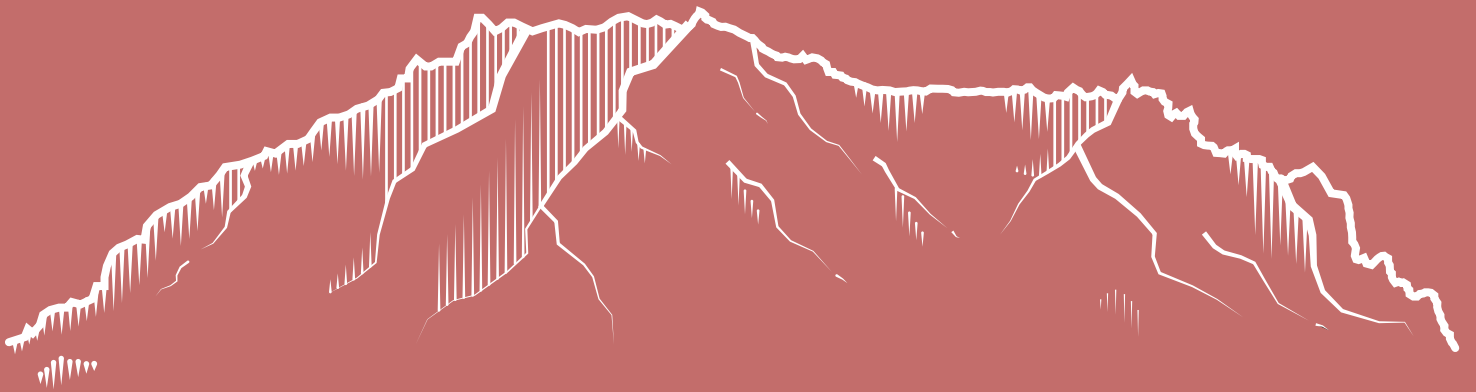


F. Ø. C. U. S.
ON JESUS



As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on the planet.

- KENNETH SCOTT LATOURETTE
PROFESSOR, YALE UNIVERSITY

Books of the Bible

66 BOOKS
40 AUTHORS

GENESIS	EXODUS	LEVITICUS	NUMBERS	DEUTERONOMY
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LAW

JOSHUA	JUDGES	RUTH	I SAMUEL	II SAMUEL	I KINGS	II KINGS	I CHRONICLES	II CHRONICLES	EZRA	NEHEMIAH	ESTHER
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HISTORY

JOB	PSALMS	PROVERBS	ECCLESIASTES	SONG OF SOLOMON	ISAIAH	JEREMIAH	LAMENTATIONS	EZEKIEL	DANIEL
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POETRY

MAJOR PROPHETS

HOSEA	JOEL	AMOS	OBADIAH	JONAH	MICAH	NAHUM	HABAKKUK	ZEPHANIAH	HAGGAI	ZECHARIAH	MALACHI
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MINOR PROPHETS

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	ACTS	ROMANS	I CORINTHIANS	II CORINTHIANS	GALATIANS	EPHESIANS	PHILIPPIANS	COLOSSIANS	I THESSALONIANS	II THESSALONIANS
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GOSPELS

