

Basics of the Old Testament

Taught by Dr. Miles Van Pelt



Basics of the Old Testament
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Overview

Title: Basics of the Old Testament

Program: Basics

Speaker: Dr. Miles Van Pelt

Goals

1. Understand that the Old Testament is a Christian book written for Christians as a single, unified story with a theological center, a thematic framework and a covenantal structure.
2. The books in the Old Testament are often categorized into the Pentateuch, historical, poetical and prophetical books.
3. This class shows how the book of Acts records the events surrounding the beginning and spread of the gospel message geographically and to different people groups
4. The letters in the New Testament by Paul and others teach you about theology and how to live your life as a believer in Jesus

Requirements

6 sessions

3 hours 10 minutes

Prerequisites

None

Format

Video and Audio

Your Speaker

Dr. Miles Van Pelt

Education

Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

M.A., Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

B.A., Azusa Pacific University

Publications

Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar

The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic

Resurrection Hope and the Death of Death

From Chaos to Cosmos: Creation to New Creation

Organization

Reformed Theological Seminary

Guidelines

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining.org. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this Student Guide.

Weekly Schedule

Listen or watch the lesson. The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts about 30 minutes. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

Take notes. This guide has the outline for each lesson with a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide at some point before your meeting.

Reflection questions. Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data based, confirming that you understand the information. Most of the questions are reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting, and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

Meeting Together

While some people may have to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a group with which you can study.

A group encourages to finish the class.

Interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs.

Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so also they will need your help.

Facilitator's Guide

If you are facilitating the group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions that should help you.

Your role is to facilitate. This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in the other people.

Preparation. Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and thought carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going.

Creativity. What works to help one person understand may not help another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

Correct error. This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting down their participation. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and what was said was correct. Look for gracious ways to suggest that perhaps the person's comment was incorrect.

Focus. Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

Lead the discussion. People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

Silence. Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, then ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started and then step out of the way.

Discipleship. Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the people in the group. Meet with them for coffee. Share life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in relationship.

Different Perspectives. People process information and express themselves in different ways based on their background, previous experience, culture, religion and other factors. Encourage an atmosphere that allows people to share honestly and respectfully.

Privacy. All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

Goal. The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

Relationships. Share everyone's name, email, and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack, Teams, or WhatsApp.

Finish well. Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

Prayer. Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so all of you can pray over what you have learned and with what you have been challenged. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

BiblicalTraining.org

BiblicalTraining.org is not-for-profit ministry that gives all people access to a world-class Christian education at no cost. Our classes range from new believers (“Basics”) to biblical literacy (“Foundations”), deeper Bible study (“Academy”), and seminary-level training (“Institute”).

BiblicalTraining.org relies on the donations of our users. All donations are tax deductible according to the current US tax codes.

Vision: Where will we be in five years?

We want every Christian around the globe to experience a deep relationship with God by understanding the life-changing truths of what God tells us in Scripture.

Mission: How will we get there?

To lead disciples toward spiritual growth through deep biblical understanding and practice.

Who are We?

BiblicalTraining is a team of distinguished professors, pastors, and authors providing high-quality biblical teaching for free for every Christian, everywhere, forever.

Biblical basis

We are to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, being filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Matt 28:19–20; Col 1:9–10).

Core Beliefs

1. Spiritual growth requires knowledge and understanding of biblical content and theology

2. Education requires both content (head) as well as reflection and integration (heart, hands)
3. All people should have access to high quality Christian education because we are all members of the one body of Christ.

Distinctives

World Class — Our professors are among the best academics in the world and know how to teach

Trustworthy — all of our classes are controlled by our Statement of Faith.

Holistic — We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application. We want them to ask what they learn about God, themselves, and others at the end of every lesson.

Accessible — BiblicalTraining is a web-based ministry whose content is free. We are fully donor-based.

Community-based — We encourage people to learn together, in mentor/apprentice relationships. We encourage people to listen to the lessons on their own and then use small group time to deal with application.

Broadly evangelical — Our materials are broadly and solidly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith. Our professors range from Calvinists to Wesleyans, men and women.

Multi-tiered — We provide three levels of classes to ensure that people of all academic backgrounds have the opportunity to learn and grow (see below).

Comprehensive — We offer comprehensive programs of study, covering a wide range of subjects that are essential for any Christian to know.

World Class — Our professors are among the best academics in the world and know how to teach.

