NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

This course is an introduction to—a "Survey" of—the New Testament. In this course you will learn who wrote the books of the New Testament (NT), when and to whom they were written, why they were written and what they were about, etc.

A survey of the NT is a powerful and rewarding study.

1. The NT tells us of Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf and His victorious resurrection from death - and what our response should be to His life and death.
2. The NT gives us much wonderful information about the God of this universe, and about how to live according to His laws, to enjoy a personal relationship with Him, in a way that pleases Him.

When was it written? The NT was written after the life of Jesus, from approximately 45 to 95A.D. It was originally written in Koine Greek, the common Greek of that time.

The five sections of the New Testament:

1. The Gospels give us four different, yet not conflicting, accounts of the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospels demonstrate how Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and lay the foundation for the teaching of the rest of the NT.
2. History: The book of Acts records the deeds of Jesus' apostles, the men Jesus sent out into the world to proclaim the Gospel of salvation. Acts tells us of the beginning of the church and its rapid growth in the first century.
3. The Pauline Epistles, written by the Apostle Paul, are letters to specific churches giving official Christian doctrine and truth.
4. The General Epistles compliment the Pauline Epistles with additional teaching and application.
5. Prophecy: The book of Revelation prophesies the events that will occur in the end times.

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GOD'S GOOD NEWS

The Bible is the inspired Word of God.

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. This means that God divinely influenced the human authors of the Scriptures in such a way that what they wrote was the very Word of God.
2. The word "inspiration" simply means "God-breathed;" God's breath makes the Bible unique among all other books. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
3. Even though God used men with their distinctive personalities and writing styles, God divinely inspired the very words they wrote. 2 Peter 1:21

The Bible is alive and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. Hebrews 4:12

1. The word of God has a life-force that is unlike any merely human book. It is not only alive; it has the power to impart life to those who are spiritually dead.
2. Reading it renews the heart by giving spiritual life to the spiritually dead, and changes our character in an essential, fundamental transformation of the heart.
3. Reading the Bible will cause our motives and desires to become changed; it cleanses and renews us thoroughly; and it brings about a total moral overhaul such as no human literature could ever hope to accomplish.
4. In biblical terms, it sanctifies us—something no other book could ever claim.
5. There is no human instrument or worldly technique more effective than the Word of God to penetrate the human heart.

The Bible teaches us Who God is:

1. The Bible is our best source of information about who God is, and tells us that:
   a. He is eternal and changeless Psalm 90:2
   b. He is omnipotent (all-powerful) Job 42:2
   c. He is omniscient (all-knowing) Psalm 147:5
   d. He is omnipresent (present everywhere.) Psalm 139:7-12
   e. He is holy and righteous (totally pure and separate from sin) Psalm 145:17
   f. He is Love 1 John 4:8
2. The Bible tells us that God loves humanity. John 3:16

The Bible has two sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament:

1. The Old Testament (OT) was written before the life of Jesus Christ. It tells about the creation of all things, about how God walked with man but that man rebelled against His will, and about God's efforts to restore man to Himself.
   a. In the OT, God worked primarily with one people group, the Jews. Sadly, the Jews often strayed from God and worshipped false gods.
   b. Even though God worked mainly with the Jewish people in the OT, there are many indications of His love for all humanity. Psalm 105:1
2. The New Testament (NT) was written after the life of Jesus and explains to us the new covenant (agreement) that was made available to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Hebrews 9:15

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BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Introduction: 400 years elapsed from when the last books of the Old Testament were written until the birth and life of Jesus Christ. This 400 years is called the intertestamental period, or, because there was no prophetic word from God during this period, as the "400 silent years."

