

The most engaging discipleship material I have ever had the pleasure to read. It is written with theological precision and amazing clarity. The intertwining of propositional truth with an entertaining narrative enhances its readability. It will be a wonderful help for the sceptic, the seeker, and the believer. I hope that the authors have an eye to writing further volumes on equally essential topics of the Christian faith. They are most needed!

Paul David Washer
President, Heart Cry Ministry, Radford, Virginia

Thirty years ago I sat in my bibliology class in seminary, desperately trying to understand the truths that my professor was trying to convey. It was a very edifying class, and the content I grasped helped to equip me for three decades of ministry. I am sincerely thankful for those lectures. However, I wish that this book had been available to me in 1989. It is so refreshing to read such a practical book with such vivid illustrations on such a complex topic. This should be mandatory reading for all seminary students! What also heightens my enjoyment of the book is my personal friendship with Andrew Mathieson. It's my hope that this will become an audio book and that the author himself will have the responsibility of reading it. It would be akin to 'Shrek meets Carl F. H. Henry!'

Ed Moore
Head Pastor, North Shore Baptist Church, Bayside, New York

Christian Focus Publications, 20Schemes and 9Marks are to be congratulated on their collaboration on the First Steps series, as they take seriously the challenge of preparing materials designed to equip those from an unchurched background as they begin their Christian life.

In keeping with this mission, the text of this book on the Bible is helpfully broken up into readily-digestible, bite-size pieces which pose questions, provide small chunks of teaching and

also relevant illustrations and scenarios from the life of Reenie, a new Christian from an unchurched background, and her as yet unbelieving husband, Pete. The layout of almost every page is slightly different and that, with the variety of fonts and line-spacings, helps the readability of the book.

The volume covers topics such as the origins of the Bible, its trustworthiness, its relevance for today, some of its major themes and the fact that it all points to Jesus. While helping young Christians from unchurched backgrounds to understand some of the great teachings of the Bible, the book also introduces them to some of the great biblical and theological terms such as special revelation, inspiration, Messiah, kingdom, covenant and substitution, no doubt preparing them for further study and growth in their understanding of their new-found faith.

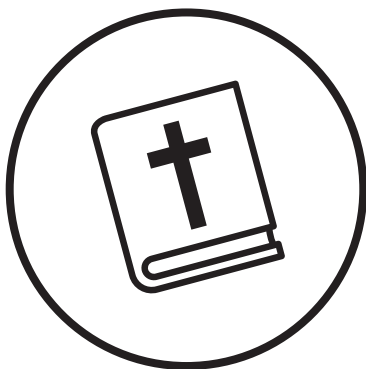
Hector Morrison

Principal, Highland Theological College, Dingwall

I've spent the last 12 years in pastoral ministry trying to get people to know their Bibles. Lately, I've realized that knowing the Bible doesn't matter unless they trust it. I wish I had this helpful resource when I was starting 12 years ago. It's short and sweet. Profoundly simple, incredibly insightful, and comprehensively concise. I can't think of a better starting point for anyone beginning their Christian journey (or refreshing the foundations) than this resource on trusting the Bible! I look forward to using this book for years to come.

John Onwuchekwa

Lead Pastor, Cornerstone Church, Atlanta, Georgia



BIBLE

CAN WE TRUST IT?

ANDREW MATHIESON

SERIES EDITED BY MEZ MCCONNELL

CHRISTIAN
FOCUS

Scripture quotations are from *The Christian Standard Bible*. Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers, all rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2011.

Scripture quotations marked NIV taken from the *HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION*®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Andrew Mathieson 2019

paperback ISBN 978-1-5271-0000-8

epub ISBN 978-1-5271-0343-6

mobi ISBN 978-1-5271-0344-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published in 2019

by

Christian Focus Publications Ltd,

Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,

IV20 1TW, Great Britain.

www.christianfocus.com

Cover and interior
design by Rubner Durais

Printed and bound
by Bell & Bain, Glasgow



All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licences are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1 8TS www.cla.co.uk

CONTENTS

PREFACE	7
SERIES INTRODUCTION.....	10
MEET REENIE AND PETE	13
INTRODUCTION.....	15
CHAPTER 1	
WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM? PART I (ORIGINS)	19
CHAPTER 2	
WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM? PART II (CANON)	31
CHAPTER 3	
HOW DO WE KNOW WE CAN TRUST IT? PART I (INSPIRATION)	43
CHAPTER 4	
HOW DO WE KNOW WE CAN TRUST IT? PART II (INERRANCY)	55
CHAPTER 5	
HOW DO I READ THE BIBLE? PART I (OLD TESTAMENT)	65
CHAPTER 6	
HOW DO WE READ THE BIBLE? PART II (NEW TESTAMENT)	83
CHAPTER 7	
IS THE BIBLE STILL RELEVANT TODAY?.....	97
CHAPTER 8	
HOW DOES THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?	105

PREFACE

Hi there I'm Andrew Mathieson, Husband to Lauren, father of Talia and Stephen with another little girl due in June 2019.

