

Starters or Refreshments: Week 1

So what!

Aims this week: To encourage us to think about God.
To introduce the Old Testament as telling us about God's relationship with us.

What is God like?

What first comes to mind when each of the following words is heard: Toast, Cold, Summer.

What comes to mind when you hear the word "God"?

Where do your ideas about God come from?

Read the passage from "Mister God, This is Anna" (see separate hand out).

Summary: The reading talks about letting our ideas of God change and letting God be God.

We can see different ideas about God in The Bible.

Look at the contents page of a Bible. Are there names you recognise? Any that are new to you?
Note that there are two "Testaments"; the Old and the New.

Put simply the "Old Testament" is, among other things, the account of the relationship of God with one particular people – the Jewish people. It's better referred to as "The Jewish Scriptures"
The New Testament is about how revealed himself to everyone in the life of one particular Jew.
That man was a Jewish teacher, or Rabbi, called Jesus.

Look at the contents page of The Bible. The Bible isn't really a book, it's rather a collection of books – a library. It contains; History, Poetry, Hymns (Psalms), Fictional Stories, Letters etc.

So how would you answer someone who says "Do you believe in the Bible"? Instead try and think of The Bible as being different books talking in different ways about God's relationship with us.

Let's think this week about the Old Testament – the Jewish Scriptures. In the Old Testament we can see an account of how the relationship between the Jewish people and God changed and evolved.

Think of any Old Testament stories you know. Here are some for starters; Daniel in the Lions Den, Noah's Ark, Samson, Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, Joseph and his of many colours, the Creation Story. Use the timeline (see separate hand out) to put them in order.

What does God offer us?

That's what we hope to find in the next few weeks. But for starters:

Abraham is promised that God will their God and they will be his people. Promise = Covenant
Look at the time line sheet again. The rest of the Old Testament tells how that relationship changes.

Joseph – the people pass into slavery in Egypt.

Moses – leads the people from slavery to freedom and towards the promised land. A key event.

Rebellion – People turn away from God. The reign of the Kings; Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon.

Exile – The kingdom of Israel (and Judah) collapse. Captivity in Babylon.

Promise – See especially Jeremiah 31 .31 – 34. A new Covenant.

In the Old Testament the Covenant was sealed with the blood of animals.

How is the New Covenant sealed? Next week we will see how it was sealed in the blood of Christ.

If you have time have a look at Mark's Gospel. It's the shortest of the four accounts of Jesus' life.

Taken from:

Mister God, This is Anna

Anna explained. "When you're little you 'understand' Mister God. He sits up there on his throne, a golden one of course; he has got whiskers and a crown...God is useful and usable. You can ask him for things...Later on you understand him to be a bit different but you are still able to grasp what he is. Even though you understand him, he doesn't seem to understand you! He doesn't seem to understand that you simply must have a new bike, so your 'understanding' of him changes a bit more. In whatever way or state you understand Mister God, so you diminish his size. He becomes an understandable entity among other understandable entities. So Mister God keeps on shedding bits all the way through your life until the time comes when you admit freely and honestly that you don't understand Mister God at all. At this point you have let Mister God be his proper size and wham, there he is laughing at you".

Some Biblical images of God to look up if you have the chance:

Genesis, Chapter 1 verse 1 – Chapter 2, verse 4	(Creator)
Exodus, Chapter 3 verses 1 – 15	(Mystery)
Isaiah, Chapter 6 verses 1 – 7	(Holy)
Exodus, Chapter 12 verses 21 – 36	(Deliverer)
Psalms 139 verses 1 – 12	(All-knowing and ever-present)
Amos, Chapter 5 verses 21 – 24	(Justice)
Luke, Chapter 15 verses 11 – 32	(Forgiveness and Love)
John, Chapter 13 verses 1 – 16	(Servant)