From Persian dominance to Roman dominance:

1. The political, religious, and social atmosphere of Palestine changed significantly during this period.
2. In the last days of the OT, Israel was under the control of the Persian Empire.
   a. The Persians allowed the Jews to practice their religion and even allowed them to rebuild and worship at the temple. Ezra 1:1-4
   b. This period included the last 100 years of the Old Testament period and about the first 100 years of the intertestamental period. It was a time of relative peace and contentment.
3. Alexander the Great defeated Persia, bringing Greek rule to the region.
   a. Greece required that their culture be promoted in every land they conquered.
   b. As a result, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, becoming the translation known as the Septuagint. Most of the NT references to OT Scripture use the Septuagint phrasing.
   c. Though Greece allowed religious freedom, Greek culture was very worldly, humanistic, and ungodly.
4. After Alexander died, Judea was ruled by a series of successors, culminating in Antiochus Epiphanes.
   a. Antiochus did far more than refuse religious freedom to the Jews. Around 167 B.C., he overthrew the rightful line of the priesthood and desecrated the temple, defiling it with unclean animals and a pagan altar.
   b. Eventually, Jewish resistance to Antiochus restored the rightful priests and rescued the temple.
   c. The period that followed was one of war, violence, and infighting.
5. Around 63 B.C., Rome conquered Palestine.
   a. This eventually led to Herod being made king of Judea by Rome.
   b. This was the power that taxed and controlled the Jews, and eventually executed the Messiah on a Roman cross.
6. Roman, Greek, and Hebrew cultures were now mixed together in Judea.

Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?

1. During the span of the Greek and Roman occupations, two important political/religious groups emerged in Palestine, the Pharisees and Sadducees.
2. The Pharisees added to the Law of Moses through oral tradition and eventually considered their own laws more important than God's. While Christ's teachings often agreed with the Pharisees, He railed against their hollow legalism and lack of compassion.
3. The Sadducees represented the aristocrats and the wealthy.
   a. The Sadducees, who wielded power through the Sanhedrin, rejected all but the Mosaic books of the Old Testament.
   b. They refused to believe in resurrection and were generally shadows of the Greeks, whom they greatly admired.

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MATTHEW

Author and Date: Scholars believe the author was Matthew, the tax collector who became one of Jesus' twelve Apostles. He wrote it sometime between A.D. 55-65.

1. Note Matthew's keen interest in accounting Matt. 18:23-24; 25:14-15
2. The Gospel of Matthew is very orderly and concise. Rather than write in chronological order, Matthew arranges this Gospel through six discussions.
3. Tax collectors could write in a form of shorthand, which meant that Matthew could record Jesus' words, such as the Sermon on the Mount, as He spoke.

Purpose of Writing: Matthew intends to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

1. More than any other Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew quotes the OT to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets (over 60 times).
2. Matthew describes in detail the lineage of Jesus from King David, and uses many forms of speech that Jews were familiar with (ie. Son of man, Son of David).

Key Verses: Matthew 28:19-20

Brief Summary:

1. The Gospel of Matthew discusses the lineage, birth, and early life of Christ in the first two chapters.
2. Chapters 3 and 4 describe the beginnings of Jesus' public ministry.
3. Matthew records Christ's teachings through "discourses" such as:
   - The Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7.
   - Chapter 10 involves the mission and purpose of the disciples;
   - Chapter 13 is a collection of parables;
   - Chapter 18 discusses the church;
   - Chapter 23 begins a discourse about hypocrisy and the future.
4. Chapters 21 through 28 describe the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, concluding with the Great Commission.

Matthew frequently quotes the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the Messiah:

1. His virgin birth in Bethlehem Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2
2. His return from Egypt after the death of Herod Hosea 11:1
3. His ministry to the Gentiles Isaiah 9:1-2; 60:1-3
4. His miraculous healings of both body and soul Isaiah 53:4
5. His speaking in parables Psalm 78:2
6. And His triumphal entry into Jerusalem Zechariah 9:9

Practical Application:

1. Matthew's intended audience was his fellow Jews, many of whom—especially the religious leaders—stubbornly refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah.
   a. They wanted a political Messiah, one who would free them from oppression and fulfill their earthly desires.
   b. Jesus rebuked them for their hard hearts and their refusal to recognize Him (John 5:38-40).
2. How often do we seek God on our own terms? We dare not make the mistake of the Pharisees, looking to God for worldly power and gain. Such a god is nothing more than an idol.
3. Matthew's climactic closing gives Jesus' last words—the Great Commission—that we, His disciples, are to *"go and make disciples of all nations"* (people groups).