I. INTRODUCTION

The New Testament consists of 39 books and was written over a period of about 1400 years.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. Foundational books

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the four accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus

B. Historical books

The book of Acts is the account of the birth and spread of the early church

C. Instructional books

The letters in the New Testament are instructions to churches and individuals about how to live as a believer in Jesus

III. BIG PICTURE: COVENANTS

A. Created for relationship with God

“I will be their God and they will be my people”

B. Sin damaged relationship

When Adam and Eve sinned, their relationship with God was broken

C. Old Covenant

Based on following God's instructions

D. Jeremiah's prophecy

God's law will be written on the hearts of followers of Jesus

E. Holy Spirit indwelling

The Holy Spirit lives in people who are followers of Jesus

IV. NEW COVENANT THROUGH JESUS

A. Jesus fulfilled prophecies

Jesus fulfilled over 300 Old Testament prophecies from the Old Testament

B. Enter relationship with God through faith

Abraham had faith that God would fulfill his promises

C. Live faithfully

Live in relationship with God and receive the blessings of the covenant

For Review

What does Miles mean when he describes the Bible as a “God-breathed book?”

What is the theological center, thematic framework and covenant structure of the Old Testament?

What does Miles mean when he describes the Old Testament as a Christian book that was written for Christians?

Reflection Questions

1. How many books are there in the Bible? How many in the Old Testament? About how long did it take for the books of the Old Testament to be written? What does it teach you about the sovereignty of God that the Old Testament and the Bible as a whole has a single unified theme and focus?
2. What is the distinction that Miles makes between “story” and “historical narrative?” How does this make a difference in the way you read the Old Testament?
3. How does Miles explain what he means when he describes the Old Testament as a “God-breathed book?” What analogy from Genesis chapter 2 does Miles use to illustrate the difference between the Bible and all other books? How does this make a difference in how you read the Bible?
4. What does Miles mean when he says that the Old Testament is “living, life-giving and forever enduring?” What is the metaphor used to illustrate this point in Hebrews 4:12? Give an example from your life that shows this is true.
5. What is the metaphor that 1 Peter 1:23-25 uses to show that the Bible remains forever? Give an example from the Bible that illustrates this point.
6. How does Miles use 1 Peter 1:10-11 to describe the process of God guiding the writing of the Bible? How is this different from dictation? Why should you expect that books of the Bible use different genres, vocabulary and styles to communicate the revelation God gave to each of them?
7. What is the theological center that brings unity to the Old Testament? What are some of the diverse types of books that focus on the theological center in different ways? How is this message confirmed and revealed in the New Testament?
8. What does Miles say is the thematic framework that is evident in all the books of the Old Testament? What does that mean? What is an example of this theme in the Old Testament? How is this theme continued in the New Testament?

9. What is a covenant? What is an example of a covenant between God and his people in the Old Testament? What is one way that the covenants in the Old Testament help you understand the importance and contrast of the New Covenant that Jesus introduced in the New Testament?
10. When Miles says that the Old Testament is a Christian book that was written for Christians, in what way is it the gospel promised beforehand? Give an example of a passage in the Old Testament that is a promise of the gospel that came later.
11. What does the apostle Paul say in Romans 15:4 about the importance of knowing the Old Testament in order to understand the New Testament? Give an example of a passage in the Old Testament that gives you hope and explain why it is an encouragement to you.
12. Since the Bible is God's communication to you, give an example of how a verse or passage has taught you something about God and your relationship to him. How did it change the way you live?
13. What is a covenant in the context of the Bible? What do the covenants in the Old Testament teach you about God? What does that teach you about your relationship to him? How does it change the way you live?
14. How does Genesis answer the questions, "Who is God," "Who are his people" and "How do we relate to him?"
15. Why are curiosity and humility important for you to have when you are reading the Bible? What can you do to cultivate these characteristics?

2

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Matthew, Mark and Luke have similar content and structure

II. GOSPEL OF MARK

A. Peter's memoirs

Peter lived with Jesus for about 3 years

B. Theme

Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament

C. Shows Jesus' identity

Mark shows that Jesus is God by recording account of what he did while he was living on earth

D. Baptism

When Jesus was baptized, there was the voice of God the Father and the Holy Spirit descending on him

E. Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly kingdom

F. Son of Man

Son of Man is a title used in the book of Daniel referring to the Messiah and also a title that refers to the humanity of Jesus

III. MARK 8: DISCIPLESHIP

A. Deny yourself

Jesus describes discipleship as taking up your cross daily and following him

B. Enter and live in relationship with God

Trusting in Jesus will change the way you live

C. Denial of ambitions

Your priorities will change when you follow Jesus

D. Perspective and motivation

Jesus warns people about final judgment and eternity

IV. GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

A. Tax collector

Jesus chose Matthew even though tax collectors in that society were hated, and Matthew left his position to follow Jesus

B. Jesus as fulfillment of the Jewish hope

Jesus claimed to be the Messiah whom God had promised for over a thousand years

C. Genealogy, birth, Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer

Matthew includes these passages to teach the deity of Jesus and illustrate how he taught the necessity of living a counter-cultural lifestyle

V. BEATITUDES IN MATTHEW 5

A. The meaning of "blessed"

In this context, Jesus uses "blessed" to mean "approved by God"

B. Poor in spirit

Recognizing your inability to have a relationship with God on your own merits

C. Golden chain

The process of beginning and living in relationship with God involves mourning, being meek, hunger and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, being pure in spirit, being a peacemaker and being persecuted for living a godly life

D. All or nothing

Living a counter-cultural life requires total commitment

VI. GOSPEL OF LUKE

A. Personal background

Luke was a gentile who used eyewitnesses and other written accounts as sources for writing his Gospel.

