the created world.

Within books of both the Old and New Testament we find references to historical figures and events, yet these events and figures are recounted and presented through a faith perspective:

- Where is the presence of God in these events?
- How does this person add to or impact on the faith journey of the community?
- Does this historical figure help us know God in our story?

Many of the stories and events that we read in both the Old and New Testament began as part of an Oral Tradition, where the elders or leaders of communities recounted stories or events that they had witnessed themselves or that had been passed on to them over time.

This Oral tradition was collected, refined, and written to form the basis of the Written Tradition that became for us the Old and New Testament.

To help students understand the why, introduce writings of other Church leaders and scholars who write letters, commentaries, and books to support the message of God's love for us, for our world, the same message that we find throughout the different books of the Bible.

Examine the writings of Pope Francis. In his letter *Laudato Si'*, he writes:

We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent is worth it.

Paragraph 229

This particular quote could support work around an understanding of the Ten Commandments, Social Justice or Sustainability.

Activity

Using this quote as the basis for a unit of work on Social Justice students respond to the following questions first as individuals then in small groups.

- What is your first response to this quote?
- How does this quote help you understand how God wants you to be in the world?
- How does this quote encourage you to make a difference?
- What difference can you as an individual make?

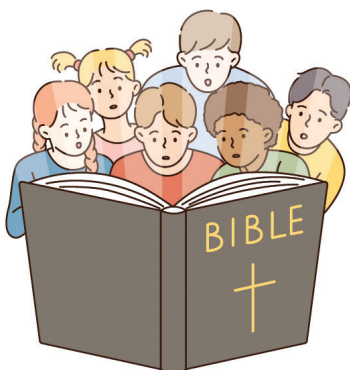
Who wrote the Bible and why?
(cont.)
Pg 5–9

- What difference can we as members of this class/ school make?
- What is your understanding of ‘shared responsibility’?
- Where have you experienced this?

These questions can be added to or reflected on as part of the assessment of the Unit.

- For further extension work consider the writings, books of C S Lewis or J R R Tolkien.
- Authors who through their lived experience of war wrote about the ongoing conflict of Good overcoming Evil.
- This theme of Good overcoming Evil is continually presented to us in the different books of the Bible.
- For those students that are familiar with the Harry Potter books give them the opportunity to explore different themes around belonging, friendships, and we can best use our gifts, talents to enrich our communities.

What type of writing, (language) was used in the bible?
Pg 9–11



Teacher Information

The majority of the text in the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.

Hebrew was the spoken language of the Jewish people around Palestine. It was used in both their everyday life and in prayer and religious celebrations.

In the Old Testament we also find texts written in Aramaic. There are examples of Aramaic in both Daniel and the Prophet Ezra.

Ezra 4:7

And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of the associates write to King Artaxerxes of Persia; the letter was written in Aramaic and translated.

The Aramaic language is linked or associated with the ancient regions of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Eastern Arabia. It is still spoken in these regions.

The Gospel writer uses Aramaic, as Jesus spoke Aramaic.

Look at the Gospel of Mark, the first Gospel to be written, in Chapter 5, verse 41, Jesus speaks in Aramaic:

He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha cum,’ which means, ‘Little girl, get up.’

This Gospel writer uses Aramaic, as Jesus spoke Aramaic. Mark then translates the Aramaic into Greek as those reading his Gospel would be more familiar with the Greek language than Aramaic. Another example of Jesus speaking in Aramaic can be found in Mark 7:34.



This particular healing with the anointing of the ears is now part of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults in preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism.

Invite a parish representative from the RCIA team to speak with the students about the different rites used during the time of preparation.

In both Matthew and John's account of the Crucifixion, reference is made to the inscription Herod had placed on the Cross "The King of the Jews."

In John's account we are told that this inscription was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, languages that those in the city would be familiar with.

The Latin being *Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum* when translated into English 'Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews'. Today many crucifixes have this inscription – INRI.

Activity

- Students refer to a map of the Holy Land, noting where Jerusalem is located, in relationship to the neighbouring countries. Jerusalem was the meeting place for diverse cultures and languages. This diversity in languages is reflected in the Inscription on the Cross.
- Related to the languages, have students find examples of warning signs used today that are placed at surf beaches or popular tourist sites – the warning is often written in 2 or 3 different languages or depicted in simple drawings to enable all visitors to be alert to the possible dangers.
- Herod is no different, he is alerting those who challenge the Emperor of Rome of the consequences of their actions.
- When looking at the significance of the Crucifix, draw the students' attention to the difference between a Crucifix and a Cross. They are not the same, each having its own meaning, interpretation and relevance in the Liturgical and devotional prayers of the Church.

Simply put: The Crucifix is the Cross with the Body of Christ affixed to it.

The Cross does not hold or show the Body of the Crucified Christ.