Today I'm the lead pastor and planter of Lochee Baptist Chapel, in Dundee, Scotland. But a little over twelve years ago I was your stereotypical guitar playing scheme pothead complete with Noel Gallagheresque delusions of grandeur.

I had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home, in a nice part of town. I was familiar with the gospel and the Scriptures from my youth, but back then I wanted nothing to do them. Through my own sin and mess at seventeen I ended up homeless and eventually landed up 'living the dream' in a little scheme called Hillhead in Glasgow, Scotland. (Scheme is a Scottish term for the socially disadvantaged housing estates that are home to over a quarter of Scotland's population.)

During the years that I lived there my mother faithfully continued to share the gospel with me and call me to repentance and faith in Christ, but in the scheme I only ever heard the name Jesus used as curse word and never came into contact with a Bible – neither did anyone else, which is a tragedy.

In 2 Timothy 3:15 we learn that the Scriptures, are able to give us wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus.

Let me put it plainly, where the Scripture aren't heard there is only a hopeless certainty of hell.

By God's grace alone I heard the Scriptures, encountered Jesus and was saved. He turned my life upside down gave me love of His Word and has taken me from pothead to pastor.

This book exists to explain what the Bible is, where it came from, and what it's about, in simple terms that the guys I used to kick about with could understand.

It's dedicated to my mum, Ruth. Thank-you for loving me, telling me about Jesus and for teaching me to, 'Trust in the LORD with all my heart, and not lean on my own understanding.'

It is my hope and prayer that the Lord will use this book to give others a life transforming love of Jesus and His Word.

Soli Deo Gloria.

ANDREW MATHIESON
Lochee, Dundee.

SERIES INTRODUCTION

The First Steps series will help equip those from an unchurched background take the first steps in following Jesus. We call this the ‘pathway to service’ as we believe that every Christian should be equipped to be of service to Christ and His church no matter your background or life experience.

If you are a church leader doing ministry in hard places, use these books as a tool to help grow those who are unfamiliar with the teachings of Jesus into new disciples. These books will equip them to grow in character, knowledge and action.

Or if you yourself are new to the Christian faith, still struggling to make sense of what a Christian is, or what the Bible actually says, then this is an easy to understand guide as you take your first steps as a follower of Jesus.

There are many ways to use these books.

- They could be used by an individual who simply reads through the content and works through the questions on their own.
- They could be used in a one-to-one setting, where two people read through the material before they meet and then discuss the questions together.
- They could be used in a group setting where a leader presents the material as a talk, stopping for group discussion throughout.

Your setting will determine how you best use this resource.

A USER'S KEY:

As you work through the studies you will come across the following symbols...



REENIE AND PETE – At points in each chapter you'll meet Reenie and Pete and hear something about their story and what's been going on in their lives. We want you to take what we've been learning from the Bible and work out what difference it would make in Reenie and Pete's lives. So whenever you see this symbol you'll hear some more about their story.



ILLUSTRATION – Through real-life examples and scenarios, these sections help us to understand the point that's being made.

STOP – When we hit an important or hard point we'll ask you to stop and spend some time thinking or chatting through what we've just learnt. This might be answering some questions, or it might be hearing more of Reenie and Pete's story.



KEY VERSE – The Bible is God's Word to us, and therefore it is the final word to us on everything we are to believe and how we are to behave. Therefore we want to read the Bible first, and we want to read it carefully. So whenever you see this symbol you are to read or listen to the Bible passage three times. If the person you're reading the Bible with feels comfortable, get them to read it at least once.



MEMORY VERSE – At the end of each chapter we'll suggest a Bible verse for memorisation. We have found Bible memorisation to be really effective in our context. The verse (or verses) will be directly related to what we've covered in the chapter.



SUMMARY – Also, at the end of each chapter we've included a short summary of the content of that chapter. If you're working your way through the book with another person, this might be useful to revisit when picking up from a previous week.

