



The Bible

A book with lots of books

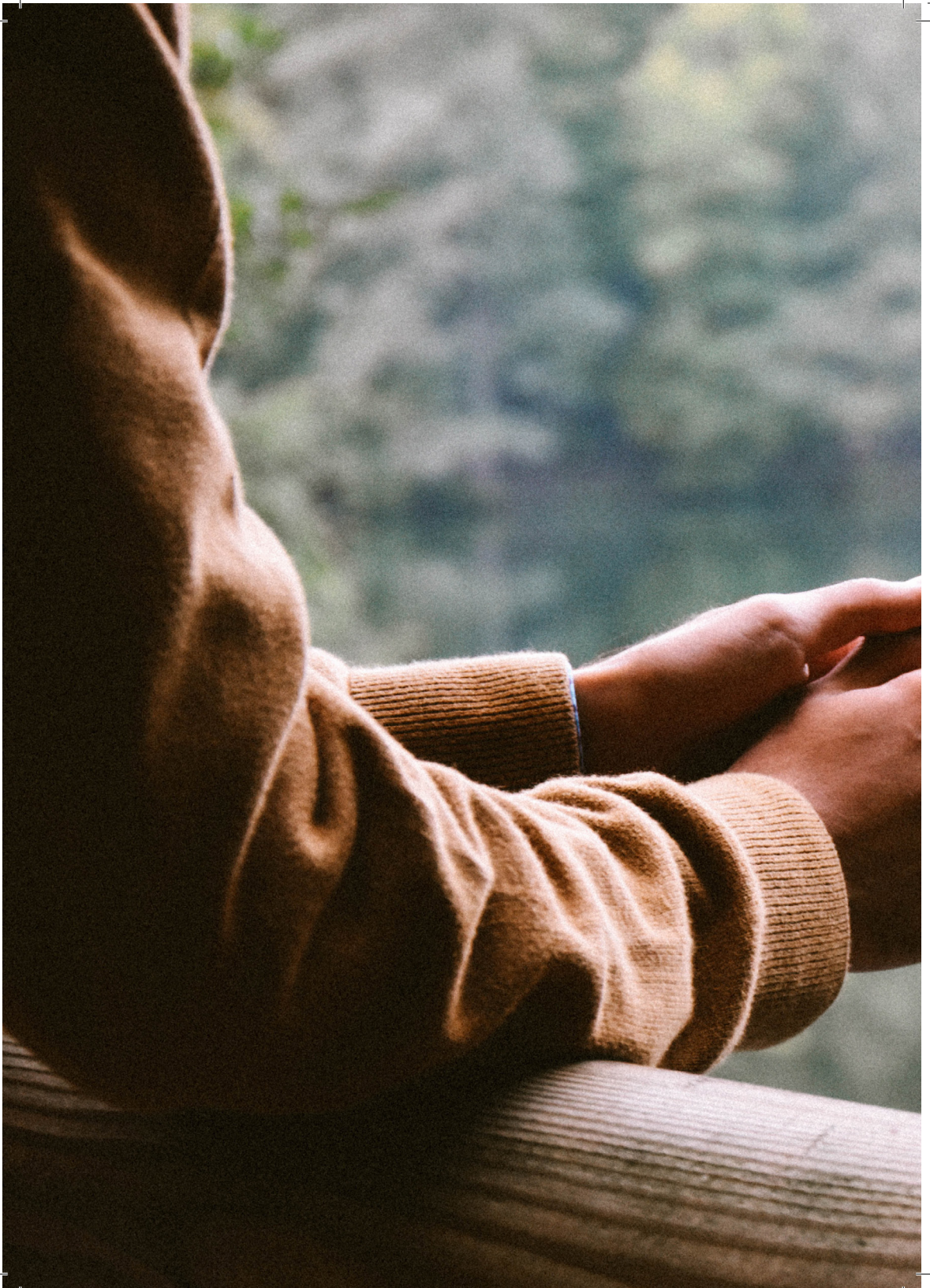
In the same way that TV shows like Brooklyn 99, How I Met Your Mother, or Friends have an overarching story told by lots of shorter stories, so too is the Bible one big story in various episodes. Unlike TV show episodes, however, each book of the Bible is distinct and different in the way it is written, often with different characters, and highlighting different themes or ideas. Some books reveal how utterly different God is to us, others reveal how He chooses to interact with us, and others show us how we are to relate to God. The first section of the Bible (the Old Testament) covers a huge period of time and many different cultures, and the second section (the New Testament) focuses on the one hundred years from Jesus' birth to the growth of the first Christian communities in and around the modern-day Middle East.