Activity

- Arrange a visit to the local parish church and have students focus on the Crucifix and the placement of The Crucifix in relation to the altar. Draw out the links between the words of Consecration and the events of Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

**What type of writing,
(language) was used in the
Bible? (cont.)**
Pg 9–11

- During the Lenten Season, students can be supported and encouraged to walk the traditional devotion of the Stations of the Cross. In reflecting on each Station look at the texts that are depicted in the Stations and the Gospels from which they are taken.
- As an art activity have students explore different artists and their interpretation of the Crucifix. Show them contrasting art works, focusing on the elements and details in the artwork. The different elements can then be related back to the different Gospel writers.

Possible contrasting artwork: Salvador Dali, Marc Chagall and Mantegna's Crucifixion.

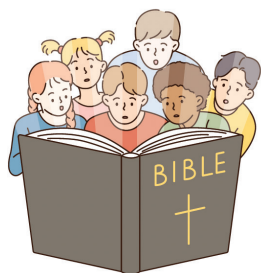
**What do BCE and CE
mean?**
Pg 11

To help students understand the terminology of BCE and CE, reference a You Tube clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDNH4G9iacw>

Activity

- After viewing this clip draw up your own Biblical timeline tracing the key figures and events from Abraham to the time of Jesus.
- Use this book as a guide and reference: expand on the Timeline shown on [page 15](#).
- Research dates for the key figures of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon.
- What else should be included? The time of Exile, the destruction of the Temple, the return from Exile, the rebuilding of the Temple.



What year was Jesus born?
Pg 11

Teacher Information

- When we read the Nativity accounts in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke no specific year is named. Yet each Gospel gives us clues to assist in the dating of the birth. From both Matthew and Luke, we know a census had been called and that's why Joseph and Mary were travelling to Bethlehem. Matthew refers to a particular bright 'Star' that guides the three Magi to the stable.
- Luke names specific, historical figures such as Herod as King of Judea, the Roman Emperor Augustus, and Quirinius as Governor of Syria. Biblical scholars and historian considering all these clues, whilst not presenting a definite year of birth, place the birth sometime between the years 6-4 BCE, (Before the Common Era).
- We need keep in mind the developments in the sciences and our approach to the interpretation of historical, archaeological and the astronomical references found in texts, that were not available when looking to date the birth of Jesus.

- In a way we hold together the worlds of scientific research and the acceptance of Scriptural texts as faith texts not historical documents.

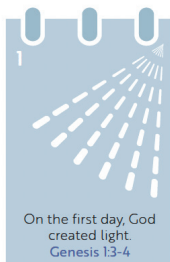
Activity

- Use the following question as the basis for to research the Gospel writers exploring when the Gospel was written and the community it was written for.
- Why are the birth stories found only in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke?

Reference: See *The Friendly Guide to the Birth of Jesus*, Mary Coloe, Garratt Publishing.

What is the Creation story in Genesis?

Pg 12–15



Teacher Information

The first Creation Account found in Genesis Ch1:1-2:3 gives us an ordered account of 7 days of creation.

Activity

- Use this account as the basis for an art display or canvas with students designing how they could present the 7 days of Creation. This could be used as a mural within the classroom or given to junior classes as they are introduced to the Creation story.

The second account of Creation in Genesis 2:4-25 looks at the relationship between God and the created world.

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* refers to both the nature of the symbolic language and the core message contained within both the Creation accounts found in Genesis Chapters 1 & 2:

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself.

Laudato Si', 66.

Use this quote to form the basis of an Inquiry unit on Sustainability or Social Justice.

Do other cultures have Creation stories? Pg 12-15

Activity

- Explore Creation stories from other cultures including a Dreamtime story from our Indigenous or First Nations people. If possible, refer to a story relevant to local area.
- You Tube -Website: 25 Creation Stories from Around the World. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qWDMBIZwM8>
- These stories can be explored through literature or art.

What was the Story of the Great Flood? Pg 16–19



Teacher Information

When looking at the Biblical account of The Great Flood / Noah's Ark, students need an understanding of the language of Biblical Myths. This will enable students to move from a literal interpretation of Biblical stories.

Biblical Myth Definition:

A Biblical Myth is a story that seeks to express profound truths about the relationship between God and humankind and indeed the whole of created existence.

Reference: *A Friendly Guide to The Old Testament*, pg 19, Marie Turner, Garratt Publishing.

Activity

- In recent years Australia has experienced floods that have impacted on communities and towns, discuss the headlines seen in the media that speak of the Lismore floods or the floods in the Northern Territory following Cyclone Meghan.
- What are the images we capture?
- What are the headlines and the language we use when describing these floods?
- What is a "100 Year Flood"?
- How do we write about them today?

What are the Abrahamic religions?

