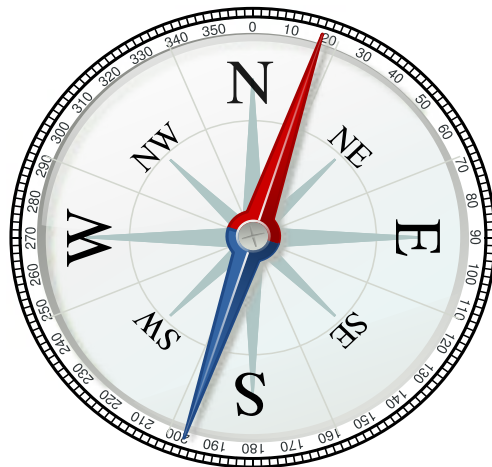


Discover the Bible

A 6-week Bible Study



An introduction to the background and main message of the Bible



Discover the Bible

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Week 1

Introduction to the Bible



Goal

To understand the impact and relevance of the Bible.

What historical figures have said about the Bible:

George Washington: “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”

Woodrow Wilson: “A man has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of this (knowledge of the Bible).”

Ulysses S. Grant: “To the influence of this book we are indebted for the progress made in civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future.”

Daniel Webster: “The Bible is the book of faith, and a book of doctrine, and a book of morals, and a book of religion, of special revelation from God; but it is also a Book which teaches man his responsibility, his dignity, and his equality with his fellow man.”



Something to Think About

In today’s culture, people are hesitant to read the Bible. This is fascinating because so many people and cultures have been heavily influenced by the teachings in the Bible. Most modern justice systems incorporate God’s moral absolutes. For example, murder, theft, and perjury are all forbidden in the Ten Commandments (see *Exodus 20*). It’s ironic that many who reject the Bible benefit from living in an ordered society governed by principles found in God’s Word.



Something to Think About

Many people have given up trying to find meaning and significance in life. What makes us special if we are just part of an evolutionary machine with no significant beginning? How do we interpret evil in the world? What happens after we die? The Bible doesn’t have a lot to say about physics or mathematics, but it does address important issues. The Bible covers topics including the meaning of life, what God is like, what makes us special, how to give and receive love, how to forgive and be forgiven, and what we will experience after death. The Bible speaks to many things that we all care about, which is one of the reasons it is so widely read.

False Teachers

This study is designed so you can clearly deduct the main message of the Bible by reading it directly. Expect everyone teaching God's Word to prove that what they are saying is in scripture. If they say, "the Bible says," ask them to show you where. The Bible itself warns of false teachers who distort the Word to serve their own ambitions (see *1 John 4:1–3* and *2 Peter 3:16*). Fortunately, the Bible stands on its own, and there are many who faithfully read and teach from it.

Introducing the Bible

1. Open your Bible (either a physical or digital copy) and find the index.
2. There are two major divisions in the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament.



Definition

A *testament* is a covenant, constitution, agreement, or contract. Just as we make out a contract to buy a house, we have a contract between God and us. Everything prior to Jesus Christ's time on earth is recorded in the Old Testament. Everything recorded during or after Jesus Christ is included in the New Testament.

3. The Bible is a collection of 66 books, written over a period of approximately 2,000 years by 40 different authors. The authors were from multiple time periods and had various occupations, including religious teachers, historians, kings, judges, fishermen, tax collectors, and prophets. Miraculously, the Bible doesn't contradict itself, but portrays a cohesive message about God and His creation, including man.



Something to Think About

To appreciate the incredible nature of the Bible, imagine taking 40 people from just one occupation and one time period and asking them to write about God and man. The results would surely be conflicting views. Yet the Bible, written by many people over many years, reads as one seamless narration of God relating to His creation. Could this be the fingerprint of God, ensuring we would know that He is the one who inspired the Bible's authors?

4. The Bible was written in the common languages of the time: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and most of the New Testament in Greek.

