

Part 1: Why the Bible is Important

In talking about an overview of the Bible, it is important to start with why the Bible is important. Why do we put such an emphasis on this ancient book which is really a collection of 66 individual books or letters. What is it about the Bible that sets it apart from any other book throughout history? What does an ancient book have to do with our lives as Christians today?

What the Bible is:

Inspired by God – 2 Timothy 3:16 –

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for ^[c]instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)

The Greek word used for “inspiration” in this verse is the word *theopneustos* which literally means “God-breathed”. In that sense, the NIV translates this verse even better.

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)

What this means is that the Scriptures are the product of the creative breath of God. Just as God breathed His creative breath into Adam and made him alive, so God breathed into the Scriptures so that they are alive and the birth life in us as we read, study and memorize them.

So how did God inspire the Scriptures if they were written by men?

2 Peter 1:21 - ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

There are a number of differing views on the inspirations of the Scriptures that we simply don’t have time to get into tonight. We do go into this in a bit greater depth in Level 1 our Discipleship Program. We believe in what is known as **verbal, plenary** inspiration view. **Verbal** signifies the words, and **plenary** means “full” or “complete” as opposed to partial. We don’t believe that God just inspired the writers of Scripture (although we believe He did), or the main idea of what they wrote, but that **God inspired the very words themselves.**

Very simply, God the Holy Spirit carried the writers of Scripture along as they wrote the message He gave them to write. He didn’t just dictate the Scriptures to them as if they were on autopilot. He used their backgrounds and their personalities so that what they wrote was both authentic to who they were, but also authentically the very Word of God.

2 Peter 3:15-16 - ¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 2:13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the [d]Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 - ¹³ For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

Inerrant – The original autographs, or manuscripts of the Bible contain no mistakes, or inaccuracies.

Internally consistent – Though the Bible is made up of 66 books, penned by 40 different writers over a period of more than 2,500 years, it is internally consistent from cover to cover. The Bible doesn't contradict itself, rather it confirms itself.

Instruction book for the Christian life - **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - ¹⁶ **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for [e]instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)** We believe that all Scripture, the entire Bible is profitable and should be used to determine everything about how we live as followers of Jesus. There is nothing that God wants us to know about Him, His salvation, or how to follow and serve Him that is not given to us in the pages of the Bible.

The written word of God is the final authority upon all matters in which it speaks. (Sola Scriptura)

What the Bible does:

It teaches us truth – **Psalm 119:160** - **The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.**

John 17:17 - ¹⁷ **Sanctify [i] them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**

If we want to know what is true about God, about us, about salvation, about life, all of that is found in the Bible.

It lights our path – **Psalm 119:105** - **Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**

In a world that is growing increasingly darker by the day, and in the midst of trials, difficulties, and struggles in life, the Word of God is what lights our path and shows us where to go and how to live.

It diagnoses our thoughts and attitudes – Hebrews 4:12 - ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

When we read the Bible, it has a way of laying our souls bare. I can't tell you how many times as I have been reading God's Word, he has confronted attitudes, corrected thoughts, and brought heart change in my life. God's Word is able to cut through deceptions and misconceptions and deliver truth to the deepest places of our hearts and lives.

It feeds us spiritually – Matthew 4:4 - ⁴ But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

**Jeremiah 15:16 - Your words were found, and I ate them,
And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart**

It is God's Word that nurtures and feeds us spiritually. If you are feeling hungry for more of God, feast on His Word!

It cleanses us spiritually – Ephesians 5:25-27 - ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might ¹⁸sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

**Psalm 119:9 - How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.**

As fallen, broken people we often become dirtied in our hearts and minds by sin, fallen, worldly thought patterns, and the struggles of life. God's Word washes and cleanses us

It renews our minds – Romans 12:2 - ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

What is it that enables us not to be shaped by the thoughts and practices of a wicked, ungodly world? It is God's Word. The Bible renews our minds and brings them in alignment with the heart and mind of God.

Part 2: The Main Message of the Bible

The main message of the Bible is → **HOW TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD**

It answers questions all people and are occupied by:

Where did I come from?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

} WHO AM I ?