HISTORY

PAUL'S LETTERS

I TIMOTHY	II TIMOTHY	TITUS	PHILEMON	HEBREWS	JAMES	I PETER	II PETER	I JOHN	II JOHN	III JOHN	JUDE	REVELATION
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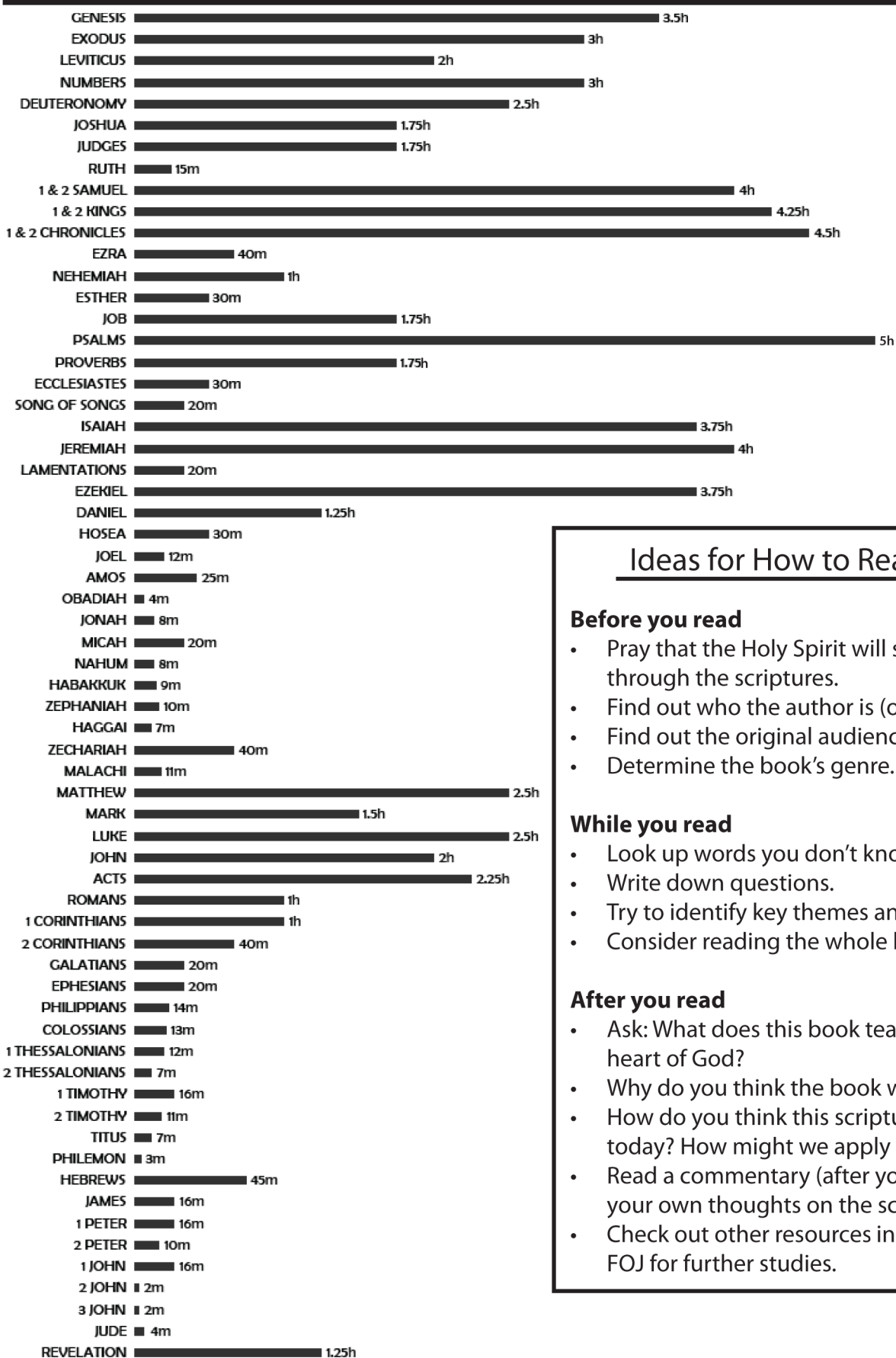
GENERAL LETTERS

PROPHECY

OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT

Average Reading Times



Ideas for How to Read a Book

Before you read

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to you through the scriptures.
- Find out who the author is (or who it likely is).
- Find out the original audience.
- Determine the book's genre.

While you read

- Look up words you don't know.
- Write down questions.
- Try to identify key themes and passages.
- Consider reading the whole book in one sitting.

After you read

- Ask: What does this book teach me about the heart of God?
- Why do you think the book was written?
- How do you think this scripture speaks to us today? How might we apply it today?
- Read a commentary (after you have formed your own thoughts on the scripture).
- Check out other resources in the back of FOJ for further studies.



