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# SCRIPTURE SESSIONS

— *on the* —

## NEW TESTAMENT

**Tony Tamberino**

**LEADER'S GUIDE**

# SCRIPTURE SESSIONS ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

Pray It! Study It! Live It!<sup>®</sup> resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.



SCRIPTURE SESSIONS ON  
THE NEW TESTAMENT

**LEADER'S GUIDE**

**TONY TAMBERINO**



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To Therese, a faithful sign of the Word.  
For Dad, whose words and love are constant.  
And to all those who broke open the Word for me.



# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....9

## 1

READING THE BIBLE AS CATHOLICS .....15

## 2

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS .....26

## 3

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS .....38

## 4

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.....49

## 5

ACTS AND GALATIANS:  
THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRISTIANITY .....61

## 6

ROMANS AND JAMES: FAITH.....72

## 7

THE BOOK OF REVELATION:  
OUR ULTIMATE DESTINY .....82

## 8

TRUTH IN THE BIBLE .....92

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....101

No part of the student workbook may be reproduced by any means.





# INTRODUCTION

## WHY STUDY THE SCRIPTURES?

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:14–17)

Perhaps no other passage from the Bible so succinctly states the need for young people to become people of the Word. If ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ, as Saint Jerome held, then it is incumbent on parents, religious educators, pastors, and the whole community of the faithful to proclaim and live the Word so that the lives of our young people are changed forever. A young person whose knowledge of the Bible deepens also experiences the same growth in her or his relationship with Christ. When a young disciple becomes both a hearer and doer of the Word, the Church becomes ever more effective in its mission to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. When young Catholic Christians learn to pray, study, and live the Bible from their earliest years, they enter the narrow door of holiness and become living witnesses to Christ.

## ABOUT *SCRIPTURE SESSIONS* ON THE *NEW TESTAMENT*

The sessions in this manual challenge young people to study the word with purpose, to read and proclaim the word with faith, and to live that word in every moment. Through critically based Bible study, discussion and faith sharing, and active learning experiences, the word of God is not reduced to either academic exercise or personal interpretation. It is a word that cuts deep as it opens the mind and transforms the heart. It is a living and active word, one that spurs a believer into action and drives a believer to prayer. While it frequently provides direction and comfort, it just as frequently raises questions and turns life topsy-turvy. Studying the Scriptures with young people should have the same impact as Jesus’s invitation to “follow me” had on the first disciples—it should be startling, exciting, and unrelenting in converting us to Jesus’s mission.

The structure of this manual is straightforward. The first session, “Reading the Bible as Catholics,” introduces the other sessions. It places the study of the Bible in the context of Church and Tradition. Sessions 2 through 7 offer an overview of the major sections and themes of the New Testament. Session 8, “Truth in the

Bible,” should be used whenever the question of biblical inerrancy becomes a major concern with your group.

Keep in mind that any session can be used on its own to address one of the given themes in a youth-group meeting or retreat.

## SESSION OUTCOMES

### SESSION 1: READING THE BIBLE AS CATHOLICS

- The participant will comprehend that the teaching authority of the Church guides a Catholic person’s understanding of the Bible.
- The participant will come to appreciate the value of historical perspective in learning about the Bible.
- The participant will understand that Catholics read the Bible with a community perspective, not just an individual view.

(Note: This session is identical to the first session in *Scripture Sessions on The Old Testament* because it is a foundational session for any Scripture study program.)

### SESSION 2: INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

- The participant will become acquainted with the stages of the formation of the four Gospels.
- The participant will examine the technique of redaction criticism and be exposed to some different theological emphases within the Gospels.
- The participant will be able to recognize the existence of different literary forms within the Gospels.

### SESSION 3: THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- The participant will understand that the Gospels present Jesus Christ as both true God and true man.
- The participant will know that Jesus focused his preaching on the Reign of God.
- The participant will reflect on the Kingdom parables and the call to discipleship.

### SESSION 4: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- The participant will understand that the Gospel of John makes the strongest case among the four Gospels for Jesus Christ’s divinity.
- The participant will reflect on the meaning of the signs in the Gospel of John.
- The participant will gain a deeper understanding of Jesus’s call to discipleship.

