

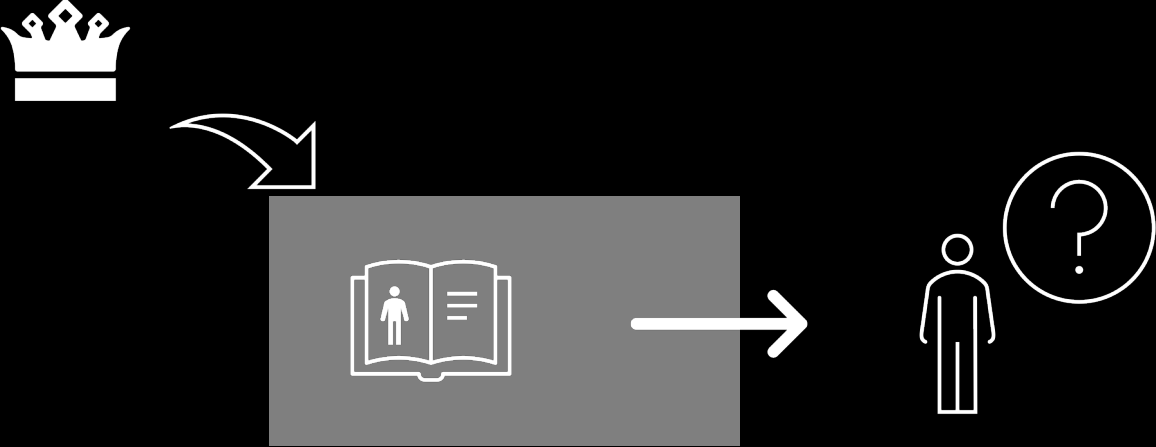
Reading / hearing /
understanding / being changed
by the bible

Some perspectives & thoughts

Chris Greenhalgh

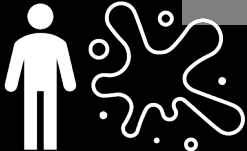
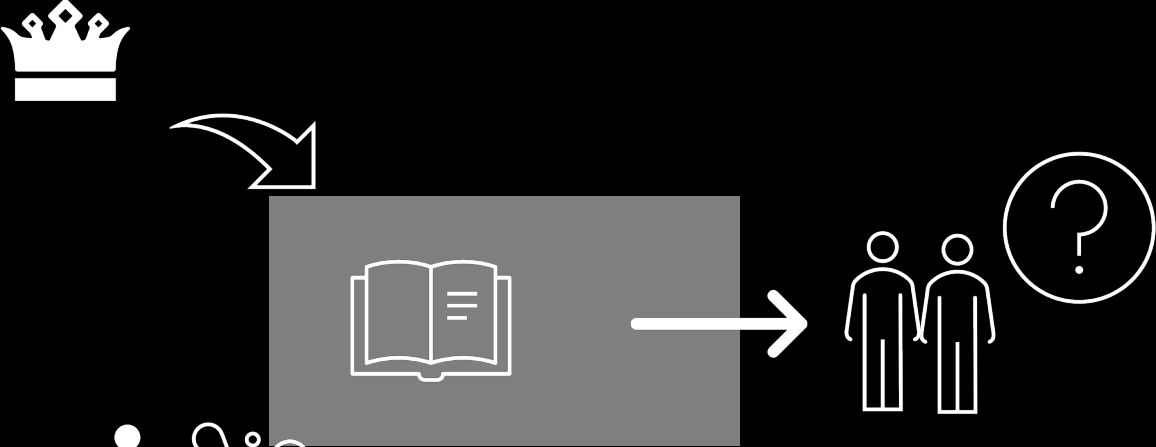
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The bible can be pretty hard to make sense of...



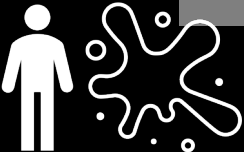
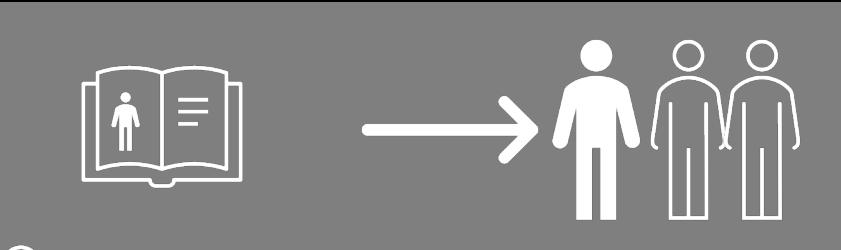
“God inspired the bible;
just read it and do it”

A bit like the disciples on the road to Emmaus after Jesus had died...



