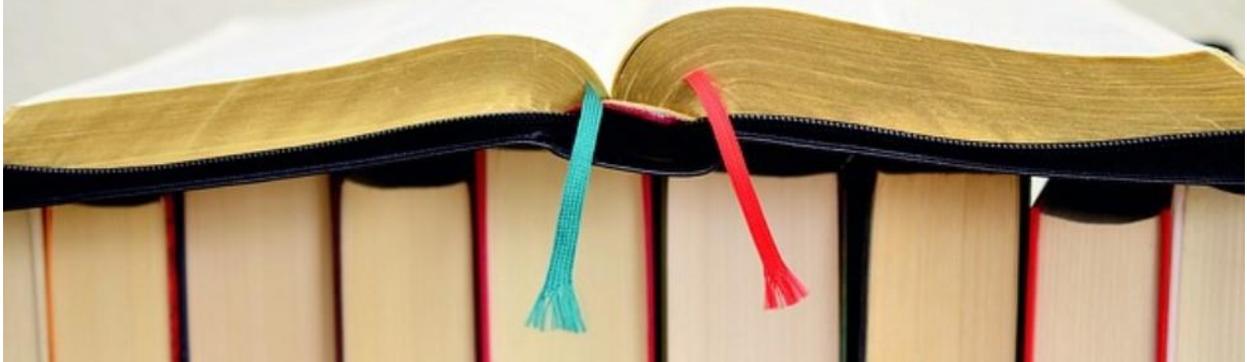


Understand the **Bible better** in 7 Lessons

Get a synopsis of each book of the Bible in 7 quick lessons



A Bible study written for those who have the opportunity to lead spiritually but are not sure where to start.

Written by Reverend H., creator of the Christian Business Revolution

The story behind this study

When I was younger I went to Vacation Bible Study in the summer. Each time the caring ladies tried to get me to memorize the list of the Books of the Bible. These well-meaning ladies wanted to help me know where to find things in the Bible. It is a good idea to start, but they never told me what was in those books. The lists faded from my memory as soon as I got my prize.

When I began to read the Bible for myself as an adult, I quickly became frustrated and got bogged down. I did not know how the pieces fit together. I decided to read the whole Bible and started in Genesis. I got stuck with all the names in Numbers. I didn't know why I had to go through a bunch of people's names just to read the story about God and soon gave up.

I knew the Bible had a great story. I knew God wanted to reveal Himself through His word. I just didn't know how to read the Bible for myself and I was stuck.

I went to church as an adult, but I found the teachings focused on individual verses rather than getting an overview of the entire book. Without knowing what the book was about the verses seemed to float away in my brain. These are great to learn from, but I wanted to understand how these verses fit into the overall story of God's revelation of Himself to mankind.

My prayer for you, and yes, I am praying for you, is that you will use this Bible study at your home, work and church to lead others. I am not charging any money for this study because I believe everyone should have a good understanding of the Bible.

I posted this Bible study on ChristianBusinessRevolution.com because I wanted Christian Business leaders to grow spiritually and influence those around them. If you take this Bible study and just lead your spouse through it, it will be a great experience. I hope the confidence you gain by doing that will encourage you to lead this study at your work or at your church to impact others and give them a good basis for understanding the Bible.

I wrote this Bible study to give the broad strokes of the entire Bible. We are going to step back and take a bird's eye at look at every book in the Bible in 7 lessons. Here is the framework of our study:

1. The Beginnings
2. The History
3. The Wisdom
4. The Prophets
5. The Gospels
6. The Letters
7. The Revelation

My hope is that by giving you an understanding of the Bible as a whole, you will feel more confident to read your Bible and lead others.

-----How to use this Bible Study-----

This study is written in a narrative form. Anyone can read the Bible study right off the page. It is set up to be easy with simple questions to keep people engaged. Each lesson should take about thirty minutes.

The goal is to give an overview of the entire Bible through the general flow of each book rather than getting into specific verses and chapters. I give an overview of the section, where we are in God's story and a short lesson on each book in that section.

Each lesson can be done as a whole lesson or broken up if you want to allow more discussion. It is all dependent on your time allocation, skills and purpose. Most lessons can be read in about 30 minutes and I will provide some simple work sheets to keep the lesson moving.

The worksheets are provided to give a guide to those who are listening so please make these available to your Bible study participants. It may be easiest to have them all printed, but keep a few copies handy for those who join or forget their sheets. Don't forget to have pens or pencils ready.

They are grouped much like the study because we want the readers to have a good overview they can carry with them after the completion of the Bible study. Rather than 7 pages, we combined them into 4 pages and left some room for taking notes. Encourage them to take notes and keep the worksheets in their Bible to remind them that God's story fits together perfectly.

The key to any good study is interaction. Writing engages the learning process, and so does discussion. I provided questions to encourage participation. **Questions are bolded** and I try to have at least one question for each lesson. Ask the question and give everyone a chance to respond. When your listeners take time to think about the question, they will learn much more about the Bible.

