



Bible Study Methods

*Inspiring & Equipping
Missional Living*

BIBLE STUDY METHODS PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TEACHING A BIBLE STUDY

It takes practice to become a successful Bible Study teacher. Don't be afraid of failure! We never learn if we do not try. God's grace is sufficient to make up what lacks in us.

I. BEFORE YOU TEACH:

1. Schedule your study one week at a time. Send a text reminder the day before and the day of.
2. Schedule your study in a location where there will be minimal distractions.
3. Be on time and never cancel unless it is unavoidable.
4. Pray for your student.
5. Pray that God will give you wisdom and spiritual discernment as you teach.
6. Give yourself an hour to prepare and review the material before you teach.

II. WHILE YOU TEACH:

1. Be time conscious. Get started right away and don't go more than an hour.
2. Take 5-7 minutes to connect with them before starting.
 - a. Find out about their week.
 - b. Ask them about their Bible reading that week.
3. Pray together before you start the lesson.
4. Engage your student every 3-4 minutes.
 - a. Ask them questions.
 - b. Have them read the scriptures. (Having them use their own bible to find scriptures helps them become familiar with their Bible and it is very important for them to hear themselves read the Word aloud.)
5. Slow down if you feel like your student is not getting it or you are moving too fast for them. You do not have to complete the lesson in one meeting.
6. Stay on topic. Avoid rabbit chasing. If they have off-topic or complex questions politely ask them if you can address them at the end.
7. Be sensitive to the Spirit of God while you are teaching.
 - a. If you sense that your student needs prayer, stop and pray with them.
 - b. If you feel the Word of God is ministering to them in a particular way, feel free to explore that topic further.
8. Don't hesitate to ask them if God has spoken to them or if they see any area where they should respond to His Word.

III. AFTER YOU TEACH:

1. Allow your student to ask questions. If you don't have then answer, let them know that you will look into it and get back to them.
2. Assign homework for the next lesson.
3. Schedule the next lesson.
4. If your church has a process for reporting, report your study.
5. Periodically, send encouraging texts or cards to your student letting them know that you are praying for them.

IV. MANAGING CRISIS MOMENTS:

1. Keep the focus on the Word. Remind them that the Bible is the final authority on truth, not tradition or a denomination. Use the phrase; "What does the Bible say?"
2. If there are questions about whether or not a deceased loved one went to heaven, remind them that God alone is the judge. Don't speculate!
3. Remind them that salvation is a journey and God may be giving them the next step.
4. Remember you are adding to their faith, not taking away from it.
5. Encourage them to pray about what they are seeing. Offer to pray with them for clear revelation from God.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD INTRO LESSON

The Bible has been translated into more than 700 languages – the most translated book in human history.

It is also the most printed and most distributed book in the world.

I. THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD!

2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV 1900)

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

The word *inspiration* means God-breathed.

2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV)

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is not a man's book about God. It is God's revelation of Himself.

Evidence supports that the Bible is historically true and has a supernatural origin:

1. Archeology:
 - a. For years many skeptics questioned whether the people or places mentioned in the Bible really existed.
 - b. Archeological discoveries have silenced those critics. (City of David, Walls of Jericho, and the Dead Sea Scrolls)
2. Science:
 - a. The Bible declared that the Earth was a sphere long before science. (Read Isaiah 40:22)
 - b. The Bible declared that the Earth was suspended on nothing. (Read Job 26:7)
3. Divine Agreement:
 - a. The Bible was written by 40 different people and was over 1500 years in the writing.
 - b. These writers were often from different places and sometimes spoke different languages. Many of them never met each other.
 - c. Yet somehow, they managed to write a book that changed the world.
4. Fulfilled Prophecy:
 - a. There are 400 fulfilled Old Testament prophecies in the life of Jesus. (Isaiah 7:14; Malachi 5:2, Zechariah 13:6)
 - b. The dissolution and reunification of Israel were foretold. (Isaiah 11:12)
5. Indestructibility: The Bible is the most scrutinized and attacked book in the world, and yet it is still the most printed, circulated, and translated book of all times.
6. Personal Witness: God's Word speaks to us and finds us where we are.

II. THE BIBLE ANSWERS THE FOUR BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE:

1. Where did I come from? Origin
2. Why am I here? Meaning
3. How do I know what is right and wrong? Morality
4. What happens when I die? Destiny

God's word is the source of true life:

John 6:63 (KJV 1900)

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

III. EVERYONE IS PERSONALLY ACCOUNTABLE TO THE WORD OF GOD!

If the Bible is inspired by God, then that means it has authority over our lives and in all matters of truth.

The Word of God will be our judge in the last day!

John 12:48 (NKJV)

48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Every person will stand before God and be judged out of the “books” of the Bible.
(Read Revelation 20:12)

Every person is accountable to the U.S. tax code, even if they don't know it. Likewise, we are all accountable to the Word of God.

IV. WE SHOULD STUDY AND RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF GOD!

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

If there is a right way to interpret or handle the Scriptures, then it stands to reason that there is a wrong way. We need to understand how the Bible is structured so that we can properly interpret it.

Two main divisions of the Bible:

1. Old Testament – 39 Books
2. New Testament – 27 Books

The Bible is one story with many subplots! The master theme of the Bible is Redemption.

V. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH THE NEW TESTAMENT RESTS:

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

4 But when the **fullness of the time** had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Jesus coming to Earth is the highest revelation of God. He is God in the flesh. Yet, this event required preparation. God used the Old Testament to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus.

Imagine Jesus' coming as the opening night of a Broadway musical. Before the show can begin, there must first be much preparation.

1. A script must be written = The Law and the Prophets were the script.
2. A stage must be built = Israel, Jerusalem, and the Temple were the stage.
3. Dress rehearsals must be performed = The Passover & animal sacrifices were the dress rehearsals.

VI. THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS A TUTOR OR TEACHER TO BRING US TO CHRIST:**Galatians 3:24–25 (NKJV)**

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

The Old Testament was a layered revelation of God. God began with Abraham and slowly revealed Himself to mankind. It was never intended to be the full revelation of God, but a teacher that would bring us to Christ.

The Old Testament was a diagnosis. The New Testament was the cure.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 1a

[Assigned Reading: Genesis, Chapters 1-3]

[Themes to Teach: Creation, Value of Human Life, Free Will, and the New Birth]

I. GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN SIX DAYS: (Read Genesis 1:1-4)

Genesis 2:1–2 (KJV 1900)

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

God created the world to be inhabited by mankind. (See Isaiah 45:18)

Humans have a very special place in the plan of God. (See Psalm 8:3-6)

Adam & Eve were made for the glory of God and to be in relationship with Him.

II. GOD MADE MANKIND IN HIS IMAGE:

Genesis 1:26–27 (KJV 1900)

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Human life is sacred because we are imprinted with the image of God.

What does it mean to be made in God's image?

- a. We are creative: We express ourselves creatively because we are made in the image of a creative God.
- b. We are spiritual: Unlike animals, we have an awareness of the spirit world.
- c. We are reasoning: We can contemplate math & science and discover the laws that God used to create the world.
- d. We are relational: While animals have flock and herd mentalities, humans have a deeper capacity for non-essential relationships.
- e. We are self-aware: We can identify ourselves in time and space. We also possess the ability to be self-conscious and make moral judgements.
- f. We have a free will: We can choose our own destiny.

III. GOD GAVE ADAM & EVE THE POWER OF CHOICE:

Genesis 2:16–17 (KJV 1900)

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil served to give Adam and Eve the ability to either choose or reject God. Where there is no choice there can be no legitimate relationship.

God gave mankind a free-will and dominion over the earth. By doing this, God limited His own sovereignty over them. He would not force His will on them.

IV. ADAM & EVE WERE MADE TO LIVE IN TWO WORLDS:

Genesis 2:7 (KJV 1900)

7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

- a. The physical world: We were made from the dust, forever connected to the physical realm. We have five physical senses that help us understand and relate to the physical world around us.
- b. The spiritual world: God imparted the spirit of life to Adam when He breathed into him. We were made with the ability and desire to interact with the spiritual world.

V. BECAUSE OF ADAM'S SIN ALL ARE NOW BORN SPIRITUALLY DEAD: (Read Gen 3:1-7)

Romans 5:12 (KJV 1900)

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

While we may be alive physically, all are born spiritually dead and separated from the life of God.

VI. WE MUST BE BORN AGAIN:

John 3:3-6 (KJV 1900)

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Jesus said we must have a second birth.

How are we born again? (John 3:5)

- a. By water = repentance & baptism (See Acts 2:37-39)
- b. By Spirit = Infilling of the Holy Spirit (See 1 Corinthians 12:13)

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 1b

[Assigned Reading: Genesis 3-4 & Romans 5-6]

[Themes to Teach: Sin, Sacrifices, Substitution, and Redemption through the Blood]

(Read Genesis 3:9–19)

I. SIN BROUGHT SEPARATION FROM GOD AND CURSES UPON MANKIND:

Man was created for relationship with God, but sin separated man from God. Relationship with God brings life and blessing, but sin brought curses and death.