FOCUS ON JESUS

Introduction

Nothing is more exciting or more difficult than trying to teach the majesty and depth of Christ in a few short pages. These lessons are an attempt to help disciples make disciples. Our prayer is that each reader would be brought face-to-face with Jesus and become as we are—radical, fired-up, crazy-in-love-with-Jesus disciples.

The goal of this 10-week study is for you to learn to live a life shaped by the biblical story as it leads to Jesus Christ. Through the biblical story, God has revealed Himself that we might personally know Him and faithfully devote ourselves to Him.

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PROLOGUE

What's your story?

Estimated
Duration
1.5 hrs

I can only answer the question “What am I to do?” if I can answer the prior question “Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?”
- Alasdair MacIntyre After Virtue

Stories inform our values. You can't control whether you are shaped by your story, so choose wisely which ones you listen to.... If we spend more time on Netflix than in scripture, we ought to expect Netflix lives.
- Bill Watson

Before we know where we're going, we need to know where we've come from. Start by sharing your story with each other. List the turning points as well as the highs and lows.

Now that you've shared your story thus far, reflect on the hopes and desires that you have for your future.

The goal of this study is for you to live out of the biblical story, rather than your own. That means understanding God's purpose and plan for your life and allowing Him to shape how you live. To do that, we have to start at the beginning and hear what God has already told us about who we are and what roles we were made to play.



Watch the “Story Of The Bible” Bible Project video together.

What has your experience with God's Word been?

What do you expect to get out of scripture?



Read the following passages aloud together.

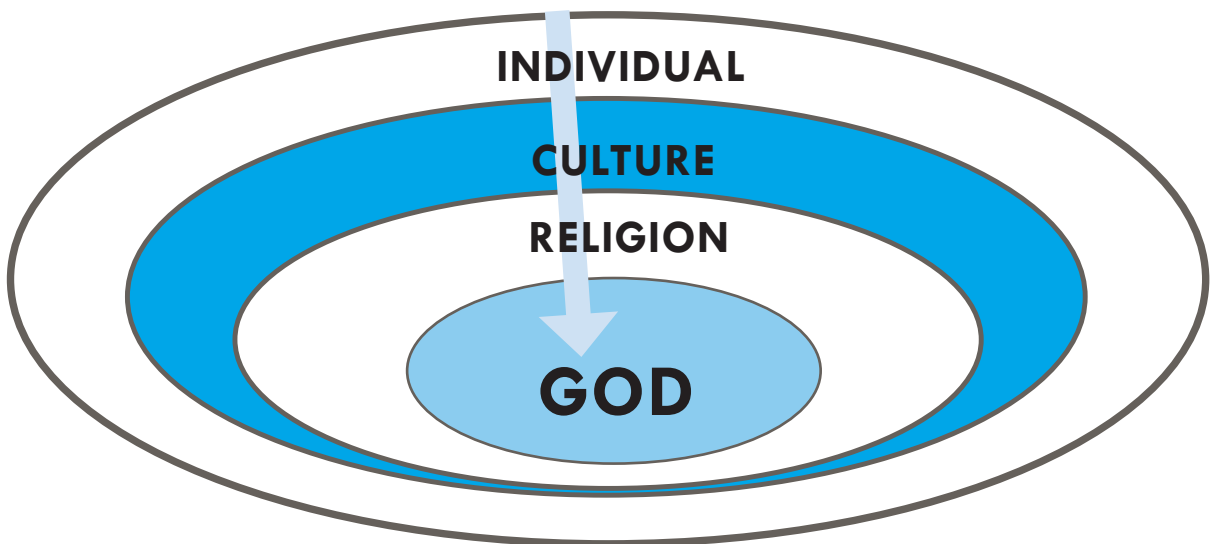
Acts 17:11 - Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Ephesians 4:2 - Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

What does it look like to be humble and sincere examiners of scripture?

Layers in Scripture:

To become faithful readers and interpreters of Scripture we need to take seriously the context in which it was originally written. Only when we peel back and examine each layer will we have a sense of who God is and what His Word says.



PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 1 hour)

Using the Read Scripture App, complete the sections over Genesis 1-11 and watch the accompanying videos.



CHAPTER I

God: The Main Character

Estimated
Duration
1 hr

Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start.

- Maria The Sound of Music

The beginning is the most important part of the work.

- Plato The Republic

What story do you believe about the beginning of everything?

Do you expect the biblical story to confirm or contradict that?

What do you personally believe about God? What has shaped those thoughts?



Read Genesis 1:1-2:3 aloud together.

What jumps out at you?

In these opening passages of Genesis, we read of God **bringing order** out of chaos (v.6-8, 14-15), **bringing light** out of darkness (v.3), and **bringing life** where there was none (v. 11, 20-22, 24-25). We humans are created beings made in the image of God, set in His creation to join in His good work in the world.

From your own experience, what do you believe God's actions in the world look like today?

When humans are created in v. 26, God creates them in His “image” and “likeness”. Knowing what we know about God so far, that means humans are meant to join in God’s work by bringing light, life, and order to this world.

Knowing that you are God’s image bearer, what are the implications for your own sense of meaning and purpose as a human?

What would it look like practically to be someone who brings life, light, and order to the people and world around you, just like God does?

Genesis doesn’t present us with a finished and perfect world, but with a creation that is good and not yet mature. Humans are the pinnacle of God’s creation in this story and are to be his means to bringing the rest of his creation to maturity. We are meant to be the priests who stand between God and the rest of creation.

Making connections:

Themes and lessons are often repeated and built upon throughout our Bible. After each chapter, take a moment to read through these and notice the connections that the biblical authors are making for us.

- Hebrews 11:3 - By faith we understand that **the universe was formed at God’s command**, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
- Psalm 8:4-6 - What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.
- John 1:1-18 - (please refer to your Bible for these verses)
- Revelation 22:5 - There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, **for the Lord God will give them light**. And they will reign for ever and ever.

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 1 hour)

Using the Read Scripture App, read Genesis 12-25 and watch the accompanying videos.



CHAPTER II

What Went Wrong?

Estimated
Duration
2 hrs

The Bible presents sin by way of major concepts, principally lawlessness and faithlessness, expressed in an array of images; sin is the missing of a target, a wandering from the path, a straying from the fold. Sin is a hard heart and a stiff neck. Sin is blindness and deafness. It is both the overstepping of a line and the failure to reach it -- both transgression and shortcoming. Sin is a beast crouching at the door. In sin, people attack or evade or neglect their divine calling. These and other images suggest deviance; even when it is familiar, sin is never normal. Sin is disruption of created harmony and then resistance to divine restoration of that harmony. Above all, sin disrupts and resists the vital human relation to God.... Sinful life, as Geoffrey Bromily observes, is a partly depressing, partly ludicrous caricature of genuine human life.

- Cornelius Plantinga Jr., Not the Way It's Supposed to Be

How would you define "sin"?

The word for "sin" in Ancient Greek was *hamartia*, which means to miss the mark, and it was often associated with archers missing their targets. In the first few books of the Bible, we find that humans and Israel alike were made for a purpose. Both humans in general, and Israel specifically, turn aside from that purpose and do what seems right in their own eyes. This is sin— settling for a distorted way of life, while missing the one you were created to pursue.



Ecclesiastes 7:29 - This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes.

Romans 7:19-20 - For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.



Read Genesis 2:4-3:24 aloud together.

What jumps out at you from each chapter?

In Genesis 1, we read that God holds the wisdom and sovereignty to designate what is good. In Genesis 3:1-6, however, we watch as the first humans redefine good and evil for themselves, which leads to disaster.

Looking closer at this section:

What does the serpent trick the woman into thinking?

Why is it such a big deal for the woman and man to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?

In Genesis 3:8-13 we see blame-shifting, shame, and deception from the first humans. Share a recent story where you have struggled with one or many of these reactions.

Why was that behavior so tempting?

It's at this point of a deception, a decision, and its consequences (which many Christians call "The Fall") that everything goes downhill.

