

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

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Material for this class was taken from the following resources: Quest NIV Study Bible, Life Application (NIV) Bible, Training for Service - A Survey of the Bible by Orrin Root, W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, and What the Bible is All About by Henrieta C. Mears.

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This work is dedicated to Sheila Smith, my wife.

William S. Smith

THE BIBLE

1. What is it?

The Bible is a collection of 66 books. It has two major divisions: The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is made up of 39 books, and the New Testament is made up of 27 books.

The Old Testament starts with the creation of the world, and ends about 400 years before the birth of Christ. The Old Testament primarily deals with the Hebrew nation - the people that God chose to prepare the way for Jesus. It starts with the story of how the world was created and how Adam was created, deals with the early beginnings of mankind, and then the birth or beginnings of the Hebrew nation. It goes on to tell the story of their escape from bondage, their rise to power and their fall to captivity. We study the Old Testament because it is a preview and foundation for the New Testament, it provides insights into the character of God, and it contains many predictions of the coming of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament tells us of the "old covenant" between God and man (Law).

The New Testament starts with the birth of Christ, and ends with a prophetic look at the end times (Jesus' 2nd coming). The New Testament primarily deals with Jesus and the church. It starts with the story of Jesus' birth, His ministry, His death, and His resurrection. It goes on to tell the story of the birth and beginnings of the Church. The majority of the books in the New Testament are letters that were written to individuals and to the early churches. The New Testament tells us of the "new covenant" between God and man (grace). Taken together, the Old Testament and the New Testament tell one story and deal with three things: The character of God; God's dealings with mankind; and God's plan of salvation.

2. Who wrote it?

The bible was written by about 40 people over the span of about 1500 years. Some of the authors are known to us (because they "signed" their names). Some of them are unknown. Some wrote the things that they personally witnessed. Some wrote about what others had seen and told them. Some wrote from stories that had been passed down to them. Some wrote after doing personal research. Each wrote in their own style and in their own way. Each of these different authors was inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

3. How did we get it?

The original documents were hand written on material such as papyrus (made out of reeds or leather). The Old Testament was mostly written in the Hebrew language; and the New Testament in Greek. Copies were made to replace the originals which became brittle with age and no longer exist. Hand written copies do exist (although there isn't any way to tell how many intermittent copies were made between the original and the copies that we have now). Some of our oldest documents are actually translations (languages other than the original). It's important to realize that while the original authors were inspired by God, the people doing the copying and translating were not inspired. They did their best, but some mistakes were made. Study and comparisons of all the thousands of copies we have in existence today show us that there are few discrepancies of any substance, and none that affect doctrine. Enough older copies have been discovered (including the Dead Sea Scrolls) to allow modern bible experts to recreate what we believe to be the original text, so we can be very certain that our modern translations are reliable.

Did you ever wonder where we got the word "Bible"? "Biblos" is the Greek for the cellular substance of the stem of the papyrus. Over time it came to stand for paper, then scrolls, then books - and finally, around the 4th or 5th century, it became our English word Bible.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Places.

The Old Testament's story mostly takes place in what we call the Middle East. You could draw a circle cutting through the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea; and you would have encompassed the areas where the Old Testament stories took place. Using today's countries, we would talk about Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel.

2. People.

When you read the Old Testament, you will find that it tells the stories of four main types of people: patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. You'll find many other interesting characters there as well, ranging from peasants to priests to spies to royal advisors. But the main characters tend to be the four types I mentioned. Moses is a special case - he is referred to as "The Lawgiver".

The **patriarchs** can be thought of as clan leaders. They included Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, etc. They predated the Hebrew nation. The **Judges** were leaders who settled disputes and/or acted as military leaders. Some of the prominent judges were Joshua, Deborah, and Gideon (I'm not sure if Joshua is "counted" as a Judge or not). Samuel was a priest, and was also the last of the judges. He anointed both Saul and David as **kings**. Solomon was the last king to rule over a united kingdom. Following his death the kingdom was split into the Northern kingdom (Israel) and the Southern kingdom (Judah). Each kingdom had 20 kings prior to going into captivity. **Prophets** did two things - they fore-told (prophesied about future events), and they forth-told (spoke out about current events). Sometimes popular, often unpopular, sometimes they lived in royal surroundings, sometimes urban, and sometimes rural. Sometimes they were friends of kings, sometimes enemies. One thing they all had in common was that they were God's spokesmen. You'll hear people refer to the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. The Major Prophets weren't more important than the Minor Prophets. It's just that the Major Prophets' books were much bigger or longer (contained more pages) than the books written by the Minor Prophets.

3. Books.

The 39 books of the Old Testament are divided into five categories: Law, History, Poetry, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets.

There are five books of the Law (all written mostly by Moses): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Together they are called the Pentateuch (Penta-five and teuchos-book). **Genesis** (beginning) tells the story of creation, the flood, and traces the family of Abraham down to Jacob whose 12 sons went into Egypt. One of them, Joseph, rises to a position of power in Egypt. **Exodus** takes up the story about 350 years later. The people have grown in numbers, and have become slaves. God sends Moses to rescue His people and lead them into the Promised Land. Exodus ends with Moses receiving the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai. **Leviticus** contains laws and instructions on worship. **Numbers** tells about censuses that were taken (and also contains some more laws). Numbers also tells us about the 40 years of wandering in the desert. **Deuteronomy** records the final address (or speech) of Moses.

The twelve History books include: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, 1st and 2nd Kings, Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah. **Joshua, Judges, and 1st Samuel** tell the story of the Israelites during their period of conquest (from the time that they enter the Promised Land until the time of Saul, their first king). **Ruth** is a short interlude story about Ruth (who was one of Christ's ancestors) and her mother-in-law Naomi. **2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, 1st and 2nd Kings** tell the story of the Israelites rise to a world power (under David and Solomon), and their subsequent fall to captivity

under the Assyrians and Babylonians. **Ezra, and Nehemiah** tell of the return from captivity, and the rebuilding of the temple and walls of Jerusalem. **Esther** is a short interlude story about a young woman who becomes Queen of Persia and saves her people from being killed. Genesis through Nehemiah is all in chronological order (one follows another in date sequence) except for 1st and 2nd Chronicles. They overlap with and repeat things found in 2nd Samuel through 2nd Kings.

There are five books of Poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. There are 150 psalms in the book of **Psalms**. They are a collection of songs and prayers. David wrote 73 of them. **Proverbs** was written mostly by Solomon during the early years of his reign. They are collections of sayings, poems, reminders, and warnings about how to govern our lives. **Ecclesiastes** was written by Solomon late in his life. He looks back on his life, filled with mistakes which led him away from God, and he realizes that everything he had amounted to nothing when spent away from God. **Song of Songs** was also written by Solomon, probably early in his life. This is a wonderful love story where a man and woman share their feelings as they describe their love, courtship, and marriage. **Job** is different from the rest of the books of Poetry. It deals with an issue that bothers most of us at one time or another - why does God allow the righteous and the innocent to suffer pain and heartache.

There are five Major Prophets books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. **Isaiah** is best known for his prophecies about the Messiah (see Isaiah 53). **Jeremiah** wrote **Lamentations** which lamented over the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He used a lot of object lessons in his writings. He foretold about a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). **Ezekiel** was one of the captives taken to Babylon. His writings rebuked the people of Israel for their sins. **Daniel**, another captive taken to Babylon rose to power there. Daniel tells us what will happen to the Gentile nations. His story is one of many visions - some of which have not come to pass yet. Read about Daniel in the lion's den in the sixth chapter, and read about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and the fiery furnace in Daniel 2:49 - 3:30.

There are twelve Minor Prophets books: Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. **Jonah** is the best known of the minor prophets, due largely to his encounter with a great fish wherein he spent 3 days. **Malachi** was the last of Old Testament prophets. Following him we have 400 years of silence (between the Old Testament and the New Testament).

4. Institutions.

Institutions in the Old Testament can be thought of as Laws, feasts, sacrifices, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. See the accompanying charts for more information on each of these.