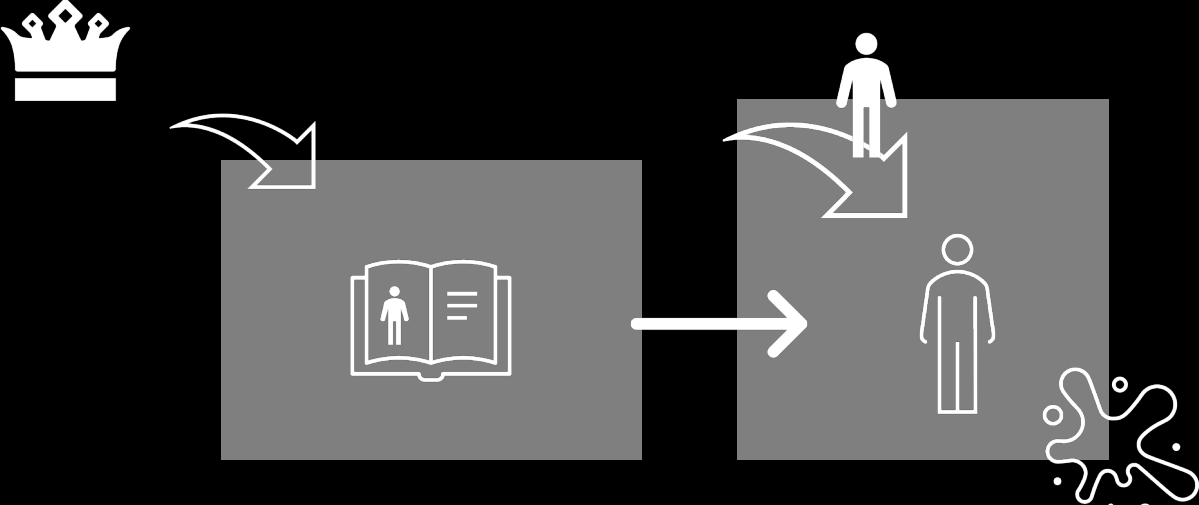
They knew the Jewish scriptures,
but couldn't make sense of what
had happened

Then Jesus joins them as they walk...



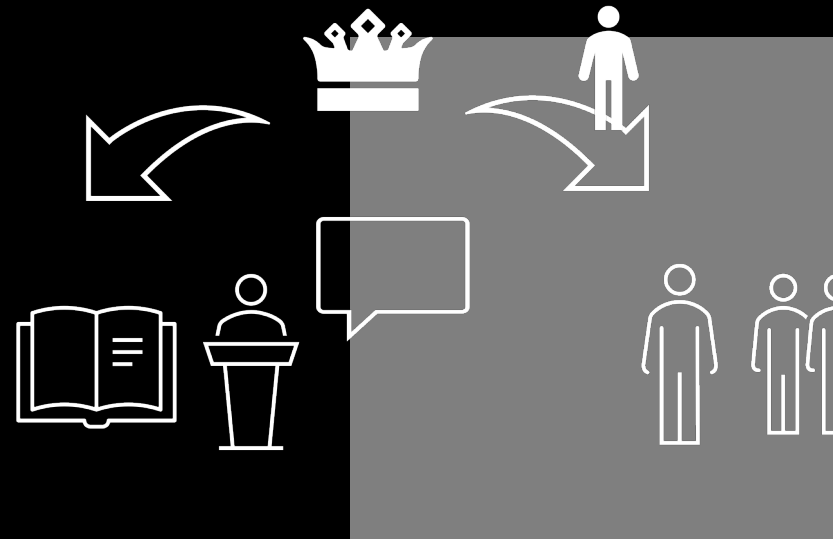
Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

We also need Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to make sense of the bible in our own situations...