## **SESSION 5: ACTS AND GALATIANS: THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRISTIANITY**

- The participant will understand that the Church invites all people to faith in Jesus Christ.
- The participant will become acquainted with the early controversy about welcoming Gentiles to the faith.
- The participant will reflect on the implications of being part of the universal Church.

## **SESSION 6: ROMANS AND JAMES: FAITH**

- The participant will comprehend that faith leads to justification by God.
- The participant will reflect on the demands of faith in daily life.
- The participant will understand that Jesus Christ is the object of faith and the source of forgiveness and reconciliation.

## **SESSION 7: THE BOOK OF REVELATION: OUR ULTIMATE DESTINY**

- The participant will become familiar with the Roman persecution of Christians in the first three centuries.
- The participant will become acquainted with the genre of apocalyptic literature and some of the symbols used in the Book of Revelation.
- The participant will reflect on the destiny that awaits those who faithfully live and die in Christ Jesus.

## **SESSION 8: TRUTH IN THE BIBLE**

- The participant will be able to recognize the kinds of truth found in the Bible.
- The participant will understand that the Bible contains no error in regard to the religious truth necessary for human salvation.
- The participant will recognize that the Holy Spirit guides the Church in the search for the truth and how the truth is lived out in daily life.

## **HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL**

You may present the material in this manual in its entirety, or you may select sessions and activities that you think will be best for the young people with whom you work. The sessions and activities may be organized in a way that is most appropriate for your situation.

Each session begins with a brief overview and a list of expected outcomes. The next element is a suggested schedule, which is to be used as a starting point and modified according to your circumstances. A checklist of the preparation required, including all materials needed, is the next part of the presentation of every session. A complete description of the session procedure is then provided,

including a core activity, session extensions, prayer experiences, and options and actions. The procedure descriptions are formatted as follows.

## **STUDY IT! A CORE SESSION AND SESSION EXTENSIONS**

In the core session, the participants explore the Scriptures in depth through a variety of activities and discussion. Ministry leaders present additional background and information to periodically augment the participants' work. The participant workbook is frequently used as a tool in these activities.

Each session can be expanded and customized to meet your schedule and the needs of your group. All the sessions begin with a core activity that should be used before any other activity in the session plan. Core sessions are structured for a 40- to 50-minute time frame. You may expand the sessions by using additional activities known as session extensions. The extensions vary in length from 15 to 60 minutes. Session extensions are intended for further development and study of the session theme and topics.

All the learning strategies in this manual are based on the praxis method of experience, analysis, and reflection, in dialogue with the Scriptures and Tradition, leading to synthesis of new learnings and insights. Variations are often suggested, including ideas for gender-specific groups and for larger or smaller groups.

Some of the sessions provide a list of media resources—such as print and film—for more exploration. Family approaches provide simple, follow-up suggestions for family learning, enrichment, celebration, prayer, and service. In addition, all the activities can be enhanced by the creativity and expertise of the adult leader.

## **PRAY IT! PRAYER EXPERIENCES**

Each session includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer focused on the session's theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayer by young people, reflective reading, and experiences created by the participants. The PRAY IT! component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. The time frame for the prayer experiences varies from 10 to 15 minutes.

## **LIVE IT! OPTIONS AND ACTIONS**

This manual can be a springboard for connections with other youth ministry experiences. Therefore, all its sessions include additional strategies to support the learning process. These activities provide good follow-up for the STUDY IT! core activities and allow for age-appropriate assimilation of the material. They might include off-site events, intergenerational ideas, parish involvement, prayer and liturgical celebrations, service options, and social actions. LIVE IT! ideas are also included in the participant workbook for those young people who want to deepen their understanding of the session's core content.

## **PARTICIPANT RESOURCES**

The learning processes in *Scripture Sessions on the New Testament* are structured around the information in the participant workbook. In addition, *The Catholic Youth Bible*® (CYB) serves as a primary resource for Scripture study and research within the learning process. Ideally, every participant will have a copy of both the participant workbook and this Bible.

## **TEACHING THIS COURSE**

### **PREPARING YOURSELF**

Read each session or activity before you facilitate it; then use it creatively to meet the needs of the young people in your group. Knowing your audience will help you determine which strategies will work best. Some of the activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready.