THE 3 TEMPLES	Solomon's Temple	Built in 960BC	Destroyed in 586BC at beginning of Babylon Captivity.
	Zerubbabel's Temple	Built in 516BC	Wasn't destroyed, but was remodeled. Ark of Covenant lost during captivity.
	Herod's Temple	Remodeling done between 20BC and AD64.	Destroyed AD70 by the Romans when Jerusalem destroyed.
<p>All three temples were built along the same lines. Proportions were similar to the Tabernacle, but double in size. Herod's temple looked something like this: At the NW corner was access to a military stronghold (read about this in Acts). Solomon's porch was along the east side. Booths and resting areas ran around the outside. The south half was the Court of Gentiles where anyone was welcome. Only men and women of Israel were allowed into the Court of Women.. Only the men could proceed into the Court of Israel. And only the priests could enter into the Court of Priests which contained the altar, laver, Holy Place, and Most Holy Place.</p>			

S A C R I F I C E S	TYPES	PURPOSE	OFFERINGS
	Burnt	Make payment for sins in general.	Bull or ram without blemish (defect). (Poor people could substitute dove or pigeon).
	Grain	Show honor and respect to God.	Grain.
	Fellowship	Express thanks to God.	An animal without blemish (defect) taken from herd or flock.
	Sin	Make payment for unintentional kinds of sin.	For individuals a female goat or lamb. (Poor people could substitute dove or pigeon; or small portion of flour for very poor).
	Guilt	Make payment for sins against God and sins against others.	Ram or lamb. Also required restitution to injured party.

F E A S T S	FEAST	Approx Month		
	MAJOR (Jerusalem) See Deuteronomy 16:16	Passover and Unleavened Bread	April	Commemorated escape from Egypt. Passover was 1 day, followed by 7 days (Unleavened Bread). Main event of Passover was eating Pascal Lamb.
		Pentecost	June	Lasted 1 day, main feature was offering two loaves which represented the first fruits of wheat. Came 7 weeks after Passover feast.
		Tabernacles	October	Commemorated life in the wilderness. Lasted 1 week, main feature was living in booths.
	MINOR (Anywhere)	Trumpets	October	Ushered in the civil year.
		Dedication	December	Introduced between OT and NT. Lasted 8 days, celebrated purification and rededication of Temple.
		Purim	March	2 day celebration commemorating Queen Esther's rescue of the Israelites.
	OTHER	Day of Atonement	October	A Sabbath of Rest. 1 day when atonement sacrifice would be made for them by priests.
		Sabbath	every	Day of rest on the 7th day of every week (Saturday).

T A B E R N A C L E	<p>The court or yard around the tabernacle measured 150 feet by 75 feet. This symbolized the world.</p> <p>As you entered the court, you would come upon the altar for burnt offerings.</p> <p>Just in front of the tabernacle was a laver or large wash basin. The priests would wash their hands before entering into the tabernacle.</p> <p>The tabernacle itself was divided into two parts - the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Altogether it measured 45 by 15 feet. The Holy Place was 30 by 15, and the Most Holy Place was 15 by 15. It was covered on top as well. When you first entered the Tabernacle, you entered into the Holy Place. To your right would be the table of shewbread, to your left would be a lamp stand (the candlestick) holding 7 lamps. Straight ahead was an altar where incense burned. Behind the altar was a veil or curtain separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. Only the priest would enter into the Holy Place.</p> <p>The Most Holy Place contained the Ark of the Covenant - a chest containing the Ten Commandments, a dish of manna, and Aaron's rod. Only entered into by the High Priest.</p>
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Books of Old Testament																			
		Law	History	Poetry	Major Prophets	Minor Prophets	People	Remember	Date BC	World Powers									
P	P	Genesis					Adam	Creation, Eve, Sin Cain & Abel, Sacrifices	2000										
							Noah	Flood											
							Job	Sufferings of Job											
							Abraham	Lot, Sarah & Hagar Father Abraham											
							Jacob	12 sons (12 Tribes)	1900										
							Joseph	Sold as Slave by brothers Rises to Power in Egypt	1800										
L	D	Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy					Moses	Plagues (Passover) Escape from Egypt Aaron & Jethro 40 years in the Wilderness 10 Commandments Ark & Tabernacle	1,446	Egypt									
	C	o	n	q	u	e	s	t	Joshua	Promised Land	1,400								
									Judges	Israel's Woman Judge Reluctant Warrior	1,200 1,150								
									Ruth	Ruth & Naomi	1,150								
									1st Samuel	Priest	1,100								
	P	o	w	e	r			David	Kills Goliath The Great King	1,025 1,010	Israel								
								Solomon	The Wise King Builds Temple	960									
A	W	D	e	c	l	i	n	e	2nd Samuel 1st Chronicles	Psalms									
									1st Kings 2ndChronicles	Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs									
									2nd Kings	Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah	Elijah Jonah	Division of kingdom Jezebel the wicked queen Elisha followed Elijah Whale	930 870 785						
										Isaiah	Hosea Micah Nahum Zephaniah	Isaiah	Gospel Prophet Israel Captivity	722	Assyria				
										Jeremiah Lamenta- tions Ezekiel Daniel	Habakkuk	Jeremiah	Weeping Prophet Jerusalem Destroyed Judah Captivity Lions Den	586	Babylon				
											Haggai Zechariah	Daniel		539					
										Ezra			Return Temple rebuilt	538 516	Persia				
										Esther		Esther	Became Queen of Persia	479					
										Nehemiah		Nehemiah	Walls Rebuilt	445					
											Malachi			430					
																Temple restored		Greece	
									Grace							Christ	Salvation	Rome	

THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Places.

The New Testament's story mostly takes place around the east half of the Mediterranean Sea. You could draw a rectangle with Rome in the Northwest corner, the island of Malta in the Southwest corner, Israel in the Southeast corner, and a point in Turkey (north of Syria) in the Northeast corner, and you would have encompassed the areas where the New Testament stories took place. Using today's countries, we would talk about Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. Jesus spent the majority of his ministry in what was then called Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. To see this area today, just look at a map of Israel. Israel is located at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea.

2. People.

The two most prominent people in the New Testament are Jesus Christ and Paul. **Jesus**, because He is the Son of God who gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins, so that we could be saved; and **Paul**, because he was responsible for sharing the good news about Jesus to so many different countries and cities, and because he wrote about half of the books in the New Testament. Other prominent characters are the apostles, the disciples, and the missionaries. You'll find interactions with kings, priests, powerful rulers and leaders, military leaders, and "normal" people like you and me.

The **disciples** were those people who followed Jesus. Some spent a lot of time with Him, and some spent just the time that they were able to. The **apostles** were those disciples that Jesus personally chose to be part of his inner circle. They traveled everywhere with Him. **Missionaries** is just the name that I use to talk about the early Christians who, like Paul, traveled to other places to tell people about Jesus. The apostles and disciples are mentioned in the four Gospels and the book of Acts. Acts introduces the 2nd generation followers (a term that I use to describe the people who didn't know Jesus before His death).

3. Books.

The 27 books of the New Testament are divided into four categories: Gospels, History, Letters, and Prophecy.

There are four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are biographies which tell us the story of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, teachings, death, and resurrection. While there is much similarity between the four Gospels, there are differences as well. Each tells the story from a unique viewpoint, and each contains several stories not contained in the other Gospels. **Matthew** was written by one of the 12 Apostles. He wrote primarily to the Jews, and emphasized the things that Jesus said (including his sermons). He presents Jesus as the promised King who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah. **Mark** was written by John Mark, a young man who traveled with Paul and Barnabus, and who spent considerable time with Peter. Mark wrote to the Romans, and emphasized Jesus' miracles and actions. He presents Jesus as the obedient servant. **Luke** is the only Gospel written by a non-Jew (gentile). Luke accompanied Paul on his second and third missionary trip. Luke wrote to the Greeks, and emphasized Jesus' humanity. He presents Jesus as the perfect man. **John** was written by another of the 12 Apostles. John wrote to Christians everywhere and emphasized the principles of Jesus' teaching. He presents Jesus as the Son of God. In case you wondered, gospel means Good News (about Jesus).

The Gospels were not written before the rest of the New Testament. Mark was written some time between AD 55-60, and was probably the first Gospel written. Luke was written about AD 60, Matthew was written some time between AD 60-65, and John was written about some time between AD 80-95.

There is only one book of History: Acts (written by Luke, who also wrote one of the four Gospels). Acts tells the story about the early church: how it began, how it grew, how it spread, what kind of problems it faced (both internally and externally), how the early Christians worshipped, etc. It begins with the resurrected Jesus telling the Apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we learn about the spread and growth of the early church in Jerusalem. We then learn how the gospel spread to Samaria after the death of Stephen, the first martyr and how Paul (then called Saul) persecuted the church before becoming a Christian. From there, we learn about the extension of the gospel to the gentiles as Peter witnesses to Cornelius. Finally, Acts tells about the church at Antioch, which becomes the center for Paul's three missionary trips. Paul's first missionary journey took him to Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (modern day Cyprus and Central Turkey); and introduces us to his practice of teaching at the synagogues, and also tells about the Jerusalem council called to decide whether or not gentiles needed to follow all of the Old Testament laws in order to become Christians (they didn't). Paul's second missionary journey took him to Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus (modern day Western Turkey and Greece). While still planning their second missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas have a disagreement about whether or not to take Barnabas' young cousin with them again. Paul's third missionary journey takes him to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, and Troas (modern day Turkey and Greece). Paul decides to go to Jerusalem, where he becomes a prisoner (for his faith). Acts ends with Paul's traveling to Rome as a prisoner. Acts was written some time between AD 63-70.