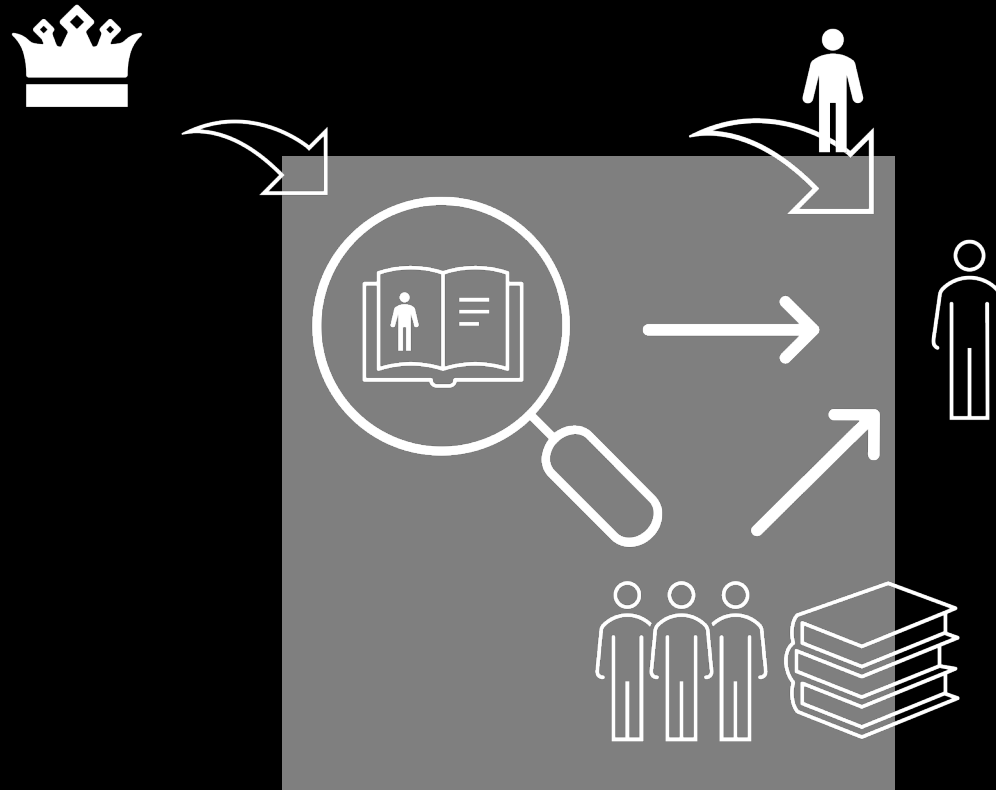
What is the Holy Spirit saying to me today through the bible?

There monasteries had rich traditions of listening to small parts of the bible "with Jesus", for example...



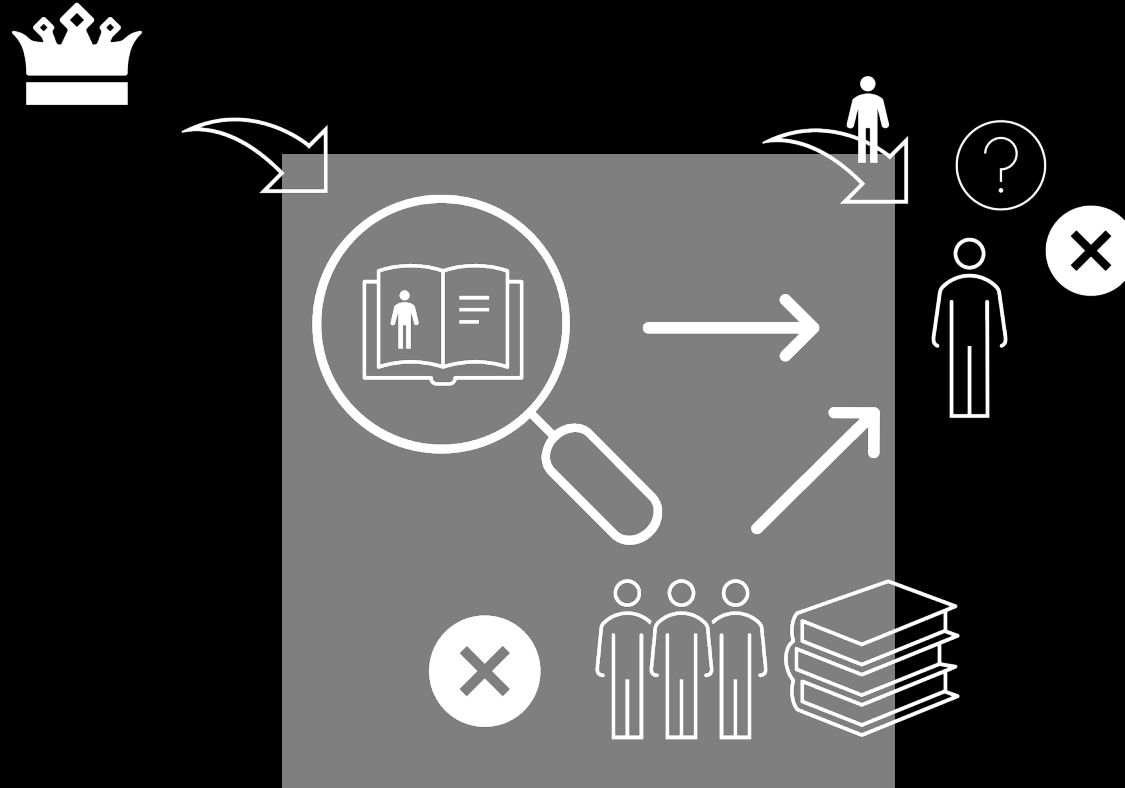
What is God saying to you through
this verse today?
Chew it over, meditate on it, pray it.
(Lectio Divina)