Pg 20–24



The Abrahamic Religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam - are the three faith traditions that trace their roots to Abraham.

Activity

- Watch this YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GQhGBsNHyc>
This clip provides a simple explanation of the Abrahamic religions and the similarities between them.
- While watching this short clip invite students to note the similarities between these Faith Tradition:
 - The place of Abraham within the tradition.
 - Their understanding of God.
 - Their belief in a Messiah figure.
 - Their Sacred texts within their prayer life.

For further understanding of the significance of Ishmael and Islam refer to the following article.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ishmael-son-of-Abraham>

This article will provide teachers with added background information.

Teacher Information

Read the following Church documents and compare the difference in language from the formal Documents of Vatican II to the open and inviting language used by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis.

[Second Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution On The Church, *Lumen Gentium*.](#)

November 21, 1964

But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.

Paragraph 16

[Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*.](#)

28 October 1965

The church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to humanity. They endeavor to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own.

Paragraph 3

What are the Abrahamic Religions? (cont.)

Pg 20–24



John Paul II, address to the Catholic community of Ankara, Turkey, November 29, 1979

After quoting *Nostra Aetate* 3, as given above, he says:

My brothers, when I think of this spiritual heritage (Islam) and the value it has for man and for society, its capacity of offering, particularly in the young, guidance for life, filling the gap left by materialism, and giving a reliable foundation to social and juridical organization, I wonder if it is not urgent, precisely today when Christians and Muslims have entered a new period of history, to recognize and develop the spiritual bonds that unite us, in order to preserve and promote together for the benefit of all men, 'peace, liberty, social justice and moral values' as the Council calls upon us to do.

Nostra Aetate 3

Faith in God, professed by the spiritual descendants of Abraham—Christians, Muslims and Jews—when it is lived sincerely, when it penetrates life, is a certain foundation of the dignity, brotherhood and freedom of men and a principle of uprightness for moral conduct and life in society. And there is more: as a result of this faith in God the Creator and transcendent, one man finds himself at the summit of creation. He was created, the Bible teaches, 'in the image and likeness of God' ([Gn 1:27](#)); for the Qur'an, the sacred book of the Muslims, although man is made of dust, 'God breathed into him his spirit and endowed him with hearing, sight and heart,' that is, intelligence.

Surah 32.8

John Paul II, address to the young Muslims of Morocco, August 19, 1985

Christians and Muslims have many things in common, as believers and as human beings. We live in the same world, marked by many signs of hope, but also by multiple signs of anguish. For us, Abraham is a model of faith in God, of submission to his will and of confidence in his goodness. We believe in the same God, the one God, the living God, the God who created the world and brings his creatures to their perfection.

God asks that we should listen to His voice. He expects from us obedience to His holy will in a free consent of mind and heart.

<https://catholicoutlook.org/pope-francis-message-to-representatives-of-the-abrahamic-religions-at-ur-iraq/>

For further extension the above URL will give you the Pope's Address to the Faith Leaders and the Prayer for the Children of Abraham.

As a class discuss the social issues raised and expressed in this prayer.

Who is Jacob? Pg 25–29



Please note that this is the birth order of the 12 sons of Jacob and refer to pp 26–27 for the land division.

- Reuben
- Simeon
- Levi*
- Judah
- Dan
- Naphtali
- Gad
- Asher
- Issachar
- Zebulun,
- Joseph/Manasseh**
- Joseph/Ephraim**
- Benjamin

Please note:

*Levi did not receive land as he was part of a priestly tribe.

**Joseph and Asenath's sons who were given land instead of Joseph.

Dinah was Jacob and Leah's only daughter. Her brothers were Issachar and Zebulun.

Teacher Information

Genesis — 32:22–29

Explore the significance of a name change. For both Abram and Jacob, the new name marks the beginning of a new journey or a new understanding of God's call in their lives.

We may use the language of vocation to speak of a new beginning. Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was Archbishop of Buenos Aires before being elected Pope in March 2013. He took as his namesake St Francis of Assis, a new name signifying the beginning of a new journey in responding to God's call.

Activity

For those students either preparing for or having celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation, invite them to share with others the name chosen and the why behind it?

What happens in the Book of Exodus? Pg 30–35

Teacher Information

When looking at the [Book of Exodus](#), as teachers there is a lot to unpack. The focus for younger students could be on the story of the infant Moses, saved by the waters of the Nile River and growing up in the Pharaoh's house.

Moses confronts Injustice Exodus — 2: 11–14

Activity

Begin with a broad overview of the injustices we see occurring in our global world:

- Students in small groups list the injustices they are aware of and then share into the whole class.
- Responses could open dialogue around oppression of others and /or environmental issues – lack of food, lack of water.
- Refine the activity to focus on issues in our own country, our own city, neighbourhood, school.
- Change the initial question to:
 - How do we as a community respond to injustice?
 - How do I as an individual respond to injustice?
 - When have I been called to take a stand against the injustices I see?