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MARK

Author: Although the author does not name himself, Bible scholars through the ages have believed the writer was Mark of the NT. Acts 12:12

Date of Writing: Mark was one of the first NT books written, probably in A.D. 55-59. Matthew, Mark and Luke are quite similar and are called the "Synoptic Gospels;" they are significantly different from the Gospel of John.

Purpose of Writing:

1. Whereas Matthew is written primarily to his fellow Jews, Mark appears to be written more to Gentiles (everyone who was not a Jew).
2. Mark desired that non-Jews have the story of Jesus as Servant and Savior of the world, in order to strengthen their faith in the face of severe persecution and to teach them what it meant to be Jesus' disciples.

Key Verses:

1. *"'Come, follow Me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.'"* Mark 1:17
2. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* Mark 10:45

Brief Summary:

1. Mark emphasizes Jesus' actions more than His teaching, moving quickly from one episode in the life of Christ to another.
2. Mark does not begin with a genealogy as in Matthew, because Gentiles would not be interested in His lineage.
3. Mark follows Jesus' baptism and public ministry. What follows is the record of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.
4. In a dynamic profession, the disciples, led by Peter, acknowledged their faith in Him (Mark 8:29-30), even though they failed to understand fully who He was until after His resurrection.
5. In the days leading to His final trip to Jerusalem, we see His disciples bewildered, fearful and doubting. At Jesus' arrest, He stood alone after they fled.
6. In the following hours, while being tried, Jesus boldly proclaimed that He is the Christ, and that He would be triumphant at His return. Mark 14:61-62
7. After His death and burial, early in the morning of the first day of the week, some women went to the tomb with burial spices and discovered that Jesus had risen. They announced the joyful news: "He is risen!" (Women were the first evangelists!)
8. This same message of Christ's victory over death, of hope and salvation has been broadcast throughout the world down through the centuries all the way to us today, and we must carry it on to our generation and the next.

Practical Application:

1. Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of God and as the One who came to serve and sacrifice for us, in part to inspire us to do the same. Mark 10:45
2. We are to minister as He did, with the same greatness of humility and devotion to the service of others. Jesus exhorted us to remember that to be great in God's kingdom, we must be the servant of all. Mark 10:44
3. Self-sacrifice should transcend our need for recognition or reward, just as Jesus was willing to be abased as He lay down His life for the sheep.

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LUKE

Author and Date: The author of the Gospel of Luke does not identify himself, but from Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3, it is clear that the same person wrote both books.

1. From the earliest days believers have agreed that Luke, a physician and travel companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts. Colossians 4:14
2. Luke was the only Gentile (non-Jew) to write any books of Scripture.
3. The Gospel of Luke was likely written between A.D. 58 and 65.

Purpose of Writing:

1. As with the other two synoptic gospels—Matthew and Mark—this book's purpose is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and all He *"began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven."* Acts 1:1-2
2. Luke is unique in that it is a meticulous history—an "orderly account" (Luke 1:3) consistent with Luke's medical mind—giving details the other Gospels omit.
3. Luke's history of the life of the Great Physician emphasizes His ministry to—and compassion for—Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others regarded as outcasts in Israel.

Key Verses: *"'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'*
Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:18-19, 21

Brief Summary:

1. Some consider Luke to be the most beautiful book ever written.
2. It begins by telling us about Jesus' parents; the birth of His cousin (John the Baptist); His birth in a manger in Bethlehem; and His genealogy through Mary.
3. Jesus' public ministry reveals His compassion and forgiveness through the stories of the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Good Samaritan.
4. While many believe in Jesus and this unprejudiced love that surpasses all human limits, many others—especially the religious leaders—oppose Jesus.
5. Christ encourages His followers to count the cost of discipleship, while His enemies seek His death on the cross.
6. Finally, Jesus is betrayed, tried, sentenced and crucified. But the grave cannot hold Him! By His resurrection He conquers death and offers to those who believe the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven.