There are 21 Letters. These fall into three categories: letters that were written to specific people, letters that were written to specific churches, and letters that we might call "open" letters because they were written either to a group of churches (maybe in a general region), or to all Christians. The letters are a combination of encouragement, chastisement, warnings, instruction, requests for prayers, and general news sharing. As such, they provide us with insights into the practices, problems, struggles and things that were going on in the early church; plus they provide us with lessons and teachings about Christianity.

Paul wrote 13 of these letters; and his are placed first. Next, there is a book by an unknown author (Hebrews). The remaining 8 books were written by James, Peter, John, and Jude. Paul's letters and the Hebrews' letter bear the name of the church or person that they were written to. The other books (James, Peter, John, and Jude all bear the names of the authors.

Paul's letters in the New Testament were written over a period of about 14-18 years. His earlier letters were written to churches, and his later letters were written to individuals. The letters all deal with multiple topics, and it is almost misleading to try and summarize them. Naturally, that won't stop me:

- ◆ Romans explains that we're all sinners, but saved through Christ.
- ◆ 1st Corinthians dealt with several problems the Corinthians were having, and also answered some questions that they had.
- ◆ 2nd Corinthians was written to express Paul's joy upon hearing about improvements made by the Corinthians after receiving a prior letter from him.
- ◆ Galatians reminded the Galatians that they are saved by faith, not by following the OT Law; encouraged them to hold to the simple truths of the Gospel message as Paul had taught them, and defended Paul's claims to be an Apostle.
- ◆ Ephesians explains that the church (all believers) is/functions as the body of Christ on earth.
- ◆ Philippians was written to thank the Philippians for help they had given Paul, encourages them to live Christian lives, and warns against false teachings.
- ◆ Colossians emphasizes Christ as Head of the Church.
- ◆ 1st Thessalonians answered questions raised by the Thessalonians about Christ's 2nd coming, encouraged Godly living, and dealt with some problems that the Thessalonians were having.

- ◆ 2nd Thessalonians was written after some of the Thessalonians misunderstood Paul's 1st letter and were "sponging" off of their fellow Christians. It also included signs of the 2nd coming.
- ◆ 1st Timothy was a personal letter written to Timothy, who was working with the church at Ephesus. Paul instructs him about choosing Elders and church leaders, warns of false teachers, and encourages him to practice his ministry.
- ◆ 2nd Timothy was the last letter written by Paul that we have. It contains special instructions for Timothy, warnings about the last days, and contains Paul's final remarks.
- ◆ Titus was a personal letter written to Titus, who was working with the churches on the island of Crete. Paul instructs him about choosing Elders, warns of false teachers, and tells him to urge good behavior.
- ◆ Philemon was a personal letter to the owner of a runaway slave on behalf of the runaway slave.

We don't know who wrote the book of **Hebrews**. It was written prior to AD70 (the destruction of Jerusalem). Hebrews was written to the Christian Jews to remind them that Christ was superior to angels, to the Patriarchs, to the priests, and to the High Priest. It shows Christ's death to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins, encourages us to stay true in our faith and to grow in our spiritual lives.

James, one of Christ's brothers, wrote the book of **James** sometime prior to AD50. Either James or Galatians was the earliest book written in the New Testament. James is a practical guidebook for Christian living.

Jude, another of Christ's brothers, wrote **Jude**. It was written about AD65. Jude warns against false teachers and against apostasy.

Peter, one of the Apostles, wrote two letters: 1 Peter (written in early AD60's) and 2 Peter (written between AD 65-68). **1st Peter** is a letter of comfort and encouragement to Christians who were undergoing persecution. It is one of the most popular letters (epistles). **2nd Peter** is very similar to Jude, and warns against false teachers and against apostasy.

John (who also wrote one of the 4 Gospels and the book of Revelation) was also an Apostle. He wrote three letters: 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. (all written between AD85-95). **1 John**, like 1st Peter is one of the most popular letters (epistles). John tells us about Christ's atoning work and our need for holiness, obedience, purity, faith, and love. **2nd John** is a letter that was written to a lady, commending her on her piety and warning her of false teachers. **3rd John** is a letter written to a friend and fellow worker.

There is only one book of Prophecy: Revelation written by John. **Revelation** was the last book written (about AD95). There are many different views of how to interpret Revelation. It tells of the great battle between good and evil, and most importantly of all, it tells us of the final outcome of the battle - that Jesus is victorious!

Date Written	Book	Date Written	Book	Date Written	Book
Prior to AD 50	James	AD 60	Colossians	AD 65	Jude
AD 49-55	Galatians	AD 60	Philemon	AD 65-68	2 Peter
AD 51	1 Thessalonians	AD 60	Gospel of Luke	AD 63-70	Acts
AD 51-52	2 Thessalonians	AD 61	Philippians	Prior to AD 70	Hebrews
AD 55	1 Corinthians	AD 60-64	1 Peter	AD 80-95	Gospel of John
AD 55--57	2 Corinthians	AD 63-65	Titus	AD 80-95	1 John
AD 55-60	Gospel of Mark	AD 63-65	1 Timothy	AD 80-95	2 John
AD 57	Romans	AD 60-65	Gospel of Matthew	AD 80-95	3 John
AD 60	Ephesians	AD 65-67	2 Timothy	AD 95	Revelation

selected events from the gospels

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus' Birth	1:18 - 2:12		1:5 - 2:40	
Jesus' early years	2:13-23		2:41-52	
John the Baptist	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	
Jesus is baptized by John	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	
Jesus tempted by Satan	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
The first disciples				1:29-51
The first miracle (Jesus turns water into wine)				2:1-12
Jesus clears the temple (1st time)				2:12-25
Nicodemus visits Jesus at night				3:1-21
Jesus talks to the women at the well				4:1-26
Jesus preaches in Galilee	4:12-17	1:14-15	4:14-15	4:43-45
Jesus rejected in Nazareth			4:16-30	
Fishers of men	4:18-22	1:16-20		
Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41	
Choosing the 12 disciples		3:13-19	6:12-16	
Sermon on the Mount	5:1 - 7:29		6:17-49	
Jesus raises widow's son			7:11-17	
Several Parables	13:1-52	4:1-34	8:4-18	
Jesus calms the storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
Herod kills John the Baptist	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	
Jesus feeds 5,000	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-15
Jesus walks on water	14:22-33	6:45-52		6:16-21
Jesus feeds 4,000	15:32-39	8:1-10		
Who do you say that I am	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-20	
Transfiguration	17:1-13	9:2-13	9:28-36	
Jesus forgives the woman caught in adultery				7:53 - 8:11
72 sent out			10:1-24	
Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer			11:1-13	
Lazarus dies and Jesus raises him from the dead				11:1-57
Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:28-44	12:12-19
Jesus clears the temple a 2nd time	21:12-17	11:12-19	19:45-48	
Plot to kill Jesus	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2	
Judas agrees to betray Jesus	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
The Last Supper	26:17-35	14:12-31	22:7-38	13:1 - 17:26
Prayers in the garden	26:36-46		22:39-46	
Jesus arrested in the garden	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:1-11
Jesus stands trial	26:57 - 27:14	14:53 - 15:5	22:54 - 23:12	18:12-37
Death on the Cross	27:15-66	15:6-47	23:13-56	18:38 - 19:42
Resurrection	28:1-7	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-9
Jesus' appearances after resurrection	28:8-15	16:9-14	24:13-53	20:10-25
Great Commission	28:16-20	16:15-18		

this information was extracted/summarized from Harmony of the Gospels (Life Application Bible)

