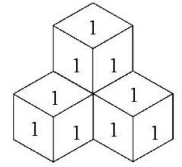


Module 1: A Firm Foundation

1/0 – Introduction



Getting Started

Welcome to 'Modulo' - designed to help us to get to know about God and Christianity, which many people find gives meaning to life. The Modules are designed to help us decide if God exists, what he's like, how we can get to know him for ourselves and what others have already discovered. Each Module is divided into parts, the first part (numbered /0) gives an introduction whilst the rest of the Module explores the detail and provides questions to help relate it to our own life today.

Module 1 has two alternatives; the 'Full Module 1' in six parts is designed for people with little or no experience of Christianity so want more information, whilst the 'Module 1 Summary' provides a revision in one part if you already have some experience.

All the Modules give Bible references - you may like to look up some of them to give authority to the material presented.

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'Full Module 1'

- 1/0 This Introduction
- 1/1 Is it rational to believe?
- 1/2 What's God like?
- 1/3 Building a relationship
- 1/4 Getting to know God
- 1/5 Exploring the 'OT'
- 1/6 Exploring the 'NT'

or

- 'Module 1 Summary'

(You only need the Full Module or the Summary. You don't need both).



Module 1/1 Is It Rational To Believe?

Is there a living God? No-one can prove God exists, but equally no-one can prove he doesn't either. There's several ways this question can be approached, but one of the most common, and probably the easiest to understand, is to look at creation all about us, and that's the approach we use.

- It's good to put God first, so we first address the question 'Who is God?' before asking 'Who am I?' and 'How can I be happy?'



Module 1/2 What's God Like?

If we can accept that God does (or might) exist, the next obvious question is 'What's he like?' For Christians, the answer is 'A Holy Trinity', but that can be a difficult idea to grasp. This section attempts to explain it.

It's an important question as it's fundamental to the answer of why God created the universe, why he acts as he does and why we're here. It's knowing that which gives our life meaning.

- Once we know what God is like we can ask 'What is the spiritual world?', 'Why is there suffering?' and 'What happens when I die?'



Module 1/3 Building a Relationship

There are several ways of getting to know God. This section introduces the idea of prayer by suggesting that we relate to others by communicating with them, so to have a relationship with God we need to communicate with him too, and prayer is one of the important ways we do that.

The questions 'What is prayer?' 'How can I make time to pray in a busy life?' and 'What shall I say?' are addressed.

- Answers are given to the commonly asked questions: 'Is it more than talking to yourself?' and 'Does God always answer?'
- A common 'Prayer Sheet' for use with all the Modules is provided as Module 9.



Module 1/4 Getting To Know God

Another important way of getting to know God is by finding out what others have experienced before us, and the Christian holy book 'The Bible' is a good source for that.

We look first at differences between the way people wrote in Bible times and the way we write today, which will help us to understand the Bible better, then at the account of creation in the Bible and our early ancestors' attempts to understanding the world around them.

- The Bible's first book reveals 'beginnings', the beginning of creation and of very early history.
- Module 2 will go on to explore how humanity grew to know God and his rules for living.



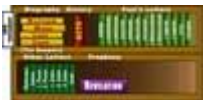
Module 1/5 Exploring The Old Testament

'The Bible' is the Christian Holy Book, written by humans so limited by our language and knowledge, but thought to be inspired by God, so it's often known as 'The Holy Bible'. The title 'Bible' is a Greek word that just means 'Books'. It's divided into two parts, the Old and New Testaments.

The Old Testament ('OT') covers the centuries from creation of the universe to just before the coming of Jesus as a human and is written in many different styles including: Story (both factual and symbolic); Law; Wisdom; Proverbs (on how to live well), and Prophecy.

This section gives a description of the different parts of the Old Testament and an introduction to some of its principal accounts.

- In many Bibles, the Old Testament contains 39 books from Genesis to Malachi. In some Bibles, especially those produced more recently, The Old Testament has an additional 15 books from Tobit to 2 Maccabees called 'The Apocrypha', the Greek word for 'hidden', because they were left out or hidden from earlier versions.



