

DAVID KITCHEN

BIBLE IN TEN

ANY BOOK OF THE BIBLE
CRACKED IN TEN MINUTES OR LESS

*Quite how people made the Bible sound so dull is a mystery.
This is the book that proves it's anything but.*

Praise for *Bible in Ten*

‘I wish the brilliant *Bible in Ten* had been written sooner – it is fun, fresh and full of insight. Easy to read but with so much packed in. Whatever your biblical starting point, there’s something of value for you. Dave Kitchen has put in the hard miles of study to give us a shortcut to understanding the big picture. Thanks, Dave!’

Abby Guinness, head of Spring Harvest

‘What a wonderful idea Dave Kitchen has come up with. I have known Dave for over 35 years and he has not lost any of his enthusiasm and quirky sharing of the good news of God’s love. This will be a valuable resource in my present multicultural context, giving people an instant insight into the scriptures and hopefully a desire to go deeper through Bible study and teaching. I warmly commend this book.’

Stephen Poxon, past president of the Methodist Conference and minister of St Mark’s Methodist Church in Tottenham

‘Such an exciting initiative. I love *Bible in Ten*.’

Rob Parsons, OBE

‘Here’s a version of the Bible which sets out to catch your attention – but goes on to engage your imagination and offer a fresh perspective on some familiar passages: thoroughly recommended.’

Stephen Wigley, chair of Wales Synod Cymru of the Methodist Church

‘Very helpful, easy-to-read resource that I would encourage both young and old to invest in. It will certainly be a book that I will be keeping within reaching distance on my bookshelf.’

Ishmael, singer-songwriter, speaker and author

‘Tackling the Bible can feel like a mammoth task and I certainly have often wondered where to start. Well, look no further! I love that this book has a mini summary at the end of each section, adding context and a little life reflection about what each book of the Bible has shared with us. Also, purely on a selfish note... this is on point for a dyslexic. Small, accessible, bite-sized pieces of an extremely large, comprehensive and complex book, and this helps to make some sense of it in the here and now. I want to share this with everyone I know.’

Megan Thomas, Methodist Youth President 2014–15

‘Brilliant! So pithy and relevant. What a fantastic achievement – love those final paragraphs at the end of the chapter, communicating the very essence of the book. Sure it’s going to be a real success!’

Rae Duke, broadcaster, teacher and podcast host



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The author asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work

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*Do you have ten minutes?
Get your head around any book of the Bible.
It's a start, of course, not a finish.
This is big picture stuff – the highlights in the headlights,
plus a rummage around the corners.
What you'll see has always been there,
but it's surprising what people can miss.
Ten minutes and a door can open.
Go on, try it...*

Contents

Introduction	9
The big picture: a quick look at the whole book.....	11

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis: start the clock	16
Exodus: trouble and travel	22
Leviticus: the priest book	28
Numbers: doing detail, getting sorted	32
Deuteronomy: choose life	36
Joshua: renewing the promise	41
Judges: could do better.....	45
Ruth: love's journey	50
1 Samuel: kingmaker and kings.....	55
2 Samuel: rise and fall	61
1 Kings: notes from exile	66
2 Kings: down and down	72
1 Chronicles: a place to call your own	77
2 Chronicles: more than buildings.....	81
Ezra: come this far, still so far to go	85
Nehemiah: putting it right.....	88
Esther: special delivery	93
Job: nightmare days.....	98
Psalms: soul music	103

Proverbs: electricity for the brain	109
Ecclesiastes: life before death.....	115
Song of Songs: the word is love	118
Isaiah: the light and the dark	121
Jeremiah: chaos creeps closer.....	127
Lamentations: long time down.....	132
Ezekiel: hard times but grand designs	137
Daniel: dream central.....	141
Hosea: love never gives up.....	148
Joel: back from the edge.....	152
Amos: not expected, not wanted.....	154
Obadiah: family fallout.....	157
Jonah: a whale of a time	158
Micah: all that lies ahead.....	161
Nahum: it's over.....	164
Habakkuk: wheels turning.....	166
Zephaniah: not just all the others.....	168
Haggai: halfway is nowhere	170
Zechariah: endings and beginnings	172
Malachi: turn to God	176

NEW TESTAMENT

A word about the gospels.....	180
Matthew: good news in the family.....	181
Mark: lots to do, must dash.....	188
Luke: outsiders on the inside	196

John: the word is out.....	205
The Acts of the Apostles: what, where, how?.....	214
Romans: thinking it through.....	222
1 Corinthians: a better way.....	226
2 Corinthians: make room in your hearts.....	230
Galatians: old rules and new lives.....	234
Ephesians: the heart of the message.....	237
Philippians: a thank you in troubled times.....	240
Colossians: complicated isn't clever.....	243
1 Thessalonians: in the right direction.....	246
2 Thessalonians: stay in the today.....	248
1 Timothy: sense, not nonsense.....	250
2 Timothy: your turn now.....	253
Titus: necessary, practical, useful.....	256
Philemon: slave or brother?.....	258
Hebrews: keep the faith.....	260
James: you say it's real, show me.....	264
1 Peter: stick with it.....	267
2 Peter: get a grip.....	270
1 John: the real Jesus.....	272
2 John: keep love going.....	275
3 John: the difference you make.....	276
Jude: taking advantage.....	277
Revelation: where all our journeys end.....	279
Further reading.....	282
Acknowledgements.....	286