We all depend on things we already know or expect when we read or hear the bible (or anything else)...



We all have particular ways of looking at the bible, shaped by our experiences, culture, reading, churches...

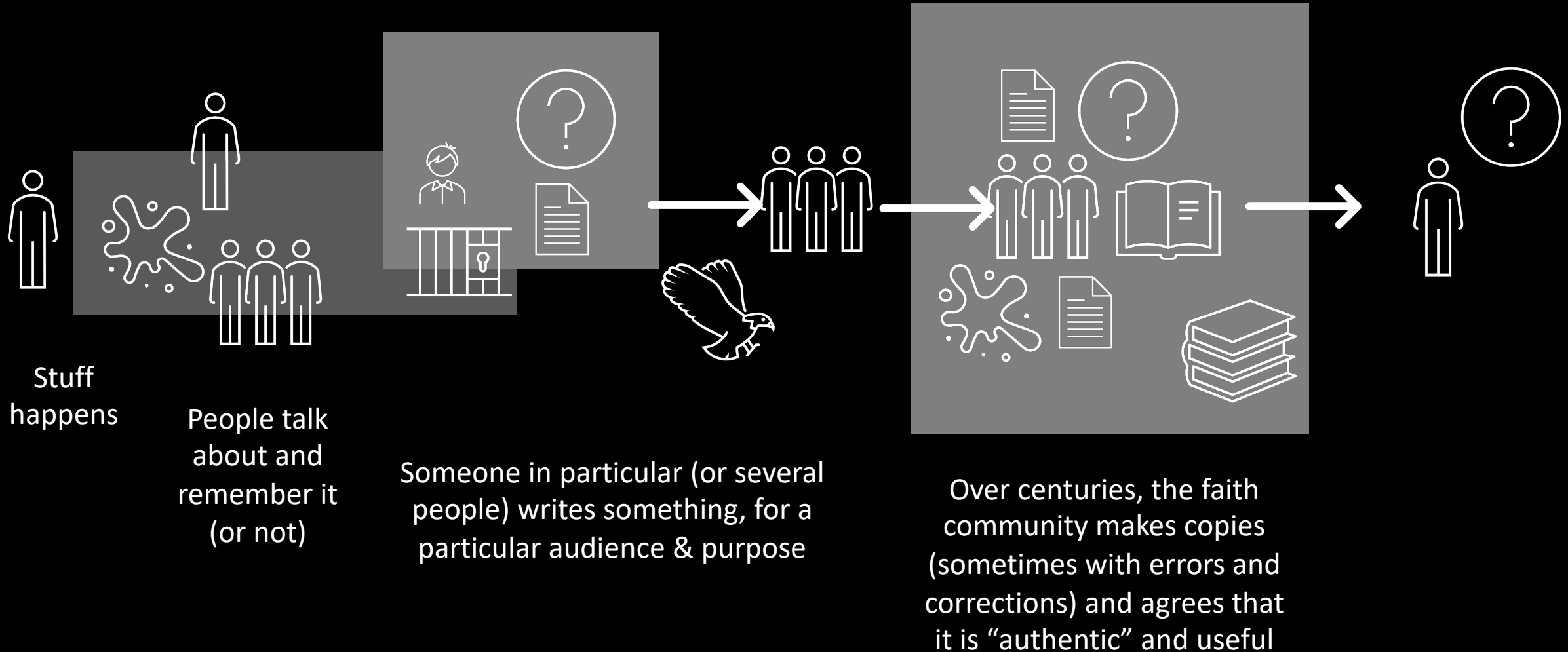
Many religious traditions (e.g. denominations or churches) have very specific ways of looking at the bible;
And sometimes they argue that their way is the **ONLY** true way...