Don't be afraid of silence when you ask a question since this may be the first time many people have spoken up in a Bible study. Let them think for a moment and encourage them, but don't give the answer until a few people try. Tell them you want to know what they think and feel about the question.

Some questions are trivia type question and have a right answer. Encouraged participants to guess because they will learn better if they attempted an answer. Don't force anyone to answer, but tell them to take their best guess.

Other questions are more opinion type questions. Let one or two people share their opinions or get a group consensus of the answer. These questions are meant to make people think and are for reflection. Again, ask the question, then be silent. The silence will allow someone else a chance to talk. If you jump in too quickly, they will just wait for you to give the answer each time.

-----Lesson One: The Beginnings-----

Background (Leader's Notes)

As we start our Bible study, we are going to look at beginnings. As a matter of fact, 'Genesis' means 'beginnings.' We are not going to stop there, though. We are going to look at the first five books of the Bible which give us the beginnings of the world, God's people, and the beginning of the Bible.

I don't want to get too technical to start off, but let's learn a quick word: Pentateuch. 'Pentateuch' means 'five books.' These are the first five books of the Bible. Many believe these books were written by Moses and it is the few books of the Bible that Muslims, Jews and Christians all believe.

In this lesson, we are going to quickly go through the first five books and talk about what each book does to bring the story of God to the nation of Israel.

Remember, the Bible is God revealing Himself to mankind, not mankind looking to find a God. Many religions were founded by man's intellect. They would see the sun and didn't understand it, so they would assume the sun was a God. That is the kind of thing that happens when man looks to find God rather than God revealing Himself.

Begin Lesson

Today we will talk about Beginnings. We are going to look at how everything began from the creation of the world to the beginning of our religion. You may not realize it, but Christianity is based on the religion known as Judaism. The Jewish people, also known as the Israelites, were the first people that God revealed Himself to.

Let's start with **Genesis**. What do you think the word Genesis means? (Answer: Beginnings)

If you know what the name of the book is, you can begin to understand what the book talks about. Yes, we are talking about the books of the Bible. The Bible is made up of books and each book is individually written, but a continual revealing of God.

In the book of Genesis we see the beginning of the world. The first line wraps it up nicely, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Bible starts with the concept that God already existed.

In Genesis we see the creation of the world. God used 6 days to create the world, then rested 1 day to set an example for us. Why do you think it is important to take a day off each week? (Let people respond if they are willing to participate or share your own story of taking a day off each week. Remind them that if God chose to take a day off and put it in the first book of the Bible, it must be important. He wants us to take a day off to recoup and refresh and knows we all need it.)

The rest of this book talks about how the Jewish nation came into being. We look at the faith the fathers, or patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The entire book is a story about why the Jews are called Israelites and how they came to live in the land of Israel. We also see how a famine drove them from the land and they ended up in Egypt through a great story of God's provision.

In **Exodus**, we start off with the nation of Israel in the wrong country, Egypt. So, there must be a way to get home. They must 'exit' where they are to go back to the Promised Land. 'Exodus' means 'exit.'

In the book of Exodus we find the story of Moses and the grand epic of the splitting of the Red Sea. We watch the nation of Israel go from slavery into freedom, only to find them getting distracted when God reveals the law in the Ten Commandments.

The next book is a book called **Leviticus**. It is written for the Levites. The tribe of Levi, one of the tribes of Israel, was the religious leaders and priests responsible for upholding the laws. The laws are all the rules and regulations the early nation of Israel must follow in order to stay in line with God.

We have heard of the Ten Commandments, but how many laws do you think there are in the Jewish law system? (Answer: The Torah, or the Jewish Law, reveals 613 laws or commandments. Basically, they break down the Ten Commandments into specific laws to guide the nation of Israel. Think of the Ten Commandments like as outline that makes it easier to remember.)

The Law is rules and regulations, but they are much more than that. They are a code of ethics that helps the nation of Israel know how to stay healthy, treat each other and it even covers civil rights. We are also introduced to the specifics about sacrifice which become the central part of Jewish worship and an important theme throughout the Bible.

All you need to remember for this lesson is that the book of Leviticus is a book of laws. Read it with the understanding that people of that day had no clue on how to live and God had to tell them everything they needed to survive as a nation and as His people.

Now we come to **Numbers**. If you have ever tried to read the Bible straight through, you probably got bogged down in the long lists of people's names. You must remember that lineage is important to Jews. They take their heritage seriously and this was the first time their lineage was documented in a census.

In the book of Numbers we see the people move away from Mount Sinai and start walking in the desert on their journey back to the Promised Land, also called Canaan. Look at chapters 10-11 to see how the journey went from taking a few months to taking forty years.

Deuteronomy means 'second law.' It is like a recap of the journey of the forty years and a recap of the laws. Moses is coming to the end of his life and he takes time to recount the story of his people and the laws. He wants to make sure they are in good hands and makes sure there is a new leader ready to take the reins named Joshua.