Chapters and Verses

1. Find where the book of Matthew begins. Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses. The big number denotes the beginning of chapters, and the little numbers in the text show the beginning of verses.
2. The books of the Bible were not originally broken down into chapters and verses. The subdivision into chapters and verses was completed so that it would be easy to look up a particular part of the Bible. This was especially helpful for public reading and Bible study groups. Someone in the group can give a reference (*Matthew 3:16*), and everyone can easily read along in the text.

Practical Exercises

1. Let's take a closer look at the first 4 books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
 - a. Find and read Matthew 6:9–13.
 - b. Find and read Mark 14:22–24.
 - c. Find and read Luke 2:4–7.
 - d. Find and read John 3:16.
2. The first four books of the New Testament are referred to as the gospels.
3. The gospels tell the story of Jesus from the viewpoint of four different authors. Matthew was a tax collector before becoming a disciple of Jesus. Mark was a friend of Peter, a fisherman who became a disciple of Jesus. Luke was a physician and accompanied the apostle Paul on his journeys throughout the Roman Empire. John was a close friend and disciple of Jesus.



Something to Think About

All four of the gospels talk about the same event, the life of Jesus. It is the only event in the Bible to which four books are dedicated. In a courtroom, the evidence is made more powerful by the number and credibility of eyewitnesses who testify. Each one reinforces the others' testimonies and adds a few unique details. The more witnesses, the more certain we can be of the facts and the more complete the story. Each of the disciples suffered extreme interrogation, and most of them would give their lives for what they knew to be true. Isn't it comforting that what we know about Jesus is not dependent on just one person's testimony?



Definition

Gospel literally means good news. The gospels tell the good news of Jesus Christ.

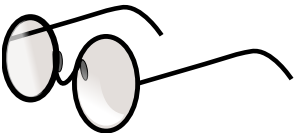
The Preaching of Repentance

1. Next, we will discover the first and most important message of Jesus, John the Baptist, and Peter.
 - a. Look up Matthew 3:1–2. What was the first message of John the Baptist?
 - b. Look up Matthew 4:17. What was the first message of Jesus?
 - c. Look up Acts 2:37–38. What was the first message of Peter to the early church?
2. What does it mean to repent?



Definition

Repent means to express sorrow for, to change direction.



Word Picture

Suppose I wanted to drive from Chicago to San Francisco. But instead of going west, I headed east. As I am going along the road, I see a sign that says, “240 miles to New York.” Recognizing that I am not driving toward San Francisco, I need to change direction and head west. To do this, I must first acknowledge that I’m going in the wrong direction, and then make the decision to turn the car around. By turning the car around, I’m not automatically in San Francisco. There is still a distance to travel; however, I’m now on the right path to get there.

3. Repent from what? Look up Romans 3:10–20.
 - a. How many times does the author use words like *there is no one*, *no one*, or *not even one*?
 - b. Why do you suppose the author would use these same words so often?
 - c. What point do you feel he is trying to emphasize?

d. Whom do you think is being talked about in these verses?

e. What does this passage teach us about good, moral, and respectable people?

Homework Assignment

Read 1 John 1. Underline or highlight verses that have special meaning for you.

Week 2

Consequences of Sin



Goal

To understand the results of sin.

Review

1. Last week, we explored what historical figures have said about the Bible.
2. We learned that the Bible is divided into what 2 main parts?
 - a.
 - b.
3. We learned how to find references. In the reference John 3:16, the 3 stands for _____ and the 16 stands for _____.
4. What is the principal message of John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter?
5. Name the first 4 books of the New Testament in their proper order:

Bible Study

1. Read Romans 3:23. According to this verse, what happens when we sin?



Definition

The word *sin* comes from the Greek word *hamartia*. Imagine an archer shooting an arrow at a bull's eye. When the archer shot the arrow and it landed anywhere other than in the bull's eye, it was said that he hamartia. That is, he missed the mark. Sin causes us to miss the mark God has established for us.

2. Next, read Romans 6:23. What do we receive in exchange for sinning?

3. Read Genesis 2:15–17.

a. What did God say would happen if Adam ate the forbidden fruit?

b. According to Genesis 3:4–5, what did Satan say would happen?



