

## *Six Steps Into The Bible*

### REVIEWS

A magisterial overview of the Bible and the themes that flow from it. You will find principles here to grasp some of the challenges of interpretation and to avoid some of the literalist bear traps. Not only does this give you an insight into the different styles of writing, but it also links it clearly to contemporary issues. Readers will find at the end of their journey a much better grasp of the text, and more importantly an inspiration for continued study and meditation. A splendid achievement. I heartily recommend it.

– *Richard Jackson, Bishop of Hereford*

This book gets under the skin of the Bible. It is superbly written, clear, focused and engagingly accessible. It has a first rate structure that inevitably builds learning for the reader. Before embarking on each section there is 'homework' to do in readings from the Old and New Testaments, with enticing questions that prevent any temptation to skip these introductions – a frame that would work well for both individuals and groups. The author explores ideas that can have assumed understandings – What does a covenant with God mean? What fundamentally changes with Jesus? – and re-presents them in a manner that builds both credible complexity and insight. This not a book about the past; the textual commentary is rooted around contemporary concerns. The writing is both demanding and powerful and any serious reader who is brave enough to engage with it is taking on a challenging inner journey that is potentially transformative. In reading these Six Steps I feel I have been brought face to face with God ... and will be processing that for a long time.

– *Barbara McGowan, Fellow Emerita of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling.*

This is the book I have been looking for!

Six Steps into the Bible is a gem that has brought alive God's Word for us in the Beacon Parish where we have used it as a group study course. It challenges, surprises, inspires, questions and affirms, as it invites the reader to step into scripture.

There were many in our group who were unconfident about picking up the Bible, not knowing where to begin and how to interpret its message for modern life. Six Steps has radically changed their hesitancy and reluctance into enthusiasm and has created in them an appetite to keep on exploring the Bible.

The approach of the book is 'refreshingly serious', in that it doesn't shy away from academic thought and serious theology, while at the same time helping the reader with its clear language and expertly crafted content. There were many moments of enlightenment on the course. People were struck by the book's exploration of the way that biblical themes have evolved, developed and progressed over time, particularly the bible's presentation of the image and character of God. There were also profoundly moving moments as people realised they had been holding on to a distorted understanding of God's message and his values.

Six Steps into the Bible does exactly what its title suggests. It doesn't try to take the reader to an end destination or finishing line, but rather, show them a bible gateway, through which they are invited to enter with a newly discovered confidence and understanding.

As I say, I've been looking for this book for a long time!

– *Reverend David Wallis, Vicar of the Beacon Parish*

## FROM THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED THE COURSE

Very thought-provoking and helpful. Reading it was fascinating and enlightening. It helped me develop my own thinking on issues such as suffering, judgement and atonement as well on current moral issues. A stimulating book that can be read many times. – *Mark-Moody-Stuart*

This guide to the Bible is so helpful and inclusive. It is rich in content and thought-provoking. As a relative newcomer to Bible study I found it engaging and interesting; a very helpful and inspiring read. In every Step a positive and profound image of God's love and care is presented. It is a guide I will return to. – *Heather Greenfield*

I approached Six Steps Into The Bible with some trepidation. I'd been a very irregular churchgoer until recently, and without really realising it, I was finding it hard to put my gently strengthening faith on something approaching a firm footing. My fairly kaleidoscopic picture of the Bible, recent reading about how it might have been written, my interest in ancient civilisations, my fuzzy faith, and my wariness around the pedlars of certainty were all part of the picture.

Following Peter Sills through Six Steps has been transformational. I feel as if a benign earwig has been munching through heart and brain and making connections which are revelatory and liberating. I'm coming through with a faith which feels anchored and dynamic. Peter's style is a big part of this. He writes clearly, with humility and humour, and his understanding of how the world is keeps you well away from easy certainties.

It's a short book but a long read if you follow all the Biblical references, and you'll need to pause for air as understanding seeps in. The way Peter has structured the book makes the journey much easier, above all showing how the Bible evolved in step with changing perceptions and expectations of God. I love the way he cycles through Old and New Testaments and links the text to historical context.

This new understanding has given me solid foundations. I feel liberated in dealing with the bits of the Bible I struggle with, and the need to try to reconcile apparent contradictions in the texts. The Six Steps are the beginning of a journey, but, even so, it's rich and deep. I encourage you to set off on your own six steps. – *Rod Pryde*

As a new arrival to the Beacon parish I leapt at the chance to join the group studying Six Steps into the Bible. Meeting every Wednesday in Lent, then, by popular demand, extending to the end of April, Peter guided us through an understanding of the Bible – its historical context, the different styles of writing, how the canon was edited and compiled, and what it says about God and Jesus and the basic Christian beliefs.

This was very new to me. The idea that the Bible is not a textbook but a map came as a shock, then a revelation: it all began to make sense. Suddenly the beauty of the parable of the mustard seed and powerful metaphor of Ezekiel's good shepherd became apparent. Six Steps opened all our eyes to a new, more fluid understanding of the Bible; as Carl said: 'It deepened my faith in a way that current religious practice does not enable.'

Six Steps provoked lively discussions. Peter was unfazed by outspoken opinions on faith and morality; as John commented: 'Peter does not preach, but gives hope through his gentle exposition of crushingly difficult issues.' And Joanna spoke for us all when she said: 'I learnt so much and it has given me much food for thought.' So much so that Six Steps has inspired a follow-on group!"

– *Kylie Sanderson*