Do you think the curses in Genesis 3 are meant to be prescriptive (God punishing them in anger over their disobedience), descriptive (the realistic results of sin in their lives), or some mix of both?



The Bible goes on to identify this rebellion against God's commands as sin. The curses which result describe a breakdown in all the major relationships from Genesis 1 & 2: humans with God, humans with each other, and humans with the rest of creation.

- How does human sin and rebellion affect our relationship with God?
- With one another? With creation?
- From your further reading of Genesis, how do the consequences of The Fall and Sin continue to play out after chapter 3?
- How do you see sin and rebellion affecting our world today?



Read Romans 1:18-32 aloud together.

Note how Paul paints sin as a breakdown of God's design in Genesis 1-2.

What does it mean for God to "give them over to their sinful desires"?

Which of these sins have most affected your life? Which are most tempting to you?

Are there sins outside this list that are present in your life?



Read 1 John 1:5-10 aloud together.

Making connections:

Mark 7:20-23

He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

James 1:13-15

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, **after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. **No longer will there be any curse.** The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **There will be no more night.** They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 1.5 hours)

Using the Read Scripture App, read Exodus 1-18 and watch the accompanying videos.



CHAPTER III

Blessed To Be A Blessing

From the beginning God's people are to be "missionary." They are chosen to be a channel of blessing to others. But in order to be a missionary people they have to be formed to be like the promise they carry.
- Craig Bartholomew & Michael Goheen
The Drama of Scripture

Estimated
Duration
2 hrs

What reflections or questions do you have from the prework this week?

Again, humans choose their own way over God's way as the Garden story gets repeated with each new generation. Eventually the people are scattered and God chooses one man and one family through whom He will bring humanity back together again. At his best, Abram is a shining example of walking by faith. At his worst he is all too familiar to us on account of our own shortcomings. As you read the next few passages, notice what we learn about God from His revelation to Abram, and look for the ways Abram faithfully or unfaithfully responds to God's word.

ABRAM/ABRAHAM: FATHER OF A NEW HUMANITY



Read Genesis 12 aloud together.

What do we learn about God and His promises?

What does it mean to have faith?

If God gave you the same proposition he gave to Abraham, how would you react?



Read Genesis 15 & 16 aloud together.

What do we learn about God and his promises?

In what ways is Abram/Abraham an example of faithfulness? Of faithlessness?

Abraham's life is a reminder that flawed people can become heroes of the faith. Like us, Abraham wasn't perfect, but God used him to impact all of humanity.

In what areas do you have a hard time trusting God?

How do you think God reacts when you fail?



Read James 2:14-26 aloud together.

What is the relationship between faith and deeds?

Based on this passage, are you dead or alive in your faith?



Ephesians 2:3-5 - All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - Or did you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God? ...And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

MOSES: FORMATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE



Watch the Exodus 19-40 Bible Project video.



Read Exodus 34:1-10,29-35 aloud together.

What does God reveal about his character?



Read 1 Peter 2:9-10 aloud together.

How does this connect to the previous passages?

Other than possessions and belongings, what are some ways that God has blessed you?

In what ways are you using those blessings to bless others?

Making connections:

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 - Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Making connections continued:

Acts 10:24-38 - The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Revelation 7:9-10 - After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 45 mins)



Using the Read Scripture App, read Amos and Micah and watch the accompanying videos.

CHAPTER IV

The Hope of God's People

Through the prophets, God called the people of ancient Israel and Judah to a balance of right belief and right living.
-Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart
How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth

Estimated
Duration
2 hrs



Watch the 1&2 Kings Bible Project video.

How would you recap the biblical story up to this point?

While Israel struggled to remain faithful, God raised up new leaders who spoke up against injustice and corruption known as prophets. The prophets served as God's mouthpiece to His people, reminding them of what God actually cares about while pointing them to a future where God fixes humanity's sinful brokenness once and for all. The prophets were not fortune tellers or magicians; they were men who spoke on God's behalf to His people.