B. Emphasis on historicity

Luke's goal was to write an orderly account to give people certainty about who Jesus was and what he taught

C. Focus on Gentiles

Jesus engaged with gentiles and even travelled to areas bordering Israel that predominantly Jewish populations

D. Interest in the socially insignificant

Luke includes accounts showing shepherds, women and other groups who were socially insignificant in that society in a positive way

For Review

What books are in the Pentateuch and Historical sections of the Old Testament when using the English order of the books?

Who are the main characters in the Pentateuch?

What do the historical books teach you about God's faithfulness and the blessings and curses of the covenants?

Reflection Questions

1. What does the word “canon” mean as it refers to the Old Testament?
2. What are the books in the Pentateuch? What is another title often used to refer to them? Who was the author?
3. In the English Bible, which books of the Old Testament are referred to as the historical books? About how many years are covered in this section?
4. In the English Bible, which books of the Old Testament are referred to as the poetical books?
5. In the English Bible, which books are referred to as the prophetical books?
6. What does genre mean? How does Miles describe the genre of the books in the Pentateuch? Why?
7. Who are the main characters in the book of Genesis? What subjects does it cover that make it such an important book in the Old Testament and the Bible as a whole? Give an example showing how one of these subjects is foundational to understanding the message of the gospel.
8. Which main characters appear in the book of Genesis after Adam and Eve and before Moses?
9. Who are the patriarchs of the nation of Israel? Who is their father, grandfather and great-grandfather? Why did they go to Egypt? How did God use Moses to rescue them from Egypt?
10. Who is the main character of the books Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy? What job did God choose him to do?
11. Who was the person in charge when the people of Israel entered the Promised Land and became a nation? What is the name of the
12. When in the history of the people of Israel do the events in the book of Judges take place? Why is the number 12 significant in the book’s structure? What are some other places in the Bible where 12 is a significant number?

13. What is the structure of the book of Judges including the introduction, conclusion and the Judges that are mentioned by name?
14. What is the cycle of events that is repeated throughout the book of Judges? What does that teach you about God's grace and the importance of repentance? How have you experienced this in your life?
15. When did the events in the book of Ruth take place? What is Ruth's nationality? What causes her to move to Israel?
16. What is one example from the book of Ruth that shows that she is a woman of virtue and strength? What is one example from the book of Ruth that illustrates God's faithfulness to redeem the tragedy of brokenness and loss?
17. Who was the first king of Israel? Who was the prophet that anointed him? Why did the life of the first king end in catastrophe?
18. Who was the second king of Israel? Why is he described in the Bible as a good king? What promise did God make to him about his descendants?
19. Why did Solomon become the third king in Israel? What was good about his reign? Why does Miles describe Solomon as the anti-fulfillment of the covenant that God made with David?
20. When Solomon's reign ends in 931 BC and Israel splits into the northern and southern kingdoms, what happens in 722 to the northern kingdom? What happens in 586 to the southern kingdom? In what way did this demonstrate God's faithfulness to keep his promises?
21. What is the subject of the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles? What years does it cover? Why is the return from exile at the end of Chronicles described as a failure? How does this prepare the way for Jesus to come to earth?
22. What are some of the women that are written about in the Old Testament that are heroic and virtuous? Why is this unusual when compared to other literature in the ancient world? What does this teach you about how God views the value of women?

23. What is the storyline of the book of Esther? What is an example in the story of Esther trusting in God? What is an example of a practical insight Esther had when she carried out what God called her to do? What feast do people still celebrate today that commemorates God's rescuing of his people?

3

I. DISTINCTIVENESS OF JOHN

A. Written later

John probably wrote his Gospel in the 90's AD after a few decades of reflection

B. Makes implicit truths explicit

John records statements of Jesus explicitly claiming to be God

C. Purpose and style

The primary reason John wrote his Gospel is so that you would believe that Jesus is God and that you would be his disciple

II. CENTRAL THEMES

A. True faith

John teaches that believing in Jesus means to trust him totally

B. Salvation

Salvation is only through the sacrifice that Jesus made by dying on the cross

III. STRUCTURE THROUGH THE "I AM" SAYINGS

A. Bread of Life, Light of the World

Jesus says that he is fully satisfying and the source of life

B. Door and Good Shepherd

Jesus is the true revelation of salvation and life and lays down his life for his sheep

C. Resurrection and Life

Jesus is the source of all life

D. Way, Truth and Life

The only path to a relationship with God is through Jesus

E. Vine

Jesus is the source of spiritual nourishment

IV. DIVINITY OF CHRIST

A. Purpose statement

John wrote this book so you would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30-31)