This could be linked into a well-being focus for all students particularly those experiencing bullying.

Teacher Information

The Call of Moses; The Burning Bush Exodus 3 — 4–17

Explore the nature of trust in God, and the awareness of our own limitations or frailty. For those moving into Secondary schools, or in the early years of Secondary, this call to speak up can be challenging and confronting.

Activity

- Invite students to reflect and think about:
 - Where is their safe place to speak out, to find comfort and support?
 - Who do they turn to and confide in when unsure?
 - Where is their 'Holy Ground'?
- These readings could be drawn on to explore and support a unit of work on social justice. Who are the leaders of our time who call out the injustices they witness?
- Linked to this, introduce, or build on the practice of Christian Meditation using scriptural texts to lead into a time of quiet reflection and prayer.
- As a class explore the possibility of introducing *Lectio Divina* as another form of devotional prayer.



What is the Passover?

Pg 30–35



Teacher Information

Exodus — 12:1–20

In Exodus, the Passover refers to the meal, eaten in haste before beginning the journey back to the Promised Land.

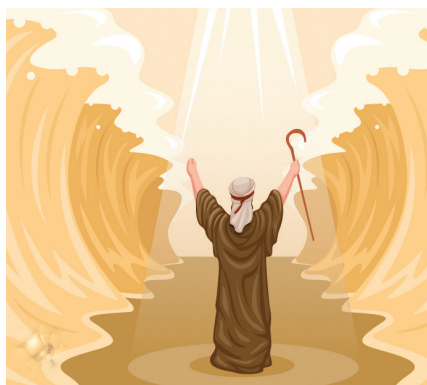
All four Gospels record Jesus sharing a last meal with his apostles before he is betrayed and handed over to the authorities, before beginning his journey to the Cross.

Mark, Matthew, and Luke are similar in recounting this meal as a Passover meal. The Eucharistic prayer of the Mass is drawn from these accounts, we have a blessing over the bread and wine. John's account is different, a different time frame and the emphasis is on the washing of the feet, we find no blessing of the Bread and Wine in John's account it is simply referred to as a supper taking place before the Passover festival. In John's account Jesus is crucified on the day of preparation, the day the sacrificial animals would be slaughtered.

It is interesting to note that on Holy Thursday, the First Reading we listen to is taken from this passage in Exodus.

What is a Covenant?

Pg 30–35



Teacher Information

Draw the students' attention to the words of the consecration. Following the blessing of the bread the priest takes the chalice of wine and says the following blessing:

Take this all of you and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It shall be shed for you and for all men so that sin may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

What is this new Covenant?

Activity

- Before attending a class mass / school mass ask students to specifically listen and tune into the words the priest says over the chalice. When they return to class invite them to share what they heard.
- After listening to their responses, read for them the particular words spoken over the chalice and again draw their response to particular words or phrases then focus on the word 'Covenant'.
 - Where have they heard this word before?
 - What is their understanding of the word?
 - Why do they think we use this word in this part of the Prayer?

How did Moses reach the Promised Land? Pg 36–39

Activity

- Compare the map of the Exodus journey on [page 37](#) with a modern map of that region.
- Trace the journey noting the names of the areas that Moses passed through.
- Place names that have changed, countries have changed yet so much continuing turmoil, that impacts the world, takes place in this small area. Why?
- Provide an opportunity for students to share their own thoughts and responses.

What is the Book of Psalms? Pg 43

Teacher Information

With the book of Psalms, there are many different opportunities to engage students with the different types of Psalms.

Activity

- Introduce the students to:
[Psalm 51 – A Psalm of Petition](#)
[Psalm 66 – A Psalm of Thanksgiving](#)
[Psalm 102 – Psalm seeking God’s Mercy](#)
[Psalm 104 – In Praise of Creation](#)
- Enable the students to recognise the language used that identifies the psalm as giving praise for creation or asking for God’s mercy.
- When students are familiar with the pattern of psalms, give them a selection and working together identify them as a psalm of praise, petition, thanksgiving, or mercy.
- After looking at the pattern within a particular psalm, invite students to choose a particular theme, or image and write their own psalm.

As the basis for art, invite students to select a psalm that they could illustrate or present creatively.

- [Psalm 23](#): The Lord, My Shepherd. Listen to musical interpretations of this psalm often used at mass. The Lord is my Shepherd – Brian Boniwell.
- [Psalm 137](#): A Hymn of the Exiles in Babylon.
- The Crimond – a traditional interpretation.
- *Meet Me in the Middle of the Air* – Paul Kelly

Who is King Solomon?