Something to Think About

The Bible is filled with historical accounts of God relating to individuals. Adam and Eve aren't the only people who have had to decide whether to choose right or wrong. Our lives are full of daily decisions and corresponding actions that have positive or negative consequences. The Bible teaches that many of the difficulties in the world today are a result of people rejecting God's plan.

4. Did Adam and Eve die when they ate the fruit?

Romans 6:23 says that we die as a consequence of our sin. Let's look at what the Bible has to say about death.

a. According to Malachi 2:15, each person is made up of
and



Definitions

The *body* is the physical part of people; the flesh that you can see.

The *spirit* is the part of us that relates to God.

b. According to James 2:26a, what is death?
(2:26a refers to the first part of verse 26, and the last part would be referred to as 2:26b)



Definition

The biblical meaning of *death* is separation. The spirit separates from the physical body, and the result is death. A person in a casket does not cease to exist. He still exists somewhere, in the place where his spirit went. The reason the body is dead is because the spirit has left it to go somewhere else.

Genesis 2:7 says, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” The word *breath* in this verse is synonymous with the word *spirit* in James 2:26. The man had no life in him until God placed a spirit within him. It is the spirit that gives life to the body of dust.

5. According to Romans 6:23, sin causes immediate spiritual death, not immediate physical death. We know what physical death is, but let’s learn what spiritual death is by reading Isaiah 59:2. What is the consequence of our sin?

Adam and Eve died spiritually the moment they sinned against God, and they were destined to die physically.



Something to Think About

If Adam and Eve would have died both spiritually and physically instantaneously, there would’ve been no opportunity for redemption. The world in general is separated from God spiritually, but God continues to allow it to survive, even in its current condition, so those who choose to repent can have a restored relationship with Him. In other words, God gave everyone the opportunity to experience spiritual life.

6. Return to Romans 6:23.
 - a. What part do we do in this verse?
 - b. What happens automatically?
 - c. What part does God do?

Homework Assignment

Read 1 John 2. Underline or highlight verses that have special meaning for you.

Week 3

Spiritual Birth



Goal

To understand spiritual birth.

Review

1. Two weeks ago, we briefly observed the principal message of John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter. What was it?
2. Last week, we studied the consequences of sin. How does sin harm us?
3. In what language was the New Testament written?
4. In what 2 ways is it possible to die?

Bible Study

1. We have learned that every person experiences two types of death. This week, we will explore two types of birth.
2. Read John 3:1–21.
 - a. According to verse 2, who did Nicodemus believe Jesus was?
 - b. Why did Nicodemus believe Jesus was from God?

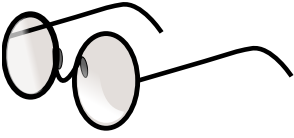


Something to Think About

There are many unique things about Jesus Christ that set Him apart from other teachers. The miracles that Jesus did confirmed to many that He was sent from God. It is interesting that those who opposed Him did not dispute the miracles, but rather the power and manner in which they were performed. It would be difficult to explain the tremendous impact of Jesus, the obscure son of a carpenter, without the miracles.

- c. Jesus apparently discerned that Nicodemus was looking for an entrance into the kingdom of God. What did Jesus say must happen for a person to enter God's kingdom, according to verse 3?
- d. Nicodemus misunderstood what Jesus said. What type of birth did he think Jesus was talking about?
- e. In verse 6, Jesus talked about 2 types of birth. Can you name them?
- f. According to verses 7 and 8, can spiritual birth be detected by our physical senses?
- g. Nicodemus was limited by his understanding of the physical world that he could see, but Jesus taught in verses 6–8 that a person must experience spiritual birth.
- h. Verse 16 explains why God sent Jesus into the world. Find 2 reasons:
- i. According to verse 18:
 - There are 2 kinds of people. What are they?
 - What does a person need to do to be condemned?

- What does a person need to do to be saved?