Practical Application:

1. Luke gives us a beautiful portrait of our compassionate Savior.
   a. Jesus did not turn away from the poor and the needy; in fact, they were a primary focus of His ministry.
   b. In Jesus' day there were many who were poor, weak and downtrodden; they were powerless to improve their lot and eagerly received Jesus' message that *"the kingdom of God is near you."* Luke 10:9
2. This is a message we must carry to those around us who desperately need it.
   a. Christians must follow the example of Jesus and bring the good news of salvation to the spiritually poor and needy.
   b. The kingdom of God is near and the time grows shorter every day.
3. We must preach repentance and His forgiveness in all nations. Luke 24:45-48

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JOHN – Part One

Author: John 21:20-24 describes the author as *"the disciple whom Jesus loved,"* understood to be John the Apostle, one of the sons of Zebedee. Luke 5:10

Date of Writing: It is unclear whether the Gospel of John was written before or after Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, but it was certainly written by A.D. 85-90.

Purpose of Writing: John himself tells us his purpose for writing: *"… that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* John 20:31

1. Unlike the three synoptic Gospels, John's purpose is not to present a chronological narrative of the life of Christ, but to display His deity.
2. John was not only seeking to strengthen the faith of second-generation believers and bring about faith in others, but he also sought to correct a false teaching that was spreading.

Key Verses:

1. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* John 1:1,14
2. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* John 3:16
3. *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* John 10:10
4. *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"* John 11:25-26
5. *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* John 13:35
6. *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'"* John 14:6

Brief Summary:

1. The Gospel of John selects only seven miracles as signs to demonstrate the deity of Christ and to illustrate His ministry. Some of these signs and stories are found only in John.
2. His is the most theological of the four gospels and often gives the reason behind events mentioned in the other gospels.
3. He shares much about the approaching ministry of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension.
4. There are certain words or phrases that John frequently uses that show the repeating themes of his Gospel: believe, witness, Comforter, life - death, light - darkness, I am... (as in Jesus is the "I Am"), and love.
5. John's gospel introduces Christ, not from His human birth, but from *"the beginning"* as *"the Word"* (Logos) who, as Deity, is involved in every aspect of creation (1:1-3) and who later becomes flesh (1:14) in order that He might take away our sins as the spotless, sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29).

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JOHN – Part Two

Brief Summary, continued:

6. In the book of John, Jesus repeatedly angers the Jewish leaders by correcting them (2:13-16); healing on the Sabbath, and claiming characteristics belonging to God. John 5:18; 8:56-59; 9:13-16; 10:33
7. Jesus prepares His disciples for His coming death and for their ministry after His resurrection and ascension. John 14-17
8. He then willingly dies on the cross in our place (10:15-18), paying our sin debt in full (19:30) so that whoever trusts in Him will be saved. John 3:14-16
9. He rises from the dead, convincing even the most doubting of His disciples that He is God and Master. John 20:24-29

The Seven "I Am" statements of Jesus: John's portrayal of Jesus as the one true God is seen most emphatically in the seven "I Am" statements of Jesus.

1. Jesus said *"I am the Bread of life*,*"* provided by God to feed the souls of His people, just as He provided manna to feed His children in the wilderness. John 6:35
2. Jesus said *"I am the Light of the world"*, the same Light that God promised
3. to His people in the OT (Isaiah 60:19-22) and which will find its culmination in the New Jerusalem when Christ the Lamb will be its Light (Revelation 21:23). John 8:12
4. Two of the "I Am" statements refer to Jesus as both the "Good Shepherd" and the "Door of the sheep." Here are clear references to Jesus as the God of the OT, the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23:1) and, as the only Door into the sheepfold, the only way of salvation.
5. Jesus said *"I am the resurrection and the life"* John 11:25
   a. The Jews believed in the resurrection and, in fact, used the doctrine to try to trick Jesus into making statements they could use against Him. But His statement at the tomb of Lazarus must have astounded them. He was claiming to be the possessor of the power over life and death.
   b. None other than God Himself could claim such a thing.
6. Similarly, by His claim to be *"the way, the truth and the life"* we see that Christ is the only way to eternal life. John 14:6
7. Finally, Jesus said *"I am the true Vine."* Jesus identifies Himself with the nation of Israel who are called the vineyard of the Lord in many OT passages. As the true Vine, He portrays Himself as the Lord of the "true Israel"— all those who would come to Him in faith, because *"…not all who are descended from Israel are Israel"* (Romans 9:6). John 15:1, 5

