



Bible Confidence: Session 2 – Facilitator’s ppt script.

The numbers correspond with the slides. This is an edited version of the Content booklet. ① indicates an animation click is needed.

1. **Intro slide**
2. **Understanding key themes: Creation: What is important that we understand about how the story of the Bible describes the world?**
3. Genesis ① describes why things and people exist, what is wrong with the world, and begins to unfold God’s solution: *The world is ① made by and continues to exist because of God.* ① “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) The Bible says that the world we live in is a place created by God. “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, who created the heavens and the earth.” In addition, the first verse of the Bible introduces us to ① the reality of a seen and unseen world, a physical and a spiritual reality – the ‘heavens and the earth’, originally created to be united. From the beginning of the Bible, ① creation is not worshipped – but it points to God’s glory (“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” (Psalm 19:1)) and reveals His reality. ① The world continues to exist because of God – creation is ongoing. He did not wind it up like a big clock and leave it to run itself but remains faithful to it.
4. *The ① world is ordered by God* ① “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’” (Genesis 2:16-17) ① God rules His creation by His law. There are two ways He rules. The first is *directly* without help from anyone. The second way that God rules His creation is ① *indirectly*, through human beings. ① In our lived experience God has created all of life to flourish in different ways. For example, if I am an artist, I can know that there is good art and bad art. God has designed art to be created *in certain ways and not others*. I am called to serve God by working out how art should be pursued to reveal God’s creativity. But, as the second chapter of Genesis makes clear, ① human beings are always given the choice as to whether to apply God’s laws to human situations or not.
5. *A ① proper understanding of God’s world makes our relationship to it healthy.* ① “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Genesis 2:7) “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1: 31) At the beginning of the story soil and spirit are united. There isn’t *somewhere else*. This is God’s theatre. Human beings are living body-souls. ① God thoroughly approves of the body. God does not split human beings up. He breathed his spirit into the human being’s body. ① This understanding should help us to be unafraid to enjoy God’s good gifts. It should help us not to split our lives into sacred and secular compartments.
6. **Understanding key themes: Image of God: What is important that we understand about how the story of the Bible describes God’s hope and purpose for human beings?**
7. *Being ① in God’s image means being made for relationship with God and each other.* ① “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness’...So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1: 26-27) At the heart of imaging God is being made for *relationship* – with God and each other. The Lord God said, ① ‘It is not good for the man to be alone.’” (Genesis 2:18)
8. *Being ① in God’s image means being His representatives and knowing our primary task* ① “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:28) ① God gives humans enormous power to image Him in the world - intelligence, creativity, leadership, and ingenuity - and God gives Adam and Eve a world inherent with possibilities: Minerals wait to be mined for metal instruments; plants grow to be cut for food or herbs; animal skins can be converted into human clothes: trees to be made into furniture, houses, cities, books, musical instruments. ① This is the main human task and has been called the “cultural mandate”. To fill the earth, not just with babies, but with music, creativity, technology, learning, art, architecture, parks, photography. Understanding this creational task can help us to see discipleship as not just being about personal worship and morality, but about changing and developing the world that the Lord of everything created.
9. *Being ① in God’s image reflects the dignity and authority of human beings* ① “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.... He brought (the animals) to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.” (Genesis 2: 15, 19) ① ① The creation of human beings is the climax of God’s work – we are named as “very good” in the story. This underlines how to be made in His image is to grant incredible dignity to each person. Psalm 8 wonders at the incredible responsibility and worth God gives us, asking, “...what is humankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? ① You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands you put everything under their feet...” (Psalm 8: 4-6) The story of the Bible starts and ends here –

with ① God wanting to restore each human by being “renewed...in the image of the creator” (Colossians 3:8-13), and eventually ruling with Him once again.