Word Picture

There is a story of a tightrope walker who was going to appear at the Niagara Falls to walk across a certain section of the ferocious waters below. On the appointed day, a large crowd waited for the once-in-a-lifetime event. When the tightrope walker appeared, he tried to excite the crowd: "How many of you believe I can walk across this rope without falling off?" Many people expressed their confidence in his ability, but most didn't really want to think about the possibility that he might fall off. He climbed on the rope and step by step, inched his way across. When he reached his destination, the crowd cheered. Then, he asked them, "How many of you believe I can push this wheelbarrow across this rope?" Many more people cheered their confidence in his ability. Slowly, he began to move across the rope, and nervously made his way to the end. Once again, the crowd roared. Never before had they seen such ability. After this, the tightrope walker asked the crowd, "How many of you believe I can push a man across this tightrope in this wheelbarrow?" The crowd roared their belief in him. Then he asked, "Who will volunteer?" The crowd became deathly quiet. No one volunteered. No one believed in the man so much that they dared commit their lives into his hands. They acknowledged his ability with their minds, but when it came to trusting him with their lives, their belief stalled.



Definition

Belief - To believe implies two things: acknowledging with the mind and trusting or relying on. Christian belief, then, has 2 elements: acknowledging that Jesus can give me spiritual birth and trusting Him to take me through that birth.

- j. What is the only reason given in verse 19 for a person to be condemned?
- k. Read verses 19–21 again. To whom is the unbeliever compared, one who lives in light or one who lives in darkness?
- l. According to verse 19, why do people prefer to walk in the dark?
- m. In verse 20, what is the motivation for remaining in the dark?

- n. According to verse 21, who lives in the light?
- 3. As we conclude this week's study, ask yourself, "Am I condemned or not condemned? Do I live in the light or in the darkness?"

Homework Assignment

Read 1 John 3. Underline or highlight verses that have special meaning for you.

Week 4

The Need for the Death of Jesus



Goal

To understand that Jesus had to die so we could receive forgiveness of our sin.

Review

1. Name the 2 types of death we have studied:
2. Name the 2 types of birth we have studied:
3. Name the 2 types of people that exist in the world according to John 3:
4. What does *repent* mean?
5. Give a biblical definition of physical death.
6. Give a biblical definition of spiritual death.

Bible Study

1. Up to this point, we have studied different types of death and birth. We've studied how spiritual death and spiritual birth happen. Now, let's learn what makes spiritual birth possible.

2. Look up Hebrews 9:22b. The way to forgiveness is recorded here. What is it?
3. Let's see how this law was applied throughout Scripture. Read Genesis 3:6–7. When Adam and Eve sinned and realized they were naked, what did they make for themselves?
4. Now read Genesis 3:21. What did God make for them to wear?
5. To have garments of skin, an animal was needed. What had to happen to the animal for its skin to be used as clothing?

Here, at the very beginning of the Bible, is the first example of blood shed to cover sin. This is a recurring theme throughout the Bible.

6. Let's observe the law regarding sin as given to the Jews in the Old Testament. Read Leviticus 4:1–7. Briefly explain the main procedure used in the Old Testament to obtain forgiveness.
7. According to Leviticus 5:5–6, what 2 things were necessary for forgiveness?
8. What did John the Baptist call Jesus in John 1:29?
9. The following are several verses that explain why Jesus died on the cross.
 - a. Read Isaiah 59:2. How does our sin affect our relationship with God?
 - b. Read 1 Peter 3:18a. How did the death of Jesus affect our relationship with God?



Something to Think About

All societies have struggled to establish a balance between applying justice and showing mercy. What makes this especially hard is limited knowledge and individual biases. Societies do their best by making laws to enforce justice and implementing programs to promote rehabilitation. The Bible says that God is all-knowing and completely holy (there is nothing deceitful or wicked in His character). At the cross, justice and mercy met. God's standard was not reduced by overlooking the sin in His creation, and His mercy was demonstrated by Jesus' tremendous sacrifice on the cross that brought about restoration.