Overview of ACTS

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM	
1:1 - 1:11	CHRIST'S ASCENSION. Apostles to remain in Jerusalem until coming of Holy Spirit. They will be witnesses...
1:12 - 1:26	MATTHIAS CHOSEN TO REPLACE JUDAS. A replacement is chosen to take Judas' place.
2:1 - 2:47	THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Peter addresses the crowd. 3,000 accept message and are baptized same day.
3:1 - 4:31	PETER AND JOHN IN JAIL. Peter heals a crippled beggar. Peter and John refuse to stop speaking about Jesus.
4:32 - 5:11	ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. Believers sharing everything. One couple held back (their right), then lied about it.
5:12 - 5:42	APOSTLES ARRESTED. Healing and miracles. Religious leaders become jealous. Angel opens doors of the jail.
6:1 - 6:7	CHOOSING OF THE SEVEN. 7 men chosen to perform certain duties freeing up the apostles for prayer & preaching.
EXTENSION OF GOSPEL TO SAMARIA	
6:7 - 8:3	STEPHEN KILLED. Saul is present. Persecution breaks out that day, and believers scattered to Judea and Samaria.
8:4 - 8:25	PHILLIP GOES TO SAMARIA. Those scattered preached the word wherever they went. Samaritan believers.
8:26 - 8:40	PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH. "Do you understand what you are reading?"
EXTENSION OF GOSPEL TO GENTILES	
9:1 - 9:31	SAUL MEETS JESUS. Saul is persecuting the church. On the road to Damascus he has an encounter with Jesus.
9:32 - 9:43	PETER RAISES TABITHA FROM THE DEAD. Afterward, Peter remains in Joppa, living with Simon the tanner.
10:1 - 11:18	PETER AND CORNELIUS. An angel tells a gentile named Cornelius to send for Peter. First Gentile is baptized.
11:19 - 11:30	THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH. Barnabas is sent to Antioch, and he in turn brings Saul (now a believer) there.
12:1 - 12:25	PETER FREED FROM JAIL. Believers pray for release of Peter, and then think he is a ghost when he shows up.
PAUL'S 1ST MISSIONARY JOURNEY	
13:1 - 13:12	CYPRUS. The Holy Spirit tells the church at Antioch to send Barnabas and Saul on a missionary trip. 1st stop: Cyprus
13:13 - 13:52	PISIDIAN ANTIOCH. John Mark leaves Paul (Saul) and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas are expelled from the region.
14:1 - 14:7	ICONIUM. Paul and Barnabas work miracles. They learn of a plot to stone them and flee to Lystra and Derbe.
14:8 - 14:21	LYSTRA & DERBE. Paul and Barnabas called gods. Paul is stoned and left for dead. He and Barnabas to to Derbe.
14:21 - 14:28	RETURN TO ANTIOCH. They now begin their trip back home. Back home, they give a report on their trip.
15:1 - 15:35	JERUSALEM COUNCIL. Because of large number of Gentile converts, the question of circumcision and law arises.
PAUL'S 2ND MISSIONARY JOURNEY	
15:36 - 16:5	DISAGREEMENT. Paul and Barnabas disagree about taking John Mark on their next trip. They agree to separate.
16:6 - 16:10	TROAS. It's in Troas that Luke joins Paul, Silus, and Timothy.
16:11 - 16:40	PHILIPPI. Lydia becomes a believer. Paul and Silas are jailed, earthquake opens prison doors, jailer becomes believer.
17:1 - 17:9	THESSALONICA. Jews start a riot. Jason, who's house Paul was staying at, posts bond for Paul.
17:10 - 17:15	BEREA. Many Jews in Berea become believers after hearing Paul's message and examinig the scriptures.
17:16 - 17:34	ATHENS. Paul speaks in the Areopagus about the "unknown god".
18:1 - 18:17	CORINTH. Paul stays and works with Aquila and Priscilla. Crispus, the synagogue ruler becomes a believer.
18:18 - 18:22	EPHESUS. Pauls spends a short time in Ephesus before heading back to Antioch.
PAUL'S 3RD MISSIONARY JOURNEY AND HIS JOURNEY TO ROME	
18:23 - 18:28	GALATIA & PHRYGIA. Priscilla and Aquila instruct Apollos about baptism.
19:1 - 19:41	EPHESUS. Paul spends two years in Ephesus, teaching and working miracles. A silversmith stirs up a near riot.
20:1 - 20:6	MACEDONIA & GREECE. After the uproar in Ephesus was over, Paul travels throughout Macedonia and Greece.
20:7 - 20:12	TROAS. Meeting lasts until midnight, a young man falls asleep and falls from window's ledge. Paul raises him to life.
20:13 - 20:38	FAREWELL SPEECH. Paul doesn't stop in Ephesus due to time constraints, so he sends for the elders there.
21:1 - 23:35	JERUSALEM. Paul is seized and dragged from the temple. Paul claims his Roman citizenship.
24:1 - 26:32	BEFORE FELIX, FESTUS, AND AGRIPPA. Paul appears before these rulers.
27:1 - 28:15	VOYAGE TO ROME. Paul is shipwrecked on island of Malta, and bit by poisonous snake.
28:16 - 28:31	ROME. Arriving in Italy, Paul is welcomed by local Christians. He arrives in Rome and is placed under house arrest.

Find it fast

Key Words	Where to Look	Key Words	Where to Look
All have sinned	Romans 3:23	Like a thief in the night	1 Thess 5:1-2
Ask and it is given	Matthew 7: 7-12	Living Sacrifice	Romans 12:1-2
Baptism	1 Peter 3:18-22	Living stones...spiritual house	1 Peter 2: 4-5
Baptism	Romans 6: 1-7	Lord's Prayer	Matthew 6: 9-13
Baptism	Titus 3:3-8	Lord's Supper	Matthew 26: 17-30
Baptism	Col 2:12	Lord's Supper	1 Cor 11:12-26
Beatitudes	Matthew 5: 3-12	Love Chapter	1 Cor 13
Call for the elders	James 5:13-16	Love of Money	1 Tim 6: 6-10
Certainty of Resurrection	1 Cor 15: 1-20	Love one another	1 John 4:7-21
Christ died for sinners	Romans 5:6-8	Love one another	1 John 3:16-20
Christmas Story	Luke 2: 1-20	Marriage / family	Col 3: 18-21
Christmas Story	Matthew 1:18 - 2:12	Necessity of worship	Hebrews 10: 19-25
Coming of the Lord	1 Thess 4:13-18	No other name	Acts 4:12
Consider it joy	James 1:2-4	One Body, One Spirit	Ephesians 4:4-6
Created for good works	Ephesians 2:10	One in Christ	Galatians 3: 26-29
Crown of life	James 1:12	Parable: Good Samaritan	Luke 10: 25-37
Elder Qualifications	Titus 1: 5-9	Parable: Vine & branches	John 15: 5-7
Elder Qualifications	1 Tim 3	Parable: Wise/Foolish Man	Matthew 7: 24-27
Enter through the narrow gate	Matthew 7: 13-14	Parable: Prodigal Son	Luke 15: 11-32
Escape from Temptation	1 Cor 10:13	Paul's life story	Galatians 1:13 - 2:10
Faith Chapter	Hebrews 11	Pray without ceasing	1 Thess 5:17
Faith and Works	James 2:14-26	Pressing towards the goal	Phil 3:12-14
Fellowship of believers	Acts 2:42-47	Prophecy and Tongues	1 Cor 14
Fruit of the Spirit	Galatians 5: 22-23	Put on the full armor of God	Ephesians 6:13-18
Giving	2 Cor 9: 6-11	Rejoice in the Lord always	Phil 4:4
God so loved the world	John 3:16-18	Resurrection	Matthew 28: 1-10
God works for good in those	Romans 8:28	Slow to anger	James 1:19-20
God's grace is sufficient	2 Cor 12: 7-10	Source of temptation	James 1:13-15
Gospel	Romans 1:16	Spiritual Gifts	Romans 12:6-8
Gospel Message	1 Cor 15:3-8	Spiritual Gifts	1 Cor 12
Heirs together	Ephesians 3:6	Spiritual Gifts	Ephesians 4: 11-13
Holy Spirit at Pentecost	Acts 2: 1-12	Stand at the door and knock	Rev 3:20
I am not ashamed	2 Tim 1: 12	Supremacy of Christ	Col 1:15-20
I will make you fishers of men	Matt 4:18-20	Taming the tongue	James 3:3-12
Imitating Christ	Phil 2:1-5	The Great Commission	Matt 28:16-20
In My Father's House...many mansions	John 14:2	Wages of Sin	Romans 6:23
Inspiration of Bible	2 Tim 3: 16-17	We preach Christ crucified	1 Cor 1:20-25
Jesus is with us always	Hebrews 13: 5-6		

BAPTISM

Beginnings are really important. That's why the Bible starts with Genesis, the story of Creation. That's why we study the Old Testament to understand the New Testament. And that's why we study Baptism - because it is an important part of our beginning life as a Christian. Important as it is, it is not the first step in our Christian walk, nor is it the last step. Here are the basic steps of our Christian walk. Notice that the first five steps could occur very quickly, but step six will last the rest of our earthly life.

1. HEAR.
2. BELIEVE.
3. REPENT.
4. CONFESS.
5. BAPTISM.
6. SPIRITUAL GROWTH.
7. DEATH AND ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD.