Moses reminds the people of Israel about how God provided for them while they wandered the desert and why they were there in the first place. Then he encourages them to keep the law so they can have an abundant life in the Promised Land. He wants to make sure they never forget who they are and where they come from.

In our next lesson we will look at The History. Now that the nation of Israel is ready, they get to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land.

-----Lesson 2: The History-----

We saw how the nation of Israel came into being, got stuck in the desert for forty years and now are ready to enter the Promised Land. These next few books cover the history of the Nation as they move into the Promised Land, take over the land and divided it up for each tribe of Israel. It may sound like a lot of work and it was.

The people had to start from scratch as a people and take over land that was occupied by others. They were promised the land, hence the name, by God, so they knew they would be victorious in their conquest as long as they were obedient to God. As was typical, they disobeyed and had troubles, only to turn back to God and win.

We also see in these books the nation elect a king and all that means to the nation. Instead of being led by God directly, when they put a king in charge they have to listen to that person. They go through a lot of heartache not listening to God and end up in captivity.

These historical books are raw. We see all the good and the bad of the leaders and what happens in real life. This is not a polished version you may see in Sunday school. These are real wars with real casualties. These are hard decisions and a lot of people stepping out in faith when things looked hopeless. Read these books to see the story of God's people and watch how they took on amazing obstacles with the help of God.

Begin Lesson

Moses has just left the people with Joshua in charge, so we pick up the story of the nation of Israel in Josh's hands. There are a lot of historical books and we must understand the context of these books. The Jewish people have crossed the Jordan and now have conquered many of the people who are living in the land they left behind.

"Finders keepers" does not work for land that was promised by God, nor did they have "squatter's rights." This is the "Promised Land." God promised the nation of Israel they would occupy this land and they went courageously into battle knowing that God would guide them.

The book of **Joshua** takes the people of Israel into the Promised Land with another crossing of water on dry land. There are a lot of amazing war stories in this book like the Battle of Jericho where the walls fell down after the people of Israel marched around them for a few days. We see God's working directly in the lives of His people as they conquer their land.

ASIDE: Let's be honest for a moment. It is hard to read about people groups being slaughtered in God's name. This is really tough for people to understand. We must keep in mind that this was a different world than today. It was a kill or be killed world and to survive often meant taking extreme measures. It is not to say that war is right, but sometimes it is necessary.

Judges is what happens after Joshua leaves. Joshua was their leader guided directly by God. Now the Levites were in charge. Remember the Levites were the ones in charge of keeping the laws and regulations, but what happens when the nation is attacked?

Since there is not one specific leader, and the priests were not warriors, there was a need to call a leader, or judge. If the nation was under attack from invaders they needed a military leader to fight for and with them. We see a female leader named Deborah and the stories of Gideon and Samson.

One thing you may note as you read this book is a pattern throughout the story. The nation was good, they did bad, they were attacked, they repented, called a Judge and won. Then, they did bad and the story starts over with a new enemy and a new leader. If only the people would have learned to fully trust in God, they could have had it much easier.

Are there times that your life would have been easier if you would have let God lead you? (Ask for someone to share, but don't force it. If no one wants to share, move on and tell them to think about this question for reflection.)

The book of **Ruth** is a story that gives us a peek into the culture of the Jewish people. Basically, a Jewish family from Bethlehem moves to Moab because of a famine. Ruth was married into the family even though she was a Moabite. Naomi, her mother-in-law, decides to go back to the Promised Land after her husband and sons have died. That means Ruth is a widow and can stay in Moab. She commits to stay with Naomi and moves to Israel. She finds the acceptance of a new husband where she becomes the great-grandmother of David and ultimately the great-great-great grandmother of Jesus.

Joshua, Judges and Ruth all take place before the nation of Israel elected a king. In these books, Israel is known as a 'theocracy.' God was their leader and ruled the nation. 'Theo' means 'God' and 'cracy' means 'government or rule.' Just like Americans live in a 'Democracy' which means people ('demo') led.

However, the nation of Israel was not happy without a king. They wanted to be just like everyone else and have a king rather than relying on God. They wanted a Monarchy, which was led by one person and succeeded by their offspring. We see the toll that having a king takes on them as taxes are introduced and leaders make horrible decision because they do not rely solely on God to lead them.

1 Samuel is the book that brings in the first King of Israel, King Saul. The people liked him because he was tall, seriously. They wanted someone who looked like a King and did not take into consideration his qualifications.

In **2 Samuel** we are introduced to David. He takes on Goliath and becomes king due to his ability to lead. He is a warrior and we see some great stories about how good he is in battle. We also see his heart as he chooses not to kill Saul even though Saul is trying to kill him.

1 Kings takes us into the reign of David's son, King Solomon. He was regarded as the wisest king. He also was the richest. He built the temple for God in Jerusalem which gave the nation of Israel a central place to worship.