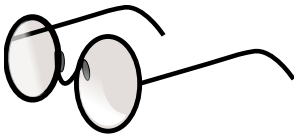
- c. According to Hebrews 9:27, what awaits us after death?



Something to Think About

There are many kinds of people on this planet, but one thing is certain, each of us is going to die. What happens then? The Bible clearly says we only physically die once. Death is not the end of our existence or a re-entry point into our existing world, but rather it is a passage from this world into another place. The Bible says that God uniquely created each of us for an eternal purpose. That makes us special. It makes others special as well.

- d. According to Hebrews 9:28a, what happened when Jesus Christ was crucified?



Word Picture

Imagine a courtroom where you are being placed on trial for all the bad things you have done. You stand helpless as sin after sin is revealed, and you are certain that you will be found guilty. And sure enough, the judge reads the verdict: guilty! The punishment is death! But then, to your surprise, the judge asks if there is anyone in the courtroom willing to take the punishment in your place. After a long silence, the judge slowly rises and to your astonishment, comes down, gives you a kiss, and then walks off to take the punishment you deserve. That's exactly what Jesus did!

What must we do to receive God's forgiveness? That question will be answered during the next two weeks.

Homework Assignment

Read 1 John 4. Underline or highlight verses that have special meaning for you.

Week 5

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions



Goal

To see the choice that God has placed before us.

Review

1. What is the principal message of the Bible, expressed in the sermons of John the Baptist and Jesus?
2. Which part of us dies when we sin?
3. Give a biblical definition of *death*.
4. Name the 2 types of birth.
5. What is the biblical definition of *believe*?
6. What is required for the forgiveness of sin?
7. What special thing did Jesus do so we can have God's forgiveness of our sin?

Bible Study

1. Over the past four weeks, we have been studying our position before God because of our sin. We have studied life and death and what Jesus has done to give us life. During the next two weeks, we will discover what God expects us to do so that we might be forgiven and have fellowship with Him.

2. First, let's look at the idea of being saved. 1 Timothy 2:3–4 tells us that God wants us to be saved.
 - a. The word *save* means to deliver; to protect. From what would you say we all need to be delivered?
 - b. From whom or what do we need to be protected?
 - c. According to John 3:17, why did God send Jesus into the world?
 - d. Read Acts 16:30. What must we do to be delivered from spiritual death and condemnation? Jesus gave His blood so we could have forgiveness for our sin. Does that mean God has forgiven everyone's sin, or do we have to do something to get that forgiveness? What is the answer to our question according to verse 31?
 - e. What does *believe* mean?
 - f. Acts 2:21 gives us another idea of what we must do to be delivered from condemnation. What is it?
 - g. Acts 2:38 tells us what we must do to have forgiveness for our sin. What is it?
3. Let's go to one more passage to get a picture of what we need to be saved from. Look up Matthew 7:13–14.
 - a. These verses describe 2 roads. What are they called?
 - b. What are the entrance gates to these roads described as?

- c. Where does the broad road lead?
 - d. Where does the narrow road lead?
 - e. Which road do most people choose to follow?
4. God expects us to take certain steps so our fellowship with Him can be restored:
- a. We must acknowledge that we have sinned. Do you accept the fact that you have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory and therefore stand condemned before God?
 - b. We must believe that Jesus paid the penalty of our sin with His blood. Do you accept the death of Jesus as payment for your sin?
 - c. We must decide which road we are going to follow.
 - d. We must call on the name of the Lord.
5. Next week, we will look at several verses that will show us how to call on the name of the Lord.

Homework Assignment

Read 1 John 5. Underline or highlight verses that have special meaning for you.

Week 6

Receiving Jesus



Goal

To learn how to call upon the name of the Lord and experience salvation.

Review

1. According to our lesson last week, how are the 2 roads described?
2. What does each road lead to?
3. Why did Jesus have to die?
4. List the steps we must make to experience spiritual life.

Bible Study

1. Read 1 John 1:9. What must we do for our sins to be forgiven?



Definition

Confess means to say the same thing as another; to agree with. When God brings to your attention the fact that something you have done is sin, you are to confess—agree with God and say the same thing that God says about it. Look at it from His viewpoint. Then determine that you will remove the sin from your life and stop doing it.