B. Key texts

Some of the key texts in the Gospel of John are 1:1, 1:18 and 10:30

C. Unity with the Father

John teaches the concept of the Trinity by giving examples of the unity that Jesus has with God the Father

V. UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE

A. Promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus told the disciples that when he left them physically, he would send the Holy Spirit as an advocate for them

B. Spirit indwells

The Holy Spirit is God's presence that lives within each person who is a follower of Jesus

VI. HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER (JOHN 17)

A. Prayer for himself

Jesus prays that he will be faithful to complete what God has called him to do

B. Prayer for his disciples

Jesus prays for unity for his disciples and for protection from the evil one

C. Prayer for future believers

Jesus prays for you as a believer in him that you will experience unity with God and with fellow believers

For Review

What does John mean by “believe in Jesus’

What are some examples of Jesus claiming to be God

How does John teach that the essence of God is a trinity

Reflection Questions

1. What are the five poetical books in the English order of the Old Testament? What do these books teach you that causes Miles describe them as practical books?
2. How does Miles describe who Job was and when he lived?
3. Why is Job suffering? Why do Job's friends think he is suffering? What do they encourage Job to do? What is Job's response?
4. What does Elihu's name mean? What is his message to Job?

4

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Connection to the Great Commission

Jesus commissioned the apostles to make disciples throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20)

B. Evangelism and discipleship

Baptism and teaching are core elements of evangelism and discipleship

C. Promise of Christ's presence

The Holy Spirit lives in you as a follower of Jesus to guide and empower you

II. AUTHORSHIP AND PURPOSE

A. Written by Luke

Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke

B. Emphasis on church growth and expansion

The number of believers increased and the gospel spread throughout the world

C. Defense of Paul's innocence before Caesar

Paul testified that he wasn't a political revolutionary or preaching blasphemy of the Jewish faith

III. STRUCTURE OF ACTS

A. Three phases

The gospel spread from Jerusalem to Samaria and then to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)

B. Shifts in leadership

Peter was the primary character in the first chapters of Acts, then the focus shifts to the apostle Paul

C. Transition in church ethnicity

The first converts to Christianity were Jewish and then the gospel spread to gentile populations

IV. PHASE ONE" JERUSALEM (ACTS 1-7)

A. Ascension and promise of the Spirit

Jesus was on earth for 40 days after he was raised from the dead. He promised that when he returned to heaven that he would send the Holy Spirit.

B. Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost, the apostles and others were praying together and the Holy Spirit descended on them. They heard a sound like a strong wind, saw tongues of flames on each person and they began preaching the gospel in languages they had not learned (Acts 2)

C. Jewish persecution

The Jewish leaders began imprisoning and killing people who claimed to be followers of Jesus

V. PHASE TWO: JUDEA AND SAMARIA (ACTS 8-12)

A. Persecution

Follwers of Jesus began leaving Jerusalem to avoid being imprisoned or killed for their faith

B. Philip's ministry

Philip was one of the first deacons who explained the gospel to an Ethiopian who was traveling in Israel and to the people of Samaria

C. Conversion of Saul

Saul was a Jewish leader who was seeking out followers of Jesus to get them imprisoned and killed. On his way to Damascus, he saw a vision of Jesus. He became a follower of Jesus, changed his name to Paul, and traveled throughout the world preaching the gospel primarily to gentiles. He also wrote letters to the churches he started, many of which make up a large part of the New Testament

D. Peter and Cornelius

God gives Peter a vision revealing that it is not required to be a Jew to be a follower of Jesus. God led Cornelius to Peter to hear the gospel and Cornelius became the first recorded gentile convert in Acts

VI. KEY THEMES AND CONCLUSION

A. Fulfillment of Acts 1:8

The number of believers increased numerically and also from Jerusalem and Judea, to Samaria and to the known world

B. Persecution shifts from Jewish to Gentiles

The focus of persecution changed from Jewish religious leaders to officials in the Roman government

C. Gospel spreads

The gospel spread throughout the Roman empire and beyond

For Review

What does the book of Acts teach about the gospel spreading geographically and culturally

Why was Pentecost important to believers in Jesus in the early church and to you today