Pg 44–47



Teacher Information

1 Kings 3:16-28, Solomon's wise decision.

Use this passage, as a basis for discussion around decision making.

Activity

- First in pairs and then in small groups invite the students to respond to the question: "How does this decision demonstrate the wisdom of Solomon?"
- Open up a class discussion to enable students to share their responses.
- Then as individuals consider and respond to: "What do I need to know or take into consideration when making decisions that will impact on others?"
- Allow time for personal reflection.
- If students are familiar with journal writing, invite them to respond to this question in their journal.

Who is Queen Esther?

Pg 48–49



Teacher Information

Raise the student's awareness to this story of Esther. Within both the Old and New Testament many of the stories we introduce to the students are about key patriarchal figures, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They may be familiar with the story of Joseph or David. Esther provides us with the opportunity to hear the story of a significant female figure who confronts and overcomes her adversary.

We need to recognise and name the key female figures we meet in the different stories in both Old and New Testament.

Activity

- Who are Shiphrah and Puah? [Exodus 1:15-22](#)
- After becoming familiar with the story of Esther, have the students take up this reference from Exodus.
- Invite their response to the reference and highlight the significance and courage of these women.
- These two women, Jewish midwives defy Pharaoh and enable Jewish newborn boys to live. It is only a few lines but speak of the faith and courage of these Jewish women.

Reference: *A Friendly to Women in the Old Testament*, Janina Hiebel, Garratt Publishing

- Invite students to do their own research on significant Women in the Old Testament such as Deborah, as Judge or Ruth and Naomi or Elizabeth as a transitional figure linking the Old and New Testament.
- Is Elizabeth a woman of faith and courage? How? Discuss after reading [Luke 1:5 25; 57–66](#).

What are the Wisdom Books and Proverbs?

Pg 50

Teacher Information

Use [Ecclesiastes 3:1–8](#) as the basis for writing or art.

Activity

- Give the students the freedom to select a particular verse or verses and illustrate these verses in whatever medium they choose.
- Or – taking the news headings from the papers or media, pair the headings with the verses recognising that these verses cross time and culture and speak to the everyday experiences of living.

Who Is Lady Wisdom?

Pg 50



Teacher Information

Introduce students to the following verses, that speak of the Wisdom of God, as feminine.

[Proverbs 1: 20-21](#)

[Prover 3:13–18](#)

[Proverbs 9:1–6](#)

Proverbs 3:13–18

Happy are those who find wisdom,
and those who get understanding,
for her income is better than silver,
and her revenue better than gold.

(1)

She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.

(2)

Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are happy.

(3)

Activity

- Using this text from [Proverbs 3](#) as the basis for an art activity, divide students into small groups, numbering them off 1–3. Each group will then work together to create an image of Wisdom that supports their given text; part 1, 2 or 3.
- Each group designs a poster that presents their given text artistically using both print and colour.
- Before introducing the students to the text do a Google search to find artists impressions of Wisdom. Select age-appropriate images to show the class, no more than two or three.

- Invite students to focus on one of the images and set the following prompts to draw out students' responses to the image:
 - What do you see?
(to support careful observation of the details in the chosen image, the use of colour, the use of shading, the use of different shapes).
 - What do you think about that?
(to support the students to reflect and interpret the artwork they are drawn to).
 - What does it make you wonder?
(to enable students to go beyond their initial thoughts, reactions to the art piece and begin questioning themselves as to why they were drawn to this particular piece).
- Introduce the students to the text from Proverbs and give them the opportunity to compare the text with the selected images or design their own image to support the text. This routine can be adapted and use with other works of art or interesting text.

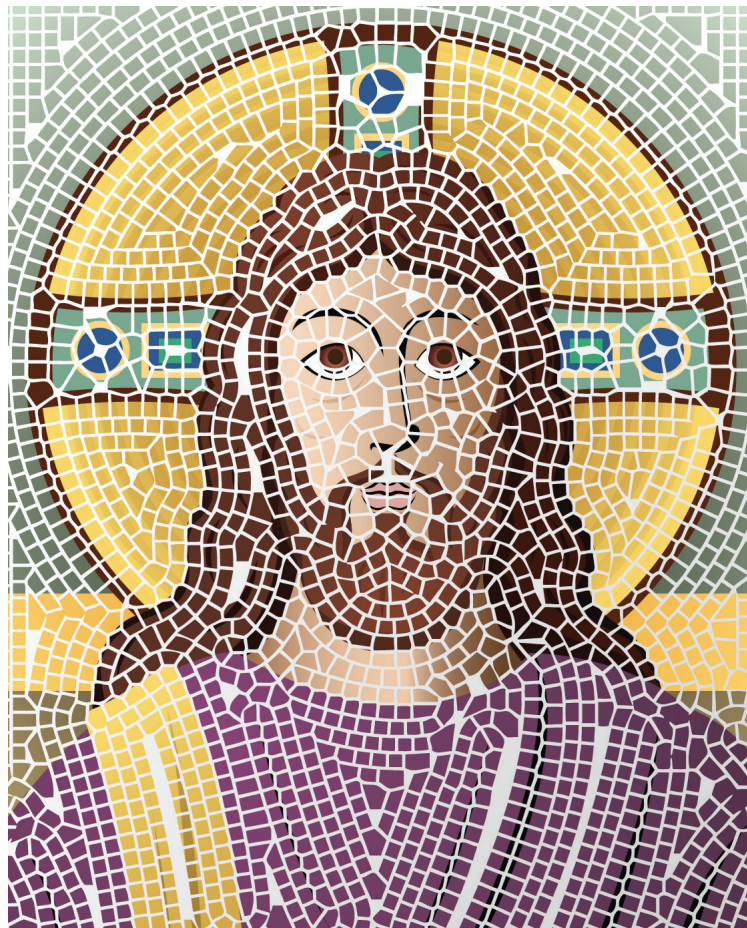
Note: Contemporary Religious Art of Holy Wisdom by artist Vicki Shuck is one example of an art piece.

