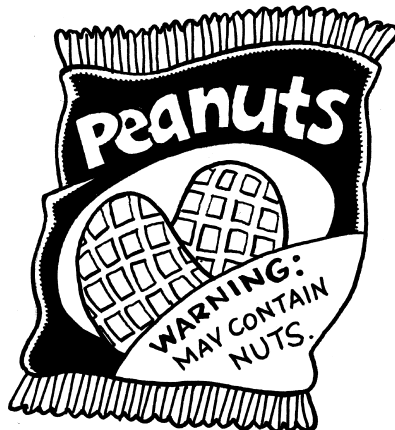




FOR YOUR SAFETY

Things you need to know before you can safely read this book.

WHEN THE stewardess stands at the front of the plane to tell you what you need to know in the event of an emergency what do you do? Do you listen avidly taking notes or do you start flicking through the in-flight magazine? To be honest we tend to turn off. Don't we? We ignore the instructions and figure we can sort it out on our own. And often we do! Sometimes instructions and safety information can be quite ridiculous!



INPUT-OUTPUT

But of course following the advice given can make the difference between life and death or at least save us a lot of time and embarrassment! Let's see how good you are at following instructions. Read through all the instructions first:

- Stand on one leg
- Sit down
- Smile
- Frown
- Laugh out loud
- Ignore instructions 1-5.

I was just testing you! Now promise you'll read the rest of this chapter before you read the rest of this book.

I pray that God will use this book to instruct and inspire you to read the Bible and pray regularly and personally. But without the following safety advice this book will be useless to you or even harmful to your health. So here we go...



SAFETY NOTE NUMBER 1

Get grace, and don't forget it!

When I started using Facebook it was all about your status. Your page opened and a

little line was flashing for you to complete the sentence: Johanna Boddam-Whetham is...

I could always tell when I had been on Facebook too much when I started talking to myself in the style of a Facebook status: Johanna Boddam-Whetham is..... wondering what to do next, JB-W is..... making her bed....

At the time of printing the Facebook status is just about still there—just above 'What's on you mind'. It may be long gone by the time you read this – but humour me.

What is your (yes you reading this book!) status? Insert your name here:

_____ is:

Of course in one sense our 'status' changes all the time, doesn't it? We might answer the question "How are you?" several different ways over the course of a day. But what is your permanent status? Where do you stand in the scheme of the universe?

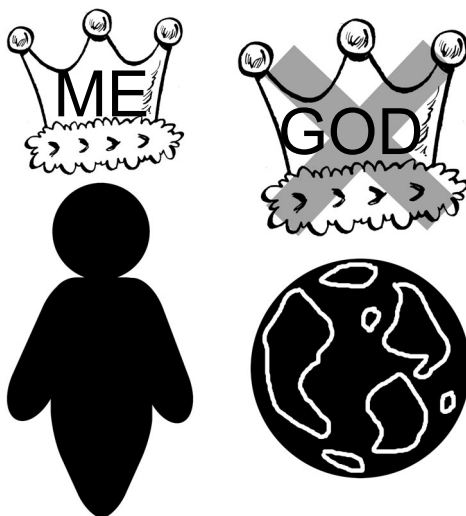
It might seem a HUGE question—but the Bible only gives us two options to choose from.

OPTION 1

Status: Made by God. In rebellion against God. Spiritually dead. Under God's judgment and facing an eternity of separation from God. What would you click on this? Like? Comment?

INPUT-OUTPUT

Their *Profile Picture* might look like this:

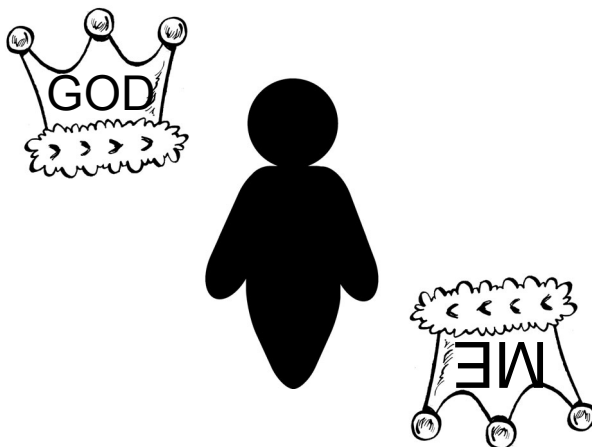


On their list of *Friends* you would find the world and the devil. They have no interest in sending God a *Friend request* and have denied God's request to them.

But don't take my word for it. If you're not 100% sure that this is what the Bible says, check Appendix 1 for some further reading suggestions to take you into the Bible's teaching on this in more depth.

OPTION 2

Status: Perfect in God's eyes because of His grace shown in Jesus. Alive eternally. The *Profile Picture* may look like this:



Friends: the one and only true God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and God's people the church.