Why were Peter and Paul important figures in the book of Acts

Reflection Questions

1. What is the subject of the book of Acts?
2. What does Jesus say in Matthew 28:19-20 that is known as the Great Commission?
3. How long was Jesus on earth after his resurrection from the dead? According to Acts 1, what did he do during that time?
4. In Acts 1:4, why does Jesus tell the disciples to wait in Jerusalem?
5. How is Acts 1:8 a clarification of the Great Commission? How is it also an outline of the book of Acts and the story of the expansion of the Church?
6. Who wrote the book of Acts? Why is it a logical continuation of the Gospel of Luke?
7. Who is the main character in the first twelve chapters of Acts? What population group did this focus on? Why?
8. Who is the main character in Acts chapters 13-28? What population group does this focus on? Why?
9. What takes place on the day of Pentecost that is described in Acts chapter 2? Why is this a significant event in the history of the Church? Why is it a significant event for you as a believer in Jesus?
10. What is Stephen's ethnic background? What task was he chosen to do in the early Christian community? What were the two main points in his sermon in Acts chapter 7? How did the Jewish leaders respond to his sermon?
11. What geographical area does the church expand to in Acts chapters 8-12? What is one reason that Christians began moving out from Jerusalem during this time?
12. Why was Saul originally opposed to Christianity? Describe the events surrounding his conversion in Acts chapter 9. Why did people begin calling him Paul?
13. Describe the vision that God gave to Peter in Acts chapter 10. What is the point of the vision? What did this have to do with Cornelius?

14. What is the difference between Jews and gentiles? Why were the first Christians Jews? Why did some of the Jewish Christians think that gentiles should also become Jews when they converted to Christianity?
15. How did the conversion of Cornelius open the door to Paul's ministry to the gentiles? How did it signify a change in focus in the rest of the chapters of the book of Acts?
16. Why would it be surprising to people at that time that with Paul's background as a Pharisee, that his primary ministry would be preaching the gospel of Jesus to gentiles?
17. How many missionary journeys did Paul take to preach the gospel to people in Asia Minor and Greece? Where did Paul die and how did he likely die? In what way did this signify the progress of the gospel according to Acts 1:8?
18. How are you living your life purposefully to continue the story of the ministry of Jesus and the works of the Holy Spirit that began in the book of Acts?

5

I. INTRODUCTION TO EPISTLES

A. Paul's 13 letters and general epistles

These are letters about the theology and practice of Christianity that were written to early church congregations and individuals

B. Order by length and grouping

The longest letters are first and they are grouped primarily by author

II. ROMANS

A. Purpose

Paul introduces himself to the church in Rome and gives a detailed explanation of what it means to be a follower of Jesus

B. Theme verses

A major theme in the book of Romans that you enter into a relationship with God because of the righteousness he gives you and live in relationship with God by faith

C. Universal unrighteousness of humanity

You have sinned and you are not able to enter into a relationship with God as a result of your own efforts

D. Justification by faith

Abraham is an example of someone who was justified by faith

E. Living in relationship with God

If you are living in relationship with God, you experience freedom from condemnation

F. Sovereignty of God and Israel's rejection

God's plan from the beginning was to include both Jews and gentiles

G. Ethical exhortations

Paul discusses how you as a follower of Jesus should relate to the government and to other believers

III. GALATIANS

A. Context

A group referred to as the Judaizers were claiming that gentiles who became followers of Jesus should be required to obey Jewish laws and customs

B. Defense of Paul's apostleship

Paul claimed that his encounter with Jesus when he became a follower of Jesus gave him the authority to teach people about theology and how they should live as believers

C. Salvation by grace

God invites you into relationship as a free gift that you accept by faith

D. Fruits of the Spirit

When you live as a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will give you the power to live your life exhibiting the qualities listed in Galatians 5:22-23

IV. 1 CORINTHIANS

A. Church problems

Some of the problems they were experiencing were immorality, lack of sanctification and divisions between people in the church

B. Instructions on marriage, divorce, worship

Paul talks about the importance of marriage, a biblical perspective on divorce and gives some guidelines for corporate worship

C. Regulation of spiritual gifts

You should use your spiritual gifts to encourage, inspire and support others in the body of Christ

V. 2 CORINTHIANS

A. Teaching on the intermediate state

Paul addresses what happens if you die before Jesus returns to give you your resurrected body and establish the new heaven and new earth

B. Instruction on giving

You should give in accordance with your means

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Romans as a theological foundation

This book is Paul's teaching about how you enter into a relationship with God and live differently by the power of the Holy Spirit

B. Galatians

The primary theme is that our relationship with God is established by his grace, not something we earn

C. Corinthians

In 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul addresses issues of living in a faith community like the gifts of the Spirit, the importance of giving and the hope we have in this life and after death

For Review

What is the main theme of each section in Romans chapters 1-4, 5-8, 9-11, 12-16

What does Romans teach you about how to begin your relationship to God

What does Romans teach you about living in relationship to God

Relection Questions

1. How many letters in the New Testament were written by Paul? How are they organized?
2. What is an epistle? Why are some of the books in the New Testament referred to as “General Epistles?”
3. When Dr. Mounce refers to the verse in Romans where Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” what might cause you to be ashamed of the gospel? How do you have a right relationship with God according to Paul? What does Paul say gives him confidence so that he is not ashamed?
4. In Romans 1:18 – 3:20, what examples does Paul use to make his point that no one is righteous apart from Jesus? Why is this significant when it comes to your relationship to God?
5. How does Paul explain the heart of the gospel beginning in Romans 3:21? Why was it a new idea to people who had been raised as Jews that the message of Jesus also applied to gentiles?
6. What is a main theme of Romans chapters 5-8?
7. In Romans 5, why does Paul say that you can be at peace with God?
8. In Romans 6, why does Paul say that when you choose to live in ongoing sin, that it’s incompatible with living in relationship with God? Give an example of a time when you experienced this in your life.
9. In what way does baptism symbolize your attitude toward sin and living in relationship to God?
10. What is the theme of Romans chapter 7? How have you experienced this in your life?
11. What is the theme of Romans chapter 8? What is a verse that stands out to you in that chapter?
12. What is the theme of Romans chapters 9-11?
13. What does it mean that God is sovereign? In Romans chapter 9, what does Paul teach about humans judging the fairness or justice of God’s

