

BIBLE READING – DC LEADER GUIDE

The following are a subset of notes captured during personal Bible Study activities while making use of a variety of resources including printed reference material, lecture series, on-line content, Bible Study books, Zondervan's Archeological Study Bible and most notably Zondervan's Life Application Study Bible.

Contents

Contents	1
Fundamentals of the Bible	3
Foundation	3
Facts and Figures	3
Structure of the Bible	4
Bible Content	4
Integrated Design	4
Language, Location & Date:	4
Quick Synopsis of Each Bible Book	5
Old Testament	5
New Testament	6
Books of the Bible	7
Genesis	7
Exodus	7
Leviticus	7
Numbers	8
Deuteronomy	8
Joshua	8
Judges	9
Ruth	9
1 Samuel	10
2 Samuel	10
1 Kings	10
2 Kings	11
1 Chronicles	11
2 Chronicles	11
Ezra	12
Nehemiah	12
Esther	13
Job	13
Psalms	13
Proverbs	15
Ecclesiastes	15
Song of Solomon (Songs)	16
Isaiah	16
Jeremiah	18
Lamentations	19
Ezekiel	19
Daniel	20
Hosea	20
Joel	20
Amos	20
Obadiah	21
Jonah	21
Micah	21
Nahum	22
Habakkuk	22
Zephaniah	22
Haggai	22
Zechariah	23
Malachi	23

New Testament	24
Matthew	24
Mark	24
Luke	25
John	25
Acts	26
Romans	26
1 Corinthians	27
2 Corinthians	28
Galatians	28
Ephesians	29
Philippians	29
Colossians	29
1 Thessalonians	30
2 Thessalonians	30
1 Timothy	31
2 Timothy	31
Titus	31
Philemon.....	31
Hebrews.....	32
James	32
1 Peter	33
2 Peter	33
1 John	33
2 John	34
3 John	34
Jude	35
Revelation.....	35
Biblical Timeline	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Fundamentals of the Bible

Foundation

Theme: Love and Forgiveness

Purpose: A "Communication" tool

- God is speaking to us now to help us today to have a relationship with God

Message: Salvation through Jesus Christ. Revealing God's Salvation plan for man.

- Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:16; 10:10; Acts 16:30-31; Rev 22:14, 17

Definitions:

- Bible means "books",
 - from the Greek word **Biblos** = The word of God
 - Scripture means "writings"

AMPEC – Understanding the Bible in one word

- Anticipation – OT summed up as the anticipation of Christ
- Manifestation – Gospels are the embodiment of Christ
- Proclamation – Acts (Beginning of the Church), Message of Christ is spread throughout the world
- Explanation – Romans through Jude, Letters to the Churches explaining new faith in Christ
- Culmination – Revelation, Reveals victory in Christ and final "arrival" of all things

Written through the personality, culture, and world of the writers.

- God did not "dictate" the Bible.
- The revelation is divine; the expression is human (2 Peter 1:21).
- While other religions have sacred books, only the Bible claims to have been inspired by God Himself (1 Corinthians 2:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- While written by many writers over much time, reading the text is convincing that it was produced by one Mind.

Facts and Figures

The Bible:

- 66 books
 - 39 Books in the Old Testament (77%)
 - 27 Books in the New Testament (23%)
 - Catholic Bible contains 7 More book (pulled out by Martin Luther)
- over a 1600 year span (from 1500 B.C to A.D. 100)
 - over 40 generations
 - over 40 authors
 - from many walks of life (i.e. - kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars)
- Written...
 - In different places (i.e. - wilderness, dungeon, palaces)
 - at different times (i.e. - war, peace)
 - in different moods (i.e. - heights of joy, depths of despair)
 - on three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe)
 - in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)
- The Bible is both divine and human,
 - The words are inspired by the Holy Spirit, The message is inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16-17).

World's best-selling book

- Translated into 2700 Different languages, more than any other text in history.
- Over 5 Billion Copies Printed in the past 200 years.

Structure of the Bible

Bible Content

Category Coverage:

- 26% History
- 20% Law
- 17% Major Prophets
- 11% Gospels
- 10% Wisdom and Poetry
- 6% Paul's Letters
- 4% Minor Prophets
- 3% Acts History
- 2% General Letters
- 1% Revelation

The word "God" appears in every book of the Bible except Esther and Song of Solomon

Integrated Design

- The NT is in the OT Concealed, The OT is in the NT Revealed
- "The New is in the Old contained; / "The Old is in the New explained"
- "The New is in the Old latent; / The Old is in the New patent." – Augustine
- Christ is on every page
- In a real sense the New Testament cannot be well understood without the Old Testament.
- Every detail is anticipated by deliberate, skillful, design;...demonstrates that its origin is from outside our time.
- Revelation quotes the Old Testament 245 times.
- The Letter to the Hebrews quotes or alludes to the Old Testament 85 times.

Language, Location & Date:

Except for a few short passages in Aramaic (Daniel 2:4 - 7:28), the Old Testament is written in Hebrew. Because of the Jewish diaspora across the Mediterranean, the Old Testament was translated into Greek about 100 years before Jesus' birth. This was the Bible used by the early church. This translation was called the Septuagint. The New Testament was written in the Greek language, the *lingua franca* of the era.

Old Testament created and organized around 100 AD "as the canon" by the Jewish Rabbi's to counter-act the Christian Movement.

Approx 500 AD is the oldest Complete Manuscripts of the Bible.

When were the Books of the New Testament Written?

- 30 A.D. - Jesus is Crucified, Dies and is Resurrected
- 35 A.D. - Gospel of Matthew
- 40 to 41 A.D. - Book of James
- 42 A.D. - Gospel of Mark
- 42 A.D. - Gospel of John (main body of Gospel)
(the prologue/epilogue to Gospel not completed until after 95 A.D.)
- 50 A.D. - Book of 1Thessalonians
- 51 A.D. - Book of 2Thessalonians
- 53 A.D. (Spring) - Book of Galatians
- 56 A.D. (Late Winter) - Book of 1Corinthians
- 57 A.D. (Late Summer)- Book of 2Corinthians
- 57 A.D. (Winter)- Book of Romans
- 59 A.D. - Book of Luke
- 61 to 63 A.D. - Books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Hebrews
- 63 A.D. - Books of Acts, 1Timothy and Titus
- 63 to 64 A.D. - Books of 1John, 2John and 3John
- 64 to 65 A.D. - Book of 1Peter
- 65 to 66 A.D. - Book of 2Peter
- 66 to 67 A.D. - Book of Jude
- 67 A.D. - Book of 2Timothy
- 95 A.D. - Book of Revelation

The Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton in 1228. The Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan in 1488 and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in 1551.

The entire Bible divided into chapters and verses first appeared in the Geneva Bible of 1560.

Chapter divisions were added by Cardinal Caro in 1236 AD. The Bible was the first work printed on the first printing press invented by Gutenberg in 1456 AD.

Quick Synopsis of Each Bible Book

Old Testament

1. **Genesis.** Describes the creation; gives the history of the old world, and of the steps taken by God toward the formation of theocracy.
2. **Exodus.** The history of Israel's departure from Egypt; the giving of the law; the tabernacle.
3. **Leviticus.** The ceremonial law.
4. **Numbers.** The census of the people; the story of the wanderings in the wilderness.
5. **Deuteronomy.** The law rehearsed; the death of Moses.
6. **Joshua.** The story of the conquest and partition of Canaan.
7. **Judges.** The history of the nation from Joshua to Samson.
8. **Ruth.** The story of the ancestors of the royal family of Judah.
9. **1 Samuel.** The story of the nation during the judgeship of Samuel and the reign of Saul.
10. **2 Samuel.** Story of the reign of David.
11. **1 Kings.** The books of Kings form only one book in the Hebrew MSS. They contain the history of the nation from David's death and Solomon's accession to the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the desolation of Jerusalem, with a supplemental notice of the liberation of Jehoiachin from his prison at Babylon, twenty-six years later; they comprehend the whole time of the Israelitish monarchy, exclusive of the reigns of Saul and David.
12. **2 Kings.** Same as above
13. **1 Chronicles.** So called as being the record made by the appointed historiographers of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel; they are the official histories of those kingdoms.
14. **2 Chronicles.** Same as above...
15. **Ezra.** The story of the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, and of the rebuilding of the temple.
16. **Nehemiah.** A further account of the rebuilding of the temple and city, and of the obstacles encountered and overcome.
17. **Esther.** The story of a Jewess who becomes queen of Persia and saves the Jewish people from destruction.
18. **Job.** The story of the trials and patience of a holy man of Edom.
19. **Psalms.** A collection of sacred poems intended for use in the worship of Jehovah. Chiefly the productions of David.
20. **Proverbs.** The wise sayings of Solomon.
21. **Ecclesiastes.** A poem respecting the vanity of earthly things.
22. **Solomon's Song.** An allegory relating to the church.
23. **Isaiah.** Prophecies respecting Christ and his kingdom.
24. **Jeremiah.** Prophecies announcing the captivity of Judah, its sufferings, and the final overthrow of its enemies.
25. **Lamentations.** The utterance of Jeremiah's sorrow upon the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.
26. **Ezekiel.** Messages of warning and comfort to the Jews in their captivity.
27. **Daniel.** A narrative of some of the occurrences of the captivity, and a series of prophecies concerning Christ.
28. **Hosea.** Prophecies relating to Christ and the latter days.
29. **Joel.** Prediction of woes upon Judah, and of the favor with which God will receive the penitent people.
30. **Amos.** Prediction that Israel and other neighboring nations will be punished by conquerors from the north, and of the fulfillment of the Messiah's kingdom.
31. **Obadiah.** Prediction of the desolation of Edom.
32. **Jonah.** Prophecies relating to Nineveh.
33. **Micah.** Predictions relating to the invasions of Shalmaneser and Sennacherib, the Babylonish captivity, the establishment of a theocratic kingdom in Jerusalem, and the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem.
34. **Nahum.** Prediction of the downfall of Assyria.
35. **Habakkuk.** A prediction of the doom of the Chaldeans.
36. **Zephaniah.** A prediction of the overthrow of Judah for its idolatry and wickedness.
37. **Haggai.** Prophecies concerning the rebuilding of the temple.
38. **Zechariah.** Prophecies relating to the rebuilding of the temple and the Messiah.
39. **Malachi.** Prophecies relating to the calling of the Gentiles and the coming of Christ.

New Testament

1. **Gospel of St. Matthew.** A brief history of the life of Christ.
2. **Gospel of St. Mark.** A brief history of the life of Christ, supplying some incidents omitted by St. Matthew.
3. **Gospel of St. Luke.** The history of the life of Christ, with especial reference to his most important acts and discourses.
4. **Gospel of St. John.** The life of Christ, giving important discourses not related by the other evangelists.
5. **Acts of the Apostles.** The history of the labors of the apostles and of the foundation of the Christian Church.
6. **Epistle to the Romans.** A treatise by St. Paul on the doctrine of justification by Christ.
7. **First Epistle to the Corinthians.** A letter from St. Paul to the Corinthians, correcting errors into which they had fallen.
8. **Second Epistle to the Corinthians.** St. Paul confirms his disciples in their faith, and vindicates his own character.
9. **Epistle to the Galatians.** St. Paul maintains that we are justified by faith, and not by rites.
10. **Epistle to the Ephesians.** A treatise by St. Paul on the power of divine grace.
11. **Epistle to the Philippians.** St. Paul sets forth the beauty of Christian kindness.
12. **Epistle to the Colossians.** St. Paul warns his disciples against errors, and exhorts to certain duties.
13. **First Epistle to the Thessalonians.** St. Paul exhorts his disciples to continue in the faith and in holy conversation.
14. **Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.** St. Paul corrects an error concerning the speedy coming of Christ the second time.
15. **First Epistles to Timothy.** St. Paul instructs Timothy in the duty of a pastor, and encourages him in the work of the ministry.
16. **Second Epistles to Timothy.** St. Paul instructs Timothy in the duty of a pastor, and encourages him in the work of the ministry.
17. **Epistle to Titus.** St. Paul encourages Titus in the performance of his ministerial duties.
18. **Epistle to Philemon.** An appeal to a converted master to receive a converted escaped slave with kindness.
19. **Epistle to Hebrews.** St. Paul maintains that Christ is the substance of the ceremonial law.
20. **Epistle of James.** A treatise on the efficacy of faith united with good works.
21. **First Epistles of Peter.** Exhortations to a Christian life, with various warnings and predictions.
22. **Second Epistles of Peter.** Exhortations to a Christian life, with various warnings and predictions.
23. **First Epistle of St. John.** Respecting the person of our Lord, and an exhortation to Christian love and conduct.
24. **Second Epistle of St. John.** St. John warns a converted lady against false teachers.
25. **Third Epistle of St. John.** A letter to Gaius, praising him for his hospitality.
26. **Epistle of St. Jude.** Warnings against deceivers.
27. **The Revelation.** The future of the Church foretold.