MEET REENIE AND PETE

We met Reenie a few years ago when she came to our Christmas Service. *'It's what you do at Christmas after all.'* Reenie is a wee gem, salt of the earth. She genuinely would do anything for anyone. She's been married to Pete for years. They have four kids who are all grown up and they have seven grandkids. We see her grandkids a lot at our church youth clubs and Reenie looks after them most days after school and all through the school holidays. The last few months she has really struggled with the older boys now that they have reached their teenage years. The boys have always been cheeky but recently one of them crossed the line, swearing and pushing his nan. It was so bad Pete had to step in and sort it out. *'Pete was so mad,'* Reenie tells us, *'I thought he was going to beat them there and then.'*

One morning Reenie suffered a health scare and ended up in the Accident & Emergency room. She suffered a mini heart attack and it's caused her to re-evaluate her life. She has begun to think about dying for the first time in her life. She has even been to the funeral directors to get a payment plan sorted to pay for her funeral.

Reenie would consider herself a spiritual person. In fact, she comes from a Catholic family. She went through her first communion as a young girl and married Pete in the local Catholic church. She describes herself as, *'A holiday Christian,'* meaning she only really attends at Christmas and Easter.

We don't really see too much of Pete at the church. In fact, at times he appears to be a bit hostile towards Christians. He definitely isn't shy in sharing his opinion! After much prayer and perseverance, Pete eventually began attending services with Reenie, and eventually both came to faith in Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

‘Fairytale!’; ‘Made up stories for weirdos’; ‘a bigoted rulebook’; ‘irrelevant and out of date’; ‘inaccurate and incomprehensible’; ‘a self-help manual’; ‘a mad history book’; ‘dead interesting’; ‘God’s Word’.

These are a few of the responses I’ve heard and received when talking to lads and lassies in Lochee about the Bible. Their opinions are really interesting because none of them have ever actually read one.

Why would they?

It is far easier to believe the world around us and what they think about the Christian faith and the Bible. Add the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and the liberal national church into the mix and we have a recipe for confusion. How can people have confidence in the Bible when:

They’re taught that the church places itself above the Bible as the ultimate authority.

The local Priest or Minister doesn’t have confidence and trust in the Bible.

National church leaders seem to make the Bible mean whatever they want it to mean in order to try and fit in with modern culture.

All this confusion means that people in the schemes have a few questions when it comes to the Word of God.

Can we really trust it?

Where does it come from?

How was it put together?

Who decided what to put in and what to leave out?

What do we mean when we say it's inspired?

Is it really 100% true?

What's this Old and New Testament jargon?

Hasn't science basically disproved the Bible?

'What do you mean it's all about Jesus? That just doesn't make sense,' Reenie would say. Even though she would say that she's a Christian she still struggles with the point of the Bible. 'I know some of it. There's the Ten Commandments. I suppose we need to try and obey them. But what good is the rest of it to my life?'

Reenie's not the only one that struggles with questions like these. This book exists to answer her questions so that people in schemes, estates, projects, townships and trailer-parks **can be completely confident in the Bible.**

They can trust 100% in the gospel it reveals to us.

Through the Bible they can come to know, love and serve King Jesus.

The book of 2 Timothy was written, from a prison cell, by the Apostle Paul. He would soon be put to death for his faith and so he writes to one of his young apprentices, Timothy, in order to help him pastor a church in a town called Ephesus. This place was messed up. People were spiritually confused. There were new

Christians, like Reenie & Pete, who knew next to nothing about the Bible. So, Paul reminds this young pastor about what the Bible is, what it does and how it does it.

'But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

The Bible is God's Word.

Paul tells us in these verses that the Bible is able to make us

wise for salvation,

through faith in Jesus Christ.

All of the Bible has been inspired by God.

Paul tells us that **all of it is profitable** for us because:

It teaches us.

It rebukes us.

It corrects us.

It trains us in righteousness.

***That means the Bible is very important in the life of a Christian.
So much so that Paul tells us:***

***'Through it we may become complete,
Equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:17).***

WHAT'S THE POINT?

GOD wrote the
Bible to save
sinners.



1. WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM?

PART I (ORIGINS)

STOP

Where do you think the Bible comes from?

You probably have a lot of questions about the Bible, and if you are going to believe and trust what it says, these questions need answers. But, before we get to where the Bible comes from, we need to ask,

‘Why does the Bible exist?’

We ended our intro by saying that the Bible is God’s Word, able to make us wise for salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. In turn, it then makes us useful to Jesus as we live out our lives. Let’s spend some time thinking this through.

Firstly, **all of the Bible is God’s Word**. The first proper line of the Bible introduces us to the main character, hero and author of the book.

‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ (Gen. 1:1).