But first, let's answer some basic questions:

Q. Why did God create us?

A. God created us (mankind) so that we could have a personal relationship with Him. He wants to walk with us and be our God. (Zechariah 2: 10-11, 2 Corinthians 6:16 and Revelation 21: 1-4.) He could have made us love Him, but instead, He created us with free will, so that we could choose to love Him.

Q. What keeps us from having a personal relationship with God?

A. Sin in our lives separates us from God. (Isaiah 59: 2-3 and Ephesians 2: 10-13).

Q What is sin?

A. Remember that thing called free will that was mentioned earlier? Well, because we have free will, we are able to do what we want. And sometimes, we choose and/or do the wrong things. We call that sin. Sin is our English word for *hamartia*, which literally means a missing of the mark. And all of us occasionally miss the mark. Murder, stealing, lying, fibbing, hurting, are all examples of sin. What about not helping when you could have? Is that missing the mark? What about saying something unkind about/to your neighbor, spouse, child? Is that missing the mark? Is it any wonder that Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Q. What are the consequences of sin?

A. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. Death here means being eternally separated from God.

Q. If sin separates us from God, will good works and following the Law bring us back to God?

A. No. Good works alone are not enough to justify us in the sight of God; and neither is a strict following of the Law (Moses' 10 commandments, and other Old Testament laws) enough to justify us. (Acts 13: 38-39; Ephesians 2: 8-9; and Romans 3: 20, 27-28.)

Q. What chance do we have then?

A. WOW - am I glad you asked that question! God loved us enough that He did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. He sent His only Son Jesus into the world to save us. (John 3: 16-18; Romans 3: 23-26; Romans 6: 23; Ephesians 2: 8; Acts 13: 38; 1 Timothy 1: 15; and 1 Peter 3: 18.)

Q. If we can't work our way to Heaven (God) by our own works, and if Jesus paid the price for our sins, does this mean that everyone will be saved (carte blanche)?

A. While we can't earn salvation, we do have to accept the gift that God offers us - that is we need to believe in Jesus, repent, take Jesus as our Lord and Savior, confess this, be baptized in His name, and then live Christian lives, growing in spiritual maturity. Here's how this all happens:

HEAR: First, we must be open to hearing about Jesus. If we are close-minded, then we will not really hear or think about what we are told. Hearing can come from talking to a friend, listening to someone, listening to the radio, watching TV, reading a book, listening to our parents, attending Sunday School classes as a child, etc. But, somehow, a source outside of ourself introduces us to the message about Jesus. Once we hear, then we have to process the message and decide whether or not it is true or has merit. I believe that the Holy Spirit's first work within us is to open our hearts and minds to receive the gospel message. (Romans 10: 13-17; Matthew 13: 13-23; Acts 4:4; Acts 16:14; Acts 18: 27; Acts 26: 14-18; Romans 10: 13-14; 1 Corinthians 15: 1)

BELIEVE: The next step calls for us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died for our sins. By following Him (taking Him as our Lord and Savior) we can be saved from our sins and become not just children of God, but joint heirs of heaven. Belief requires faith. (Mark 4: 11-20; John 1:12; John 3: 12-18, 36; Acts 4:4; Acts 13: 38-39; Acts 16: 30-31; Romans 1: 16; Romans 3: 20-28; 1 Timothy 1: 15-16; Hebrews 11:6; Galatians 3: 26; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-2).

If you are already a believer, then you probably have no problem believing in Jesus, because you believe in the bible. But if you're not a believer, then you may not believe in the bible, and there isn't any use in quoting scriptures to you.

Let's start with a look at the Old Testament. Do you believe in it? Many people used to question the accuracy or truthfulness of the Old Testament. They would point out that many of the locations mentioned don't exist today, and that there is no record of them ever existing. But, over the years, archaeological discoveries showed that these places and towns did exist. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls allowed us to confirm many of the books of the Old Testament as being in existence prior to the time of Christ.

Maybe you believe in the Old Testament, but don't believe that Jesus really existed. About 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament were written between AD 50 and AD 70. If you put Christ's death anytime close to AD 30, then it stands to reason that there were many people alive during the time these books were written who were alive at the time of Christ. If Christ had not really lived, then these people would have said "this is malarky - there was no Christ". But that didn't happen. Do you remember where you were when President John F. Kennedy was shot? I do. If I was to read a book that said Kennedy didn't exist, I would stand up and say "yes he did - I remember watching him on TV".

REPENT: Literally, the word means to turn around 180 degrees. We turn from "sin" to "God". We turn from doing what is wrong to doing what is right. We realize that we have missed the mark in the past, and we decide to try and do better in the future. We know we can do better, because now we will have Jesus' help. It's not just feeling sorry for your past actions, it's a commitment to future actions based on leading lives as Jesus would want us to. (Acts 2: 37-38; Acts 3: 19-20; Acts 17: 30; Acts 20: 21; Acts 26: 19-20; 2 Corinthians 7: 10; 2 Corinthians 12: 21; Hebrews 6: 1-2).

CONFESS: We confess that we have sinned, we confess that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. The key here is that we are ready to go on record with what we now believe. (Matthew 10: 32-33; Acts 19: 18; Romans 10: 9-10; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:19)

BAPTISM: One last act of obedience is needed to start us on our new Christian walk. We need to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. I'm going to quote directly from Vine's here:

Topics: BAPTISM, BAPTIST, BAPTIZE

English Use: Noun

Transliterated: *baptisma*

Text: "baptism,c consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence (from bapto, "to dip"), is used (a) of John's "baptism," (b) of Christian "baptism," ...

Topics: BAPTISM, BAPTIST, BAPTIZE

English Use: Verb

Transliterated: *baptizo*

Text: "to baptize," primarily a frequentative form of bapto, "to dip," was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc. Plutarchus uses it of the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl (Alexis, 67) ...In the early chapters of the four Gospels and in Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:4, it is used of the rite performed by John the Baptist who called upon the people to repent that they might receive remission of sins. Those who obeyed came "confessing their sins," thus acknowledging their unfitness to be in the Messiah's coming kingdom. Distinct from this is the "baptism" enjoined by Christ, Matt. 28:19, a "baptism" to be undergone by believers, thus witnessing to their identification with Him in death, burial and resurrection, e.g., Acts 19:5; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:13-17; 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12. The phrase in Matt. 28:19, "baptizing them into the Name" (RV; cf. Acts 8:16, RV), would indicate that the "baptized" person was closely bound to, or became the property of, the one into whose name he was "baptized." In Acts 22:16 it is used in the middle voice, in the command given to Saul of Tarsus, "arise and be baptize," the significance of the middle voice form being "get thyself baptized." The experience of those who were in the ark at the time of the Flood was a figure or type of the facts of spiritual death, burial, and resurrection, Christian "baptism" being an antitype, "a corresponding type," a "like figure," 1 Pet. 3:21. ...

So, we see that Baptism is first of all, an act of obedience. We also find that the original word meant to dip or immerse. Immerse means that the object is totally surrounded by water - ie, the person being baptized is lowered into the water until they are immersed, and then they are raised out of it. Being baptized lets us symbolically participate in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Reading through Acts will show you that baptism was a regular practice by those who had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Here are my bible references for Baptism: (Matthew 3:16; Matthew 28: 18-20; Acts 2: 37-41; Acts 8:12; 34-39; Acts 10: 34-48; Acts 13: 38-39; Acts 16: 14-15, 30-33; Acts 18:8; Acts 19: 1-6; Romans 6: 1-11; 1 Corinthians 15: 3-5; Galatians 3: 26-27; Colossians 2: 11-12; 1 Peter 3: 18-22)

SPIRITUAL GROWTH: Now that we have been baptized, our lives belong to Jesus. We need to learn more about him, and we need to start acting in ways that would be pleasing to Him. As we grow more Christ-like, we mature in our faith. This is a life long process. It doesn't end until we die and go to be with Jesus. Our lives should be constantly improving (becoming more like Christ). But, because we are still human, we will sometimes fail and fall. Sin won't totally leave our lives - but slowly we will see improvements if we depend on the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15: 1-2; 2 Corinthians 5: 17; Hebrews 5: 12-14; 2 Timothy 2:19)

There are other concepts that you can explore in studying about baptism. First, there is the concept of baptism representing a burial of the old man of sin and the rebirth to a new life in Christ; second, there is the concept that baptism is our entry into the church (body of Christ). (1 Corinthians 12: 13; Titus 3: 5; Romans 6: 4; Romans 8: 1-2; Galatians 3: 26-27; and 1 Peter 1: 3)

Q. If Baptism is so important, why don't we Baptize babies and small children?

A. When we study the New Testament, we see that becoming a Christian is a personal choice. It requires us to hear the gospel message, to believe, to repent of our past sins, to confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and then we are baptized. Babies and small children can not do this. They don't understand, and they can't make this decision. It is all right to dedicate them, to pray for them, and to raise them as Christians - but being baptized needs to be a personal decision that each person makes for themself.