1. The woman was cursed with pain in childbearing.
2. The man was cursed with hard work and toil.
3. The ground and the Earth were cursed.

a. Thorns	c. Poisons
b. Venom	d. Decay

II. GOD PROMISED REDEMPTION THROUGH THE SEED OF A WOMAN:

Genesis 3:14-15 (KJV 1900)

14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This is the first prophecy concerning Jesus Christ.

The Savior would be born of a virgin:

Isaiah 7:14 (KJV 1900)

14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The Savior would be made of a woman:

Galatians 4:4 (KJV 1900)

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

God declared that just as the serpent had used the woman to bring sin into the world, He would use a woman to bring a savior into the world.

III. GOD COVERED THEIR NAKEDNESS AND SHAME:

God made Adam & Eve coats from animal skin to cover their nakedness.

Genesis 3:21 (KJV 1900)

21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins and clothed them.

1. This is a record of the first animal sacrifice in the Bible:

a. It revealed to them that the payment for sin is always death:

Romans 6:23 (KJV 1900)

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

b. It also revealed to them that shedding blood is required to atone for sin:
(Life is in the blood)

Hebrews 9:22 (KJV 1900)

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

2. Animal sacrifices could not atone for human sin:

Hebrews 10:4 (KJV 1900)

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

These sacrifices simply pushed off the debt owed by mankind.

3. This event foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus and illustrates a great doctrine of the Bible – The doctrine of substitution:

1 Peter 1:18–19 (KJV 1900)

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Just as Adam and Eve were covered by coats of skin, we too can be covered by the righteousness of Jesus. When we are baptized in the name of Jesus, we “put on Christ” just like putting on a garment (See Galatians 3:27).

IV. CAIN & ABEL - TWO APPROACHES TO GOD: (Read Genesis 4:1–7)

Both Cain and Abel offer a sacrifice to God. Abel is accepted and the Cain is rejected. The reason is simple – God had already shown Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21 that a blood sacrifice would be required. Abel approached God through the blood of a substitutionary lamb.

1. Cain's Sacrifice: (Fruits and vegetables)

- a. It represented offering God the works of his own hands.
- b. Cain approached God on his own terms.

2. Abel's Sacrifice: (Firstling of his flock)

- a. It represented approaching God through the blood of the lamb.
- b. Abel approached God on God's terms.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 2

*[Assigned Reading: Genesis Chapters 6-11]
[Themes to Teach: Obedience]*

(Read Genesis 6:5-18)

After the Fall, mankind was left without a clear revelation of God. Mankind simply did that which seemed right to them. Sin abounded, and mankind became excessively wicked. God decided to purge the earth and judge their wickedness. But the Scriptures tell us that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

I. NOAH WAS SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH:

1. Noah was saved by Grace:

Genesis 6:8 (NKJV)

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Grace is what God does! God's grace is seen in the fact that God:

- a. Came to Noah
- b. Revealed the danger of the impending judgment
- c. Revealed His desire to save Noah
- d. Provided a way of salvation – the plan

2. Noah was saved by Faith:

Hebrews 11:7 (NKJV)

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Faith is what we do in response to God! Noah's faith is seen in the fact that Noah:

- a. Responded to the message from God
- b. Built the Ark according to the specifications given by God
- c. Stayed committed to the message he had received

3. We are also saved by grace through faith.

Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV)

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

We are saved because God reaches for us in love, and we respond to him in obedience.

II. GOD'S PLAN WAS SPECIFIC:

Genesis 6:13–16 (NKJV)

13 And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.

15 And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

16 You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

God did not simply ask Noah to build an ark; He gave him a very specific plan:

450 feet long	1 door
45 feet high	3 floors
75 feet wide	Gopher wood

If Noah would have chosen to deviate from the plan of God, it would have certainly affected his salvation.

Application: God demonstrated His grace through the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus revealed both God's desire and plan to save us. However, we must apply that plan to our lives in faith, repentance, water baptism, and the infilling of His Spirit.

III. NOAH WAS SAVED BY WATER:

1 Peter 3:20–21 (NIV)

20 ...when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

In his letter, Peter clearly draws a parallel between the water that saved Noah and New Testament baptism. Baptism is our response to His grace.

IV. JESUS REFERENCED NOAH AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW IT WOULD BE IN THE ENDTIME:

Matthew 24:37–39 (NIV)

37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

1. Eating, drinking, and marrying – Matthew 24:38-39
2. Buying, selling, planting, and building – Luke 17:26-30

In the last days, many people will be ignorant of the coming judgment. Not because they are without witness, but because they are pre-occupied with life.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 3a

[Assigned Reading: Genesis 12-22]

[Themes to Teach: Walking by Faith, God's Faithfulness, the Lamb of God]

(Read Genesis 12:1-7)

The Old Testament is a layered revelation of God. After the flood, mankind was without a clear revelation of God. Most of the world was steeped in paganism, polytheism and the worship of ancestors. About 1900 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, God called a man by the name of Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans in modern-day Iraq. Starting with Abram, God slowly began re-introducing Himself to mankind.

I. GODS PROMISES TO ABRAM:

1. To make of him a great nation – this was a promise about the nation of Israel.
2. To make his name great – he became the father of the faithful.
Abraham is the father of all monotheists (those who believe in one God).
3. To give a land to his descendants – the promised land.
4. To bless all families of the earth through Abraham's seed – this refers to Jesus.

Galatians 3:16 (NKJV)

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

Abram was 75 years old when God called him, and he had no children. Yet, all of the promises of Abram were dependent upon him having children.

II. ABRAM RESPONDED TO GOD IN FAITH:

Hebrews 11:8 (NKJV)

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Romans 4:20–22 (NKJV)

20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

22 And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

III. ABRAM & SARAH DECIDED THEY WOULD GET GOD'S PROMISE THEIR WAY:

Genesis 16:3–4 (NKJV)

3 Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

Hagar's son would be named Ishmael, and he would be a wild man:

Genesis 16:11–12 (NKJV)

11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction.

12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

Ishmael became the father of the Muslim people.

Isaac became the father of the Israelites.

Paul would later use the births of Ishmael and Isaac to illustrate the natural birth and spiritual birth. (Read Galatians 4:28-31)

1. Ishmael is a foreshadow of our first birth.
2. Isaac is a foreshadow of our second birth.
3. Ishmael represents that which is born of the flesh.
4. Isaac represents that which is born of the Spirit.

IV. GOD RENEWS HIS COVENANT: (Read Genesis 17:1-10)

After Abraham's failure, God does not give up on him.

1. God changed Abram's name to Abraham:
 - a. Abram = "High father"
 - b. Abraham = "Father of multitudes"

2. God instituted the sign of circumcision.

We are no longer required to be physically circumcised because we are circumcised with the circumcision of the heart.

Colossians 2:11–12 (NKJV)

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Putting on Christ in water baptized now fulfills the Old Testament requirement of circumcision.

Galatians 3:26–29 (NKJV)

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

V. IN TIME, GOD KEPT HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM: (Read Genesis 21:1-7)

Genesis 21:2 (NKJV)

2 For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, *at the set time* of which God had spoken to him.

God's promises often have a set time. God is faithful and He will keep His word.

VI. GOD TESTED ABRAHAM'S FAITH: (Read Genesis 22:1-13)

1. God gave Abraham a chance to prove why he was living for God.
 - a. Was he doing it to get the promises of God?
 - b. Or was he doing it because he truly trusted God?
2. Abraham demonstrated supreme faith in God.

Hebrews 11:17-19 (NKJV)

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"

19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

3. Abraham could build this altar because he had built lots of small altars.
 - a. His life was marked by altars (devotion) and tents (separation).

VII. THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC FORESHADOWED THE LAMB OF GOD:

Genesis 22:6-8 (NKJV)

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

John the Baptist would later identify Jesus as the Lamb provided by God.

John 1:29 (NKJV)

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 3b

[Assigned Reading: Genesis 37-50]

[Themes to Teach: Forgiveness]

(Read Acts 7:2-10)

God called Abraham into a covenant relationship with Him. He promised that He would build out of Abraham and his descendants a great nation and that through this nation, He would bring a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3).

I. GOD'S CHOSEN NATION WAS ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE PATRIARCHS:

The Old Testament, from this point on, focuses on God's working with a select group of people – the descendants of Abraham. His purpose was to use this nation to bring about His plan of redemption for mankind.