Module 1/6 Exploring The New Testament

The New Testament ('NT') covers the years of Jesus' birth, life and death as a human, and the events immediately afterwards as his Apostles took out his message to the surrounding world... which is what he'd trained them to do.

It too contains several of the writing styles found in the Old Testament but covers the 'Gospel' about Jesus life and teaching; his parables (teaching by making a 'Com-parable' between a point that's difficult to understand and something we already know about); and an account of how Jesus made reconciliation between God and humanity for our sins through his action on the cross. It describes the 'Acts' of his followers immediately after his death on the cross and resurrection to life again, 'Letters' (in Greek 'Epistles') to the early church that reveal how those churches interpreted Jesus' teaching, and a 'Revelation' of God's whole plan.

As with the Old Testament, this section will give a description of the different parts of the New Testament and an introduction to some of its principal accounts.

- The word 'Gospel' is Greek and just means 'Good News', so the Gospel of Jesus Christ just means the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- The Good News is that Jesus made reconciliation between God and humans which repaired our separation from God caused by our disobedience of his rules – which disobedience we call 'sin'.
- The last book 'Revelation' explores God's whole plan with hundreds of references back to passages in both the Old and New Testaments, but it was written in a confusing style that was popular at the time but which makes it hard for us to understand it today.



Module 1 Summary

This Summary in one part is an alternative to the six parts of the Full Module 1 described above – you only need the Full Module or the Summary, you don't need both. The Summary revises the subjects covered in the first four parts of the Full Module and omits parts 1/5 and 1/6 on the assumption that the reader already knows about the Old and New Testaments.

- **The Summary is intended for people who already have some knowledge of Christianity so just want a short revision all covered in a single session.**



The Bible – Why Different Versions?

Christians refer to the Bible a lot, so it's good to know something about it. Surely the Bible is the Bible? Well, yes and no! The Old Testament was mainly written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, so for most of us it has to be translated. The problem is that it's often impossible to get exactly the same meaning in one language as in another, so the translator has to make the best interpretation they can.

It depends what you want from the translation. Do you want a version that's easy to read, or do you want a 'scholarly accurate' translation, even though that may be harder to understand?

Also, words change their meaning over time, eg: 'nice' used to mean 'over fussy' but now means 'pleasant', so an older translation can get out of step with modern meaning and give us a false understanding, or even miss the point altogether.

Parts of the Bible were translated at different times into early forms of English, but the first translation into English of the whole of the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament was made by William Tyndale early in the 16th century.

King James I of England directed that a new translation be made by a group of eminent scholars, and in 1611 this became the 'Authorised' or King James Version (KJV), still in use today.

In 1970 a new translation into current English was made called the New English Bible (NEB). Other mainstream translations include: 1966 the Jerusalem Bible (JB) used especially by Roman Catholics; 1966 the Good News Bible (GNB); 1978 the New International Version (NIV); 1989 The New Standard Revised Version (NRSV); and 1995 the Contemporary English Version (CEV) – several of these have been updated and re-issued since. 'Specialist translations have also been made, eg: in 2004 a version that uses common slang (The Word on the Street), and even more recently a version in mobile-phone 'Text' shorthand.

- **The first complete translation was made by St Jerome in 405AD. His translation into Latin was used by other translators and became the basis of the Bible in common usage for many centuries, so was known as the 'common version', or 'The Vulgate' from the Latin for 'common'.**
- **Many Bibles have the word 'LORD' in capital letters. This signifies it's referring to God and not to an earthly lord.**
- **Different translators don't agree on what everything means, even in the King James Bible there's lots of words or phrases in italic print for no apparent reason – they're the view of the majority, but not all of the translators who worked on it.**
- **Modern translators therefore prefer to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that are found from time to time, to avoid duplicating translation and copying errors made in earlier versions.**
- **It's a good idea to look at several versions and choose one that suits you best, or the one that's used by your church in its worship.**