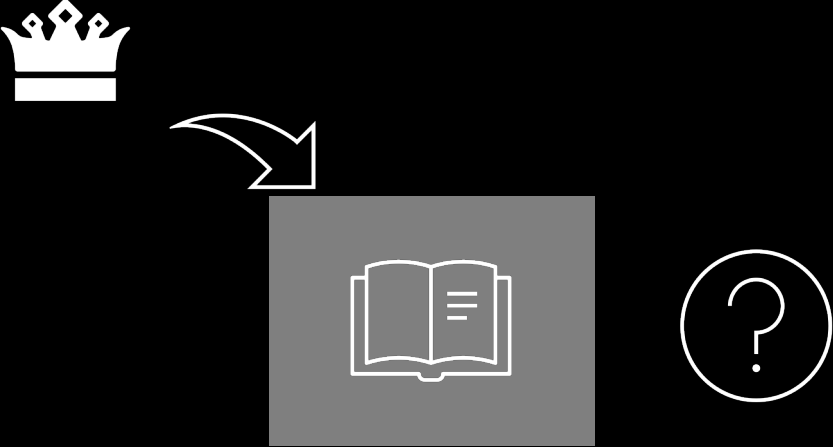
“God inspired the bible;
(we know) this is what it means;
read these bits and do this;
everyone else is wrong”

On the other hand, (Some) academic theology says:

“Forget about God, this ancient manuscript is a really a complicated assembly of material from different authors, at different times and in different genres, and it has gone through all kinds of editorial revisions over the centuries; I think...!”



Some people would say that the bible is the literal “word of God”, i.e. God dictated each word verbatim...



“God dictated the bible
word-for-word!”

But some people find parts of the bible seem to be inconsistent with each other, or with what Jesus seems to be like, or with what the world is like now or with what they think God is saying today, e.g.



Can I eat pork?

Can women be church leaders?

Could a married gay person be a minister?

Can people remarry after divorce?

Should we care for the environment?

Why is there pain and evil in the world?

What really happens when I die?

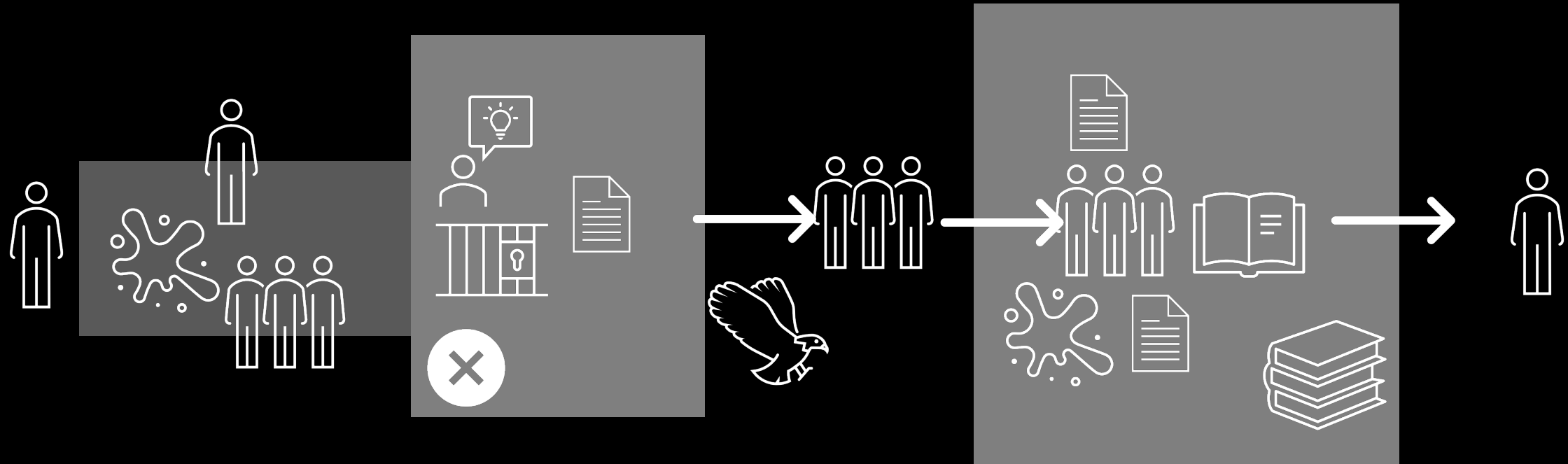
Is God really loving?