1. Abraham begat Isaac, the son of the promise.
2. Isaac begat Esau & Jacob.
 - a. Jacob was a deceiver, yet God saw something in him.
 - b. Jacob convinced his brother to sell him his birthright. (Read Gen 25:29-34)
 - c. Jacob tricked his father into giving him the blessing. (Read Gen 27:18-23)

After securing the birthright and the blessing, Jacob fled the wrath of his brother. While running he encountered God at a place called Bethel. God offered to Jacob the same covenant that He had made with his father and grandfather.

(Read Genesis 28:10-22)

Jacob, however, is still self-willed and fled instead to Haran (the place God had called Abraham out of). He struggled for 21 years and is cheated by his father-in-law Laban (Genesis 29-31). Jacob reaped what he had sown.

But then, God called him back to Bethel:

Genesis 31:13 (NKJV)

13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.' "

3. After an encounter with God, Jacob's name was changed to Israel. (Read Genesis 32:24-28)
4. Jacob had twelve sons. They would become the twelve tribes of Israel:

Reuben	Zebulun	Asher
Simeon	Issachar	Naphtali
Levi	Dan	Joseph
Judah	Gad	Benjamin

II. JOSEPH WAS THE FAVORED SON: (Read Genesis 37:1-5)

Joseph is the oldest son of Rachel. He was his father's favorite. Joseph dreamed dreams that he did not understand, but they pointed to his future. His brothers hated him because of his father's favor and for his dreams.

1. Joseph's Struggle:
 - a. Betrayed and attacked by his brothers (Genesis 37:17-20 & 26-28)
 - b. Enslaved in Egypt (Genesis 39:1-5)
 - c. Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-14)
 - d. Imprisoned in the dungeon (Genesis 39:20-23)
 - e. Forgotten by the king's butler (Genesis 40:21-22)
2. Joseph's Advantage:
 - a. Yet, the Lord was with Joseph. (Read Genesis 39:2, 21)
 - b. God's presence is not always indicated by our ease of life.
 - c. Joseph lived his life *Coram Deo* – before the face of God.
 - d. He was a man of integrity.

III. JOSEPH IS A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS:

Joseph could have thwarted the purpose of God in his life by:

1. Allowing himself to become bitter.
2. Seeking to avenge himself when he had the power.

Instead, he became a beautiful Old Testament picture of Christ's forgiveness.

IV. KEY PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVENESS FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH: (Read Genesis 45:1-8)

1. Forgiveness is a decision made in faith.
2. Forgiveness is a recognition that God alone has the right to avenge our enemies (Read Genesis 50:19).
3. Forgiveness does not mean the pain goes away. (V.2 "he wept aloud")
4. Forgiveness is not forgetting. (V.4 "I am your brother, whom you sold into Egypt")
5. Forgiveness is not always immediate reconciliation. Joseph did not immediately reconcile with his brothers.
 - a. Sometimes reconciliation takes time.
 - b. Sometimes reconciliation is not possible.
 - c. Forgiveness takes one, reconciliation takes two.

V. JOSEPH SAVED HIS FAMILY & PRESERVED GOD'S PLAN:

God used Joseph to save his family from the famine and to bring them into Egypt, so they could grow into the nation God planned for them to be: (Read Genesis 47:11-12 & 27)

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 4a

*[Assigned Reading: Exodus chapters 1-12]
[Themes to Teach: Passover, Plan of Salvation]*

(Read Exodus 1:1-14 & 22)

God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the patriarchs of a great nation. Jacob (Israel) and his sons relocated to Egypt under the protection of Joseph. The children of Israel lived in the land of Goshen for nearly 400 years and grew from a small family of 70 people into a nation of hundreds of thousands of people.

A new king rose to power. He feared the numbers and might of Israel. So, he enslaved them and eventually began systematically killing every male child. Yet, in all this suffering and loss, the purpose of God continued to be advanced as the children of Israel increased and multiplied greatly.

I. GOD RAISED UP A DELIVERER BY NAME OF MOSES: (Read Acts 7:17-25)

1. God spared Moses' life as child: (Read Exodus 2:1-10)

- a. Moses was hidden by his parents for 3 months.
- b. When she could no longer hide him, his mother made an ark and placed him in the river.
- c. Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and raised as a prince in Egypt.

2. Moses made the right choice: (Read Hebrews 11:23-29)

- a. By faith, he chose to suffer with God's people, instead of enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season.
- b. Moses forsook Egypt and refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.
- c. Responding to God in faith will often bring us to a point of decision. We may have to walk away from some things to embrace all God has in store for us.

3. Moses is called back to Egypt: (Read Acts 7:30-34)

- a. Moses fled Egypt and lived in the wilderness for 40 years.
- b. After 40 years, God spoke to Moses from a burning bush.
- c. God revealed himself to Moses as the I AM and sent Moses to free the children of Israel.

II. ISRAEL'S EXODUS FORESHADOWED GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION:

The Exodus from Egypt is a beautiful picture of God's New Testament plan of deliverance from sin and death. Moses confronted Pharaoh and commanded him to let God's people go. Pharaoh refused and hardened his heart. Therefore, God used Moses to bring judgement upon Egypt in the form of 10 plagues.

1. The ten plagues were God's judgement upon Egypt:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1) Water to Blood | 5) Cattle Slain | 9) Darkness |
| 2) Frogs | 6) Boils | 10) Firstborn Slain |
| 3) Lice | 7) Hail | |
| 4) Flies | 8) Locusts | |

(Read Exodus 12:1-3, 7-8 & 12-14)

All sin will be judged. God is holy, and He cannot simply overlook sin.

2. Israel was spared from judgement by the Blood of the Lamb:

The Angel of the Lord was to pass through Egypt and execute judgement upon the land. Only those who had the blood of a lamb applied to their home would be spared. God told Moses; "When I see the blood, I will pass over..."

- The blood of the Passover lamb pointed to the atoning blood of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God without spot or blemish.
- This event also foreshadowed our repentance and turning to Christ as our atonement. When we turn to Him and apply His sacrificial death to our lives, the judgement of God will pass over us.
- It was not enough for a lamb to die; its blood must be applied. Jesus died for all, but only those who apply His blood will be spared.

3. Jesus is our Passover: (1 Corinthians 5:7)

- The Jews were instructed to commemorate this day with an annual feast.
- Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, was crucified more than a thousand years later, on Passover.
- Jesus used the Passover meal to introduce the New Covenant and point to Himself as its fulfillment (Read Luke 22:14-20)

4. They passed through the Red Sea: (Read Exodus 14:13-14 & 21-23)

Israel's passing through the Red Sea is a type of our baptism. They went into the sea and their slave masters pursued them. Yet, Israel came out of the sea and their past was buried beneath the waves.

"...the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever"

Just as God removed the past from Israel by having them pass through the water, He removes our sin from us in the waters of baptism. (See Acts 22:16)

5. They met and followed the cloud: (Read Exodus 13:21-22)

This is a foreshadow of being filled with and led by the Holy Spirit.

God's plan of deliverance for the Hebrew slaves from Egypt foreshadowed our own deliverance from the bondage of sin. (See Acts 2:37-39 & Romans 6:3-5)

- a. Passover = Blood & Death. This is fulfilled in our turning to Jesus in repentance.
- b. Red Sea Crossing = Burial & Water. This is fulfilled in water baptism.
- c. Promise Land = Spirit giving them a new life. This is fulfilled through the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Paul referenced the two baptisms of the nation of Israel: (Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-2)
These two baptisms symbolize being born of the water and of the Spirit.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 4b

[Assigned Reading: Exodus, Chapters 19-25]

[Themes to Teach: Purpose of the Law & the Foreshadowing of the Tabernacle Plan]

(Read Exodus 19:1-6)

After delivering the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the Lord brought them through the Red Sea and to Mt. Sinai. At Mt. Sinai, God made a covenant with the Children of Israel and gave them the Law.

The best-known portion of the law is the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).

However, there were a total of 613 commandments in all.

The purpose of the Law:

- The Law separated Israel from other nations. It made them God's chosen people.
- The Law revealed to Israel the nature of God. They knew little about God.
- The Law was a schoolmaster intended to show Israel their need for a savior. (Galatians 3:24-25) It was a diagnosis of our sinful condition (Romans 7:7).

I. THE LAW CAN BE DIVIDED UP INTO THREE GENERAL CATEGORIES:

1. The Moral Law:

These are laws dealing with basic right and wrong.

This category included laws regarding murder, adultery, theft, lying, sexual sins, idolatry, etc.

The moral laws were based on the nature of God. For example: God is just; therefore, taking a life unjustly would be wrong; and God is true; therefore, telling a lie or bearing false witness would violate the very nature of God.

These laws never change because God's nature never changes.

2. The Civil Law:

These laws pertained specifically to daily conduct within the civil society of Israel.

This category included laws regarding business transactions, suits, and personal liability (See Deuteronomy 24:10-11)

3. The Ceremonial Law:

These laws pertained to the religion of Israel and their worship of Jehovah under the Old Covenant.