Books of the Bible

Genesis

Etymology:	Ancient Greek γένεσις <i>genesis</i> , “creation, birth, beginning, origin
Purpose:	Record God’s creation and his desire to have a people set apart to worship him
Author:	Moses
Setting:	Region presently known as the Middle East
Synopsis:	God created the sky, seas, and land. He created the plants, animals, fish, and birds. But he created human beings in his own image. <u>Adam and Eve</u> were created by God without sin. They became sinful when they disobeyed God and ate some fruit from the tree. <u>Noah</u> was spared from the destruction of the flood because he obeyed God and build the Ark. <u>Abraham</u> was asked to leave his country, wander in Canaan, wait years for a son, and then sacrifice him as a burnt offering. <u>Isaac</u> did not demand his own way. He did not resist when he was about to be sacrificed, and he gladly accepted a wife chosen for him by others. Jacob did not give up easily. He faithfully served Laban for 14 years. Later, <u>Jacob</u> wrestled with God. <u>Joseph</u> was sold into slavery by his brothers and unjustly thrown into prison by his master.
Applications:	At times, others may treat us disrespectfully. But we can be certain of our dignity and worth because we have been created in the image of God. Through Adam and Eve we learn about the destructive power of sin and its consequences. Just as God protected Noah and his family, he still protects those who are faithful to him today. Through periods of sharp testing, Abraham remained faithful to God. His example teaches us what it means to live a life of faith. Like Isaac, we must learn to put God’s will ahead of our own. Although Jacob made many mistakes, his hard work teaches us about living a life of service for our Lord. Through the life of Joseph, we learn that suffering, no matter how unfair, can develop strong character in us.
Themes:	Mega-themes – Beginnings, Disobedience, Sin, Promises, Obedience, Prosperity, Israel
Notes:	

Exodus

Etymology:	(Ancient Greek ἔξοδος (<i>exodos</i>), from ἐξ (<i>ex</i>), “out of”) + ὁδός (<i>hodos</i>), “way”))
Purpose:	Events of Israel’s Deliverance from Egypt and development of a nation. The departure of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt under the leadership of Moses
Author:	Moses to the people of Israel around 1450 to 1410 BC
Setting:	Egypt/ Desert/ Mt Sinai. God’s people, once highly favored in the land, are now slaves. God is about to set them free.
Synopsis:	When the Israelite’s were enslaved in Egypt, God heard their cries and rescued them. After crossing the Red sea, the Israelites became quarrelsome and discontent. God revealed his law to the Israelites at Sinai. Through the law, they learned more about what God is like and how he expected his people to live.
Application:	We can be confident that God still hears the cries of his people. Just as he delivered the Israelites from their captor, he delivers us from sin, death, and evil. Like the Israelites, we find it easy to complain and be dissatisfied. Christians will have struggles, but we should never allow difficulties and unpleasant circumstances to turn us away from trusting God. The law is still instructional for us, for it exposes our sin and shows us God’s standard for living.
Themes:	Slavery, Rescue/Redemption, guidance, Then Commandments, the Nation of Israel
Notes:	Exodus relates more miracles than any other Old Testament book Noted for containing the Ten Commandments.

Leviticus

Etymology:	(From the Hebrew word, Vayikra <u>וַיִּקְרָא</u> "and he called (out)". First Greek word <i>Levitikon</i>)
Purpose:	Handbook for priests and Levites, outlining duties in worship, guidebook of Holy living.
Author:	Moses to the People of Israel around 1445 BC during Israel’s wanderings in the desert.
Setting:	At the foot of Mt Sinai. God is teaching the Israelites how to live as holy people.

- Synopsis:** God provided specific directions for the kind of worship that would be pleasing to him. God gave clear standards to the Israelites for living a holy life. They were to be separate and distinct from the pagan nations around them
- Application:** These instructions teach us about the nature of God and can help us develop a right attitude toward worship. Through offerings we learn of the seriousness of sin and the importance of bringing our sins to God for forgiveness. Just as the Israelites, all believers should be separated from sin and dedicated to God. God still wants to remove sin from the lives of his people.
- Themes:** Sacrifice/Offering; Worship; Health; Holiness; the Levites.
- Notes:** Holiness is mentioned more time (152) than in any other book of the Bible

Numbers

- Etymology:** (Greek: Αριθμοί *arithmoi* meaning "numbers") - Numbering of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai and then Moab
- Purpose:** Story of how Israel prepared to enter Canaan, (the promised land), how they sinned and were punished, and how they prepared a second time.
- Author:** Moses to the people of Israel around 1450-1410 BC while Israel was wandering in the desert.
- Setting:** Desert (Wilderness) of the Sinai region, along with areas south and east of Canaan; covers 39 years and closes with Israelites poised near the banks of the Jordan River with Promised Land in sight.
- Synopsis:** As part of their preparation, the Lord gave strict guidelines to the Israelites regarding purity in the camp. He wanted them to have a lifestyle distinct from the nations around them. He wanted them to be a holy people. The Israelites were prevented from entering the Promised Land because of their unbelief. When the people complained against God and criticized Moses, they were severely punished. Over 14,000 people died as a result of rebellion against Moses. As a result of Korah's (Levite – Tabernacle assistant) rebellion, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their households died, along with 250 false priests. The Moabites and Midianites could not get Balaam (a prophet who acknowledged Yahweh was a powerful God) to curse Israel, but they did get him to give advice on how to draw the Israelites to idol worship. Balaam knew what was right, but he gave in to the temptation of material rewards and sinned.
- Application:** Just like the Israelite's camps, we should concern ourselves with purity in the church. Throughout history, God's people continued to struggle with lack of faith. We must prevent unbelief from gaining a foothold in our lives, for it will keep us from enjoying the blessings that God has promised. Dissatisfaction and discontent, if allowed to remain in our lives, can easily lead to disaster. We should refrain from complaining and criticizing our leaders. Knowing what is right alone is never enough. We must also do what is right.
- Themes:** Census, Rebellion, Wandering, Canaan

Deuteronomy

- Etymology:** (Greek: Deuteronomion, "second law") or **Devarim** (Hebrew: דְּבָרִים, literally "things" or "words")
- Purpose:** Renewing of the covenant between God and Israel. Remind people of what God had done and encourage them to rededicate their lives to him.
- Author:** Moses to the new generation entering the Promised Land around 1407 BC. Final summary probably written by Joshua after Moses death.
- Setting:** East side of the Jordan River, in view of Canaan.
- Synopsis:** Moses reviewed the mighty acts of God for the nation of Israel. Obeying God's law's brought blessing to the Israelites and disobeying brought misfortune. This was part of the written agreement God made with his people. Moses called the people to commitment. Although Moses made some serious mistakes, he had lived uprightly and carried out God's commandments. Moses died with integrity. Moses got them out of Egypt but did not get them into Canaan
- Application:** Remembering God's special involvement in our lives gives us hope and encouragement for the future. Although we are not part of this covenant, the principle holds true: Obedience and disobedience carry inevitable consequences in this life and the next. God still calls us to be committed to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We too may make some serious mistakes, but that should not stop us from living with integrity and godly commitment.
- Themes:** History; Laws; Love; Choices; Teaching
- Notes:** The last will and testament of a disappointed man (Moses) – Ian Thomas

Joshua

Etymology:	Joshua's name was originally Hoshea = Salvation. Moses changed his name to Joshua = The Lord Saves
Purpose:	To give the history of Israel's conquest of the Promised Land.
Author:	Joshua to the people of Israel. Ending may have been written by Phinehas (the high priest)
Setting:	Canaan (the Promised Land) which occupied the same general geographical territory of modern-day Israel
Synopsis:	Joshua demonstrated his faith in God as he took up the challenge to lead the nation. The Israelites reaffirmed their commitment to God by obediently setting out across the Jordan River to possess the land. Joshua and his army moved from city to city, cleansing the land of its wickedness by destroying every trace of idol worship. Joshua urged the Israelites to continue to follow the Lord and worship him alone. The people had seen God deliver them from many enemies and miraculously provide for all their needs, but they were prone to wander from the Lord.
Application:	As we live a Christian life, we need to cross over from the old life to the new, put off our selfish desires, and press on to possess all God has planned for us. Like Joshua and Israel, we need in courageous faith to live the new life. Conflict with evil is inevitable, and we should be as merciless as Israel in destroying sin in our lives. Even though we may have experience God at work in our lives, we, too, must continually renew our commitment to obey him above all other authority and to worship him alone.
Themes:	Success; Faith; Guidance; Leadership; Conquest
Notes:	Out of over 1 million people, Joshua and Caleb were the only two who left Egypt and entered Canaan. Study of Joshua allows us to focus on deepening our walk with Christ. Getting us to move out of the wilderness into the Christian life well lived, the fruit and fight of sanctification, and increased dependence on God. Joshua can teach us how to achieve more rest and how to win more victories in "our" Canaan.

Judges

Purpose:	To show that God's judgment against sin is certain, and his forgiveness of sin and restoration to relationship are just as certain for those who repent.
Author:	Possibly Samuel to the people of Israel
Setting:	The land of Canaan, later called Israel. God had helped the Israelites conquer Canaan, which had been inhabited by a host of wicked nations. But they were in danger of losing this land because they compromised their convictions and disobeyed God.
Synopsis:	The tribes had compromised God's command to drive out the inhabitants of the land. Incomplete removal of evil often means disaster in the end. The nation of Israel repeatedly sinned against God and God allowed suffering to come upon the land and the people. Despite the efforts of Israel's judges, the people still would not turn wholeheartedly to God. They all did whatever they thought was best for them. The result was the spiritual, moral, and political decline of the nation.
Application:	We must be aware of compromising with wickedness. Sin always has its consequences. Where there is sin we can expect suffering to follow. Rather than living an endless cycle of abandoning God and then crying out to him for rescue, we should seek to live a consistent life of faithfulness. Our lives will fall into decline and decay unless we live by the guidelines God has given us.
Themes:	Decline/Compromise; Decay/Apostasy; defeat and oppression; repentance; deliverance
Notes:	Records Israel's first civil war

Ruth

Purpose:	To show how three people remained strong in character and true to God even when the society around them was collapsing.
Author:	Unknown; Possibly Samuel. Written after the period of the judges (1375 – 1050 BC)
Setting:	A dark time in Israel's history when people lived to please themselves, not God
Synopsis:	Ruth is an impoverished widow who stays with her mother-in-law, joins God's people, gleans in the grain fields, and risks her honor at the threshing floor of Boaz. Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz.
Application:	This is a picture of how we come to faith in Christ...as we begin with no hope and are rebellious aliens with no part in the kingdom of God. Then as we risk everything by putting our faith in Christ, God saves us, forgives us, rebuilds our lives, and gives us blessing that will last through eternity. Boaz's redeeming of Ruth is a picture of Christ redeeming us.
Themes:	Faithfulness; Kindness; Integrity; Protection; Prosperity/Blessing
Notes:	

1 Samuel

- ()
- Purpose:** To record the life of Samuel, Israel's last judge; the reign and decline of Saul, the first king; and the choice and preparing of David, Israel's greatest king.
- Author:** Possibly Samuel; may include writings from Nathan and Gad
- Setting:** The book begins in the days of the judges and describes Israel's transition from a theocracy (led by God) to a Monarchy (led by a King)
- Synopsis:** We see a vivid contrast between young Samuel and Eli's sons. Eli's sons were selfish, but Samuel was helpful. Eli's son's defrauded people, but Samuel grew in wisdom and gave the people messages from God. As an adult, Samuel became a prophet, priest, and judge over Israel. Saul showed great promise. He was strong, tall, and modest. God's Spirit came upon him, and Samuel was his counselor. But Saul deliberately disobeyed God and became an evil king. David quickly killed Goliath but waited patiently for God to deal with Saul. Although David was anointed to be Israel's next king, he had to wait years to realize this promise.
- Application:** A person's actions reflect his character. This was true of Samuel and of Eli's sons...and also true of us. Strive to keep your heart pure before God. In light of Saul, we must not base our hopes or future on our potential. Instead, we must consistently obey God in all areas of life. God evaluates obedience, not potential. Just as with David, the difficult circumstance in life and the times of waiting often refine, teach, and prepare us for the future responsibility God has for us.
- Themes:** King; God's control; leadership; Obedience; God's faithfulness
- Notes:** Samuel was the last of the judges, first of the prophets, founder of monarchy, and started the school of Prophets
This is the beginning of the King Books.

2 Samuel

- Title:** Named after the prophet who anointed David and guided him in living for God.
- Purpose:** To record the history of David's reign; to demonstrate effective leadership under God; to reveal that one person can make a difference; to show the personal qualities that please God; to depict David as an ideal leader of an imperfect kingdom, and to foreshadow Christ, who will be the ideal leader of a new and perfect kingdom (chp7).
- Author:** Unknown; Possibly Nathan's son Zabud, some writings from Nathan and Gad. Written around 930 BC...soon after David's rule.
- Setting:** The land of Israel under David's rule
- Synopsis:** David took the fractured kingdom that Saul had left behind and built a strong, united power. 40 years later, David would turn this kingdom over to his son Solomon. David had a heart for God. He was king who governed God's people by God's principles, and God blessed him greatly. David sinned with Bathsheba and then tried to cover his sin by having her husband killed. Although he was forgiven for his sin, the consequences remained...he experienced trouble and distress, both with his family and with the nation.
- Application:** We may not have David's earthly success, but following God is, ultimately, the most successful decision we can make. God is always ready to forgive, but we must live with the consequences of our actions. Covering up our sin will only multiply sin's painful consequences.
- Themes:** Kingdom Growth; Personal greatness; Justice; Consequences of sin; Feet of clay.
- Notes:** The enthronement of God's king...David
David was humble in his success and genuinely repented when he sinned.
David used every talent God gave him for God's glory
An example of loyalty to God
Reigned 40 years – 7 ½ in Hebron; 33 in Jerusalem
David united the whole nation under his kingship

1 Kings

- Purpose:** To contrast the lives of those who live for God and those who refuse to do so through the history of the kings of Israel and Judah.
- Author:** Unknown; possibly Jeremiah or a group of prophets.

Setting:	The once great nation of Israel turned into a land divided, not only physically, but also spiritually.
Synopsis:	Solomon was a botanist, zoologist, architect, poet, and philosopher. He was the wisest king in the history of Israel, but his wives led to the introduction of false gods and false worship in Israel. When the northern Kingdom of Israel was being led by wicked kings, God raised up a prophet to proclaim his messages. Elijah single-handedly challenged the priesthood of the state religion and had them removed in one day. Through the dividing of the kingdom and the sending of Elijah, God dealt with the people's sin in powerful ways.
Application:	It is good for us to have wisdom, but that is not enough. The highest goal in life is to obey the Lord. Patient obedience to God should characterize our lives. Sin in our lives is graciously forgiven by God. However, the sin of an unrepentant person will be handled harshly. We must turn from sin and turn to God to be saved from judgment.
Themes:	The King; the temple; other gods; Elijah's message; sin and repentance
Notes:	The books of 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book.