CONFRONTING INJUSTICE



Read Amos 5:4-27 aloud together.

What charges does God bring against Israel?

What does this teach us about the heart of God?



Read Micah 6:1-8 aloud together.

Why do you think that justice, mercy, and humility are at the core of God's desires for His people?

Are these a priority in your life? (If so, how? If not, what would it look like to make them a priority?)



Read James 1:22-27 & 5:1-6 aloud together.

Based on all the passages we have read so far, what should our priorities in practicing our faith be?

How does your religious practice reflect these priorities?

REMINDING OF FUTURE HOPE

The prophets were active throughout periods of exile, waiting, disappointment, and occupation. In addition to reminding the people of God's true purposes and interests, the prophets were also concerned with Israel's future hope and with the future King who God would raise up.



Watch the Micah Bible Project video.



Read Micah 4&5 aloud together.

What view of heaven did you grow up believing in, if any?

How does Micah's vision compare?

What do we learn about Israel's coming Ruler?



Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 aloud together.

What descriptions does Isaiah give of the suffering servant?

In your own words (excluding anything you may know of the New Testament), how would you describe the coming King based on the story so far?

Making connections:

Mark 8:31 - He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Acts 2:22-36 - Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence. "

Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 45 mins)



Using the Read Scripture App, read Mark 1-8 and watch the accompanying videos.

CHAPTER V

The Messiah

Estimated
Duration
1.5 hrs

If you want to know who God is, look at Jesus. If you want to know what it means to be human, look at Jesus. If you want to know what love is, look at Jesus. If you want to know what grief is, look at Jesus. And go on looking until you're not just a spectator, but you're actually part of the drama which has him as the central character.

- N.T. Wright Video: Look at Jesus

Start by sharing what you know already about Jesus. What did you grow up believing about Him?



Watch "The Messiah" Bible Project Video.

How does Jesus connect to this greater story we have been learning?



Jeremiah 31:31 - "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah."

Malachi 3:2-3 - But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.

Matthew 16:15 - "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"



Read Mark 1 aloud together.

What sticks out from this passage?

What connections does this chapter make with the Old Testament?



Read Luke 15:11-32 aloud together.

Which character(s) in the story do you relate with and why?

Do you really believe that God would run towards you with arms open wide? Why or why not?



Read Matthew 25:31-46 aloud together.

What does Jesus mean here?

What does this teach us about the heart of God?

How do you treat others and does it reflect that they matter to Jesus?



Read John 3:1-21 aloud together.

How have you been transformed by Jesus' teaching? If not, how would you like to be transformed?

Have you been baptized? If so, what did it mean to you? If not, why not?

What significance does baptism have?

Jesus contrasts light and darkness. How have you seen yourself avoid the light?

In what areas do you still live in darkness and need to come clean?

Reflecting on the passages we have read today, which aspects of Jesus' character are most appealing to you?

Making connections:

Luke 4:16-21- He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Zechariah 9:9-12 - Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

Matthew 21:1-11 - (please refer to your Bible for these verses)

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 45 mins)

Using the Read Scripture App, read Mark 9-16 and watch the accompanying videos.



CHAPTER VI

Resurrection

Estimated
Duration
1.5 hrs

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- Isaiah 53:5-6



Read Matthew 26:17-30 aloud together.

What sticks out from this chapter?

What do we learn about Jesus here?



Read Matthew 27-28 aloud together.

What is the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection?

How does this tie into the greater story?



Watch the "Sacrifice and Atonement" Bible Project video.

How have you seen evil affect the world we live in?

How has it affected you personally?

What significance do you place on baptism and on taking the Lord's Supper?



Read Romans 6 aloud together.

What does it mean that God gives us grace?

How should grace transform us?

What would it look like to be as free from sin as Paul claims, and do you believe it is possible? Why or Why not?

Making connections:

- Hebrews 1:1-3 - In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
- Romans 8:1-39 - (please refer to your Bible for these verses)

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 45 mins)

Using the Read Scripture App, read Acts 1-8 and watch the accompanying videos.



