



CONGREGACIÓN
LEÓN DE JUDÁ

Discipleship Level I



A SOLID FOUNDATION





Level I A Solid Foundation

“Because no one can lay another foundation than that which has already been established:
Which is Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 3:11

Lesson #1 – Salvation

New Life in Christ - - - - - 3

Lesson #2 – Intimacy with Christ – Part I

Prayer and Fasting - - - - - 15

Lesson #3 – Intimacy with Christ – Part II

Nourishing ourselves with the Word - - - - - 30

Lesson #4 – The Family of God

Know your church - - - - - 44

Lesson #5 - God - the One and Only!

His Attributes and Trinity - - - - - 65

Lesson #6 – Jesus – our Divine Savior

His Life and Identity - - - - - 77

Lesson #7 – The Holy Spirit

Anointing for the Christian Life - - - - - 91

Lesson #8 – The Principal Events and Characters of the Bible

The Divine Drama - - - - - 104

Lesson #9 - The Books of the Bible: An Overview

Mail from Heaven- - - - - -120

Lesson #10 - Evangelism

How to Share the Gospel and your Testimony- - - - - -140



LESSON #1 SALVATION
NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

The Question!

If you were to die today, and the Lord were to ask you,

“Why should I let you into my heaven?”

What would your answer be?

Our Goal: Understand the concept of salvation.

- That real Christianity is a new life
- That each person has a problem which separates us from God
- That Jesus solved this problem for us
- That our part is to —“receive Jesus” by faith in our lives

True Christianity – The “real thing” – A New Life!!

—“I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” Jesus, John 10:10

Before Christ enters our life, we come with..

- Health problems
- Family problems
- Loneliness
- Emotional problems
- Spiritual problems
(demonic oppression)
- Addiction

- Abuse and suffering
- Insecurity
- Financial need
- Inner emptiness

En Christ, we receive...

- New hope in life
- A clean conscience
- Power to make radical changes
- Emotional healing
- Freedom from demonic oppression
- Inner security and self-confidence
- Power to move forward in life
- Purpose

And most importantly.... Forgiveness of our sin!!



True Christianity: A personal relationship with Jesus!

Not – merely attending church!

- Praying at night
- Being a “good person”
- Being baptized as a child

Being a Christian means enjoying a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3

True Christianity: A New Birth To have New Life – We must be “Born Again”!

Being religious is not enough!! No one is “born” a Christian!

In John 3:1-6 we read a fascinating dialog between the Lord Jesus Christ and a religious leader named Nicodemus. He was a devoutly religious man who expressed sincere interest in Jesus. But Jesus made it very clear that being —“good” or —“religious” is not sufficient before God!

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.” In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” John 3:1-6

Discussion Question: According to Jesus, What is necessary in order for a person to enter the Kingdom of God? In your opinion, Why is this necessary?



What does it mean to be "Born Again"?

1. Receive a New Heart!

"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." Ezekiel 36:26

2. Experience a spiritual awakening

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." John 1:12-13

3. Experience a total life-transformation!

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

True Christianity: A New King!!

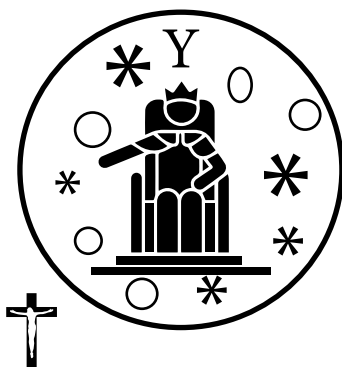
Who is truly on the throne of your life?

When Jesus is at the core of our lives, all else falls into place. However, when we try to govern our own lives as we see fit, we end up making a mess of things! ¹

These two circles represent two types of lives:

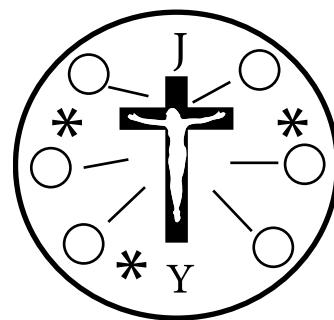
Life controlled by –The Self

S (Y) - The ego-centric "Self" on the throne
+ - Christ on the outside of the life
** Interests controlled by the Self:
Discord and Frustration



Life controlled by Christ

+ Christ on the throne
S (Y) – The Self is submitted –
off the throne
** Interests under the control of an
infinite God: *Harmony and Peace*



*Which circle best represents your life?
Which circle would you like to represent your life?*

Discussion Question: what does it mean, in your opinion, to let Jesus be on the throne of your life instead of yourself?

¹ Material drawn from The Four Spiritual Laws. Bill Bright; Campus Crusade for Christ.

Salvation from Sin and Death We all share the same problem!!

There is a basic problem which all humanity shares, which separates us from God and causes destruction and pain in the world. It is a moral problem. We have all failed before God's moral law which determines the essence of right and wrong in the universe. God is the origin of this moral law, and all people in all nations experience its consequences. Violating this moral law is called "sin."

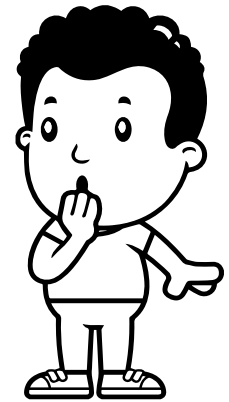
Man is Sinful

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

Sin, at its heart, is selfishness – putting ourselves first – before God and others.

But I'm such a "nice" person?!!

What do we say to the one who says,
—But I'm a good person. I haven't killed anyone or stolen. Why does the Bible say that I'm a "sinner?"



Sin manifests itself in Attitudes, Words and Actions

- Imagine if every word spoken in your life were caught on tape
- Imagine if every action were televised for all to see
- Imagine if every thought were visible on a screen, mounted on your forehead

Who would not be ashamed before others and a perfect God?

Sin has consequences - "We reap what we sow"

How many of us know from personal experience that we suffer the consequences of our actions?

- Broken relationships
- Pain and emotional bitterness
- Loneliness and anguish
- Shame



Sin results in spiritual death

In society, if a person breaks a law, there are legal consequences – judgment and punishment. The moral law is no different. When we break the law of God, we experience separation between God and ourselves. God is a completely holy and just being, and cannot, by nature, be in relationship with people who are contaminated by the stain of sin. As fire and hay cannot coexist, the holy nature of God cannot coexist with sinful humanity. The Bible calls this separation between God and humanity a spiritual death.

We cannot reach God by our own efforts!

- By being a “good person”
- By doing “nice things”
- By religious activities



We cannot earn our salvation!!

Comparison: It is like trying to swim to Puerto Rico!



Trying to “earn our own salvation” by being a good person or being religious is like trying to swim all the way from Florida to Puerto Rico. Some may swim farther than others, but all end up as “fish food”!

Result: Fear of Death

“For the wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23

We all need a Savior to solve our sin-problem and make us acceptable before a Holy and Perfect God.

God Solves our Problem!

Jesus died in our place! He paid the punishment for our Sin!

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

Jesus is the only way to God

“Jesus said, —I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.”
John 14:6



Illustration of the Judge

Imagine that a young man is condemned for committing a certain crime. The judge, being a fair and honest judge, could not overlook this infraction of the law. The punishment required by law is a serious fine - \$100,000. In spite of this young man's being totally repentant for what he had done, he had no money to pay the fine, and stood in danger of being jailed for his failure to pay. Then the judge did something completely unexpected. He removed his judicial robe, came down from his seat of judgment, and stood in the place of the young man, before the court. Taking his checkbook out of his vest pocket, he paid the full amount for the young man. The judge did this because the guilty boy was his own son, and he loved him. Yet it was necessary to condemn the young man and pay the fine in order to fulfill the requirements of the law. Who would not accept that another pay such a penalty in one's place?

That is what our God has done. He is a just judge but at the same time a loving father. As a judge, he sees our sin and says, *"You are guilty. You have sinned against the moral law of the universe and deserve death. But I love you, and therefore, I will pay this punishment in your place."* As a father, he lowered himself, taking off his robe of divine majesty, and became human. He took our place of condemnation and paid for our sins, dying in our place on the cross.²

Jesus conquered death and sin! He rose from the dead!



Wow! Christians believe that...

"Christ died for our sins... was buried, and... rose on the third day... appeared to Peter, and then to the twelve. Afterwards he appeared to more than five hundred..."
1 Corinthians 15:3-6

Jesus is alive! And because of this, we can know him personally! Every other religious leader and philosopher died, but Jesus' tomb is empty! Therefore, he can transmit his life to us. The life of Jesus is contagious! Abundant life!

Our part – Receive Jesus by faith

The Bible promises...

—Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

The Bible teaches...

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves - it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one may boast."
Ephesians 2:8-9



What does it mean to have "faith"? (Illustration of the trapeze artist)

There are many who say, "I believe in God." But their lives in no way reflect this belief. Consider the following parable to illustrate the nature of true, saving faith.



Once upon a time there was a trapeze artist who claimed that he could balance himself on a tight-rope stretched in the air above the roaring waters of Niagara Falls. A great throng of spectators gathered to witness the event.

He asked the multitude: *"How many of you believe that I can walk from one side to the other on this tight-rope?"*

—We believe! We believe! shouted the expectant throng.

With fear and trembling, the man crossed from one side to the other, provoking an explosion of happy applause.

Then he asked again, *"How many of you believe that I am able to cross from one side to the other with a wheelbarrow before me?"* Shocked and amazed, the crowd affirmed their confidence once again in him, and the trapeze artist did not disappoint! He crossed on the tight-rope while pushing a wheelbarrow! Once again, the sound of exultant celebration could be heard.

But the man was not satisfied. He asked the multitude, *"How many of you believe that I can cross on this tight rope with a wheelbarrow full of bricks?!"*

Once again the crowd exclaimed, *"We believe! We believe!"* And once again, the trapeze artist fulfilled his promise, and once again, the crowd went wild with excitement and cheering.

Finally, the trapeze artist presented his most amazing feat. *"Now I will show you my most daring trick. How many of you believe that I can cross from one side to the other, with a person in the wheelbarrow?"*

Once again, the crowd shouted, now with more fervor than ever, *"We believe! We believe!"*

Then the trapeze artist paused for the key question: "Any volunteers?"

Silence.

True faith puts one's self in the wheelbarrow. It casts its entire trust and well-being upon the will of God, giving over the entire life, and trusting that the Lord is able to take us across the great divide of death and give us new life. That is true faith.

And you? Will you get in the wheelbarrow and entrust your life completely to Jesus' control?

It is important to Receive Christ Publicly (get in the wheelbarrow)

“That if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”
Romans 10:9-10

A Personal Invitation

If you want to accept Jesus as Lord, we invite you to repeat the following simple prayer. The exact words are not as important as the attitude of your heart, but we present this prayer as a model to be followed.

“Dear God, thank you that you love me. I admit that I am a sinner and have failed in so many ways. I ask for your forgiveness today. I believe that Jesus died for me on the cross and rose again. I receive Christ as my Lord and Savior. I give you my life today. I want to be your son/daughter, and follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for forgiving my sin. Thank you for entering my life today. Amen.”

If you have repeated this prayer sincerely, then this verse applies to you, which says...

—Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Congratulations! You have begun a new life today!

In Christ you have...

- New life
- Eternal life
- Forgiveness of Sin
- A Father-Child relationship with God
- A new heart
- A new name written in heaven
- New spiritual perception



Conclusion: The most important answer in any life

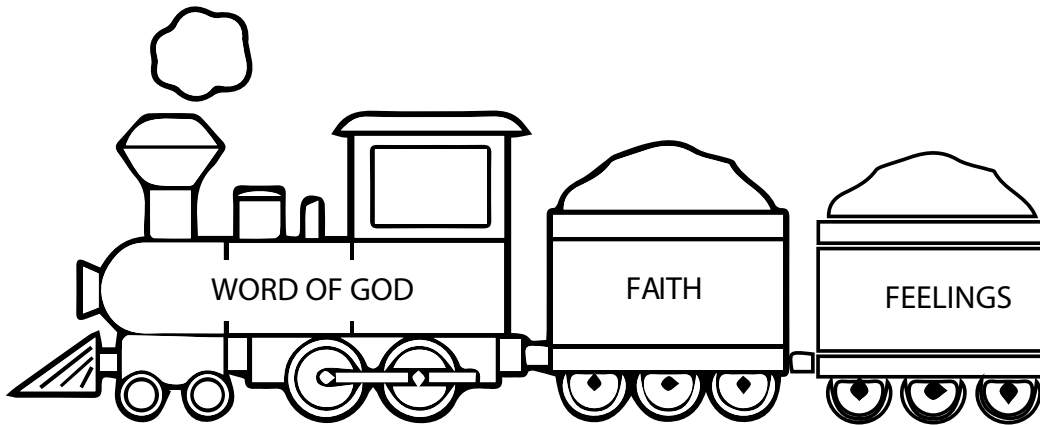
If you were to die today, and the Lord were to ask you,

“Why should I let you into my heaven? What would your answer be?”

Our Answer: I have done absolutely nothing to deserve salvation. I know I am a sinner. But I have trusted in Jesus to save me. He died and paid the price for my sin. I have received him as my Lord and Savior, and I know I am forgiven because of what he did for me on the cross!

Some Questions

What happens if I don't feel so different after accepting Christ?



The train can operate with or without the caboose. It would be useless to attempt to push a train with the caboose. In the same way, as Christians we do not depend on emotions or feelings, but rather we put our faith in the faithfulness of God and the promises of his word.³

Now what? What do I do after accepting Christ?

1. Participate in Church!

- o Attend services: (Sunday 9:00 am. English and 12:00 pm. Spanish ; Wednesday 7:30 pm. Spanish)
- o Attend special activities
- o Attend a small group
- o Take a Discipleship Class!!

2. Pray and Read the Bible

- o Find a quiet place without interruptions to be alone for a few minutes every day
- o Talk to God as you would to a friend
- o Start reading a Psalm a day and a chapter of the Gospel of John or Mark

3. Share what has happened to you!

- o You don't have to be an —expert to share your experiences!
- o Friends and family will be curious!



Review Questions

Jesus said, "I have come that they might have _____, and have it _____." (p.4)

True Christianity is not being religious or merely a "nice person" but rather it is _____." (p.5)

What does it mean to be "born again"? (pp.6-7)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the problem which we all share? _____." (p.7)

How do we answer the person who says the following?

"But I'm a nice person. I don't kill anyone. I'm good to all. Why does the Bible say that I'm a "sinner?" (p.7)

¿What is the primary result of human sin? _____ (p.7)

¿What are the mistaken ways that people use to earn their salvation? (p.8)

1. _____
2. _____

¿How did God solve the human problem? _____ (p.8)

"Jesus said, I am the _____, and the _____, and the _____; No one comes to the Father except through me." -Juan 14:6(p.8)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners... _____." Romanos 5:8 (p.8)

Summarize the story of the judge and his son _____

_____ (p.9)

¿What is our part in the salvation process? _____
_____. (p.9)

¿What does it mean to have faith? _____
_____. (p.10)

Without copying word for word the prayer in the lesson, write your own prayer to accept Jesus and be saved. _____

_____ (p.11)

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a _____
_____; the old has gone, the new has come!
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (p.11) If we compare the Christian life to a train, which car represents our —feelings? _____ (p.12)

If you were to die today and God were to ask you, —Why should I allow you to enter my heaven? What would you say? (p.11)

After accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, what do we do next in order to grow?
(p.12)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



LESSON #2 INTIMACY WITH CRIST
Part I – Fasting and Prayer

Intimacy with the Lord ***Part I – Fasting and Prayer***

*"Behold I stand at the door and knock;
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and dine with him, and he with me."*

Jesus – Revelation 3:20

The Most Important Invitation of your Life!

You are invited to spend private, quality time with God Himself! Our answer to this invitation will change our lives forever...

Q - Is it enough to pray and read the Bible only when in public church services?

NO!

More than a religion, Christianity is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God wants so much more than mechanical religious activity. He invites us to enjoy an intimate, transparent and ever-deepening relationship with the Holy Spirit. We can know God – just like we know any other person!

Q - Think of an important relationship in your life – (it could be a friend, a relative..etc.) How did you grow to become acquainted with that person? How did trust and intimacy grow between you?

Our Goal: Learn to spend regular, private time in communion with God!

- How to plan such times?
- What to say in prayer?
- The importance and nature of fasting



Make an Appointment with God! ***Pray and read the Bible every day!***

We impoverish ourselves spiritually if we limit our contact with the Lord to formal church services. Jesus stands at the door of our lives, knocking. How will we answer?



What goes into an “appointment with God”?

- 1. Solitude** – Set aside time in a quiet place without distractions.
- 2. Prayer** – Simply talk with God – sharing our thoughts, pains, joys and desires.
- 3. Bible Reading** – When we read scripture, we listen to God in our hearts.

Moses used a “Tent of Meeting”

Tent of Meeting: A Mobile Temple for Worship apart from the camp

Moses enjoyed a personal, intimate and transparent relationship with the Lord in a special place, called the “Tent of Meeting.”

“Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent... The pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. ... the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend...”
Ex. 33:7-10 (partial)

What a delight to share such daily intimacy with the creator of the universe! Moses set aside this special place to be alone with His God, apart from the hustle and bustle of the camp. He went to this place regularly, and the Holy Spirit never failed to descend in the form of a cloud to commune with him.

We can make our own “Tent of Meeting”

In the new covenant, by virtue of the blood of Jesus, we also can talk with God face to face! He invites us to such intimacy. Jesus stands at the door of our lives, knocking and waiting. It is up to us to respond by opening the door of our lives to dine with him in our own personal “Tent of Meeting.” It could be...

- *A Special Table* in the kitchen, early in the morning as the sun shines in
- *An empty meeting room* in our work place where we go during our “break”
- *A park* where we stop the car for a while on our way home from work.
- *Our bedroom*, before going to bed at night (but not lying in the bed itself!)

First Step: Plan it!

Designate a set time of day – using a calendar date-book!

When we make an appointment with someone, we agree to two important things:

1. The time
2. The place

In our hurried society of many demands frenetic activity, if we do not set an appointment in our calendar book, it most likely will not take place. Likewise in our spiritual life, the first step is to take out or date-book, our personal calendar, and set up a time and place when we will fulfill our appointment with God!

Start Small!

Some Christians spend hours and hours in daily prayer, but when beginning, we do best to set small, achievable goals. We recommend starting with 15 minutes of daily prayer, and increasing in the future.

On the “personal calendar” below, mark down a time each day when you will spend time in private prayer and Bible reading.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

If we don't plan it, we won't do it!!

Designate a private place, without distractions.

Turn the cell phone off!

We start by seeking a private place, free of interruptions, telephones, children's cries and the noise of the television.



Examples from the Bible: Appointments with God

- **Jesus** - taught the importance of going into our room, closing the door, and praying to God who sees what is done in secret (Matt 6:5-15). He himself modeled the habit of going to the Mount of Olives to pray in private. (Luke 22:39)
- **Moses** - Went regularly to his "Tent of Meeting" outside the camp-site to have encounters with God. The divine fire descended and Moses spoke with God, —face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.
- **Daniel** - prayed three times a day in his room beside a window. (Daniel 6:10)
- **Peter** - was in the habit of escaping to a rooftop in the calm of twilight to pray before dinner. (Acts 10)

Regardless of the specific context, let it be a comfortable, solitary place, where we can pray without interruption. Although we should certainly pray throughout our daily activities – in the car, (in the shower, at work...etc), an appointment with God should be in a solitary place of concentration.

Flee Distractions! Don't:

- Pray in the car during rush-hour traffic!
- Pray in the shower!
- Pray in bed!
- Pray in a busy office with phones ringing!

... but have your appointment with God in a place of quietness and concentration!!!