2 Kings tells us what happens after King Solomon. The leadership of the kingdom was poorly led because of some of David's decisions with his children. There was a lot of animosity among his children because of the way David treated them differently. This causes the nation of Israel to divide into two nations. The south became Judah and the north remained Israel.

1 & 2 Chronicles are a shortened version of 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. These were most likely the notes taken by the court chronicler. It chronicles the kingdom back to Adam and shows the nation of Israel and Judah landing in captivity or exile in Babylon.

Ezra picks up 70 years later in Babylon. It is the beginning of the return to Jerusalem. A guy by the name of Zerubbabel (zair-ub-ub-ul) takes up the restoration of the temple. (The temple was destroyed back when the nation of Israel was taken into captivity.) He not only built the temple with the first group, but brought a second group back to teach a life centered back on God.

Nehemiah takes us back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. This is the third group to return. The walls were necessary to protect Jerusalem from invaders. This is a great story of leadership as you see how troubles are overcome and God is the center of his life and decisions.

Esther is a Jewish cultural story. Here we see a Jewish orphan girl being raised by an uncle become the Queen of Persia. Because of her Uncle's guidance she ultimately saved the people of Israel from being wiped out. This book was almost not included in the Bible because God is not mentioned directly in the entire book.

Now you know how the history of the Bible is revealed. In our next lesson, we take a short break to talk about the wisdom literature of the Bible. We will look at poems, songs and even a love story.

-----The Wisdom-----

When we read history books we get the facts of what happened, but we don't get to see the emotions behind the stories. This part of the Bible reveals what is going on in the inner lives of the people who are going through wars and living out their faith in real life.

Many people have heard of the Psalms, but few people realize many of these are songs. David and a few others sung these songs when in the middle of battles, or when they felt they were being overtaken. There is a lot of raw emotion and if you understand the setting of each Psalm, it adds some powerful understanding to the words.

Begin Lesson

We have seen the history of the people of Israel, now we get to peek inside the way they think and feel. In the wisdom literature, we see epic poems, great worship songs, and much more. These are more personal writings. Where the previous books told what happened, these books can show up why some of them happened.

Think back to a time when you were younger. **What songs remind you of your past?** (Give some time for a few people to answer or share from your own life.) **What quotes do you remember from your parents or Grandparents that you find useful now?** (Let a few people answer.)

These songs and quotes tie you to your past. They resonate in your heart, not just in your mind. In the Wisdom section, we find the heart behind the history in the Bible. Imagine how much more you can learn about living by faith by listening to David's words rather than just a story of what he did.

Job is the first book we find in the Wisdom section. Chronologically, this book would go way back with Genesis. Keep in mind the wisdom literature of the Bible is group together and happens throughout the historical books. Job is an epic tale of a man dealing with a horrible time in his life and still learning to trust God. Job asks the question about why bad things are happening even though He is relying on God. God talks directly to Him and gives Job a profound answer.

Psalms are songs, or hymns, and prayers often put to music. I guess you could say this was the hymn book of the ancient Jews. Many of these songs were written by David and cover a variety of emotional topics. You would expect to find songs of faith and joy, but there are also songs that cover discouragement, anger, depression and all kinds of human emotions. Psalms lets us know that these are real people struggling with a real faith.

ASIDE: Psalms is longest book with the longest chapter and the shortest in the entire Bible. Interestingly, Psalms lines up right in the middle of the Bible which makes it easy for most people to find. The longest chapter, Psalm 119, is a long poem where each section starts with a letter of the Jewish alphabet. The shortest chapter, Psalm 117, is a simple song of faith.

Proverbs is a great book of wisdom. It starts out as a father warning his son about the trappings of this world, then goes into some short pithy sayings to give guidance to his life. This is a collection put together by King Solomon who is said to be the wisest King ever. These lessons are practical and many of them have found their way into our modern culture. You even find an entire chapter written for women of the time.

Ecclesiastes is a different kind of wisdom book. The word Ecclesiastes can mean 'gatherer' 'teacher' or 'preacher.' This tells us what we need to know about that book. It is a gathering of teachings that include God. In this book, commonly thought to be written by Solomon, we find a wise person looking for the meaning of life.

Many people have tried to find the meaning of life, but it is the journey that makes meaning. In Ecclesiastes you see the journey and the struggle. His conclusion wraps up the entire book without giving a specific answer.

Song of Songs or **Song of Solomon** is a series of love poems. The language in this study is meant for adults. They talk about very intimate details between two people in love. The entire book is quite provocative and was especially so for its time. Some say it is an allegory for the Nation of Israel and God or for Christ and the Church, but most people see it as it is in the Bible, a poem between lovers.

In the history lessons we peek into the mind of things and what happened. In wisdom literature we peek into the emotions or the heart of things. In our next lesson, we go into the soul of things as we look at the Prophets, who were people who heard directly from God.