This category included dietary codes, circumcision, holidays, sacrifices, priesthood, tabernacle, etc.

The ceremonial law was in place to:

- a. Provide a path for Israel to have a relationship with God.
- b. Teach Israel about their own sinfulness and the price of redemption.
- c. Serve as a foreshadow of the finished work of Christ.

Most of the ceremonial law pointed to Christ or an aspect of salvation (He is our Passover lamb, He is our High Priest, He is our Sabbath, and through His Holy Spirit we become the tabernacle of God, etc.)

(Read Hebrews 10:1-4 & Colossians 2:16-17)

Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial Law. One great example of this is the Passover commandment (Exodus 12:14). This commandment is fulfilled through Christian Communion (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Therefore, we now observe the Passover in its fulfillment.

II. THE TABERNACLE PLAN REPRESENTED MAN'S APPROACH TO GOD:

Exodus 25:8-9 (KJV 1900)

8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

The Tabernacle was a portable tent designed to be a place of communion with God. Once Israel settled in the promised land, they built a permanent structure called the temple.

The Tabernacle had three sections: Outer Court, Holy Place, and Holiest of Holies.

The tabernacle represented Israel's approach to God. This would be where the High Priest would offer sacrifices for the sin of the people. If Israel was going to have a relationship with God as a nation, it would center around and run through the tabernacle.

God designated the tribe of Levi to be a priesthood and to work in the Tabernacle. (The entire book of Leviticus is written to provide them with instructions on how to keep the tabernacle, perform sacrifices and atone for sins). (Read Numbers 8:13-16)

III. THE TABERNACLE LAYOUT:

1. One Door – Jesus is the door (John 10:9).
2. The Brazen Altar – A place of sacrifice, death and shed blood.

Leviticus 17:11 (KJV 1900)

11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Fulfilled in Hebrews 9:28: The Brazen Altar foreshadowed the blood of Jesus and our repentance.

3. The Brazen Laver – A place of washing and cleansing by water.

Exodus 30:20 (KJV 1900)

20 When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not...

Fulfilled: Acts 22:16, the Brazen Laver foreshadowed our baptism.

4. The Holy Place – A place of worship.
 - a. Furniture: Table of Shew Bread, Golden Candle, and the Altar of Incense.
5. The Holiest of Holies – A place of fellowship with the Spirit of God.
 - a. It housed the Ark of the Covenant – (Read Exodus 25:10-11, 19-22)
 - i. This was God's throne on Earth.
 - ii. God would commune with the High Priest from the Ark of the Covenant.
 - b. Only the High Priest could enter this part of the Tabernacle, once per year; He could never enter without blood.
 - c. The Holiest of Holies was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a curtain or a veil. Access to His presence was very limited!
 - d. Yet, when Jesus died, the veil was torn in two. The way to God was now open to everyone. (Read Luke 23:45)
 - e. The Holiest of Holies also foreshadowed us becoming the temple of the Holy Ghost

(Conclude by reading 1 Corinthians 3:16)

The Tabernacle Plan was a temporary means of relationship for Israel, and its patterns foreshadowed our approach to God under the New Testament. We must recognize Jesus as the door, we must repent and deal with our sin, we must be washed in baptism, and God promises to fill us with His Spirit and make His dwelling place in our hearts.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD

LESSON 5a

[Assigned Reading: Joshua 1-6, 1 Samuel 15-18]
[Themes to Teach: Repentance]

After receiving the Law of God at Mt. Sinai, Israel journeyed toward the Promised Land (Canaan). They came to a place called Kadesh. From there Moses sent spies into the land to help them prepare for the conquest of Canaan.

(Read Numbers 13:1-2, 25-33)

I. GOOD REPORT VS. EVIL REPORT:

Ten spies brought back an evil report.

Two spies brought back a good report. Their names were Joshua and Caleb.

Israel allowed the giants and strongholds ahead of them to blind them to the power of God they had witnessed in Egypt. They focused more on the challenges than they did on the promises.

II. ISRAEL & THE WILDERNESS:

Because of Israel's unbelief, God disciplined them by causing them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.

Numbers 14:34 (KJV 1900)

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

God disciplined Israel, but He never abandoned them. (Read Deuteronomy 8:1-5)

After 40 years in the wilderness, Moses died on Mt. Nebo. (Read Deuteronomy 34:1-8)

III. THE CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT OF CANAAN:

- a. God called Joshua to lead Israel. (Read Deuteronomy 34:9-12)
- b. God was with him just as he had been with Moses. (See Joshua 1:1-7)
- c. Israel crossed the Jordan river on dry ground. (See Joshua 3:9-13)
- d. Israel demonstrated faith and obedience when they marched around the walls of Jericho. Sometimes, God's instructions do not make sense to us.
- e. God empowered them to drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan just as He had promised.
- f. At the end of his life, Joshua gave a powerful final charge to the people:

Joshua 24:14–15 (KJV 1900)

14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

IV. THE TIME OF JUDGES:

- a. For more than 400 years Israel lived in the Promised Land without a king. During this time, God raised up judges to lead them against their enemies.

Judges 2:16 (KJV 1900)

16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------|----------|
| ➤ Othniel | ➤ Tola | ➤ Abdon |
| ➤ Ehud | ➤ Jair | ➤ Samson |
| ➤ Shamgar | ➤ Jephthah | ➤ Eli |
| ➤ Deborah & Barak | ➤ Ibzan | ➤ Samuel |
| ➤ Gideon | ➤ Elon | |

- b. During this time, Israel frequently drifted from God and often slipped into idolatry.

Judges 17:6 (KJV 1900)

6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

V. GOD ESTABLISHES A UNITED KINGDOM:**1 Samuel 8:5 (KJV 1900)**

5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

The last judge of Israel was also a prophet and the high priest. His name was Samuel. When he was old, Israel asked Samuel to anoint a king to lead them. God directed Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel's first king.

VI. THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL: SAUL

- a. Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin.
 b. Saul was head and shoulders above others.
 c. Saul was rejected by God because of his disobedience and pride. (Read 1 Samuel 15:10-30)

- d. Saul's response to his sin.
 1. Denied: "I have obeyed the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:20)
 2. Blamed: "The people took of the spoil" (1 Samuel 15:21)
 3. Excused: "We did it to sacrifice to the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:15)
 4. Minimized: "I've sinned, but honor me now" (1 Samuel 15:30)

VII. THE SECOND KING OF ISRAEL: DAVID

- a. David was anointed to be the next king of Israel when he was just a shepherd boy. (1 Samuel 16:10-13)
- b. David rose to fame when he killed Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:23-26, 45-51)
- c. David was a man of worship and wrote many of the Psalms.
- d. David was called "a man after God's Own Heart."

Acts 13:22 (KJV 1900)

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

- e. David received the Davidic Covenant. God promised that David's seed would forever sit on the throne in Jerusalem. (Read 2 Samuel 7:8-17)
- f. This covenant would be fulfilled in Jesus: "Jesus, thou son of David..."

Matthew 1:1 (KJV 1900)

1 THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*, the son of Abraham.

- g. David sinned with Bathsheba: (Read 2 Samuel 11:1-9)
 - i. He committed adultery and murder
- h. David repented of his sin and God restored him. (Read 2 Samuel 12:1-13)

2 Samuel 12:13 (KJV 1900)

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

(Conclude by reading Psalm 51)

Compare David's attitude toward his own failure with that of Saul. David was restored because he was humble before God.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 5b

[Assigned Reading: 1 Kings 3-11, Daniel 1, Ezra 1]
[Themes to Teach: God's Discipline & Restoration]

I. THE THIRD KING OF ISRAEL: SOLOMON

1. He prayed for wisdom: (Read 1 Kings 3:9-12)
2. He built the temple: (Read 1 Kings 9:1-7)
3. He wrote the books of Proverbs, Song of Solomon & Ecclesiastes
4. However, Solomon compromised with idolatry: (Read 1 Kings 11:1-4)
5. Because of this, God judged Solomon: (Read 1 Kings 11:9-13)

II. THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL BECAME A DIVIDED KINGDOM: (Read 1 Kings 12:20-24)

1. These two kingdoms were called the Kingdom of Israel & the Kingdom of Judah.
2. The Kingdom of Israel was led by Solomon's general, Jeroboam
3. The Kingdom of Judah was led by Solomon's son, Rehoboam
4. The Kingdom of Israel would never again truly follow God. Their kings committed idolatry, and they were eventually destroyed by the Assyrian Empire.
5. The Kingdom of Judah had both good kings and bad kings. Because of the promises made to David, this kingdom would live on.