All the sessions include presentations of key concepts and teachings. The session plans offer guidelines for these talks. Preparing for the presentations is vital to the success of each session. You will want to review the appropriate content from the CYB, as needed. Spend time putting these presentations together, so that they are clear and hold the attention of the participants.

### **STANDARD MATERIALS**

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials into bins and storing those bins in a place that is accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Here are some recommendations for organizing the bins.

#### **Supply Bin**

The following items appear frequently in the materials checklists:

- participant workbooks
- *THE CATHOLIC YOUTH BIBLE*, or another Bible of your choosing, at least one copy for every participant
- masking tape
- cellophane tape
- washable and permanent markers (thick-line and thin-line)
- pens or pencils
- self-stick notes
- scissors
- newsprint
- blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- index cards
- baskets
- candles and matches
- items to create a prayer space (for example, a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl of water, and a vase for flowers)

The songs suggested for use during activities are from the *Spirit & Song* hymnal (Oregon Catholic Press, [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org), 800-548-8749).

## **SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS**

We hope you find this material helpful as you invite young people into a deeper relationship with the marvelous community of faith we know as the Catholic Church. Please be assured of our continual prayers for you and the young people you serve.

## 1

**READING THE BIBLE AS CATHOLICS****OVERVIEW**

Reading and studying the Bible can be a daunting task, particularly for young people whose experience is limited to Sunday liturgy or religion classes. Often young people are confused about how to understand the sacred Scriptures and are unaware that not all Christians approach studying and praying the Bible in the same way. This session will examine some factors Catholics should keep in mind as they encounter God's word.

**OUTCOMES**

- The participant will comprehend that the teaching authority of the Church guides a Catholic person's understanding of the Bible.
- The participant will come to appreciate the value of historical perspective in learning about the Bible.
- The participant will understand that Catholics read the Bible with a community perspective, not just an individual view.

**AT A GLANCE****STUDY IT!****CORE SESSION**

- A Community Faithful to Tradition (45 minutes)

**SESSION EXTENSIONS**

- Recognizing Literary Genres (30 minutes)
- Contradictions in the Bible (20 minutes)
- Biblical Inspiration and Inerrancy (30 minutes)

**PRAY IT!**

- Lord, Guide Us with Your Word (10 minutes)

**LIVE IT!**

- An interview with a pastor
- An ecumenical exercise



# STUDY IT!

## CORE SESSION

### A COMMUNITY FAITHFUL TO TRADITION (45 MINUTES)

#### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - participants' workbooks
  - pens or pencils
  - copies of *THE CATHOLIC YOUTH BIBLE* or another Bible, one for each participant
  - index cards with printed instructions, one for each participant
  - timeline materials: half sheets of construction paper and masking tape
  - newsprint and a marker
  - a small basket
  - slips of construction paper, each bearing the name of a biblical figure.

You will need one name for each participant; some names are Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Jeremiah, John the Baptist; Mary, Mother of Jesus; Jesus, Peter, John, Zaccheus, Judas Iscariot, Caiphas, Mary Magdalene, Stephen, Paul, and Junias. You can use the *CYB* "Events, People, and Teachings" index to choose other names.

- On the index cards, write or print the following instructions: Welcome—do not show this card to anyone. Help yourself to refreshments and take a seat. Please do not talk to anyone. Once at your seat, open your workbook to "The Scriptures," on page 9, where you will find 1 Thessalonians 3:6–13. Read it and be ready to comment when called upon.
- Create a timeline with masking tape on the floor. Using half sheets of construction paper, mark the beginning of the line with the word *Creation*. Next, use the construction paper to mark the years 2000 BC, 1000 BC, AD 1, AD 100, and AD 2000.
- Review the summary points from the *CYB* for the presentation and be prepared to share the information with the young people.

1. Greet the young people as they arrive, giving each an index card. As you distribute the index cards, ask the participants to follow the printed instructions. After about 5 minutes, begin the session by leading a discussion on the following questions. List the answers to the final question on a sheet of newsprint.