Find a quiet place that works for you!

- Early in the morning in the kitchen with a cup of coffee
- At noon in an empty office while everyone else is eating lunch
- At night in the living room when the kids go to sleep

Every life is different. Find a plan that works for you!

So write it down in the calendar, shut off the cell phone and television, and prepare yourself for an appointment with the living God!

Assignment: Do at least four "Appointments with God" and fill out the forms entitled: "My Appointments with God."



Prayer – The First Element of an Appointment with God

Be natural!

- 1. Talk “Normally”!** Setting aside religiosity, feel free to speak openly with God, without elegant and lofty religious vocabulary.
- 2. Get Comfortable** (but not too comfortable!) - One can kneel, sit, lie prostrate or pace around a room to pray. Do whatever best helps you feel alert, comfortable and focused, without falling asleep!
- 3. Avoid Mindless Repetition** – Christ warned us not to use repetitive, meaningless religious jargon, as if we were repeating some sort of magic formula to invoke God’s favor.

What should I say when praying to God?

Jesus taught us to pray! The “Our Father” is an outline of prayer topics!



Jesus provides the famous, “Our Father”, as a model for prayer, not as a formula to be repeated mindlessly. Therefore, we can glean from this model the basic topics to be addressed in prayer. Can you repeat it from memory?

The Our Father Matthew 6:5-15

Our Father who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Topics of Prayer - (Fill out the sheet – “Topics of Prayer”)

- 1. Worship and Praise**
- 2. Thanksgiving**
- 3. Requests for others - Intercession**
- 4. Requests for one’s self**
- 5. Confession**
- 6. Forgive others**
- 7. Spiritual warfare**



Let’s consider these topics for prayer, one by one...

1. Worship and Praise

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

What does "hallowed" mean? It means, "honored, revered, respected." This opening phrase is a declaration of praise and worship for God's name!

Beginning prayer by lifting our eyes in worship changes our perspective and prepares our hearts.

- Read a Psalm of Praise
- Sing a worship song!
- Simply tell God how much you love Him!

For example: Sing "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...."

For example: Read Psalm 136:1 out loud: —Give thanks to God, for He is good, his loving-kindness endures forever."

2. Thanksgiving

Praise leads naturally to thanksgiving as we set aside our complaints and problems for a moment to consider God's goodness in our lives. By so doing we train ourselves to see the "glass half full" and recognize God's many blessings in our lives; both the "biggies" (salvation, life, etc.), as well as the "little things", (a sunset, a good meal, etc.).

Example: Thank you, Father, for giving me health. Thank you for saving my soul. Thank you for the delicious bagel this morning. Thank you..."

3. Requests for others (Intercession)

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

We pray that God changes the world!

- That the world would be a little more like "heaven"
- We pray for others
 - That God would save them
 - That God would bless them
 - That God would provide for their needs
- We pray for the nation and the needs of the world
- We pray for the salvation of our friends and family



Example: "Father, I pray that you save my uncle. I ask that you would bless the pastor with fresh anointing to preach this Sunday. I ask that you would guide politicians in solving crises...etc."

4. Personal Requests

"Give us this day our daily bread."

It is not selfish to ask God to meet our needs! On the contrary, God invites us to ask for His loving care over every detail of our lives – whether emotional, material or spiritual.



Example: "Lord, I ask that you would provide me with a good job. Please help me pay for the new tires on the car, and please heal me of this annoying cold!"

5. Confession

"Forgive us our trespasses..."

Asking for -- and giving -- forgiveness: Good Spiritual Hygiene!

We believe in daily confession to God! We also affirm the healing power of confessing our sins and struggles to trusted friends in Christ; (James 5:16), but the Lord's Prayer teaches us to confess in private to God on a daily basis. We should regularly take time to examine ourselves, analyze our behavior, words, attitudes and motivations. Like brushing our teeth, the practice of daily confession in private to God provides ongoing cleansing and good "spiritual hygiene."

Example: Lord, please forgive me for criticizing my boss yesterday. Forgive me also for being impatient with my spouse...etc."

6. Forgiving others

"As we forgive those who trespass against us."

Nothing contaminates the human psyche like bitterness. Depression, illness and a variety of other emotional problems spring from unforgiveness. If we want to grow in the Lord, it is absolutely necessary that we "settle accounts" on a daily basis with those who have offended us. *If we do not forgive, God will not forgive us or accept our prayers.*

Therefore, it is necessary for us to ask ourselves daily – *Am I harboring resentment against anyone?* To forgive does not require us to pretend as if nothing bad has happened or passively to allow ourselves to be mistreated by others. It is a decision to release bitterness and resentment towards those who have wronged us.

Example: "Lord, I forgive my boss for annoying me yesterday. I also forgive my husband for leaving his underwear on the bathroom floor – again!"

7. Spiritual Warfare

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Scripture teaches that our enemy, Satan, prowls around like “roaring lion, seeking a victim to devour.”

(1 Peter 5:8) Whether we recognize it or not, we live in a context of constant spiritual warfare. Therefore, we cannot lower our guard for even a moment. Every day we must put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6) and resist Satan and his schemes.



Example: "Today I declare that I am a child of God and I renounce Satan. Protect me, O Lord, from the temptation to go back to smoking cigarettes or looking inappropriately at women. I rebuke Satan and I clothe myself with the armor of God! I'm a warrior of the Lord, ready for battle today!"

Fasting – Praying with our Entire Body

Definition: The practice of abstaining from certain foods or activities for a designated time with the purpose of seeking spiritual intimacy with God in prayer.

Throughout the centuries Christians have practiced this discipline. When done with the correct motivations, fasting yields tremendous spiritual benefit. To avoid abuses that could possibly occur, we provide the following clarifications.

Fasting is NOT...

- To make ourselves suffer in order to earn points with God
- To manipulate God by twisting his arm
- To make ourselves feel spiritually superior to others

Fasting IS...

- A way of focusing ourselves on spiritual reality
- A way of praying with “our entire body”
- A way of subjecting the desires of our flesh
- A way of highlighting the intensity and urgency of our prayers

Question: Is there a particular way in which I should fast?

No. The state of the heart counts above all. If someone seeks God sincerely, any form of fasting can be valid in His eyes.

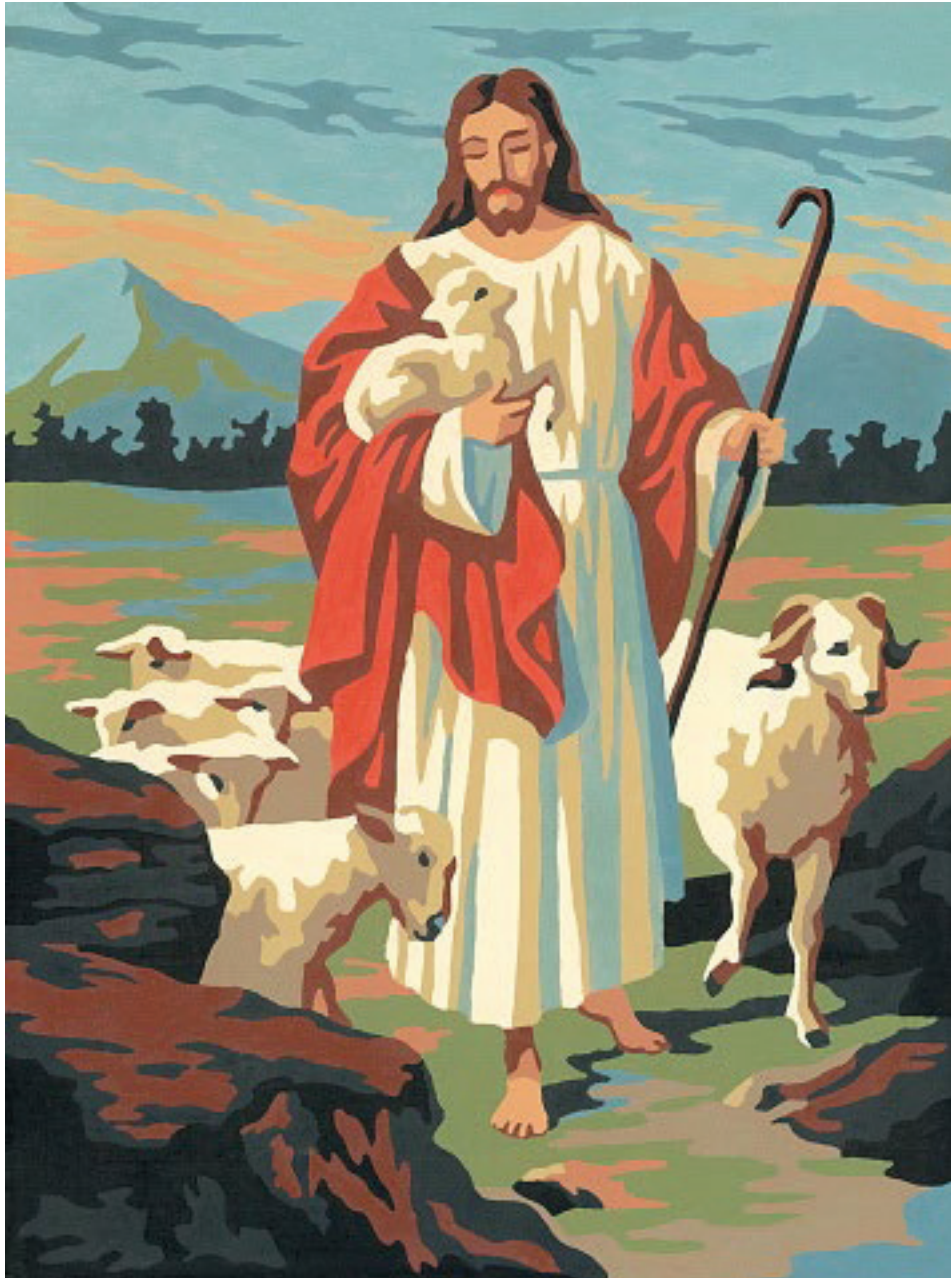
There are many ways of fasting...

- Abstain from food for several days
- Abstain from a particular meal
- Abstain from food, but drink juices or eat only vegetables
- Abstain from certain activities or pleasures (TV; Sports; Shopping, etc.)

**Jesus stands at the door,
knocking, every day.**

**He beckons you to spend time in
sweet intimacy with him...**

How will you respond?



Assignment: Have 4 "Appointments with God"
Following the sheets, "My Appointment with God," set aside time for 4 devotional
experiences.

Assignment: Fast

Using the sheet, "My Fast" – take time to fast in some way this week.

The "Our Father" – An Outline of Prayer Topics

Praise and Worship: "Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

Father, I praise you because _____

Thanksgiving:

God, I thank you for _____

Requests for others – **Intercession:** "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Lord, I ask you to _____

Personal Requests: "Give us this day our daily bread".

Father, I ask you for _____

Confession of Sin: "Forgive us our trespasses."

Lord, I ask you to forgive me for _____

Forgiving others: "...as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Lord, I forgive _____ for _____

_____.

Spiritual Warfare: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Lord, please keep me from the temptation to _____.

My Appointment with God

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____



The illustration shows a calendar with a brown header and five binder holes. The title 'My Appointment with God' is written in a blue, italicized font. The calendar grid displays days from 1 to 31. Days 5, 12, 19, and 26 are highlighted in orange. A small clock icon is positioned at the bottom right of the calendar.

Text: Psalm 23 -- When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....

Prayers: (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____



The illustration shows a calendar with a brown header and five binder holes. The title 'My Appointment with God' is written in a blue, italicized font. The calendar grid displays days from 1 to 31. Days 5, 12, 19, and 26 are highlighted in orange. A small clock icon is positioned at the bottom right of the calendar.

Text: John 3 -- When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....

Prayers:(praises, confessions, requests, etc.)

My Appointment with God

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____



Text: Romans 8 -- When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....

Prayers: (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____



Text: Philippians 2 -- When I meditate on this text, the Lord tells me that....

Prayers: (praises, confessions, requests, etc.)

My Fast

Terms of the Fast

I will abstain from _____

The fast begins _____
(Date/Time)

The fast ends _____
(Date/Time)

Special Requests for Prayer

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Evaluation

Describe this experience. _____

_____.

Did you fulfill your goal? _____.

Did you feel any spiritual benefit from this fast, during or after? Explain.

_____.

Comprehension Questions

What is an —appointment with God? (p.17)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the place where Moses met with the Lord on a regular basis? (p.17)

_____.

Mention an example of a good context – time and place – to plan an appointment with God?

_____. (p.17)

How can we be natural with God in our prayers? (p.20)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention seven elements of prayer (topics)? (pp.20-21)

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.
6. _____.
7. _____.

How would you define fasting? (p.23)

_____.

Is there a specific way a person should fast? (p.23)

_____.



LESSON #3 Intimacy with God – Part II
The Bible – Our Spiritual Bread

Intimacy with God – Part II

The Bible – Our Spiritual Bread

*"For man does not live by bread alone,
But by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God..."*

Luke 4:4



Review - What is an "Appointment with God?"

- An undistracted time of solitude in God's presence,
- Set apart for prayer and scripture reading.

This past week were you able to have appointments with God and dedicate some time to fasting? Any testimonies to share?

Our Goal in this session is to learn how to nourish ourselves with God's Word!

Reading the Bible is listening to God

God is speaking! But are we listening?

Ever had a friend who talks on and on without letting anyone else get in a word edgewise?

Many of us interact with God in the same way!! We present monologues that do not give Him a chance to get in a word edgewise!! We pray and sing, but we never listen long enough to let God speak back to us!! In any healthy relationship, one should not only speak, but also take time to listen. With God as well, we ought to take time to read his Word and reflect on it, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and minds!

We read the Bible not only to learn, but to live spiritually!!

The Bible – much more than a “normal book” -- Inspired by God!!

The Bible is the spiritual food for the believer – the very voice of the living God, expressing love from His heart to ours!



What does it mean that the Bible is “Inspired”?

1. The Bible has two authors – Divine and Human!

-All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timoteo 3:16-17

—...no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

Different from any other book in the universe, the Bible has two authors – human and divine! The Holy Spirit “inspired” the human writers in the writing process.

2. The Bible is “God-breathed.”

“Inspire” means “to breathe into” a person or activity

In other words, the Holy Spirit illuminated the understanding of the human writers, penetrating their mental processes to enable them to express the message with authority and divine power. Therefore, throughout the centuries, Christians have been nourished by these words of the Scripture, and the Bible has provided the absolute foundation for our faith. To add to it or alter its content is to stray from genuine Christianity.

3. The Bible has Spiritual Power and Life

—For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the Heart. Hebrews 4:12

—The Words which I speak are spirit and life... – Jesus, (John 6:63)

Being inspired, the Bible ushers us into a direct encounter with the Living God. If we receive the word with an open heart, it produces spiritual fruit in our lives. It changes us! It transforms us!

We must Receive the Word with an Open Heart

The Word is like a seed. It contains life within itself and, if sown on receptive soil, it produces plants and fruit. It all depends on us as listeners – How will we receive the word? Are we good soil?



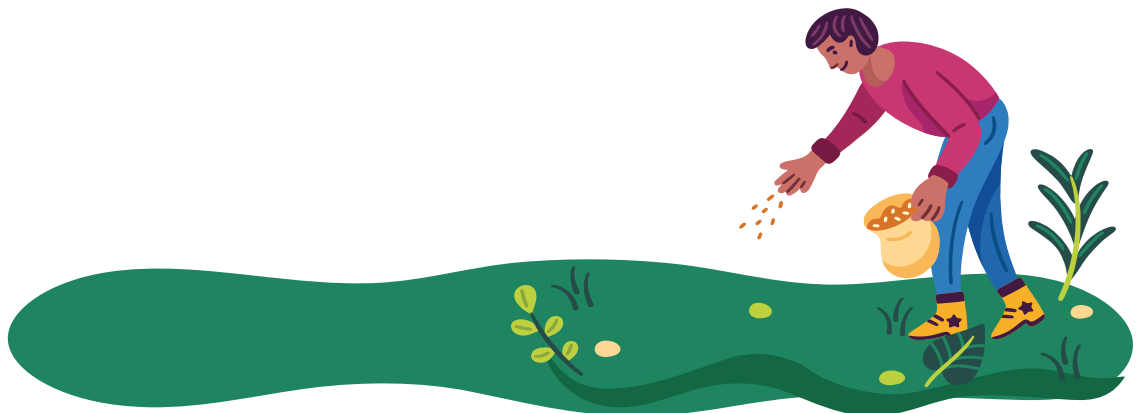
Bible Study: Read the Parable of the Seeds and the Sower – Mark 4:1-20
We observe four types of soil in this parable. What are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

The four types of soil correspond to four types of people. What are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How can we be sure that we are the final category of soil – the receptive and fruitful soil?



The Bible – Our Spiritual Bread

Jesus in the Desert

When Jesus fasted in the desert for forty days, Satan tempted him to change stones into bread. Jesus answered with a verse he had memorized from the Old Testament, saying...

*"Man does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*



Why do you think that Jesus makes this comparison between bread and the Word of God?

Manna in the Desert – Fresh Bread every Morning

When the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years, God fed them with bread from heaven which was called, —manna. Every day this bread appeared as dew on the sand in the morning sunlight. The Israelites gathered this bread every morning and ate it that same day. Any bread stored for the following day, with the exception of the Sabbath, became rotten and moldy. The lesson was clear: God gives fresh bread every day to be gathered and enjoyed! We cannot live on —yesterday's bread.



We must gather the "manna" of God's Word every day

As it was for the Israelites who gathered manna every day, so it is with Christians and the Word of God. Every day God has a fresh word for us a special, relevant message for our lives. Our part is to make an appointment with God and read his word on a daily basis in order to receive this special message He wants to give us. Yesterday's bread – yesterday's reading - will not suffice. God wants us to meditate on His word anew and hear his voice today!

How do we "eat" the Word of God?

1. Read it
2. Study it
3. Memorize it
4. Meditate on it
5. Do it!

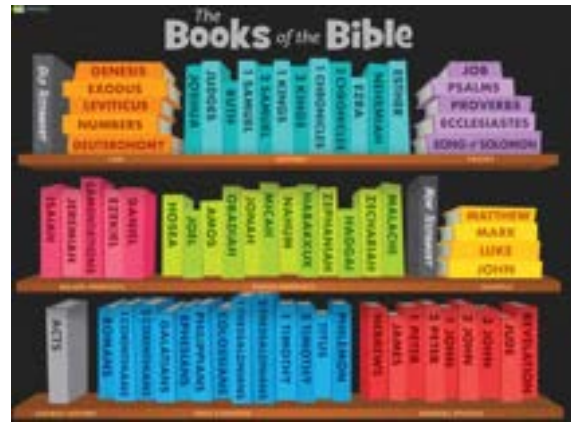


Structure of the Bible – Old and New Testaments

More than a single book, the Bible is...

- A collection of 66 books,
- Written by more than 40 human authors
- Over a period of about 1,800 years.

—The majority of the writers did not know one another nor read the writings of the others, but in spite of this, we observe an amazing unity among them all which would have been impossible without the intervention of God. (Humberto Lay, p.43)



Look at the —Table of Contents of your Bible to see a list of all the books in order.

Two principal sections – The Old and New Testaments

Looking at the table of contents, we see that the Bible is divided into two principal sections – the New and Old Testaments

• The Old Testament (Before Jesus)

*Historical Books – The history of God and humanity. The creation of the world and the relationship between God and Israel.

*Poetical Books – Songs, Prayers, Proverbs, Philosophy and Love Poetry.

*Prophetical Books – Messages from God for His people. Warnings, exhortations, encouragements and predictions of the future.

• The New Testament (After Jesus)

*Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – Biographies of Jesus.