2 Kings

Setting:	()
Purpose:	To demonstrate the fate that awaits all who refuse to make God their true leader.
Author:	Unknown; possibly Jeremiah or a group of prophets.
Setting:	The once united nation of Israel has been divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, for over a century.
Synopsis:	Although Israel had the witness and power of Elisha, the nation turned from God and was exiled to Assyria. Assyria filled the northern kingdom with people from other lands. The northern kingdom was destroyed, and prophets were predicting the same fate for Judah. What more could cause the nation to Repent? Hezekiah and Josiah were able to stem the tide of evil. They both repaired the temple and gathered the people for the Passover. Josiah eradicated idolatry from the land, but as soon as these good kings were gone, the people returned again to living their way instead of God's way.
Application:	There has been no return from this captivity...it was permanent. Such is the end of all who shut God out of their lives. Each individual must believe and live for God in his or her family, church, and nation.
Themes:	Elisha; Idolatry; Evil Kings/Good kings; God's patience; Judgment
Notes:	The 17 prophetic books at the end of the OT give great insights into the time period of 2 kings.
Content:	

1 Chronicles

Etymology:	(Hebrew Divrei Hayyamim , דברי הימים, "matters [of] the days", Greek Paralipomenon , Παραλειπομένων, "material set off[aside]" from Ezra)
Purpose:	To unify God's people, to trace the Davidic line, and to teach that genuine worship ought to be the center of individual and national life. Emphasizes the religious history of Judah and Israel.
Author:	Ezra (According to Jewish tradition)
Setting:	1 st Chronicles parallels 2 Samuel and serves as a commentary. Written after the exile from a priestly point of view.
Synopsis:	Long list of names presents a history of God's work in the world from Adam through Zerubbabel. David loved the Lord and wanted to build a temple to replace the tabernacle, but God denied his request. David's greatest contribution to the temple would not be the construction rather the "preparation".
Application:	We may be unable to see the results of our labors for God in our lifetime, but David's example helps us understand that we serve God so he will see his results, not so we will see ours.
Themes:	
Notes:	

2 Chronicles

Etymology:	(Hebrew Divrei Hayyamim , דברי הימים, "matters [of] the days", Greek Paralipomenon , Παραλειπομένων, "material set off[aside]" from Ezra)
Purpose:	To unify the nation around true worship of God by showing his standard for judging kings. The righteous kings of Judah and the religious revivals under their rule are highlighted, and the sins of the evil kings are exposed. Includes a detailed record of the temple's construction.

Author: Ezra (According to Jewish tradition)

Setting: 2nd Chronicles parallels 1 and 2 Kings and serves as a commentary. Originally 1 and 2 Chronicles were one book. It was written after the exile from a priestly perspective, highlighting the importance of the temple and the religious revivals in Judah. The Northern Kingdom, Israel, is virtually ignored in this history.

Synopsis: Solomon achieved much in business and government, but most important, he was the man God used to build the glorious Temple, which was the religious center of the nation. It symbolized the unity of all the tribes, the presence of God among them, and the nation's high calling. Throughout the reigns of 20 kings, the nation of Judah wavered between obedience to God and apostasy. The reigning king's response to God determined the spiritual climate of the nation and whether or not God would send judgment upon his people. Obedience and rewards are highlighted rather than dis-obedience and punishment....for example nothing is said of David's Sin with Bathsheba.

Application: We may achieve great things in life, but we must not neglect any effort that will help nurture God's people or bring others into God's kingdom. It is easy for us to get the wrong perspective on what's really important in life. Our personal history is shaped by our response to God. Just as Judah's failure to repent brought them captivity in Babylon, so the abuse of our high calling by sinful living will ultimately bring us catastrophe and destruction.

Themes:

Notes:

Ezra

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Purpose: To show God's faithfulness and the way he kept his promise to restore his people to their land.

Author: Not stated, but probably Ezra (A scribe among the exiles in Babylon who led the 2nd group of exiles from Babylon back to Jerusalem). Written around 450 BC to the exiles who returned from captivity.

Setting: Ezra follows 2 Chronicles as a history of the Jewish people, recording their return to the land after captivity.

Synopsis: Finally given the chance to return to their homeland, the people started to rebuild the temple, only to be stopped by opposition from their enemies. Ezra returned to Jerusalem almost 80 years after Zerubbabel, only to discover that the people had married pagan or foreign spouses. This polluted the religious purity of the people and endangered the future of the nation.

Application: God's work in the world is not without opposition. We must not get discouraged and quit, as the returning Jews did at first, but continue on boldly in the face of difficulties, as they did later with encouragement from the prophets. Believers today must be careful not to threaten their walk with God by taking on the practices of unbelievers.

Themes: The Jews return; Rededication; Opposition; God's word; Faith and action

Notes: Ezra and Nehemiah were one book in the Hebrew Bible, and, with Esther, they comprised the post captivity historical books.
Ezra should be studied with Haggai and Zechariah as they prophesied during the period of the reconstruction.

Nehemiah

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Purpose: Records the history of the 3rd return to Jerusalem after captivity, telling how the walls were rebuilt and the people were renewed in their faith.

Author: Nehemiah probably wrote the book with Ezra as the editor. Written approx. 445 - 423 BC to the exiles who returned from captivity.

Setting: Zerubbabel led the 1st return to Jerusalem in 538 BC. In 458 Ezra led the 2nd return. Finally, in 445, Nehemiah returned with the 3rd group of exiles to rebuild the city walls.

Synopsis: Nehemiah's life is an example of leadership and organization. Giving up a comfortable and wealthy position in Persia, he returned to the fractured homeland of his ancestors and rallied the people to rebuild Jerusalem's wall. In the face of opposition, he used wise defense measures to care for the people and to keep the project moving. After the wall was rebuilt, Ezra read the law to the people, bringing about national repentance. Nehemiah and Ezra were very different people, yet God used them both to lead the nation.

Application: To accomplish more for the sake of God's kingdom, we must pray, persevere, and sacrifice, as did Nehemiah. Remember, there is a place for you in God's work even if you are different from most other people. God uses each person in a unique way to accomplish his purposes.

Themes: Vision; Prayer; Leadership; Problems; Repentance and Revival.
Notes: Nehemiah is the last of the OT historical books
The book shows the fulfillment of the prophecies of Zechariah and Daniel concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

Esther

Etymology:

Purpose: To demonstrate God's sovereignty and his loving care for his people.

Author: Unkown. Possibly Mordecai (9:29), Ezra, or Nehemiah (due to similar writing style). Written approx.. 470 BC to the people of Israel.

Setting: Although Esther follows Nehemiah in the Bible, its events are about 30 years prior to those recorded in Nehemiah. The story is set in the Persian empire, and most of the action takes place in the king's palace in Susa, the Persian capital.

Synopsis: The book of Esther is an example of God's divine guidance and care over our lives. God's sovereignty and power are send throughout this book.

Application: Although we may question certain circumstance in our lives, we must have faith that God is in control, working through both the pleasant and difficult times so that we can serve him effectively.

Themes: God's sovereignty; Racial hatred; Deliverance; Action; Wisdom

Notes: Esther is one of only two books name for women (Ruth is the other)

Book is unusual in that in the original version no name, title, or pronoun for God appears. This caused some church fathers to question the book's inclusion in Scripture. But God's presence is clear throughout the book.

Content:

Job

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Purpose: To demonstrate God's sovereignty and the meaning of true faith. It addresses the question Why do the righteous suffer?

Author: Unknown, possibly Job, Moses, Solomon, Elihu

Setting: The land of Uz, probably located northeast of Palestine, near desert land between Damascus and the Euphrates River.

Synopsis: Job, a wealthy and upright man, lost his possessions, his children, and his health. Job did not understand why he was suffering. Why does God allow his children to suffer? Job's friends wrongly assumed that suffering always came as a result of sin. With this in mind, they tried to persuade Job to repent of his sin. But the three friends were wrong. Elihu, who had been listening, criticized the three friends for being unable to answer Job. He said that although Job was a good mad, he had allowed himself to become proud, and God was punishing him in order to humble him. God himself final answered Job. Job finally learned that when nothing else was left, he had God, and that was enough.

Application: Although there is an explanation, we may not know it while we are here on earth. In the meantime, we must always be ready for testing in our lives. Suffering is not always a direct result of personal sin. When we experience suffering, it may not be our fault, so we don't have to add to our pain by feeling guilty that some hidden sin is causing our trouble. God is beyond our comprehension and we cannot know why he allows each instance of suffering to come into our lives. Our part is simply to remain faithful. God is in control of the world, and only he understands why the good are allowed to suffer. We must courageously accept what God allows to happen in our lives and remain firmly committed to him. Through suffering, we learn that God is enough for our lives and our future. We must love God regardless of whether he allows blessings or suffering to come to us. Testing is difficult, but the result is often a deeper relationship with God. Those who endure the testing of their faith will experience God's great rewards in the end.

Notes:

Psalms

Title: The word psalms is derived from the Greek Ψαλμοί (Psalmoi), perhaps originally meaning "songs sung to a harp", from psallein "play on a stringed instrument".

Purpose: To provide poetry for the expression of praise, worship, and confession. Taken together, its 150 poems "express virtually the full range of Israel's religious faith."

Author:	Many Psalms are written by, to, for, or about David (73 Psalms); Asaph wrote 12, the sons of Korah wrote 9; Solomon wrote 2; Heman, Ethan, and Moses each wrote 1; 51 Psalms are anonymous. Written to the people of Israel between the time of Moses (1440 BC) and the Babylonian captivity (586 BC).
Setting:	Represents the results of the process of collecting and organizing psalms over centuries, completed by temple leaders after the return from exile. Psalms were not intended to be narrations of historical events; however, they often paralleled events in history, such as David's flight from Saul and his sin with Bathsheba.
Synopsis:	<p>Organized into 5 Books (may imitate the Pentateuch) While the psalms are not organized by topic, it is helpful to compare the dominant themes in each section of the psalms to the five books of Moses.</p> <p>Book 1 (1-41) – Mainly written by David is similar to the book of <u>Genesis</u>. Just as Genesis tells how mankind was created, fell to sin, and was then promised redemption, many of the psalms in book 1 discuss humans blessed, fallen, and redeemed by God. Writers praise God for his justice, express confidence in God's compassion, recount the depravity of humanity, plead for vindication, ask God to deliver them from their enemies, speak of the blessedness of the forgiven sinner, and portray God as a shepherd.</p> <p>Book 2 (42-72) – Mainly written by David and the sons of Korah is similar to the book of <u>Exodus</u> as they described the nation of Israel as ruined and then recovered. Psalms include a prayer for rescue, a confession of sin, an encouragement to trust God, a psalm for those hurt by friends, a prayer for those who have been slandered, and a missionary psalm.</p> <p>Book 3 (73-89) – Mainly written by Asaph or his descendants is similar to the book of <u>Leviticus</u>. As Leviticus discusses the tabernacle and God's holiness, many of these psalms discuss the temple and God's enthronement. They celebrate the sovereignty of God, God's hand in history, God's faithfulness, and God's covenant with David.</p> <p>Book 4 (90-106) – Mainly written by unknown authors is similar to the book of <u>Numbers</u>. Just as Numbers discusses the relationship of the Nation of Israel to surrounding nations, these psalms often mention the relationship of God's overruling kingdom to the other nations. Includes a prayer of Moses, a psalm about oppressors, and a psalm praising God as our King.</p> <p>Book 5 (107-150) – Mainly written by David is similar to the book of <u>Deuteronomy</u> as they are anthems of praise and thanksgiving for God and his Word. Most of these were originally set to music and used in worship. These Psalms praise God's works, recount the blessing of righteous living, thank God for deliverance, and praise God for his wonderful word.</p>
Application:	<p>As God rescued the nation of Israel, he also rescues us. We do not have to work our solutions first, but we can go to God with our problems and ask him to help. Because God is almighty, we can turn to him for deliverance. Book 2 psalms can help us retain a sense of wonder in our worship. Book 3 psalms praise God because he is holy, and perfect holiness deserves our worship and reverence. Because we are citizens of the Kingdom of God, in Book 4 we can keep the events and troubles of earth in their proper perspective. We should remember our place and be submissive before our mighty God. We can use the psalms in book 5 today as they were used in the past...as hymnbooks of praise and worship and make our heart sing. The best sacrifice we can offer to God is a faithful and obedient life.</p> <p><u>Pray through the Scriptures</u> – Prayers can be based on phrases and versus moving through a psalm.</p> <p>Example Psalm 23</p>
Themes:	<p>Mega themes – Praise, God's Power, forgiveness, Thankfulness, Trust</p> <p>God's sovereignty, Justice, and faithfulness</p> <p>God as a source of Hope</p> <p>God's special work with Israel</p>
Notes:	<p>Psalms or the Jewish hymns and prayers of temple worship and individual worship.</p> <p>An anthology (collection) of 150 "separate" poetic compositions (2461 verses) organized into five books...perhaps to imitate the Pentateuch...each ending with its own doxology.</p> <p>The word "selah" is found in 39 Psalms, but its meaning is unclear</p>
Types:	<p>Psalms can be categorized into "types" of psalms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Imprecatory (cursing)</u> – praying for God's justice/vengeance on the enemies of God, Israel, or an individual. Reminds us to be angry with injustice, to refocus our concerns away from us and more towards others, to refocus our desire for revenge within a trust of God's justice and timing, and to wrestle with the tension between our desire for justice and the call to pray for our enemies, Ex Psalm 35 2. <u>Wisdom</u> – Proverbs-like in communicating and emphasizing the importance of wisdom. Ex Psalm 37 3. <u>Community Lament</u> – based on crisis and or repentance for the community or nation. Ex. Psalm 44 4. <u>Historical/Narrative</u> – looking back on God's works in history as the basis of current prayer/praise and future hope. Ex. Psalm 78 5. <u>Royal/Messianic</u> – To commemorate "royal" events or prayer/praise for the King/king. Ex. Psalm 89 6. <u>Songs of Trust</u> – underlying the individual's or community's trust in God. Ex. Psalm 91 7. <u>Individual Lament</u> – based on crisis and or repentance of an individual. Ex. Psalm 102

8. Thanks/Praise – Worshiping God, especially in the context of festivals or for deliverance from enemies. Ex. Psalm 118

9. Songs of Torah – Praising and celebrating the Law. Ex. Psalm 119

How to Read: **Nine Principles to enrich your understanding** – by Tremper Longman III
Principles for interpreting the Psalms and helping us meet God in the reading.

1. Read in its context – Collection of poetic compilations not a narrative; a Psalm may have no relationship to the ones that surround it.

2. Determine the genre – Reflect on how it is used in the original setting.

3. Meditate on the parallelism - lines building on each other to strengthen the point

4. Unpack the imagery – Says a lot in a few word; look for metaphors and similes (images and symbols) that give imaginative power.

5. Read in light of the title – Giving us information such as historical setting, names, events, musical terms.

6. Glean the theological teaching – Psalm teaches us about God and our relationship with Him. Articulates images of God most often pictures of relationship to us.