actions by using the example of pharoah and the metaphor of a potter?

14. What does Paul teach in Romans 10:9-10 about what it means to be in relationship to God?
15. In Romans chapter 11, what does Paul teach about the relationship of Jews and gentiles by using the analogy of grafting branches? What does this teach you about the importance of reading and understanding the Old Testament?
16. What is the overall theme of chapters 12-16?
17. Why is Romans 12:1-2 an important passage in the book of Romans? In what way is it an encouragement in your life today?
18. What does Romans chapter 13 about governments and as a believer, how you should relate to the government you are under? What is one way that makes a practical difference in your life right now?
19. If you are living with a government that allows you to vote or hold public office, what is your biblical role and responsibility to be involved? How does this apply to your life in your current situation?
20. What is the overall message of the book of Galatians? Why was it necessary at that time for Paul to emphasize this message? Why is this message important to you?
21. What are the fruits of the Spirit that are listed in Galatians 5:22-23? Name one that the Spirit has been prompting you about recently. What are you doing about it?
22. If you read 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, how should you be acting toward others in the church? What is the role of the Spirit?
23. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, why does Paul say that the resurrection is an essential event for the Christian faith? What are some of the facts that he mentions that attest to the resurrection as a historical event?
24. What does Dr. Mounce mean by the term, "intermediate state?" What does the Bible teach about it? Why is this important to you?
25. What does Dr. Mounce say is the principle for giving in the New Testament? Do you agree? Why or why not? What is your principle for determining how much and to whom you should give?

6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome

Paul was accused of promoting political unrest in Jerusalem. When the local officials were indecisive, he appealed as a Roman citizen to have his case heard by the emperor. As he was under house arrest awaiting trial, he wrote letters to churches he had started.

B. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

The first three are churches and Philemon is an individual

II. EPHESIANS

A. Theology and practice

The first three chapters focus on theological truths and the last three chapters focus on practical living

B. Spiritual blessings

As a follower of Jesus, you are chosen by God, adopted by God and forgiven by God

C. Salvation by grace through faith

Ephesians 2:1-10 focuses on how you are saved by grace because God extends his goodness to you even though you don't deserve it

III. PHILIPPIANS

A. Gratitude

Paul is thankful for their support and encourages them to pursue humility and choose joy

B. Christ hymn

Because Jesus humbled himself and was obedient, God exalted him. One day, every knee will bow to him and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord

IV. COLOSSIANS

A. Confronts syncretism

Paul warns the believers at Colossae to not blend church and culture but rather that they should address cultural issues from the perspective of their faith

B. Christ's supremacy

Jesus is supreme because he created the universe, he holds it together, all the fullness of God dwells in him and he is the head of the Church

C. Warning against deceptive philosophies

As a follower of Jesus, do not be taken captive by philosophies based on human tradition and elemental spiritual forces of the world that are opposed to Jesus and his teachings

V. PHILEMON

A. Appeal for Onesimus

Paul reminds Philemon that he owes a debt to Paul and to treat Onesimus as a brother, not a slave

B. Stresses equality in Christ

The message of the Bible is to treat people as humans, not property

VI. KEY THEMES

A. Identity and blessings in Christ

You are adopted into relationship in God's family and you are empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit living in you

B. Supremacy of Christ

Jesus created all things and holds them together. He is above all man-made philosophies and traditions

C. Salvation by grace

You enter into relationship with God by faith through grace alone. As a result, you will live your life differently

D. Gospel prioritized over cultural reform

Paul focused on encouraging people to enter and live in a relationship with God. Changed people will affect the community around them which will result in reforming the culture

For Review

What do the Pastoral Epistles teach you about the trustworthiness of the Bible

What do the Pastoral Epistles teach you about becoming and living as a follower of Jesus

What do the Pastoral Epistles teach you about the importance of leadership and the qualifications for leaders