*How can I be "saved"?
And what does it mean?*

Is there a literal hell?

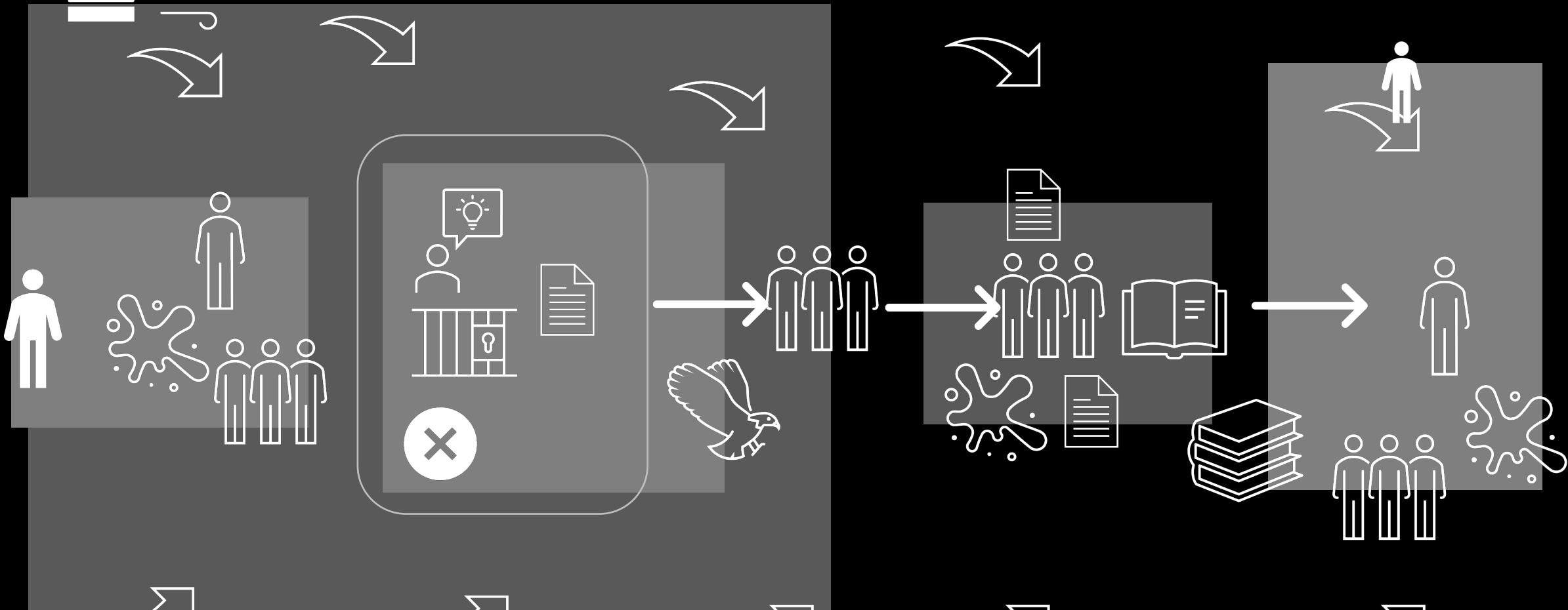
Did God order genocide in the promised land?