Practical Application:

1. John's gospel contains much useful information for evangelism (John 3:16 is likely the best known Bible verse) and is often used in evangelistic Bible studies.
2. In Jesus' encounters with Nicodemus and the woman at the well (chapters 3-4), we can learn much from Jesus' model of personal evangelism.
3. His comforting words to His disciples before His death (14:1-6, 16, 16:33) are still of great comfort today when death claims our loved ones in Christ, as is His "high priestly prayer" for believers in chapter 17.
4. John's teachings concerning the deity of Christ (1:1-3, 14; 5:22-23; 8:58; 14:8-9; 20:28, etc.) are very helpful in countering the false teachings of some of the cults who see Jesus as being less than fully God.

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ACTS – Part One

Author and Date of Writing: As noted in the lesson on the Gospel of Luke, the Acts of the Apostles was very likely written by Dr. Luke, probably between 61-64 A.D.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The Book of Acts was written to provide a history of the early church.
2. The emphasis of the book is the importance of the day of Pentecost and of being empowered by the Holy Spirit to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ.
3. Acts records the apostles being Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the rest of the surrounding world.
4. The book sheds light on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers, guides, teaches, and serves as our Counselor.
5. Reading the book of Acts, we are enlightened and encouraged by the many miracles that were being performed during this time by the disciples Peter, John, and Paul.
6. The book of Acts emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's Word and the transformation that occurs as a result of knowing Christ.
7. There are also many references to those that rejected the truth that the disciples preached about the Lord Jesus Christ. The lust for power, greed, and many other vices of the devil are evidenced in the book of Acts.

Key Verses:

1. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Acts 1:8
2. *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* Acts 4:12
3. *"So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.'"* Acts 16:31

Brief Summary:

1. The book of Acts gives the history of the Christian church and the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ, as well as the mounting opposition to it.
2. Although many faithful servants were used to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, was the most influential.
   a. Before he was converted, Paul was very active in persecuting and killing Christians. Paul's dramatic conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-31) is a highlight of the book of Acts.
   b. After his conversion his life was totally transformed; he loved and served God until his death, preaching His Word with power, taking His salvation throughout present-day Turkey, Greece, Italy and, some believe, Spain.
3. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem (chapters 1–8:3), Judea and Samaria (chapters 8:4–12:25), and to the ends of the earth (chapters 13:1–28).
4. Included in the last section are Paul's three missionary journeys (13:1–21:16), his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea (21:17–26:32) and his final journey to Rome (27:1–28:31).

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ACTS – Part Two

The Power of the Holy Spirit:

1. The Book of Acts presents wonderful teaching about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through the lives of His children:
   a. Until the Day of Pentecost the role of the Holy Spirit had been the external "anointing" of a few (among them Moses [Numbers 11:17], Othniel [Judges 3:8-10], Gideon [Judges 6:34], and Saul [1 Samuel 10:6-10]).
   b. On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Spirit came to live in the very hearts of all His children (Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16), guiding and empowering them from within.
   c. The indwelling Spirit is the gift of God to those who come to Him in faith.
2. Paul's conversion and life give a dramatic example of the power of God's Holy Spirit in His children.
   a. Paul admitted that, prior to meeting the risen Savior, he was the most zealous of Israelites and was blameless "concerning the righteousness of the law" (Philippians 3:6 NKJV), going so far as to persecute those who taught salvation by grace through faith in Christ. But after his conversion, he realized that all his legalistic efforts were worthless. Philippians 3:8b-9
   b. Paul was filled with God's Spirit and was empowered to take His salvation throughout the Roman Empire.