Reflection Questions

1. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, why does Paul encourage the believers to persevere? How does this message apply to your life?
2. What does “eschatology” mean? Why does Dr. Mounce say that the core message of eschatology is ethical? In what way are these passages meant to encourage believers? How are they an encouragement to you?
3. What books are often referred to as “pastoral epistles?” Why are they given that title?
4. What are the three criteria that Paul gives in 1 Timothy for believers in Jesus to be leaders in their church? Give some examples of how the leaders in your church fit these criteria. How do you need to improve to fit the criteria?
5. What does Titus 2:11-14 teach you about becoming a follower of Jesus and living as a follower of Jesus?
6. What does Titus 3:5-8 teach you about becoming a follower of Jesus and living as a follower of Jesus?
7. In what way is 2 Timothy a different kind of letter from 1 Timothy and Titus?
8. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he says that the bible is “inspired?” What does 2 Timothy 3:16 teach about the inspiration of the Bible? What does this verse say about the purpose of studying the Bible? How have you experienced this result in your life?
9. How does Paul sum up the way he has lived his life? What are some specific things you are doing in your life so that you will be able to say that you finished well?

I. 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

A. A young church

This church had started recently as a result of Paul's preaching

B. Call to persevere

When you live your life in a way that is in contrast to the world, be ready to experience persecution and be determined to persevere

C. Christ has not returned yet

When Jesus returns, he will appear physically and everyone will see it

D. Great apostasy

Before Jesus returns, there will be a great falling away from the church led by a person who will be empowered by Satan, which the Bible refers to as the Antichrist

E. Christ's victory

When Jesus returns, he will overthrow the Antichrist "with the breath of his mouth"

F. Eschatology is ethical

As a follower of Jesus, circumstances will get worse, you will be persecuted, Jesus will win in the end, so persevere by living by faith

II. PASTORAL EPISTLES: 1 TIMOTHY, TITUS, 2 TIMOTHY

A. Context

Timothy was sent to help at the church in Ephesus and Titus was sent to help at the church in Crete

B. 1 Timothy

The primary problem of the church in Ephesus was poor leadership, so Paul is writing to Timothy about how to identify and train good leaders. A leader must have character, be able to teach and refute heresy and have a history of managing people well.

C. Titus

Salvation is offered to all people for the purpose of living a self-controlled, upright and godly life

D. 2 Timothy

Paul knows that he will likely die soon so he wrote a personal letter to encourage his good friend Timothy

III. CONCLUSION

A. Message to the Thessalonians

Endure persecution when it comes and live faithfully as you look forward to the coming of Jesus

B. Themes in the Pastoral epistles

Identifying and choosing good leaders that will provide sound teaching is foundational to the life of your church. Your relationship with God should result in living out your faith

C. Paul's legacy

Paul persevered in his faith to the end and preached the message of the hope of eternal reward

For Review

What does Ephesians teach you about God's sovereignty in choosing you and adopting you to be in relationship to him

What does Philippians teach you about God being fully human and fully God?

What do the Prison Epistles teach you about a biblical view of slavery

Reflection Questions

1. What books does Dr. Mounce refer to as the “prison epistles?” Why are they given that title?
2. When you consider that Paul wrote these books while he was in prison, what are some passages that stand out to you that indicate how being incarcerated might have affected his perspective and priorities?
3. In Ephesians, what is the primary focus of the first 3 chapters? What is the primary focus of the last 3 chapters?
4. In chapter 1 when Paul says that God has chosen you and adopted you, what does that teach you about the character and nature of God? How does that affect what it means to you to live in relationship with God? What is a practical way this affects how you live?
5. What does it mean that God has redeemed you? What was the process that makes this possible? What does this teach you about God’s nature and character? How does this make a difference in the way you live?
6. What does Ephesians 2:8-10 teach you about how you begin your relationship with God and how you should live your life as a result?
7. In Philippians 2:5-10 when it says that Jesus humbled himself and became a man. What do you know about him from the Gospels that confirm he was human? What do you know about him from the Gospels that confirm he never ceased being God?
8. Since Jesus lived as a human, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, how is this an example of the way you should live your life as a follower of Jesus? What do you think John 14:12 means in this context?
9. What does syncretism mean? How do you or other believers in Jesus sometimes practice the teachings of other religions or philosophies that are opposed to the teachings of Jesus? (e.g., eastern religions, horoscopes, philosophies, etc.)
10. How does Paul describe the deity of Jesus in Colossians 1:15?

11. What role did Jesus have in creation and in the way the universe continues to function according to Colossians 1:16-20? How is this opposed to other current religions and philosophies that are popular today?
12. As a follower of Jesus, what are some of the practical ways your life should be different according to Colossians 3:1-16? How does God want you to apply one of these characteristics in your life this week?
13. What is the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus? What is the main purpose of Paul writing the book of Philemon?
14. When Paul describes Onesimus as, “both a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord” in Philemon vs 16, how does that challenge the way that slaves were typically treated in that time?
15. What does Dr. Mounce mean when he describes Paul’s teaching about slavery as “leveling out the culture” of that time by referring to verses like Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:9? Why might this be considered “revolutionary” in that culture?
16. What reason does Dr. Mounce give for Paul not advocating for freedom of slaves? In what way did the passages about treating slaves with fairness, dignity and as brothers in the Lord provide a biblical basis for abolitionists who advocated for the abolition of the slave trade and the institution of slavery?