Kingdom:	Northern (Israel)	Southern (Judah)
Number of Tribes:	Ten	Two
Capital City:	Samaria	Jerusalem
Ruling Family:	House of Jeroboam	House of David
Destruction:	722 BC by the Assyrians	586 BC by the Babylonians
Inhabitants were called:	Samaritans	Jews
Major Prophets:	Elijah & Elisha	Isaiah & Jeremiah
Religion:	Worshiped in High Places	Worshiped at the Temple

III. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH WAS TAKEN CAPTIVE TO BABYLON: (Read 2 Kings 25:1-11)

Because of Judah's backsliding, God used the Babylonian army to discipline them. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed. The temple was burned. The instruments of worship were carried away, along with many of the people.

Daniel 1:1-2 (KJV 1900)

1 IN the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

1. The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would be in captivity for seventy years.

Jeremiah 25:11–12 (KJV 1900)

11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

2. During their captivity, God raised up prophets like Ezekiel & Daniel.
3. These prophets encouraged Judah and spoke prophetically of the restoration of Jerusalem.

IV. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM:

1. At the end of seventy years, Babylon was defeated by Persia.
2. In 538 BC Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Work was completed in 515 BC. (Read Ezra 1:1-7)
3. God used Zerubbabel to lead the effort to rebuild the temple.
4. God used the scribe, Ezra, to instruct the people in the Law of Moses.

Ezra 7:10 (KJV 1900)

10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

5. God raised up prophets like Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to encourage and guide the people as they returned from captivity and rebuilt the temple.

Malachi 3:1 (KJV 1900)

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, Even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

This is the Second Temple – this temple would be remodeled and expanded by King Herod shortly before the time of Jesus. It is the temple to which the Messiah would come.

6. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in 444 BC. (Read Nehemiah 2:2-6)

The Old Testament ends about 400 years before the birth of Jesus.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD

LESSON 6a

[Use the New Testament layout chart]

[Themes to Teach: New Testament Layout, Importance of the Book of Acts]

We have concluded a general overview of the Old Testament and learned that God created mankind for relationship and that sin entered the world, severing that relationship. Yet, God had a plan to bring salvation through the nation of Israel. Much of the Old Testament is about God working with this one nation and setting the stage for the Messiah to come into the world.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT LAYOUT:

2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV 1900)

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

The New Testament has 27 books.

We are to rightly divide the Word of God. Understanding how the New Testament is laid out is essential to properly interpret it.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV 1900)

15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II. THE GOSPELS:

These are the biographies of Jesus Christ:

1. The Gospel of Matthew: He was a disciple of Jesus Christ – a tax collector. This Gospel is written to the Jewish people to prove that Jesus is their Messiah. Matthew traces Jesus' lineage back to Abraham and there is a great deal of emphasis placed on fulfilled prophecy in His life and ministry.
2. The Gospel of Mark: He was a protégé of Barnabas & Peter. This Gospel focuses extensively on the miracles of Christ.
3. The Gospel of Luke: He was a physician and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke's gospel is written with a Gentile reader in mind. Jesus is presented as the savior of the world and his lineage is traced back to Adam.
4. The Gospel of John: He was a disciple of Jesus Christ – a fisherman. John writes to show that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (See John 1:1, John 1:14, John 10:30, John 14:7-9)

Collectively, these books cover His birth, life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection.

Any differences in the accounts of the life of Jesus should not be viewed as a contradiction of each other, but each writer presents the story of His life from their perspective. We must take all four Gospels to have an accurate picture of His life.

The Gospels tell us what God did for us and how He made salvation possible for all mankind. In short, the Gospels tell us why we can be saved.

It is important to note that the New Testament does not really begin until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

III. CHURCH HISTORY – THE BOOK OF ACTS:

The Book of Acts picks up where the Gospels leave off and provides detail about the birth of the church, and the growth and development of Christianity in the First Century.

It is the only book in the Bible where we can read actual accounts of people being saved under the New Testament and according to the Apostles Doctrine.

This book is central to understanding and interpreting the New Testament.

1. The Book of Acts is where we see the commandments of Jesus Christ carried out by His disciples. Their actions are the lens through which we understand His words and commandments.
2. The Book of Acts is also the context in which we should read the letters of the Apostles.

This book shows us how we can be saved.

IV. THE EPISTLES (THE LETTERS OF THE APOSTLES):

1. Pauline Epistles: Letters written by the Apostle Paul to a specific person or group of people.

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews.

2. General Epistles: Letters written by other Apostles to a general audience.

James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

These letters were written to the church during the time outlined in the Book of Acts. The purpose of these letters was to provide instruction in matters of Christian living, doctrine, and church order.

These 21 books tell us how to live as Christians.

V. PROPHECY – THE BOOK OF REVELATION:

Written by the Apostle John when he was in exile on the isle of Patmos. The central theme is one of the end time, final judgement, and the restoration of all things.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 6b

*[Assigned Reading: Matthew 1-4, Luke 1-4]
[Themes to Teach: Incarnation & Oneness of God]*

I. JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST:

- a. Prophecy concerning John's ministry: (Read Isaiah 40:3 & Malachi 3:1)
- b. John's mission:
 - i. To prepare the way for the Messiah
 - ii. To identify the Messiah for Israel

John 1:32–33 (KJV 1900)

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

- c. John's message:

Matthew 3:11 (KJV 1900)

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

- i. Repentance:
- ii. Baptism in water:
- iii. Holy Spirit baptism:

II. THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS FORETOLD BY THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS:

Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- a. Born of a virgin: (Fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23)

Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV)

14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

- b. Born in Bethlehem: (Fulfilled in Luke 2:1-4)

Micah 5:2 (NKJV)

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."

- c. Born to be a Savior:

Matthew 1:21 (NKJV)

21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Jesus was perfect humanity and very deity in one person – He was both God and man. (See Colossians 2:9 & 1 Timothy 3:16)

III. JESUS SPENT 40 DAYS IN THE WILDERNESS BEING TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL:

(Read Matthew 4:1-11)

- a. The temptation of Christ proved His humanity.
- b. He was tempted in all points like us, yet without sin (Read Hebrews 4:15-16)
- c. Jesus was tempted in three ways:
 - i. Turn stones to bread to abate His hunger.
 - ii. Worship Satan to inherit the kingdoms of the earth.
 - iii. Jump from the pinnacle of the temple to prove Himself.

These three areas of temptation correspond to the three categories of sin given by the apostle John. (Read 1 John 2:15-16)

All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh (appetite), the lust of the eyes (greed), and the pride of life (pride).

This was the same type of temptation faced by Adam & Eve:

Genesis 3:6 (NKJV)

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Jesus is the second Adam. He came to fight the same battle of temptation lost by Adam & Eve in the Garden and to win back the dominion lost.

The temptation proved He was sinless and qualified Him to be our substitute.

IV. JESUS HAD AN UNPRECEDENTED MINISTRY OF MIRACLES:**Isaiah 35:5-6 (NKJV)**

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

Jesus frequently pointed to His miracles as proof of who He was. (Read Matthew 11:2-6)

The miracles of Jesus proved His deity. (Read John 14:10-11)

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 7a

*[Assigned Reading: Matthew 5-13, John 3]
[Themes to Teach: The New Birth]*

Jesus' ministry lasted for three years. It began at the age of 30. Most of His ministry took place in the region around the sea of Galilee and around the city of Jerusalem.

I. JESUS' TEACHING WAS EXTRAORDINARY:

Matthew 7:28–29 (NKJV)

28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

John 7:45–46 (NKJV)

45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"

46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

II. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: (Read Matthew 5:1-12)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us how to pray and the principles of the Kingdom. He internalized the Law of God and focused specifically on the issues of the heart. He revealed that mere external adherence to Law was not sufficient to make us righteous.

Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)

20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

In this sermon, He taught the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law. He helped them apply the Law, both to their behaviors and to the heart.

Matthew 5:22 – Jesus identifies hatred as a sin, not merely murder.

Mathew 5:28 – Jesus identifies lust of the heart as a sin, not merely adultery.

When the Law is properly applied, we see how sinful we really are.

III. JESUS TAUGHT THE NEW BIRTH: (Read John 3:1-8)

Nicodemus was a religious leader for the Jews. He came to Jesus by night. Jesus taught him one of the most fundamental lessons of Christianity – the New Birth.

1. Jesus revealed that the Kingdom of God was not an earthly kingdom.
2. To enter the Kingdom of God, one must be born again.
3. We must be born of the water and of the Spirit:
 - a. Born of water = Water Baptism (Read Mark 16:16)

b. Born of Spirit = Holy Spirit Baptism (Acts 1:4-5)

Throughout much of His ministry, Jesus pointed people to a future when they could be filled with the Holy Spirit. Religion cannot not change our nature; we must be born again.

John 7:37–39 (KJV 1900)

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The promise of the Spirit was to anyone who believed and was spiritually thirsty.

IV. JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES: (Read Matthew 13:1-16)

Throughout His ministry Jesus often taught in parables. A parable is an earthly story with a spiritual application. Jesus taught more than 30 different parables.