-----The Prophets-----

Since this lesson is longer, you may want to just cover the Major Prophets. Feel free to go through as many Minor Prophets as you can, but there are a lot of books in this section.

The prophets are written by individuals who God talked to directly. We see some really interesting stories and gain some insight into what it means to live life being totally directed by God. The hard thing about these stories is that they are not 'logical.'

Many stories have the prophet doing something as a lesson to the nation or community they are called to. The word 'called' means they have a specific mission to a specific group of people at a specific time. These prophet books are not the easiest to read and some can be really emotional and even discouraging. It must be hard to be a person speaking the truth of God only to have the people not listen and fall into hard times.

When you decide to read these books for yourself, it is best to do a quick online search or use a study Bible. Find out what the historical setting is. Find out what was going on with the nation of Israel, where they were and who the book is being written to. Having a historical context can help you understand why the book was written and how it was important to the people of that day.

Begin Lesson

We have seen the history of the Jewish people unfold and even visited their wisdom literature. Now we get to go behind the scenes and see what God was doing in individual lives. We get to the soul of the matter.

These stories happen in and around the history books so they are not necessarily in chronological order. As a matter of fact, many of these books overlap each other since there were two kingdoms and God sometimes called a prophet for each. The stories are written by a single prophet as he tells the story the way he saw it happen.

Before we talk generally about the books, let's cover the two main categories of prophets. You may hear the terms minor and major prophets. It does not mean one is better than the other, it simply means one is written shorter than the other. Major prophets wrote more and are longer books.

Major Prophets

Isaiah was written because God's people had grown corrupt and Isaiah is calling them to return to true worship or face judgement. It has two parts. The first half talks about punishment and gives warnings to repentance. The second part talks about hope and forgiveness and mentions the Messiah, like chapter 53: 4-6.

Jeremiah was known as the doom and gloom prophet. He told the nation of Judah about their moral failures and often the consequences of those decisions which came true. His focus was on God's judgement and it is a hard read for the modern reader, but a great warning.

Lamentations was Jeremiah's song about Jerusalem. He was full of sorrow about what happened to God's people, but understands that God is sovereign and will restore His people.

Ezekiel is focused on the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was in Babylon preaching while in exile. Though he focused on judgement and punishment, he understood that God did not forget His people or the enemies of His people. Valley of dry bones is the most famous story in Ezekiel.

Daniel is a favorite story to tell in church because of the faithfulness of Daniel. It shows what a life is like lived by faith even in tough times. Daniel also wrote from captivity in Babylon, but he had a position of authority. We hear the stories of the fiery furnace, writing on the wall and the lion's den in this book.

Minor Prophets (shorter books)

Hosea is a story about a prophet who was told to marry a prostitute in order to be a moral object lesson to the nation of Israel. Basically, Israel had 'adulterous affairs' with false gods and God was calling them out.

Joel describes God's coming judgement with terrifying imagery. He also set the path for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit which occurred at Pentecost in the New Testament book of Acts.

Amos was a shepherd who told the nation of Israel that they had grown lazy and hypocritical. He called out items like slavery, greed and mistreating the poor.

Obadiah was written to the nation of Edom which did not help Judah when they asked for help.

Jonah is one of the more famous Minor Prophets who was swallowed by a whale. He did not want to deliver a message of repentance to Nineveh because he did not want them to repent and that is how he ended up in a whale. He finally delivered the message and they repented.

Micah was written for both nations, north and south. He talks about faithful living and calls out their false prophets and hypocritical religion.

Nahum was written for the nation of Judah to remind them of God's faithfulness in the ruin of their enemies the Assyrians.

Habakkuk shows the wrestling of a man of God. He asks tough questions and prays steadily to hear God's answers.

Zephaniah was written for the nation of Judah. He talks about the rejoicing that happens when God's people turn back to Him. They are rescued and restored to live in hope.

Haggai was written for a group of exiles returning to Jerusalem. He reminds the people that God is still with them.

Zechariah happens after the exile. He brings hope and reminds the people of the coming Messiah.

Malachi also happens after the exile. His message finds God's people being disobedient again. He reminds them of their need for a Savior because only a few had remained faithful to the law.

These books end the Old Testament, which is the story before Jesus came to earth. There are 400-450 years between Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, and Matthew, the first book of the New Testament. In our next lesson, we jump into the story of Jesus found in the Gospels.

-----The Gospels-----

We are starting the New Testament. Basically, this is what happens after Jesus comes to earth starting with the story of His birth. There has been a silence from God for about 400 years, so when things start to happen with Jesus, there is a renewed energy. We see the first churches starting and all kinds of exciting events.

Quick word about New Testament: New Testament can be a new covenant. Before Jesus, following the law was the only way to get on God's good side. You had to follow regulations and sacrificial requirements. It was tough and no one could live up to those standards. In the New Covenant, we see the completed work of Jesus, starting in the Gospels. The New Testament is that covenant.

Begin Lesson

We have finished up the Old Testament and now something new is happening. It has been over 400 years since God has spoken and all of a sudden a baby is born that changes everything.