7. Ask how it anticipates Jesus Christ – Luke 24:44 teaches that Christ's suffering and glorification were anticipated in the Psalms. We should read each and every Psalm with Christ in mind.

a. We can "pray through the Psalms" as prayers to Christ and of Jesus.

b. Ask yourself how reading each Psalm leads you to Christ.

8. Consider as a mirror of your soul – Psalms give you a close look at yourself and reveal your soul. They express every emotion that human being experience. They help us understand what is going on inside of us...as the words become your own.

a. The Laments articulate fear, despair, shame, and anger

b. The Hymns express joy, love, and confidence.

9. Let it guide your life – Psalms lead us to godly actions and attitudes; they tell us how to worship...encouraging us to sing, praise, clap our hands, pray, fall on our knees.

a. Invites us to enthusiastically adore God in good times and in difficult times.

Proverbs

Etymology: (in Hebrew: מִשְׁלֵי *Mishlay*) Hebrew title of the book of Proverbs is "Míshlê Shlomoh" ("Proverbs of Solomon")

Purpose: To teach people how to attain wisdom, discipline, and a prudent life, and how to do what is right, just, and fair. To apply divine wisdom to daily life and to provide moral instruction

Author: Solomon wrote most of the book, with Agur and Lemuel contributing to later sections.

Setting: A book of wise sayings, a textbook for teaching people how to live godly lives through the repetition of wise thoughts.

Synopsis: Solomon instructed the young people of his day like a father giving advice to his child. Solomon wanted to impart wisdom to all people, regardless of their age, sex, or position in society. In addition to the proverbs that Solomon collected, the advisers of Hezekiah collected many proverbs that Solomon and others wrote.

Application: While many of the proverbs are directed toward young people, the principles supporting them are helpful to all believers, male and female, young and old. Anyone beginning his or her journey to discover more of wisdom will benefit greatly from these wise sayings. These short, wise saying give us practical wisdom for daily living. We should study them diligently and integrate them in our lives. While most of them in 25 - 31 are general in nature, many are directed specifically to the king and those who dealt with the king. These are particularly useful for leaders or those who aspire to be leaders.

Notes: Should be read as general principles rather than universal truths or commands (i.e. 15:25, 30)

Ecclesiastes

Etymology: The Hebrew קהלת meaning "to gather, assemble, convene"

Purpose: To spare future generations the bitterness of learning through their own experience that life is meaningless apart from God. All is vanity. It records an intense search for meaning and satisfaction in life on this earth.

Author: Solomon, Around 935 BC, late in Solomon's life.

Setting: Solomon was looking back on his life, much of which was lived apart from God

Synopsis: Ecclesiastes shows that certain paths in life lead to emptiness. This profound book also helps us discover the true purpose of life. Such wisdom can spare us from the emptiness that results from a life without God. Solomon teaches that people will not find meaning in life through knowledge, money,

pleasure, work, or popularity. True satisfaction comes from knowing that what we are doing is part of God's for our lives.

Application: This is a book that can help free us from our scramble for power, approval, and money, and draw us closer to God. We should enjoy life, but this does not exempt us from obeying God's commandments. We should search for purpose and meaning in life, but they will not be found in human endeavors. To live properly, we need to:

1. Recognize that human effort apart from God is futile
2. Put God first...now
3. Receive everything good as a gift from God
4. Realize that God will judge both evil and good
5. Know that God will judge the quality of every person's life

Themes: Mega-themes: Searching, Emptiness, Work, Death, Wisdom

Notes:

- The book of Ecclesiastes cannot be interpreted correctly without reading the final verses.
- Proclaims all the actions of man to be inherently "vain", "futile", "empty", "meaningless", "temporary", "transitory", "fleeting, or "mere breath"
- Suggests that one should enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life, such as eating, drinking, and taking enjoyment in one's work, which are gifts from the hand of God

Song of Solomon (Songs)

Etymology: The phrase Song of Songs is a superlative meaning "the best of the songs."

Purpose: To tell of the love between King Solomon and his bride, to affirm the sanctity of marriage, and to picture God's love for His people.
- To extol the virtues of love between a husband and his wife. To affirm the goodness and righteousness of physical, romantic love within the confines of a God ordained marriage.

Author: Solomon (1:1). Written during the early part of his reign around 956BC

Setting: Israel in the Shulamite woman's garden and the king's palace.

Synopsis: Song of Songs is a wedding song honoring marriage. The most explicit statements on sex in the Bible can be found in this book.

Application: The poem clearly presents marriage as God's design. A man and woman are to live together within the context of marriage, loving each other spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Love entails passion. Marriage is to be celebrated, enjoyed, and revered. The purity and sacredness of love represented here is greatly needed in our day in which distorted attitudes about love and marriage are commonplace. God created sex and intimacy, and they are holy and good when enjoyed within marriage. A husband and wife honor God when they love and enjoy each other.

Themes: Mega-themes – Sex, Love, Commitment, Beauty, Problems

Love is a beautiful gift from God – Portrayed as precious (8:7), spontaneous (2:7), and powerful (8:6-7).

Marital contentment – Fulfillment is found in exclusivity (2:16). The Erotic love is tender, delightful, and natural...

Love is both pleasurable and painful

Notes: - Song of Solomon has been the subject of a great deal of discussion. There have been more differing interpretations of this book than any other. ie. the history of the Jews from Abraham to the Messiah; the bride as "Wisdom"; a celebration of the restoration of Mosaic worship by Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah; the relationship of God to Israel, or God to the church; a figurative of Solomon's civil government. And others assert that it means nothing more than physical love, dividing as to whether it describes love before marriage or after marriage .

- The Song of Songs was read during the festival of the Passover. The Passover commemorated the Israelites' deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians. So although this book describes the love between a man and a woman, it is also picturing the love between God and His people. Such a theme would most certainly be appropriate during the Passover

Isaiah

Etymology: Isaiah = "YHWH is Salvation"

Purpose: To call the nation of Judah back to God and to tell of God's salvation through the Messiah

Author: The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz written during his ministry (700BC) and near the end of his life (681BC).

Setting: Isaiah is speaking and writing mainly in Jerusalem

Synopsis: The 39 chapters in the first half of Isaiah generally carry the message of judgment for sin. Isaiah brings the message of judgment to Judah, Israel, and the surrounding pagan nations. The people of Judah had

a form of godliness, but in their hearts they were corrupt. Isaiah's warnings were intended to purify the people by helping them understand God's true nature and message. However, they ignored the repeated warnings that Isaiah brought.

The 27 chapters in the second half of Isaiah generally bring a message of forgiveness, comfort, and hope. This message of hope looks forward to the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah speaks more about the Messiah than does any other Old Testament prophet. He describes the Messiah as both a suffering Servant and a sovereign Lord.

Application: We need to heed the prophetic voice and not repeat the errors of Judah. The fact that the Messiah was to be both a suffering servant and a sovereign Lord could not be understood clearly until NT times. Based on what Jesus Christ has done, God freely offers forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith. This is God's message of comfort to us because those who heed it find eternal peace and fellowship with him.

Themes: Holiness; Punishment; Salvation; Messiah (a major focus); Hope

Notes:

- The book of Isaiah contains both prose and poetry and uses personification (personal qualities to divine beings).
- Many of the prophecies in Isaiah contain predictions that foretell a soon-to-occur event and a distant future event at the same time.
- Isaiah was a prophet from the Southern Kingdom (740 BC – 681 BC)
- Came from a family of rank and had access to the king (7:3) and was intimate with the high priest (8:2)
- Jerusalem was his home; where he was married and had 2 sons
- Literary form is regarded as the highest Hebrew art with extensive vocabulary, versatile expressions, and imagery.
- Is considered by many as the greatest of the Major Prophets, the most comprehensive...

Jeremiah

Etymology: יֵרֵמְיָהוּ Yirməyāhū in Hebrew

Purpose: To urge God's people to **turn from their sins and back to God**.

- Jeremiah's purpose was to call his hearers to **repentance** in view of God's judgment on Judah, which would come soon from an army from the north (chs. 2—45)

Author: Jeremiah – “**The weeping prophet**”

Audience: People of Judah and to Jerusalem (its capital city)

Setting: Written during a **period of political and military unrest**, during which the entire region, found itself at the mercy of the superpowers (Assyria, Egypt, and then Babylon). Jeremiah ministered under Judah's last five kings (Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah). His ministry began during the time of Josiah's attempt to reform the nation and purge it of idolatry. The nation was sliding quickly toward destruction and was eventually conquered by Babylon in 586 BC (2 Kings 21-25). The prophet Zephaniah preceded Jeremiah, and Habakkuk was Jeremiah's contemporary. Almost all his ministry took place in Jerusalem. He spoke to kings, priests, and prophets, as well as the ordinary citizens, and he delivered oracles against foreign nations. During that time, the Babylonian Empire had taken control of Jerusalem. The Babylonians took Jews as captives to Babylon as early as 605 BC and 597 BC. Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Synopsis: Jeremiah confronts many people with their sins: Kings, false prophets, those at the temples, and those at the gates. The people of Judea were in apostasy. A lack of response made Jeremiah wonder if he was doing any good at all. He often felt discouraged and sometimes bitter. Jeremiah lived to seem may of his prophecies come true...most notably the fall of Jerusalem. The fulfillment of this and other prophecies against the foreign nations came as a result of sin. Because of Jeremiah's doom and gloom message, he was despised and continuously in danger (11:18-23; 26:8; 38:6)

The people of Judah continuously disobeyed God's direction for them after repeated warnings. They did not listen to the very stern and direct warnings and continued to sin. God ultimately punished and justice prevailed. Yet God wants' his people to survive and be in harmony with him. So his remnant is returned for yet another chance.

Application: To bring such gloomy messages to these people was a hard task. **We, too, have a responsibility to bring this news to a fallen world.** Those who continue in their sinful ways are eternally doomed. Although we may feel discouraged at the lack of response, we must press on to tell others about the consequence of sin and the hope that God offers. Those who tell people only what they want to hear are being unfaithful to God's message. Those who refuse to confess their sin bring judgment upon **themselves**.

Themes:

- **Repentance** – Jeremiah called God's people to repent and return to God in order to avoid divine judgment (e.g. 7:1-15). The people responded negatively, and, as a consequence, some of the oracles asserted of the coming judgment.
- **Judgment** – Jeremiah announce that Judah's covenant rebellion would bring judgment (11:1-13:27) and that they had broken the covenant by their idolatry; their attempts to save themselves through military alliances; and their injustice and ethical violations. Their sin would not go unpunished.
- **Restoration** – Jeremiah 31:31 – 33 (The book of Consolation) describes the new covenant in which Jesus ultimately fulfilled that new covenant (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 9:15; Heb 12:24)

Outline:

- Chapters 1-25 (The earliest and main core of Jeremiah's message)
- Chapters 26-29 (Biographic material and interaction with other prophets)
- Chapters 30-33 (God's promise of restoration)
- Chapters 34-45 (Mostly interaction with Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem)
- Chapters 46-51 (Divine punishment to the nations surrounding Israel)
- Chapter 52 (Appendix that retells 2 Kings 24.18-25.30)...possibly written by Baruch

Notes:

- This book is a combination of history, poetry, and biography. Jeremiah often **used symbolism** to communicate his message. Jeremiah **is the longest book** with respect to number of words. **Not written in chronological order**.
- Jeremiah dictated most of his prophecies to his **faithful secretary, Baruch**, who wrote them down verbatim (36:4).
- Jeremiah spoke more **about repentance** than any other prophet.
- The Book of Jeremiah tells us more about the prophet Jeremiah than any other prophetic book reveals about its writer. It is highly biographical and autobiographical.² Scholars refer to the

autobiographical sections (10:23-25; 11:18—12:6; 15:10-14, 15-21; 17:9-11, 14-18; 18:18-23; and 20:7-13, 14-18) as "Jeremiah's confessions." We know more about his personality than that of any other writing prophet.

- The principal **Messianic prophecies** are found in Jer_23:1-8; Jer_31:31-40; and Jer_33:14-26.
- Two distinctly different versions of his book have survived. First is the standard Hebrew version known as the Masoretic text; which is the basis for our English translations. The other is the Septuagint, which represent a variant edition.

Lamentations

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- Purpose:** To teach people that to disobey God is to invite disaster, and to show that God suffers when his people suffer.
- Author:** Jeremiah to the exiled people of Judah written soon after the call of Jerusalem in 586 BC.
- Setting:** Jerusalem had been destroyed by Babylon and her people killed, tortured, or taken captive.
- Synopsis:** Jeremiah grieves deeply because of the destruction of Jerusalem and the devastation of his nation. But in the middle of the book, in the depths of his grief, there shines a ray of hope. God's compassion is ever present. His faithfulness is great. Jeremiah realizes that it is only the Lord's mercy that has prevented total annihilation.
- Application:** This book shows us the serious consequences of sin and how we can still have hope in the midst of tragedy because God is able to turn it around for good. We see the timeless importance of prayer and confession of sin. We will all face tragedy in our life. But in the midst of our afflictions, there is hope in God.
- Themes:** Destruction of Jerusalem; God's mercy; Sin's consequences; Hope
- Notes:** Three strands of Hebrew thought meet in Lamentations...prophecy, ritual, and wisdom. Lamentations is written in the rhythm and style of ancient Jewish funeral songs or chants. It contains five poems corresponding to the five chapters.