Finding things in the Bible

Bible references use the name of the book, then chapter, then verse. For example, to find Mark 1:15, locate the book of Mark (most Bibles should have a contents page), and a large print number 1. Following this there should be various numbered sentences, one of which will be sentence 15.

How to use this publication

This booklet is designed for people who are brand new to faith or reading the Bible. However if you're still exploring becoming a Christian it is also a great place to start! This booklet will help you read the Bible each day, for the first 14 days. Reading the Bible and praying on a daily basis is a big part of our faith, and most Christians start the day by doing so. This booklet will give you a reading to do each day, a bit of explanation about the passage, and then something to pray for. Follow it in order - read the Bible passage first, then the explanation, then the prayer. The booklet starts in the New Testament focussing on Jesus, and then later on looks at some passages from the Old Testament.





Praying

When you pray, don't worry about what words to use or the prayers being too short, just say what you mean as best as you can explain. God knows what you mean, and long or cleverly-worded prayer doesn't make you a 'better' Christian. Try something like this:

'Jesus, thank you that I can pray to you, and thank you for making it possible for me to know you personally. Please help me to live in a way which pleases you, and give me all I need to do it. Help me read the Bible and understand it. This world is so far from how you would have it be, so I pray you'd use me to make a real difference. Thank you God. Amen.'



Day 1

Mark 1:14-15

Jesus is King



This passage starts by saying John (often called 'John the Baptist', who was one of the first people to believe in Jesus) had been put in prison. Jesus, who would have been about thirty years old at this time, starts gathering a crowd around Him to tell them what the Bible calls 'good news'. Jesus says that those listening should have a moment of recognition that 'the Kingdom' is here. By this, Jesus is saying that there is a different way to live - like stepping from one country (or 'Kingdom') into a different one. This is good news because the new country (the Kingdom) is so much better than

the last. This kingdom has a king, and that king is Jesus. Therefore Jesus says we are to 'repent', which means to turn away from our old way of living and 'believe', which means to live knowing that Jesus is our king. These are not physical kingdoms or countries which Jesus is talking about, but rather different cultures. Jesus says to us, through the Bible, to give up our old culture and understanding of the world we've been born into and to start living in His culture and seeing the world His way. We're invited into the kingdom by the King Himself.



Thank God that He has shown you there is a different way to live, and that the new way means you can call Him your king. Acknowledge that the way you're living now will change when He asks you to change it. Ask Him to help you live under His kingship, and make Him in charge of your life. John was put in prison - pray that God would help all those beaten, imprisoned, and killed for believing in Jesus.



Day 2

Mark 8:34-38

Jesus is the Master



Jesus makes clear here that to follow Him means to be a 'disciple', which means 'apprentice'. Just as an apprentice learns from a master, so too do we learn from Jesus. We read about Him in the Bible, worship together at church, and talk about our faith. Jesus says we must 'deny ourselves', meaning that we don't just do whatever we want with our bodies, time, or money, but rather we do what Jesus did. Your faith, while immensely personal, is not private. Because our faith is not private, we discuss it with others - and learn from others who are fellow disciples of Jesus. While it might be scary, we live like Jesus by being open and honest with everyone

that God is in charge of our lives. The best way to do this is to find a church (for more advice on this see the back of this booklet). The phrase 'adulterous generation' is here using a picture of God and people being in a marriage, and people being unfaithful to God. Through growing in faith together at church we stay faithful to God. Later on in this passage, Jesus describes Himself as the 'Son of Man', and while this means many things, one of the important meanings is that He was born on earth and lived a human life. He knows what it is like to be human - to be worried, happy, scared, or excited.



Thank Jesus that He knows what it is like to be human, and that He knows what is going on in your life. Talk to Him about how you are feeling about telling other people you're now one of His followers. Ask Him to give you confidence to talk to other people about Him and go to church. If you want to give Him your life so that you may have a better life, tell Him.