In showing us how to be right with God, the Bible tells us about →

Creation: *How it all started*

The Fall: *How it all went wrong*

The Remedy: *How to be right with God*

Israel: *The Remedy Prepared*

Jesus: *The Remedy Comes*

Church: *The Remedy Applied*

The End: *How it all works out*

Summary of the OT

The Bible is all about Jesus, from cover to cover, because the Bible is all about salvation: how man can be made right with God. The purpose of the Old Testament is to prepare the world for Jesus in the New Testament—that He would be recognized and understood when He arrived.

→ GOD ESTABLISHES ABRAHAM'S FAMILY

ORIGINS: Genesis Pt 1 (Genesis 1-11)

Adam & Eve sin and are cast out, but are given a promise that an offspring of the woman would crush satan's head

Satan prompts Cain to kill righteous Abel / probably to try to undo this prophecy of his destruction through Eve's child / But younger brother Seth,

whose family calls upon the Lord, becomes the son whose family line will lead to Jesus

Jumping forward several generations: Sin has run rampant / Satan has corrupted the human race / God sees that it is time for a reset – sends the flood to judge a sinful world

But God chooses righteous Noah to build a boat of refuge from the flood / Noah's family alone is saved / no one else will get on the boat / a picture of the salvation we have in the cross of Jesus!

Key Characters: Adam & Eve / Cain & Abel / Seth / Noah

ABRAHAM'S FAMILY: Genesis Pt 2 (12-50)

God chooses one family in the earth to work His redemptive plan through & establishes them in Canaan. A famine drives them to Egypt for survival, where Joseph saves them.

An important theme: God accounts righteousness to people based on their trust in Him

Key Characters: Abraham & Sarah / Isaac & Rebekah / Jacob ("Israel") & his 4 wives / Judah / Joseph

→ THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL BECOME A NATION

LEAVING EGYPT: Exodus Pt 1 (1-19)

Over time, the Israelites lose favor in Egypt, and they are enslaved. After 400 years of Egyptian bondage, God calls Moses to lead the people in God's redemption from Egypt—transforming them from slaves to a nation set free.

Key Characters: Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh

THE LAW: Exodus Pt 2-Deuteronomy

Key Themes: This section, except for parts of Numbers, is mostly law-giving, and contains less narrative.

Strict Laws of Holiness • Israel was given hundreds of laws in order to demonstrate God's holiness: but these laws were meant to prove that humankind was hopeless, lost, and broken, because no one can keep the law perfectly!

Worship through Sacrifices • God gives Israel one way, and only one way, of dealing with sin: the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Animal sacrifices can't cover human sin—but they are temporary substitutes until Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice for sin.

A Tabernacle for Worship • That God dwells with His people / Jesus will be the ultimate “tabernacle” of God – dwelling with us in the flesh!

Feasts • 7 key feasts for Israel / each of which are prophetic of Jesus’ ministry

THE WILDERNESS: Numbers

The first generation who came out of Egypt refused to trust God, and kept crying out to go back to Egypt / the younger generation, and those born in the wilderness trusted God and walked by faith

Key Characters: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb

→ ISRAEL ENTER THEIR LAND WITH GOD AS KING

ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND: Joshua

Joshua leads the people in taking back the Promised Land, walking by faith and obedience; but they fail to fully lay hold of God’s victory for them

Key Characters: Joshua, Caleb

THE CYCLE OF SIN: Judges

The nation gets caught in a cycle of sin / The fall into sin & rejecting God / God sends an oppressor to get their attention / they cry out to God for help / God sends a judge who leads them in revival and drives out the enemy / they have a time of peace, but they settle back into their old sins / and it happens again and again

Key Characters: Deborah, Barak, Ehud, Gideon, Samson

REDEEMING LOVE: Ruth

A godly love story of King David’s ancestors

Key Characters: Naomi, Ruth & Boaz

→ ISRAEL TURNS TO HUMAN KINGS

THE UNIFIED KINGDOM: Samuel

Saul is made king, a man the people admire – who has a heart like theirs, but is rejected when he rejects God. God chooses David to replace Saul, a man after God’s heart.