One great example of this is the Parable of the Sower:

Matthew 13:18–23 (NKJV)

18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower:

19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

1. The seed is the Word of God
2. There are four soils:
 - a. Wayside – Hard
 - b. Stoney – Shallow
 - c. Thorny – Polluted
 - d. Good – Ready for the seed
3. What type of soil am I? We are the soil of our own choosing.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 7b

[Assigned Reading: Luke 22-24, Matthew 26-28]

[Themes to Teach: Crucifixion, Resurrection & Great Commission]

In the past couple of lessons, we have covered the birth of Jesus, the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, His temptation, His ministry of miracles, and His unparalleled teaching. Yet, it is important to note that Jesus did not simply come to fulfill prophesy, perform miracles, or teach powerful principles. His mission was declared plainly at the announcement of His birth.

Matthew 1:21 (NKJV)

21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

After a public ministry that lasted about three years, Jesus informed His disciples that He was to be crucified at Passover.

Matthew 26:1-2 (NKJV)

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples,

2 "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Jesus came to be our substitutionary sacrifice. He came to redeem us from our sins.

I. THE ROAD TO CALVARY:

1. Jesus at the Last Supper: (Read Matthew 26:26-29)
 - a. Jesus repurposed the Passover meal. He revealed to the disciples this ancient ceremony was about to be fulfilled in His death, burial and resurrection.
 - b. The wine represented His blood that would be shed for the remission of sins.
 - c. The bread represented His body that would be bruised and broken for our iniquity.
 - d. Today, we celebrate the Passover through the observance of Christian communion.

2. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: (Read Matthew 26:36-39)
 - a. Jesus surrendered His human will to the eternal will of God.
 - b. Adam & Eve condemned mankind by essentially saying, "my will be done." Jesus redeemed mankind by saying, "thy will be done."
 - c. The cup He prayed to avoid was the cup of God's wrath. The collective guilt of all mankind.

3. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and identified Him to the High priest's servants with a kiss. (Read Matthew 26:46)
4. Jesus is tried before the High Priest for blasphemy: (Read Mathew 26:57-69)
 - a. They could not find a reason to accuse Him.
 - b. The high priest declared Jesus guilty of a false charge.
 - c. Those watching declared that He was guilty and worthy of death.
 - d. The spat on him, struck him, and mocked him.
5. Jesus is led from High Priest to Pontius Pilate. (Read John 19:1-3)
 - a. Pilate found no fault in Him.
 - b. He gave the Jews a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, a thief. They chose the thief.
 - c. He had Jesus whipped with 39 stripes. (Read Isaiah 53:1-7)
 - d. They placed a crown of thorns on his head.

II. CHRIST DIED FOR US: (Read Matthew 27:35-40 & 45-50)

1. Jesus took our place on the cross:

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- a. By His stripes we are healed.
- b. He was wounded for our transgressions.

2. Jesus died for everyone:

Romans 5:8-9 (NKJV)

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

When He died, the veil in the temple was torn. This signified that everyone now had access to God.

3. His blood redeems us from our sin:

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The blood flowed from His pierced hands & feet, the crown of thorns, and the wound in His side

III. CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD:

Without the resurrection, Jesus would have been just another martyred prophet.

1. What does the resurrection mean?
 - a. The resurrection proves that He was sinless. (Read Acts 2:24)
 - i. Death's claim on every man is that we are all sinners.
 - ii. Because Jesus was sinless, death could not hold Him.
 - b. The resurrection proved that He was God. (Read John 20:27-29)
 - c. The resurrection gives hope to every Christian, that death is not final. (Read Romans 8:11)

2. Proof of the Resurrection: (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
 - a. The empty tomb:
 - i. The Romans and Jews could have stopped the spread of Christianity by simply showing the body of Jesus.
 - ii. The tomb was secured, and the body could not be stolen.
 - b. He was seen by twelve of His disciples: (Read Matthew 28:16-20)
 - c. He was seen of them for 40 days: (Read Acts 1:3)
 - d. Seen by 500 people at one time: (Read 1 Corinthians 15:4-7)

I. THE GREAT COMMISSION: (Read Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16-17; Luke 24:46-49)

After His resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days helping the disciples understand what had just happened. Furthermore, He outlines the mission and the message of the church.

1. There are three different Gospel accounts of the Great Commission. They must be viewed together to provide the full picture of what Christ commanded. They should be viewed as an overlay of each other.

2. The elements of the Great Commission:
 - a. Preach the Gospel to all the world.
 - b. Teach and make disciples.
 - c. Call people to faith in Jesus.
 - d. Call people to repentance.
 - e. Baptize people in the name of Jesus.
 - f. Receive the Holy Spirit.
 - g. Expect supernatural signs to follow.

3. The Great Commission matches the message of John the Baptist (Read Matthew 3:11)

4. The Great Commission was fulfilled by Peter on the day of Pentecost. (Read Acts 2:38)

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 8

[Assigned Reading: Acts 1-2]

[Themes to Teach: The Plan of Salvation]

The birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ made salvation possible for every person on earth. Yet, the unfortunate reality is that not everyone will be saved. Salvation must be individually received and applied to our lives.

I. JESUS' LAST WORDS AND ASCENSION: (Read Acts 1:3-14)

1. Just before He ascended to heaven, Jesus reminded the disciples to wait for the promise of the Father, which was the baptism of the Holy Ghost.
2. 120 people waited in the Upper Room. This number included, Mary the mother of Jesus, His brothers, and the twelve apostles.

II. THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH: (Read Acts 2:1-6, 12-17)

1. The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost:
 - a. This was the beginning of the New Testament church.
 - b. The Church did not exist until the Day of Pentecost.
 - c. It had been promised by both Jesus and the prophets, but it did not come into existence until people were filled with the Holy Ghost.
2. Pentecost was a Jewish feast known as the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot):
 - a. It was 50 days after Passover.
 - b. It marked the giving of the Law and the Old Covenant at Mt. Sinai.
 - c. God chose this day to give a New Covenant. Not a covenant of laws, but of the Spirit.
3. When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues:
 - a. This event fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies: (See Isaiah 28:11-12; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 36:26-27, & Joel 2:28-29)
 - b. This event also fulfilled the promise of Jesus Christ. (Read John 7:37-39)
 - c. This event drew the attention of thousands gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks.
 - d. Some mocked them, while others were amazed about this supernatural experience and asked Peter two important questions:
 - i. What does this mean? (Read Acts 2:12)
Peter answered this question with the Gospel – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Read Acts 2:22-24)
 - ii. What must we do? (Read Acts 2:37)
Peter answered this question with the Plan of Salvation. (Read Acts 2:38-39)

III. PETER PREACHED THE PLAN OF SALVATION: (Read Acts 2:36-29)

The Day of Pentecost was the first opportunity the Apostles had to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. How did they do it? What did they preach?

Those listening to Peter heard the Gospel and they believed it. Yet, there was still something for them to do. Peter commanded them to do three things:

1. Repentance: Dying to sin and self. Repentance can be summed up as confession, sorrow and turning from sin.
2. Water Baptism: Burial of the old life with Christ (Read Romans 6:3-4)
 - a. Baptism is done by immersion in water. (Read Acts 8:38)
 - b. Baptism is for the remission of sins. (Read Acts 22:16)
 - c. Baptism was and is to be administered in the name of Jesus Christ.
 - i. This is not a contradiction of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19. It is the fulfillment of it.
 - ii. There is only one name that saves us. (Read Acts 4:12)
 - iii. This was the only way New Testament baptism was performed.
 - iv. Peter elevated baptism to an essential part of the plan of salvation. (See also Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:20-21)
3. Receive the Holy Ghost: Peter then shared with them God's promise to fill each of them with the Holy Ghost. He then declared that this promise was for everyone. (v.39)

IV. THE INITIAL EVIDENCE OF RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST:

1. All 120 people spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost. (Read Acts 2:4)
2. The Gentiles spoke in tongues when they received the Spirit. (Read Acts 10:44-46)
3. Those in Ephesus spoke in tongues. (Read Acts 19:2-6)
4. Jesus said that these signs would accompany the New Birth. (Read Mark 16:17)
5. Why tongues? Because the tongue is the uncontrollable part of our body. (Read James 3:2-8)

V. THE PURPOSE OF THE HOLY GHOST:

1. The Spirit gives us power: (Read Acts 1:8)
2. The Spirit teaches and guides us: (Read John 14:26)
3. The Spirit imparts the love of God: (Read Romans 5:5)
4. The Spirit gives righteousness, joy, and peace: (Read Romans 14:17)
5. The Spirit gives eternal life: (Read Romans 8:11)

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 9a

*[Assigned Reading: 1 Corinthians 12-13 & Galatians 5]
[Themes to Teach: Gifts of the Spirit & Walking in the Spirit]*

In our last lesson, we explored the birth of the New Testament church on the day of Pentecost and how the Apostles interpreted and applied the Great Commission given to them by Jesus. However, the experience of the Spirit was not just an initial experience. The church is a supernatural organism that is unified and empowered by the working of the Spirit. Through the Spirit, God also gave supernatural gifts to the church to help it accomplish its mission.

