

1. The Bible has been and still is the bestselling book in the world.
2. Printed in part or in whole in 2,800 different languages.
3. On average - 85% of American households own a Bible. The average number per household is 4.3.
4. 69% believe they are knowledgeable about the Bible - but 58% are unable to correctly identify its first five books.
5. 47% of American Christians believe that the Book of Mormon, the Quran, and the Bible all express the same spiritual truths.
6. So - what is the Bible?
7. Recognizing and understanding what the Bible is - will affect how we read and study it.
8. The Bible is a unique book:
  - it contains 66 books
  - written by 40 different writers from different walks of life
  - written in different literary styles
  - written in 3 languages - Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek
  - written over 1600 plus years
  - with one consistent message
  - having but one Author - God
9. The message begins with the creation of the universe and the fall of man - and God's plan to redeem man through Christ's death on the cross.

It has been said this way; "The 'Paradise Lost' of Genesis becomes the 'Paradise Regained' of Revelation. The gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation."

10. The 66 books are known as the canon of Scripture. The word "canon" comes from the Hebrew word (*qaneh*) and the Greek word (*kanon*). Meaning - a measure by which other things are judged.
11. By the third century Origen and Clement were referring to the canon of Scripture as:
  - fixed in number
  - divine in their origin
  - universal in their authority
12. In the fourth century Athanasius referred to the New Testament books we know today and claimed:

"These are the fountains of salvation, that whoever thirsts, may be satisfied by the eloquence which is in them. In them alone is set forth the doctrine of piety. Let no one add to them, nor take anything from them."

13. There are many popular novels and academic writings that claim the Bible is not to be trusted.  
  
Dan Brown - "The Da Vinci Code" - claims there were over 80 gospels once considered for the N.T., but only 4 were chosen.  
  
Richard Dawkins (Professor of Popular Science at Oxford)- "The God Delusion" - claims that the Bible is not systematically evil, it is just plain weird.
14. Translators have actively rendered the Scriptures into languages that either have or are without a written alphabet.
15. Wycliffe Bible Translators alone have over 6,000 people working with more than 850 different languages in fifty countries to produce new or revised copies of the Bible.
16. 468 languages are being translated for the first time. No other book in history comes close to comparing with the Bible in its translation activity.
17. Compared with other ancient writings - the Bible has more manuscript evidence to support it than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined.
18. There are 52 books that are not in our Bible from the second and third centuries that give evidence of a kind of Christianity that is an attempt to meld Greco-Roman philosophy and Christianity – and to make Christianity more palatable to a Greco-Roman world.
19. That is really what those texts are about. They were actually uncovered in 1945 (near Nag Hammadi, Egypt). So, they have been around for just over 60 years.
20. We have actually known about them since the time of Irenaeus because he wrote about them in 180 A.D.
21. The first portions of the New Testament to be recognized were the New Testament gospels, the Acts, and the epistles of Paul. That happened at the end of the Second Century, long before the process was completed.
22. This is because these books were debated. Some of them were discussed as to whether they belonged in the canon, like 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. Books that didn't make it in like I Clement Shepherd and Earnest. This is because they were on some lists but not on others originally.
23. The factors that led to their selection included: did they go back to the Apostles or someone working very closely with the Apostles, were they theologically orthodox, and were they being used in a widespread way in the church geographically and through the passage of time. This was done to test their quality.
24. Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of Judas.....