10. **Understanding key themes: Fall: What is important that we understand about how the story of the Bible describes the problems we face in the world and ourselves?**
11. **The ① Bible describes the root of the world’s problem.** “And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.’” (Genesis 3:22) The Bible begins with a description of the original dignity and calling of human beings, but also the reality of how far we have universally “fallen” from the glory given to us. As Paul wrote, ① “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3: 23) The story describes this as the result of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ① The issue in Genesis is not about whether we should be able to distinguish between good and evil – rather, ① the root of our human condition is *our attempt to be wise like God is wise. To define in ourselves what is good and evil, effectively becoming our own gods.*
12. **The ① Bible describes how the fall affects three relationships: With God...** “He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’...But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’” (Genesis 3:1,9,10) The cause but also the effect of this disobedience is the breakdown of the relationship of trusting love between human beings and God. The story portrays the serpent as suggesting that ① God cannot be trusted. “Did God really say...?” Humans are portrayed as falling from seeing God’s love and holiness, and so beginning to view God as less than trustworthy – thinking that His way is not necessarily the best. As a result, humans become estranged from their Creator – they hide from Him. ① We can sense the effects of this today in the cooling of our desire to worship and obey Him. We find that we may not want to talk to God, we may only want to talk *about* God. ① Yet the tone of God’s question to Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” is not of anger, but of pain.
13. **With ① one another...** ① Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked...(Genesis 3:7) There is breakdown of relationship between human beings. In losing God as the centre of their identity, and having to define themselves, they become vulnerable in front of each other, and self-protective. ① **With creation.** ① “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.” (Genesis 3: 17-18) Human disobedience to God’s offer of life has touched everything – it’s most obvious in our personal lives, in our greed, self-obsession, hatred, lusts, lies etc, and in our physical and mental diseases. Yet it also affects the material creation. We live in a culture where the term ‘Act of God’ has a negative connotation with legal documents and insurance companies often referring to natural disasters as ‘Acts of God’. Beneath all of this lies the assumption that God is directly responsible for natural disasters, so the final explanation for why a particular disaster happened is to be found in why God would punish whomever the victims happen to be. It is important to note that, as revealed in Christ, *God never wills suffering or disaster.* ① Natural events such as earthquakes are not attributed to God’s will, but to the groaning of a fallen world. It is essential to note the order of the beginning of the story – human beings and God’s creation do not start out as broken and sinful, but as “very good”. Human beings are sinners, but remain made in the image of God. ① We are affected by evil, but we are *not evil in ourselves.*
14. **The ① Bible describes a human and spiritual fall.** “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 1:1; 3:24) From the beginning of the story, the Bible reveals creation as containing two realms of existence – the heavens and the earth, a ① spiritual realm and physical realm, initially created to be united. Just as God delegated responsibility to humans to have to dominion over the earth, God also gave responsibilities and authority to angels. Like human beings, spiritual beings too have freedom – to choose to obey or disobey. But a mysterious glimpse into the spiritual structures of reality reveals that they, ① like us, fell from God’s rule. ① In our lived experience the spiritual effects of the Fall have yet to be cleared up completely. The New Testament is clear on this point: ① creation itself still groans for the restoration of the children of God to their proper place so that creation itself will be set free from bondage, decay and violence (Rom. 8:19--23; Mark 4:39; Luke 13:4--16).
15. **Reading it well: How do we read the Bible faithfully?**
16. **Why did the religious groups of Jesus’ time – Pharisees, Sadducees or Essenes – disagree about some aspects the Torah means, even though they had the same text?** ① Why do Christians have different understandings of what the Bible means? ① It is impossible for us to read anything without *interpreting* it. Two things stand in our way when we seek to have a perfect understanding of any text: ① We all have *incomplete knowledge* of the background and intention behind the original words or story. We all ① wear the ‘glasses’ of *own perspectives*, shaped by our experiences, which no one else shares. (Sometimes these perspectives may help us discover new insights, but sometimes they may get in the way). A book that was written over 1500 years by multiple authors can be doubly hard to interpret. In order to read the Bible well it is therefore important that we seek to ① *understand the original meaning* as best we can, and also become aware of how *other perspectives* – including our own - can influence that interpretation (we will focus on this in session 4). Particularly when we are teaching others, being sure we are trying to draw out the original meaning as much as possible

(known as *exegesis*) as ^① opposed to having our own ideas and trying to use the Bible to justify them (*eisegesis*) is vital in reading it well.