This verse gives us some seriously important information. **God** is the **creator**, **ruler** and **owner** of *everything*. If we continue to read that first chapter of the Bible then we’ll notice something else about God.

STOP

Look at Genesis chapter one. What two words do we see at the beginning of nearly every verse? (Heads up: When something is repeated in the Bible then it means it's important.)

God speaks. In fact, the phrase '*God said*' shows up 10 times in the first chapter of Genesis.

God is a communicator.

He creates the universe and everything in it by speaking.

This is important for us to understand because it is God's nature as a communicator and His desire to communicate with us, as the pinnacle of His creation, that explains the ultimate origins of the Bible.

**ILLUSTRATION**

When Pete was a child, his dad worked in a shipyard on the River Clyde and every so often he would take him to watch the launch of a new battleship out of the dry dock into the river. As a small boy he remembered being amazed by these massive frigates and wondering how they came to be. What did it take to design one? How were they built? He'd pester his dad with these questions all morning. Even as a child, Pete knew that a marvel of engineering like a Royal Navy frigate didn't simply appear out of thin air. Someone designed it and built it and, in the case of a frigate, many people were involved in the process. Just by looking at the ship, Pete could learn lots of things about these mysterious builders. He knew they were creative, intelligent and skillful.

The same is true of the universe that God created. It gives us lots of information about God. Its size and detail tells us that **God is massive, intelligent, powerful, wise, and skillful**. The beauty

and diversity of the universe tells us that **God is creative, artistic, beautiful and glorious.**



'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge' (Ps. 19:1-2).

The universe just won't shut up about God. If we look at the human race we learn even more about Him. If we think about our *intellect, morality, conscience and emotions* we learn that God must be:

Good

Righteous

Rational

Just

Relational

Loving

When we throw all this information from creation together we learn that **God is the all-powerful creator and ruler of all things, He is good, righteous and just and we, as His creatures, owe Him our allegiance.**



'What can be known about God is evident among them [humanity], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse' (Rom. 1:19-20).

STOP

What do you think the creation of the world and the human race tells us about God?

If creation tells us that we were created by an all-powerful, good, and righteous God; if it tells us that we owe our allegiance to Him, then:

Why do we ignore Him, pretend He doesn't exist and live life on our own terms?

**REENIE**

Reenie is irritated by these questions, 'What do you mean we don't give a stuff about God? That's just not true! We believe in God. We're good people. Pete's worked all his life. I've brought my kids up well. I care for my grandkids! I go to church, I pray, I've even had my holy communion! This is all a bit heavy. Aren't you just taking this Bible stuff a bit too far!'

STOP

What do you think?

GENERAL REVELATION

Bible teachers call this information from nature, 'general revelation.' This information is freely available to every human being who has ever set foot on the planet earth. It's why we can say that **every person**, whether they're from a scheme in Scotland or a remote tribe in the middle of nowhere, **is guilty before God**.

Everybody knows He exists

Everybody knows we owe Him everything

Everybody knows we should obey Him

Everybody knows judgement will come

But nobody cares.

STOP

Having got this far and having understood these points, can you see now why the Bible exists? Explain your answer.

SPECIAL REVELATION

The Bible exists because *we are in grave danger and we need to be saved from the danger we are in.* The **Bible** is God's **kind, gracious, revelation of Himself** as the lover and saviour of sinners through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Teachers of the Bible call this, 'special revelation.' Nature supplies us with enough information to know we are in danger, but if we are going to be saved, we need to know more than creation can teach us on its own.



ILLUSTRATION

'Nan, can we go fishing up at the old black bothy this weekend?'

Definition: both-y

[both-ee, baw-thee] noun, (in Scotland) a small hut or cottage.

Before Reenie gets a chance to answer, Pete jumps in. 'Oh, do you remember that time we got lost going to the black bothy? We were on the old road on the way to Loch Fyne. Remember, it was late, it was dark, the weather was seriously grim and you lot were whining because of the cold. Even with the map we just couldn't find the place. In fact, it was pure luck that we stumbled on it in the end. I'd never been so happy to see the place, especially when the fire was roaring and the tea was made.'

'But, grandad, that was ages ago, and we have been there loads now so we know the way. We've got google maps on our phones anyway.'

Pete chuckled from the corner, *'Seriously? What good do you think your phones are going to do up there? You'll get into trouble if you just rely on your gadgets. How is your phone going to help you when the wind starts up, the rain is pouring down, you're lost and cold and there's no phone signal? You'll end up lost and alone in the dark.'*

In a sense, we are all like this. We live our lives alone in the dark, battered by forces beyond our control or understanding, with a vague idea of where we'd like to be but no understanding of how to find safety. All the while we have no clue whatsoever as to how much danger we are in.