Who is Job? pg 53

Please note that Job is not a prophet and belongs in the Wisdom Books.



Section 2: The New Testament



Why does each gospel have a different beginning?

Pg 56–61

Teacher Information

We must remember that in the history of the Israelites, the Jewish people have experienced struggle and oppression by Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece and at the time the Gospels are written Rome.

The Jewish rebellion or wars against Rome of 60–70 CE resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem including the destruction of the second Temple. They have lost their city of David. They have lost their temple, the visible sign of God dwelling with them. They have lost the Ark of the Covenant protecting the Law given to Moses that defined them as God's chosen people. They are looking back on their own history and holding on to the faith that God would raise up a leader, a Messiah, someone who would restore their Kingdom.

The Gospel writers, writing after the destruction of the Temple, recognise Jesus as God's promised Messiah and so in telling his story they highlight the events, his teachings, his miracles that point to him as Messiah. They write to give hope to those communities, struggling with persecution and oppression. They write the Good News, that Jesus is Lord and that he will return and restore God's reign or God's Kingdom.

What are nativity stories in the gospels?

Pg 60–61



An Advent task that can help students draw on the key elements found within the Nativity accounts of Matthew and Luke.

Activity

- Divide the class into two groups and set the task of designing a Christmas Card using only the Nativity account found in either Matthew or Luke as the guide.
- Bring the class back together and list the key elements, characters that are found in both.
- Using this list, critique religious Christmas cards for accuracy in reflecting one of the gospel accounts.

Teacher Information

This task can then be expanded to an open dialogue to why Matthew and Luke chose those elements to include in their account.

This supports or leads into an understanding of the community for which the Gospel was written.

Matthew, writing for a Jewish community includes Old Testament quotes that his community would be familiar with. Delve into the role of Joseph in Matthew's Gospel; the genealogy that leads back through the ages to Abraham. Joseph who hears the voice of angels in his dreams and who protects his family by escaping into Egypt. These different elements would resonate with those of the Jewish faith.

What are nativity stories in the gospels? (cont.)

Pg 60–61

It is in Matthew's account that we read of the Three Kings or Wise Men following the star. The significance of the 'Star' could be explored.

Luke writing for a non-Jewish community, considered by many to be outsiders.

What elements do we read in Luke's account that supports this? The shepherds out on the hills protecting their sheep, a child placed in a manger or feeding trough for animals.

There are no Kings with gifts of gold, frankincense, or myrrh, in Luke.

Activity

Depending on time and interest as a class, look at the example of St Francis of Assisi and the development of Nativity scenes and cribs. This could involve a visit to your own local Church, if they have a Nativity Scene on display.

What are parables?

Pg 62–67



Teacher Information

When teaching the parables, work with the students to recognise the key characteristics of a parable.

- They are simple and clear so listeners can easily relate to them.
- They are often about everyday experiences that would be familiar to those listening.
- Often there is a surprise or unexpected ending that raises the question Why?
- The parable will hold a key or main point and, in some way, speak of God's Kingdom.

What are the key features of parables?

Pg 62–67

Teacher Information

As we introduce and read different Parables, guide the students to look for familiar features of Parables.

Activity

- Repetition as found in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard ([Matthew 20: 1-6](#)).
- Contrast as in The Sower and the Seed, found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.
- The rule of Three that we see in the Parables of the Forgiving Father/ The Prodigal Son, or the Good Samaritan, both found in Luke.
- A surprise or twist at the end as found in the Parable of the Lost Sheep found in Luke's Gospel.

What parables are unique to gospel writers?

Pg 62–67



Teacher Information

The following parables are unique to a particular Gospel writer. The question being why this parable?