I. **THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT:** (Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-14)

The gifts of the Spirit are given to edify the body of Christ and for the work of ministry.

The gifts of the Spirit should be normal within the church, but not continuous.

Each gift is a supernatural empowerment beyond our own limited human abilities.

Paul lists nine spiritual gifts, and these gifts can be grouped into three categories:

1. Power to know things supernaturally:
 - a. A word of knowledge: God gives information previously unknown.
 - b. A word of wisdom: God gives direction beyond one's human wisdom.
 - c. The discerning of spirits: God reveals what kind of spirit is at work in a specific situation.

2. Power to act supernaturally:
 - a. The gift of faith: God gives great faith for a specific task or moment.
 - b. The gifts of healing: God gives the ability to pray effectively for the sick.
 - c. The working of miracles: God gives the power to work miracles.

3. Power to speak supernaturally:
 - a. The gift of prophecy: God speaks prophetically through someone.
 - b. Diverse kinds of tongues: God gives the ability to speak in a previously unknown language – heavenly or human.
 - c. The interpretation of tongues: God gives one the ability to interpret a message given in tongues.

Having saving faith is not the same as the "gift of faith," and having wisdom is not the same as operating in the "word of wisdom". The spiritual gifts are a supernatural empowerment from God, given to edify the body in a specific way.

II. **CHRISTIANS MUST LEARN TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT:**

Even as the Spirit of God is essential in the corporate church setting, it is also essential in the life of the individual. We are all called to personally walk in the Spirit and to develop the fruit of the Spirit.

1. When we are born again, we become a new creature. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:17)

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV 1900)

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2. As a born-again Christians, we have two natures:
 - a. A sinful nature called the flesh or the old man.
 - b. And a heavenly nature called the spirit or the new man.

Ephesians 4:22–24 (KJV 1900)

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

3. Being born of the Spirit is just the beginning. We must learn to walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25 (KJV 1900)

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

4. When we walk in the Spirit, we are empowered to overcome the old nature and its desires.

Galatians 5:16–17 (KJV 1900)

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

III. HOW DO WE WALK IN THE SPIRIT?

1. We must crucify the flesh:

Galatians 5:24–25 (KJV 1900)

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

The flesh and the spirit are in conflict. We must refuse those things that strengthen the old nature. We must daily surrender our will to His in prayer.

2. Our mind must be renewed:

Romans 12:1–2 (KJV 1900)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Our minds (thought-life, attitude, responses, etc.) were influenced under our old sinful nature. We must renew our minds to match our new identity.

Romans 8:5–8 (KJV 1900)

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

We can cultivate a mind controlled by the Spirit of God. This is done through prayer, fasting, study of God's Word, and guarding against ungodly influences on our thought life.

IV. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: (Read Galatians 5:22-23)

1. As we walk in the Spirit, the nature of God is revealed in our lives. We call this the fruit of the Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit transforming our character and attitudes.

2. The fruit of the Spirit is the long-term evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

3. Contrast the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh. The works of the flesh are the default settings of our life.

Galatians 5:19–21 (NIV)

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

No matter how much these works may have defined our lives, we can live free through the power of His Spirit!

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 9b

*[Assigned Reading: Ephesians 4-5]
[Themes to Teach: Holiness]*

2 Corinthians 6:17–7:1 (NKJV)

17 Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”

18 “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”

1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

God has always called His people to be set apart. This was true of Abraham and the Children of Israel in the Old Testament, and it is no less true today. The New Testament is comprised of 27 books. 21 of those books deal almost entirely with the way Christians live.

(Read Ephesians 5:8-11; 1 Peter 1:15-16)

I. HOLINESS DEFINED:

Holiness is about separation for the purpose of dedication.

In a marriage each spouse chooses to be separate from all others so that they may be dedicated to each other. Likewise, as Christians, we are called to be separated unto the Lord. Our hearts, minds, bodies, and families should be consecrated to and for Him.

Romans 12:1 (NKJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Holiness is also called sanctification, and it is an ongoing process in the life of every Christian. It is a journey of maturity.

II. THE THREE MOTIVES OF HOLINESS:

We pursue a lifestyle of holiness for three important reasons:

1. To please and glorify God:

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NKJV)

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

We should never try to live for God with minimums. Instead, we should offer our lives to Him in worship and dedication.

Holiness is more about relationship than it is rules. Just as we would give of ourselves and make sacrifices to please someone we love on earth; we should give of ourselves and make sacrifices to please the One we love in heaven.

2. To be a witness and shine as a light for others:

Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

If Christians are not distinct in their attitudes and lifestyles, the world will never see Jesus in them. We must not hide our light.

3. To protect ourselves and our walk with God:

Romans 13:14 (KJV 1900)

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

When we live with holiness standards in our life, we establish boundaries against the flesh and the world.

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD REJECT CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD:

Christians should not pattern their lives after the standards, definitions, opinions, and priorities of the culture around them. (Read 1 John 2:15–16)

Romans 12:2 (KJV 1900)

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We should never allow the world to establish our definitions. We should question the world's standards of beauty, success, happiness, truth, goodness, etc. We must use Kingdom definitions, not cultural definitions.

Just because a behavior is legal or considered normal by the culture, it does not mean that it is acceptable to God.

IV. THE THREE TEACHERS OF HOLINESS:

There are three ways that God teaches His people how to live a holy life:

1. Through the Bible:

Psalms 119:9 (NKJV)

9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

- a. Commandments: These are behaviors or attitudes that are specifically addressed in the scriptures. Such as adultery or drunkenness.
- b. Principles: These truths are not as specific as commandments, but they are still relevant. They are timeless truths that must find contemporary application in our lives. Example of Biblical principles:
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 – Abstain from all appearance of evil.
 - ii. Psalm 101:3 – Guarding against looking at ungodly things.
 - iii. 1 Timothy 2:9 – Modesty in our appearance.

Cultures and technology may change, but Biblical principles never do. The way those principles are applied may be adjusted.

2. Through pastors and spiritual leadership:

Hebrews 13:17 (NKJV)

17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

God will use ministry to help the church apply biblical principles in a contemporary way.

Biblical principles never change, but the way they find application in our lives may change with developments in culture. For example, the internet did not exist in the 1st Century. Nevertheless, Biblical principles should still guide our usage of streaming services and social media.

God calls pastors to watch for our souls, as shepherds would watch for their flock. We should listen humbly when they guide us in the application of Biblical principles.

3. Through the Holy Spirit within us:

John 16:13 (NKJV)

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

The Spirit of God will give believers personal convictions regarding attitudes, thoughts and behaviors that are not pleasing to God. The key is for us to be sensitive and responsive to the prompting and the leading of the Spirit. We do not grieve the Holy Spirit. (Read Ephesians 4:30)

V. CONCLUSION:

We must remember that the pursuit of holiness is not about learning and living a list of rules. It is about responding humbly to the Bible, spiritual leaders, and the Spirit of God. We do this because we love God, we want to grow in our witness to others, and we do not want to compromise our walk with God in any way.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 10

*[Assigned Reading: Acts 3-13]
[Themes to Teach: The Church]*

I. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH GREW EXPONENTIALLY:

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament Church grew rapidly! 3000 converts (Acts 2:41), 5000 converts (Acts 4:4), multitudes added (Acts 5:14), and a great many priests were converted (Acts 6:7).

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH: (Read Acts 2:36-47)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Doctrine</u> | 4. The <u>Supernatural</u> |
| 2. <u>Fellowship</u> | 5. <u>Sacrificial Giving</u> |
| 3. <u>Prayer</u> | |

III. AS THE CHURCH GREW IT FACED INTENSE PERSECUTION: (Read Acts 7:54-60)

1. Stephen was the first martyr of the church.
2. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church. (Read Acts 8:1-4)
3. The church was scattered, but not defeated. They went everywhere preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus. (Read Acts 9:1-6 & 17-19)
 - a. Saul was a chosen vessel and would become one of the greatest missionaries of the church.
 - b. After his conversion, his name was changed from Saul to Paul.

IV. THE GENTILES RECEIVED THE GOSPEL: (Read Acts 10:1-16)

1. Peter received the revelation that God's plan of salvation included everyone, not just the Jews. (Read Acts 10:34-35)
2. The Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (Read Acts 10:44-48)
3. Peter explained to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem that God had received the Gentiles into the church. (Read Acts 11:15-17)
4. Their experience was just like the experience of the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost.

V. PAUL'S MISSIONS TRIPS:

After the Gentiles were received into the church, Antioch became an important center of missions' activity. Paul was sent out from Antioch as a missionary. He traveled throughout the Mediterranean coasts and planted many churches.

