



SESSION TWO



How You Can Respond

Choose at least one of the following suggested activities/reflections to complete over the next week. Consider sharing with your friends or small group members the impact the activity or reflection had on you as you spent this time exploring. Before you begin, you may want to review book chapters 4–6 in *How (Not) to Read the Bible*.

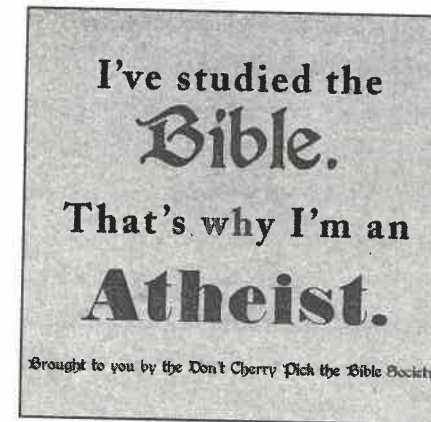
When Jesus came, everything changed, and from the time of Jesus onward, we have to look at everything in the Bible through a new lens of interpretation.

1. It's common to read the "stranger things" of Old Testament laws and wonder if we even want to be Christians! A question pastors hear often after their churchgoers read Leviticus 19:28 is this: *Is it okay to be a Christian and get a tattoo?* Read the backstory in "If These Laws Were Only for Israel at the Time, Do They Apply to Us Today?" on pages 78–79 of *How (Not) To Read The Bible*.

According to Dan, why are tattoos outlawed for the Israelites in Leviticus? And what does this mean for us today?

The Old Testament isn't the only place where we read "stranger things" in Scripture—they appear in the New Testament, too. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1–16. What strange rules appear here? How do Christians respond to this rule today?

2. Is the Bible credible and trustworthy? This is the underlying question behind the criticisms we've been talking about in Session Two.



When we look at the context of the greater story of the Gospel in light of the strange verses we read, we see that God is credible and trustworthy. In the first five books of the Bible, God instructed Moses to write down the history of the Israelites to teach them it was God who created everything, not the gods of neighboring Egyptians or other gods. God wanted the Israelites to pattern their lives after him, not other nations who worshipped and followed other gods. So God establishes his credibility and trustworthiness by reminding the Israelites who he is as the creator of the universe (Exodus 3:15–17, Isaiah 45:12) and who they are as image bearers of God (Genesis 1:27).

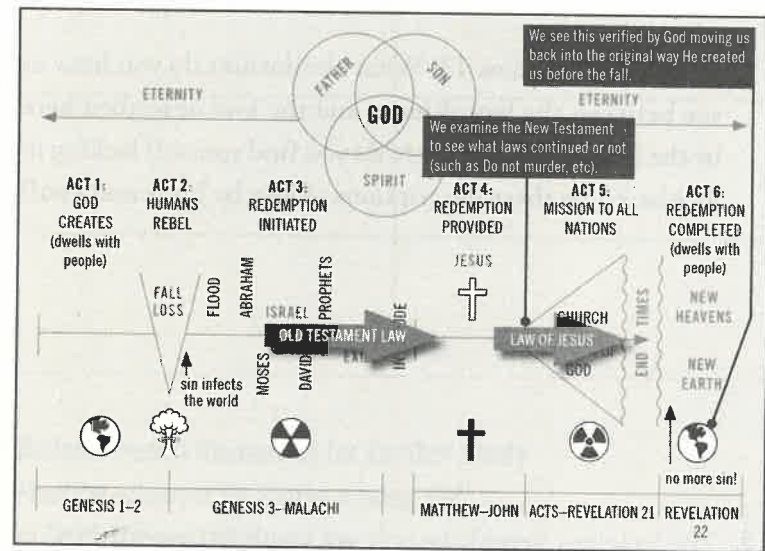
What makes the Bible credible and trustworthy from your perspective?

What principles can you remember when you encounter strange things in the Bible?

3. Read Leviticus 20. According to this passage, in what ways were the Israelites "set apart" from neighboring nations and why?

THE WAYS	THE WHY

4. Read "Why Do We Follow Some Commands but Not Others" on pages 81–85 in the book *How (Not) To Read The Bible*. In the following graphic, you can see where the Old Testament law arrow ends on the timeline. It stops with the death and resurrection of Jesus, which means all of the strange, bizarre stuff stops, too. No more strict dietary laws, weird worship rituals, sacrifices, etc. And then, a new arrow starts with Jesus. This is the start of the new law, otherwise known as the law of Jesus.



Read Galatians 3:23–28; 6:2; and 1 Corinthians 9:21. What insights stand out about the new law of Jesus?

Read Matthew 28:16–20 and Matthew 22:36–40. According to these two passages, how would you summarize the new “law” of Jesus?

Read 1 Corinthians 13. What similarities do you hear or see between the law of Jesus and the love described here by the Apostle Paul? Where do you find yourself lacking in love based on these descriptions of love by Jesus and Paul?

- The Israelites weren't the only ones with “stranger things” in their laws. Strange sounding things pop up in our modern context, too—whether it's actual laws or the societal rules we strive to live by. *What laws or rules are the “stranger things” of our modern day (even things that make perfect sense to us today but might be specific to who we are as a generation, living in this specific time)? If you're having a hard time answering these questions, then do a quick online search for “US laws that make no sense.”*

MODERN DAY “STRANGER THINGS” LAWS & RULES	THE MEANING OR PURPOSE OF THESE RULES

Recommended Resources for Further Study

Practical resources for finding a loving God in Old Testament history and law:

Genesis, a Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary by John H. Walton, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), pg. 246.

Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God by Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

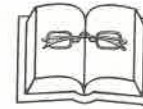
“Old Testament Law and the Charge of Inconsistency” article by Tim Keller <https://timothykeller.com/blog/2012/6/12/old-testament-law-and-the-charge-of-inconsistency>.

If you're interested in seeing how modern culture feeds into the "stranger things" criticisms, check out:

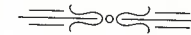
The West Wing, season 2, episode 3, "The Midterms."

"Things the Bible Bans" google search for popular YouTube videos, blogs and articles about misunderstandings and misuse of the complex passages of the Bible.

For Next Week: Before your group's next session, read chapters 7–9 in *How (Not) to Read the Bible*.



SESSION THREE



Boys' Club Christianity

Is the Bible Anti-Women?

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

GALATIANS 3:28 NIV

Welcome

We live in a world today where there is a recognition and intolerance of misogyny in our society. As Christians, we should add our support out of love and justice to affirm women's rights to equal respect, value, and worth. But it starts to get uncomfortable when critics talk about Bible verses that—at face value—seem to demean and devalue women.

Misogyny refers to contempt for and prejudice against women.