Practical Application:

1. God can do amazing things through ordinary people when He fills and empowers them through His Spirit.
   a. God essentially took a group of mostly uneducated fisherman and other simple tradesmen and used them to turn the world upside down. Acts 17:6
   b. God took a Christian-hating murderer and changed him into a great evangelist and missionary, who authored almost half the books of the NT.
   c. God can and does do the same through us—transforming our hearts and empowering us by the Holy Spirit, and giving us a passion to spread the good news of salvation through Christ.
   d. Like the disciples in Acts 1:8, we are to wait for the empowering of the Spirit, then go in His power to fulfill the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19-20
   e. We are to be His witnesses in our Jerusalem (our home city or town), in all our Judea and Samaria (our home region and the nearby areas), and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8
2. We can observe many important lessons from Paul's missionary work about how to serve God and be fruitful in our Great Commission efforts:
   a. Paul focused most of his ministry on population centers, including Ephesus, Corinth, Athens and Philippi. We also must not neglect the cities.
   b. Paul preached repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Acts 20: 24; Rom. 1:16
   c. Paul often went first to the Temple to present the Gospel. Similarly, we must not be afraid to engage leaders of other religions. Acts 13:14-15, 14:1, 18:4
   d. Paul adapted himself and the way he presented God's Truth to the cultures of the people he was trying to reach. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
   e. Paul planted churches.
   f. He discipled others, such as Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3) and Timothy and Titus, and assigned them to lead and further the ministries. Titus 1:5

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ROMANS – Part One

Author and Date of Writing: Romans 1:1 identifies the author as Paul. Romans 16:22 indicates that Paul used a man name Tertius to transcribe his words. The Book of Romans was likely written from A.D. 56-58.

Purpose of Writing:

1. As with all Paul's epistles to the churches, his purpose in writing was to proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching doctrine and to edify and encourage the believers who would receive his letter.
2. Of particular concern to Paul were those to whom this letter was written—those in Rome who were *"loved by God and called to be saints."* Romans 1:7
3. Because he himself was a Roman citizen, he had a unique passion for those in the assembly of believers in Rome. Since he had not, to this point, visited the church in Rome, this letter also served as his introduction to them.

Key Verses: Of all the books in the Bible, Romans has the most fully-developed doctrinal statements. Paul beautifully explains the doctrines as faith and grace, giving us many verses worth memorizing and understanding.

1. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."* Romans 1:16
2. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Romans 3:23
3. *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Romans 5:8
4. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 6:23
5. *"You however, are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."* Romans 8:9
6. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28
7. *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:37-39
8. *"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9-10
9. *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship."* Romans 12:1
10. *"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."* Romans 12:19
11. *"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."* Romans 16:17

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ROMANS – Part Two

Brief Summary:

1. Paul was excited about being able to minister at last in this church, and everyone was well aware of that fact. Romans 1:8-15
2. The letter was written from Corinth just prior to Paul's trip to Jerusalem to deliver the contributions that had been given for the believers there.
3. Paul had intended to go to Rome and then on to Spain (Romans 15:24), but his plans were interrupted when he was arrested in Jerusalem. (In Acts 28:16 we read that he would eventually go to Rome as a prisoner.)
4. The Book of Romans is primarily a work of doctrine. Its main theme is righteousness, and it can be divided into four sections:
   a. Righteousness needed, 1:18–3:20;
   b. Righteousness provided, 3:21–8:39;
   c. Righteousness vindicated, 9:1–11:36;
   d. Righteousness practiced, 12:1–15:13.
5. He strongly points out that he is not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power by which everyone is saved. Romans 1:16
6. Paul points out that God did not demand men have their lives straightened out before coming to Christ. While we were still sinners Christ died on a cross for our sins. Romans 5:8

Paul's addressing the Jewish context of many of the believers in Rome:

1. Paul uses several Old Testament people and events as illustrations of the glorious truths in the Book of Romans.
   a. Abraham's faith made him righteous. Romans 4:1-5
   b. David demonstrated his faith by his repentance. Romans 4:6-9
   c. Through Adam humanity inherited sin, but Jesus was a new holy Adam.
   d. Isaac was the child of promise, illustrating that we also are children of the promise of the divine grace of God through Christ.
2. In chapters 9–11, Paul declares that God has not eternally rejected Israel (Romans 11:11-12), but has allowed them to "stumble" only until the full number of the Gentiles will be brought to salvation.