*Acts – The histories of the first Christians.

*Letters – Advice and teachings of the first Christian leaders.

*Revelation – Prophecy about Jesus' Second Coming

The Old and New Testaments Complement one another!

The entire Old Testament prepares the way for the coming of Jesus and connects perfectly to the New Testament.

The Original Languages of the Bible: Greek and Hebrew

The Old Testament – Written originally in Hebrew (and some Aramaic)

The New Testament – Written originally in Greek

Many English translations of the Bible

- The King James Version (KJV) is the most traditional version. Written in beautiful poetry, it is considered a classic of English Literature, but uses antiquated language, such as —thee and —thou.
- The New International Version (NIV) is a modern translation written in common English. Very accurate and readable.
- The Living Bible is the easiest translation to read, but is a general paraphrase of the original, and therefore not as precisely accurate as the other translations.

How to Feed ourselves with the Word

1. Read the Bible every day

Where do I begin?

The Gospels (New Testament)



We recommend that a person begin reading in the New Testament. The first four books are called —gospels and were written by the disciples and close personal friends of Jesus – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are narratives of his life and teaching – biographies. They relate the direct accounts of the words and actions of Jesus. We suggest starting with a chapter or two a day, reading in chronological sequence (chapter 1,2,3,4..etc.), as one would read any other story.

Psalms and Proverbs (Old Testament)

The Psalms are prayers and beautiful songs, written by King David and many other believers who lived before the time of Christ. They provide exquisite poetry that we can use in our own daily prayer and worship. The Proverbs are brief, memorable phrases packed with practical advice for daily life. These Psalms and Proverbs are perfect for daily reading.



How should the Bible be read?

- In Sequential Order –With the exception of the Psalms and Proverbs, which do not follow a strict sequential pattern, it is important to read the chapters of the Bible in their numerical order. (Matthew 1..2...3...4..etc.) When reading a historical narrative, such as the life of Jesus, it is especially important to follow the story in its logical order.
- With Regularity – It is not necessary to read the Bible through in a week! To begin, try reading one or two chapters a day.
- With Understanding – Don't simply read the words! Take time to re-read certain sections in order to understand and retain the meaning of the words.

2. Study the Word

Many ways to study the Bible!

- Take a Class - Congratulations! You are already doing it!
- Ask Questions – Write down questions as you read and then ask a more experienced Christian about them.
- Attend a Small Group – Most small group meetings include Bible Study.
- Listen to Sermons – A good sermon analyzes and applies a Biblical text. We can hear sermons on the radio or the internet!
- Use a "Study-Bible" – Almost any good bookstore should have special –Study Bibles which contain footnotes and added material to help understand the meaning and background of the text. Some include maps and special articles to provide historical and geographical information.
- Use a Concordance – A concordance is a book which lists every usage of each word in the Bible. Using a concordance, you one can look up every use of the word –joy, for example, and find each verse which includes that word.
- Use Commentaries – A Bible Commentary provides background information to help us understand the historical, geographical and theological content of the Bible. Some are better than others. It is important to ask a trusted and mature Christian which commentaries he or she would recommend.

3. Memorize the Word

Why memorize the Word?

When we memorize verses we sow spiritual seeds in our hearts. This practice allows the verse to penetrate our psyche and stay with us throughout the day.

- To “treasure” it in our hearts.
- To avoid temptation -- “I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you...” (Psalm 119:11)
- To fight against Satan o Not for nothing the word is called the “Sword of the Spirit.” Ef. 6:17

*Jesus used the word against Satan in the desert. When the devil tempted Jesus, he responded by saying, “It is written...” If he had not had the word memorized, he would not have been able to use it.

How can we memorize the Word?

- No excuses – You can do it!
- Start small – “I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.”
Philippians 4:13
- Repeat it out loud - until it “sticks.”
- Write it out again and again
- Use little cards with the verse written on it so that you can refer to it in casual moments during the day.

4. Meditate on the Word

God commanded Joshua to meditate on the word in order to have success

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1:8

The First Psalm calls us to “Delight” in the Word of God

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Or stand in the way of sinners Or sit in the seat of mockers.

But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, And on His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in season, Whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does, prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3

Based on these verses above, list out some of the promised benefits for those who meditate on the Word of God.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



What does it mean to “meditate” on the Word?

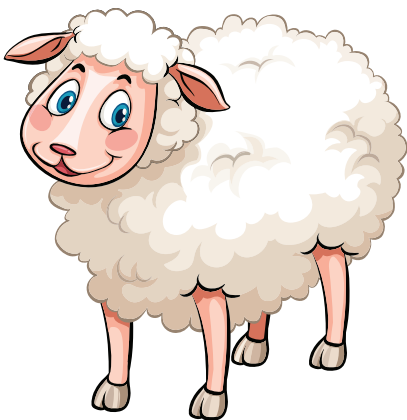
- Take time to “concentrate deeply” on the words of the verse.
- Use the verse to pray to God
- Personalize the words of the verse
- Listen to the Holy Spirit apply the words to our lives.

How to meditate on the Word?

- Choose a short verse from your daily reading

Example: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” Psalm 23:1

- Concentrate on the verse for two or three minutes, repeating it over and over and thinking about the meaning of each word.
- Personalize and Pray the verse – giving thanks to God



Example: The Lord isn't just any shepherd – He is my shepherd! He knows me by name. Thank you Lord, that I'm not alone in life. Thank you for being my shepherd today and forever. I ask you to guide me and provide for my needs today. I trust you!! ... etc.

5. Do the Word!

Don't be a "Pharisee"!

In the time of Jesus there were certain super-strict religious leaders called Pharisees. Some were sincere in their faith, but many were hypocrites. They memorized entire sections of the Bible and fasted two or three times a week, yet they lacked one thing – they did not put the Word into practice! For all their knowledge and –spirituality, they were proud, dishonest, and violent. Some even had Jesus put to death!

If we read the word without living it, we end up worse than we started!

Reading the Bible without putting it into practice is downright dangerous.

*"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."
James 1:22-25*

How do we apply the word to daily life?

We ought always to ask ourselves the following question:

How should my life change in order to live out this message which I am reading?

Assignment – Try applying this verse to your life!!

"Do everything without grumbling and complaining..." (Philippians 2:14)

Mention three times this week when you complained about doing something.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thanksgiving – The opposite of complaining!!

Now choose one of those moments/situations in which you had "grumbled." Write a brief expression of thanksgiving related to that moment instead!

Review Questions – The Bible: Our Spiritual Food

What do we mean by saying that the Bible is inspired? (p.32)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention five ways we can eat the word of God. (p.34)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How many books are in the Bible _____ (p.35)

What is the difference between the Old and New Testaments? (p.35)

_____.

What are the three different types of books in the Old Testament? (p.35)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are the four different types of books in the New Testament? (p.35)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

The Old Testament was written originally in _____ (p.36)

The New Testament was written originally in _____ (p.36)

Mention three different English Translations of the Bible. (p.36)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Where should we begin reading the New Testament? Why? (p.36)

_____.

Where should we begin reading the Old Testament? (p.36)

_____.

Is it ok to flip open the Bible randomly and read the first thing we see? Why not? (p.37)

_____.

What is a "Study Bible"? (p.37)

_____.

What is a "Bible Commentary"? (p.37)

_____.

What is a "Concordance"? (p.37)

_____.

Why is it so important to memorize verses of the Bible? (p.38)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention three strategies for memorizing verses of the Bible. (p.38)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention three steps in the process of meditating on a verse. (p.39)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write a simple prayer (one sentence), personalizing this verse.

—The robber comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly. Jesús – Juan 10:10

Who were the Pharisees? (p.40)

How can we avoid becoming like them? (p.40)



LESSON #4 The Family of God
Know your church

¡Welcome to the Family of God!

*For where two or three
Are gathered in my name,
There am I among them...
- Jesus (Matthew 18:20)*



There is power in the Fellowship of God's People!

Our Goal – Be more than a "Sunday Christian"!

- Learn the importance of sharing relationships with other believers
- How to participate in Lion of Judah specifically
- How Lion of Judah is structured
- The meaning of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Question – Some say, —I love God, but I just don't think it is necessary to go to church. How do we answer?

There is no such thing as a "Lone Ranger" Christian

The Christian Life is Lived in Community!

"Birds of a feather – flock together."

"Show me your friends – and I'll show you yourself!" (Translated from Spanish)

Whether we like it or not, we influence one another. It is impossible to grow as a believer without having friendship and companionship with other Christians. Being a Christian alone is as ludicrous as being married – alone!

"One another..."

In the New Testament the expression: "one another," is used countless times. "Love one another." "Serve one another." "Forgive one another." The message is obvious, to be faithful to God and grow in Christian maturity, it is absolutely crucial to share with other believers and serve God together. In the Christian life, there is no such thing as a lone ranger! Christianity is lived in community!



The Church is the Body of Christ

The Church is a living "Organism" – not an "Organization"!

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ..." (1 Cor. 12:12)



There exists an organic connection between every believer in Jesus.

We all have a special role to play in his body.

If a body loses a member (an arm or a leg), the entire body suffers debilitating pain.

We cannot survive spiritually apart from the Church. An amputated member quickly dies!

Decide – I will be more than a "Sunday Christian!"

- Attend services and activities.
"A lone charcoal quickly cools."
- Make Christian Friends
God deeper than mere Sunday "acquaintances."
- Always serve in some way
 - o Set up chairs before a class
 - o Help care for children during services
 - o Greet a newcomer.
 - o Pick up trash in the sanctuary after a service...etc.
- Give to the work of God with regular offerings and
 - o Put your money where your mouth is!
 - o Jesus says, "where your treasure is, there will your heart also be." We all have a holy obligation to return to God what belongs to him and to support the work of God in the world.



Be Baptized and Partake of the Lord's Supper!

"Holy Ordinances" (Sacraments): Baptism and the Lord's Supper

- They serve as palpable reminders of our salvation
- They are prophetic actions – Proclaiming Spiritual Realities



God knows that we are forgetful. Therefore, the Lord instituted two prophetic actions that dramatize the reality of our salvation – Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

What does Baptism mean?

1. Baptism identifies us as Followers of Jesus

After accepting Christ, baptism serves as the principal way of identifying one's self as a "New Creation" – a follower of Jesus Christ. It is a public declaration of our new Christian identity.

Comparison: Jewish Circumcision.

This rite of circumcision of male children marked the Jews as a distinct people and distinguished them from other nations. Baptism serves a similar function for Christians. It "identifies us" as members of God's family.

2. Baptism reminds us of our Commitment to Christ

Baptism is unforgettable!

Like the Wedding Ring and Ceremony - A wedding ring and ceremony clearly identify a person as formally —married. It is a public commitment, testifying to the world in a manner that is undeniable and unforgettable!

In the same way, the act of public baptism helps us remember that we are no longer —normal people – we now belong to Jesus! When we feel tempted to fall back into old patterns of life, we only need remember the day of our baptism to renew our awareness that we are no longer the same!

*"I got soaked in front of 500 people to declare that God has changed my life!
I am a new creation in Christ!"*

3. Baptism is a "burial" of our old self

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:1-4

In a manner of speaking, our baptism is our burial.

Symbolically we die with Christ, undergo a burial of our old "self," and are raised again as a new person in Christ. In this act, we dramatize the death and resurrection of Christ, and we identify ourselves with him. When the accuser, Satan, condemns you and says – "This sinner deserves to die!" you can say –



"That's right! I did die – when I was baptized! By being baptized I remember always that I died with Christ, and that he paid the full penalty for my sins!"

Why do we practice baptism by immersion?

1. Immersion symbolizes burial – the immersion depicts death and rebirth.
2. The word "bautizo" in the original Greek of the New Testament means literally, –submerge, saturate, dip and was used to refer to the process of dyeing cloth.
3. Immersion symbolizes full surrender to Jesus. When being baptized, we must yield ourselves to the one submerging us. One must –let go physically.
4. Immersion represents full cleansing in Jesus.
5. Immersion best corresponds to Biblical analogies of salvation
 - a. The Ark of Noah passing through the flood waters.
 - b. The people of Israel passing through the Red Sea.

Is it necessary for me to be baptized if I was already baptized as a child?

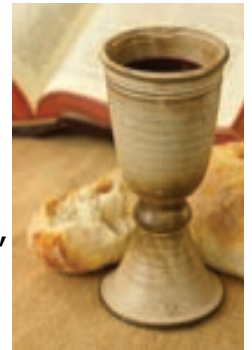
Yes. No one is "born Christian." We all must accept Jesus and be born spiritually – be born again – in order to be saved. The Bible teaches us that Baptism represents this spiritual transformation; which is to say, baptism is meant for those who have already experienced spiritual re-birth. Baptism of a baby, who has no understanding of the meaning of the event, lacks this spiritual significance. Therefore, we present babies to the Lord, asking for God's blessing on their lives in order that they might one day accept Jesus of their own free will.

Is Baptism necessary for salvation?

No. The Bible clearly teaches that salvation is “by grace, through faith; not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9) The thief on the cross beside Jesus repented and put his faith in Christ. For this faith, the Lord assured him that he would be with him in paradise that same day. He was never baptized. He never attended a single service. We do not earn our own salvation – we receive it! Baptism is not a way of earning our salvation. Rather, it serves as a public expression of an inward faith. It demonstrates an unforgettable declaration to the world – —I belong to Jesus!”

The Lord’s Supper

—For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:23-26



What is the meaning of the Lord’s Supper?

The Lord’s Supper is a Memorial of the Death of Jesus

God knows how forgetful we can be and that we need regular reminders of that which we cannot always see and feel. All of life has reminders...

- Anniversaries and rings remind us of our marriage vows
- Celebrations and Holidays remind us of historical and national events
- Pictures and Keepsakes remind us of loved ones and special moments

The Lord’s Supper reminds us of the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross!

What can be more important than salvation!?! Therefore, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper as a spiritual reminder – a solemn ceremony to be celebrated regularly in order to remind us of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We do not believe that the bread is actually transformed into being human flesh, but rather that it represents the physical body of Jesus. As such, it is a sacred and prophetic action, infused with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord's Supper replaces the Jewish Passover – Jesus is our Passover Lamb!!

The Passover reminded the Jews of their Salvation from Egypt

On the night that God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He instructed them to offer a sacrificial lamb in each household. Each family was to smear blood on the doorframe of their home before sitting to consume the sacrifice in a special, Passover meal. During the night, an "angel of death" passed through the land of Egypt, putting to death the first born of each home that was not marked with the "blood of the lamb."

The Israelites went out that evening, escaping through the Red Sea. To remind them of this great salvation, The Lord ordered the people to celebrate the "Passover dinner" each year, in memory of what God had done to save them from slavery.



Jesus ate this Passover meal with his disciples before being crucified, and explained that the lamb represented him, and his death on the cross. From that moment on, the Lord's Supper replaced the Passover for Christians as a commemorative meal, honoring the death of Jesus, our ultimate Passover lamb.

The Lord's Supper is a re-affirmation of our faith – like a renewal of wedding vows!

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we affirm anew that his death has saved us. Akin to renewing marriage vows, we re-affirm our covenant with Christ.

The Lord's Supper is Holy, and should be taken with Reverence

The Apostle Paul writes these words to warn the Corinthian believers, who showed a lack of reverence for the Lord's Supper by abusing the poor among them during the meal:

"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment."

1 Corinthians 11:27-32



God does not tolerate game-playing. We should confess our sins to the Lord before partaking of the table. God does not expect perfection, but he does demand sincerity!

Ways to Participate in Congregation Lion of Judah

1. Participate in services!



“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” -- Jesus
The Service is the family party – the main activity of any church. In a mysterious way, The Lord Jesus is present in services in a special way.

- We worship the Lord
- We listen to the word of God
- We give our tithes and offerings,
- We pray together.

Service Schedule

- o Sundays: 9:00 a.m. (English) and 12:00 p.m. (Spanish).
- o Discipleship Classes: Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. and Friday 6:30pm
- o Prayer: Monday @ 7:30 p.m.
- o Worship: Wednesdays @ 7:30pm Original Sanctuary
- o Prayer meeting: Wednesday @7:30pm on Facebook Live
- o Youth: Friday @ 6:30 p.m.
- o AWANA: Friday @ 6:30pm



Questions

Why do we sing, raise hands, and dance?

We believe it is important to express ourselves freely in the praise and worship of God. The Psalms indicate that the Israelites used instruments, sang, danced, and shouted in their worship.

Why do some people cry and fall during prayer time?

We believe that the Holy Spirit moves in a special way during the time of worship. The Spirit is like the wind, and manifests itself in different ways for each person. Some cry when they feel the Spirit; others lose strength and fall; and some remain still and calm. For each one it is different. The important thing is to allow freedom for everyone to have a personal encounter with Christ during services.

Are there sometimes non-spiritual expressions?

Yes. As human beings, there is always a mix between the spiritual and the human. For this reason, sometimes the pastor makes the decision to calm a person who expresses themselves in a way that distracts others.

2. Synergist Women

The word synergy is defined as the interaction or cooperation of two or more agents that produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate parts. For our purposes, this means that Synergist Women's strength and impact lie in us cooperating to accomplish incredible things for God's kingdom. This level of synergy requires that we grow together spiritually, and personally and build an interdependent community. Our ultimate goal is to equip every woman with the tools to become catalysts for change wherever they are and, extend the Kingdom in their communities. We meet regularly on the 2nd Saturday of each month, for more information contact, Yovanny Pulcini ypulcini@gmail.com

3. Enter the Discipleship Program!

Our Goal – Spiritual Formation

Our goal is to become more and more like Jesus! Christians mature with...



- Biblical Knowledge
- Christian Character
- Training to serve

Classes

- Level I - Fundamentals
- Level II – III – Christian Character
- Level IV – Preparation for Ministry
- Marriages

The semesters begin in February and September.

Contact Pastor Jonatan Toledo or you can leave him a message at the administrative office (617) 541-4455

4. Fellowship time: Every Sunday on the 4th floor immediately after the service to continue building up a community. Also, let us know if you are interested in collaborating in this ministry.



5. Family Services: What's in it for my family?

Children's Ministries

- Sunday School: Director, Marina Miranda. We currently offer Christian education classes for children from preschool age through fifth grade. Classes meet on the third floor of the Northampton Building (Original Sanctuary):

- From 10-11am during the service in English.
- From 1-2pm during the service in Spanish.

Parents sign their children into the new sanctuary each Sunday at the third-floor computer station.

- AWANA: Director, Sonybel Quiñones, discipleship ministry for children from 2 years old to fifth grade.

Classes meet on Fridays from 6:30pm - 8:30pm in the Northampton building (Original Sanctuary)



- CLJ Youth: Director, Wilson Santos. Meetings of worship and discipleship for youth from 6th - 12th grade. Meetings: Fridays from 6:30pm - 8:30pm in the New Sanctuary and on Sundays 1:00pm - 2:00pm on the fourth floor of the New Sanctuary.

- CLJ Young adults:Exists to love God and love others. Our mission is to inspire a young adult generation to be radical followers of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, anchored in Scripture. Our heart's desire is to reach souls in the Greater Boston area through acts of service, evangelism, and discipleship, and by sharing and spreading the transformative love and power of God. Pastor Jonatan Toledo. CLJ YAM serves young people aged 18 to 35, and they meet weekly. You can contact Pastor JonatanFor more information: jtoledo@cljmail.org



- Special Events: Throughout the year, events are organized for women, men, youth, children, and families that are announced in advance. One of the main purposes of these events is to strengthen the sense of community.

6. Miracle Mile Ministries is a Boston, MA based christian ministry devoted to a sustained, deliberate, and strategic response to the area we call "Miracle Mile" (a roughly 2-square-mile area in the South End of Boston often referred to as "Mass & Cass" or "Methadone Mile").

