“I started in Genesis, but died in Leviticus”:
Bringing Beginners to Bibles

3. What do we want to accomplish?
   Help people to grow comfortable with the Bible
   Find their way and interpret
   Teach the faith
   An aid to right living
   Help people experience God
   Assist people’s spiritual journey

4. What’s going to help us? (1)
   Great respect for Bible
   Liturgy
      processions
      ambo
      incense, etc.
   Encouragement from non-Catholics
   Protestant reverence
   Cultural devotion

5. What’s going to help us? (2)
   The Bible is interesting!
   Poetic: Eccl 3:1-4
   Ironic: John 1:45-47
   Pithy or disturbing: 2 Pet 2:22b; Mt 24:28
   Tales of sex: Gen 38; 1 Cor 5:1
   Intrigue, violence and murder: Jud 13:6-10; Joshua 11:12-13

6. What Get’s in the Way?
   The Bible doesn’t read like a normal book, and requires a different reading strategy
   Genealogies are only selectively helpful and need someone to identify key passages.
   Ritual purity, concentrated in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, matters a lot, should be reserved for advanced Bible students.

7. Where do We Focus?
   a. what we want people to know?
   b. what people find interesting?
   c. what people ask us about?

8. The Problems
   Do we bring Bibles to things?
   Unreflective about the Bible
   Influenced by fundamentalists

9. What must we do?
   #1. Understand our own motivations for leading the study
   #2. Understand principles of Catholic interpretation
   #3. Do good research
   Emphasize the practical over the theoretical

10. (#1) Understand Our Own Motivations
   Don’t focus on our issues
   Be neither to the left nor the right
   The Holy Spirit’s voice should be loudest
   Be leaders with faith
   Teach with evangelical zeal (Matt 28:19-20)

11. (#2) Understand Catholic interpretation
    Read:
    Dei Verbum:
    http://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/V2REVEL.HTM
    “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” by the Pontifical Biblical Commission”:
    http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.HTM

12. (#3) Do good research
    Ask a lot of questions! Do good research!
    Be suspicious of the obvious!
    Commentaries:
    New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Ray Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy
    Introduction to the New Testament, Ray Brown
    Anchor Bible Commentaries – Doubleday, Garden City, NY
    Sacra Pagina Commentaries – Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN
13. **Emphasize the practical over the theoretical**
   How do we
   - live the truly *good* life?
   - Succeed as a family?
   - Have integrity?
   - Forgive?

Avoid jargon

14. **How to Begin**
   NT before OT
   Gospels 1st – Mark then Matt
   Parallel readings observing changes
   Get to know *Jesus*:
   - who he cares for, who disappoints, his patience
   Ask the deep questions
   - Where do I meet Jesus?
   - How do I apply?
   - Do I need to change?

15. **After the Gospels**
   Paul: 1 Thes, 1 and 2 Cor
   Investigate the human condition
   Perhaps Gen and Exod?
   - Catholic inerrancy: The Bible is inerrant in regards to salvation!
   *Dei Verbum* ch 3, para 11.

Be willing to skim past…

16. **Continuing with Beginners**
   Listen…and follow your students’ needs
   Liturgy, prayer or worship? – Psalms, Isaiah and Lamentations
   History? – Exodus, 1 and 2 Sam, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Macc
   Social Justice? – the Prophets
   The Church? – 1 and 2 Tim and Titus
   Return to Luke and Acts: focus on Jesus

17. **More Advanced Studies**
   Study of observance of the Law vs good works:
   - Jewish ritual world: Lev and Deut
   - The role of sacrifice, diet, illness purification and *death*!
   - Level of commitment: 2 Macc 7
   - Jesus the Jew: Matt 5:17-20; 9:20; Mark 7:1-23

History in the Church:
   Acts 10-15

Finally, Romans and Galatians
Good works and judgment:
   - Matt 25:21-46; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor 5:10; om 2:5-111

18. **Setting Up a Beginners’ Study**
   Do good press
   Show good hospitality
   - baby-sitting
   - refreshments
   - set up room
   - comfortable chairs
   - shrine of some kind

Have spare Bibles

19. **Explaining Different Translations**
   Isaiah 6:1-3
   See also Isaiah 7:30

20. **Catholic and Protestant**
   NT: both contain 27 books
   HB:
   - Catholic 46 books
   - Protestant 39 books
   Greek speaking Jews from 3rd C. BC, after Alexander
   Septuagint: Greek trans.
   Quoting Sept. – Luke 3:4-6
   Hebrew 11:35 – 2 Macc 7

21. **Bible Versions**
   Catholic
   - *New American Bible* (NAB)
   - Study 1970, 1986, & 2010
   - *Jerusalem*
   - poetic
   - *Navarre*
   - *Douay Rheims*
   - Trans. of a trans. – *Vulgate* 1752

Protestant
   - *King James*
   - beautiful, stilted
   - *Revised Standard*
   - updated KJ 1901
   - *New Revised Standard Version*
   - updated, inclusive
   - *New International Version*
   - *Good News*
22. **Navigating and Marking**  
Chapters: Archbishop Langton, 13th Century  
Verses: Stephanus, 1551

24. **What is the Bible**  
OT – Hebrew and Aramaic  
Old Testament  
Jewish Bible  
Israelite Bible  
Hebrew Bible – the (inaccurate) winner!  
NT Greek  
Highbrow / lowbrow

25. **Where did the Bible come from?**  
The clouds did not open up  
Divine and human authors  
A complicated history

26. **Good Passages for Study**  
John 1:1-14  
John 20:30-31  
John 21:24-25  
2 Pet 1:20-2:3  
2 Tim 3:15-17

27. **Understanding what we’re reading**  
Kouzmanoff smacks 10th-inning homer as Padres beat Giants 3-2

28. **What do we need to admit (before reading the bible)**  
Dei Verbum 12  
John 18:33-37  
Thucydides  
Peloponnesian War Chapter 22  
What we find in Scripture  
History: I Kings 16 ff./Acts 11:19  
Genealogies: I Chronicles 1 ff./Matt. 1  
Laws: Deuteronomy 12 ff.  
Prophetic Lit.: Ezekiel 3:17  
Apocalyptic: Daniel 7/Revelation 4  
Wisdom Lit.: Proverbs 12  
Songs: Exodus 15, Psalm 33/John 1  
Stories: Genesis 1 & 2/Gospels

29. **Non-Catholics on “inspiration”**  
Inspiration is nothing  
Like reading Shakespeare

30. **How Catholics view inspiration**  
Dei Verbum 11-12  
Judas Iscariot’s death: Matt 27:3-5 and Acts 1:18

31. **Strategies for Bible Studies**  
Topical  
tracing themes  
allows for depth and development  
Following a book  
easier context setting  
only need one commentary  
author creates agenda

32. **Don’t Forget the Big Picture!**  
Fig trees:  
Mark 11:13-14 and 20-21  
taken in isolation, and Jesus seems petty  
Don’t forget Mark 11:15-19  
Mic 7:1-2; Jer 8:12-14