Parable of the Growing Seed, Mark 4:26–29

Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, Matthew 20:1–16

Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25–37

When introducing students to these Parables, give context to the time the Gospel was written, the community it was written for and the historical events impacting on the community.

Activity

- Ask students to select one of the above listed parables.
- Use the following questions to help the students engage with the text. They do not need to use all the questions.
 - Who are the characters in the text?
 - Is there a main character?
 - How do the characters interact?
 - Do the characters change during the text?
 - In your own words recount what happens in this piece of text.

Or

- Use the following questions to reflect and respond to the text:
 - What would you like to say about the text?
 - I wonder who you relate to in this story?
 - What does this text reveal to us about God?
 - How does this text encourage us to be caring of others?
 - How does this text help us to know how God wants us to be in the world?

Or

- Use the following questions to focus on the text and the Gospel writer.
 - In which gospel do we find this text?
 - Why do you think this text was written?
 - What comes just before this piece of text?
 - What comes after?
 - What kind of story is it?

At the end of the activity students can share their responses in small groups where students have selected different parables.

These questions can be used and adapted to support students' engagement with any piece of text.

Who are the most well-known apostles?

Pg 74–82

Teacher Information

The most well-known Apostles are Peter, James, and John. Trace their journey with Jesus from their initial call through to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

What does this journey tell us about them?

- They struggled with their faith in Jesus.
- They had moments of great insights, with moments of fear and denial.

The Transfiguration

Mark 9: 2-13

Matthew 17: 1-8

Luke 9: 28-36

After reading one of the accounts of the Transfiguration, contemplate on these questions:

- How would describe Peter's response to the event?
- Does he change during the text?

Mark 10: 35 – 45

Matthew 16:13-20

Matthew 16: 21-23

They argued amongst themselves and were ambitious.

Reference Mark 10:35–45

Compare Matthew 16:13-20 with Matthew 16:21-23.

- What questions do these few verses raise in speaking of Peter?

Their journey tells or speaks of ordinary human responses to events happening around them.

They are like us.

Activity

Comparison of texts.

- Have the students read both references from Matthew's Gospel. Here are some guiding questions:
 - Where does this text fit into the Gospel of Matthew?
 - Why here?
 - Who are the main characters in this passage of text?
 - Is there a main character? If so, who?
 - Who speaks? What do they say?
 - Do the characters change during the text? If so how?
 - What does this text tell us about Peter?
 - What does this text tell us about Jesus?

Why is Thomas significant? Pg 75

Teacher Information

Have the students reference the account of Thomas in [John 20:19–28](#).

Activity

Discussion.

- Invite students to question and talk about Thomas.
 - What do they think?
 - What would you be like in the story?
 - How willing or how readily do we accept the word of others?
- We often refer to him as ‘Doubting Thomas’. Go back and unpack the significance of being in community with like-minded friends.
- Invite some of the local parishioners to speak with the students about the importance of being part of a faith community, and how they are supported by the community.

It is in community that Thomas experiences the presence of the living Lord.

It is in, and with, community that Thomas gives us the prayer response; ‘My Lord and My God.’



Who is Mary Magdalene?

Pg 76



Teacher Information

When discussing Mary of Magdala as an Apostle, begin with a map so students can see where Magdala is on the Sea of Galilee.

Activity

- Look at the names of other places around the Sea of Galilee, many of these places we read about in the Gospels.
- Follow her journey in the Scriptures. When do we first read about her? [Luke 8:1-3](#).
- Mary is presented as a follower of Jesus, to standing at the foot of the cross, to meeting the risen Jesus in the garden. Highlight her strength of character.
- Here is another strong woman, who listens and responds to God's call and is sent by Jesus to the apostles. [Reference John 20:11-18](#).
- Enable the students to recognise and name strong women that we encounter in the scriptures.

What are Letters?

Pg 83

Teacher Information

In writing letters, we put our experiences before others without really knowing what the response will be. We trust in the friendship, or the relationship we have with that particular person or community.

In writing a letter or sending an email knowing the person or the family influences the language we use.

Activity

- Give the students the experience of writing a letter to someone, a friend, family member, grandparent, telling them about what is happening in their day to day lives. If students are more familiar with sending emails or messages, then give them the opportunity to share an email with a friend, a parent or grandparent.
 - Is the way they approach the email the same?
 - Is the language or expressions they use in an email the same when messaging or emailing a parent, a teacher, a grandparent? Why?
 - Do the grandparents understand the language of emojis?