It is led by a core group of four Boston area Lead Churches (Congregación León de Judá, Antioch Community Church Brighton, Cornerstone Church, and Symphony Church) but involves a universe of a dozen or so churches and parachurch ministries from throughout Boston's neighboring communities who faithfully support this effort week after week.

What would become Miracle Mile Ministries was born as an outreach of the Congregation Lion of Judah (the English translation of Congregación León de Judá), which is located in the heart of the South End's "Mass & Cass Corridor". This ministry began in 2012 as a weekly sidewalk outreach on Saturday mornings, serving coffee and making friends with people in the neighborhood around the church who were enduring homelessness and other needs.

In 2014 "the breakfast" moved into Lion of Judah's basement fellowship hall, allowing the church to serve a fuller breakfast, year-round, and conduct an evangelistic service. Over time, volunteers from area churches and ministries would flock to the "breakfast". Lion of Judah would serve as the nexus for a ministry to those experiencing homelessness and addiction that would be led by a collaboration of four Boston area "Lead Churches", but sustained by an average of 20 to 30 volunteers a week drawn from area churches and ministries.



Are there other services offered?

Boston HERC (Higher Education Resource Center):

The Academic Resource Center.

Director: Carolina de Jesus

A ministry to help first generation youth of color to prepare for college.



- o Mentoring and tutoring for high school students
- o Preparation for the SAT
- o Information on scholarships and university admissions.

For more information, call their office: (617) 221-6495

4th Floor of the Harrison Building

www.bostonherc.org

Agencia ALPHA

Its mission is to improve the quality of life of immigrants in Massachusetts by focusing on three areas: community organization, legalization and citizenship services.

www.agenciaalpha.org

1st Floor Harrison Building

Tel: (617) 522-6382

Fax: (617) 522-6177

info@agenciaalpha.org



TELL ME MORE ABOUT CONGREGATION LION OF JUDAH

The activities of Congregation Lion of Judah take place in three different buildings. All are interconnected, and people can circulate from one to the other from the inside.

The first building where we moved 25 years ago in 1998, is located at 68 Northampton Street, which is the original sanctuary. Adjacent to it is 62 Northampton Street, in the corner of Harrison Avenue. In this building we have classrooms, the main entrance where the church's reception area is located, as well as the Administrative Offices. Finally, the most recent building is the new sanctuary, at 20 Reed Street where we hold our two worship services on Sundays, at 9 am in English, and at 12 noon in Spanish.



Edificio Harrison



Edificio Northampton



Edificio Reed

During many years Lion of Judah has enjoyed access to the parking lots from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission. The City allows us to use them for our Wednesdays and Fridays services, from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm, and Sundays from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Ministerial History

- Founded in 1982 in the City of Boston at Emmanuel Gospel Center, by Rev. Juan Vergara and his wife Elsie.
- Moved to Cambridge at the end of that same year (1982.)
- We were called to go back to Boston where we moved in 1997, after remodeling the building at 68 Northampton Street (acquired in 1993.)
- Socio-economic and National diversity: There are more than 30 nationalities represented from throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean. The English ministry is also very diverse, with nationals from USA and other continents.
- Denomination: American Baptist.
- Charismatic Spirituality: We believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit remain in force and are necessary for the building of the church of Jesus Christ.

Our Mission

We seek to promote, in all we do, —The formation of disciples of Jesus Christ who are radically committed to the Kingdom of God, full of the Spirit, equipped to evangelize, disciple and serve others, through a church of excellence, founded on the principles of the Word of God.

Transforming lives – We transform the city! Isaías 61:1-5

Where does the name, “Lion of Judah” come from?

A Title for Jesus

Lion of Judah = The Great, Messianic King, Descended from David

Judah was a Biblical patriarch whose story is recorded in the book of Genesis. His name means, “Praise to the Lord.” We clarify – Judah is not to be confused with “Judas,” who betrayed Jesus years later! According to prophesy, one of Judah’s descendents would come to be the great awaited king, symbolized by a Lion. (Genesis 49:8-12). This anticipated ruler would be called, symbolically, “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” The lion symbolizes divine and regal majesty. For this reason the prominent kings, David and Solomon, used statues of Lions to adorn every step and the arms of their royal thrones.

Prophesy in the Book of Revelation – Jesus is the long awaited Messianic King!

The Apostle John received a prophetic vision depicting Jesus as a great lion.

“...Then one of the elders said to me, =Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”
Revelation 5:5

A prophetic dream

Our church, originally named, Central Baptist Church, grew steadily during its first ten years in Cambridge, MA. Around 1993, Pastor Roberto Miranda had a prophetic dream, in which he stood by the Charles River. As he looked at the skyline, a dark cloud, full of venomous spiders, descended upon the city. Then the face of an enormous lion appeared, transposed over this ominous scene. Pastor Roberto knew immediately that this lion represented Jesus – the Lion of Judah – and cried out three times, “You are the Lord! You are the Lord! You are the Lord!” The Lion roared thunderously, scattering the clouds and the spiders, which represented demonic infestation. Upon reflection, Roberto interpreted this dream as a prophetic confirmation of our calling to cross the Charles, enter the heart of the city, and wage spiritual warfare against the dark forces of spiritual evil. The church unanimously decided to change its name to **“Congregation Lion of Judah.”**



How is the Lion of Judah government organized?

King Jesus!

The kingdom of God is not a democracy! We submit to a king named Jesus Christ. Under his absolute authority, there are several positions of human authority in the church. Because we are imperfect humans, we believe in sharing authority among pastors, deacons, and ministry leaders.

Ministers – The Entire Congregation!

We believe that every believer is a minister, gifted by God to serve in his kingdom. For this reason, we seek not to make an exaggerated difference between “clergy” and “lay people.” There are those who serve full time and others who work secularly, but every Christian is a minister and should use his or her talents and gifts to serve others.

Pastors

Dr. Roberto Miranda, Founding Pastor

Rev. Dr. Roberto Miranda served as Senior Pastor of Congregación León de Judá (CLJ) from 1984 to 2022. He was born in 1955 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, where he spent his childhood until moving to New York at the age of 10. He received his B.A. from Princeton University, where he graduated as a Woodrow Wilson Scholar in 1978 with a degree in International Relations. In 1989, he completed a Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literature from Harvard University. During his studies at Harvard, Dr. Miranda helped to found CLJ, a predominantly Latino church in Boston’s Roxbury/South End. Today, León de Judá is one of Boston’s largest churches, widely known for its diverse composition and social ministries that impact the city’s youth and immigrant families.



Dr. Miranda was active in fostering unity and spiritual revival in churches from all denominations across the New England area. He founded Covenant for New England, a multi-denominational organization that brings together various religious ministries for spiritual renewal, as well as the Fellowship of Latino Pastors of New England (COPAHNI), an organization serving over 70 Latino churches from different denominations across the region. Throughout his years of ministry, he preached in many countries around North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In 2013, he received an honorary doctorate (D. Min.) from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. Between 2009 and 2022, he published 3 books, *En la tierra de los peregrinos*, *Pies de barro*, and most recently *Vida por diseño*, which was released posthumously in June 2022.

Dr. Miranda is survived by his wife of 39 years and partner in ministry, Mercedes López-Miranda, their daughters, Sonia and Abigail, two sons-in-law, and three grandchildren. He was an unconditionally devoted husband, father, and grandfather and left an indelible mark on the countless people whose lives he touched.

Mercedes Lopez-Miranda, Lead Pastor



Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Mercedes (Meche) López-Miranda moved to Boston in 1982 to complete a graduate program in occupational therapy at Boston University. She met Roberto Miranda through Juan and Elsie Vergara, the founding pastors of Iglesia Bautista Central, as Congregación León de Judá (CLJ) was known for its first 15 years. Roberto and Meche were married in 1983.

Professionally, Meche served in the Early Intervention field for over 35 years. In 2018, she left her profession to serve full-time in the church. She pastored alongside Dr. Miranda, who served as Senior Pastor from 1984 until his death in May 2022.

Meche founded Mujeres Edificando Destinos (Women Building Destinies), a ministry that has led impactful conferences for women in the New England region for the past 30 years. She established the counseling ministry at CLJ and founded the premarital counseling program more than 20 years ago.

In her husband's absence, she has provided leadership in the congregation and officially accepted the church's call to be Lead Pastor. As she embarks on this new stage in the life of the congregation that she loves deeply, Meche is convinced that the hand of the Lord will continue to guide and support the pastoral team, alongside its members, to continue building the Kingdom of God in the city.

During breaks from her ministerial work, Meche enjoys traveling to be with her daughters, Sonia and Abi, her sons-in-law, and her three grandchildren.

Associate Pastors

Samuel Acevedo

Is the Pastor for Social Transformation at the Congregación León de Judá (CLJ) in Boston, Massachusetts. In that capacity, in addition to his traditional pastoral duties, Pastor Sam serves as the Executive Minister overseeing Miracle Mile Ministries, a collaborative of churches devoted to a sustained, deliberate, strategic response (volunteers, nutrition, clothing, love, etc.) to the area we call "Miracle Mile" (a roughly 2-square-mile area in the South End of Boston often referred to as "Mass & Cass" or "Methadone Mile"). Pastor Sam also serves as the Board Chair of the Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC), after serving 23 years as its Executive Director. Pastor Sam discovered the Iglesia Bautista Central (later to become CLJ) while



attending Boston College Law School in 1990. And immediately nurtured a relationship with Pastor Roberto Miranda and Pastor Mercedes Miranda-Lopez. "I am so grateful they took in 'strays'", Pastor Sam often says. Pastor Sam and his wife, Marina, were married in July of 2001.

Jonatán Toledo,



Jonatán Toledo joined Congregation Lion of Judah in 2007. Currently he oversees the Young Adult Ministry and the Discipleship program. Before moving to Boston, Jonatán served five years as a short-term missionary in the Dominican Republic and Mexico, through TIME Ministries and Camino Global, formerly CAM International.

Jonatán has a passion for education and economic development. He has a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Gordon-Conwell Theology Seminary and a Professional Graduate Certificate in Strategic Management from Harvard University. He is working towards obtaining the Financial Advisory Certification, CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™. Jonatan is married to Tricia and they have two daughters, Ana Cecilia and Noemí Akemi.

Mick Da Silva,

Pastor Mick has been at Congregation Lion of Judah since 2012. He began his pastoral ministry when he was 16 years of age. He worked for many years as a missionary and base director for Youth with a Mission (JUCUM.) Mick has also served as a missionary in different parts of the world, such as in Asia, Latin America, North American and Africa. Mick, as well as his wife Angelica, share the same love for evangelism and missions.



Deacons

Along with pastors, deacons are in charge of governing the church. They look after the spiritual well-being of the congregation; the advancement of your mission; the finances; physical plant; staff; ministries; new works and new projects. They represent pastors in various aspects of the life and ministry of the church. They are nominated by a special committee of ministry leaders and are elected annually at a congregational meeting.

Congregational Meetings

Twice a year congregational meetings are called after services. Topics of importance to the government of the congregation are discussed regarding the budget, election of Deacons, nomination of new pastors and other relevant matters.

Administrative Staff

Administrator: Yoxmar Rodríguez (617) 541-4455 Ext 115

Administrative Assistant: Yulieth Ramos (617) 541-4455 Ext 111

Treasury: Karina Carrasco and Angélica Burbano (617) 541-4455 Ext 114

Reception: Francis Taveras and Kevin Gonzalez (617) 541-4455 Ext 0

Physical plant: Javier Naranjo, Director
Haroldo Juarez, Assistant



Comprehension Review Questions

Jesus said, Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, _____
_____. (p.51)

How do we answer the "lone ranger" who says, "I love God, but I don't think it's necessary to go to church."? (p.45)

Mention four general ways to participate in our church. (p.46)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Which are the two "Sacred Ordinances" of our church? (p.47-49)

1. _____
2. _____

What is the meaning of water-baptism? (p.47-49)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention three reasons that we practice full submersion in baptism. (p.48)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Is it necessary to be baptized if I already was baptized as a baby? Why or why not?
(p.48)

Is baptism necessary for salvation? Why or why not? (p.49)

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? (p.49-50)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Why is it dangerous to partake of the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner?"

Mention four specific ways to get involved in the congregational life of Congregation Lion of Judah. (p.51-52)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What is the goal of our Discipleship Program? _____ (p.52)

The Discipleship program seeks to develop maturity in three ways. What are they?
(p.52)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention three services offered for families in CLJ. (p.53)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Where would one find info about immigration? (p.55) _____.

What is our denomination? (p.56) _____.

What are the origins of our name, "Lion of Judah?" (p.57)

How could we summarize our mission as a church? (p.57)

Who is the primary leader of Lion of Judah? (p.58) _____.

Who are the ministers of Lion of Judah? (p.58) _____.

Who are the pastors of Lion of Judah? (p.58-60)

What do Deacons do? (p.61) _____

What are some topics addressed in Congregational Meetings? (p.61)

Who is the administrative assistant of the church? (p.61) _____



LESSON #5 God - The One and the Only!
His attributes and Trinity

God -- the One and Only!
–Lord, there is none like you... – Micah, Moses
–Dear children, keep your selves from idols. – 1 John 5:21

Our Goal is to understand more fully - Who is the true God!?

- What are some mistaken views of God?
- What are some of God's attributes (characteristics)?
- What does it mean that God exists as a –Trinity?

Knowing God – The adventure of a lifetime!

Prepare yourself! There is no one in the entire universe who compares to the majestic Person we will consider in this lesson! This Divine Being has captured the imagination of humanity throughout the centuries. His beauty has inspired art, music and poetry. His mystery has fascinated the most sublime philosophers. His tender love has softened the hardest hearts, and his majesty has humbled the unbridled pride of the kings of the earth. God! There is none like Him! To know Him is to discover a new world, full of mystery, wonder and exquisite beauty. Welcome to the adventure of a lifetime. But be careful! After tasting a little of Him, this quest becomes a magnificent obsession, a healthy addiction. You will want more! So buckle up as we launch into the deep, sometimes unpredictable waters to know Him better. God!

True Story: A passionate young man discovers the true God

Visualize a young man, about 18 years old, walking in a field. Suddenly a violent storm erupts, flashing thunder, lightning, and buckets of rain. A bolt strikes a spot immediately beside this young man.

Terrified, he throws himself to the ground, crying and shouting to God: –If you save me from this storm, I will serve you the rest of my life. Suddenly – miraculously - the sky clears, leaving this young man sobbing in the dirt –gasping for breath and soaked with sweat and rain.

His father, a prosperous business man who rarely showed affection or humor, had insisted that his son apply to law school. But this earnest young man could not bring himself to renege on the promise he had made to the Lord, and entered a monastery. On the day of his ordination this young man could hardly contain his excitement as he prepared to celebrate the Eucharist for the first time – with his father present in the congregation.

Perhaps finally he could earn his father's approval. After the ceremony he sought out his father and mother to celebrate this all important moment of his life. But instead of an embrace or smile of congratulations, this son



received only cold, formal silence and an expression of utter rejection and scorn on the face of his father.

Devastated, the young man threw himself into his clerical obligations. If he could not earn the love of his father, perhaps God could be won over with his sincere, sacrificial efforts. He prayed and fasted more than any other, spending hours and hours in daily penitence and confession of sin. The elderly priest who had the misfortune of listening to this tedious litany of peccadilloes finally barked back --

—I am sick and tired of listening to these silly confessions day in and day out! Your sins are painfully boring! If you're going to confess, please go out and commit some crime worthy of the confessional. Kill your father or mother! Commit adultery! Anything to spice things up a bit! Just stop torturing me with these insignificant little confessions!

But of course the young man remained inconsolable. His sense of guilt and inferiority grew and grew until it finally became unbearable. He came to the point of suicide or complete insanity because of the load of guilt he bore.

Sensing his protégée's desperation, his confessor, a kindly and wise man of God, assigned him to study the Scriptures – specifically the New Testament. The young monk set out to study with his usual intensity until one day his eyes fell on the following verse in Paul's letter to the Romans:

—The righteous will live by faith.
In that instant the young man felt a tremendous burden lifted from his shoulders. His muscles relaxed; his heart became inundated with burning peace and love, and the tears flowed. Finally he realized...

—I do not have to earn my salvation! Neither do I have to work in order to earn the love and approval of my heavenly father!

This young man experienced a new spiritual birth, beholding God, and himself, through new eyes. He came to be the leader of a massive social movement that espoused a new type of Christianity – one based on salvation by grace, through faith, and not by human effort.

This movement is called the "Protestant Reformation!"



This young man's name was – Martin Luther!

We have mistaken concepts of God

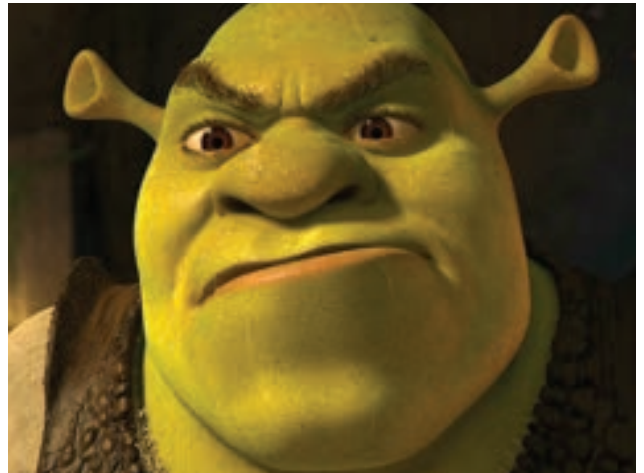
Based on this story, what kept the young man from seeing God as a loving father?

And you? How has your own family or religious background possibly influenced – positively or negatively – your own concept of what God is like?

Unfortunately, many of us live with distorted views of God. Our family or religious background has contaminated our thinking, resulting in some of the following erroneous perspectives.

1. God the Monster

Many, for having suffered in the home of an abusive father or perhaps having been raised in a legalistic version of religion, view God with mistrust and fear. We do not dare seek intimacy with him. On the contrary, we keep Him at a distance, fearing that he might be quick to punish us for the smallest mistakes or defects. Today we will learn that God is love – more merciful and patient than we can imagine!



2. God as Santa Clause

On the other extreme, many of us view God as so loving that He would never demand anything of us. We think He gives us license to do as we please with our lifestyle and behavior, never having to suffer the consequences. But we will see that God is holy and just – not to be trifled with!

3. God as Teddy Bear

Many of us view God as if he were a type of pet or security blanket, a “teddy bear” to be held for comfort. But we will see that God is holy and awesome, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He more great and terrible than we could possible imagine.



4. The "Force" – (from Star Wars)

Many people view God as if He were some sort of electrical energy a force to be manipulated and channeled. This perspective fails to see Him as a Personal God, whom we can know and respect, but rather as merely raw power to be controlled.



Witchcraft conceives of God in this manner. If one knows the appropriate incantations, one can use the force to perform spiritual signs. Many Christians try to approach God in the same, erroneous manner. We offer religious sacrifices and perform apparently spiritual activities, thinking that we can activate good "luck" from our god.

5. A "Good Luck Charm"

Many approach God as if He were some sort of good luck charm. Perhaps they carry a cross or a figurine of a "saint" in order to ward off "bad vibes" in their daily lives. Or perhaps they think that religious activities, contributions to the church or magic prayers can bring them good luck. This view motivates us to fulfill certain religious duties, without consideration for a person's lifestyle or heart before God. Fulfilling the requirements of this "god" is meant to bring good luck.

The Israelites tried to do this in battle against their enemies. In spite of God's clear warnings to the contrary, they attacked the Philistines, bringing along the Ark of the Covenant, containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments, in hopes of good luck. (1 Samuel 3-4) But God is not to be manipulated in this way. He allowed them to be defeated by their enemies and allowed the ark to be captured; making the point that He is not to be treated as a pagan idol or a good luck charm.