Ezekiel

- Etymology:** Ezekiel means "God is Strong" or "God Strengthens"
- Purpose:** To announce God's judgment on Israel and other nations and to foretell the eventual salvation of God's people.
- Author:** Ezekiel son of Buzi, a Zadokite priest. Written to the Jews in captivity in Babylonia around 571 BC.
- Setting:** Babylon was the dominant power in the region. Ezekiel was a part of the second group of captives that Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon. Ezekiel was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. While Jeremiah ministered to the people still in Judah, Ezekiel prophesied to those already exiled in Babylonia after the defeat of Jehoiachin. He was taken there in 597 BC.
- Synopsis:** While Jeremiah was prophesying in Jerusalem that the city would soon fall to the Babylonians, Ezekiel was giving the same message to the captives who were already in Babylon. Like those in Jerusalem, the captives stubbornly believed that Jerusalem would not fall and that they would soon return to their land. Ezekiel warned them that punishment was certain because of their sins and that God was purifying his people. Ezekiel condemns the sinful actions of seven nations. The people in these nations were saying that God was obviously too weak to defend his people and the city of Jerusalem. But God was allowing his people to be defeated in order to punish them for their sins. These pagan nations however would face a similar fate; and they would know that God is all-powerful. After the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel delivered messages of future restoration and hope for the people. God is holy, but Jerusalem and the temple had become defiled. The nation had to be cleansed through 70 years of captivity. Ezekiel gives a vivid picture of the unchangeable holiness of God.
- Application:** God will always punish sin, whether we believe it or not. Those who dare to mock God today will also face a terrible fate. We must gain a vision of the glory of God, a fresh sense of his greatness, as we face the struggles of daily life.
- Themes:** **Megathemes:** God's holiness; Sin; Restoration; Leaders; Worship
Holiness/ Transcendence; Justice/Judgment; Individual responsibility; Hope; Consciousness of God's redemptive purposes.
- Notes:** Book of Ezekiel is exclusively chronological; numerous calendar dates. Ezekiel received 14 visions that comprise 48 chapters.

Daniel

Etymology:	"Daniel" means "God is my judge": <i>Dan</i> means "judgment" or "he judged".)
Purpose:	To give a historical account of the faithful Jews who lived in captivity and to show how God is in control of heaven and earth, directing the forces of nature, the destiny of nations, and the care of his people. God is sovereign over all human history, past, present, and future.
Author:	Daniel; possibly anonymous
Setting:	Daniel had been taken captive and deported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 AD. There he served in the Government for about 7- years during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.
Synopsis:	Daniel and the three friends chose not to eat the king's food. They did not bow down to the king's image, even under penalty of death. Daniel continued to pray even though he knew he might be noticed and sentenced to death. Daniel's visions gave the captives added confidence that God is in control of history. They were to wait patiently in faith and not worship the gods of Babylon or accept that society's way of life.
Application:	These men are an inspiring example for us of how to live godly lives in a sinful world. When we face trials, we can expect God to also be with us through them. May God grant us similar courage to remain faithful under pressure. God still rules over human activities. Evil will be overcome, so we should wait patiently and not give in to the temptations and pressures of the sinful way of life around us.
Notes:	Daniel was written in two languages; Hebrew and Aramaic [2:4 – 7:28]

Hosea

Etymology:	(Hebrew: <i>חֹשֶׁה</i> , Modern <i>Hošea</i> Tiberian <i>Hōšēā</i> ; "Salvation of/is the Lord", Greek Ὡσηέ = Ōsēe)
Purpose:	To illustrate God's Love for his sinful people
Author:	Hosea son of Beeri (Minor Prophet to Israel from 753 – 715 BC)
Setting:	Hosea began his ministry during the end of the prosperous but morally declining reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (upper class oppressed the poor people). Hosea prophesied until shortly after the fall of Samaria in 722 BC.
Synopsis:	Hosea was commanded by God to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him and would cause him many heart aches. God wanted the people in the northern kingdom to turn from their sin and return to worshiping him alone, but they persisted in their wickedness. Israel is described as ignorant of God, with no desire to please him. Israel did not understand God, just as Gomer did not understand Hosea. The people of Israel had sinned against God, as an adulterous woman sins against her husband. Judgment was sure to come for living in disregard for God. Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC.
Application:	Just as Gomer lost interest in Hosea and ran after other lovers, we lose appreciation for our special relationship with God and pursue dreams and goals that do not include Him. When we compromise our Christian life styles and adopt the ways of the world, we are being unfaithful. Like a loving husband or patient father, God wants people to know him and turn to him daily. While we must answer to God for their sins, those who seek God's forgiveness are spared eternal judgment.

Joel

Title:	Ascribing the prophecy to Joel son of Pethuel
Purpose:	To warn Judah of God's Impending judgment because of its sins and urge the people to turn back to God. Symbolically describes the locusts that devastated Judah as a marching human army and views this as divine judgment coming against the nation. Two major events: 1) invasion of locusts and 2) the outpouring of the Spirit.
Author:	Joel son of Pethuel (Minor Prophet)
Setting:	Southern Israelite Kingdom of Judah (prosperous, complacent, and self-centered) and probably its capital Jerusalem
Synopsis:	The locust plague was only a foretaste of the judgment to come in the day of the Lord.
Application:	A timeless call to repentance with the promise of blessing. We will face tragic judgment if we live in sin. But God's grace is available to us both now and in the coming day...if we repent.

Amos

Purpose: To pronounce God's judgment upon Israel, the Northern Kingdom, for its complacency, idolatry, and oppression of the poor. Amos spoke against those who exploited or ignored the needy.

Author: Amos

Setting: The wealthy people of Israel were enjoying peace and prosperity. They were quite complacent and were oppressing the poor, even selling them into slavery. Soon, however, Israel would be conquered by Assyria, and the rich would themselves become slaves.

Synopsis: Amos speaks with brutal frankness in denouncing sin. He collided with the false religious leaders of his day and was not intimidated by priest or king. He continued to speak his message boldly.

Application: God requires truth and goodness, justice, and righteousness, from all people and Nations today as well. Many of the conditions in Israel during Amos's time are evident in today's society. We need Amos's courage to ignore danger and stand against sin.

Obadiah

Etymology: Attributed to Obadiah, which means "servant (or worshipper) of the Lord")

Purpose: To show that God judges those who have harmed his people. Condemns Edom (proud of its high position) for sins against both God and Israel.

Author: Obadiah (Minor Prophet)

Setting: Edom (who constantly harassed the Jews) had participated in attacks against Judah. Before the time that Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Judah (before 586 BC)

Synopsis: Shows the outcome of the ancient feud between Edom and Israel. Edom was proud of their high position, but God would bring her down.

Application: Those who are high and powerful today should not be overconfident in themselves, whether they are a nation, a corporation, church, or a family. Just as Edom was destroyed for its pride so will anyone be who lives in defiance of God.

Jonah

Etymology: (Hebrew: *Sefer Yonah*)

Purpose: To show the extent of God's grace – the message of salvation is for all people. Illustrates God's Character through Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale. An opportunity to seek a unique deliverance, as Jonah repents during this equally unique retreat. His initial disobedience leads to not only his personal revival, but that of the Ninevites as well.

Author: Jonah son of Amittai (Minor Prophet)

Setting: Jonah ministered under Jeroboam II (Israel's most powerful king)

Synopsis: Jonah was a reluctant prophet given a mission he did not like. He chose to run away from God rather than obey him.

Application: Like Jonah, we may have to do things in life that we don't want to do. Sometimes we find ourselves wanting to turn and run. But it is better to obey God than to defy him or run away. Often, in spite of our defiance, God in his mercy will give us another chance to serve him when we return to him.

Micah

Etymology: Hebrew: means "who is like God?"

Purpose: To warn God's people that judgment is coming and to offer pardon to all who repent

Author: Micah, a native of Moresheth

Setting: King Ahaz set up pagan idols in the temple and finally nailed the temple doors shut. Four different nations harassed Judah. When Zezekiah became King, the nation began a slow road to recovery and economic strength. Hezekiah probably heeded much of Micah's advice. The political situation is described in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles; Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea.

Synopsis: Micah emphasized the need for justice and peace. Like a lawyer, he set forth God's case against Israel and Judah, their leaders, and their people. Throughout the book are prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah, who will gather the people into one nation. He will be their king and ruler, acting mercifully toward them.

Application: Micah makes it clear that God hates unkindness, idolatry, injustice, and empty ritual – and he still hates these today. But God is very willing to pardon the sins of any who repent.

Nahum

- Etymology:** (Hebrew: *ūmḥNa* מַחֲנֵה “Consoler” or “Comforter” the Elkoshite)
- Purpose:** Telling the people of Judah to not despair and take comfort because God had pronounced judgment on Assyria and the Assyrians would soon be getting just what they deserved.
- Author:** Nahum (Minor Prophet)
- Setting:** This prophecy took place after the fall of Thebes in 663 BC
- Synopsis:** Nineveh (capitol of the Assyrian Empire) is the subject of Nahum’s prophecy. The news of its coming destruction was a relief for Judah, who was subject to Assyrian domination. No longer would Judah be forced to pay tribute as insurance against invasions. Judah was comforted to know that God was still in control.
- Application:** Nineveh is an example to all rulers and nations of the world today. God is sovereign (supreme ruler) over even those who are seemingly invincible. We can be confident that God’s power and justice will one day conquer all evil.

Habakkuk

- Etymology:**
- Purpose:** To show that God is still in control of the world despite the apparent triumph of evil.
- Author:** Habakkuk to the people of Judah (southern kingdom) between 612 BC and 588 BC.
- Setting:** Babylon was becoming the dominate world power and Judah would soon feel Babylon’s destructive force.
- Synopsis:** When Habakkuk was troubled, he brought his concerns directly to God. After receiving God’s answers, he responds with prayer of faith.
- Application:** Habakkuk’s example is one that should encourage us as we struggle to move from doubt to faith. We don’t have to be afraid to ask questions of God. The problem is not with God and his ways but with our limited understanding of Him.
- Themes:** Struggle and doubt; God’s sovereignty; Hope
- Notes:**

Zephaniah

- Etymology:** (Hebrew: זְפַנְיָהּ, Modern *Zəfanya* Tiberian *Ṣəḫpānyāh* ; "Concealed of/is Lord")
- Purpose:** To shake the people of Judah out of their complacency and urge them to return to God.
- Author:** Zephaniah son of Cushi
- Setting:** King Josiah of Judah was attempting to reverse the evil trends set by the two pervious kings of Judah – Manasseh and Amon. Josiah was able to extend his influence because no strong superpower was dominating the world at the time. Zephaniah’s prophecy may have been the motivating factor in Josiah’s reform. Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah.
- Synopsis:** Zephaniah warned the people of Judah that if they refused to repent, the entire nation, including the beloved city of Jerusalem, would be lost. The people knew that God would eventually bless them, but Zephaniah made it clear that there would be judgment first, then blessing. This judgment would also be a means of purifying the people.
- Application:** Though we live in a fallen world surrounded by evil, we can hope in the perfect Kingdom of God to come, and we can allow any punishment that touches us now to purify us from sin.

Haggai

- Etymology:** (Hebrew: חֲגַי, *Haggay* or "Hag-i", Koine Greek: Ἀγγαῖος; Latin: *Aggeus* meaning “my feast”)
- Purpose:** To call the people to complete the rebuilding of the temple
- Author:** Haggai (Minor Prophet, 1st of the postexilic prophets)
- Setting:** The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed in 586 BC. Cyrus had allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple in 538 BC. They had begun the work but were unable to complete it. Through the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah, the temple was completed (520 – 516 BC)
- Synopsis:** When the exiles first returned from Babylon, they set about rebuilding the temple right away. Although they began with the right attitudes, they slipped back into wrong behavior, and the work came to a standstill. Haggai’s Message encouraged the people to finish rebuilding God’s temple.

The Temple lay half-finished while the people lived in beautiful homes. Haggai warned them against putting their possessions and jobs ahead of God.

Application: We need to be on guard to keep our priorities straight. Remain active in your service to God and continue to put first things first.

Zechariah

Etymology: (Hebrew: זְכַרְיָהּ, Modern Zəḥarya Tiberian Zəḵaryāh, "YHWH has remembered"; Greek: Ζαχαρίας; Latin: Zacharias)

Purpose: To give hope to God's people by revealing God's future deliverance through the Messiah

Author: Zechariah; 11th of the 12 Minor Prophets

Setting: The exiles had returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple, but the work had been thwarted and stalled. Haggi and Zechariah confronted the people with their task and encouraged them to complete it.

Synopsis: Zechariah encouraged the people to put away the sin in their lives and to continue rebuilding the temple. His visions described the judgment of Israel's enemies, the blessings to Jerusalem, and the need for God's people to remain pure – avoiding hypocrisy, superficiality, and sin. Zechariah's visions provide hope for the people. Besides encouragement and hope, Zechariah's messages were also a warning that God's Messianic kingdom and the King would come, but God's people would themselves face many difficult circumstances before experiencing the blessing of the Messianic Kingdom.

Application: We also need to carefully follow the instruction to remain pure until Christ returns. We too, may face sorrow, disappointment, and distress before coming into Christ's eternal kingdom.

Malachi

Etymology: (Malachi means 'my messenger' or 'my angel' in Hebrew.)

Purpose: To confront the people with their sins and to restore their relationship with God

Author: Malachi (Postexilic prophet); Last of the 12 minor prophets

Setting: Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah were postexilic prophets to Judah (Southern kingdom). Haggai and Zechariah rebuked the people for their failure to rebuild the Temple. Malachi confronted them with their neglect of the Temple and their false and profane worship.

Synopsis: Malachi rebuked the people and the priest for neglecting the worship of God and failing to live according to his will. The priests were corrupt; how could they lead the people? They had become stumbling blocks instead of spiritual leaders. The men were divorcing their wives and marrying pagan women; how could they have godly children? Their relationship to God had become inconsequential.

Application: If our relationship with God is unimportant, we need to take stock of ourselves by setting aside our sinful habits, putting the Lord first, and giving God our best each day.