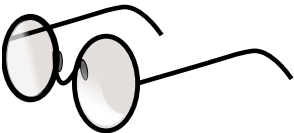
2. If we confess our sin, what does God promise to do?

Confession normally happens between God and you alone. The old covenant demanded that a person confess his sins to a priest, but the new covenant makes it possible to go directly to God through Jesus. Confession of our sin is part of calling on the name of the Lord.

3. Now read John 1:12–13 to learn more about calling on Jesus. Several weeks ago, we talked about spiritual birth. These verses tell us how spiritual birth is possible. According to verse 12, what 2 things are necessary for someone to become a child of God?

4. We have discussed several times what believing is. Now, let's read Revelation 3:20 to learn what receiving is.

- a. What is the person outside the door doing?
- b. What is expected of the person inside the house?



Word Picture

Jesus knocks on the door of our lives and asks to come in. Some people lock the door or stack furniture against it, fearing He will force His way in. Others turn up their music so they can't hear the persistent knocking. Still others ignore that there is any knocking at all.

5. In this verse, the person not only heard Jesus knocking, but opened the door for Him to enter. When Jesus is invited into our lives, what happens, according to this verse?

6. When you invite someone into your house for a meal, it is a display of friendship. Why do you think Jesus wants to come into your house and share a meal with you?



Something to Think About

The Bible repeatedly talks about having a personal relationship with God. God is not interested in establishing a religion, but desires to establish a relationship. Religion is our attempt to reach God; the Bible is all about God reaching out to us. When Jesus was dying on the cross, with His hands stretched out, He cried, "It is finished" (*John 19:30*). The way for a relationship between sinful people and a holy God had just been created.

7. According to Hebrews 12:2b, why did Jesus endure death on a cross?

Now we have a clear picture of what is required to receive spiritual life:

- a. Acknowledge that we are sinners.
 - b. Believe that Jesus paid for our sin with His blood.
 - c. Decide which road we are going to follow.
 - d. Call on the name of the Lord by repenting, confessing, and receiving.
8. Please respond to the following questions individually:
- a. Are you willing to acknowledge that you are a sinner?
 - b. Do you believe that Jesus paid for your sin with His blood?
 - c. Are you willing to travel the narrow road that leads to life?
 - d. Are you ready to call on the name of the Lord by repenting (changing direction), confessing (agreeing with God), and receiving (asking Jesus into your life)?

9. If you answered yes to all of the parts of the previous question, the only thing left to do is to pray this prayer:



Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and in need of your forgiveness. I believe that you died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I invite you now to come into my heart and life. I am now willing to trust and follow you as my Lord and Savior. Thank you. Amen.