Q. Can I get baptized so that I am saved, and then go back to living a non-Christian life?

A. No. Baptism is not an "eternity life insurance policy". We must believe in, accept, and choose to follow Jesus. Once we have been baptized into Jesus' name, we can't just go back to the life we used to live. Our lives now belong to Him, and we need to live lives that are pleasing to Him.

Q. Why don't we practice sprinkling, like some churches do?

A. We don't do this because first, the command is to be "*baptizo*" (immersed), not sprinkled. Second, while being sprinkled would be an act of obedience, it does not carry the full symbolism of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, nor does it involve a "rebirth" as does rising out of the water.

Q. I was baptized as a teenager. I went away from the church, but now am back and want to rededicate my life again. Should I be baptized again?

A. There is no need to be re-baptized because we have sinned, or because we want to rededicate our lives to God. Repentance, confession, and rededication alone are sufficient. But, if this is really important to you, then I don't believe it would hurt. Talk to your pastor about it.

Q. If a person lived on a desert island and never heard about Jesus, and they lived a really good life, would they go to heaven?

A. Only God can answer that question for sure. We are told that the only SURE way to heaven is through Jesus Christ. I can offer this small piece of hope to you - Romans 2: 14-16 says that "*when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.* "

Q. What happens if someone becomes a believer, and accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and confesses that; but dies before they are baptized - will they go to heaven?

A. Only God can answer that question for sure. Remember, baptism is part of a process - one that involves hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized. I can not say for sure at which point in that process we are truly saved. But I can say that anyone who completes the process is saved.

Q. I have been a believer for many years (sprinkled as a child). Are you telling me that my belief in Christ didn't count? Were all those years wasted? Are you asking me to turn my back on all I believed?

A. I understand how you feel. I had to deal with the same questions myself. I finally decided to be baptized because of three things:

- ◆ Jesus was baptized by John as an example. If Jesus could be baptized, so could I.
- ◆ Jesus commanded it ("...go and make disciples..., baptizing them..., teaching them...").
- ◆ It was the New Testament model. The believers in Jerusalem were baptized, the Samaritans were baptized, the Ethiopian was baptized, Saul was baptized, Cornelius was baptized, Lydia was baptized, the jailer was baptized...maybe I needed to stop worrying about my past belief and just obey Jesus' command to be baptized.

COMMUNION

If Baptism is a visible sign of our becoming part of the church body; then Communion is the visible sign of our continuing fellowship in the church body (along with worship and other fellowship activities).

We use the English word Communion for the Greek word "koinonia" which carries a sense of having something in common, a partnership, a fellowship. As such, it is used to denote something that we share together in, or participate together in, such as our joint understanding about the effects of Christ's blood shed for us and Christ's body offered as a sacrifice for us as symbolized by the emblems in the Lord's Supper. It is that time that the whole church body celebrates together in remembering Christ's sacrifice for us. We do this by jointly eating the bread and drinking the juice which are emblems of Christ's body and blood. At the same time that we are doing this together, we are also individually communicating with God as we think about what the emblems actually stand for.

This participation is probably best described in 1 Corinthians 10: 16-17. *"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."*

Our practice of Communion is probably best described in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26. *"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

Christ instituted the practice on the night before he was crucified. You can find the story in Matthew 26: 17-30; Mark 14: 12-26; and Luke 22: 7-38.

One of the things in this story that we don't always appreciate is the reference to the Passover and to the Passover lamb. Read Exodus 12: 1-14; Exodus 12: 40-50; and Exodus 13: 1-16. The Israelites had been in Egypt for about 350 years. Their status had gone from being honored guests to being slaves. God heard their prayers for deliverance and gave Moses the task of freeing the Israelites and leading them to the promised land. God sends 9 plagues against the Egyptians, including such things as a plague of locusts, waters turning blood red, etc. None of these is sufficient to turn Pharaoh's hardened heart. Finally, God sends the 10th plague - the death angel who will kill every 1st born male. The Israelites would be spared from this plague - provided that they obediently followed God's instructions. They were to slay a young unblemished lamb and roast it. The blood was to be put on the sides and tops of the doorframes into their house. After the 10th plague, Pharaoh let the Israelites go. God then gave instructions that the Passover meal was to be celebrated each year to remind the people of how God had saved them from their bondage. Instructions included:

- ◆ Unblemished young lamb. Jesus was without sin. His blood would be shed to save us.
- ◆ No bones were to be broken. Normally, criminals who were crucified would have their legs broken to hurry their deaths (they were not to be left up during the Sabbath). When the soldiers went to break Jesus' legs, they realized He was already dead; and did not break His legs. None of His bones were broken.
- ◆ Unleavened bread would be eaten (nothing containing yeast). This was to remind the Israelites that they had left Egypt in a hurry, and didn't even have the time to make bread and allow it to rise. Yeast is related to mold (which is associated with decay). Jesus would not be left in the tomb to decay. Sin can be thought of as a decay which we are to eliminate from our lives.

I love the way God links everything together. We have the Long Past (Passover), we have the Short Past (Christ's death), we have the Present (whenever we gather for Communion); and we have the Future (until He comes again).

Other references worth reading include Acts 2: 41-47 and Acts 20:7. These describe the early Christians coming together to share bread; and help explain why we have communion weekly (as often as we come together).

One passage that needs explaining is 1 Corinthians 11: 27-29. Some people think that this passage means that if there is any sin in our lives then we should not take communion. I don't believe that is true. I believe the passage either reminds us to approach communion reverently because of the emblems references to Christ's body and blood; or it means to remind us to maintain good relations with the other church members (the church often is referred to as the body of Christ on earth). This would mean setting aside class, race, and gender prejudices. I do believe that approaching communion reverently would mean to examine our lives, and identify areas that we need to improve in.

Two final thoughts on Communion.

First, why do we use juice rather than wine. In it's simplest form, wine is just juice which has been allowed to ferment. So, it's not really much different. There is also some thought that the wine used in Jesus' day had less alcohol in it than the wine produced today - so juice would be much closer. Finally, by using juice, we avoid any problems for those offended by (or addicted to) alcohol. In any case, by using grape juice, we stay with the fruit of the vine.

Second, did you ever stop to think about bread and juice. Both items can be found in any country. This means that the practice of Communion can be carried out throughout the world with no problem of obtaining the ingredients. In addition, both are reasonably affordable throughout the world.

STEPS TO GROWTH

The following **STEPS** will help you develop your Christian walk. All are important, and none is really more important than any of the others.

- ◆ Study God's Word
- ◆ Take time to worship
- ◆ Encourage one another.
- ◆ Pray.
- ◆ Stewardship.

1. Study God's Word.

One of our Christian Church motto's is "Where the bible speaks, we speak. Where the bible's silent, we're silent". Here are some others: "The bible is our only creed"; and "In essentials, unity; in everything else, liberality". All of these emphasize the importance that we place on the bible.

Start by getting yourself a good modern Bible such as the NIV (New International Version) or the New King James Bible. Then begin by reading the New Testament. The Old Testament is important too, but the New Testament contains the new covenant of grace that we are under.

How do we study the Bible? Start with prayer, asking God to guide you and help you to gain insight. Then just read straight through an entire book. If that is too much to do in one sitting, then read a chapter or two at a single sitting. Now that you've gotten an overview, you're ready for some in-depth study techniques. Distinguish between **Observation** (what the Bible says), **Interpretation** (what the Bible means), and **Application** (the meaning for your life). To do this, ask yourself:

1. Who is speaking?
2. Who was the intended audience?
3. What was the occasion that prompted it?
4. What was going on at the time it was written?
5. What was the culture as it relates to what was said?
6. Does it still apply today?
7. How can I apply this to my life?
8. How does this fit with the verses above and below, and other books in the bible?
9. What is the literary style in which it was written?

Study Aids: My recommendation is to get a good study bible (NIV Study Bible, NIV Life Application Bible, or NIV Quest Bible). These will have the Bible verses at the top, and notes at the bottom. The notes should be treated just like you would treat all commentaries. Keep in mind that the bible is inspired, but commentary writers are not. You may want to know something about the author's background to help you understand why they interpret certain passages the way that they do. If you read 10 different commentaries, you may very likely find 10 different interpretations. But, in the majority of cases you will probably find a certain level of agreement. Another excellent tool is a bible computer program. such as The Bible Library. It comes on a single CD-ROM and costs about \$10. The basic price includes a bible, a good bible search program, Strong's Greek & Hebrew dictionaries, a literal translation of the original Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament, Nave's Tropical Bible, a concordance, and more. Additional features can be "unlocked" for \$50 or \$75.

