

The Bible in 20 Words

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THE GREATEST STORY

This morning we are going to memorize the Bible; you will leave having memorized the Bible from beginning to end.

Q: Do you know how many words are in the Bible?

A: 3/4 million

Q: Would you prefer the 20 word version? These 10 key events capture the core story of the Bible.

The Bible is simply a story; it is the history of God's relationship with mankind. God could have written the Bible like an encyclopedia, but instead it is set entirely in real life.

- Even Romans was a response to specific situation.

By "memorizing the Bible," you will get a glimpse at the big picture and see how God has been working throughout history.

- We'll also learn some hand motions as memory aids.

1. GOD CREATED [Hands shape a ball]

The first words of the Bible are "God created the heavens and the earth." But foremost of His creation is mankind.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over...all the earth...." *Genesis 1:26 NIV*

We're the only thing He made in His image; it doesn't say this about the angels. We can know Him as no others can. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve walked and talked with God.

But we were also meant to be like Him, in our own small way. I take great pleasure watching my daughter play house. Likewise, God loves watching us create, serve, and love, as He does.

- The "meaning of life" is found in His purpose for us: God made man to know and reflect Him.

But there's a twist in the story. We weren't satisfied with reflecting God; we wanted to be God.

2. MAN REJECTED [Hands shove away]

For man to truly love God, God had to give us free will.

- Without choice, there can be no love.

And in order for the choice to be real, there had to be a real opportunity to for Adam and Eve to rebel. So God gave them a rule, just one rule: Don't eat the fruit of this one tree.

- If have children, you won't be surprised by what happens next.

[Eve] took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. *Genesis 3:6 NIV*

It's ironic: God gave man authority over the entire earth, but he couldn't even handle a piece of fruit.

By listening to that serpent who tempted them to eat the fruit, they showed that no matter what rule God gave them, they would rebel. This leads to the next event.

3. GOD PROMISED [Raise hand in oath]

No sooner had man fallen, than God promised to restore what was lost and began orchestrating his plan to redeem mankind.

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." *Genesis 3:14-15 NIV*

The serpent was a manifestation of Satan, and God promised that someday Eve's offspring would defeat Satan and restore God's plan. Theologians call this "protoevangelion," first good news.

- Man cannot destroy anything beyond God's ability to restore.

Throughout the OT, God continued to confirm and clarify this promise. Taken together, these passages promised a Messiah who would die to pay the penalty of sin and restore what was lost.

- And so, God began to put His plan into action, which leads to the next event.

4. ABRAHAM SELECTED [One hand strokes beard, other holds staff]

In order to reach the entire world, God decided to work with one small group of people, who would then reach the world. God choose Abraham to become the father of the nation of Israel.

Abraham was not some great righteous man; he was barely more than a pagan. In fact, he probably thought there were many gods, and his grandchildren were still worshipping idols (*Gen. 31*).

- But he believed Yahweh and obeyed Him.

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. *Genesis 12:2-3 NIV*

Notice that God blessed Abraham and Israel, not just for their own benefit, but in order that the world would be blessed.

- God's blessings are never for our benefit alone.

God's plan for Israel unfold through the Pentateuch, culminating when He gave them the Law, through Moses. Their job was to represent God to the nations, to be missionaries to the world.

- This leads to the next event.

5. ISRAEL FAILED [Both thumbs down]

Israel failed twice. The rest of the OT tells of Israel's failure to live up to God's standards and how she became as wicked as the nations around her.

- Instead of Israel being a light to the nations, God had to use the nations to correct Israel.

By the time of Christ, Israel was more-or-less following God's laws, but she failed again because she refused to reach out to the nations, but instead became very exclusive and isolated. This leads to the next event.

6. JESUS BORN [Rock baby in arms]

The time had now come for God to fulfill His promise to Adam & Eve.

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman.... *Galatians*
4:4-5 NIV

It seemed like God took forever (4,000 years), but His timing was perfect. There had never been a better time for the Messiah to come. The stage was set for the spread of the Gospel.

- The Roman Empire allowed for safer traveling than ever before.
- The entire empire spoke Greek, allowing easier communication.
- God's timing is always perfect, no matter how it appears.

Jesus was the Messiah the Jews had waited for, but his coming was so different from what they expected. They expected a king to kick out the Romans and establish God's kingdom on earth. This misunderstanding led to the next event.

7. CHRIST CRUCIFIED [Arms spread out]

Christ's purpose was to crush the real enemy and restore what was lost at the fall. But it was only a partial restoration.

His death allowed believers to be restored, but this world is still not restored. Sin and death still reign; this is no Garden of Eden. Jesus will restore the earth at His second coming.

God has delayed Jesus' second coming because He wants to give more people a chance to repent and be restored (*2 Peter 3:9*).

- The Jews rejected Jesus because they expected the Messiah to do both jobs in one visit.

8. GENTILES ACCEPTED [Pull arms in and grasp hands]

The book of Acts tells the story of the Gospel being rejected by most Jews, but accepted by Gentiles.

Since you reject [the Gospel] and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles...., that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." *Acts 13:46-47 NIV*

Paul quotes from OT prophet Isaiah. Ironically, by rejecting Jesus the Jews became a light to the nations. Had they accepted Him, the Gospel would have never been spread to the world. This leads to the next event.

9. CHURCH EXPANDING [Push hands out]

The epistles show the apostles' interaction with the new, mostly Gentile, church. In one such letter, Peter refers to several OT promises given to Israel, but now applies them to the church:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. *1 Peter 2:9 NIV*

- The church is now God's representatives to the world.
- Notice the "-ing"; this event continues today

10. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED [Two thumbs up]

Finally, in the book of Revelation and elsewhere, the Bible gives us a glimpse of the end of the story, when both believers and creation will be restored.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."
Revelation 21:1, 3 NIV

No matter how bad things get, we know how the story ends. God will restore all things. They will be better than before the Fall because, if for no other reason, we will know the lengths God reached to save us from such great depths.