

The Bible

Lesson Objective: In this lesson I will be discussing the importance of the Bible. We will look at who wrote the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, the relevance of the Bible for today, Biblical principles regarding how to live our lives, and lastly the promises of God.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

Shepherds, kings, scholars, fishermen, prophets, a military general, a cupbearer, and a priest all wrote portions of Scripture. They had different immediate purposes for writing, whether recording history, giving spiritual and moral instruction, or begging God's people to turn back to Him when they strayed. They composed their works from palaces, prisons, the wilderness, and places of exile while writing history, laws, poetry, prophecy, and proverbs. In the process they were honest in putting their personal emotions out there for all to read. They expressed in real ways feelings of anger, frustration, joy, love, shame and pain.

Despite writing in radically different times and contexts, the Bible's many authors all told the same message about God's eternal plan, from Creation and the Flood to Christ's work on the Cross and His ultimate mission to bring His Kingdom to Earth THROUGH His return. You can find the same truths stated by Moses and the Old Testament prophets, Christ Himself, and later, the apostles.

2 Timothy 3 :16 tells us that all Scripture is "God breathed" or inspired by God. Even though it was penned by people, The Spirit of God guided in the choice of the words used by the human authors in the original writings. God used the individual styles of each writer but what they put down on paper was inspired by Him.

Because all Scripture is inspired by God it is inerrant or without errors or falsities. No matter how amazing they might seem to our natural minds, every miracle – from the parting of the Red Sea to Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead are all 100% true. The Garden of Eden was a real place, Jesus fed over 5,000 people with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread and Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected after 3 days in the tomb exactly as recorded on the pages of Scripture. (Scripture is another Word for the Bible)

Scripture References:

2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT) *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

1 Peter 1:21 (The Message Bible) *The main thing to keep in mind here is that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private opinion. And why? Because it's not something concocted in the human heart. Prophecy resulted when the Holy Spirit prompted men and women to speak God's Word.*

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NIV) *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.*

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The Bible is divided into two main writings - the Old and the New "Testaments." The word "testament" is an old English word that means, "covenant." A covenant is an agreement or contact between two parties. The Old Testament was a contract between God and the people of Israel. The New Testament is a contract between God and all those who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Old Testament was based on Israel keeping His laws and rituals. The New Testament is based not on keeping laws and rules rituals but rather on receiving God's forgiving grace through faith in Jesus.

The Old Testament contained hundreds of laws, rituals and animal sacrifices ordered by God that Israel had to keep in order to be in right standing with Him. Unfortunately, Israel sinned over and over by breaking God's commandments and worshipping lifeless statues and idols.

The Old Testament also foretold of a coming savior who would deliver Israel and ultimately believers from every nationality, language and people group from their sins.

The New Testament reveals that the prophesied savior is Jesus. The first 4 books of the New Testament (written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were written as accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. They are called the Gospels. The books of the New Testament are traditionally divided into three categories: The Gospels, letters written to the Church called the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

In the Old Testament we see glimpses of the grace and mercy of God. In the New Testament we receive a full revelation of a loving and gracious Heavenly Father.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE

Quote from former pastor **Rob Bell**: *"I think culture is already there and the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense"*

According to Rob Bell many of the ideas in the Bible are no longer relevant to our modern culture. Many claim that we must adapt the Word of God to the times and its current lifestyles. The argument goes that since the Bible was written so long ago, it made sense for ancient cultures but is totally inapplicable today.

However, regardless of how many years have passed by, the Bible is just as relevant to our lives as ever. Although we always want to present Jesus in a way that is gracious, meaningful, and understandable in every cultural setting, we can't altar what the Bible says or cut out verses the modern World finds offensive.

The Word of God teaches us truths that help us to overcome issues that so many struggle with today. Here are a few:

1 - Our true worth and value

Psalm 139:13-14 *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well*

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

2 - Overcoming fear and anxiety

Philippians 4:6-7 (The Message Bible) *Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.*

3 - Erasing guilt, shame and condemnation from your life

Romans 8:1 (NLT) *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*

Isaiah 50:7 (NLT) *Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will not be put to shame.*

4 - Getting free from lack and poverty

Luke 6:38 (NLT) *Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.*

Matthew 6:31-33 (NLT) *"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God[a] above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need"*

Proverbs 13:11 (NLT) *Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.*

5 - Raising children to become emotionally and spiritually healthy

Colossians 3:21 (MSG) *Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits*

Proverbs 29:17 (NLT) *Discipline your children, and they will give you peace of mind and will make your heart glad.*

6 – Building strong relationships

Proverbs 17:17 (MSG) *Friends love through all kinds of weather, and families stick together in all kinds of trouble.*

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT) *Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

7 – Conflict Resolution

Matthew 18:15-17 (MSG) *“If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you’ve made a friend. If he won’t listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again.”*

THE BIBLE TEACHES US HOW TO LIVE

Although we live in the fullness of God's grace and favor, there are many New Testament Scriptures that teach us to live victorious lifestyles. In **John 4:23**, Jesus said that if we love Him we will obey His teachings and commandments. His goal is not to deny and deprive us but to mature us with the goal that we become more and more like Jesus. **James 1:22** (NLT) states: Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. Of course, God's forgiveness and mercy is always available to us, but at the same time it matters to God how we live our lives, and how we treat and speak to others. Here are some New Testament Scriptures that were written to guide our actions and lifestyles.

Colossians 4:6 (The Message Bible) *Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.*

Titus 3:2 (NLT) *They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.*

Ephesians 4:2 (NLT) *Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

Ephesians 5:3 (NLT) *Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people.*

Romans 12:18 (NIV) *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NIV) *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.*

Philippians 2:3 (NLT) *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*

GOD'S PROMISES

Throughout the Bible God has made powerful promises to His people inviting us to believe more deeply in who he is. When God makes a promise, we know that he will keep it. God always keeps his promises...

not just sometimes... although He doesn't always do it in the timeframe, we expect it to happen. **2**

Corinthians 1:20 The Message (MSG) reassures us that:

Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus. In him, this is what we preach and pray, the great Amen, God's Yes and our Yes together, gloriously evident.

Although people may make us promises they fail to keep God is true to His Word. Because He is Holy God cannot lie or break His Word.

Its important to know God's promises and hold them in your heart and proclaim them in your prayer times. Especially during times when you might feel overwhelmed or down or anxious about the future, holding on to God's promise will help you get through those difficult days. There are many good books you can obtain such as God's Promises for Your Every Need by **A. L. Gill** that are great resources.

Psalms 91 contains many promises from God. Lets read it carefully

Psalm 91 (NIV)

1 Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him. 3 For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. 4 He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings His faithful promises are your armor and protection. 5 Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day. 6 Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday. 7 Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you. 8 Just open your eyes, and see how the wicked are punished.

9 If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, 10 no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. 11 For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go. 12 They will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone. 13 You will trample upon lions and cobras; you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet! 14 The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. 15 When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them. 16 I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1 – What promises do you see in the verses of this Psalm?

2 - Do you find these promises are relevant for today or do you see them as outdated or old-fashioned? Why or why not?

3 – Have each person claim one or more promise from this Psalm for his or her own life and assign them to reflect and pray over them until the next class meeting, where they can report back on the experience.