Introduction

When Bibles first came off the early printing presses, they were so precious they had to be chained down to keep them safe. In fact, some of them were so heavy you'd be doing very well to lift them, never mind move them. These days, there are millions in circulation but they seem to be read less and less. So, if you think David and Goliath is the name of a ship, you wouldn't be alone. Then how about Mahlah, Hoglah and Tirzah? Important women whose role in history is often forgotten.

Bible in Ten gives you a short, sharp snapshot of every single book in the Bible. Each one of them should take around ten minutes to read, often less. They concentrate on explaining what happens – springboards for getting to know the whole story better. It's a way to step aside from the chapters and verses by which the Bible was divided up centuries ago and to briefly see each book as a whole.

The word 'Bible' simply means 'books' and there are all sorts within this library. They range from short, personal notes to massive histories, from poetry to politics. It's a library which covers not only different places but very different times as well.

Overviews like this don't answer every question you will ever have about the Bible. Thousands of years of debate can't be neatly resolved in a few minutes. But what you should have by the end of the book is a much clearer idea of what the Bible contains. Hopefully, you'll also sense how beautiful, astonishing and unpredictable God's library is.

Reading this book obviously isn't the same as reading the whole Bible, but it's a start for understanding it. When thousands of years stand between you and the writers, some things will inevitably sound strange. Historically, you're being taken back in some cases to times when people thought human sacrifice was a necessary requirement for the health and well-being of a community.

Almost as alien to modern eyes was the situation regarding slavery. It seems so abhorrent today but, back then, slave labour was not necessarily forced labour. Slaves were not actually at the bottom of the jobs pyramid. That place belonged to the hired hands who got casual work on a

daily basis with no rights to fall back on. If the work dried up, they went hungry: a gig economy for ancient times. In contrast, slaves with responsible masters and mistresses had guaranteed food, shelter and safety. There were laws that protected them. Of course, bad masters and mistresses were a very different matter and the full horrors of that were every bit as bad as today.

That's one small example of how it's not always easy to understand a situation that occurred thousands of years ago. To help you look deeper into the detail and the issues that the Bible raises, there's a section headed 'Further reading' at the end of this book. Some of the suggestions are much bigger reads than others, but all of them have their enthusiastic supporters, so take a look and decide what might be right for you.

Let us know how you use this book, what you like, plus what else you've found yourself by emailing bibleinten@brf.org.uk. We don't guarantee to reply individually to every single email, but we do promise to take a look and pass on the best suggestions for using this material and getting to know the Bible better.

Finally, a word from the writer of Ecclesiastes, who warned that constant study can actually wear you out. So give the Bible your time, but remember that it's there for you to enjoy, not in order to make you exhausted.



Deuteronomy: choose life

The final book of the Moses cycle takes another look back at his life. This is history written in the present tense. Translations don't usually follow that because we think of our yesterdays as the past. Not so, back then. History was seen as if it was living, breathing and making sense of life today.

These are the last words of Moses Rodbearer as he says goodbye to the people he has led for 40 years. They are about to cross the Jordan to the promised land but his time is now over. So this final chapter of his life starts with five messages linked to the people's story:

- You've been here long enough; it's time to move on.
- Choose your leaders wisely and be fair to each other.
- Don't moan, don't worry, just trust God.
- Disobedience is expensive and painful.
- If you stick with God – the one God – good things happen.

Moses tells them how special they are: nothing like this has ever happened before; no one else has heard God speak as you have; no one else has known God's love as you have; no one else has seen his power as you have. So get to know your history and get to know your God.

The power of ten

The second speech is the long one and includes a repeat of the ten basic rules:

- 1 God comes first... always.
- 2 No substitutes for God, no alternative focus.
- 3 Take care to use God's name wisely and well.
- 4 One rest day every seven: take a break.
- 5 Treat your parents with respect.
- 6 No killing.
- 7 No adultery.
- 8 No thieving.
- 9 No lying.
- 10 No wanting what someone else has got and you haven't.

Moses reminds the people how they had a sense of God's greatness and power when these rules were given. That's great... but what matters most, says Moses, is that you obey them.

In case anyone finds ten a bit of a stretch on the memory, there's an even shorter version: a top two. First, you need to know that there is only one true God. Nice and simple really. Second, you need to love that God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength.

And, if you find rules hard to remember, keep working at it. Say them aloud at home, repeat them when you're out walking, write them up on doors and gates. Whatever works for you, do it.