Besides reading the bible on your own, join a Sunday School Class or a Small Study Group of some sort.

Here's a thought. You can read the entire New Testament every month by reading about 20-40 minutes a day. Just divide the number of pages in your New Testament by 30, and read that many pages each day - just reading the actual scriptures. In a year, you will have read the New Testament twelve times.

2. Take Time to Worship.

It is possible to worship God in the quiet of our hearts, in the quiet of the outdoors, and in the quiet of our own homes. These are all examples of "individual worship", and they are good. But there is another form of worship, "corporate worship". Corporate worship is what we do together as a group. We need to have both forms of worship in our lives: individual and corporate. Both individual worship and corporate worship share many things in common - singing hymns, praying, and praising God. Corporate worship also includes encouraging each other, receiving instruction, hearing ministry/mission reports, and giving of tithes and offerings.

Individual worship is something we can do throughout the week. We can sing hymns, pray, and praise God. We can even encourage our friends, listen to Christian radio commentators, and study our bible. We've already talked about how to study the Bible. And, we'll soon be talking about prayer and encouragement. Let's briefly look at the other items. Singing hymns alone may sound strange. But it can be very uplifting. Buy a few good Christian CDs or tapes that are a collection of praise songs. Put them on and sing along. I do this as I drive to work. It makes the trip go fast, and it helps me focus on God. As you listen and sing along, think about what the verses actually say. What about listening to Christian radio stations. Is there anything wrong with listening to the various bible study programs? No. Some of them are very good. Just keep in mind that the commentator quite likely will have different views and beliefs than you may have on some subjects. Don't assume that everything they say is inspired - because it isn't. But don't be afraid to listen to someone just because they don't attend our church.

If we can do all of the above by ourselves, then do we really need to meet with other Christians for corporate worship? Yes! I can't emphasize corporate worship enough. It is an opportunity to be in church with other Christians where we can encourage and exhort one another.

There is an old saying that goes like this: "Show me the people you hang out with, and I will show you what you will be like". As parents, we are very concerned about who our children's friends are. God cares about His children too, and He wants us to continue to meet together on a regular basis. Hebrews 10:25 says "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing..."

I mentioned that corporate worship includes many activities. Take a moment to read the following bible verses: Acts 2: 46-47; Acts 14: 27; and 1 Corinthians 14: 26. We find the early Christians coming together to break bread, to sing hymns, to pray, to praise God, to encourage one another, to receive instruction, to hear ministry/mission reports; and to collect offerings.

Coming together to worship not only strengthens us (1 Corinthians 14: 26), but it helps the church to reach others and to grow in love as each of us matures and becomes more Christ-like. (Ephesians 4: 11-16).

Have you ever wondered why we normally meet on Sundays, rather than Saturdays? Saturday is the Sabbath, and one of the 10 commandments tells us to keep Holy the Sabbath. But, Acts 20: 7 tells us that the early church gathered together on Sunday, the first day of the week. The reason we meet on Sunday is two-fold. First, we meet on Sunday because that was the day that Christ rose from the tomb. Second, we meet on Sunday because we follow the example of the early church. Does this mean it is wrong to hold church service on Saturday night? No, many large churches have to do this in order to accommodate all of their members, and to accommodate those who have to work on Sunday morning. There is no scriptural mandate to only meet on Sundays, but there is plenty of good reasons (already stated) why we would want to continue to do so; even while sometimes also meeting on other nights.

3. Encourage One Another.

We've already established that one of the things that we are to do is to come together on a regular basis so that we can encourage one another. In so doing, we build one another up. Just how do we build someone up? 1 Corinthians 8: 1 tells us that love builds up. Ephesians 4: 29 says "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs..." 1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us that we build one another up by encouraging each other.

There are over 60 references in the New Testament that comment on things we are to do or how we are to treat "one another" because we are united together in Christ. Here are a few of the things the Bible tells us to do for one another. Take a moment and write down how you put each of these into practice this week:

- ◆ Pray for one another ((James 5:16)

- ◆ Build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

- ◆ Be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9)

- ◆ Put up with one another (Ephesians 4:2)

- ◆ Forgive one another (Colossians 3: 13)

- ◆ Instruct one another (Romans 15: 14)

- ◆ Fellowship with one another (1 John 1: 7)

- ◆ Love one another (John 15: 12)

Sometimes, we find that instead of building someone up, we hurt them. James 3: 2 says "*We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*" We all slip, and say things that hurt others, put them down, spread gossip, tell lies, or use bad language - but we need to remember that Christ wants us to encourage each other, to build one another up. There is nothing that can hurt a church more then the tearing down of one another that gossiping, and complaining can do. We need to remind ourselves that everything we say and do should encourage and build one another up. Remember - only you can prevent forest fires (James 3: 5-6).

4. Pray.

What is prayer, and why is it so important? Prayer is talking to God. It is our chance to share our thoughts, our desires, our concerns, our wishes, our wants, our praise, our worship, and our thanks with God. Of all the STEPS to growth, prayer may be the most important. Why, because it is the one thing that we can do anytime, anyplace, and for anything.

Q. Did the early church pray?

A. Yes. They prayed together in assemblies, in small groups, and individually. (Acts 1:14, 1:24, 2:42, 4:31, 6:4, 6:6, 7:59, 8:15, 9:40, 10:9, 12:5, 12:12, 13:3, 14:23, 16:25, 20:36, 21:5, and 28:8).

Q. I hear people talk about the promises of prayer? What are they?

A. These are bible verses that contain promises connected with prayers. There are also some verses that tell us things that need to be present in order for our prayers to be answered. Here are some of them:

- ◆ 1 John 3: 22 says we will receive what we ask for if we obey God and do what pleases Him.
- ◆ John 15:7 says we will receive what we ask for if we remain in Jesus and His words remain in us.
- ◆ John 14: 12-14 says Jesus will do whatever we ask in His name if we have faith in Him.
- ◆ Luke 11:9 says ask and receive, seek and find, knock and the door will be opened.
- ◆ Mark 11: 24 says whatever you ask for in prayer - believe it - and it will be yours
- ◆ James 5:16 says the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well.
- ◆ 1 John 5:14 says that if we ask anything according to His will, we will receive it

Q. Why doesn't God give me what I ask for?

A. There are many reasons why we sometimes don't get what we ask for. Sometimes

- ◆ what we ask for isn't in accordance with God's sovereign will (2 Corinthians 12: 7-9)
- ◆ we ask for selfish or self-indulgent reasons (James 4: 3)
- ◆ we don't obey/listen to God (Deuteronomy 1: 41-46)
- ◆ we have sin in our lives (Isaiah 59: 2)
- ◆ God treats us the way we treat others (Proverbs 21: 13)
- ◆ we lack faith (James 1: 6-8)
- ◆ we ask for things that would hurt us (Jonah 4: 1-4)

Q. Why doesn't God answer my prayer right away (immediately, now, ASAP)?

A. Sometimes God answer is a quick yes. Sometimes it's a quick no. And sometimes we find ourselves in God's waiting room. We need to remember that God's time isn't ours. He may be waiting for something or someone else. He may be waiting to give us or someone else a chance (2 Peter 3: 8-9).

Q. Can prayer result in God's changing His mind?

A. Sometimes. Read Genesis 18: 20-33; and Jonah 4: 1-10.

Q. What kinds of things can I pray for?

A. You can pray for just about anything that you want. Certainly, not for evil things or things that go against the will/teachings of God. But almost anything else is fair game. Ephesians 6: 18 says pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Phillipians 4:6 says not to be anxious about anything, but in everything to present prayers to God. There are several requests by the evangelists and missionaries for prayers on their bequest. You'll find cases of prayers for food, for wisdom, for health, for children, and for so many other things. What should you pray for? Everything.

Q. Where can I find the Lord's Prayer?

A. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. This is recorded in Matthew 6: 9-13 and Luke 11: 2-4. But remember, this is just a "model". It is not meant to be "THE" prayer that we offer over and over.

5. Stewardship.

Stewardship means taking care of the money, the time, and the gifts/skills that God has given you; and returning a portion of those back to God.

We give time to the church by serving in various ways. This can involve helping, cleaning, working, teaching, serving on a committee, welcoming guests, greeting, and many other activities.

Each of us has a special gift that God has given us. We need to put it to work. 1 Peter 4: 10 tells us that we should use the gift that we received to serve others. God's spiritual gifts were not given to us for our benefit, but were given to us to benefit the church body. We need to develop the gift that God gave us, and put it to work. (Ephesians 4: 11-13; Romans 12: 4-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7; 1 Timothy 4:14).