That's a picture of the spiritual position of every human being in the world unless God tells us how to be saved.



'Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path' (Ps. 119:105).

The Bible is a light in the dark to lost people. The Bible exists because God is kind, gracious, loving and compassionate and **He wants the people He created to repent and be saved from sin and judgement.**

STOP

Do you think that God likes to see wicked people die?



"Do you think that I like to see wicked people die?" says the Sovereign Lord. "Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live" (Ezek. 18:23, NLT).

The Bible is God's gracious communication of salvation to sinners. A pastor in America called Kevin DeYoung writes this:

'God speaks, and He speaks not simply to be heard and not merely to pass along information. He speaks so that we can begin to know the unknowable and fathom the unfathomable. You may think you've seen it all, and you've heard it all, and you've experienced everything there is to experience. But you haven't seen or heard or imagined what the God of love has prepared for those who love Him. This is the good news of the cross. This is the good news for the forgiven and the redeemed. And this is the good news you won't find anywhere else but in the word of God.'

The Bible is God's Word to man.

It is His kind and gracious revelation of Himself

It contains the story of salvation

It reveals to us that **the only way we can be saved is**

by faith in Jesus Christ.

STOP

The Bible is God's Word but who wrote it all down?

The Bible is actually a portable library. It's a collection of 66 books written over 1,500 years by over 40 different men, in 3 languages: Hebrew, a little bit of Aramaic, and Greek.

The 66 books are a mixed bag of styles and genres. There are history books, biographies, genealogies, laws and rules, sermons, letters, a hymnbook, proverbs, poems, prophecy and (the always entertaining) apocalyptic literature. Despite these differences of style, *all these books reveal the same God and tell the same gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Bible begins with the tale of creation and our rebellion against God in Genesis chapters 1-3. It then charts the unfolding story of salvation in Jesus.

The Bible splits broadly into 2 parts:

The Old Testament, made up of 39 books, written by the prophets – men like Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel and Amos. These men had diverse backgrounds, different life experiences, each instructed by God to record His Word. Men who tell the story of the people of Israel, a people chosen by God in order to bless the world and bring about the salvation of His people.

The 2nd part of the Bible, the **New Testament**, is made up of 27 books written by an equally diverse group of people, the apostles (eye witnesses to the life of Jesus) and their close companions – men like Matthew, John, Luke, Peter and Paul. These men tell the story of the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the saviour king, the fulfilment of God's promise to bless the world through Israel. These men record the story of the birth of the church, which is both the evidence and means of God blessing the world by saving His people.

In his 2nd letter the Apostle Peter tells us how these 66 books came to be:



'Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

In these verses, Peter tells us that the Bible is both the Word of God and the words of men. He tells us that it isn't a random collection of made-up nonsense, but that the men spoke and

wrote what they heard from God as they were carried along and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

STOP

So, were these men who wrote the Bible just like God's robots? What do you think 'being carried along and inspired by the Holy Spirit' actually means?



'All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

These verses tell us that every word of the Bible, though penned by over 40 different men, is inspired by God. *Therefore, we know it can be trusted but it also means it must be obeyed.* We'll look at what is meant by inspiration in more detail in chapter 3.

Though the Bible has many authors and styles of writing it clearly reveals to us everything we need to know about God and everything we need to know to be saved from our sins and live godly lives.

Even though it contains many difficult concepts and challenging truths, its core message is:

God is the good creator and judge of the universe

All human beings are sinners by nature and choice

We have all rebelled against God

We all deserve His righteous wrath poured out on us in hell

forever

But, thankfully for us, it doesn't end there. It teaches us:

That God, in unimaginable love and kindness, sent His Son Jesus into the world

to live the life we have not lived,

a perfect life that God requires,

to die the death that we deserve

taking upon Himself the sin of His people and our punishment

and that Jesus is raised to life so that we might live

and salvation from sin and judgement come by repentance

and faith in Him.

This core message is clear; it unfolds on every page, and can be understood even by a child.

The Bible comes from a speaking God whose gracious desire is to reveal Himself and save ruined sinners.

It is His inspired Word, written by many men over 1,500 years in order to reveal to us everything we need to know about God and salvation from sin through faith in Jesus Christ.



SUMMARY

The Bible is the very Word of God, written by over 40 authors that were inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to write His Word to us. It is able to make us wise for salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, then make us useful to Jesus as we live out our lives.



MEMORY VERSE:

'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge' (Ps. 19:1-2).