Responsibility can be terrifying

There's a promise of good things to come, but also a warning of how easily people drift when they've got what they want. Then there's a note that children depend on what they see in adults. Terrifying! The instructions regarding war are uncompromising and sound brutal. The reason is fear they'll dilute their beliefs with other people's ideas and what has made them special will be lost.

If the people keep their identity, they're promised a land where they need never be hungry again, a place with everything they could possibly need. It's not because they deserve it but because God is merciful. Respect him, love him, serve him. And put your heart and soul into it.

In a time of a thousand and one gods, Moses explains that theirs is unique. This is the Lord of the heavens and the earth: his power is awesome, but he uses it fairly. He doesn't do bribery and corruption, but he does care big-time for those who can't look after themselves. He treats you as special, but he loves those you think of as foreign, too. In short, he's God for everyone, everywhere.

The older people are told they have a special responsibility: the more you've seen, the more it's up to you to set a good example. Farmers are offered a place where the weather will do most of the hard work for them.

Then everyone is asked to decide between a blessing in a land of promises or a curse as they drift through the years behaving like everybody else. It sounds like the easiest choice in the universe, but the desire to fit in with the people around them is terrifyingly strong. God lays down ground rules in detail and with a passion. Disobedience will mean death.

From vultures to grapevines

The food arrangements are clear. Lamb, beef and fish get the seal of approval but camels, vultures, bats and screech owls are off the menu. The ten per cent rule for sharing is set out with a reminder that this isn't just for God or the church but also for those in need: strangers, widows, orphans. There are arrangements for not letting debt be a burden forever and for slaves to be made free.

The rules in this book cover all sorts of situations: unsolved murders, beautiful female prisoners, roof safety and tassel-wearing. Deuteronomy does detail without worrying too much about what comes next: outdoor toilets, interest rates and saying what you mean follow quickly one after another.

The justice system gets directions about evidence and how to deal with those who lie in court. The army regulations take the liberal approach to human rights close to an all-time high. You don't have to fight if:

- you're engaged to be married
- you've just built a house
- you've just planted grapevines
- you're scared.

And, for the overenthusiastic soldier, there's a reminder that fruit trees are *not* the enemy.

Giving special attention to those in need gets several mentions. If someone is poor, pay them first, says Moses. And don't take advantage of those who haven't got a father or are away from home; remember that in the past you needed help, too. This isn't about rules in a vacuum; it's about keeping a people together and never forgetting how they came to be where they are.

Saying means doing

There's a ceremony of blessings and curses with everyone yelling 'Amen!' in the right places. The message is simple. Doing good can lead to more good things; choosing what is wrong only leads to the place where life falls apart.

Moses challenges people to be real with God. Don't think to yourself: I'll say the right things but go my own way. Take God's path and, even if things are hard for a while, he'll bring you back together again. No one's being called to do the miraculous or impossible. Will you love God and walk his roads or will you take your heart elsewhere? It's up to you but it's a life-and-death decision. Choose life.

Joshua, the new leader, is told not to get discouraged. Then, the history and the law books are passed on... but with a sad anticipation that the rules will be forgotten once they settle in their comfortable new place.

Moses ends with a song of love and betrayal that warns his people about what could happen if they forget the story of their lives together. Take it to heart, Moses tells them, and live long in the land.

Finally he blesses each and every one of them, then climbs the mountain to glimpse the promised land before he dies. The book finishes with a blessing: a prayer about the God of the sunrises, the God of the harvests, the God of every good gift. So Moses leaves them with one more river to cross and the message that God doesn't call you to stand still but to move on.

The heart of Deuteronomy

Moving on but remembering where you came from – that's the essence of Deuteronomy. Knowing that God is great is a start, but it means nothing if you don't follow what he says. There's a choice: blessings in a land of promises or a world which forgets God and falls apart. The advice is simple: choose life.

Home
Exile
Love
Faith
Home

Home
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Love
Faith
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Home
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Faith
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Home
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Love
Faith
Home



Enabling all ages to grow in faith



Anna Chaplaincy
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

BRF is a Christian charity that resources individuals and churches. Our vision is to enable people of all ages to grow in faith and understanding of the Bible and to see more people equipped to exercise their gifts in leadership and ministry.

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Bible in Ten is for everyone who wants to be connected with all that is unexpected, beautiful and astonishing in the Bible. It tells the stories of success and failure, suffering and hope, home and exile, and a love that is stronger than death.

Here are 67 short, sharp snapshots covering every corner of a book that people sometimes don't know quite as well as they think they do. It's a way into a volume that is often on the shelves but far less frequently taken off them.

The Bible is packed with advice, stories and promises that cry out to be heard. This book gives people a real chance to take the words off the page and into their own world.



David Kitchen is an award-winning writer, broadcaster, teacher and storyteller who has been making the Bible come alive for longer than he cares to remember. In *Bible in Ten* he combines his down-to-earth writing skills with almost 50 years' experience in church leadership and worship. His hobbies include music, poetry and playing crawling-up-stairs games with his grandson.



Cover illustrated by Ben Bloxham



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