New Testament

Matthew

- Etymology:** Greek: κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγέλιον, kata Matthaion euangelion, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ματθαῖον, to euangelion kata Matthaion)
- Purpose:** To prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal king. It stresses how Jesus fulfilled Jewish OT prophecies.
- Author:** Matthew, a Jewish tax collector who became one of Jesus' disciples.
- Setting:** This gospel forms the connecting links between the Old and New Testaments because of its emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy. The people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah, their king.
- Synopsis:** The Gospel of Matthew can be broken down into five distinct sections: the Sermon on the Mount (ch 5-7), the Mission Instructions to the Twelve (ch 10), the Three Parables (ch 13), Instructions for the Community (ch 18), and the Olivet Discourse (ch 24-25).
Matthew begins his book by showing how Jesus Christ was a descendant of David. But Matthew goes on to show that God did not send Jesus to be an earthly king but a heavenly king, whose reign would never end. Even at Jesus' birth many recognized him as king. Herod, the ruler, as well as Satan, was afraid of his kingship and tried to stop him, but others worshipped him and brought him gifts. Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, directions for living in his kingdom. He also told many parables about the difference between his kingdom and the kingdoms of earth. Jesus was formally presented to the nation of Israel but was rejected, accused, arrested, and crucified. Jesus demonstrated his power, even over his death, through his resurrection and gained access for us into his kingdom.
- Application:** We must be willing to recognize Jesus for who he really is and worship him as king of our lives. Forgiveness, peace, and putting others first are some of the characteristics that make one great in the kingdom of God. And to be great in the God's kingdom, we must live by God's standards right now. Jesus came to show us how to live as faithful subjects in his Kingdom. With all this evidence, we should accept him as our Lord.
- Notes:**
- This synoptic gospel is an account of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.
 - It details his story from his genealogy to his Great Commission.
 - Certain details of Jesus' life, of his infancy in particular, are related only in Matthew.
 - His is the only gospel to mention the Church or ecclesia.
 - Matthew also emphasizes obedience to and preservation of biblical law.
 - Since this gospel has rhythmical and often poetical prose, it is well suited for public reading, making it a popular liturgical choice
 - His gospel has a Jewish "flavor" – seeming to be particularly concerned with Jewish questions and perspective in trying to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

Mark

- Purpose:** To present the person, work, and teachings of Jesus.
- Etymology:** Greek: κατὰ Μάρκον εὐαγγέλιον, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον, to euangelion kata Markon
- Author:** John Mark to Gentile Greek speaking Christians in Rome; written around AD 55 to 65.
Not one of the 12 Disciples, but accompanied Paul on his 1st missionary journey.
- Setting:** The Roman Empire under Tiberious Ceasar. The empire, with its common language and excellent transportation and communication systems, was ripe to hear Jesus' messages, which spread quickly from nation to nation.
- Synopsis:** Gospel of Mark narrates the Ministry of Jesus from John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus to the Ascension of Jesus. Jesus did not arrive unannounced or unexpected. The Old Testament prophets had clearly predicted the coming of a great one, sent by God himself, who would offer salvation and eternal peace to Israel and the entire world. Then came John the Baptist, who announced that the long-awaited Messiah had finally come and would soon be among the people. Jesus had all the power of God: he raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, restored deformed bodies, and quieted stormy seas. But with all this power, Jesus came to humanity as a servant. Jesus came as a server, so many did not recognize or acknowledge him as the Messiah.
- Application:** In God's working the world today, Jesus does not come unannounced or unexpected. Yet many still reject him. We have the witness of the Bible, but some choose to ignore it, just as many ignored John the

Baptist. We can use his life as a pattern for how to live today. As Jesus served God and others, so should we. We must be careful that we also don't reject God or his will because he doesn't quite fit our image of what God should be.

Themes:
Notes:

Mega-themes – Jesus Christ, Servant, Miracles, Spreading the Gospel.

- The Gospel of Mark does not name its author.
 - An early tradition preserved by Eusebius ascribes it to Mark the Evangelist (aka John Mark),
 - A disciple of Peter and a cousin of Barnabas, based on the preaching of Peter.
- Although the book was written by Mark, the facts contained in it are thought to be the accounts of Peter during his ministry with Jesus.
- Mark was probably the first Gospel written. The other Gospels quote all but 31 verses of Mark.
 - The majority of scholars believe that the authors of Matthew and Luke relied heavily on the Gospel of Mark and Q
- The shortest of all New Testament gospels, yet it often tells of Jesus' ministry in more detail than either Matthew or Luke
- Mark Records more miracles than does another other Gospel
- An important theme of Mark is the Messianic Secret.
 - Jesus silences the demoniacs he heals, keeps his messianic identity secret, and conceals his message with parables.
 - In Mark, more than in the other synoptics, Jesus hides his messianic identity
- Unlike both Matthew and Luke, Mark does not offer any information about the life of Jesus before his baptism and ministry, including neither a nativity nor a genealogy

Luke

- Purpose:** To present an accurate account of the life of Christ and to present Christ as the perfect human and savior. To strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of cultured non-Christians.
- Author:** Luke, a gentile doctor (Col 4:14). Well educated in Greek culture and a gentile convert
- Audience:** Theophilus (possibly a non-Christian Roman official) and the gentiles
- Setting:** Luke likely wrote this book from Caesarea or (more probably) Rome during Paul's Roman imprisonment...around A.D. 61-62. Luke articulated his desire to give his readers a clear and coherent presentation of the words and deeds of Christ. By 62 A.D. there were probably many oral and written accounts of Jesus' miracles and teachings.
- Synopsis:** From an infant who could do nothing on his own, Jesus grew to become completely able to fulfill his mission on earth. He was fully human, developing in all ways like us. Yet he remained fully God. Jesus taught great crowds of people, especially through parables. But only those with ears to hear will understand. The Savior of the world was arrested and executed. But death could not destroy him, and Jesus came back to life and ascended to heaven.
- Application:** Jesus took no shortcuts and was not isolated from the pressures and temptations of life. There are no shortcuts for us either as we prepare for lives of service to God. We should pray that God's spirit would help us understand the implication so of these probable truths for our lives so we can become more and more like Jesus. We must not only believe the facts of Luke's Gospel, but we must also trust Christ as our Savior.
- Themes:** **Universality of the gospel** – Good news is intended for all peoples (Luke 2:14, 32).
Concern for Social Outcasts – Draws attention to Jesus' concern for the women and the poor.
Repentance – Repentance requires a fundamental "reorientation" toward God, which then leads to the reconciliation of human relationships. (i.e Parables of the lost son in chp 15; tax collector and the Pharisee in Chp 18; and Zacchaeus in chp 19).
- Notes:** **Megathemes** – Jesus Christ the Savior, History, People, Compassion, Holy Spirit.
Luke and Acts may be regarded by some as a single work in two volumes that look at the ministry of Christ and the origins of the early church.
The most comprehensive of the four Gospels.
Longest book in the New Testament
Luke's account gives distinction to Jesus' concern for the poor and oppressed along with Jesus' particular attention to diverse ethnic, religious, economic, and social groups; more focused on the Gentiles.
Emphasizes parables and the role of prayer.

John

Etymology: (Greek: κατὰ Ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιον, *kata Iōannēn euangelion*, or τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ἰωάννην, *to euangelion kata Iōannēn*)

Purpose:	To prove conclusively that Jesus is the Son of God and that all who believes in him will have eternal life.
Author:	John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, Brother of James
Setting:	Written to new Christians and searching non-Christians. Written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and before John's exile to the island of Patmos.
Synopsis:	A profound book, focusing more on theology and philosophy than the other gospels, while still relaying the historical events of Christ's ministry. John makes it clear that Jesus is not just a man; he is the eternal Son of God. He is the light of the world because he offers this gift of eternal life to all people. Jesus meets with individuals, preaches to great crowds, trains his disciples, and debates with the religious leaders. The message that he is the Son of God receives a mixed reaction. Some worship him, some are puzzled, some shrink back, and some move to silence him. Jesus carefully instructed the disciples how to continue to believe even after his death, yet they could not take it in. After he died and the first reports came back that Jesus was alive, the disciples could not believe it. Thomas is especially remembered as one who refused to believe even when he heard the eyewitness accounts from other disciples.
Application:	If Jesus is the eternal Son of God, we should pay attention to his divine identity and life-giving message. We see the same varied reactions of Jesus today that John shares in his Gospel. Times have changed, but people's hearts remain hard. May we see ourselves in these encounters Jesus had with people, and may our response be to worship and follow him. May we not be like Thomas, demanding a physical face to face encounter, but may we accept the eyewitness testimony of the disciples that John has recorded in this Gospel.
Notes:	Not one of the 3 "Synoptic" gospels...as Mt, Mk, and Lk were prominently based on the same sources.

Acts

Title:	"Acts of the Apostles" was not part of the original text. It was first used by Irenaeus in the 2nd century.
Purpose:	To give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian Church. The ministry of Peter and Paul.
Author:	Luke, A Gentile physician. Between 63 and 70 AD to Theophilus
Setting:	Acts is the connecting link between Christ's life and the lie of the church, between the Gospels and the Letters.
Synopsis:	After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter preached boldly and performed many miracles. Peter's actions demonstrate vividly the source and effects of Christian power. Because of the Holy Spirit, God's people were empowered so they could accomplish their tasks. Paul's missionary adventures show us the progress of Christianity. The gospel could not be continued to one corner of the world. This was the faith that offered hope to all humanity.
Application:	The Holy Spirit is still available to empower believers today. We should turn to the Holy Spirit to give us the strength, courage, and insight to accomplish our work for God. We should venture fourth and share in this heroic task to witness for Christ in the entire world.
Themes:	Megathemes – Church Beginnings, Holy Spirit, Church Growth, Witnessing, Opposition.
Notes:	Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because Acts ends so abruptly, Luke may have planned to write a third book, continuing the story. • The title "Acts of the Apostles" was not part of the original text. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was first used by Irenaeus late in the 2nd century. ○ Some have suggested that the title "Acts" be interpreted as "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" or even "The Acts of Jesus,"

Romans

Purpose:	To introduce Paul to the Romans and to give a sample of his message before he arrives in Rome; sets forth the foundation of the Christian faith. Contains the most comprehensive and logical presentation of the gospel.
Author:	Apostle Paul (Name means Smallest, little one, least); In AD57 (during Paul's 3 rd missionary trip) from Corinth written to the Christians (Gentiles) in Rome. Dictated the letter to a secretary named Tertius (16:22)
Setting:	Paul had finished his work in the east, and he planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain after first bringing a collection to Jerusalem to the poor Christians there. The Roman church was mostly Jewish but also contained a great number of Gentiles who converted from paganism. Rome was generally polytheistic. Jews regarded themselves as superior to Gentiles because they possessed the Mosaic Law (2:1). A major concern of the book is the relationship between Jew and Gentile in God's overall plan of redemption. Rome was approx 1 million people in size and home to numerous pagan temples.

Synopsis: Paul clearly sets forth the foundations of the Christian faith. All people are sinful; Christ died to forgive sin; we are made right with God through faith; this begins a new life with a new relationship with God. Paul gives clear, practical guidelines for the believers in Rome. In this sweeping presentation of God's plan for salvation, Paul moves from condemnation to glorification and from theological truth to practical behaviors.

➤ Revelation, Vindication (proof), and Application of God's Righteousness

Application: Like a sports team that constantly reviews the basics, we will be greatly helped in our faith by keeping close to these foundations. If we study Romans carefully, we will never be at a loss to know what to believe. The Christian life is not abstract theology unconnected with life, but it has practical implications that will affect how we choose to behave each day. It is not enough merely to know the gospel; we must let it transform our lives and let God impact every aspect of our lives.

Themes: **Mega-themes** - Sin, Salvation, Sanctification (Growth), Sovereignty, Service
The Gospel Of The Righteousness From God, Romans 1:16,17 – Romans is written to show how sinful men and women can receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
God's faithfulness – His fidelity to his promise to Abraham is revealed in salvation on the basis of faith. Both Jews and Gentiles find righteousness before God through faith in Jesus (3:21-26)
Righteousness – Neither Jew nor Gentile is on personal merit righteousness before God; each, apart from Christ, is under his wrath (2:1-3:20). But, through Jesus' death, God credits his own righteousness to all who believe and rely on his promise of salvation in Christ (3:21-5:21). Through their union with Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit enables Christians to live righteous live here and now (6:1-8:39).
Reconciliation – Paul is concerned for racial reconciliation and cross-cultural sensitivity. His advice on resolving internal conflicts in the church (14:1-15:6) lifts up Christ's attitude as the example for our own (15:1-6). Paul reiterated Jesus' teaching that love of neighbor fulfills the law's intent (13:8-10)

Notes:

- Paul wrote Romans as an organized and carefully presented statement of his faith...it does not have the form of a typical letter.
- Considered to be the most complete and penetrating statement of God's Divine plan for the redemption that God has given us.
- **Systematic and comprehensive explanation**
 - Gentiles come from a background of idolatry and unbelief...against Jews, whose heritage including knowing the law and promises of God, yet all had sinned. (chs 1-3)
 - Justification is by faith not by works, yet this does not proved license to live in sin (chs 4-6)
 - Jews had sought righteousness by works and did not find it...Gentiles did not seek God through the law, but found Him and had been grafted into the true Israel of faith. (chs 9-11)
 - From these foundations Paul moved to concerns that relate to the everyday Christian life (chs 12-15)
- Recurring topics of faith and works, law and grace, sin and righteousness, judgment and justification.
- Probably the most read and studied of the NT letters and provides the most thorough explanation of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ.
- The longest of the Pauline epistles, and is considered his "most important theological legacy.
- *Romans* is placed first among Paul's letters in the New Testament not only because it is his longest work, but because it also furnishes a massive and basic theological frame-work for the whole collection of the apostle's writings.
- Romans was notably influential in the history of the church
 - Augustine, a theologian of the fourth century, was converted by reading Romans
 - Inspired Martin Luther as he discovered in it the truth of justification by faith.
- The first half is Paul's classical apologetic on justification through the blood and cross of Christ and sanctification through the Holy Spirit.
- The second half contains a number of other practical teachings on Christian living.
- The book was probably written because Paul was unable to visit the church there and wanted to lay out these teachings on doctrine and practice in a systematic manner

1 Corinthians

Purpose: To identify problems the Corinthian Church, to offer solutions, and to teach the believers how to live for Christ in a corrupt society.