Acts 13:1-3 (KJV 1900)

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

1. First missionary trip: (Account found in Acts 13-14)
 - a. Traveling Companions: Barnabas & John Mark
 - b. Destinations: The regions of Cyprus, Pamphylia, & Galatia
2. Second missionary trip: (Account found in Acts 15:36 – Acts 17)
 - a. Traveling Companion: Silas
 - b. Destination: Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth
3. Third missionary trip: (Account found in Acts 18:23-21:17)
 - a. Traveling Companion: Luke
 - b. Destinations: Galatia, Western Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia. His base of operations appears to have been Ephesus.

Acts 19:10 (NKJV)

10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

VI. PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME: (Account found in Acts 21-28)

1. Paul was arrested for preaching in Jerusalem: (Read Acts 21:30-33)
2. Paul avoids execution by using his Roman citizenship and appealing to Caesar: (Read Acts 25:11)
3. Yet, God had already determined for Paul to preach in Rome:

Acts 23:11 (NKJV)

11 But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

4. After much travel and hardship, Paul arrived in Rome and lived there for two years while awaiting his trial before Caesar. (Read Acts 28:30-31)
 - a. During this time Paul converted many people, even members of Caesar's household. (Read Acts 4:22)
 - b. During this time, Paul wrote many letters to the churches he had established during his missionary trips. Many of these letters are viewed as scripture and are an important part of the New Testament today.

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 11

*[Assigned Reading: Matthew 24 & 2 Timothy 3]
[Themes to Teach: Signs of the End Times & the Rapture]*

The book of Acts concludes with the Apostle Paul living in Rome while awaiting an audience with Caesar around 63AD. Not long afterward, the Apostle Paul would be martyred for his faith, and the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed by Roman legions.

I. JERUSALEM & THE TEMPLE WERE DESTROYED: (Read Luke 19:43-44; Matthew 23:37-24:2)

1. Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, its temple, and the dispersion of the Jewish people.
2. Because they rejected Him and failed to receive their King, they would be chastised by God.
3. In 70AD the Roman general Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem, looted the temple, and scattered the people of Judah.

II. THE NATION OF ISRAEL IS RESTORED:

1. Many of the Old Testament prophets spoke of the scattering of the Jews and of the destruction and restoration of Jerusalem. (Read Isaiah 43:5-6; Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 29:14; Ezekiel 37:21-22)
2. By UN charter, Israel became a nation once again in May 1948.
3. Israel's reunification was an important sign of the end time season.

III. THERE WILL BE SIGNS OF THE END TIMES:

Matthew 24:3 (KJV 1900)

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

The disciples, like many, were eager to know about the end of the world and the return of the Lord Jesus. Jesus gave them some very important truths:

1. No-one knows the day nor the hour.

Matthew 24:36 (KJV 1900)

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

2. However, Jesus teaches that we can know the season. To illustrate this, He gives them the parable of the fig tree.

Matthew 24:32-33 (KJV 1900)

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

3. Jesus said when you see “these things” you will know that it is the end time season. The Scriptures provide a list of signs regarding the end time:

(Read Matthew 24:4-14 & 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

- a. Wars and the threat of war. (Matthew 24:6)
- b. Famines, pestilence, and earthquakes. (Matthew 24:7)
- c. Many will be offended. (Matthew 24:10)
- d. False prophets and powerless religion. (Matthew 24:11; 2 Timothy 3:5)
- e. Iniquity and sin will abound. (Matthew 24:12)
- f. Breakdown of the family – (2 Timothy 3:2)
- g. The Gospel will be preached to all the world. (Matthew 24:6)
- h. Knowledge will increase. (Daniel 12:4)

IV. THE CATCHING AWAY OF THE CHURCH – ALSO CALLED THE RAPTURE:

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (KJV 1900)

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1. The word rapture means to be “caught up” or “snatched away.”
2. The bodies of raptured saints will be transformed.

1 Corinthians 15:51–53 (KJV 1900)

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

3. The rapture will be a sudden event unexpected by many.

Matthew 24:40–42 (KJV 1900)

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

4. The rapture is not the same as the second coming of Jesus. We will meet Him in the clouds, but He will not return to the earth at the rapture.
5. The rapture is the great hope of the church.

Titus 2:13 (KJV 1900)

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD LESSON 12

[Assigned Reading: Revelation 19-22]

[Themes to Teach: Final Judgment and Eternity]

In our last lesson, we discussed the signs of the end times and the rapture of the church. The rapture of the church is the great hope of God's people. Yet, it is not the end of the story.

I. **THE TRIBULATION:**

In the book of Revelation, John recounts the vision given to him, by God, concerning the last days and the great Tribulation.

1. The Tribulation is a seven-year period of divine judgement on the earth.
 - a. The Seven Seals (Revelation 6-8): Each seal that is opened releases a new judgement on earth.
 - b. The Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8-9): Each trumpet that is blown releases a new judgement on earth.
 - c. The Seven Vials (Revelation 16)
2. The Tribulation will be a time of natural disasters, war, famine, death, and great suffering.
3. The Tribulation is the fulfillment of Daniel's Seventieth Week. (Read Daniel 9:24-27)
 - a. Daniel prophesied that there were seventy weeks determined for God's people (the nation of Israel).
 - b. Each week represented seven years.
 - c. Therefore, he prophesied that there were 490 years determined for the nation of Israel.
 - i. 7 weeks or 49 years to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
 - ii. 62 weeks or 434 years until the crucifixion of the Messiah.
 - iii. 1 week or 7 years remain unfulfilled.
 - d. This last week is the seven years of the Tribulation.

II. **THE REIGN OF THE ANTICHRIST:**

During the Tribulation, the world will witness the rise of a leader known as the Antichrist.

1. A one-world government will be controlled by the Antichrist. Revelation chapter 13 describes the Antichrist as a "beast": (Read Revelation 13:4-8)
2. The Antichrist wages war against Israel:

He will be a global leader who promises peace. He will make a covenant with the nation of Israel, possibly restoring the Temple Mount. Three and a half years into the covenant he will demand that he be worshiped as God. Some Jews will resist him. He will then unite the world against the remnant of Israel.

Daniel 9:27 (NKJV)

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate...

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (NKJV)

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

III. THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON:

1. The Antichrist gathers the armies of the world to fight. (Read Rev 16:14-16)
2. Armageddon is the culmination of the Tribulation. (Read Revelation 19:11-21)
3. Jesus returns and defeats the Antichrist with the Word of God.
4. The Beast (Antichrist) is thrown into the Lake of Fire.

IV. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT: (Read Revelations 20:11-15)

Anyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death.

V. TIME ENDS... THEN ETERNITY:**2 Peter 3:10-13 (KJV 1900)**

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

1. The heavens and earth will be destroyed.
2. There will be a new heaven and a new earth: (Read Rev 21:1-4 & Rev 22:1-5)
3. Characteristics of the new earth:
 - a. It is the home of the New Jerusalem promised by Jesus (Read John 14:2-3)
 - b. It will be filled with righteousness.
 - c. There will be no more pain or tears.
 - d. There will be no more curse or death.
 - e. The Tree of Life will be restored.
 - f. We will have complete access to God.
 - g. We will know then, what we cannot know now. (Read 1 Corinthians 13:12)

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD SUPPLEMENT UNDERSTANDING THE PRACTICE OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

(Read 1 Corinthians 14)

In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul provides insight and instructions to the church regarding the practice of speaking in tongues. It is important to understand that what Paul is addressing is the use of tongues as a ministry gift within the local church. He is not referring to the use of speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. There were no such restrictions placed on the initial experience (See Acts 2:4, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 19:5-7)

1. There are three ways that tongues are used in the New Testament:
 - a. As the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost: (Acts 10:44-46)
 - b. As a personal prayer language: (Romans 8:26; 1 Corinthians 14:14)
 - c. To communicate a message from God: (1 Corinthians 14:26-28)
2. Speaking in tongues is the supernatural experience of speaking in a previously unknown or heavenly language. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:2)

1 Corinthians 14:2 (NKJV)

2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

3. Paul encouraged speaking in tongues, he did not forbid it. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:39)

1 Corinthians 14:39 (NKJV)

39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

4. When we pray in tongues, our spirit prays even if our understanding is unfruitful. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:14)

1 Corinthians 14:14 (NKJV)

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

5. When we pray in tongues, we build up our own spirit. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:4 and Jude 20)

1 Corinthians 14:4 (NKJV)

4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

6. Praying aloud in tongues should never disrupt a service, unless there is a message from God accompanied by an interpretation. (Read 1 Corinthians 14:18-19, 26-28)

1 Corinthians 14:18–19 (NKJV)

18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all.

19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:26–28 (NKJV)

26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.

28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.