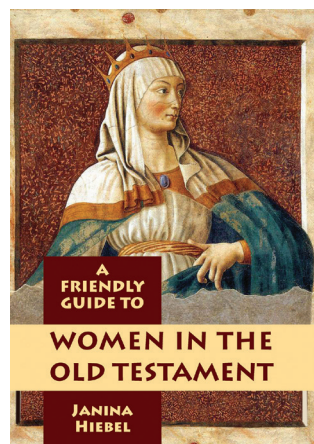
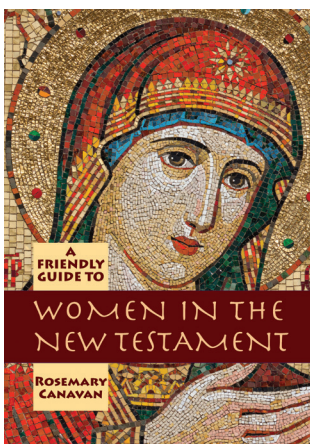
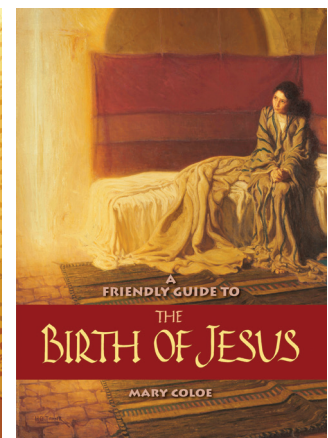
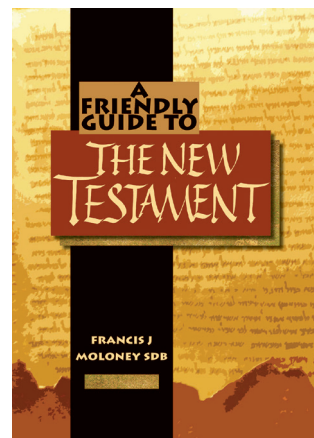
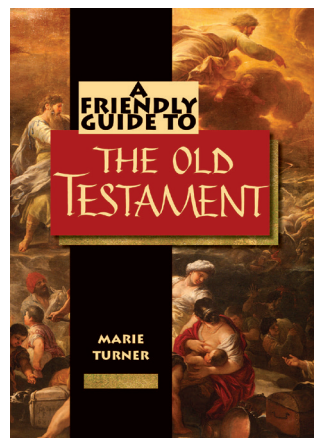
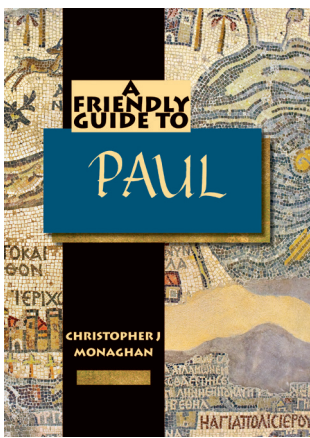
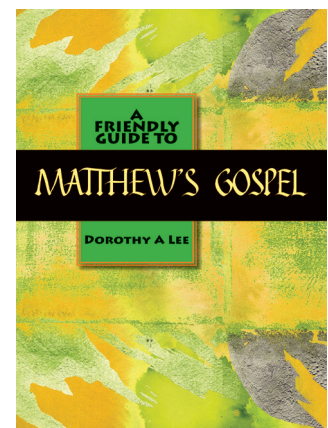
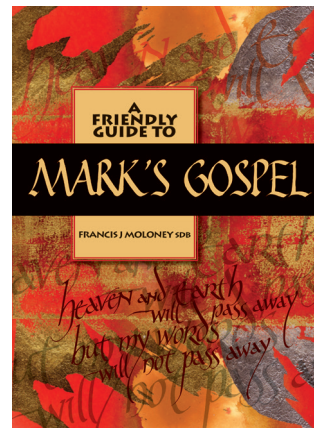
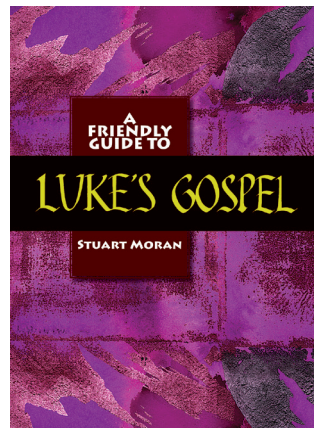
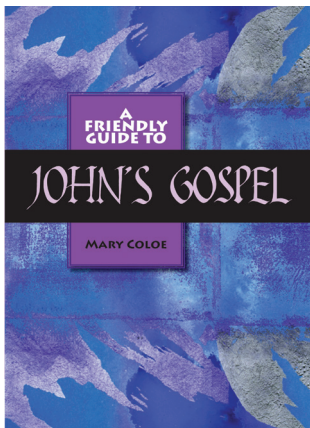
Is the Bible the only Holy Book?
Pg 85-86

Teacher Information

To have a greater understanding of the relationship between those of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith refer to the YouTube clip.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GQhGBsNHyc>



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