Author: Paul

Setting:	Corinth was a major cosmopolitan city, as seaport and a major trade center...the most important city in Achaia. It was also filled with idolatry and immorality. The Church was largely made up of Gentiles. Paul had established this church on his second missionary journey.
Synopsis:	Without Paul's presence, the Corinthian church had fallen into divisiveness and disorder. This resulted in many problems, which Paul addressed squarely. The Corinthians had sent Paul a list of questions, and he answered them in a way meant to correct abuses in the church and to show how important it is that they live what they believe.
Application:	We must be concerned for unity and order in our local churches, but we should not mistake inactivity for order and cordiality for unity. We, too, must squarely address problems in our churches. Paul gives us as a Christian approach to problem solving. He analyzed the problem thoroughly to uncover the underlying issue and then highlighted the biblical values that should guide our actions.
Notes:	Corinth was a thriving city; it was at the time the chief city of Greece both commercially and politically

2 Corinthians

Purpose:	To affirm Paul's ministry, defend his authority as an apostle, and refute the false teachers in Corinth. He was continuing his work to bring the church to maturity and stability.
Author:	Paul, Approx 55-57 AD from Macedonia
Setting:	Paul had already written three letters to the Corinthians (2 are now lost). In 1 Corinthians (the 2 nd of these letters) he used strong words to correct and teach. Most of the church had responded in the right spirit; there were; however, those who were denying Paul's authority and questioning his motives.
Synopsis:	In responding to the attacks on his character and authority, Paul explains the nature of Christian ministry and, as an example, openly shares about his ministry. Paul found it necessary to encourage the Corinthian believers to avoid being "yoked with unbelievers" (6:14-7:1) and to rebuke those who had submitted to the religious tyranny of the "super-apostles" (10:1- 13:10). Taught the true nature of Christian ministry and encouraged generosity (Chp 8&9).
Application:	This is an important letter for those interested in any form of the ministry as it teaches us about who we should handle our ministries. Like Paul, those involved in the ministry should be blameless, sincere, confident, caring, open, and willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.
Themes:	<p>Mega themes – Trials, Church Discipline, Hope, Giving, Sound Doctrine</p> <p>Ministry of reconciliation – Paul's desire and goal was reconciliation between himself and the Corinthians; among the church members; and most importantly between God and human beings. Paul was pleased by their repentance and renewed commitment to him, he was proud of them, and had a hope for their future.</p> <p>Generosity in giving – Renewed commitment to the collection for the believers in Jerusalem (6:1-9:15). Charity is an act of obedience, resulting in eternal reward and bringing glory to God</p> <p>Defense of Paul's apostleship – Some had become alienated from Paul by the influence of boastful rivals.</p>
Notes:	Some scholars think that 2 Corinthians may be an accumulation of several different letters from Paul

Galatians

Purpose:	To refute the Judaizers (who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish Law in order to be saved) and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ.
Author:	Paul
Setting:	The most pressing controversy in the early church was the relationship of new believers, particularly Gentiles, to the Jewish laws. This was especially a problem for the converts and for the young churches that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Later, at the council in Jerusalem, the conflict was officially resolved by the church leaders.
Synopsis:	In response to attacks from false teachers, Paul wrote to defend his apostleship and the authority of the gospel. The Galatians were beginning to turn from faith to legalism.
Application:	The struggle between the gospel and legalism is still a relevant today. Many today would have us return to trying to earn God's favor through following rituals or obeying a set of rules. As Christians, we are not boxed in but set free. To preserve our freedom, we must stay close to Christ and resist any who promote subtle ways for us to earn our salvation.
Notes:	

Ephesians

Purpose:	To strengthen the believers in Ephesus in the Christian faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church, the body of Christ.
Author:	Paul
Setting:	Letter sent with Tychicus after Paul spent 3 years with the Church in Ephesus. This letter may have been intended to be a circular letter to be read to all the churches in the area
Synopsis:	Paul explains the wonderful thing that we have received through Christ and refers to the church as a body to illustrate unity of purpose and show how each individual member is a part that must work together with all the other parts. A classic book on the Christian walk, emphasizing our resources and identity in Christ (1-3), before turning to our responsibility and opportunities in Christ (4-6).
Application:	Key passages on unity, marriage, children, work, and the "Armor of God". We should work to eradicate all backbiting gossip, criticism, jealousy, anger, and bitterness, because these are barriers to unity in the church.
Notes:	A pivotal "then" in 4:1 the switches from our resources in Christ to responsibilities in Christ Eph 2:2-3 lists our 3 enemies – The devil, the Flesh, and the World
Content:	

Philippians

Purpose:	To thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent Paul and to strengthen these believers by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone.
Author:	Paul
Setting:	Paul and his companions began the church at Philippi on his 2 nd missionary journey (Acts 16). This was the first church established on the European continent. The Philippian church had sent a gift with Epaphroditus (one of their members) to be delivered to Paul (4:18). Paul was in a Roman prison at the time. He wrote this letter to thank them for their gift and to encourage them in their faith.
Synopsis:	Although Paul was writing from prison, joy is a dominant theme in this letter. The secret of his joy is grounded in his relationship with Christ.
Application:	People today desperately want to be happy but are tossed and turned by daily successes, failures, and inconveniences. Christians are to be joyful in every circumstance, even when things are going badly, even when we feel like complaining, even when no one else is joyful. Christ still reigns, and we still know him, so we can rejoice at all times.
Notes:	

Colossians

Purpose:	To combat errors in the church (heresy) and to show that believers have everything they need in Christ. To urge readers to live the Christian life.
Author:	Paul around A.D. 50; some argue that it is a forgery attributed to Paul as its style is unlike Paul's
Setting:	Written to the church at Colosse, a city in Asia Minor. Paul had never visited Colosse. Evidently the church had been founded by Epaphras and other converts from Paul's missionary travels. Epaphras had just brought a report to Paul on the situation of the churches in the Lycus Valley. The church had been infiltrated by religious relativism, with some believers attempting to combine elements of paganism and secular philosophy with Christian doctrine. It was unclear if it was a united body of false doctrine or a mixture of errors, superstitions and misunderstandings. Elements included taboos about food and holy days, devotion to angelic beings and pseudo-sophisticated theology that may have had something to do with Gnostic heresies (chp 2). Paul confronts these false teaching and affirms the sufficiency of Christ.
Synopsis:	Paul clearly teaches that Christ has paid for sin; that Christ has reconciled us to God, and that Christ gives us the pattern and the power to grow spiritually. A large portion of the letter provides general exhortations to Christian living (especially chps 3 & 4)
Application:	Because Christ is the exact likeness of God, when we learn what he is like, we see what we need to become. Since Christ is the Lord over all creation, we should crown him Lord over our lives. Since Christ is the head of the body, his church, we should nurture our vital connection to him. Take to heart the warnings against missing elements from various religions.
Themes:	Warning against Heresy —Deceit based on human tradition and basic principles of the world (2:8, 20). Supremacy of Christ —Creator of all things; all the fullness of God dwells in him; Christ is superior to the angels; head of the church; through whom believers have "fullness"; in Christ all requirements of the Mosaic Law have been met; asceticism has no value; life "hidden in Christ" brings glory; Christ himself is the "mystery of God"...no other secret knowledge is necessary.

Christian Living – Believers union with Christ results in holy living. Clear standards prescribe attitudes that are to govern relationships with family and church. Leadership is to be exercised, but domination is unacceptable.

Christ is God, Christ is the Head of the Church, union with Christ, Man-made religion

Notes: Church in Colossae was in a small Phrygian city (Modern day Turkey) near Laodicea and approximately 100 miles inland from Ephesus in Asia Minor.

Paul was in prison at the time Colossians was written (4:3)...most likely in Rome but possibly in Caesarea.

Similarities to Ephesians suggest that Paul wrote the two letters at nearly the same time.

The central error of the Colossian heresy was a defective view of Christ, in that he was believed to be less than deity. (2:9).

Dallas Willard describes Colossians as a “model” of discipleship curriculum.

1 Thessalonians

Purpose: To strengthen the Thessalonian Christians in their faith and give them the assurance of Christ's return. To correct their misconceptions about the resurrection and the 2nd coming of Christ.

Author: Paul

Setting: The church at Thessalonica was very young, having been established only two or three years before this letter was written. Paul was abruptly forced out of the city after planting a church in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). Paul dispatched Timothy to check on them while he remained in Athens (1 Th 3:1-2). Paul wrote this letter to assure the Thessalonian Christians that his abrupt departure had not signified lack of love for them, to encourage them to avoid sexual immorality (4:1-8), and to clear up their minds on the resurrection and 2nd advent of Christ (4:13-5:3). The Thessalonian Christians needed to mature in their faith. There was a misunderstanding concerning Christ's second coming...some thought Christ would return immediately; thus they were confused when their loved ones died because they expected Christ to return beforehand. Also, believers were being persecuted.

Synopsis: Paul and his companions were faithful to bring the gospel to the Thessalonians in the midst of persecution. The Thessalonians had only recently become Christians and they had remained faithful to the Lord, despite the fact that the apostles had not been with them.

Application: Others have been faithful in bringing the God's word to us. We must remain faithful and live in the expectation that Christ will return at any time.

Themes: Mega themes – Persecution, Paul's Ministry, Hope, Being prepared

Persecution – Suffering for the faith is to be expected (3:3)

Christ's Return - Believers who have died will be raised first at Christ's return. The time and place of this event will come like a thief in the night (5:2)...yet certain and sudden like a baby (5:3).

Christian Living – While awaiting the Lord's coming, live quite, respectful, holy, and productive lives (4:1-12), to encourage and help each other and to be patient and kind to everyone (5:14). While a moral life is not a precondition for acceptance by God, an immoral lifestyle is incompatible with the Christian faith.

Notes: Written approx AD 51-52

Thessalonica was the largest city in Macedonia and was a major military / commercial port along Egnatian Way (an important Roman road between Asia Minor and the Adriatic Sea)

2 Thessalonians

Purpose: To clear up the confusion about the 2nd coming of Christ. Paul indicates various events that must precede the 2nd coming of Christ. Clearly a response to ongoing issues among the Thessalonians.

Author: Paul

Setting: Many in the church were confused about the timing of Christ's return. Because of mounting persecution, they thought the day of the Lord must be imminent, and they interpreted Paul's first letter to say that the 2nd coming would be at any moment. In light of this misunderstanding, many persisted in being idle and disorderly, with the excuse of waiting for Christ's return. On one hand the believers were enduring in the faith despite the persecution (2 Th 1:4). On the other hand, some had become frantic about the return of the Lord (Ch 2), while others had taken to a living off the generosity of their fellow believers (3:6-15). Paul wanted to set the record straight.

Synopsis: Paul wrote to encourage those who were facing persecution and to correct a misunderstanding about the timing of Christ's return. The teaching about the Lord's return promoted idleness in this young church.

Application: The imminent coming of Christ should never make us idle; we should be even more busy...living purely, using our time well, and working for his kingdom. We must work not only during easy times when it is

convenient but also during difficult times. Christians must patiently wait for Christ's return and work for him while they wait.

Themes: **Christ's Return** – Christ's coming will be preceded by the arrival on an antichrist figure, who will unleash a season of unprecedented hostility to God, incite widespread rebellion and delude many through satanic signs and wonders. He will be a self-deifying figure who will exalt himself over other deities, seek to destroy Christ's work and lure those who are perishing (2:4-12)

Vigilance until Christ's return – Christians are to wait patiently and faithfully for Christ's return. Watchfulness is expressed by diligent work for Christ

Notes: This is a follow-up letter to 1 Thessalonians.
Written approx. AD 51 or 52...a few months after 1 Thessalonians from Corinth

1 Timothy

Purpose: To give encouragement and instruction to Timothy, a young leader.

Author: Paul

Setting: Timothy was one of Paul's closest companions. Paul had sent Timothy to the Church of Ephesus to counter the false teaching that had arisen there. Timothy probably served for a time as a leader in the church of Ephesus. Paul hoped to visit Timothy, but in the meantime, he wrote this letter to give Timothy practical advice about the ministry.

Synopsis: Paul advised Timothy on such practical topics as qualifications for church leaders, public worship, confronting false teaching, and how to treat various groups of people within the Church.

Application: Right belief and right behavior are critical for anyone who desires to lead or serve effectively in the church. We should all believe rightly, participate in church actively, and minister to one another lovingly.

Notes:

2 Timothy

Purpose: To give final instructions and encouragement to Timothy, pastor of the church of Ephesus.

Author: Paul

Setting: Paul was virtually alone in prison; only Luke was with him. Paul wrote this letter to pass the torch to the new generation of church leaders. He also asked for visits from his friends and for his books, especially the parchments...possibly parts of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and other biblical manuscripts.

Synopsis: Paul gives helpful advice to Timothy to remain solidly grounded in Christian service and to endure suffering during the difficult days to come.

Application: It is easy for us to serve Christ for the wrong reasons: because it is exciting, rewarding, or personally enriching. Without a proper foundation; however we will find it easy to quit during difficult times. All believers need a strong foundation for their service, because Christian service does not get easier as we grow older, and it will become no easier as the time of Christ's return grows closer.

Notes:

Titus

Purpose: Pastoral Letter written to encourage and instruct the leader of the church. To advise Titus in his responsibility of supervising the churches on the island of Crete. How to organize and lead the churches and be a responsible Christian leader.

Author: Paul

Setting: Paul sent Titus to organize and oversee the churches on Crete.

Synopsis: Paul calls for church order and right living on an island known for laziness, gluttony, lying, and evil. The Christians are to be self-disciplined as individuals, and they must be orderly as people who form one body, the church.

Application: A "call to leadership". We need to obey this message in our day when discipline is not respected or rewarded in our society. We must live upright lives, obey the government, and control our speech. We should live together peacefully in the church and be living examples of our faith.

Notes: A good place to start when developing Spiritual Leaders. Combine with Proverbs given our need for Wisdom as leaders. Titus is very similar to 1 Timothy with its instructions to church leaders.

Philemon

Purpose: To convince Philemon (a wealthy member in the Colossian church) to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, and to accept him as a brother in the faith.

Author: Paul

Setting:	Slavery was very common in the Roman Empire, and eventually some Christians had slaves. Paul does not condemn the institution of slavery in his writing, but he makes a radical statement by calling this slave Philemon's brother in Christ.
Synopsis:	Paul pleads on behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave. Paul's intercession for him illustrates what Christ has done for us. Biblical model of 3 people at work to bring about right relationships.
Application:	As Paul interceded for a slave, so Christ intercedes for us, saves to sin. As Onesimus was reconciled to Philemon, so we are reconciled to God through Christ. As Paul offered to pay the debts of a slave, so Christ paid our debt of sin. Like Onesimus, we must return to God our master and serve him. When relationships are out of sync, we need to take action to make them right and productive...whether we are the offender, the offended, or the innocent bystander
Themes:	Mega themes: Forgiveness, Barriers, Respect
Notes:	This is a private, personal letter to a friend. Written approx. AD 60 during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, at about the same time Ephesians and Colossians were written.