The True God – Personal and Transcendent

God is Personal – Do you know God's "personality"?

The Bible teaches clearly that our God is not an "it" nor a "concept," but a personal being. He possesses a heart full of intense and profound emotion. For example...

God experiences joy

God delights in the obedience of His children. The Bible says that God "will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with this love, he will rejoice over you with singing."(Zephaniah 3:17)

God experiences sadness

When humanity became corrupt in the days of Noah, God's heart was "full of pain." (Gen. 6:6) This sin also provoked his anger.

God experiences anger

The Bible testifies again and again to "the wrath of the Lord."

Personal Characteristics of God

God is love

"The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 Jn. 4:8)

More than a characteristic, love is the very identity of God. He defines love.

- Love serves others

"Having loved his own who were in the World, he now showed them the full extent of his love...he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet..."
John 13:1,6

- Love sacrifices for others...

"Greater love has no one than this; that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Jesus died for us." Romans 5:8

Love is not merely a sentimental, warm feeling. It is a commitment which expresses itself in action. We see love perfectly demonstrated on the cross of Jesus Christ. He said, "I love you," and underlined it with his own blood!!

God is compassionate and merciful

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

God is Just

Some try to take advantage of God's love, using His mercy as a license to continue a lifestyle of sin. God is not our little pet! While abounding in love and mercy, he also is completely just, and does not ignore sin. He is a judge who will have nothing to do with corruption. He will not be bribed, has no hypocrisy, and will not overlook sin. He is merciful, but just. God is not to be trifled with!

God is faithful and True

God speaks the truth and fulfills his promises.

"God is Light, and there is no darkness in Him." (1 John..)

Many of us have learned to be suspicious of others, because people invariably fail us in some way. But...

"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise, and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19)



Is it hard for you to trust others – perhaps because of being disappointed in the past? Our God is faithful to fulfill his promises. He will never let us down. We can learn to count on him!

God's Transcendent Qualities – Different from Human

God is personal, but at the same time He is fundamentally "other" than any human being. He possesses various characteristics that no human being could share.

God is Transcendent – How big is your God?

The Bible also teaches that God is fundamentally different from any human being – that He transcends humanity. He is able at the same time to be in all places, know all things, and do anything He chooses. Above all – He is holy – and essentially different from any human being.

God is Holy

- He is perfectly pure – without blemish
- He is high, sublime, and awesome in His majesty
- He inspires reverence and holy fear
- He is a "Consuming Fire"

Many seek to use God as some sort of a mascot to rally enthusiasm or invite good luck. They fail to serve him with reverence and fear. But the Bible teaches that God is Lord – and not our "pet divinity." He is a consuming fire!



We read of Moses' experience...

Exodus 24:15-18

"When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. It looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Then Moses entered the cloud as he went up on the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights."

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our —God is a consuming fire."
Hebrews 12:28-29



Don't play with God!

God is Omniscient - Psalm 139

God knows all things – past, present and future

"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."
(Prov. 15:3)

God knows us better than we know ourselves!

God is Omnipresent

God is in all places at all times.

The Psalmist exclaims...

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast..." (Psalm 139:7-10)

God is Omnipotent

He can do all things!

Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you...(Jer. 32:17)

The Trinity of God

A Mystery beyond our ability to comprehend

Our brains are so tiny. For us, trying to grasp the nature of God is comparable to an ant attempting to understand the theories of Albert Einstein. We can only go so far before being forced to recognize the limitations of our puny understanding. How big is the universe? How many grains of sand can be found on the beaches of Florida? How many seconds are contained in eternity? How is it possible to drive simultaneously on Route 1 North and 95 South? Mysteries of the universe!



The Trinity of God is mystery

The Bible clearly teaches that God is one, but it also teaches that He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each one is Divine, and none is "more God" than the other. To deny the trinity is to deny a basic, essential belief of orthodox Christianity throughout the years. But to try to understand it is like trying to count the stars of heaven!

New Testament references to the Trinity

- The Baptism of Jesus

When Jesus was baptized, He received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and heard the voice of the Father speaking to him.

- Paul's blessing to the Corinthians

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14)

- The Great Commission

"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..." (Matthew 28:19)

- The Trinity is comparable to the unity and diversity of the Church

"...There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit, There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men." (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

- Salvation

We have been "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedient to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling by his blood..." (1 Peter 1:2)

How is it possible for God to be "three persons" in one God?

We present the following illustrations in order to help us better grasp this concept. None of these analogies is perfect, but perhaps they could help us better conceptualize this mystery.

Illustrations

• Sound

The father speaks; the Son is "The Word," and the Spirit is the amplifier. Without a speaker, words, and microphone, there is no communication to a large audience.



• H2O (Water)

This chemical combination can exist in three forms at the same time – Ice, liquid and steam: Three modalities of the same essential chemical substance.



• The Egg

... has three components: the shell, the yoke and the white. Three elements of one, single egg.



• The Sun

We perceive the radiance of the sun in three ways: Light, heat, and energy. One sun; one radiance – but three perceptions.



• The Rainbow

... contains various colors in one continuum. Variety and unity
Light consists of all the colors at once!



Worship – The only appropriate reaction!

So how does one respond to such a holy and awesome God, who knows all things and exists in all places at all times? What do we do when we consider a God of such love and mercy – who dwells in glorious and “unapproachable light”?

Only one reaction is appropriate:

We join with —the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircle the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sing:

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

- To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!’ The four living creatures said,
- Amen, and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 5:11-13

Which characteristic of God do you most need to understand more deeply?

_____.

Prayer – Thinking of this characteristic of God, repeat this prayer:

Lord, I thank you because you are _____.

Teach me more of your _____.

I praise you and worship you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Comprehension Questions:

Who is Martin Luther? (pp.67)

_____.

Mention five mistaken conceptions of what God is like? (pp.68-69)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are four personal characteristics of God? (pp.69-70)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mention two ways that Jesus teaches us about the true nature of love? (p.70)

1. _____
2. _____

What does it mean that God is Holy? (p.71)

What does it mean that God is Omniscient? (p.72) _____

What does it mean that God is Omnipresent? (p.72) _____

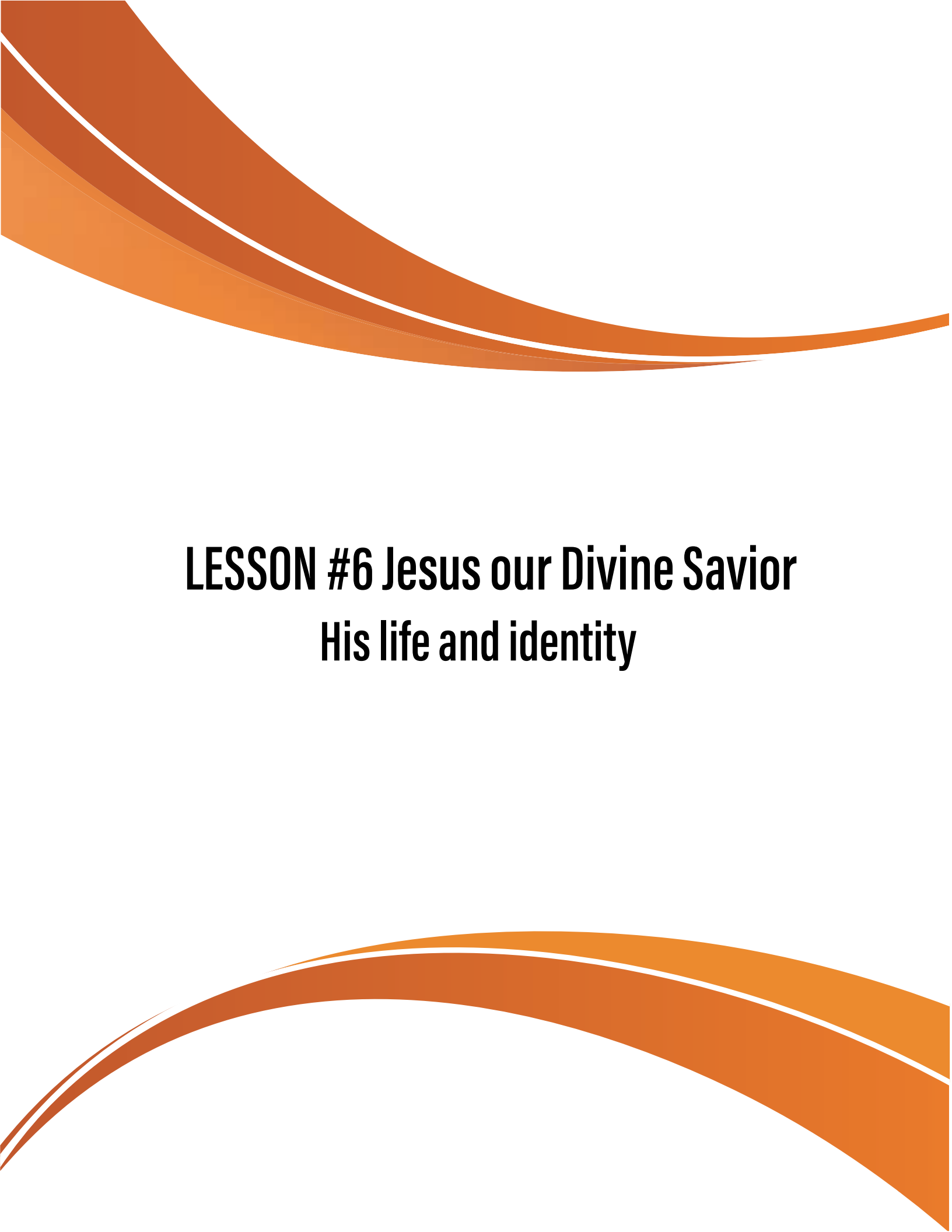
What does it mean that God is Omnipotent? (p.72) _____

Mention three New Testament references to the Trinity. (p.73)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mention three illustrations which help you better to understand the Trinity. (p.74)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



LESSON #6 Jesus our Divine Savior
His life and identity

The Life of Jesus

Our Goal is to understand more fully the life and divine identity of Jesus. The Gospels – Portraits of the life of Christ

The Authors

- Matthew Formerly a tax collector – then disciple of Jesus
- Mark A young follower of Christ – interviewed Peter
- Luke A doctor and historian – interviewed Mary and the Apostles
- John The most intimate disciple of Christ

The “Synoptic” Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke Similar in their chronological format

John: Different from the other three. More philosophical in perspective; emphasizing the divine nature of Christ. Includes significant material not included in the other three.

What would the Messiah be like? What did the people expect?

A Conquering King!



“...And the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom...form that time on and forever...”

Isaiah 9:6-7

For generations the Israelites had expected the fulfillment of prophecies such as this one – the great Messiah to deliver his people. Throughout the centuries the prophets had promised that he would come, a great king, like David, to conquer the enemies of God and establish the kingdom of God on earth. He would be a universal king, establishing a new order of peace, glory and joy. At the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the Romans oppressed and dominated the people of Israel. Not surprisingly, then, the Jews awaited a political savior, to remove the oppression of the despised Roman Empire. But who would have expected someone like Jesus?

Jesus surprised them all!

But a manger? A carpenter? A poor and humble man? A friend of prostitutes and thieves? A violent and gruesome death – and by crucifixion no less?!! No one expected that glory would be preceded by suffering; before the throne – a cross. No one, absolutely no one, expected someone remotely like Jesus.



What does the name, "Jesus Christ, mean?

"Christ" is a title – like "President," "Officer," "Governor," or "Your Majesty."

The title, "the Christ," means "The Anointed One." In that era, kings were designated by being "anointed" by oil. This symbolic and prophetic action indicated that God had chosen this individual for a special role of leadership, and endowed them with the Spirit of God.

The word "Messiah" is this exact same term in Hebrew, also meaning, "The Anointed One."

His name - Jesus

Jesus (Greek) = "The Lord Saves"

His title - Christ

"Christ" (Greek) = "Messiah (Hebrew) = "The Anointed King"

The Baptism of Jesus – God identifies and anoints Jesus as the "Christ/Messiah"



Visualize a crazy prophet, dressed in animal skins, with fiery eyes, shouting in the desert.



"Repent! Prepare the way for the coming of the Lord!" Then Jesus appears, mingling through the crowd like any other Hebrew carpenter, coming to be baptized by John the Baptist. A dove descends and a voice from heaven resounds. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Lord himself has done the anointing. The Lord himself has declared Jesus the Messiah; the Christ; the King.

The Earthly Ministry of Jesus

His Message – The Gospel - The “Good News”

“The time has come; the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the good news.”

Jesus Taught with Authority

“...the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” - Matt 7:29

He used “stories” – parables – comparisons and illustrations from daily life

A comparison can take an abstract, spiritual concept and make it concrete and understandable to those who may lack formal education, but possess a simple, open and teachable heart.

Parables drawn from domestic life – family and home The Kingdom of God is like....

- o A rebellious son who runs away from home
- o Another son – well behaved – but resentful and distant
- o A woman who loses a valuable coin
- o An annoying friend who knocks on the door at inopportune moments
- o A thief in the night

Parables drawn from the workplace – Agriculture and Business The Kingdom of God is like....

- o A shepherd who loses a sheep
- o A dishonest employee
- o A tree that fails to give fruit
- o A lazy worker
- o A contractor who builds on sandy soil
- o Various types of seed and soil
- o A mixed catch of fish
- o Separating the sheep from the goats



Jesus preached sermons

The most famous is “The Sermon on the Mount”(Matthew 5-8).

Jesus delivered prophecies (Mark 13; Matthew 25)

Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and his second coming.

Jesus calls the disciples -- - Intensive Training!

Jesus did not minister alone. He called a group of men, mostly from humble origins, to follow him and learn from his example.

They were called the "Disciples." They walked with Jesus; they ate with Jesus; they even fought with him from time to time! Through it all, Jesus "rubbed off" on them!

"Disciple" = Apprentice; Student

Jesus Performs Miracles and Exorcism

Miracles demonstrate vividly Jesus' identity and authority! They proclaim – "The Kingdom of God has arrived!"



The Miracles of Jesus

- He cast out demons
- He touched lepers
- He healed the blind, lame, and mute
- He changed water into wine
- He multiplied the loaves and fishes among thousands
- He walked upon the waters
- He restored a severed ear
- He calmed a storm
- He provoked a miraculous catch of fish
- He had Peter find a coin in a fish's mouth
- He raised the dead!

Jesus confronted the corrupt religious establishment

Pharisees and Scribes –Religious leaders dedicated to the strict legalistic obedience to the Old Testament ceremonial law.

- They fasted two days a week – minimum
- They memorized scripture
- They obeyed the ceremonial laws
- They invented an even more elaborate legal code
- They became arrogant
- They used their power to oppress the people and reinforce their social position.

Envious of Jesus, they accused him of being lascivious and gluttonous, a –friend of prostitutes and sinners. Ultimately, they arrested him and manipulated the Roman authorities into crucifying him on the cross.



The Suffering of Christ (Holy Week)

The last scene of a movie. The final note of a symphony. The dying words of a loved one. The last inning of a baseball game. Almost always, we save the most important for last.

Likewise in the life of Jesus. Almost half the gospel narratives are devoted to the final week of Jesus' earthly life; coming to a climax with his death and resurrection. We will briefly touch the principal events of this final week.

The "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem – Matthew 21:1-11

Exclamations! Leaps of joy! Children shouting! A truly "holy" chaos! Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.

In place of the traditional white stallion, used in war, Jesus arrives in peace and humility, mounted upon a donkey, fulfilling old Testament prophecy -

*"Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."
Zechariah 9:9*

The Last Supper – Mark 14:12-31

The Last Supper = The Passover Meal - Jesus becomes the sacrificial lamb!

Remember the night in which the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt? Remember how their lives were spared as the angel of death passed through the city, leaving dead the first born son of each family? Every family killed a lamb and smeared the blood on the doorframe of their home. From that night, the Israelites celebrated the feast which commemorated that salvation.



- *The Passover.*

The annual passover meal served to memorialize this salvation, through the blood of the sacrificed lamb. Jesus now sits to eat with his disciples, explaining, —This wine represents my blood; and this bread represents my body. I am the lamb of God. I lay down my life for you...

What parallel do we see between Jesus' sacrifice and the Passover story?_____

_____.

The Crucifixion – Luke 23:32-49 – A sacrifice for our sins

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn 15:13)

Jesus died – the lamb of God – in our place

The Bible provides several examples of sacrifice – in which one dies in place of another.

- An animal died in the garden of Eden to provide skins to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, after their sin.
- A ram died in place of Isaac
- A lamb was slaughtered and blood used on the doorframes to save the Israelites on the night of the Exodus.
- Thousands of animals were sacrificed in the tabernacle and temple to pay for the sins of the people of Israel.



The Resurrection – Matthew 28:1-10

The tomb is empty! Jesus is no ghost! After being raised from the dead he walked and ate with his disciples, allowing them to touch and feel him. He is alive!!

Read John 21:24-30

What does Thomas say after touching Jesus' wounds?

Before Jesus' death his entire band of disciples denied him and fled. After their encounters with him after his resurrection, however, all of these apostles, except for John died to affirm their testimony:

“We have seen Jesus. And he is alive!

John was exiled to an island for this testimony. The others were burned alive, tortured, and crucified for this same testimony. Would any sane person die for a lie? Of course not!

Jesus is alive!



Who is Jesus – God or Man?

Both! Jesus -- Completely Divine and Completely Human

The Bible teaches clearly that Jesus is the God-Man. He was crucified precisely for this claim – identifying himself as the divine Son of God. Jesus constantly spoke and behaved as if he were God Himself – in the flesh!

Jesus is not 50% Divine and 50% Human. Jesus is completely human and completely divine – 100% / 100%!

Examples of the Humanity of Jesus

God understands people! Because he lived a completely human life, Jesus can identify with any human emotion or struggle we may have. He became “one of us.”

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil.”
Hebrews 2:14

Jesus was Tempted!

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are experiencing temptation...” – Hebrews 2:18

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Heb. 4:15-16

According to these verses, why is it important for us to know that Jesus experienced temptation?

Jesus experienced fatigue after a long day of activity

In describing his trip through Samaria, the gospel writer reminds us that Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well... (John 4:6)

Asleep in the boat after a long day – Mark 4:35-38

“That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, Let us go over to the other side. Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat... a furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion...”

Jesus experienced hunger and thirst

He asked for a drink during his trip through Samaria.

—When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?:” John 4:7

On the cross

Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” -- John 19:28

After the Resurrection

—And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat? They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.” Luke 24:41-42

Jesus experienced Anger

He rebuked the Pharisees

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”
Matthew 23:33

He cast out the merchants from the temple

“...In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at the tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!” John 2:14-16

He experienced frustration with his disciples

“Oh unbelieving and perverse generation! How long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you?” Matthew 17:17



Jesus experienced Sadness

He wept for Jerusalem

“As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it...” (Luke 19:41)

Emotion at Lazarus' tomb

“Jesus wept.” John 11:35

He experienced intense grief before his arrest

—Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Matthew 26:38

“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.” Luke 22:44

It is important to recognize that many times our image of Jesus does not line up with the reality described in the New Testament. Which aspect of Jesus' humanity is most difficult for you to visualize? Circle one option:

Fatigue Anger Sadness Hunger/Thirst Temptation

Which did you choose, and why?

The Divinity of Christ

Examples of the Divinity of Jesus

Many cults teach that Jesus is not truly God in the flesh. Sometimes the Bible teaches this fact explicitly, and at other times the actions and words of Jesus imply this divine identity. Consider the following examples.