These are two very different options. What makes the difference?

Well let's be clear what *doesn't* make the difference. The difference is *not* how many books on the Bible and prayer you have read or even how much you actually read the Bible and pray. In fact we can make no difference.

God has made the difference. We don't deserve His help. We don't deserve a change in status. It's a free undeserved gift from God.

INPUT-OUTPUT

That's what the Bible means by grace—the undeserved gifts that God gives us and most importantly the gift of a perfect status before Him. John 3:36 states “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath¹ remains on them.” Anyone who, by God’s grace, believes that...

- Jesus is alive.
- Jesus is in charge of their lives and the whole world.
- Jesus died to make the difference between option 1 and 2...

has eternal life.

So, a Christian is someone who has accepted the Son—Jesus Christ. Anyone who does not accept the Son, Jesus, will remain in Option 1.

Is that the first time you have heard that you can’t do anything to get sorted with God? Is it a well needed reminder that God has done everything necessary to make you His?

Or maybe you’re just thinking “What a simplified version of the good news about Jesus.” Well if so—you’re right! An illustration using Facebook is hardly going to get across such a big truth adequately. I might as well be a toddler with finger paint trying to reproduce the Mona Lisa². However if you’re clear that

¹ anger ²To go into more depth about what Jesus has done and what a Christian is check out the book recommendations in Appendix 1.

it is because of Jesus that God accepts us and not because of how much we read the Bible and pray then Safety Note Number 1 has done it's job. Of course there is a book that makes us completely wise about salvation, a book where we really find out about who God is, what His plans are and how He has rescued us. Got it? It's the Bible. Which means you need to keep paying attention as you read...



SAFETY NOTE NUMBER 2

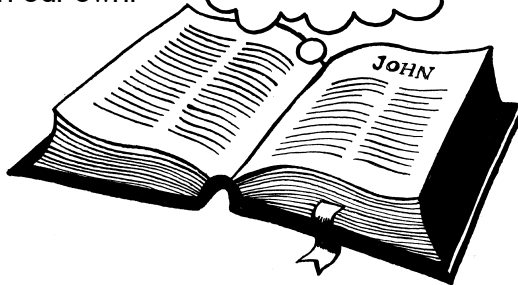
Know what you're handling when
you pick up the Bible


I want to make sure we agree on some basic truths about the Bible and that we can find our way around it. Let's start by nipping a potential problem in the bud. I am getting my information about the Bible from the Bible.

I make no apology for using the Bible to find out about the Bible.

The fact is that we can't find out about God on our own.

Find Out
About the Bible
From the Bible





INPUT-OUTPUT

He has to show Himself to us. We often rely on people to tell us things before we can know them. For example, what might you know about me?

- When is my birthday?
- How old am I?
- How many children have I had?
- What do I eat for breakfast most days?
- What was my favourite birthday present?
- What am I thinking right now?

Now, because I live on planet earth in the twenty first century the more resourceful of you could find some of these things out. There are people you could track down and ask (don't bother, it isn't that exciting!) and of course you could use that great source of information—the internet. However, some of these questions could only be answered by me. You would only find out the answer if I revealed it to you.

Well if that is the case for me—how much more so do we need God to show Himself to us? His chosen way of doing this is through the Bible. If you're unsure about the reliability of the Bible there are some great books that show us how trustworthy the Bible is. Check them out in Appendix 1. Meanwhile, our authority is going to come from the Bible.

So what sort of book is the Bible? Is it as different from other books as we tend to

think? You could, after all, pick it up, start at the beginning and read through it. It has an author—God. It starts at chapter one, page one with the creation of the universe and its final chapter ends with Jesus returning to the earth. The main character is always God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), the main storyline is the grace God shows us in Jesus.

Have you ever thought of the Bible as one big true story? Read through my tiny summary:

- God exists for eternity.
- God makes the world perfectly.
- People sin.
- God makes promises to solve the problem of sin.
- God relates with His people Israel: sin keeps spoiling, and God keeps promising.
- God makes particular promises about sending a rescuing King to sort out sin.
- God's people wait and wait and wait and go on sinning.
- King Jesus comes. Many refuse to believe He is the King.
- The King dies on the cross—that's the rescue!
- The King rises again and ascends to heaven.
- Jesus' friends spread the news about King Jesus.

INPUT-OUTPUT

- All sorts of people become Christians—God’s new people—and start meeting together.
- Lots of letters get sent to teach the new Christians all over the place.
- Jesus returns, punishes evil and makes everything new. This is the only bit that hasn’t already happened—the Bible tells us to be ready for it though!
- God exists with His people, while those who are not His people exist for eternity without Him.

So the Bible is a book which tells one amazing story... But of course, there are some **major** differences between the Bible and say a novel or a magazine article we’re reading. The differences lie in both its very nature – true and perfect, and in the way it is laid out.

