

Story of the Bible

NIGHT SCHOOL

Week One



GROUP QUESTION

What is your story?
(Your testimony or a defining
moment in your faith journey)

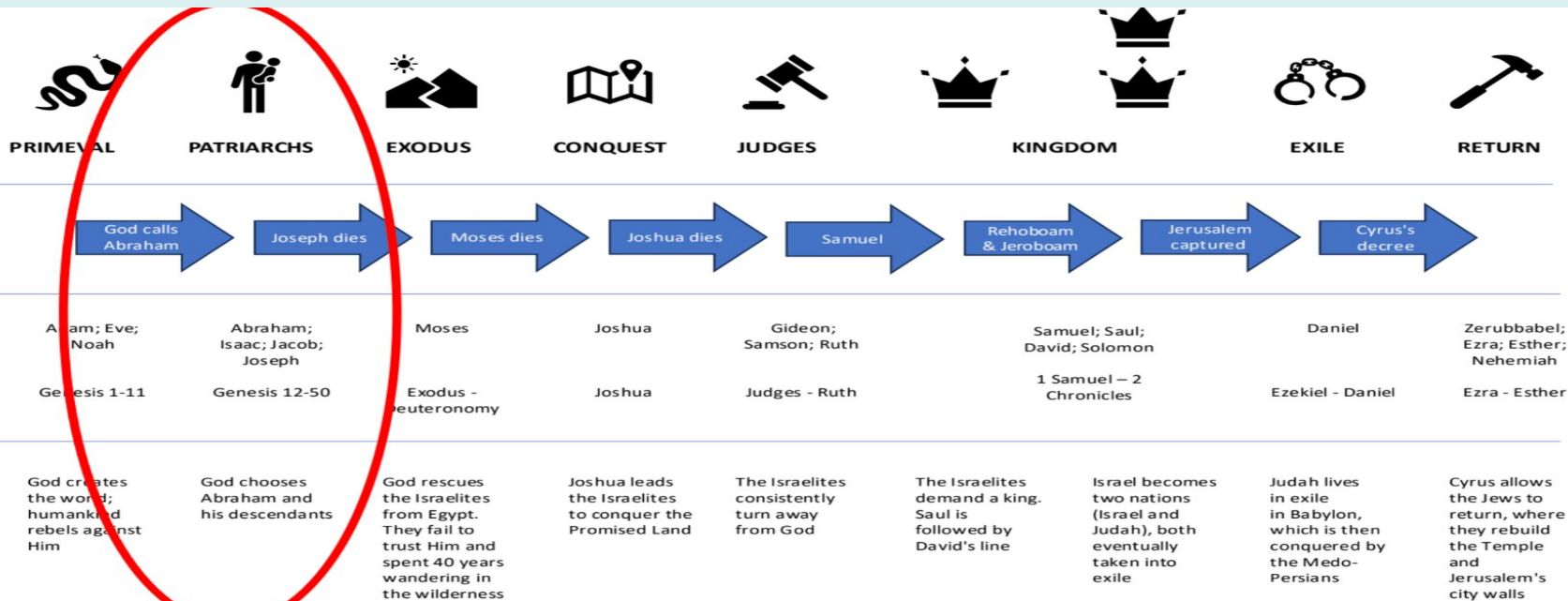
WHAT TO EXPECT

Course Overview

Each Session

Discussion + Q&A

Midweek



THE GOAL OF THIS COURSE

Understand God as He has revealed himself in His story
(Progressive Revelation).

Interpret the bible faithfully considering its historical context
(historical context).

Become people who fulfil scripture (fulfilling scripture)



Key 1

Understand God as He has revealed himself in His story

Progressive Revelation

- Jesus is the fulfilment God's redemptive plan.

Why does the character of God in the Old Testament at times seem to be different from the character of Jesus?

"The Old Testament is an accurate, inspired birds eye view of how people's understanding of God got better, sometimes in giant leaps and sometimes in tiny blips"

- Thomas Cahill (Historian)

- God, in his grace, meets people where they are at.

Key 2

Interpret the bible faithfully considering its historical context

Historical Context

*"The bible was written **for** you, but not **to** you" - Wes Huff (Theologian)*

- The bible is a collection of 66 books, written to different audiences throughout history
- Historical context of the author and their intended audience help to interpret more accurately

Example: Paul's letters

Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

1 Corinthians 6:12 (NLT)

How do we interpret scripture? Firstly ask: **What was happening for them back then?** Then ask:

What's happening in me now because of this?

Example: 10 Commandments

Exodus 20:1–17 (NLT)

Key 3

Become people who fulfil scripture

Fulfilling Scripture

- A unified narrative that points to Jesus.
- Fulfilling scripture allows the message of the gospel and the power of The Holy Spirit to transform your life and the lives of others.