That baby is Jesus. He is God's son born of a virgin. He came to save all of mankind with His sacrifice on the cross. He is fully God and fully man, which is a hard concept to wrap your brain around. Just think of this, God is powerful enough to be God of the universe. At the same time He limits Himself to walk on earth as a man.

The Gospels are the story of Jesus' life. Gospel means 'good news.' It is the good news of God's love for all of mankind. Before Jesus, only the Jews could get into heaven and only if they followed the strict regulations found in the 613 laws we talked about in the Old Testament.

The Gospels are four views of the same story. Just imagine four reporters seeing the same events. All of them would report the even slightly different based on who they were writing for and what their background is.

Matthew is written for a Christ believing Jewish audience. That is why it starts with a list of Jesus' Jewish heritage. The focus of Matthew's gospel is the fulfillment of prophecy. He wants to show his Jewish readers that Jesus is the messiah that was promised.

Mark is focused on Jesus' ministry on earth. It is a fast action type of book that moves from scene to scene pretty quickly. You will find the word 'immediately' repeated because Mark was ready to get to the next story and show what Jesus did on earth.

Luke is more of a historical account of Jesus. Luke was an educated man, most likely a doctor. It is the most chronological story of Jesus and has the most details. It is also the longest book in the New Testament.

John takes a different approach. Instead of going to Jesus' birth, he starts by stating that Jesus was present at the beginning of the earth and calls Him the Word of God. John focuses on the fact that Jesus is God. It is a more personal look into the life of Jesus from someone who was in the inner circle of disciples.

(Leader's Note: If you have time, cover the following concepts and have a short discussion.)

Now that we have looked at the books, let's talk about a few things that are introduced in the New Testament.

Disciples are the twelve followers of Jesus. They walked with Him and were always around. In those days, people would follow Rabbi's around all day to learn of their teaching. There were more than just these twelve disciples following Jesus, but these were identified as disciples.

What do you notice about the number of disciples? (There are 12 disciples, just like the 12 tribes of Israel.)

Jesus is God and Man. This is a hard concept, but once you realize that God can do anything, including existing in two places, you can see the reality. As a man on earth, God limited His power so that He could only do what Mankind can do.

Jesus was born of a woman, so that He came into the world just like the rest of us. God did not have sex with Mary. He just caused Jesus to form inside of her. He was God's son because God put Him in Mary. He was born of a virgin making Him pure.

Without a pure sacrifice, we would need to have sacrifices to cover our sins every day. Jesus completes God's plan by providing a sacrifice once and for all. All of history, up to this point, brought humanity to a point where they were ready to see Jesus for all that He is.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

Why do you think He gave us Jesus, Himself, in flesh walking on this earth? (Answers could include things like: To understand what we go through. To show us a better way to live. To offer a sacrifice for all mankind.)

In the Gospels we see the amazing stories of Jesus. We get to hear Him, see Him on earth. Next we will look at the historical books and the letters of the New Testament which were shared to help the church understand all that happened in the Gospels.

-----The Letters-----

It is weird to think about the Bible books being letters, but that is how messages were spread in those days. Preachers would send messages to churches since there was so few of them and so many churches starting.

I said preachers, but in reality these were the Apostles, the twelve disciples. Apostle is a fancy word that basically means a church planter or missionary. Since there were only twelve of them, there had to be a way to spread the message to help the church grow.

Remember, at this time, the only Bible they had was the Old Testament, and even then they could only read it in the temple. They did not have the Gospels, so everything they learned was directly from the letters spread throughout the Christian community.

Begin Lesson

The Gospels talk about Jesus' life, now we move into the letters in the Bible. Letters are how messages were spread in ancient days and the New Testament letters show what happens after Jesus ascends to heaven.

Basically, one of the disciples, an Apostle, would write a letter to a specific church. That church would read the letter and pass it along to another church, who would share any letters they had. When one of the Apostles was in the area, he would visit the church and give a message in person. You have to remember, it took several days to walk between towns so to get to a new place was often quite a task.

Acts, sometimes called Acts of the Apostles, is the first letter of the New Testament. Some people put this book in the history category because of the way it is written. It is written by Luke and we know that he writes with lots of details and chronologically. We know it is a letter because the first words say it is written to Theophilus.

Acts is broken into two parts. The first part introduces the Holy Spirit and we see the meek disciples being bold in what they believe. The second part talks about who Christ is and we meet Paul who is converted rather miraculously. The entire book talks about the beginning of the church and how the message of Jesus spread.

Many of the letters in this part of the Bible were written by Paul. They take place during the stories found in Acts.

Romans was written to the church in Rome. It is a good breakdown of the doctrine, or system of beliefs, of Christians. It is written for a church that is growing to give them the foundations of their faith. He shares practical concerns about living as a follower of Jesus.

1 & 2 Corinthians was sent to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a corrupt place so Paul shows them how to live in a culture, but separate themselves to remain unified as a Christian church.

