

Trinity Episcopal School
7th Grade Introduction to the Bible
Instructor: The Rev. David C. Dearman

“The challenge and charge is not to quibble over religious difference, but to make common cause on behalf of a better world...”

Peter Cobb, Executive Director, Council for Spiritual and Ethical Education

“And I will never look at the stars and yawn.”

“It was in story that I found hints of the meaning I sought: not fact, but meaning. Like everybody else moving out of very early childhood, I wanted to know what it’s all about. Why are we born? Does my life make any difference? Does it matter? Does anybody care? Old, old questions. They’ve been around through the rise and fall of civilizations. But we all have to ask for ourselves.”

Madeleine L’Engle, author of *A Wrinkle in Time*

Text: Classroom set of The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3rd Ed. (NRSV)

Class Goals:

Students will...

Become familiar with Bible stories from both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Testament in order to recognize allusions made to these in more advanced literature and to appreciate the influence these stories have had on Western Civilization.

Have an opportunity to share traditions, experiences, and reflections in order to enlarge their respect and understanding of one another and to build community.

Explore the timeless nature of Biblical stories in order to stimulate further interest in and continuing exploration of these writings.

Be asked to find intersections between Biblical stories and critical events in their own lives. These connections may be literary, emotional, spiritual, or ethical.

Content and Strategy:

The core of the class is a studied reading of the Gospel According to Mark. Attention will be given to vocabulary and tie-ins with the Hebrew Scriptures. Strategies will include class discussions, teacher presentations, objective answer class assignments, and

oral (or written) class assignments we will call “Mirrors.” These are presentations of events from everyday life brought to mind by a story.

Some key terminology used in the class.

Christ (χριστος) or in Hebrew, Messiah,
Good News (ευαγγελιον),
Repentance (μετανοια),
Parable (παραβολειν),
Authority (εξουσιαν),
Word (λογος),
Send (αποστολεω),
Kingdom of God (βασιλεια του θεου),
Compassion (σπλαγχνιζομαι),
Love of Neighbor (αγαπησεις του πλησιου),
Faith (πιστις),
Spirit or Wind (πνευμα),
Sabbath (σαββατον)
Thanksgiving (ευχαριστηα)

Topics may include: How the Bible Came to Be, The Washington Codex (4th or 5th Century manuscript of the Gospels), Comparing a page from an ancient manuscript with one from a modern Bible, Geography of Palestine, God’s Love and God’s Justice, John the Baptist, the Messianic Secret, the religious and political context of 1st Century Palestine, How Jesus Taught, Prayer and Reflection, Symbols of Jesus’ Humanity and Divinity, Compulsion versus Freedom, Temptation and Fall, the traditions of Moses and the Prophets, the Ten Commandments, Jewish purity codes (clean and unclean), the Synoptic Problem, the Passover and Exodus, the Pharisees and Sadducees, stewardship, the Greatest Commandment, the Temple of Jerusalem, Jesus’ Passion and Death, and the Resurrection.

Stories from other books of the Bible may include: the Creation (Genesis), the Covenant with Abraham (Genesis), the Passover and Exodus (Exodus or Deuteronomy 26: 1-15), Samuel anoints David (I Samuel), What God requires (Micah 6:8), the Prodigal Son (Luke), Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew), the Golden Rule (Matthew and Luke), the Good Samaritan (Luke), Conversation with Nicodemus (John), the Delay of Jesus’ Return (I Thessalonians, and II Peter), the Promise of the Advocate (Holy Spirit) (John).

The tradition of Episcopal Schools is to educate mind, body, and spirit. Our school seeks to support the spiritual development of children through worship, an intentional school-wide focus on virtue, service to others, the creation of community, and through specialty classes like this introduction to Biblical literature and our 8th Grade class, “Choices.”

Our school family represents diverse national and faith traditions. In our class, beliefs may be shared but not imposed on others, and no one will be expected to adhere to any specific faith position. In fact, we recognize that for some religion may be irrelevant or even suspect; even these students should have a working knowledge of the Bible as part of a holistic education in the Episcopal Schools tradition. The course is not designed to proselytize, but to increase the understanding and appreciation of Biblical literature.