

BibleWay: Biblical Themes

When you look up at the night sky, what you first see is scatter—points of light that seem unrelated. But once someone teaches you to see the pattern, the stars form something meaningful. A bear. A hunter. A story written across the sky.

The Bible works the same way.

For many readers, Scripture feels overwhelming. Stories jump across centuries. Laws interrupt narratives. Poems appear in the middle of history. Without guidance, it can feel disjointed. But Scripture is not random. It is unified by a set of recurring themes that work together to tell one story.

These themes are not slogans competing for attention. The Bible is not *only* about the kingdom, or *only* about the gospel, or *only* about covenant. Instead, these themes form a **constellation**—distinct, interconnected truths that together reveal God's redemptive plan.

This curriculum walks through five core themes:

1. **Kingdom of God**
2. **Imago Dei (Image of God)**
3. **Sin and Death**
4. **Covenant**
5. **Gospel (Good News)**

As you move through Scripture—Genesis to Revelation—these themes will appear again and again. Learning to recognize them will help you understand not only the Bible, but your own life within God's story.

1. Kingdom of God

Definition: *The kingdom is wherever someone rules. God is everywhere; therefore, He rules over all.*

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

This opening line establishes reality's most basic truth: God reigns. Creation itself is an act of kingship. Everything that exists exists under God's authority.

We instinctively understand this idea. Each of us has spaces we consider our own—physical, relational, emotional. Imagine sitting on a beach, finally resting after weeks of work. You lay out your towel. That space is yours. If a stranger sits down without asking, something feels wrong. Authority has been violated.

Scripture tells us that God's authority is ultimate and eternal:

"To him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom... his dominion is an everlasting dominion." (Daniel 7:13–14)

Later, Jesus speaks of the kingdom as something that is *coming*. This can feel confusing. If God already rules, why does the kingdom need to arrive?

The answer is rebellion. Humanity has resisted God's rule. While God remains sovereign, human hearts have pushed Him out. Jesus comes not because God lost control, but because people need restoration. The kingdom advances wherever hearts return to their rightful King.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Why do you think the Bible begins with God's authority rather than human need?**
(Genesis 1:1; Psalm 24:1; Isaiah 45:18)
2. **How does thinking of the kingdom as God reclaiming hearts reshape the way you read the Gospels?**
(Mark 1:14–15; Luke 17:20–21; Colossians 1:13–14)
3. **Where do you most guard your territory from God?**
(Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 10:23; Luke 9:23)
4. **What would surrendering that space look like in daily life?**
(Romans 12:1–2; Matthew 6:33; James 4:7–8)

2. **Imago Dei (Image of God)**

Definition: Humans were created to reflect God's character and represent His rule in the world.

Genesis continues by explaining humanity's unique role:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion..." (Genesis 1:26–28)

To bear God's image means more than resemblance. It means representation. God shares His rule with humanity, giving people real responsibility over creation. This is why work, stewardship, and responsibility matter so deeply to us. They are part of our design—not a result of sin.

But the most powerful implication of Imago Dei is **identity**.

Much of life is shaped by external identity: job titles, roles, achievements, relationships. These identities shift. They can be gained or lost. When they collapse, people often feel unmoored.

The image of God is different. It is intrinsic. It was given before you accomplished anything. It cannot be erased by failure or diminished by loss.

Throughout Scripture, God continually reminds His people: *Remember who you are. You bear My image.*

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Why does God connect bearing His image with having dominion?**
(Genesis 1:26–28; Psalm 8:4–6)
2. **How does Imago Dei challenge modern definitions of worth and success?**
(Psalm 139:13–16; James 3:9)
3. **Which external labels most influence how you see yourself?**
(Galatians 1:10; Colossians 3:1–4)
4. **How would your choices change if you lived from an unchanging identity in God's image?**
(Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:9)

3. **Sin and Death**

Definition: Sin is rejecting God's will.

Genesis 3 introduces rebellion. Adam and Eve do not deny God's existence; they reject His authority. They desire autonomy beyond what God has given.

Sin is directional. It turns us away from God's kingdom and toward self-rule. And sin carries consequences:

"Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin... so death spread to all men." (Romans 5:12)

For many, sin feels abstract—especially when life appears comfortable. But sin often works quietly. Like a bug trapped beneath a phone screen, something is wrong beneath the surface even when things seem functional.

Small compromises accumulate. Over time, they redirect the heart away from God.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Why is sin easier to minimize when life is comfortable?**

(Jeremiah 17:9; Revelation 3:17)

2. **How does understanding sin as a direction rather than isolated actions change the conversation?**

(Proverbs 14:12; Hebrews 3:12–13)

Personal Journaling Questions

1. **What small compromises may be shaping your spiritual direction?**

(Song of Songs 2:15; Luke 16:10)

2. **Where have you noticed growing distance between you and God?**

(Isaiah 59:1–2; James 4:4)

4. Covenant

Definition: *A covenant is God's binding commitment to a people, forming a relationship of loyal love that shapes every part of life.*

God's response to sin is not abandonment—it is promise.

Throughout Scripture, God establishes covenants: Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and ultimately the New Covenant. These are not separate plans. They build toward one goal.

Genesis 15 reveals the heart of covenant. In a covenant-cutting ceremony, both parties typically walk between sacrificed animals, symbolizing mutual commitment—even unto death.

But in Abraham's covenant, only one walks through:

"A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces." (Genesis 15:17–18)

God alone bears the weight of faithfulness. Abraham sleeps.

This covenant is unconditional. God commits Himself fully, knowing humanity cannot keep its promises. This moment anticipates Jesus, who will later bear covenant consequences on the cross.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Why is it significant that only God passes between the covenant pieces?**

(Genesis 15:17–18; Psalm 89:34)

2. **How does covenant reshape obedience from obligation to trust?**

(Deuteronomy 7:9; Micah 6:8)

3. **Where do you still live as if God's love depends on your performance?**

(Romans 8:1; Galatians 3:3)

4. **How does God's covenant faithfulness invite deeper trust in Him?**

(Lamentations 3:22–23; Hebrews 10:23)

5. Gospel (Good News)

Definition: *The gospel is the announcement that God has acted in Jesus to forgive sin, defeat death, and restore His kingdom.*

Paul summarizes the gospel clearly:

"Christ died for our sins... he was buried... he was raised on the third day." (1 Corinthians 15:1–4)

The gospel is news, not advice. It announces what God has done, not what we must do to earn salvation. Jesus fulfills every covenant humanity failed to keep. Salvation rests on His faithfulness, not ours.

At the center of the constellation stands Jesus. Every theme points to Him. Every promise finds fulfillment in Him.

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Why is unconditional grace difficult to believe or accept?**

(Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5)

2. **How does the gospel change how we view failure and shame?**

(Romans 8:33–34; Hebrews 12:2)

3. What would change if you truly trusted that God's love does not depend on your consistency?

(John 10:28–29; Romans 5:8)

4. **Where do you need to rest in Christ's finished work today?**

(Matthew 11:28–30; Hebrews 4:9–10)