Galatians was written to Galatia (modern day Turkey). Paul started this church, but when he left false teachers came in and corrupted the church. Paul writes them to return to solid doctrine of salvation through Jesus and not to return to a legalistic way of living.

Ephesians was written for the church at Ephesus. His focus is much like Galatians in bringing them away from legalism and back to salvation. He focuses on the message of unity within the church.

Philippians is one of the encouraging books. Paul was happy about how things were going at the church in Philippi. He encourages the believers to enjoy living as disciples of Christ. (Note: Disciple means follower, after the 12 disciples, we are all called to be disciples of Jesus.)

The **Colossians** were also having troubles and Paul had to correct them. They started looking to Jesus as only a man and started worshipping angels and other heavenly beings. Paul brings the church at Colossae back to the deity of Christ and His place in the universe.

1 & 2 Thessalonians was written to a new church at Thessalonica and Paul needed to clarify some of his teachings. He talks about the second coming and reminds people to continue living and working as followers of Christ until His return.

1 & 2 Timothy were written to a young church leader named Timothy. He was a disciple of Paul who led the church at Ephesus. In this book, he tells Timothy how to lead the church including qualifications of a leader, order of worship and proper doctrine. He also encourages Timothy in the faith.

Titus was another young leader like Timothy. He was working in Crete. Paul has leadership advice and personal encouragement for Titus.

Philemon was written on behalf of a slave who escaped and became a believer. Paul sends a letter to his owner encouraging him to welcome the slave back as a brother and to not treat him harshly.

Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians. The writer helps them focus on salvation, grace and faith and encourages the readers not to fall back into Jewish rules and regulations.

James is Jesus' brother on earth. He wrote a practical guide on living the Christian life. He gets straight to the point: reject hypocrisy and help those in need.

1 & 2 Peter was written by Peter to the church. He focuses on suffering and persecution of the followers of Jesus. He warns against false teachers and tells the church to focus on the hope of eternal life.

1, 2, & 3 John was written by John to encourage a persecuted church. He gives the new believers guidance in how to live the Christian life in tough times.

Jude was another brother of Jesus on earth. He warns about false teachers and calls out immorality.

As you can see, there is a lot to learn from these letters. Each one was written with care to the particular group of Christians it was written for. In the next lesson we get an overview of Revelation which was written for everyone.

-----The Revelation-----

Revelation is a single revelation, not revelations. It is a combination of Jewish Apocalyptic Writing and End Times Prophecy. When you put those two things together, you get lots of weird imagery.

If we could go back to the time it was written, it would make more sense to us. The imagery was written for people living in the first century A.D. We have lost some of the context, so some of the images are left to wide speculations.

Don't get bogged down in specific imagery or quotes. Don't allow people to talk about the end times, or you may find yourself in a long discussion with lots of opinions and little facts. Keep this lesson focused on the overall flow of the book.

When someone starts getting into details or talking about news reports, simply say, 'That is interesting, let's go through the lesson first and if we have time at the end we can discuss some more of the details. We want to get a good overview of the whole book before digging into details.'" Hopefully, that will help keep on track.

Begin lesson

Today we finish up the Bible in the last book, Revelation. The book of Revelation is a book about the end. We see prophecy, symbolism, weird imagery and lots of cryptic messages.

To understand Revelation we must realize it was written at a time when the church was being intensely persecuted. The people who wanted to end the Christian movement were looking for ways to destroy the church. Any message written to the church at this time had to be written in a code so that those outside of the church would not understand.

John, the disciple of Jesus, was writing from an island where he was in prison. While in prison he is hit with a message directly from God. In this vision, he sees many weird things and has to write about them as best as he can understand. Then, he had to write a letter to give the message to the church without being found out it was a message for the church.

Revelation 1-3 John shares the details of what he sees in his vision. He is given a message to the seven churches (think territories). He describes their qualities and/or their weaknesses. He gives specific instructions to each church.

Revelation 4-20 is where John describes the spiritual realm. We see the seals being opened and all that is released on the earth with each opening. We see the 7 angels and the 7 trumpets which leave a third of mankind on earth because they did not repent.

John talks about the anti-Christ and Satan which will usher in the end. He shares 7 more angels and 7 more plagues and the men on earth still don't repent. These demonstrate God's judgement upon the wickedness on earth.

John introduces a very real place called Hell as the final resting place for those who refuse to believe. The anti-Christ and false prophets are cast into the fire and 1,000 years later Satan is thrown into the fire. We see the others are still in torment even after all of these years.

Revelation 21-22 is the New Heaven and New Earth. All the wickedness has been removed and there is a New Jerusalem. There is no more mourning or death because the 'first things have passed away.' Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life can enter this place to live with Jesus for eternity.

John ends by assuring us that everything he wrote is true and Jesus is coming back soon.

Before we end the study of Revelation, let's have a little fun.

