



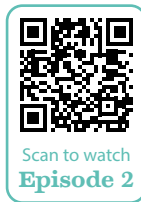
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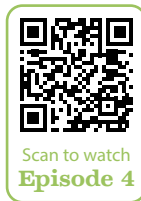
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What is the Bible?



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Episode 1

There are eight billion people in the world today and counting, and 7,164 officially known languages.

But one book has had more influence throughout history, been translated into more languages and been sent out to more regions of the earth than any other.



Have You Heard Some of These Sayings?

He who lives by the sword dies by the sword.

The blind leading the blind.

Salt of the earth.

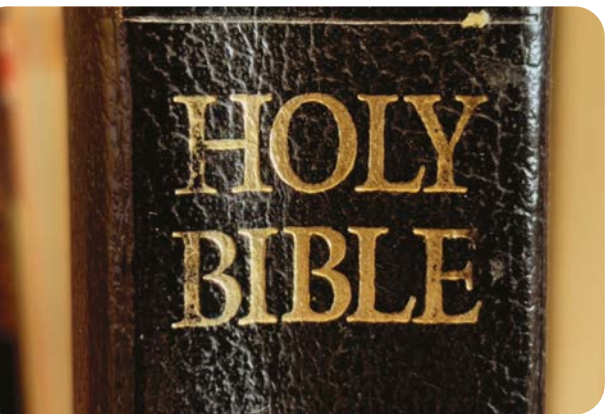
A leopard cannot change its spots.

The apple of my eye.

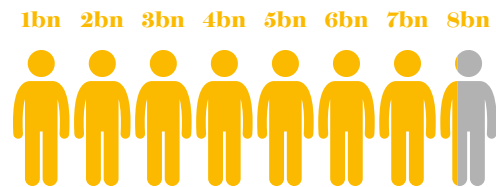
All these familiar sayings have one source: the Bible. These examples could be multiplied many times over, showing how deeply the Bible has influenced our language, laws, ethics, culture and society down through millennia. No other

book has had such a singular influence on the development of Western civilisation and other cultures across the globe.

But what is this book that we call the Bible?



Of the 7,164 known languages spoken in the world, recent figures show that 736 have complete Bibles, 1,658 have the New Testament and 3,658 languages have some Scripture in them. Of the eight billion people in the world today, it is estimated 7.23 billion have at least some Scripture in their own language.



Estimated 7.23 billion have at least some Scripture in their own language

In our digital age, there is a massive surge in copies of the Bible being downloaded or accessed via the internet every year, and Bible apps are found on hundreds of millions of devices in over two thousand languages. These numbers just keep growing.

While the Bible exceeds the rest in circulation, it also leads the way in the amount of controversy it generates. The Bible has always provoked heated debate. It has drawn passionate reactions from some of the greatest thinkers and leaders across the ages. Today this is perhaps more evident than ever, as meaning and language have been redefined and words are often taken out of their original context.

The All-Time Best Seller

The Bible is the most circulated and translated book in the history of the world. It is the bestselling book of all time and more copies of the Bible are printed than any other book, going all the way back to the innovation of the Gutenberg press – when the Bible in Latin was the first large book to be printed using moveable type. The Gutenberg Bible was printed around 1455 and marks a pivotal moment in history.

Now, on average, there are more than a hundred million complete Bibles printed annually. It is estimated that there are currently more than six billion Bibles in print.



Positives and Negatives

Down through the ages, we hear wildly different responses to the Bible from those who have encountered its teachings.

For example, English physicist and mathematician, Isaac Newton (1642–1727) said:



“There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane [non-religious] history.”

Whereas Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), German philosopher and son of a pastor, claimed:



“I have searched in it vainly for even a single congenial trait ... everything in it is cowardice and self-deception.”

The French military general and Emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) observed:



“The Bible is no mere book but a living creature with power that conquers all that oppose it.”

And despite his antipathy to Christianity, biologist T.H. Huxley (1825–1895) commented:



“The Bible has been the Magna Carta of the poor and oppressed. The human race is not in a position to dispense with it.”

Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), politician and abolitionist, affirmed:



“I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated through this book.”

But Thomas Paine (1737–1809), political reformer and philosopher, claimed:



“It is from the Bible that man has learned cruelty, plunder, and murder; for the belief of a cruel God makes a cruel man.”

Celebrated poet of the Victorian age, Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), commented:



“Bible reading is an education in itself.”¹

More dismissively but insightfully, French philosopher, writer and atheist, Voltaire (1694–1778), is widely attributed as saying:



“If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man’s belief in the Bible.”