CHAPTER VII

Transformed by the Spirit

God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature.
- C.S. Lewis Mere Christianity

Estimated
Duration
1.5 hrs



Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 aloud together.

What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

In what ways do you still need to accept His forgiveness?

Do you really feel like a new creation? If not, what stands in your way?



Read Matthew 3:1-12 aloud together.

What does repentance mean to you?

What role does baptism play?

What is the significance of the Holy Spirit?



Paul explained to the church in Corinth that every person in their congregation was given a supernatural ability to bless others in the church. He even called these abilities “manifestation[s] of the Spirit”... We would be terrified for days if we saw a demon-possessed woman, so shouldn’t a Spirit-filled woman be equally startling and memorable? We need to expect more!

- Francis Chan Letters to the Church



Watch the “Holy Spirit” video by the Bible Project.

What role should the Holy Spirit be playing in our lives today?



Read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 aloud together.

What does it mean to be transformed into God’s image?

Which areas of your life do you think God would transform if you let Him?

What might this new Spirit-empowered you look like?



Isaiah 44:3-4 - For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.

John 16:13 - When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Making connections:

Joel 2:28-30 - And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

Ezekiel 36:24-28 - For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

John 14:15-21 (please refer to your Bible for these verses)

Galatians 5:16-26 (please refer to your Bible for these verses)

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 20 mins)



Using the Read Scripture App, read Galatians and watch the accompanying videos.

CHAPTER VIII

Good News for the World

Estimated
Duration
1.5 hrs

“To be saved” in the Pauline view means to become part of the people of God, who by the Spirit are born into God’s family and therefore joined to one another as one body, whose gatherings in the Spirit form them into God’s temple. God is not simply saving diverse individuals and preparing them for heaven; rather he is creating a people for his name, among whom God can dwell and who in their life together will reproduce God’s life and character in all its unity and diversity.

- Gordon Fee Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God



1 Corinthians 3:16 - Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?

THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH



Read Ephesians 4-5:20 aloud together.

List the various instructions Paul gives for Christian living. What stands out to you?

How have you experienced the sense of “belonging to one another” that Paul describes?

What role does the Spirit play in all of this?

What would have to be given up in order to build something like this?



Read Acts 2:42-47 aloud together.

What different activities do you see this community engaging in together?

How have the communities you have been a part of compared to these examples?

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORLD



Matthew 5:16 - Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth.

Genesis 22:17-18 - I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.



Watch the “Gospel of the Kingdom” Bible Project Video.

The Beatitudes of Jesus are often thought of as the heart of Jesus' teaching. As you read, allow them to challenge your thinking and shift your priorities.



Read Matthew 5 and 6 aloud together.

What stands out to you?

Which of these teachings are hardest for you?

What sort of impact could our community have if we lived out these verses?



Read Matthew 28:16-20 aloud together.

What is your mission and how does it compare to this one?

What holds you back from following the Great Commission?

Making Connections:

Genesis 26:2-5 - The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.”

Exodus 19:3-6 - Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Revelation 7:9-10 - After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

Matthew 28:19-20 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

PREWORK FOR NEXT WEEK: (Estimated Reading Time: 15 mins)

Using the Read Scripture App, read 1 Peter and watch the accompanying videos.



EPILOGUE

The Return of the King

Estimated
Duration

1 hr

I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.
- 2 Timothy 4:1-5



Watch the “Heaven and Earth” Bible Project Video.



Read Revelation 21-22:6 aloud together.

What do you think God means that He is making all things new?

How does this passage connect to the rest of God’s story?



Read Matthew 25 aloud together.

What is Jesus teaching in each of these parables?

Are you prepared for His return?



As this study comes to a close, it's imperative that you allow God to turn your focus outward and begin seeking those He wants to impact through you. The following questions are for personal reflection. We recommend working on these individually this week, writing your thoughts in a journal, then returning together to share and pray over what you came up with.