But perhaps we can take something helpful from the complicated details that academics worry about, but also see God at work...



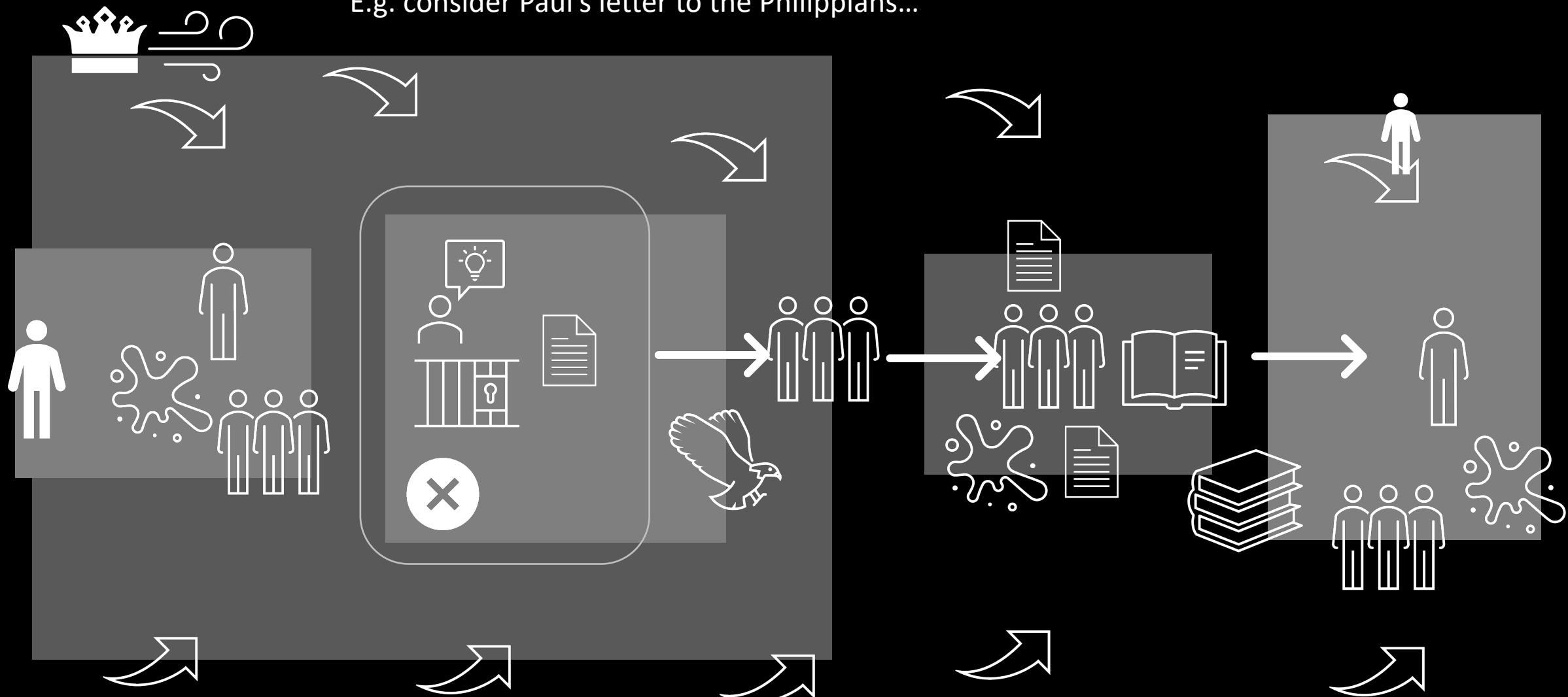


God in-spires (breaths into) all kinds of people and situations...



God creates and sustains all things...

E.g. consider Paul's letter to the Philippians...



Paul planted a church in Philippi, who supported his ministry

While in a Roman prison, c.60AD, Paul wrote a letter to the church to thank & encourage them (Jesus is Lord!)