Example: When Jesus was crucified, he was hung on a cross in between two criminals.

Luke 23:39

INTRODUCTION

Know your bible

- This course is to enhance, not overwhelm.
- Knowledge doesn't 'make' a 'good' Christian
- **1 Peter 3:15** - "...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have"
- How one views scripture will determine the rest of one's theology.

'There is no more basic issue: Every system of thought that takes seriously the claims of the Bible to be the inspired, authoritative word of God will share a commitment to particular central truth, and that without compromise'

- James White (Theologian)

TENANTS OF THE BIBLE

The bible is human and divine

The bible unified literature

The bible is messianic literature

The bible is wisdom literature

The bible is meditation literature

The bible is contextually rooted in literature

The bible is communal literature

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE & WHY

Basic Facts

- 66 books
- ~40 authors
- Written over ~1600 years
- 10 countries
- In 3 main languages
- Written across different cultures, locations, and life situations

Key Takeaways

- The Bible is both **human and divine**
- Multiple authors, one unified message

Major literary forms

- Law - Torah
- Narrative - Kings
- Poetry - Psalms
- Wisdom literature - Proverbs
- Prophecy - Isaiah
- Gospels - Matthew
- Epistles - Corinthians
- Apocalyptic - Revelation

Key Interpretive Principles

- The Bible is **inerrant when interpreted within the genre it was written**
- Genre governs meaning

And why
that's okay!

WHY THE BIBLE FEELS COMPLEX

What the Bible contains

- God speaking
- People thinking God is speaking when He isn't
- People cursing when God is blessing
- Heroic obedience
- Disobedience and failure
- Tragic atrocities

- Descriptions of events God approves
- Descriptions of events God merely reports
- Authentic human observations
- Different opinions held in tension
- References to other tribal literature
- Literary devices throughout
- Sometime it is describing and sometimes it is prescribing - can be confusing to get the two confused

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE WELL

Phenomenology and Diatribe

Phenomenology

- Not all truth is scientific data
- Meaning is experienced

Diatribe

- Rhetorical dialogue with an imaginary opponent
Paul uses this to teach and correct wrong conclusions

Polyphony

- Multiple voices in dialogue
- Truth emerges through tension
- Example:
 - Job: righteous suffering
- Voices include:
 - Accuser - Satan
 - Victim - Job
 - Law - Friends
 - The Lord - The Lord

Key Takeaway

- Paying attention to literary devices helps us see the **author's purpose, argument, and intended response**, rather than flattening the text into disconnected statements
- Meaning often emerges through **dialogue, tension, and reflection**

HOW THE BIBLE WAS COLLATED

OLD Testament:

- Torah recognised by the time of Ezra (mid 5th century BCE)
- Prophets later recognised as equal authority
- Writings developed as a third collection
- Septuagint (Greek OT) completed **before Jesus**

Canon recognition was **gradual**, not invented at one meeting

NEW Testament:

- Written AD 45–96
- AD 170 – Muratorian Fragment lists most books 22/27 (oldest list we've found - 18th century)
- AD 250 – Origen (scholar and theologian) recognises all 27 books
- AD 367 – Athanasius (scholar and theologian) lists the full 27
- AD 393–419 – Councils of Hippo & Carthage formally endorse

Canon was often discussed and agreed upon by council in response to heresy's that were circulating.

WHY THE BIBLE IS RELIABLE

Manuscript Evidence

- Over **5000 NT manuscripts**
- Written within **50–225 years** of originals
- 99.5% agreement between copies
- 0.5% minor spelling/grammar - no change in meaning
- Many copies allow for textual criticism - the clear meaning
- OT manuscripts 1000 years older than previous copies
- Confirmed textual accuracy

Comparison with other Ancient Works

- *Plato's Republic*:
 - 1300-year gap
 - 7 copies
- *Caesar's Gallic War*:
 - 1000-year gap
 - 10 copies
- **New Testament**:
 - Thousands of copies
 - Much earlier dates
 - Far better preservation

Archeology

- No archaeological discovery has contradicted the Bible
- Pool of Bethesda (John) confirmed exactly as described (discovered late 19th Century)

External Confirmation

- Non-Christian historians:
 - Josephus
 - Tacitus
- Confirm Jesus' existence, execution, and movement

FINAL POSTURE FOR CHRISTIANS

“...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”

- **1 Peter 3:15**

The Bible is:

- Unified but complex
- Human and divine
- Historically grounded
- Literarily rich
- The story of God making Himself known

Resources

Midweek Communications

- Bible reading plan
- Discussion question
- App communications
- Website link for access to resources

Resources

- Bible project book breakdowns
- Enduring word commentary
- Lecture slides uploaded
- Lecture recordings

**THANKS FOR YOUR
TIME!**

See you next week!