Most of us don't have any problem sharing our time or our gifts with the church. The hard part is understanding why we need to share our money.

Everything belongs to God, so all we are really doing is returning a part of it back to Him.

Tithing is an Old Testament practice of giving 10% of your increases back to God. You won't find the command to tithe in the New Testament. You will find the following instructions about giving:

- ◆ *...when you give...do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing... Matthew 6:3.*
- ◆ *Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Luke 6: 38.*
- ◆ *...if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is ... Romans 12:8*
- ◆ *Give everyone what you owe them...let no debt remain outstanding...Romans 13: 7-8*
- ◆ *If I give all I possess to the poor...but don't have love, I gain nothing...1 Corinthians 13:3*
- ◆ *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, 1 Corinthians 16:2*
- ◆ *...see that you also excel in...giving...2 Corinthians 8:7*
- ◆ *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. 2 Corinthians 8:12*
- ◆ *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7*
- ◆ *...be generous...and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:14*

When I say that you won't find the command to tithe in the New Testament, am I saying that we don't need to give 10% to God anymore. No. Tithing was scriptural in the Old Testament. It was a way of life. There are many verses about not neglecting our tithe, and bringing the tithe into the storehouse and God blessing the entire nation. If giving 10% made sense in the Old Testament, then it makes sense in the New Testament too. If anything, we should be giving more.

What is really important in our giving is our attitude. God is interested not just in our gift, but in our heart. If we give just to impress others, or if we give out of a sense of obligation, then God will not honor our gift. Likewise, if we give to God, but neglect our obligations, God will not be honored. Give willingly, give generously, give cheerfully. Give and watch God return good things back to you. Will those things be material? Not necessarily. I praise God for my wife, for my friends, and for my three sons who have grown into wonderful mature Christian men. These are true riches.

SHARING YOUR FAITH

There are many ideas about the best way to share your faith. I don't think any of them are necessarily better than the others.

As a new Christian, you may be thinking that you don't know enough to share with others. But you're wrong. You do. The key to sharing your faith is to just share your faith.

Let me say that again. The key to sharing your faith is to just share your faith.

Don't worry about memorizing a bunch of scriptures. Unsaved people don't place the same value on the bible that we do.

The best thing to share is YOU. Tell them why you became a Christian. Tell them what changes or what differences it has made in your life. Tell them what it felt like to be baptized. Tell them what it felt like to accept Christ into your life. Tell them what it felt like to join - and to belong to the Christian family.

Tell them that you don't know everything there is to know. But you do know one thing. God sent His only Son Jesus to earth to save us. Jesus died for OUR sins. God raised Him alive again. Believing in Him, following Him, and obeying Him is all that we need to do to have salvation.

Remember these things:

- ◆ If they say no, or if they reject you - they are not rejecting you, they are rejecting the facts about God.
- ◆ Be polite and gentle. Don't get into any arguments.
- ◆ Don't leave a negative wake.

OUR LOCAL CHURCH

Now that we've introduced you to Christianity, we're ready to look at our local church body here at Gladstone. But before we talk about our local church body, let's spend a minute to see how we "fit" into the total picture.

First of all, all Christians everywhere make up the church of Christ. Ephesians 1: 22-23 and Collosians 1: 18 tell us that Jesus Christ is the head of the church and that the church is His body (here on earth). What does this mean? It means that we (Christians everywhere) are the ones that need to do Christ's work. Taking our cue from the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20), we (the church) are to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded.

The New Testament doesn't just talk about the (whole) church, it also talks about local churches (Acts 14: 23). A local church refers to the people (body of believers) who meet together at a specific location (such as 305 E. Dartmouth Street in Gladstone, Oregon).

The New Testament doesn't spell out specific details about how each church should be organized or run. We find references to Paul appointing elders (Acts 14: 23). Some people consider 1 Corinthians 12: 28 to be a list of offices in a church. But beyond that, the New Testament is pretty much silent about how each church is to be organized or run. This means that we have discretion to organize ourselves as best fits the times and culture that we find ourselves in.

Some churches belong to a "denomination" such as Baptist, Lutheran, or Methodist. The denomination may have a central body of decision makers who set the "rules" for the churches belonging to the denomination. The leaders are "elected" at conferences made up of representatives of the member churches. A hierarchy may be present, and instrumental in deciding who ministers/pastors each church.

Other churches are "independent". Each local body sets the "rules" for themselves, and chooses their own pastor. The "independent" church may participate in a conference, but the member churches are not bound by any decisions or agreements reached at the conference. The conferences do not necessarily deal with issues, but are more focused on teaching/sharing new ideas about worship, education, etc.

Gladstone Christian Church is an independent church. We are part of the fellowship of churches called the Christian Church, a Bible-centered movement which seeks to base itself and it's beliefs on the Bible, God's Word. We share the basic beliefs and practices of other Christian churches, and our leaders sometimes attend conferences. There is no hierarchical group above us who approves our decisions, or who makes our decisions for us. We choose our own leaders, and we choose our own pastors.

Here are some specifics about Gladstone Christian Church and how it operates:

Finances

- ◆ We don't use offering envelopes. People who want a report at year end (for tax purposes) use checks.
- ◆ Here is what we do with the money
 - ✓ 14% off the top of giving goes to missions.
 - ✓ Then fixed expenses (salaries, utilities, insurance, etc.)
 - ✓ Then ministry funds (evangelism, education, scholarship, etc.) up to fixed monthly amount.
 - ✓ The rest is divided between Future Building and Special Projects.
- ◆ Expenses are approved prior to being paid. Approvers include the heads of the ministry teams.
- ◆ Reports are available on desk outside of office.

Committees (Ministry Teams)

- ◆ See Opportunities to Serve pamphlet for description of the teams and the names of the Ministry Team Leaders.
- ◆ Ministry Team Leaders meet once every three months. This meeting is called the Ministry Council. All church members are welcome to attend. Meeting reports are published and available to anyone interested in them. The Ministry Council is made up of:
 - ✓ The Ministry Team Leaders
 - ✓ The Elders and the Trustees
 - ✓ The Senior Pastor

Trustees

- ◆ We have trustees for the same reason that we have By-Laws. They are required by the State of Oregon in order for us to be incorporated, which gives us special tax status.
- ◆ The trustees handle any legal matters requiring their attention. They are not just names on paper.
- ◆ A copy of the by-laws can be obtained from the church office.

Elders

- ◆ The Elders are responsible for spiritual oversight of the church, and for setting strategies/direction.
- ◆ All Elders are elected, except for the pastors who become Elders upon accepting a calling to serve here.
- ◆ The Elders meet once a month, usually the first Thursday of each month. The first part of each meeting is open to anyone wishing prayers or wanting to talk to the Elders. Signed letters can also be given to any Elder who will share the letter at the next Elders' Meeting.
- ◆ A current list of elected elders can be found in the Church Directory
- ◆ Qualifications for Elders and election procedures can be found in the By-Laws.
 - ✓ Scriptural qualifications are taken from the Bible.
 - ✓ Local qualifications include such things as amount of time a person must be a member before becoming an Elder.
 - ✓ Each candidate fills out a form asking about views on stewardship, spiritual practices, etc. This form is reviewed by the Elders prior to a person being nominated for Elder.

Programs and Classes

We have many different programs and ministry areas here at Gladstone. Descriptions can be found in the Opportunities To Serve, What's Happening for Youth, and What's Happening for Adults pamphlets.

****NOTE: All adults working with Youth/Children must first fill out a background check form.****

	Seniors	Adults	Youth	Children
Sunday School	Seniors' Sunday School Class	Adult Sunday School Class	3 Sunday School classes: Jr. High, High School, & College age	Sunday School classes for each age group, Junior Church
Special Activities	Monthly potlucks, Quarterly trips	"We're All God's Valentines" Brunch, Singles	Summer Camp, Annual Retreat	Junior Choir (Spring & Winter), Christmas Joy Shop, Summer Camp
Special Outreach	Visitation programs taking craft and cards to shut-ins	Mexico Mission Trip, Honduras Mission Trip, Bus Ministry, Evangelism	Mexico Mission Trip	Vacation Bible School (VBS), Scholarships (college and camp)
Mid-Week Bible Study	Monthly Wednesday afternoon	Wednesday evening	"Jr. High Live" Thursday afternoons, Senior High "Life on the Edge" Wednesday nights	
Men's Group	Buildings & Grounds, Golf Tournament, Men's Breakfast, Promise Keepers, Men's Bible Study			
Women's Group	Annual Retreat, Welcome Basket, Meals for Sick/Bereavement, Women's Bible Study, Weddings			