Practical Application:

1. The Book of Romans makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Every "good" deed we have ever done is as a filthy rag before God.
2. So dead in our trespasses and sins are we that only the grace and mercy of God can save us. God expressed that grace and mercy by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place.
3. When we turn our lives over to Christ, we are no longer controlled by our sin nature, but we are controlled by the Spirit. Romans 8:9
4. If we make confession that Jesus is Lord, and believe that He is raised from the dead, we are saved, born again. Romans 10:9
5. We are to live our lives as a living sacrifice offered to God for His service and glory, and He will transform our lives and hearts into His character. Rom. 12:1-2
6. We should never be ashamed of the gospel. Instead, let us all be faithful in proclaiming the good news of Jesus' love and salvation, offered freely to all who believe! Romans 1:16

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1 CORINTHIANS – Part One

Author and Date of writing: In 1 Corinthians 1:1 we read that the author is the Apostle Paul. Scholars believe it was written in approximately A. D. 55.

Purpose of Writing: A few years after founding the church in Corinth Paul heard some disturbing reports about it. They were full of pride and were excusing immorality. Spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines. Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in an attempt to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation—Jesus Christ.

Key Verses:

1. *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."* 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:
2. *"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."* 1 Corinthians 9:19
3. *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* 1 Corinthians 10:31:
4. *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit."* 1 Corinthians 12:4
5. *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."* 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Brief Summary:

1. The Corinthian church was plagued by divisions. The believers in Corinth were divided into groups loyal to certain spiritual leaders. 1 Corinthians 1:12
2. Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to be united. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23
3. Many in the church were essentially approving of a sinful relationship (1 Cor. 5:1-2). Paul commanded them to expel the sinner from the church. 1 Cor. 5:13
4. The Corinthian believers were taking each other to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-2). Paul taught them that it would be better to be taken advantage of than to damage their Christian testimony. 1 Corinthians 6:3-8
5. Paul gave the Corinthian church instructions on <u>marriage and celibacy</u> (chapter 7), <u>food sacrificed to idols</u> (chapters 8 and 10), <u>Christian freedom</u> (chapter 9), the <u>veiling of women</u> (1 Corinthians 11:1-16), <u>the Lord's Supper</u> (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), <u>spiritual gifts</u> (chapters 12-14), and <u>the resurrection</u> (chapter 15).

Strife in the church:

1. There were many problems among the believers in Corinth. There were divisions, quarrels, jealousy, some living in immorality and other problems related to the spiritual immaturity of some of the believers. 1 Cor. 3:1-3
2. Worship services were often disorderly, with some evidently even becoming drunk during feasts. 1 Cor. 11:21
3. Disagreements were so strong that some of the believers were taking other believers to court. 1 Cor. 6:7-8
4. Paul reminds the believers that they are God's temple—that His Spirit lives in them—and that they are to be united in Christ. 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20
5. Paul exhorts the believers to stand firm in their faith and in *"the work of the Lord."* 1 Cor. 15:58

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1 CORINTHIANS – Part Two

The Gifts of the Spirit:

1. Three whole chapters (12, 13 and 14) are devoted to the use and misuse of Spiritual Gifts.
2. Paul explains that the Holy Spirit gives different spiritual gifts to different believers.
3. He stresses that they all come from the same Spirit, and that they are given "for the common good." 1 Cor. 12:4-7
4. He defines some of these gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8-10.
   a. This list of spiritual gifts is similar to, but not identical with, the lists of gifts in Romans 12:6-8 and in Ephesians 4:11. The fact that all three lists are different suggests that they aren't intended to be all-inclusive.
   b. The spiritual gifts are given *"to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."* Ephesians 4:12
   c. This is different from the fruit of the Spirit, which the Spirit produces in us as a reflection of God's character in us as a witness to the world. Gal. 5:22-23
5. We are to use and develop our spiritual gifts in service to the Church, and *"eagerly desire the greater gifts."* 1 Cor. 12:31a
   a. The "greater gifts" can be understood to be those that are mentioned first in the different lists of gifts. The three first gifts listed are apostleship, prophecy, and teaching. 1 Cor. 12:28
   b. In each of the three lists, the gift of tongues (and interpretation of tongues) is mentioned last, suggesting it to be the least important of the spiritual gifts.
6. In the middle of Paul's three chapters about spiritual gifts, he calls us to *"the most excellent way,"* to love one another with God's supernatural love. 1 Cor. 12:31b
   a. 1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most beautiful passages in all of human history.
   b. This chapter makes is clear that no matter what spiritual gifts God gives us, the important thing is to do everything with love.