If someone in the first century A.D. saw a computer or a car from today, how would they describe it? (Have fun and let people describe it only using things common from the first century. There is no right answer, so let them have fun with it.)

Based on our conversation, what modern day contraption could this be talking about: "The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces."-Rev 9:7 (Again, this is meant to be fun. It could describe an airplane, helicopter or tank. From the first century, it would be hard to describe a flying device with a human's head peeking out from behind glass.)

What could this describe? "They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle." -Rev 9:9 (Again, this is a description would could be a helicopter which would look like a locust and the whirling blades could sound like rushing chariots.)

We share these images to say that Revelation is John trying to convey images that he did not understand. He was looking into the future and describing items outside of his historical context. We are not meant to get bogged down in all of the details in Revelation, but to focus on the message. **Do you know Jesus and are you ready for when He comes back?**

(Take a moment to let people respond or give their thoughts about this question. Again, don't get bogged down in details. Keep the question at the forefront of this discussion. The only way to get to heaven, and avoid all the horrible things that happen in Revelation is to trust in Jesus. Be prepared to give your testimony and lead a short prayer for anyone who does not believe. It wouldn't hurt to know how to lead someone to Christ.)

If the discussion goes well and everyone is a believer, let people share some of their thoughts about Revelation. (You may want to limit how long anyone can speak. Depending on your group, you could give them 2 minutes each to share.)

End by talking about which book of the Bible sounded the most interesting and decide on a book the whole group can read through together.

-----**Leading someone to Christ**-----

You don't need to take someone to church to lead them to Christ. If you can lead a Bible study, you can lead someone to Christ. You do want to follow up by getting that person involved in a good Christ-centered church where they can grow spiritually, but their decision to become a believer can be lead by you.

If someone says they would like to know how to become a Christian, all the hard work is done for you! The Holy Spirit has already begun to work in their life. Let me share an easy way to tell them about their faith in Christ using the word **LIFE**.

Love – God loves you just like you are and wants you to know Him. That is why He gave us the Bible. He created the world so that He can have a relationship with you. (John 3:16)

Isolation – Mankind, we, messed up and because of our messiness we were separated from a relationship with God. Because He is Holy, He can't have a relationship with unholy things. We become unholy when we do things we know we shouldn't, called sin. (Romans 3:23)

Forgiveness – God loved us so much He sent Jesus to show us a way to forgiveness. Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and make us holy again. It is through Jesus's sacrifice we can be holy and have a personal relationship with God. (Romans 5:8)

Eternal – God wants us to live with Him forever in Heaven. He gives us eternal life through Jesus so that we can go to heaven with Him when we pass from this life. Our job on earth is to tell others about Him and live our lives the best way we can according to His word, the Bible. (Romans 10:9; John 3:16)

Have them read Romans 10:9 directly from the Bible directly. Ask them if they understand that verse and if not talk them through it. We must recognize that Jesus is the only way to Heaven and accept Him in our heart. We must confess that He is Lord, boss in charge, of our life. Then, we must try to live a life to honor Him for all He did for us.

Many people like to lead a prayer at this point and have the new believer repeat after them, but I have found it more powerful to let them pray. Tell them to use the verse as a way to pray or you can tell them to use the ABC prayer.

- Admit you are a sinner and need God.
- Believe that Jesus died for your sins.
- Confess Jesus as the Lord of our life.

If they put it in their words, it is so much more powerful. After they speak, say a prayer with them thanking God for bringing them into your life. After the prayer, encourage them by telling them how good their prayer was and encourage them to get involved in a church. You can help them search for a church near them or invite them to church with you. . . offer to pick them up! You can even take them to lunch after church to get to know them better and field any questions they may have from the sermon.

If they don't have a Bible, buy one for them. Do some research or ask your pastor what he suggests. Get one that is easy to read with some notes at the bottom to give a better understanding. It wouldn't

hurt to go through the front of the Bible to show they how to use that specific Bible. Most study Bibles show how to read their Bible and get the most out of the notes.

Lastly, they may ask questions that you don't understand or are not comfortable answering. That is no problem. Remind them we are all the same before God and we are on this journey of faith together.

Go with them to a seasoned Christian or search the internet to get the answer. Make sure your answer is based on scripture and not opinions. . .that is very important.

You can even suggest they search on some websites to learn about their faith. A few good websites may be iamsecond.com; exploregod.com; gotquestions.org; or bibleinfo.com. These will get you pointed in the right directions.

For Bible study helps, I suggest BibleGateway.com and you can download the Bible app to your phone for free from Youversion.

It is really important to get them tied into a church where they are comfortable and can grow. You may even volunteer to go with them as they search for the church where God is calling them.

Know that you have done a good thing leading someone to Christ. If nothing else, you have planted God's word in their heart and they will be blessed by the Holy Spirit working in their lives.

My prayer is that this Bible study become an encouragement to you as you dig deep into God's word and live it out in your life and your business.

Be blessed and be a blessing!

-Reverend H.