- 1.** Jesus forgave sins, a right reserved exclusively for God.
(Mark 2:5-7)
- 2.** Jesus accepted worship on various occasions, knowing that adoration is reserved exclusively for God.
(Matthew 2:11; 14:33; 28:9,17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38)
- 3.** Jesus calls God his "Father" in a way which made himself equal to God, for which he was accused of blasphemy by the religious leaders. (John 5:18)
- 4.** Jesus said, "The Father and I are one." Again, provoking the religious leaders to accuse him of blasphemy and attempt to stone him. (John 10:30)
- 5.** Jesus explained to his disciples, —The one who has seen me, has seen the Father."
(John 14:7-9)
- 6.** The Apostle Thomas called him "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28)
- 7.** Jesus called the angels of God, his angels. (Luke 12:8-9; y Matthew13:41)
- 8.** Jesus called the chosen of God, his chosen. (Mark 13:20, y Matthew 13:41)
- 9.** Jesus called the kingdom of God, his kingdom. (Matthew 13:41)
- 10.** Jesus said that he would judge the world one day, and only God is Judge.
(Matthew 25:31ff; 2 Timothy 4:1; 2Corinthians 5:10)
- 11.** Jesus called himself "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28)
- 12.** The Apostle Paul taught that —in him (Jesus) the fullness of the deity dwells"
(Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9)
- 13.** Hebrews teaches that the universe was made through Jesus, and that he is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." (Hebrews 1:1-4)
- 14.** Most importantly – Jesus was raised from the dead and called "Lord"!
- 15.** Jesus is the Divine "Word"

The Gospel of John says,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
Juan 1:1

Further on, John explains that...

“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” (John 1:14)

Which means that...

The Word = God = Jesus!

16. Jesus called himself the great “I AM” = Jehovah

Jesus said to the Pharisees,

“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.” (John 8:58)

Upon hearing this, his enemies...

“took up stones to kill him...”

What so infuriated them?

Because the name, “I AM” means, Jehovah!

Jesus was taking the name of God as his own identity! (Éxodus 3:14-15)

“Jesus called himself –Jehovah!”

iJesus is Jehovah!

iJesus is God!

Review Questions: The Gospels

What is the difference between the synoptic gospels and the gospel of John? (p.78)

_____.

Which are the three "synoptic" gospels? (p.78)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What type of Messiah did people expect? (p.78) _____.

How was Jesus a surprise to all? (p.79)_____

_____.

What does the name "Jesus" mean? (p.79)_____.

What does the title "Christ" mean? (p.79)_____.

Who baptized Jesus? (p.79) _____.

What does the word "gospel" mean? (p.80)_____.

What is a "parable"? (p.80)_____

Which is the most famous sermon Jesus gave? (p.80)_____

_____.

What does the word "disciple" mean? (p.81)_____.

What is the role of miracles? What does Jesus demonstrate through his miraculous signs? (p.81)

_____.

What is a "Pharisee"? (p.81)_____

_____.

Jesus died as a "sacrifice" for sin. Mention another example of sacrifice in the Bible?
(p.83)

Mention four examples of Jesus' humanity. (p.84 - 86)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Mention seven examples of Jesus' divinity. (pp.87)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____



LESSON #7 The Holy Spirit

Anointing for the Christian Life

The Work of the Holy Spirit

And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Counselor
to be with you forever "the Spirit of truth...
I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

– Jesus, John 14:16-18



We are a people of the Spirit! - Because God is present with us through the Holy Spirit we are not orphans! In this lesson we seek to learn how to cultivate the work and presence of the Spirit in our lives.

What is the Spirit like? -- Images of the Spirit in Scripture "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting." Acts 2:1-2



New Birth

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:8

—Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. "And with that he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:21-22

"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Genesis 2:7

Why does scripture compare the Spirit to wind, in your opinion?

Fire

Pentecost

“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...” Acts 2:3



Jesus will baptize with the Spirit and Fire

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Matthew 3:11

Column of fire before Israel in the desert

“By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.” Exodus 13:21-22

How does the Spirit compare with fire, in your opinion?

Dove – the Baptism of Jesus

... Jesus was baptized too. And he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” Luke 3:21-22



Why compare the Spirit to a dove, in your opinion?

Water

The Spirit quenches our thirst



—Jesus answered her, —If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water... Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life...” John 4:10 & 13-14

Rivers of Living Water flow from our inner being

—On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him....”John 7:37-38

A River of healing waters

“This water flows toward the Eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so wherever the river flows everything will live..... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing...” Ezekiel 47:6-12



“This water flows toward the Eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so wherever the river flows everything will live..... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing...” Ezekiel 47:6-12

Why compare the Spirit to “living water,” in your opinion?

What does the Spirit do? The Work of the Spirit

The Spirit works in the life of the believer principally in three ways...

1. Salvation – Spiritual rebirth
2. Sanctification – Spiritual transformation
3. Anointing to Serve – Spiritual power Salvation – Spiritual Birth!

Promise of the Old Testament – a New Heart

“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...” Ezekiel 36:26-27

Consider your own experience of coming to know Christ in a personal way. Describe the first times you remember sensing the presence of the Spirit.

Without spiritual rebirth, we cannot understand spiritual things

Try to describe the color blue to a person blind from birth.

Try to explain the sound of a Mozart symphony to a person deaf from birth.

Likewise with the Holy Spirit. Without being born of the Spirit, it is impossible to understand and perceive the Kingdom of God. One lacks a spiritual sense – or perception.

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. John 3:3,6

According to Jesus, Why is it necessary for a person to be born again?



Every true Christian has the Holy Spirit within

“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” Romans 8:9

Sanctification – The Spirit transforms us into his Glory

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with every increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:17-18

What is “Sanctification”? The Process of becoming more and more like Jesus!

The Spirit has a tremendous project in mind for your life. He longs to form you into the likeness of Jesus himself!!

He wants to transform you completely

- He wants to heal your emotional pain
- He wants to deliver you from destructive patterns
- He wants to change your way of thinking and seeing the world
- He wants to heal your relationships with others
- He wants to free you from sinful habits
- He wants to free you from negative patterns from your family background and previous generations
- He wants to smooth out your rough spots
- He wants to fill you with the love and goodness
- He wants you to shine with hope and joy

1. The Spirit gives victory over the sinful nature

Thank God “we are not condemned to fall into the same old patterns again and again. We can be free from sinful habits that have plagued our lives for years. But how? Have you ever tried to change a bad habit by simply —trying harder, as in a new year’s resolution?” What happened?

The “Flesh” = The Sinful Nature

We all have an “old self” which is in the habit of sinful behavior and attitudes.

We can change “not by human effort” but by the power of the Spirit within us!

Read Galatians 5:16-26 According to Galatians 5:16, what is the key to having victory over the sinful habits in our lives?

Mention some of the works of the sinful nature?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____



What are the "fruit of the Spirit"? Galatians 5:22 - 23

- | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 5. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 8. _____ | 9. _____ |

2. The Spirit Unifies us with other believers

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit..." Ephesians 4:1-4

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." 1 Corinthians 12:5 & 7 & 11

"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." 1 Corinthians 12:13

Why do we need the Holy Spirit to join us with other Christians, in your opinion?

3. The Spirit draws us into intimacy with the Lord

We are not orphans! The Spirit is our "Counselor"

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." Jesus - Juan 16:13-14

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth... I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." -Jesus Juan 14:16,18

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you..." Jesus - Juan 14:26-27

"...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with your spirit that we are God's children." Romans 8:14-16

According to these verses above, what are some specific ways in which the Spirit blesses us and brings us greater intimacy with God?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Pentecostal Anointing - Works of Spiritual Power

The Promise of Anointing

"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."



According to Acts 1:8, what is the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit for the Apostles?

The Spirit anointed the leaders of the Old Testament

God anointed Bezalel to build the Tabernacle

"Then Moses said to the Israelites, See, the Lord has chosen Bezalel son of Ur... and has filled him with the Spirit of God with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze..." Exodus 35:30-32

According to the text, for what purpose, specifically, did the Spirit anoint Bezalel?

God anointed Moses and the Elders to prophesy

"Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied..."Numbers 11:25

"...I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" Numbers 11:29



What happened to the Elders when they received the Spirit?

God anointed the Judges to do battle

"Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him." Judges 6:34

What did Gideon do when the Spirit descended upon him? Why?



"Samson went down to Timnah.... Suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands..."
Judges 14:6

"...the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men..."
Judges 15:14-15

What was the effect of the anointing on the life of Samson?

God promises the Baptism in the Spirit for all!

The Prophet Joel

"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."
Joel 2:28-29

John the Baptist

"...John answered them all, I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire..." Luke 3:16

Jesus

"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Lucas 24:49

Who baptizes in the Holy Spirit? _____.

How are baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit similar, do you believe? What do the two experiences have in common?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit – Pentecost – A spiritual explosion!



Read Acts 2:1-13 – Pentecost

What happens when the Apostles are baptized in the Holy Spirit?

What were some of the diverse reactions of spectators on the street below?

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit spreads

Read Acts 8:14-17 -- The Samaritans are baptized in the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 10:44-48 -- The Gentiles in Israel are baptized in the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 19:1-7 -- The Gentiles in Greece are baptized in the Holy Spirit

How are these events, mentioned above, similar to the events on Pentecost in Acts 2?

How are these events different from the events of Pentecost?

The Gift of Tongues and Prophecy – 1 Corinthians 14

What does it mean to “speak in tongues?”

The gift of tongues = The ability, given by the Spirit, to speak and pray an unknown language

God gives a very unusual gift called “speaking in tongues.” It is the God given ability to pray and worship God in a language unknown to the speaker. The believer’s spirit communicates directly with the Spirit of God in a language he himself or herself does not understand.

Speaking in tongues is praying and worshipping God

“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.” 1 Corinthians 14:2

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” Corinthians 14:14-19

According to this text, with whom do we speak when speaking in tongues?

What are we saying when speaking in tongues? _____.

Why speak in tongues?

The Spirit of God is beyond our capacity to comprehend and express. Therefore, it should not surprise us that our spirit communicates with God’s Spirit in a way that surpasses our ability to understand with the rational mind. When a person prays or speaks in tongues, his spirit is edified in a mysterious way.

“...He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...” 1Cor. 14:2-3

What is the gift of prophecy?

The gift of prophecy = Speaking messages inspired by the Holy Spirit

“But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort...” 1 Corinthians 14:3

According to this verse above, what is the purpose of the gift of prophecy?

Should speaking in tongues out loud be permitted in public worship services?

Only if there is translation, in order that the message might serve as a prophetic Word. Without such translation, the person ought to speak in tongues in a quiet voice, not distracting those around.

The Anointing must be Cultivated!

The Anointing can be renewed – it is not “once for all” – We must “fan the flame”

Paul wrote the following words to Timothy

“...For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of selfdiscipline...” 2 Timothy 1:6-7

Do not be complacent! We must seek the Spirit with persistence and intensity

Read Luke 11:9-13 – A Pushy Friend

According to Jesus, why did the neighbor give his friend the bread he requested?


In spite of being friends of Jesus, we will not receive the fullness of the Spirit unless we seek with intensity. The original Greek word used to describe the neighbor is best translated – “Shameless one”!

Our lifestyle can help cultivate the fullness of the Spirit

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ love the church and gave himself up for her..... Children, obey your parents in the Lord... Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord... Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect.... And masters, treat your servants in the same way. Do not threaten them...” Eph. 5:18 – 6:9

According to this text, mention four lifestyle habits that can cultivate the fullness of the Spirit.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

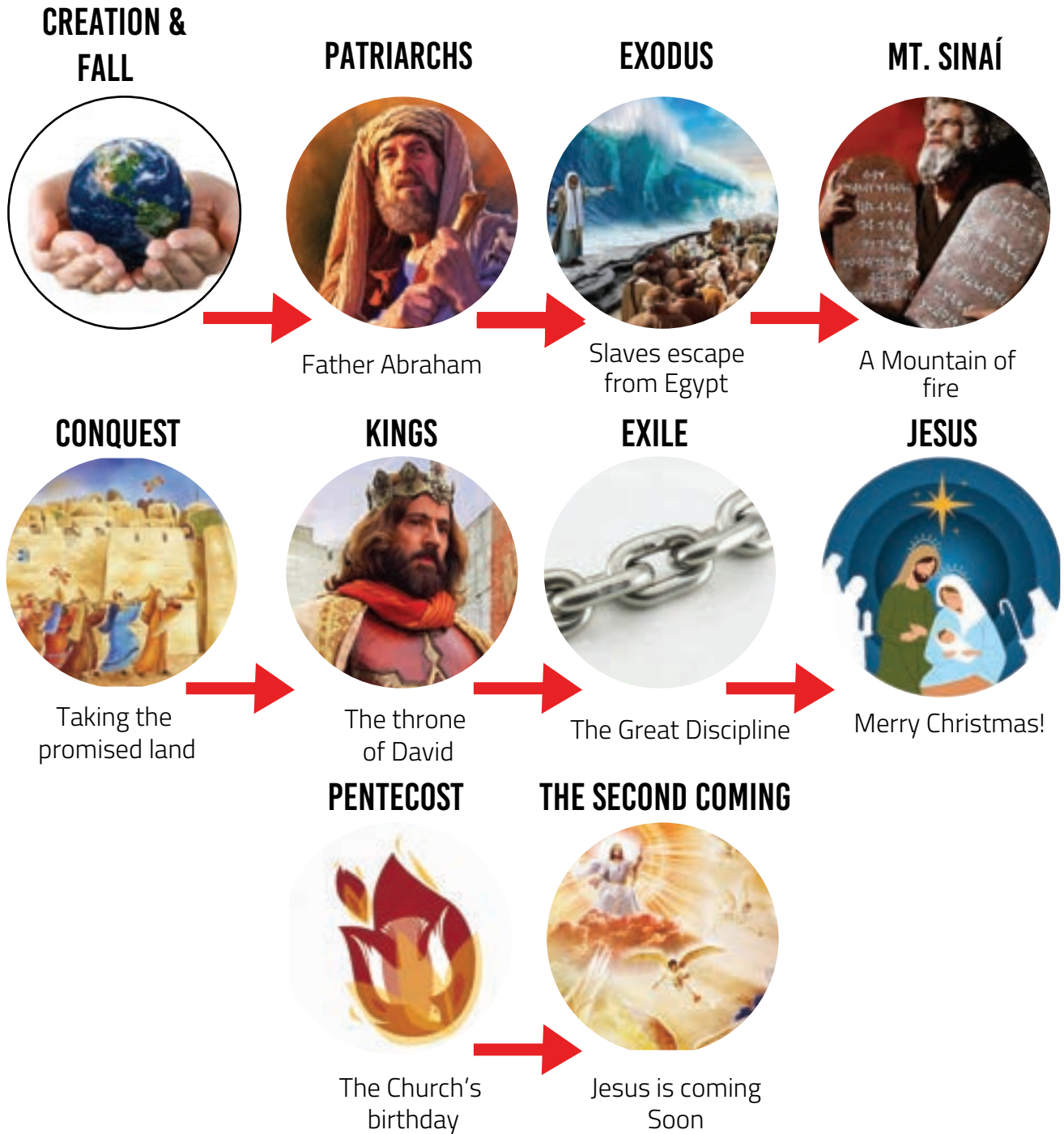


LESSON #8 The Principal Events and Characters of the Bible

The Divine Drama

The Divine Drama

In this Lesson we consider the basic "timeline" of the Bible. The "Divine Drama" is an overview of the principal events and characters in the Bible narrative, divided into 10 "scenes." Memorizing these ten points, we can grasp the basic outline of the Biblical narrative.



The Divine Drama



1. Creation and Fall: Let there be light! God creates the universe and humanity. Adam and Eve are tempted in the Garden of Eden, and rebel against God.



2. Patriarchs Father Abraham! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the fathers of the nation of Israel. This family-nation takes refuge in Egypt with their brother Joseph during a great famine. They eventually become enslaved there.



3. Exodus Slaves escape from Egypt! With Moses in the lead, they escape through the miraculous parting of the Red Sea.



4. Sinai A Mountain on Fire! Moses receives the Ten Commandments and blueprints for the Tabernacle (a mobile Temple).



5. Conquest Taking the Promised Land! After 40 years of wandering in the desert, they conquer the land of Palestine under the leadership of Joshua.



6. Kings The Throne of David! After the rule of the Judges, Kings reign over Israel, beginning with Saul, David and Solomon.



7. Exile The Great Discipline! God punishes the Israelites for worshiping idols. Her enemies conquer the nation and take the Israelites as prisoners for 70 years.



8. Jesus Merry Christmas! God becomes flesh to save humanity.



9. Pentecost The Church's Birthday! God pours out His Holy Spirit upon the first believers. The church is born!

10. Second Coming Jesus is coming soon!



THE DIVINE DRAMA



CREATION AND FALL

Let there be light!



PATRIARCHS

father Abraham



EXODUS

Slaves escape from Egypt



MT. SINAI

A Mountain on fire



CONQUEST

Taking the land of Israel



KINGS

The Throne of David



EXILE

The Great Discipline



JESUS

Merry Christmas!



PENTECOST

The Church's Birthday



THE SECOND COMING

Jesus is coming soon!

Important People and Events

Following the Timeline – “The Divine Drama” – we here review and summarize the principal events and Characters in the Bible narrative. Please read the texts and use your imagination! History is a great drama. Try to visualize the scenes – as if it were a majestic film!

1. The Epoch of the Creation and Fall

Visualize the wonders of nature – green meadows, a radiant, translucent sea, majestic mountains, a leafy forest, and countless millions of stars in the night sky. God saw *“everything he had made, and it was very good.”* He made the first human couple, and gave them authority over the splendor of this new world.



But as we all know, they used their free will to rebel against God’s benevolent rule and ally themselves to their mortal enemy—Satan. We read in Genesis 3:1-13 about the beginning of this tragic beginning to human existence.

Read Genesis 3:1-13

Mention some of Satan’s lies (or “half-truths”) (3:4-5)

Principal Characters and Events of the Creation Era

Adam and Eve The first human couple.

The Fall The Serpent tempts Eve, and both eat of the forbidden tree. They are cast out from the Garden of Eden and condemned to suffer and eventually die.



Cain and Abel The sons of Adam and Eve. The first murder.

The Flood God punishes humanity with a catastrophic flood.

Noah Survives the flood with his family in a giant ark.

Tower of Babel In prideful ambition, humanity builds a tower to reach heaven itself. They are punished and dispersed through the multiplication of languages.



2. The Era of the Patriarchs

God calls Abraham – the Father of Israel

Visualize an extremely old man, with a grisly white beard, and a face wrinkled by his many years and the strong desert winds. A voice calls and commands him to leave all in order to follow the Creator of the Universe. If he dares to obey, without knowing his precise destination, he will be the ancestor of a host of descendants, as numerous as the stars of heaven. They would have their own land and eventually spawn a descendants through whom all the nations on earth would find blessing. What did Abraham say? What would you have said?

Read Genesis 12:1-7

What are three of the promises to Abraham?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



What is meant by the phrase, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you?" (12:3)

Principal Events and Characters of the Patriarchal Era

Abraham The first patriarch, and the "father" of the nation of Israel. struggles with God.

Isaac Son of Abraham. Almost sacrificed!



Jacob The son of Isaac. A scoundrel as a young man. Struggles with an angel and is given the new name, "Israel" "The one who struggles with God."



Joseph Son of Jacob; sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. Becomes a great leader in Egypt and eventually saves his family from starvation!



Move to Egypt Jacob and his sons move to Egypt to survive a great famine. They become slaves in Egypt.