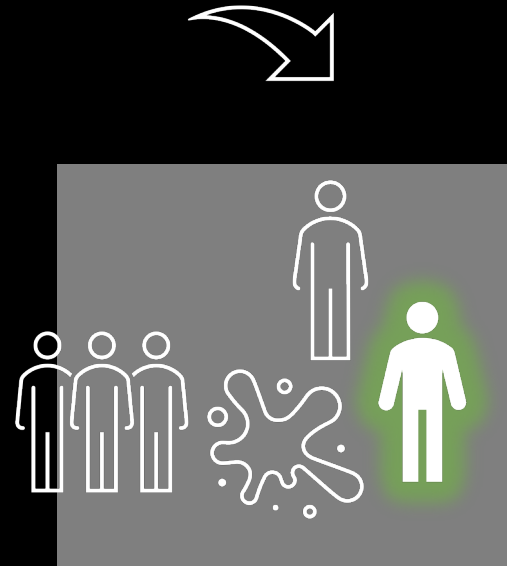
Other Christians found the letter useful and encouraging, were reasonably sure Paul wrote it, kept making copies, including it in the New Testament

We ask God to help us know what God was doing then, **and** what it means for us today

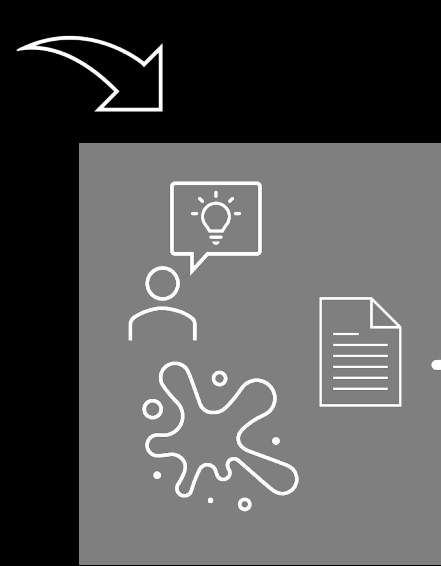


God creates and sustains all things, and God in-spires (breaths into) all kinds of people and situations. But only Jesus is and was perfectly open to God (and is God)

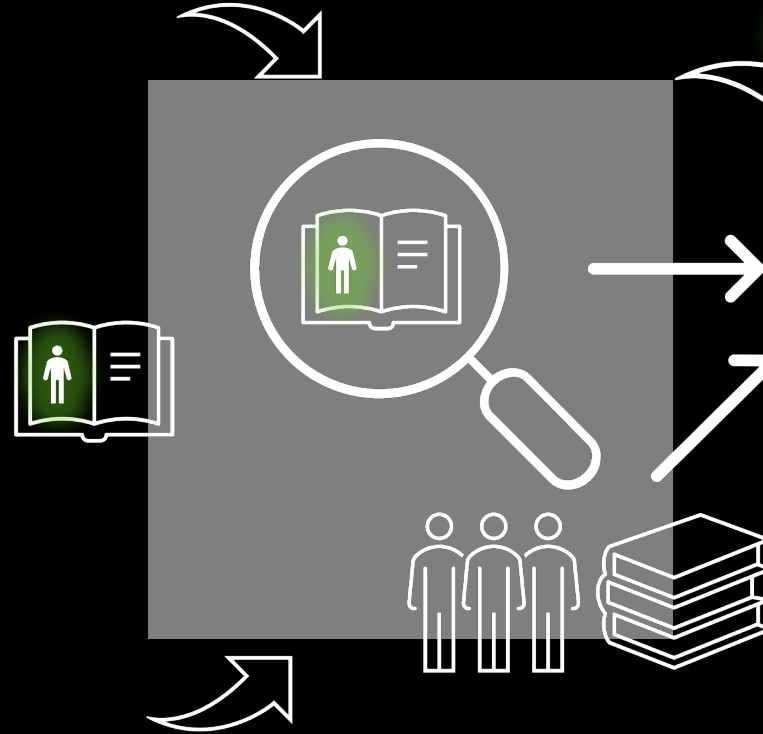
(A rather long summary)



God revealed himself through relationship with real people (Israel) and especially **by becoming human as Jesus**



Lots of real people wrote stuff down (e.g. histories, poems, letters), at different times and places, **with a purpose and audience in mind** (and some kind of authority)



The way we look at the bible is shaped by our context, experiences & people around us, but **Jesus can be our reference point**



The Holy Spirit of **Jesus is active today**, helping us to hear what God is saying to us now (usually this works better together)

You are here