Jesus will be the ultimate King David: the King of Kings, the True man after God’s heart, who is Sinless and Righteous

David’s son Solomon becomes king, and builds a temple for God that is filled with the Glory of the Presence of God / Solomon falls into sin

Key Characters: Prophets Samuel & Nathan, King Saul, King David, King Solomon

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: Kings & Chronicles

Solomon's proud son Rehoboam splits the nation in two: N. Israel & S. Judah. The northern tribes are led by only evil kings, they rebel against God, and are taken captive into Assyria.

The southern nation is also led by many evil kings, but a few good kings keep the nation from complete failure. They are taken to Babylon for 70 years of captivity, and the temple is destroyed.

Key Characters: Kings Solomon, Rehoboam, & Jeroboam; Prophets Elijah and Elisha. Many other kings, mostly bad, but a few good kings in Judah: ie., Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah

Prophetic books: Jonah, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Joel, Hosea, Nahum, Zephaniah

→ JUDAH IS PRESERVED IN EXILE: Prophetic books: Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Daniel and Esther are raised to roles of influence in Exile. God establishes Queen Esther in Persia so she could save her people from genocide. God speaks through the prophets, encouraging the people not to abandon God, and promising return to Israel.

Key Characters: Daniel, Esther, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius

→ RETURN AND REBUILD

REBUILDING THE WALL AND THE TEMPLE: Ezra & Nehemiah

After 70 years in captivity, their captor Babylon is conquered, and the Persian kings allow the Jews to return to their homeland, and to rebuild their temple and the city walls.

Ezekiel the prophet sees the Holy Spirit leave before the temple's destruction / the rebuilt temple lacks God's glory / but Haggai promises that the glory of this new temple will be greater than Solomon's temple: because Jesus Himself will visit this Temple

Key Characters: Ezra, Nehemiah

Prophetic books: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Not part of the "story line"—but half of the OT are the books of Wisdom, Worship, and Prophecy...

WORSHIP: Psalms / The very real human emotions seen in Israel's worship resonate with all believers throughout time. We were created for an authentic, transformational relationship with God.

WISDOM: Job = Why do we suffer? / **Proverbs** = Wisdom for just about any issue! / **Ecclesiastes** = The danger of carnal thought and lifestyle / **Song of Solomon** = romance, sex – but ultimately, a picture of our Divine Romance with God

PROPHETS: ISAIAH–MALACHI

Summary of the NT

JESUS' MINISTRY • Described in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

GROWING UP IN OBSCURITY:

After thousands of years of preparing for this big moment, Jesus was born on earth to a lowly carpenter's virgin fiancée. Matthew and Luke tell of Jesus birth and early years, and how God protected Jesus from King Herod, sending Jesus and his parents to safety for several years in Egypt.

Jesus then grows up in humble circumstances around the Sea of Galilee in N. Israel, employed as a carpenter.

HIS MINISTRY BEGINS:

When He turned 30 years old, Jesus gets baptized: not for repentance, but to mark His stepping fully into His role as Savior of the World, fully empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus calls His disciples and begins to train them, that they would be prepared to preach the Gospel message to the whole world once His work on earth was completed.

HE GAINS POPULARITY:

As a Rabbi, or teacher, He confronted the broken religious system in Israel which kept people in bondage to man-made laws of impossible holiness, instead of telling people of salvation by God's grace through simple faith alone.

Jesus also healed the sick and the lame, and even raised the dead, to prove that He was indeed the "Messiah" of Israel and her true King—prophesized in the Bible long before.

Jesus' radical teaching of love and grace, along with His miracles, made Jesus incredibly popular among the common folks, and His fame spread across Israel.

HE IS REJECTED:

The religious leaders became jealous and threatened by Jesus—and they were convinced that Rome would take away their position of power because of Jesus' popularity, so He was falsely arrested, and illegally put through a sham trial.

He was turned over to the Romans to be executed by one of the cruelest and most painful forms of death ever conceived—the cross. Jesus' death was witnessed by the crowds and His followers, and verified by the Romans. He was buried in a new tomb, sealed by the Roman governor and guarded by a squad of soldiers.