3. Era of the Exodus (Departure) - Israelites escape from Egypt!

Spiritual Warfare against Egypt – Plagues – the first Passover

Using the staff of his authority, Moses waged an epic spiritual war against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, inflicting terrible plagues upon the oppressive nation. The last and most horrific was “The Plague on the First Born.” An Angel of Death passed throughout the land, putting to death the eldest male of each family. The Israelites were instructed to butcher a lamb, however, and to smear the blood on the upper doorframe of the house. The Angel would recognize this sign, and pass such houses without killing the first born. And thus it happened. The morning air was pierced with the anguished cries of grief throughout the nation, and Pharaoh finally cast the Israelites from Egypt. The Jews still celebrate the Passover in memory of this event with a solemn meal, which finds fulfillment in Jesus’ “Last Supper” and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.



The Exodus – God Separates the Waters of the Red Sea

Visualize a ragged multitude of poor men, women and children, with their tunics and sandals, illuminated in the night by a column of otherworldly fire, moving steadily before them. They run as quickly as possible to escape the land of their bondage and suffering. When the sun rises, the fire transforms into a gigantic cloud which provides much needed shade from the scorching sun. In the distance, on the horizon, an immense army comes into view, rapidly overtaking the vulnerable multitude with terrifying speed. The crowd comes to the shores of the Red Sea, and freeze there, trapped without any apparent escape. They would never forget what would then occur...



Read Exodus 13:20 – 14:31

How do the people respond when they find themselves trapped? (Exodus 14:10-12)

What is the dialog between Moses and the Lord at this time? _____

Principal Events and Characters of the Exodus Era

Moses Born in Egypt. Called to deliver his people from slavery. Receives the ten commandments and blueprints to the tabernacle atop Mt. Sinai.

The Burning Bush God appears to Moses from within a bush in a theophany of divine fire.



Pharoe The Egyptian leader who resists freeing the Israelites from slavery.

The Passover God punishes Egypt, putting to death the first born of each family. The Israelites are saved by eating a sacrificial lamb and identifying their homes by smearing the blood on the doorpost. This "passover meal" comes to be the precursor for the "Lord's Supper" or "Communion" for Christians.



The Exodus God opens the waters of the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to escape.



4. The Era of Mt. Sinai

Visualize the same multitude of men, women and children camped out in the desert at the foot of a mountain. The earth trembles at the blast of awesome thunderclaps and the terrifying blast of a trumpet, piercing the air. All are gazing upwards, stunned and speechless at a sight never before witnessed on planet earth. They see atop the mountain the spectacle of burning smoke and fire, as if billowing from a live furnace. Moses ascends this mountain and enters the jaws of this other-worldly manifestation of the Divine Presence. He receives laws from God and the blueprint for a tabernacle, which will become the basis for a covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel.



Read Exodus 19:16 – 20:21

Please list the “Ten Commandments.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



The Tabernacle – A moveable temple for sacrifices and worship.

Rebellion and Punishment - Because of their rebellion against God and Moses, the Israelites are condemned to wander in the desert for 40 years before conquering the promised land.



5. Era of the Conquest of Caanan

Visualize a city in the desert, encircled by an extremely high wall of stone and bronze. You hear the shrill sound of the shofars and see an army marching behind, following the priests who carry a chest with long poles. What could these crazy people be doing?

Joshua 5:13 – 6:5 & 6:15-20 – Conquest of Jericho

Who appears to Joshua before the great battle for Jericho?



Why do you think the Lord commands them to march around the city as they do?

Joshua The leader of Israel after Moses. Leads them to conquer the land of Canaan. (Israel)

The Conquest Israel conquers the land of Canaan. (Jericho and other cities)

Judges Leaders of Israel after the conquest of Canaan.

Gideon A famous judge.

Deborah A famous female judge.

Samson and Delilah Another famous judge and his lover.



6. The Era of the Kings

Ruth The Great Grandmother of King David.

Saul - The first King of Israel. He was unfaithful and ultimately rejected by the Lord.

David – The most important King of Israel. He wrote many Psalms; sinned with Bathsheba and was ultimately restored. He was promised a descendant to rule over Israel forever.

Solomon – The most rich and powerful King of Israel. Wrote many proverbs. Built the temple. Married over 1,000 wives, many pagan, and ultimately fell into idolatry.

Read 1 Kings 3:3-15

What is the primary request Solomon makes of the Lord?



Jerusalem Capital of Israel.

The Temple Replaces the tabernacle. Place of sacrifices and prayer.

Divided Kingdom - Because of the sins of Solomon, a civil war brought division between Israel in the north and Judah in the south during the rest of the era of the kings.



Elijah A great prophet who challenged the people and kings of Israel for their idolatry.

7. The Era of the Exile -- Israel conquered and taken prisoner



Visualize a city in flames. As on the day the towers fell in NY City, there is fire, smoke, and people running in terror. Soldiers from Babylon have entered the city of Jerusalem, killing men, women and children as they lay waste to buildings and the temple. The nation is being punished for its idolatry, and for 70 years, "Israel," as a nation, ceases to exist.

2 Chronicles 36:15-21

What happened to Jerusalem? _____
_____.

Idolatry The principal sin of the Israelites. They worship demons and statues of stone.

The Prophets Messengers from God, sent to proclaim His words of warning against the sin of idolatry. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are the "Major Prophets."

The Exile Punishment of Israel and Judah for their idolatry. They are conquered and taken as prisoners to Assyria and Babylon.

Esther An Israelite woman in exile who comes to be the queen of Persia and saves the Jews from extermination.

A leader after the exile who rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem.

Ezra A leader after exile who rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem.



The exiled Israelites return to Israel after 70 years

There is always hope! A pagan King, Cyrus, gives permission to the Israelites to return to their land. God raises up Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and Ezra to initiate the rebuilding of the temple. Thank God! A new beginning!!



8. The Era of Jesus

Birth – Joseph and Mary Jesus is born to a poor and insignificant family in Bethelhem.



John the Baptist – A cousin of Jesus. He preaches repentance and baptizes contrite Israelites in the desert. He baptizes Jesus also. Not the same as John the apostle, who wrote the gospel. Decapitated in prison.



Pharisees – Religious Jewish leaders. Very strict. Jesus accused many of hypocrisy. The majority were enemies of Jesus.

The 12 Disciples (The three) – Followers of Jesus who were selected for intensive training, and would eventually become apostles. Among them, Peter, James and John constituted the inner circle of intimate disciples.



Parables – Stories and comparisons that Jesus utilized to teach.

Miracles – Miraculous signs to demonstrate the divinity and authority of Jesus.

The Last Supper – The Passover supper which Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion.

Pilate – The Roman governor of Judea who condemned Jesus to be crucified.

Crucifixion – A Roman torture, causing death by asphyxiation after several hours of being suspended from a cross-like structure. This death of Jesus served as the sacrifice for the sins of humanity.



Resurrection – After three days, Jesus was raised physically from the grave and appeared to his followers on multiple occasions.

Ascension – After forty days, Jesus was taken physically to heaven in the presence of his followers.

9. The Era of Pentecost

Pentecost – The Jewish feast of the Harvest ingathering. The Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples on this day in the form of fire and wind. Peter preached and 3,000 people put their faith in Christ.



Paul - Previously called "Saul," he was a Pharisee who persecuted Christians. God knocked him to the ground and appeared to him on the road to Demascus. He came to be a great Apostle who planted churches among the Gentiles (non-Jews) and wrote many letters, preserved in the New Testament.



10. The Era of the Second Coming

Jesus is coming back soon!



What are the "10 Scenes" of the Bible Timeline presented in this lesson? (p.105-107)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Who committed the first murder? (p.108) _____

Who were the first three patriarchs? (p.109)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Who was sold to Egypt and came to be a great leader? (p.109) _____

"Exodus" means _____. (p.110)

God appeared to Moses in a _____. (p.111)

The Egyptian King was called the _____. (p.111)

The Israelites escaped through the _____. (p.111)

On Mt. Sinai God gave Moses... (p.112)

1. _____
2. _____

What was the punishment upon Israel for their rebellion against God and Moses? (p.115)

_____.

The Leader after Moses was _____. (p.113)

Two famous judges are (p.113)_____ & _____.

David's great grandmother was _____. (p.114)

The first three kings of Israel.. (p.114)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The kingdom was divided between _____ in the north

And _____ in the south. (p.114)

What is the "Exile?" _____

_____.

The sin that caused the exile: _____. (p.115)

The Israelite who came to be queen of Persia: _____. (p.115)

The Israelite leader who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem (p.115)_____

_____.

They returned to Israel after _____ years of exile. (p.115)

Who baptized Jesus? _____. (p. 116)

Religious leaders who were enemies of Jesus: _____.(p.116)

What is a "parable"? (p.116) _____

_____.

The Roman governor who condemned Jesus: (p.116)_____.

What happened on Pentecost? (p.117)_____

_____.



LESSON #9 The Books of the Bible: An Overview
Mail from Heaven

The Books of the Bible A "Map" of the Books of the Bible

Imagine trying to navigate the streets of Boston without a map or GPS! Likewise in the devotional life of a believer, without knowing the principal sections of the Bible, one can easily feel confused about where to begin reading or how to understand what we are reading. If, however, we learn the order and logic of the arrangement of the books of the Bible, the scriptures become much more accessible. In this chapter we seek to provide orientation in how to navigate the Bible by presenting a basic outline of how the books of the Bible are divided into logical categories. Before beginning, we invite you to refer to the "Bible Overview" and "Bible Bookshelf" appendices. On these diagrams you will see the titles of all the Books of the Bible, divided according to general categories.

Our Goal: To Learn the Books of the Bible

- The Primary Categories (or "genres")
- The basic topics of the various books of the Bible



The Old Testament

"Old Testament" means literally the "Old Covenant" of God with humanity. The Old Testament presents the evolving relationship between God and humanity from the creation of the world through a period roughly 400 years before the birth of Christ. In the Old Testament we find books of history, poetry and prophecy.

- History Books (Génesis, Exodus, etc.)
- Poetry Books (Psalms, Proverbs, etc.)
- Prophecy Books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.)

The New Testament

"New Testament" means "The New Covenant" of God with humanity. It reveals Christ as the savior of humanity and relates his life and teachings. It also includes an account of the beginnings of the Christian church (the "Acts" of the Apostles) along with letters from the first Christian leaders (Apostles).

- The Gospels - The Life of Christ, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- The Acts of the Apostles - The history of the first Christians, written by Luke.
- Letters (Epistles) - from Paul and the other Apostles to churches and individuals
- Revelation - Prophecy about the second coming of Christ

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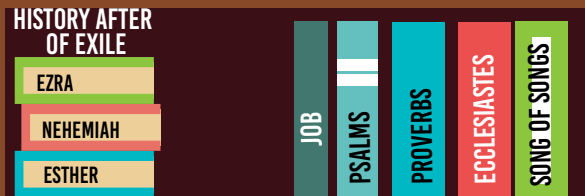
PENTATEUCH



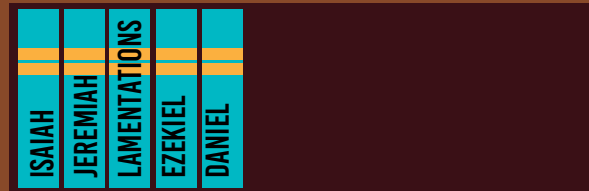
HISTORY BEFORE EXILE



POETRY



MAJOR PROPHETS



MINOR PROPHETS



GOSPELS



HISTORY



LETTERS OF PAUL



GENERAL LETTERS

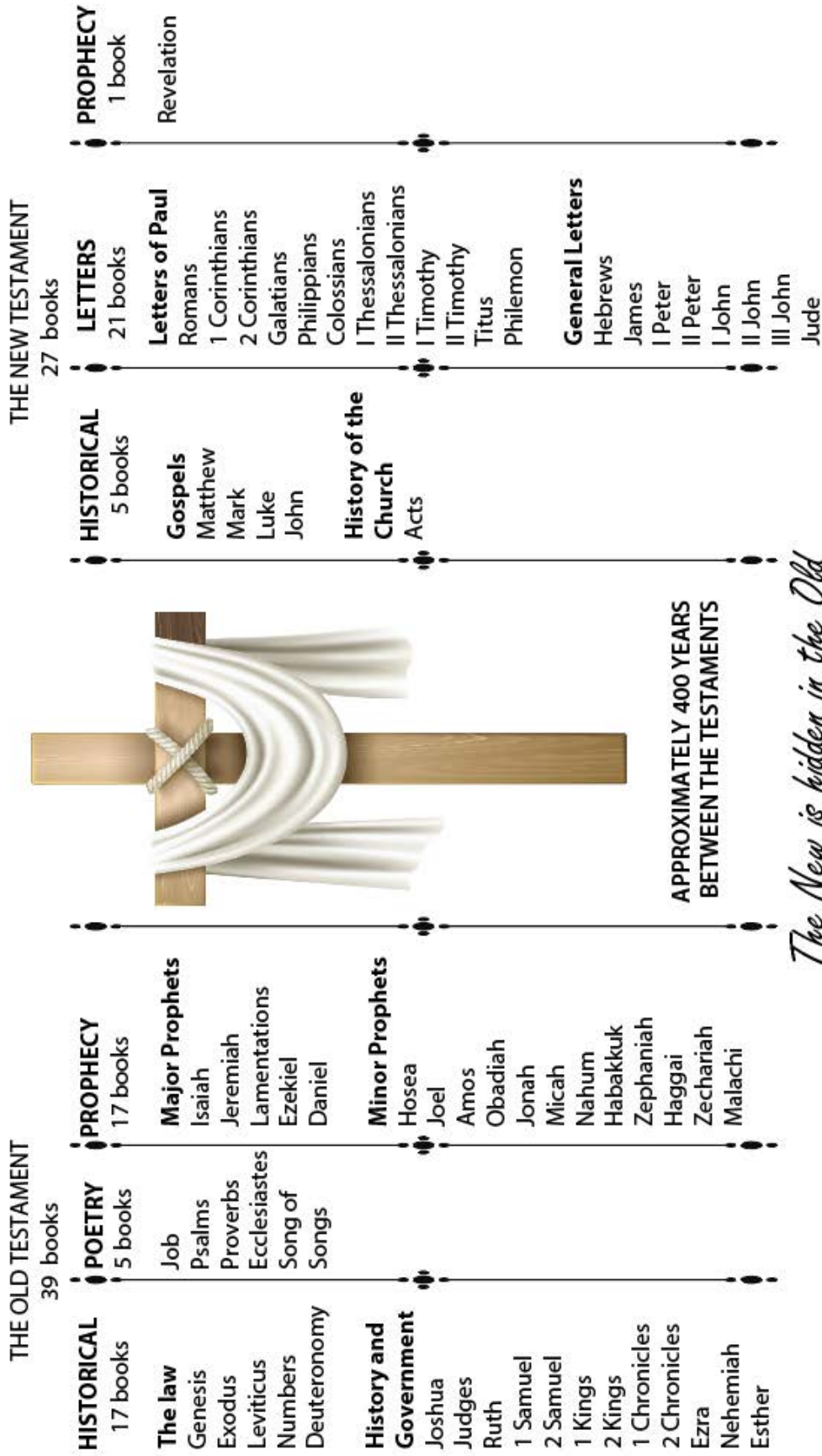


PROPHECY



OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

66 Books



*The New is hidden in the Old
The Old is Revealed in the New*

The Books of the Old Testament

The History Books of the Old Testament

These books teach the history of Israel from the creation of the world up to about 400 years before the birth of Christ. The key moment we use to divide these books is the "Exile" when Israel was conquered by their enemies and taken into 70 years of captivity in Babylon and Assyria.

The History of the Birth of Israel – The Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy



History of Israel up to the Exile

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles



History of Israel after the Exile

Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther



History of Israel - Basic Topics of each Book

The History of the Birth of Israel (The Penteteuch)



1. Genesis: The book of origins – the creation; the fall of humanity; the flood; the call of Abraham and the Patriarchs – the fathers of Israel.



2. Exodus: The deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The covenant with God given to Moses atop Mt. Sinai.



3. Leviticus: Priestly legal codes – laws and guidelines for the holiness of worship in the tabernacle. (Mobile temple)



4. Numbers: The disobedience of Israel and wanderings in the desert for 40 years.



5. Deuteronomy: An extended discourse by Moses to the people of Israel in the desert, reviewing the laws, promises and warnings included in the previous books. This discourse was meant to prepare them to enter the promised land.

Books of the History of Israel before the Exile



6. Joshua: The Conquest of Canaan.

7. Judges: The rule of military “judges” (Gideon, Samson, Deborah, etc.)

8. Ruth: History of a righteous woman – David’s grand-mother.

9. I Samuel: The kingdom begins - Saul, David

10. II Samuel: The kingdom established - David

11. I Kings: Solomon builds the temple – the kingdom divides

12. II Kings: The Kingdom divided between the North (Israel) and the South (Judah); Idolatry and Exile.

13. I Chronicles: Review of the history of David

14. II Chronicles: Review of the history of Salomon, the kings, and the exile.



Books of the History of Israel after the Exile



15. Ezra: The Israelites return and rebuild the temple.

16. Nehemiah: The Israelites return and rebuild the walls around Jerusalem.

17. Esther: A beautiful Israelite becomes queen and saves her people.

Poetry Books

Poetry of Praise, Love, Advice and Philosophy

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs



Summary of the Poetry Books of the Bible

Job: An extended poem, seeking meaning in the midst of human suffering.

Psalms: Songs and prayers to God.

Proverbs: Concise poems about integrity in the practical affairs of everyday life.

Song of songs: Love poems celebrating erotic love between husband and wife. Can be used as an analogy for the believer's intimacy with Christ.

Ecclesiastes: An exploration of the quest for meaning in life.



Prophecy Books

Messages and sermons by the prophets immediately before, during and after the exile. These messages were exhortations and warnings of impending judgment. This collection is divided between the "major" and "minor" prophets, based on the length of the books. (Not their importance!)

Prophecy Books

Major Prophets (longer books)

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel



Minor Prophets – (briefer books)

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi



The Context of the Prophets

Prophets – the Megaphone of the Spirit

The Prophets were like the megaphone that God used to get his message through to hard hearted people! They proclaimed the word of God directly and passionately. They shouted, wept, used creative object lessons and did somersaults to get the message through. There is even one extreme case of a prophet directed by God to marry an unfaithful prostitute to show Israel what it was like to be married to them!

Rampant Idolatry in the Epoch of the Prophets

Visualize a Pagan Temple!

Imagine a pagan temple, set up on a hill. Incense rises from a sacrificial figure of a nude goddess or a golden calf. Before offering the sacrifices, the worshipers enter a makeshift tent in order to engage in sexual relations with a “sacred” prostitute, male or female. They believe that such sexual activity in the “temple” can channel the spirit of the goddess and invoke a blessing for fertility of crops. But even more terrible than these abominations, they commit horrifying atrocities. One can hear screams – as if from a slaughtered sheep. But upon the sacrificial altar one sees with terror and shock – not an animal, but an infant perishing in the flames. By sacrificing the baby, it is believed that the goddess will multiply other children and abundant crops.

This scene does not describe the worship of a pagan people – but the people of Israel before their punishment of exile. From generation to generation the nation of Israel had become increasingly degraded. They had ceased to worship God and set themselves to worship idols – statues of stone, representing demons. They sacrificed their children in the fire, practiced divination, and engaged in sexual immorality with temple prostitutes as part of their Satanic worship. Israel came to be a pagan nation – even worse than the nations they displaced from the land of Canaan. Like an unfaithful wife, Israel had left her “first love” in order to commit spiritual adultery with other gods.



Idolatry – A great temptation!