Although it is one book, with God as its author, it is divided up into 66 different ‘books’, with a variety of human writers over a large passage of time.

Because we don’t always read the Bible from the beginning to the end and because Bibles are all set out differently with different page numbers we need a way to all find the same bit of the Bible without starting from the beginning each time.

All the books in the Bible that describe the time before Jesus’ birth make up the

Old Testament. All the books that refer to the time after Jesus was born are called the New Testament.

Each book of the Bible has a number of chapters (the bigger, bolder numbers on the page) and each chapter has a number of verses (the smaller numbers on each page).

Later on we'll be reading Paul's second letter to Timothy. It's a letter from Paul to Timothy. It's the second letter we have to Timothy in the Bible so we call it 2 Timothy, or 2nd Timothy. The bit we'll be reading is chapter 3 verses 14-17. This tends to be referred to as: 2 Tim 3:14-17. Let's try to look it up. If you have one—grab a Bible.

Start off by finding 2 Timothy. It is towards the end of the Bible. Don't worry if you have to use your contents page (you'll find that at the start of your Bible!) Just look up the page number for 2 Timothy. Then flick through until you find the large number 3. Then follow the smaller numbers to number 14. Found it? Double check using the example from the following page.

A section of the Bible like the one we have looked up is often referred to as the passage. When you hear "As we saw in this passage" it simply means the bit you have just read.

Whenever we read a passage of the Bible we need to make sure we know where we are in the flow of things. We're a bit like someone

2 Timothy

③ But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ²People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ④ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⑤ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

⁶They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, ⁷always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. ⁹But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

¹⁰You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹persecutions, sufferings— what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I

This number 3 is referring to chapter 3 of 2 Timothy

These smaller numbers are referring to the different verses within chapter 3.

The highlighted section is 2 Timothy chapter 3 verses 14-17.

endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹²In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

parachuting out of a plane into the middle of nowhere—we'll want to take a look at a map first.

So each time we take a look at a passage we'll stop and find out where we are in the Bible. I've called this **ORIENTATION**. We'll look at how to do this when we get to chapter 8, up to that point I've done the hard work for you. You just have to read it.

A final warning about picking up the Bible.

The Bible describes itself as a very sharp double edged sword (Hebrews 4:12³). This means that the Bible can pierce our soul; get right into our lives; look right into us; and judge us accordingly.

Have you read 'The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe?' by C.S. Lewis? When the four children find out that they are going to meet a lion (Aslan) they are rightly a bit wary. They ask nervously "Is he—quite safe?". The answer they get is excellent. "Course he isn't safe. But he's good"⁴. The Bible is not a safe book, but it is a good book. Which brings me to...

³ For the **ORIENTATION** and a longer look at this verse see chapter 5, page 82.

⁴ Taken from *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis; page 75 of the 1996 edition published by Diamond Books, a division of HarperCollins Publishers



SAFETY NOTE NUMBER 3

I'm not going to do all the talking

Be prepared to pray

Let's pray for God's help before we read the Bible and then thank Him for what we have read and discovered. Let's ask for God's help as we respond to the amazing truths we find out about Him and the disgusting ones we find out about ourselves.

Remember—it's God's work to sort out our status before Him. Grace. It's God's work to enable us to pick up and handle His Word. Grace. It's God's work to help us do something with what we read. Grace. By God's grace it is our privilege to get involved not only in God's work in our lives, but in His work throughout the world!

If you've really got Safety Note Numbers 1 and 2 you are going to want to talk to God. You may be the most confident person you know when it comes to explaining what our status is before God with and without Jesus. You may be able to explain God's grace miles better than me. You may be the quickest in class to look up any Bible reference. BUT if you are not talking to God it won't mean much. For now don't worry about the how and why of prayer—we'll get to that. Just be prepared to start talking to God. So have you read...



SAFETY NOTE NUMBER 1

Get grace, and don't forget it!

It's because of Jesus that God accepts us
not because of how much we read the Bible
and pray!

YES..... NO..... I SKIPPED IT.....
And...

SAFETY NOTE NUMBER 2

Know what you're handling when you pick up
the Bible

The Bible is our authority on these matters, it
is by God, it is completely true and perfect,
and each bit needs to be read as part of a
whole.


YES..... NO I SKIPPED IT.....
And finally...

SAFETY NOTE NUMBER 3

I'm not going to do all the talking
Be prepared to pray

YES..... NO..... I SKIPPED IT.....





INPUT-OUTPUT

Time Out: Let's pray now. Thank God for His grace, thank God for the Bible and thank God that we can talk to Him and ask for His help.

And we're back...

If you answered yes for all three you may proceed! If you haven't—don't blame me when the plane crashes! You've been given the safety instructions! You need to pay attention!