8

I. HEBREWS

A. Written to persecuted Jewish Christians

The primary audience of Hebrews were Jewish Christians were being persecuted and were considering abandoning their faith in Jesus to avoid persecution.

B. Christ is superior

Jesus is superior to the angels, Jewish sacrifices and the high priest

C. Warnings

The warning passages convey the seriousness of the consequences of experiencing a relationship with God then leaving the Christian faith

II. JAMES

A. Written early

The author is the brother of Jesus. He wrote this book earlier than many of the other books of the New Testament

B. Wisdom passages

Passages of practical wisdom speak to issues like how to respond to trials in your life, being kind to poor and disenfranchised people, controlling your tongue and praying in faith

C. Faith without works is dead

If the way you live is not consistent with what you say you believe, your words are meaningless

III. 1 PETER

A. Encourages perseverance

When you live in a way that brings the qualities of the kingdom of God into the world, you can expect to be persecuted. Continue to be faithful

B. Hope in eternal inheritance

God in his great mercy has given you a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus into an inheritance that will never perish

IV. 2 PETER AND JUDE

A. Urge believers to contend for the faith

There will be heresy and false teaching, so be ready and willing to fight for the truth of the Christian faith

B. Warnings

Heresy often comes from within the church, so be ready to confront heresies that deny the true character of Christ and promote using grace as a license to sin

V. 1, 2 AND 3 JOHN

A. Themes in 1 John

Major themes in 1 John are the full humanity of Jesus, living your life characterized by a love of God and others

B. Marks of assurance

The three tests that John gives are believing that what God says is true, continued obedience to the teachings of Jesus and the constant witness of the Spirit that you are a child of God

C. Themes in 2 and 3 John

The main theme in 2 and 3 John is to demonstrate love to fellow believers

VI. REVELATION

A. Apocalyptic imagery

This is a type of literature that uses bizarre images to tell the story of God breaking into history, usually at the end of time.

B. Persecution worsens

Persecution of believers will get more intense but Jesus wins in the end

C. Call to faithfulness

Persevere to the end so that you can be united with Jesus and experience the new heaven and new earth

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Scripture tells one story

You are created in the image of God for relationship with him. That relationship was broken by Adam and Eve but God made a way to restore that relationship and offer redemption to everyone

B. Everything is fulfilled in Christ

Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins so that you can live in a covenantal relationship with him and receive the blessings of covenantal life

For Review

What is a theme of each of the General Epistles

What is the three-part message of the book of Revelation

What is the Bible is all about

Reflection Questions

1. Who was the book of Hebrews written to? What was the situation the author was addressing?
2. When the author gives theological reasons for the supremacy of Jesus in all things, what are the three things he says Jesus is superior to?
3. How are you encouraged to live in Hebrews 10:19-31? What are you warned to avoid? What is the penalty if you ignore the warning? In what way does this teach you that being a follower of Jesus is both entering into a relationship with Jesus and living in a relationship with Jesus? What is a practical way this affects the way you live your daily life?
4. Who was the author of the book of James?
5. What does James 1:2-4 teach you about the purpose of trials in your life and how you should respond to them? What does it look like to respond in faith when you are facing a trial? How can being aware of how God is redeeming a situation give you the faith to persevere? How does depending on God help you to live differently when you experience difficulties in your life?
6. What does James 3:1-12 teach you about the importance of what you say? What is an example you have experienced with speech used in a negative way? What is an example you have experienced with speech used in a positive way? What is a situation this week in which God wants you to use speech in a positive way?
7. What does James say is the relationship your faith and works in chapter 2:14-26? Give an example from your life. What is a practical way that you can improve your life in this area?
8. At the time the apostle Peter was writing, why is it not surprising that persecution and perseverance would be important topics? In what way are these important topics today?
9. What is the encouragement in 1 Peter 1:3-9 that gives you hope when you face persecution?

10. When 2 Peter and Jude encourage you to fight for your faith, what is an example of persecution that is currently coming from without? What is an example of persecution that is coming from within?
11. What are the two heresies that Dr. Mounce refers to that are mentioned in 2 Peter and Jude? How can these be damaging to you individually and to your church body?
12. How does John teach the humanity of Jesus in 1 John 1:1-4? Why is this a core theological teaching of the Christian faith?
13. How does Dr. Mounce describe sanctification? What is the main characteristic that is foundational to this process? What are some ways that John says you should live this out practically?
14. In 1 John, what are the three tests to determine if you are a believer in Jesus? Give an example of each of these from your life.
15. What is the literary genre of the book of Revelation? What is an example of the way a metaphor is used to describe something that will happen in the future?
16. What does Dr. Mounce say is the message of Revelation? In what way is this encouraging to you as you experience difficulties in your life and see events with destructive consequences in the world?

1.