17. Some of ^① these questions may help us to understand the original purpose and meaning: ^① *How can I read this prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to guide me?* ^① *Who wrote it and to whom?* Was it intended for all people in all times (i.e. the record of Jesus written by eyewitnesses) or for a particular situation (i.e. food laws in Leviticus?) ^① *Why did they write it and what did they intend it to do?* What kind of writing is it? i.e. does the fact that Genesis 1 is structured like a poem for worship help us understand its purpose better? ^① *How does the particular passage relate to what is written before and after it?* Sometimes paying attention to how a parable is introduced can help us focus on its main meaning: "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1))
18. *How* ^① *does this passage work alongside other passages?* For example, how might we harmonise Luke 14:26, which tells us we must hate our parents, spouses, children and even ourselves if we are to be Christ's disciple and Ephesians 6:2, which tells us to honour our parents? ^① *How does the whole Bible story help us to understand this passage?* For example how does our understanding of Abraham help us to interpret the writing about covenant in the New Testament? ^① *How might we see the meaning of this passage through Jesus?* For example how do we make sure we read the accounts of warfare in the Old Testament in the light of His self-sacrificial love?
19. In addition, these two questions are often helpful, and can be illustrated well by looking at how we might better understand the creation stories in Genesis. ^① *What was going on at the time that is relevant?* (What historical events or cultural background might help us understand it better? What does archaeology reveal about the place involved?) ^① For example, knowing that other cultures had their own creation stories, that the biblical authors who wrote Genesis would have known about, can open up some exciting possibilities in appreciating the meaning of Genesis. Indeed, the writers used aspects of these stories, but in a way that *contrasts* with these other myths. At the time Genesis 1 was written, while the Israelites were in Babylon, people worshipped many gods, including the sun and moon. ^① Genesis emphasises that there is one God, and calls the sun and moon "*lesser lights*" (1:16), in other words, not to be worshipped. During this period a Babylonian myth called the *Enuma Elish* portrayed creation as the fallout of a battle between two gods, and human beings, who are created from the blood of a slain god, as the slaves of the gods. We can understand Genesis 1 better when we see it in contrast to this – ^① rather than the world being created from a battle, it is created as "good". Rather than humans being slaves, they are "under-kings", made in God's image. ^① The people who originally read this would have been slaves in Babylon – to read that God has ordered the world, and made them to be free and in His image would have inspired hope in the face of despair. Genesis 1 is a liberating story.
20. *Are there meanings of particular words we need to pay attention to?* This final question can be illustrated by looking at the meaning of how we understand ^① human 'dominion' in Genesis, and how important a good understanding of individual words can be. In 1967, a professor named ^① Lynn White said that the real problem...the real danger to the environment...actually comes from the Christian faith. He went back to Genesis 1:28 and human dominion to rule over the earth. White said Christianity created this idea that nature is not sacred, it is just disposable, and that in the Bible human beings are not really a part of nature, they are above it, so nature exists just kind of as a thing for people to use and exploit. Thus understanding the intended meaning of the word dominion (or 'rule over') is crucial in reading the passage well. The writers of *The Drama of Scripture* put it this way: "It is impossible to read this as suggesting that humans are free to do what they like with God's workmanship. ... ^① A better way of expressing the concept of 'dominion' over creation may be to say that we are God's royal stewards, put here to develop the hidden potentials in God's creation so that the whole of it may celebrate His glory." When Stuart Pimm, a Professor of Conservation Ecology, buys land in Brazil to protect a species of primates called the golden lion tamarin on the verge of extinction that is not something apart from being a disciple, that is *central* to being a disciple. He says, "I'm actually a believing Christian and Christians have an obligation to care for the ^① planet because it was made by God and does not actually belong to us. So we cannot simply fail to care for oceans, or forests, or creatures. That would be to fail to fulfil our obligations to God."
21. **Practical starting points: What will help me discover the original intended meaning of a text?**
22. There are many resources available seeking to help us find answers to the questions we might want to ask when trying to find the intended meaning of a text. ^① [The Bible Project](#) provides excellent overviews of key themes and each of the books of the Bible. ^① [Study Bibles](#) have useful maps and introductory material for each biblical book, as well as comments on individual verses. ^① Bible Commentaries are written to provide detailed background, summarize they key points, and help us to apply passages well. There are commentaries for each book or one volume books on the whole Bible. There are some free New Testament ones online [here](#).
23. [The Lion Handbook to the Bible](#) ^① has proved popular and immensely helpful over several decades and the ^① short commentaries on each book by Tom Wright, published by SPCK have proved very helpful. ^① [A Bible Dictionary](#) gives short articles on biblical themes arranged in alphabetical order. ^① [Nave's Topical Reference](#) offers a similar resource. ^① Concordance cross-references individual words, showing where else the author used particular word, and the meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek. Many of the tools listed above can be found on the Internet. ^① [www.biblegateway.com](#) is a reliable resource.
24. **Suggestion for this week:** ^① Have a go at exploring a couple of the themes from this week by getting familiar with this 'Dictionary of Bible Themes' online.