Knowledge of the Bible

How well do Presbyterians know the Bible?

REPORT CARD

Grade	Members	Pastors
A	14%	45%
B	24%	39%
C	18%	13%
D	14%	2%
F	30%	2%

Letter grades are based on the percentage of 40 questions answered correctly:
A = 90–100%; B = 80–89%; C = 70–79%; D = 60–69%; F = less than 60%

Average Grades

Members (72%) C–

Pastors (90%) A–

Quiz yourself on these sample questions
(See the complete test and answers online at pcusa.org/research)

	Members	Pastors
	Percent correct	

▶ **EASY QUESTIONS**

1. What is the first book of the Bible? — 99% / 99%
2. Which biblical figure is most closely associated with leading the exodus from Egypt? — 96% / 100%
3. Who said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, . . . I will not believe"? — 92% / 100%
4. Where was Jesus baptized? — 89% / 99%

▶ **HARD QUESTIONS**

5. Which book says, "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adultress shall be put to death"? — 56% / 87%
6. "Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways" is found in which book? — 45% / 60%
7. Which of Paul's letters says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male or female; for all of you are now one in Christ Jesus"? — 31% / 72%
8. Which Gospel tells of Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple near the beginning of his ministry? — 21% / 72%

ANSWERS — 1) Genesis 2) Moses 3) Thomas 4) Jordan River 5) Leviticus 6) Lamentations 7) Galatians 8) John
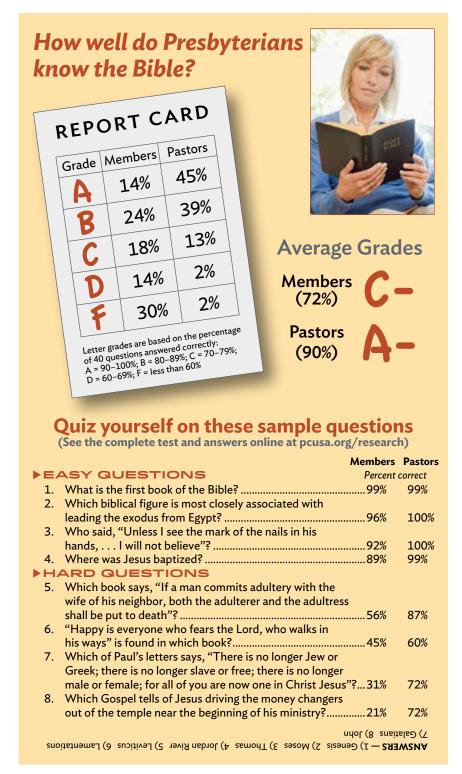
On several occasions I've heard people remark that most Presbyterians aren't very knowledgeable about the Bible. (I've even said it myself.) In November 2011 we decided to test that impression by asking 40 biblical-content questions to representative groups of Presbyterians.

Not surprisingly, pastors—who were all seminary educated—turned out, with some exceptions, to be very knowledgeable. More than 8 in 10 received an A or a B on the exam. Only 2 percent failed. The median pastor responded correctly to 90 percent of the questions (A–).

Results for people in the pews were less stellar. The median member answered only 29 questions correctly (72 percent, or a C–), and almost 1 in 3 received an F. Only around 1 in 3 got either an A (14 percent) or a B (24 percent).

On balance, I'd conclude there's more than a kernel of truth in the supposition that most Presbyterians aren't all that familiar with the Bible.

Because we've never tested Presbyterians' biblical knowledge systematically before, there's no way to compare these results with those of an earlier period. But with these results as a benchmark, we'll ask the questions again in a few years to monitor the trend.

Until then, you may want to test yourself or others you know and compare those results with these from the survey. You can find more detailed results of the survey, as well as a copy of the questions and the correct answers, at pcusa.org/research (select Presbyterian Panel, then Series 13—2009 to 2011, then November 2011).

Jack Marcum is coordinator of Research Services of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

» **Other findings pcusa.org/research**