Hebrews

Purpose:	To present the sufficiency and superiority of Christ to Hebrew Christians who may have been considering a return to Judaism.
Author:	Possibly Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Philip, Priscilla. Name is not given in the Biblical text.
Setting:	Likely written before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. These Jewish Christians were probably undergoing fierce persecution, socially and physically, both from Jews and from Romans. Christ had not returned to establish his kingdom, and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and the Jesus was indeed the Messiah.
Synopsis:	The superiority of Christ over everyone and everything is clearly demonstrated by the author. Christianity supersedes all other religions and can never be surpassed. Jews who had become Christians in the first century were tempted to fall back into Judaism because of uncertainly, the security of customs, and persecution. The writer made statements about Jewish customs and explained that Jesus brought a new covenant (of grace through faith) that is infinitely better than the old one (of obedience to the law).
Application:	Where can one find anything better than Christ? Living in Christ is having the best there is in life. All competing religions are deceptions or cheap imitations. Today believers are also tempted to fall back into legalism, fulfilling minimum religious requirements rather than pressing on in genuine faith. We must strive to live by faith each day.
Themes:	Mega-themes: Christ is Superior, High Priest, Sacrifice, Maturity, Faith, and Endurance. The Superiority of Christ – Hebrews presents Christ as superior to the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, the OT Priesthood and the High Priest, the sacrificial system and the sanctuary. Perseverance – Believers are called to a heavenward journey...but must first undergo testing. Faith pleases God – Hebrews 11 emphasizes a faith that is exercised in numerous large and small ways. Discipline comes to God's children – Hardship is the means God uses to discipline his children Christian living (Chp 13) – Christians are to show hospitality, refrain from sexual immorality, guard against the love of money, do good and share with others, obey their leaders, and pray.
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The title Hebrews (or "To the Hebrews") was not a part of the original text and thus is questionable... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ but most do believe that the letter was written to Jewish Christians who spoke Greek and probably used the Septuagint. • The only New Testament book whose authorship remains a mystery. • Hebrews is an extended exposition of numerous Old Testament passages, and the author relied upon the Septuagint (Greek Translation of the Old Testament) for his quotations.

James

Purpose:	To expose hypocritical practices and to teach right Christian behavior. Practical Christian counsel.
Author:	James(Jesus ½ brother ...a leader in the Jerusalem Church); written in AD 49 to the Jewish Christians
Setting:	This letter expresses James's concern for persecuted Christians who were once part of the Jerusalem Church
Synopsis:	James wrote to Jewish Christians who had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean world because of persecution. In their hostile surroundings they were tempted to let intellectual agreement pass for the true faith.
Application:	This letter can have rich meaning for us as we are reminded that genuine faith transforms lives. We are encouraged to faith into action. It is easy to say we have faith, but true faith will produce loving actions toward others.

- Themes:** Mega-themes: Living faith, Trials, Law of Love, Wise Speech, Wealth
- Notes:**
- Points to the need for a spoken faith that is matched by good works...as saving faith will yield fruit.
 - Resembles the Old Testament Wisdom literature and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount
 - Does not address or develop any specific doctrinal view for Christians.
 - Has a direct style and includes vivid illustrations from nature, everyday life, and human character.
 - James makes no direct claim to being the brother of Jesus as the writer of this letter.
 - There have been more doubts, and more diversity of opinion, concerning the author of this epistle, and the time in which it was written, than about most other parts of the New Testament
 - The first of the Catholic (General) Epistles, that is, the Epistles intended for general circulation, as distinguished from Paul's Epistles, which were addressed to particular churches or individuals.

1 Peter

- Etymology:** (Peter's name means "rock")
- Purpose:** To offer encouragement to the suffering Jewish Christians driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor. Encourages them to remain faithful.
- Author:** Peter the apostle (the fisherman); Approx. 62-64 AD possibly from Rome ("Babylon")
- Setting:** Peter was probably in Rome when the great persecution under Emperor Nero began. Throughout the Roman empire, Christians were being tortured and killed for their faith, and the church in Jerusalem was being scattered.
- Synopsis:** Peter wrote to Jewish Christians who were experiencing persecution for their faith. He wrote to comfort them with the hope of eternal life and to challenge them to continue living holy lives.
- Application:** Those who suffer for being Christians become partners with Christ in his suffering. As we suffer, we must remember that Christ is both our hope in the midst of suffering and our example of how to endure suffering faithfully.
- Themes:** Mega-themes: Salvation, Persecution, God's family, Family life, Judgment
- Notes:** Peter used several images that were special to him because Jesus had used them when he had revealed certain truths to Peter (Rock, Living Stones, Sheppard tending to the flock, etc)
Tradition holds that Nero executed Peter...so this letter had to be written before AD68 (Nero's death)

2 Peter

- Purpose:** To warn Christians about false teachers and to exhort them to grow in their faith in and knowledge of Christ. Meant to address an outbreak of teaching contrary to the faith of the Christian church.
- Author:** Peter; around A.D. 67 (3 years after 1 Peter) to the church at large
- Setting:** Peter knew that his time on earth was limited (1:13-14), so he wrote about what was on his heart, warning believers of what would happen when he was gone...especially about the presence of false teachers. He reminded his readers of the unchanging truth of the gospel.
- Synopsis:** While Peter wrote his 1st letter to teach about handling persecution, he wrote this letter to teach about handling heresy (trials from within). False teachers are often subtly deceitful.
- Application:** Believers today must still be vigilant against falling into false doctrine, heresy, and cult activity. This letter gives us clues to help detect false teaching.
- Themes:** **Megathemes** - Diligence, False Teachers, Christ's Return
- Notes:** Authorship and date has been disputed as it differs significantly from 1 Peter
2 Peter was the last book admitted to the canon of the NT.
There are similarities between 2 Peter and Jude.

1 John

- Purpose:** To reassure Christians in their faith and to counter false teachings. Calls for Christians to live in a godly manner. Defines how Christians are to discern true teachers: by their ethics, their proclamation of Jesus in the flesh, and by their love
- Author:** The Apostle John; written in Ephesus between the years AD 85-90 or 100-110
- Setting:** John was an older man and perhaps the only surviving apostle at this time. He had not yet been banished to the island of Patmos, where he would live in exile. As an eyewitness of Christ, he wrote authoritatively to give this new generation of believers assurance and confidence in God and in their faith.
- Synopsis:** John wrote about the most vital aspects of faith so that his readers would know Christian truth from error. He emphasizes the basics of faith so that we can be confident in our faith. Call's for Christians to live in a godly manner: turning from sin, obeying God's commands, showing love to other believers, abandoning worldly glory and holding fast to orthodox teachings about Jesus Christ.
- Application:** In our dark world, God is light. In our cold world, God brings the warmth of love. In our dying world, God brings life. When we lack confidence, these truths bring certainty.

- Themes:** Mega-themes: Sin, Love, Family of God, truth and error, assurance
- **The incarnation** – The test of biblical Christianity is belief in the full humanity and full divinity of Jesus Christ.
 - **Love** – (3:11, 23; 4:11; 21) Love one another, care for those in need, even to the point of laying down their lives for one another. Genuine love can only be expressed as God lives in us and we in him.
 - **Christian certainties** – That Jesus is the son of God (5:5); Believers have eternal life through him (5:11); God hears and answers their prayers (5:14); they are no longer in bondage to sin but are kept safe by God from the evil one (5:18); they are children of God (5:19); they know God through his son Jesus Christ (5:20); Jesus is “the true God” (5:20)

Notes:

- Likely intended to be a circular letter as it does not specify any recipients or refer to any geographical locations
- John is considered the apostle of Love
- May be addressing a kind of proto-Gnostic teaching (1:10; 2:27;4:2). Gnosticism (Greek “Knowledge”) was one of the earliest Christian heresies. A movement that claimed to provide secret knowledge about God.
- Enormous number of similarities to the Gospel of John

2 John

- Purpose:** To emphasize the basics of following Christ...truth and love...and to warn against false teachers
- Author:** The Apostle John; possibly written in AD90 from Ephesus
- Setting:** The letter is addressed to “the chosen lady” (v1). Evidently this woman and her family were involved in one of the churches that John was overseeing...they had developed a strong friendship with John. John was warning her of the false teachers who were becoming prevalent in some of the churches.
- Synopsis:** False teachers were a dangerous problem for the church to which John was writing. His warnings against showing hospitality to false teachers may sound harsh and unloving today. Yet these men were teaching heresy that could seriously harm many believers...for eternity.
- Application:** To be loyal to Christ’s teachings, we must seek to know the Bible, but we may never twist its message to our own needs or purposes or encourage others who misuse it. To obey Christ fully, we must believe his command to love others. Helping, giving, and meeting needs put love into practice. Don’t encourage those who are opposed to Christ. Politely remove yourself from association with false leaders. Be aware of what is being taught.

Themes:

- Mega-themes – Truth, Love, False leaders
- **Warning against false teaching** – The same false teaching addressed in 1 John
 - **Truth** – Mentioned 52 times in his Gospel and 22 times in his 3 short epistles (letters)
 - **Love** – The test of the true believer.

Notes:

- 2 John identifies its author only as the “elder”, but the letter has clear affinities with the Gospel of John and 1 John.
- In his later years, John functioned as an “elder”, perhaps the Ephesian church.
- “Inns” were not readily available; believers customarily took missionaries into their homes and supplied them with provisions for their journey when they left.
- “False teachers” may have been the early form of Gnostic teaching.
- John places emphasis on truth and love; along with his warning against false teaching and deceivers.

3 John

- Purpose:** To commend Gaius (a prominent Christian) for his hospitality and to encourage him in his Christian life
- Author:** The Apostle John; approx AD90 from Ephesus
- Setting:** Church leaders traveled from town to town helping to establish new congregations. They depended on the hospitality of fellow believers. Gaius was one who welcomed these leaders into his home.
- Synopsis:** John wrote to commend Gaius, who was taking care of traveling teachers and missionaries, and to warn against people like Diotrephes, who was proud and refused to listen to spiritual leaders in authority.
- Application:** If we are to live in the truth of the gospel, we must look for ways to support pastors, Christian workers, and Missionaries today. All Christians should work together to support God’s work both at home and around the world.
- Themes:** Mega-themes – Hospitality, Pride, Faithfulness
- **Hospitality** –

- **Truth** – Demetrius was to be received because he manifested the truth (v12)

Notes:

Jude

- Purpose:** To remind the church of the need for constant vigilance (attention)...to keep strong in the faith and to oppose heresy. A brief letter on salvation and a warning against false teachers.
- Author:** Jude (The brother of Jesus and James); approx A.D. 65 to the Jewish Christians
- Setting:** From the 1st century on, the church has been threatened by heresy and false teaching; we must always be on our guard.
- Synopsis:** Jude wrote to motivate Christians everywhere to action. He wanted them to recognize the dangers of false teaching, to protect themselves and other believers, and to win back those who had already been deceived. Jude was writing against godless teachers who were saying that Christians could do as they pleased without fear of God's punishment.
- Application:** Many people in the church today act as if they can do as they please without fear of God's punishment. This letter contains a warning against living a "nominal" Christian life.
- Themes:** **Mega-themes** – False Teachers, Apostasy
- **Warning against false teachers**
 - **Christian behavior**
- Notes:**
- Numerous similarities between Jude and 2 Peter
 - The tone of the letter suggest that its author was alarmed and indicates that the letter was written in a rush (v3)

Revelation

- Title:** "The unveiling". Title is singular...one Revelation.
- Purpose:** To reveal the full identify of Christ and to give warning and hope to believers
- Author:** The Apostle John (son of Zebedee); to the 7 Churches in Asia in 95 AD from Patmos (off coast of Turkey)
- Setting:** The 7 churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) to whom John writes were experiencing the persecution that took place under Emperor Domitian (AD 90-95). Roman persecution of Christians (1:9, 2:10-13, 3:10) was widespread at the time, and false teachings were prominent in the churches. Roman authorities were beginning to enforce "emperor worship".
- It seems that the Roman authorities had exiled John to the island of Patmos (off the cost of Asia) for his activities as a Christian missionary and his warnings against the coming opposition and oppression. Some Christians were advocating compromise with the Roman government and John wrote in part to encourage believers to stand firm in the those days.
- John, who had been an eyewitness of the incarnate Christ, had a vision of the glorified Christ. God also revealed to John what would take place in the future...Judgment and the ultimate triumph of God over evil.
- Synopsis:** The vision John received opens with instructions for him to write to 7 churches. He both commends them for their strengths and warns them about their flaws. Each letter was directed to a church then in existence...but also speaks to conditions in the church throughout history. This revelation is both a warning to Christians who have grown apathetic and an encouragement to those who are faithfully enduring the struggles in this world.
- Application:** Both in the church and in our individual lives, we must constantly fight against the temptation to become loveless, immoral, lenient, compromising, lifeless, or casual about our faith. The letters make it clear how our Lord feels about these qualities. The rest of the book reassures us that good will triumph over evil, gives us hope as we face difficult times, and gives guidance when we are wavering in our faith. Christ's message to the church is a message of hope for all believers in every generation.
- Themes:** **Mega-themes** - God's sovereignty, Christ's return, God's faithful people, Judgment, Hope
- God is in control**
- Jesus will return** – The final deliverance will occur at Christ's return. This will be preceded by a period of distress, symbolized by image of childbirth; military conflict; and super natural catastrophes. The new age will result from God's direct intervention...not as an evolving result of our human activity.
- Salvation is for all who will receive it** – Salvation is not exclusive to any people group or nation.
- Notes:** A book of prophecy...a book of hope and of warning
- Written in apocalyptic (prophetic) style which is known
 - for its hyperbole, symbolism, numerology,
 - a division of history into a present time of trial and suffering,
 - an imminent intervention by God to remedy the problem, and

- a subsequent glorious future.
- Written in symbols that are found in the Old Testament...if you know your OT you can read more comfortably.
 - Revelation has 404 versus that contains of 800 references from the OT.
 - Events in the OT are seen as reflecting recurring patterns in history.
- Remember....Don't concern yourself with the day and hour of his coming (Mark 13:22, Matthew 24)
- Encourages an eternal perspective...particularly as we consider our stewardship of our time, talent, and treasures.
- The most "relevant" portion of Revelation to us at this time is the 7 letters to the 7 churches in Chps 2 and 3.
 - Things were note as they should have been in the churches, so Christ called the members to commit themselves to live in righteousness.
- As you read...
 - listen as Christ warns the churches and root out any sin that blocks your relationship with him
 - watch for clues about the conditions within the churches
 - don't get bogged down by the timetable of events or the symbolism and obscure details
 - view the book as a source of encouragement...being full of hope, knowing that God is in control, Christ's victory is assured, and all who trust him will be saved.