- Who are some people in your life that you believe may not be right with Christ? What specific prayers can you be praying for them?
- List the top four or five needs you see in your peers.
- What are the three or four most important contributions you can bring to those needs?
- Consider Matthew 13:44-46. Was this your response to the best news? What have you “sold” for the Kingdom? What do you need to “sell”?
- The primary difference between Jesus and any other “good” person was His purpose. Are you living your life on purpose?
How does this line up with His?
How is that demonstrated in your life?
- In light of this entire study, take some time to dream with God. What do you want to accomplish in your short time here? Prayerfully consider this, and write down 20 spiritual goals for your life.

Finally, we leave you with some of Jesus' words to His disciples. These are meant to guide us as we contemplate our place in this story, currently awaiting the return of the King.



Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Matthew 28:18-20 - All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are many great resources that will help you grow in your faith and deepen your understanding of the scripture. Here are a few we recommend as good places to start. (These resources are chosen to be challenging for college students. Don't expect high school level material!)

1. **Regentaudio.com.** Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, is a transdenominational graduate school of Christian studies. They offer mp3 recordings of many of their for-credit courses for a fraction of the cost of tuition through their bookstore's website. Two great classes to start with would be "Old Testament Foundations" by Iain Provan and "New Testament Foundations" by Rikk Watts.
2. **NIVAC series.** NIV Application Commentaries are available for almost every book of the Bible. They strike a great balance between thoughtful scholarship to help you understand the original text and helping you apply the text to today. If you don't have a specific book in mind to study, Mark by David Garland is an excellent place to start.
3. **How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth and How to Read the Bible Book by Book by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.** These two companion books are great tools for learning how to better read and understand scripture on your own.
4. **So, You Want to Be Like Christ? by Charles Swindoll.** If you want to deepen your personal walk with God and develop spiritual disciplines, this book is our recommended place to start.
5. **Vine's Expository Dictionary.** Use this resource to look up words from scripture. It will identify the original Greek or Hebrew words used and define them. The English translation doesn't always capture the nuances of the original text, and this resource can take your understanding a step further. This resource is available for free online. Just search for it.
6. **Counterpoints and Spectrum Multiview book series** (examples: Women in Ministry: Four Views, Three Views on Creation and Evolution). If you want to explore a controversial doctrine, these series are great places to start. Each book has multiple viewpoints put forth by multiple authors who hold those views. Then each author gets the chance to respond to each of the others. This is a great way to expose yourself to the various issues that surround the debate and give you ideas for further study.

WHAT'S NEXT

Each of these can be done individually or with a partner:

1. Read to discover the main Old Testament story from start to finish, skimming over lists, rules, genealogies, etc. (you can go back later and study these). The basic order is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus 8-10, Numbers, Deuteronomy 30-34, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
2. Read a gospel followed by a commentary of the same gospel.
3. Write your own annotated bibliography of each book of the New Testament (an annotated bibliography provides a concise summary of each source and some assessment of its value or relevance). Go a step further and identify a theme verse for each book.
4. While reading through John and Acts, write out all of the scriptures that talk about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on His role in the church, your life, and your ministry.
5. In one place, keep an ongoing list of spiritual questions that you have for God. Seek answers in Scripture, in prayer, and from other people. Keep this list going and be patient! Discipleship is a life-long endeavor.
6. Memorize the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-10). This has been called the ethical core of Jesus' teachings.
7. Think of a topic that challenges you (for example: women in ministry, spiritual gifts, baptism, abortion, Christians in the military, etc.) and develop arguments for two (or more) opposing sides with scriptural support.
8. Pray through the Lord's Prayer (found in Matt 6:9-13) daily for a week (or more), expanding each line into your own words and applying it to your own life.
9. Read a chapter in Proverbs and pray for wisdom every day for a month (there are 31 chapters in Proverbs). As you encounter wisdom that you need to hold on to, capture it in writing.
10. There are a number of different types of psalms found in the book of Psalms. Use the Internet to identify a praise psalm and a lament psalm and read both. Then write your own psalm. Feel free to lament before God or rejoice. Note that most Psalms of lament end with rejoicing in who God is.