- ***It was Convenient*** – An altar could be erected in any house or on any hill. One did not have to travel to the temple in Jerusalem to worship God as prescribed in the law.
- ***It was “Normal”*** - Every nation had its own personal “god” or “goddess.” In fact, Israel was the only nation which worshiped an invisible, spiritual, and universal God.
- ***It was Logical*** – It made sense to believe in gods who “specialized” in particular problems: Healing, fertility, prosperity, war, etc. Also, one can see and touch an idol. To worship an invisible God seemed ludicrous.
- ***It was Sensual*** – An idol was artistic and aesthetically pleasing – involving fine craftsmanship. One also could kiss the idol and smell the incense being offered.
- ***It was Carnal*** – Eating meat and drinking alcohol was part of a pagan feast.
- ***It was Erotic*** – Pagan prostitution allowed worshipers to combine sexuality and spirituality.
- ***It was Easy*** – Idolatry made no moral demands on the life of the worshiper. One could offer sacrifices and need not make changes in his or her daily lifestyle.

Prophets Warn the Nation

The First Commandment - No Idols!

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything... you shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." (Éxodus20: 1-5^a)

God will not be trifled with! He is Holy, and ready to punish any sin, even among his own special people. Therefore, he sent his chosen messengers – the prophets. These prophets listened to the voice of God and transmitted the message to the people.

Repent! If you do not turn from worshiping idols, you will be defeated by your enemies and taken captive as prisoners to foreign lands. Israel will be destroyed!



The Punishment – Exile

Babylon and Assyria Conquer Judah and Israel

The Israelites failed to take the prophets seriously and continued in their sin. Therefore, they were conquered by two great and strong nations. First, the Assyrians defeated Israel in the north, and about two hundred years later, Babylon conquered Judah in the South. They burnt the temple to the ground; robbed the sacred utensils; killed men, women and children; and put out the eyes of the king. The remnant of survivors was taken into captivity in Babylon and other nations. After 70 years, God caused them to return to the land of Israel once again. During that era after their punishment, God sent prophets once again to encourage them to be faithful to God and to rebuild the temple and the walls around the city of Jerusalem.



The Exile – A Warning for us!

This punishment serves as an example for us. Therefore, the Lord has preserved an extensive record of these prophetic messages in His Word. From these books of the Bible we learn that being faithful to God is a serious and awesome responsibility, not to be taken lightly.



Timeline of the Prophets

There were prophets before, during and after the Exile.

Prophets before the Exile

Isaiah
Jeremías
Amos
Hosea
Micah
Zepheniah
Habbakuk
Nahum
Obadiah
Jonah
Joel

Prophets during the Exile

Ezekiel
Daniel



Prophets after the Exile

Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi



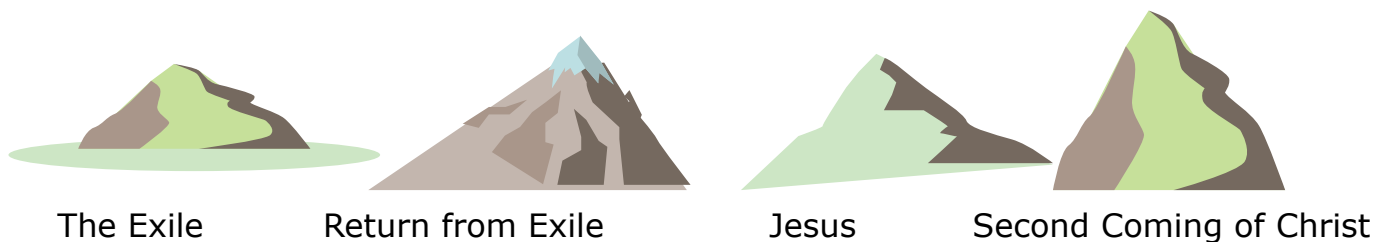
Making Sense of the Prophecy Books – Different Perspectives of Time

The Prophets received messages about various events, sometimes combined in a single dream or revelation. Therefore, one must recognize that a single “prophecy” can refer to distinct events, such as the Exile, the Return; the birth of Christ; and the end of the world – all mixed together! To understand prophecies better, then, we should think of the prophets as describing a faraway mountain range on the horizon. From afar, it is difficult to estimate the distances between the various mountain peaks. Likewise with the prophets, it was sometimes not possible to express the precise chronology of the events they could foresee through spiritual revelation.



The Prophet “sees” all events on the same horizon

The reality could be a combination of distinct events, separated by many years.



The Preaching of the Prophets – Actions speak louder than words!

Shouts, Somersaults, Scandal and Spectacle – the prophets used whatever means necessary to get the attention of a hardened people. Consider the following examples of “prophetic communication.”

- Hosea married an unfaithful prostitute – just as God married unfaithful Israel
- Jonah was vomited from the mouth of an enormous fish
- Ezekiel was forbidden to grieve the loss of his wife
- Hosea gave the following names to his kids: “Unloved” and “Not-my-People.”
- Isaiah walked about half-naked
- Jeremiah wore a yoke of Wood – and then Iron!
- Ezekiel built a model replica of Jerusalem and laid beside it in “siege” for more than a year!
- Jeremiah visited the house of the potter
- Jeremiah wept and wept and wept because of the coming judgment

Which of these examples most grabs your attention? _____.

The New Testament

The Gospels -- Portraits of the life of Jesus

The life and teachings of Jesus, written by his close followers.

Matthew -- An ex – tax collector and disciple of Christ

Mark -- A young follower of Jesus. Interviewed Peter.

Luke -- A doctor and historian. Interviewed Mary and the apostles.

John -- An intimate disciple of Jesus.

Synoptic Gospels – *Matthew, Mark and Luke* -
Similar in their chronological style.



John

More philosophical in orientation than the other three. Emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus and includes some teachings that do not appear elsewhere.

The Acts of the Apostles

The History of the first Christians

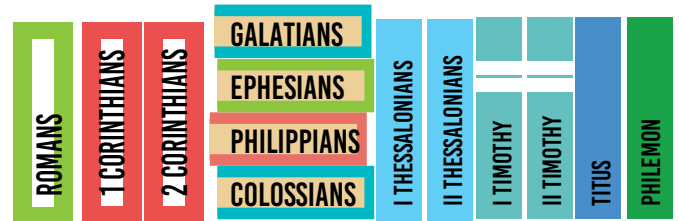
Anointing - Pentecost - a Spiritual Explosion!



The Letters - "Epistles"

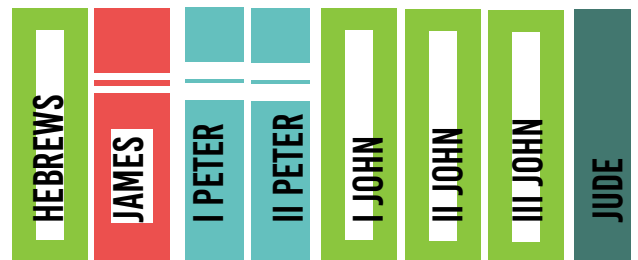
Paul's Letters: (titles are names of the recipients; whether particular cities or individuals.)

1. Romans
2. I Corinthians
3. II Corinthians
4. Galatians
5. Ephesians
6. Philippians
7. Colossians
8. I Thessalonians
9. II Thessalonians
10. I Timothy
11. II Timothy
12. Titus
13. Philemon
14. Hebrews



General Epistles - Letters by other Apostles (titles are names of the writers)

1. James
2. I Peter
3. II Peter
4. I John
5. II John
6. III John
7. Judas



The Letters – One by One ³
Basic content of each letter

Paul's Letters to the Churches

Romans A logical presentation of the doctrine of Salvation.

1 Corinthians Directed to specific moral problems in the church of Corinth

2 Corinthians Paul explains and defends his Apostolic ministry

Gálatians Paul corrects the error of the "judiazers" who attempted to integrate the Old Testament law into Christian practice.

Ephesians Paul explains the importance of unity and holiness for spiritual warfare. (The Armor of God)

Philippians An affectionate letter about joy and peace in the midst of trials. Written from prison.

Colossians The preeminence of Christ and unity in the church.

1 & 2 Thessalonians – Very personal letters which deal with specific questions, especially the second coming of Christ and practical Christian living.

Paul's Letters to Individuals

1 y 2 Timothy Encouragement and counsel to a Young pastor.

Titus Instructions to a new pastor.

Philemon Personal letter to the owner of a fugitive slave, urging kindness and mercy.

Anonymous Letter

Hebrews A strong doctrinal letter, explaining how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. Directed to Christians under persecution, emphasizing perseverance.

³ Anders, Max. 30 Days to understand the Bible. Caribe. Nashville. 1996.pp162-163

General Letters – by other Apostles

James: A brother of Jesus. Teaches about practical holiness in daily life.

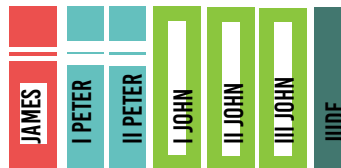
1 & 2 Peter: Deals with suffering and persecution in the Christian life.

1 John: The signs of an authentic believer.

2 John: A personal letter to a Christian sister who is being pursued by cults.

3 John: Advice and encouragement to a personal friend.

Judas: Another brother of Jesus, not the Judas who betrayed Jesus. A brief letter warning about false teachers.



Revelation

The last book of the New Testament. Prophecy about the last days and the second coming of Christ.



Comprehension Questions– Lesson #9 – The Books of the Bible

List the principal divisions of the books of the Old Testament. (p.121)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List the divisions of the Historical Books of the Old Testament. (p.122)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What was the "Exodus?" (p.125)

What are the books of the Pentateuch? (Birth of Israel) (p.125)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What was the "Exile" and why did it happen? (p.130)

What are the historical books written about Israel after the Exile? (p.131)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why was idolatry such a strong temptation? (p.129)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

List the Poetry Books of the Old Testament? (p.127)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the two principal divisions of the Prophecy Books of the Old Testament?
(p.128)

1. _____
2. _____

List the "major prophets." (p.128)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What are the principal categories of the books of the New Testament? (p.121)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

List the four gospels. (p.133)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What is the "book of Acts" about? (p.133)

_____.

Which apostles wrote letters in the New Testament? (p.134)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



LESSON #10 Evangelism
How to share the Gospel and your Testimony

Evangelism

You are an Ambassador of the King

"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." Prov. 11:30

Our Goal is to begin sharing the gospel!

- Review the gospel message
- Learn how to share our Testimony



We are all called to Share the Gospel!

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Romans 10:14-15

According to this verse, why is it necessary to preach the gospel?

Jesus has commissioned you to preach --- and promises to be by your side as you do!

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "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."

Matthew 28:18-20

What is our —Great Commission as Christians?

We should be “Shameless” about preaching

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” Romans 1:16

Paul insists that he isn’t ashamed of the gospel. What are some reasons why we might be shy about sharing our faith?

The Need is Great!

“He told them, The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Luke 10:2

What does it mean that —the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few?

Review from Lesson #1: The Message of Salvation

Our Message Jesus was Crucified to Save us!

*“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”
1 Corinthians 2:1-2*



Why is it so important to preach Jesus Christ crucified? What was it necessary for Jesus to die for us?

1. *We are all Sinners*

The word "salvation" implies that we need to be saved! The Bible says that we all have sinned. (Romans 3:23).

Some say, "I'm basically a good person. I don't kill anyone. I'm nice to others. Why does the Bible say I'm a sinner who needs to be saved?" How do we answer?

2. *The Result of Sin is Death*

"For the wages of sin is death."
Romanos 6:23



3. *We cannot save ourselves.*

What are some of the ways people usually think they can "be good enough" to save themselves? (See Ephesians 2:8-9)

1. _____
2. _____

Why is it impossible to earn our own salvation?

4. *Jesus Died for us and Paid the Price for our Sins*

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, And the Life, no one comes to the father except through me."
John 14:6



Our Part in the Salvation Process

- **Repent**
- **Receive**
- **Rejoice!**

We need to “repent” of our sins

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” Mark 1:15

What does it mean to “repent?”

We must receive Christ by faith

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” John 1:12

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved you and your household.” Acts 16:31

There are many who say, “I believe in God,” but it is obvious that their lives do not match their words. How can we explain the difference between simply saying we believe in God, and actually having the faith that is necessary for salvation?

We have to profess our faith in Jesus publically

“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”
Romans 10:9-10

Let’s Pray - Write a prayer to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Your Testimony: A key to Evangelism **You have a powerful story to tell!!**

Whether you think so or not, you have a testimony!! A "testimony" conveys your story of how you came to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Some people have dramatic stories of being rescued from deep darkness, while others came to faith more gradually, or perhaps even as a little child. Thank God, however, we each came to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior and can present the gospel through sharing our own experience. Below we share some simple guidelines about how to prepare your personal testimony.

The "Message" – Jesus changed my life, and he can change your life as well!!

Basic Structure

- **"Before"** – Briefly describe your life before coming to know Jesus, preferably focusing on a specific area of need or struggle.
 - o I often felt lonely and misunderstood.
 - o I could not bring myself to stop drinking.
 - o I was religious and "nice" but did not understand a personal relationship with Christ.... Etc.

- **"What happened"** – How did you come to decision to receive Jesus as your Lord? Describe the specific situation. This part should include a presentation of the gospel such that the listener could imitate your example to receive Christ him or herself.
 - o I came forward at an altar call and confessed my sins and accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior.
 - o I prayed with my best friend to receive Christ as my Lord.

 - o Alone in my room, I yielded my heart to the Lord and really put my trust in Jesus as my Lord and Savior..... etc.

- **"After"** – Mention some specific ways in which your life changed after receiving Christ. Careful not to exaggerate and make it seem as if life was perfect after that moment. Try to focus on the specific issues you mentioned earlier in your story.
 - o From that time on I felt a new personal connection to Christ which I had not experienced in my years of merely "going to church."

 - o Over time God gave me the courage to find help for my drinking problem. I have been sober for ten years.

 - o While I still have my ups and downs, Jesus helps me not to feel alone and insecure. I am aware of his love and feel optimistic about the future....etc.

One person's Testimony can "Rock" a Nation!!

Lazarus

Lazarus was raised from the dead. What a story!! Check out the results....

"Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him." John 12:9-11

Why did the Pharisees want to kill Lazarus? What was the effect of his testimony.

The Samaritan Woman

Jesus prophesized to a woman of "ill repute" that he met by the well one hot day. Deeply impacted by his words, she went into town and told everyone who would listen that she had met a true prophet. Could he be the Messiah?

Again, check out the results....

"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." John 4:39-42

What was the effect of the woman's testimony?

Do you know someone like that – who changed drastically after encountering Jesus in their lives? What was the effect of this person's changed life on you and others who knew him or her?

Some examples of Testimonies

Example #1: The Apostle Paul

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." 1 Timothy 1:12-16

What was Paul like before meeting Jesus?

How was his life changed?

What message did Paul hope others would receive through his own personal testimony of salvation?

**Example #2: Camacho el Macho Chamaco
Tough guy Tom**

As a young man I lived a pretty crazy life. I bounced from woman to woman, thinking that this behavior made me more of a "man." I also drank too much – again, to earn the respect and admiration of my friends and be more of a "tough guy."

But when I was 18 years old I started working for a boss that I respected tremendously. He was a strong man, and extremely fun to be around, but he didn't drink and stayed faithful to his wife. I was impressed by his example and his genuine personal relationship with Christ. I went to his church and there heard about Jesus as a person I could know in a personal way. I felt that they were "on" to something real, and after one service I prayed to accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

He changed my life completely. I know that being a true man is not living a wild life, but serving God and being there for my wife and kids. I'm a leader in my church and feel the blessing of God on my career and home.

What is the "before" for Camacho?

How did he meet Jesus?

Describe the "after" for Camacho?

**Example # 3 – Barbarita la Buena
Nice Nelly**

I grew up in church. My mother and father always brought me to services and activities for children and youth. I never got involved in drugs or harmful relationships with boys, the way many of my friends did. I always saw myself as a “nice girl” and thought that I pretty much deserved good things in life.

But when I was 14 years old I heard a sermon about “pride” and realized that I had that type of superior attitude in my heart. I realized that in spite of being so religious and so “good,” that I still needed Jesus to forgive my sins and fill my heart. The pastor made an altar call and I went forward to receive Christ as my Lord and Savior. When I prayed, I felt a new type of joy and peace that I had never felt before. I felt that the Holy Spirit had entered my life and I had been born again.

Now I continue to go to church and while my life may not have changed in dramatic external ways, I feel completely different inside. I’m not “religious” anymore and I have a personal relationship with Christ.

What was the “before” like for Nelly?

How did she come to know Christ as Lord and Savior?

Describe the “after” for Nelly.

**Example #4 – Ana la Sanada
Helen finds Healing.**

I grew up in an extremely abusive household. As a child I experienced various types of abuse from my mother's boyfriends which caused deep wounds in my life. I saw myself as a worthless human being and repetitively entered into destructive relationships with men, feeling always more depressed and lonely. Sometimes I came to the point of wanting to end my own life.

But when I was 25 years old I met a co-worker who invited me to her church. I wanted to visit but at the same time felt afraid of being rejected. I had always imagined "church" people to be the types who wouldn't want to be around someone like me. But my friend was completely different from this preconception I had, extremely warm and accepting, so I decided to give her church a chance. At first I sat in the last row and carefully observed the people singing and raising their hands in worship. I thought it was all rather strange, but felt drawn to the joy that they demonstrated. After visiting a few times, one day during a song I felt something special move in my heart and the tears started to flow. My friend asked if I wanted to accept Jesus, and I said yes. We prayed together right there, during the songs, and I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior. That day I felt like a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders... as if I could fly!

I would be lying if I said my life changed overnight. It was a long process of healing, but little by little, I felt a new power within me to change my life style and way of thinking. I broke up with the man who was mistreating me and began to feel better about myself. Now I'm taking a discipleship class at church, and I feel a new hope about my future. Jesus is changing my life!!

Describe the "before" for Helen? _____

How did she meet Jesus? _____

How did Helen's life change? _____

Now Write your own Testimony!! --- Some Guidelines!!

Be brief!!!

- Try to summarize and focus on your salvation experience
- It should be presentable in 2-3 minutes

Concise

- Try not to get lost in too many details.
- Do not try to tell the entire story of your life
- Focus on that which is most relevant to your experience of salvation in Christ
 - Don't tell about all your pets as a child
 - Don't describe every drug you took
 - Don't tell the whole "soap opera"

Appropriate and Discrete

- Don't air out all the dirty laundry
- Avoid graphic or sexual details
- Be aware of your audience. For example, do not tell a young child: "I stabbed two men in cold blood!"
- Be careful not to betray the privacy of others in your story
- Do not glorify sin and Satan. Remember that God is the hero of the story!

Avoid Exaggeration

- Resist the temptation to paint the story in overly simplistic terms: "I was a devil and now I'm an angel."
- Resist the temptation to exaggerate the intensity of your sinful past
- Resist the temptation to exaggerate the intensity of your conversion
- Be honest and balanced

Don't Preach

- The testimony is meant to be your story, leave preaching for other contexts
- The idea is to share and not lecture the listener at this time

Include the Gospel

- The process of salvation should be clear.
 - "I prayed to receive Christ as my Lord and Savior."
- The Listener should be able to understand the basics of the gospel through your story.
- It should be possible for the listener to himself or herself be saved, based on following the example of your testimony.

Review Questions

List the important points in our presentation of the góspel message.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How should we respond to the góspel to be saved. What is our part in the salvation process?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Review – The 10,000 dollar question!

If you were to die today and the Lord were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you say?

What are some guidelines in preparing a good testimony presentation?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Assignment: Write your Testimony!

The Before: - What was your life like before coming to know Christ. Mention one or two specific areas of struggle you faced.

The New Birth – What happened? - Describe your experience of receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior. Be sure to include the basics of the gospel.

The "After" - How has your life changed after coming to know Christ? Try to focus on some specific areas in which this change has been evident.

Hit List - Jot down the names of five people you know who are not yet active believers and with whom you could share your personal testimony.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____