- What was it like arriving and being asked not to communicate and greet one another?
- Why is it so difficult for us not to share and connect with one another when we come together?
- In the reading from 1 Thessalonians, what is Paul most thankful for?
- What are some advantages of belonging to a community?

Post the list for all to see and then conclude the discussion by having a participant read aloud the following article, "Encouragement," on page 9 of the workbook:

Sometimes, we feel alone in our faith. We wonder if anyone feels, thinks, or prays the way we do. As a first missionary of the faith, Paul must have experienced his share of dark days when he wondered if the people would really accept the Good News. He must have been so encouraged when Timothy returned to tell him of the “faith and love” of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 3:6). The Christian faith is never meant to be held privately. We don’t grow in our faith, hope, and love by being isolated from other people. Like Paul, we need the encouragement and challenge of other people; our family, friends, and the entire Christian community. (CYB, near 1 Thess. 3:6–13)

After the reading, offer these comments in your own words:

- For Catholic Christians, the experience of community is an essential aspect of our relationship with God. Our faith, our religion, even our reading of the Bible can never be a completely private affair. We are challenged to have not only a personal understanding but also a communal perspective as we seek to follow Christ.
- The teaching authority of the Church and the historical perspective of the authors guide the Catholic understanding of the Bible. The Holy Spirit guides the teaching authority (Magisterium) of the Church in order to preserve and maintain the religious truth God intends to convey to the entire faith community.

2. Introduce the next activity with these or similar words:

- The Catholic faith is rooted in the life and Gospel of Jesus Christ. When he commissioned his disciples at his Ascension, Jesus promised to be with them until the end of time and commanded that they preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. However, many people and groups hear and interpret the message of the Gospel in many different ways. The next activity will test our ability to pass on messages faithfully.

Arrange the group in a single line or in a circle, with participants standing or sitting shoulder to shoulder. Explain that they are going to participate in a “telephone” or “pass-the-word” game that they have probably played. Explain that they are to pass on the message as accurately as possible to the person next to them and that they may only say the message once. Begin at one end of the line, quietly reading the following scriptural text to the first person:

- Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

Ask that person to repeat the verse to the next person and so forth. Wait for the message to reach the end of the line. Ask the last person to repeat what she or he heard to the whole group. Then ask the first person to repeat the message she or he received at the beginning of the activity. Invite discussion with the following questions:

- How accurately was the message passed from person to person?
- What could we have done to ensure the accurate passing of the message?
- Is there an advantage to having someone ensure that the original message is not lost? Why?

Summarize with the following points, which are drawn from the article “How to Read and Study the Bible,” on pages xii and xiii of the *CYB*:

- God’s inspiration of the biblical authors and God’s revelation in their writings of the truths about God and God’s will for us—are two important Christian beliefs about the Bible.
- To say that biblical authors were inspired by God does not mean that they took dictation directly from God. They were true authors using creative literary forms to communicate the people’s experience of God.
- In fact, many of the books had more than one author. Some books went through several decades of development in which the stories were told and retold, written down, combined, and edited.
- Christians believe that the Bible is true and without error when it teaches the things God wishes to reveal for the sake of our salvation. This is called the inerrancy of the Bible.
- Some Christians also believe that the Bible is without error in every respect, including all references to scientific and historical facts. But Catholic Christians, along with others, are cautious about making this claim.
- The Catholic Church teaches that in order to interpret the Bible correctly, we must understand what the human authors intended to communicate at the time of their writing.
- To know what God wants to reveal through their words, we must take into account “the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 110).
- All Christians believe that God’s complete revelation—all that people need to know about God and about their relation to God—is expressed in Jesus Christ. They believe that Jesus is the living Word of God, “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).
- All Christians believe that the Bible is a primary way of communicating God’s revelation, which has its ultimate source in Christ.
- But Catholic Christians believe that God’s revelation is also communicated through sacred Tradition.
- Sacred Tradition, which is sometimes simply called Tradition, is all that the first Apostles learned from Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is preserved, taught, and reinterpreted for each new generation by the Apostles’ successors—the pope and bishops. Scripture and Tradition are closely related and support each other, having their common source in Jesus Christ.
- Christians believe the Bible’s core message of God’s desire to be in a loving relationship with human beings is greater than the difficulties caused by the passing of time and by cultural differences between the biblical era and our time. They believe that the more people read, reflect on, and study the Bible, the more they can discover what God is saying to people today. The Bible’s message does not wear out or become obsolete.
- However, the Bible was originally written by and for people who lived in different historical circumstances. In order to make the Bible relevant to our time, people need to interpret it in its proper context. This process of making the Bible’s message current for our time is called actualization.