RESURRECTION:

But on the third day, an angel stunned the guards and rolled the stone away to reveal that Jesus had resurrected! And that day, and for the next 40 days, Jesus appeared many times to His followers and proved overwhelmingly that He was truly alive again in the flesh—glorified and perfected, but still a Man.

And after 40 days with them, Jesus ascended back into heaven to take His throne again.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MINISTRY • The Book of Acts

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH:

On the 50th day, called "Pentecost," God sent the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples, Who empowered them to preach, serve, and even perform signs and wonders to prove their authority and authenticity.

EVANGELISM:

These "apostles" "turned the world upside down" by their preaching, planting churches, and by their deaths as martyrs and eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Quickly, thousands and thousands of both Jews and Gentiles put their faith in Jesus, trusting in His Gospel message as the only source of salvation and eternal life.

INSTRUCTION:

Several key apostles were given a critical ministry: writing the scriptures by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They wrote the Gospels, telling of Jesus' life and ministry, as well as critical letters, called "Epistles," which outline Christian doctrine and lifestyle. The last apostle, John, tells us of Jesus' future return to reign over the earth in the book of Revelation.

Part 3: How the Bible is Arranged

The Bible is a collection of books –

Written by 40 authors

From diverse backgrounds

Over a span of 1500 years

On 3 continents

In 3 languages

Dealing with many subjects

Yet it all points to one
thing > JESUS

**THE OLD TESTAMENT > 39 Books
27 Books**

History > 17 Books

Poetry > 5 Books

Prophecy > 17 Books

THE NEW TESTAMENT >

History > 5 Books

Letters > 21 Books

Prophecy > 1 Book

Part 4: Translations

Safe for Study

New King James Version
(NKJV)

New American Standard
(NASB)

English Standard Version
(ESV)

New International Version
(NIV)

Study-Bibles (w/notes)

Open Bible

Word for Today Bible

ESV Study Bible

Life Application Bible

Christian Standard Bible

Easy Reading

The Living Bible

God's Word Translation

Contemporary English
Version

The Message

Bible Software

Logos

Olive Tree Bible Reader

Blueletter Bible

Bible Apps

YouVersion

Olive Tree

Avoid These

The Passion Version

New World Translation

Bible Study Helps

Holman's Bible

Handbook

Strong's Exhaustive

Concordance

Part 5: How to Use the Bible

How to use the Bible

Read it – We have looked at a number of Scripture verses that have clearly shown us the value of God’s Word. We won’t receive that value into our lives though unless we **READ IT**. There’s no power or magic in a closed Bible. The power of God comes to bear in our lives when we open and read God’s Word. There are a number of great ways to do this. Bible apps like You Version and Daily Audio Bible can help. There are tons of great reading plans for the Bible. Find a reading plan that works for you, and commit to reading the Bible daily.

Study it – Beyond just reading the Bible, there is great value in time spent studying it. In our Discipleship program in both levels 1 and 2 we help people learn how to go deeper in studying God’s Word. A good way to start studying the Bible is to look at several different translations side by side. Take notes and compare. Enduringword.com is a great online Bible commentary by our friend David Guzik. It’s a great resource to help you go a little deeper in your study of the Bible. The deeper you dig into God’s Word, the more treasure you will find.

Memorize it – Psalm 119:11 - ¹¹Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

Deuteronomy 6:6 - “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

By memorizing God’s Word, we are giving the Holy Spirit ammunition to use in our Christian life and in our fight against sin. When we store up verses in our minds by memorizing them, the Holy Spirit will later bring those verses to our minds right when we need them most. Memorizing Scripture also prepares us to share the Gospel with people.

Seek to live it – James 1:22-25 - ²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

It’s not enough just to seek to read, study, and memorize God’s Word. We need to LIVE IT. That’s the whole purpose of doing those other things. In order to live God’s Word, you really need to be in relationship with other believers who can help you live it out, and gently let you know when you aren’t. Our motto here at CCO which summarizes our vision

is “Becoming more like Jesus by learning and living God’s Word.” When we seek to live God’s Word, He makes us more like Jesus!