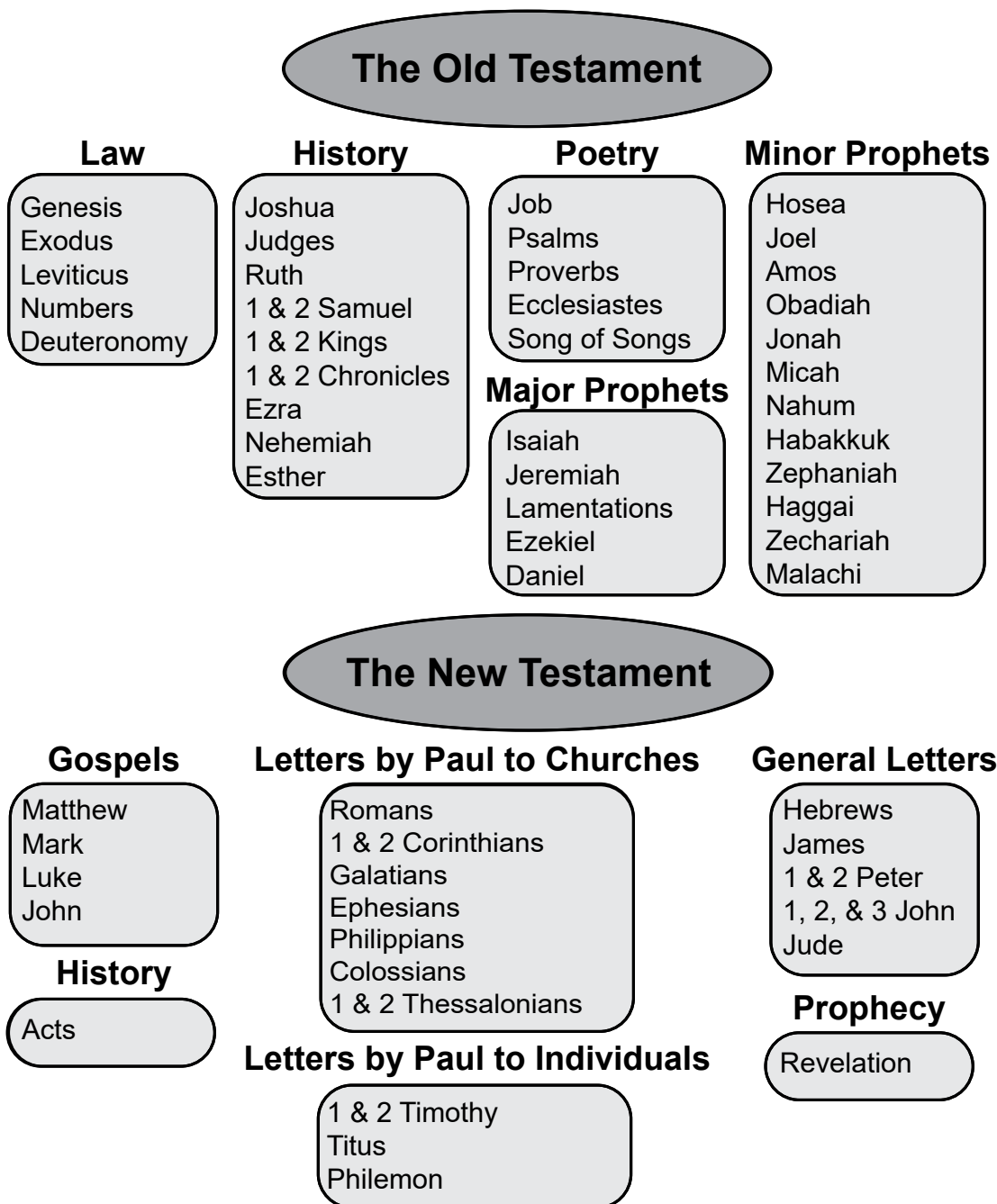
John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

If you prayed this prayer, you are now saved from the penalty of sin and are considered a child of God! You are now spiritually alive, and the relationship that was broken between you and God has been restored. As with any relationship, it takes time to develop. We relate to God by communicating with Him (prayer), learning about Him (reading the Bible), and pleasing Him (obedience). In addition, you are not alone in your relationship with God, but you have millions of "brothers and sisters" in Christ. God will use their gifts and experiences to assist you in your new spiritual life.

Appendix A - Acknowledgments

This course was adapted from the *Bible Study for Beginners* originally created by Gary Troyer.

Appendix B - Books of the Bible



Beginner's Series

Discover the Bible

An introduction to the background and main message of the Bible

Welcome to the Family

An overview of the dynamics involved in becoming a follower of Jesus

Foundation Series

Thirty Days with Jesus

A daily journey through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ

Love I: Loving God

A practical guide to living the first part of the greatest commandment

Love II: Loving Others

A practical guide to living the second part of the greatest commandment

Basic Doctrines

A survey of the doctrines of the Christian faith

Book of James

A brief study of the biblical book of James

Kingdom Living

An overview of the guiding principles of Christian living

Spirit Fruit

A study of the character traits the Holy Spirit produces in believers

Book of Romans

A brief study of the biblical book of Romans

Overview of the Bible

A general survey of the Bible



Loving God. Loving People.