- The Bible tells us that we are entrusted with Jesus’s mission to share God’s peace, justice, and love—a mission that gives true meaning to our life.

3. Have the participants each draw a name from the basket of biblical names you prepared earlier. Instruct them to locate their biblical figures in the Bible index. Ask the young people to locate the following information in the Bible about the person whose name they drew and to write the answers in their workbooks in the space provided in “A Community Faithful to Tradition,” on page 10:

- the time in which she or he lived
- one or two things the person did
- the person’s importance in the history of salvation

When all have finished searching, ask the young people to line up along the timeline during the time when their person appeared in the Bible. Have each participant make a brief presentation on his or her biblical figure.

After the presentations, make the following points in your own words:

- The history of salvation is the story of how God has manifested his saving power throughout the history of creation. Salvation history begins with the Creation of the world and all that is in it, including the creation of human beings. It teaches how sin entered the world. Salvation history tells how God has called a people from Abraham to Moses to David to Jesus to the Church of today.
- The Bible’s stories teach us about the history of salvation. When we learn about the people and the stories of the Bible, we are also learning about salvation history.

(This activity is adapted from Brian Singer-Towns, ed., *Bringing Catholic Youth and the Bible Together*, pp. 34–35.)

#### **VARIATION: LARGE GROUP**

Consider doing the pass-the-word activity in two or three groups. Use the same message or try different ones. For the timeline activity, groups should be limited to fewer than twenty-five people.

#### **VARIATION: SMALL GROUP**

Assign two or three biblical figures to each person in the timeline activity. Or have the group study and discuss the “Biblical History Timeline” in the back of the CYB.

## SESSION EXTENSIONS

### RECOGNIZING LITERARY GENRES (30 MINUTES)

#### Preparation

- Gather the following items:
  - participants' workbooks
  - pens or pencils
  - copies of *THE CATHOLIC YOUTH BIBLE* or another Bible, one for each participant
  - an editorial from a local newspaper (find one that will be met with different reactions among the group)
  - several copies of daily newspapers
  - newsprint and markers

1. Begin by reading the editorial to the group. Announce that this information is very important. Tell the participants that all of us must ascribe to it and do our utmost to make sure that our family and friends do the same. As some members of the group begin to disagree, continue to act as though your opinion is the only right way to view the topic or question. Finally, call time and inquire what the problem is in relation to the editorial. Explain that you do, in fact, realize that what you have read is a form of writing that merely expresses one opinion and that different opinions regarding the topic are possible.

2. Give a brief presentation on literary genres in the Bible. Be sure to include the following points, which are drawn from the *CYB* article "Literary Genre," near Genesis, chapter 2:

- Some Christians believe that God actually created the world in six twenty-four-hour days. Such a belief comes from a literal reading of the first chapter of Genesis, as though it were a scientific textbook.
- However, Genesis was written not as a science article but as symbolic stories, sometimes called mythic stories that convey great moral and spiritual truths. We should not try to come to any scientific conclusions about the Creation of the world from reading these stories.
- Mythic stories are one literary type, or genre. You just have to look in a newspaper to see examples of different literary genres: news stories, advice columns, editorials, and comics. Each genre has different rules for interpreting its meaning.
- The Bible also contains many types of literary genres, including hero stories, poetry, laws, legends, fictional satire, debates, and letters. To properly understand the Bible, pay attention to the literary genre—otherwise, you might believe the Bible is saying something God doesn't intend.

3. Explain to the participants that they are going to search for articles in the newspaper that represent different kinds of writing or literary genres. Have the young people work in pairs to compile lists on newsprint of the different kinds of literary genres they discover.

4. After the pairs have compiled their lists, invite them to share their lists with the entire group.

(This activity is adapted from Brian Singer-Towns, *The Bible: Power and Promise*, pp. 27–28.)