The Resurrection:

1. Paul reminds the believers in Corinth that Jesus was victorious over death (1 Cor. 15:3-4), and that because of Christ's resurrection we have the promise of eternal life. 1 Cor. 15:20-21
2. Paul points to the eventual return of Christ, at which time all His children will be resurrected and will meet Him in the air. 1 Cor. 15:51-53

Practical Application:

1. Many of the problems and questions the Corinthian church was dealing with are still present in churches today. Churches today still struggle with divisions, with immorality, and with the use (and misuse) of spiritual gifts.
2. The Book of 1 Corinthians very well could have been written to the Church today and we would do well to heed Paul's warnings and apply them to ourselves.
3. Despite all the rebukes and corrections, 1 Corinthians brings our focus back to where it should be—on Christ.
4. Genuine Christian love is the answer to many problems (chapter 13).
5. A proper understanding of the resurrection of Christ, as revealed in chapter 15, and thereby a proper understanding of our own resurrection, is the cure for what divides and defeats us.

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2 CORINTHIANS – Part One

Author: In 2 Corinthians 1:1 we read that the author of the Book of 2 Corinthians is the apostle Paul, possibly along with Timothy. It was written approximately two years after the first letter to the Corinthians.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The believers in Corinth were shallow in their faith. Some were denying Paul's spiritual authority. In 2 Corinthians, Paul laid out his defense, refuting and condemning the false teachers. He also encouraged the faithful to stay committed to the truth and reaffirmed his deep love for them.
2. Second Corinthians is a deeply personal letter--a response to the complex history between Paul and the church he had established in Corinth. The circumstances behind this letter reveal the difficult, often painful realities of life in the ministry.
3. More than any of his letters, this one shows us the heart of Paul as a pastor.

Second Corinthians, or Third or Fourth? Many believe this epistle was actually Paul's fourth letter to the church in Corinth. They believe this because:

1. Paul mentions an earlier letter in 1 Corinthians 5:9, which means that 1 Corinthians was actually the second letter to the believers in Corinth.
2. Three times in 2 Corinthians Paul references a third, painful letter: *"For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears ..."* (2 Corinthians 2:4).
3. 2 Corinthians, therefore, was Paul's fourth letter to them.

Key Verses:

1. *"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God."* 2 Corinthians 3:5
2. *"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."* 2 Corinthians 3:18
3. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* 2 Corinthians 5:17
4. *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* 2 Corinthians 5:21

Paul, the founding pastor of the Church in Corinth:

1. The church in Corinth began in A.D. 52 when Paul visited there on his second missionary journey.
2. It was then that he stayed one and a half years, the first time he was allowed to stay in one place as long as he wished. Acts 18:1-18.
3. In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his relief and joy that they had received his "severe" letter (now lost) in a positive manner.
4. That letter addressed issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13) who were assaulting Paul's character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine.
5. There were also some people who had not repented of their licentious behavior (2 Corinthians 12:20-21).

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2 CORINTHIANS – Part Two

Brief Summary:

1. After greeting the believers in the church at Corinth and explaining why he had not visited them as originally planned (vv. 1:3–2:2), Paul explains the nature of his ministry.
2. Paul was overjoyed to learn from Titus that the majority of Corinthians repented of their rebellion against Paul (2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-9). The apostle encourages them for this in an expression of his genuine love (2 Cor. 7:3-16).
3. Paul also sought to vindicate his apostleship, as some in the church had likely questioned his authority (2 Cor. 13:3).
4. Faithfulness and triumph through Christ were the hallmarks of his ministry to the churches (2:14-17).
5. He compares the glorious ministry of the righteousness of Christ to the "ministry of condemnation" which is the Law (v. 3:9) and declares the validity of his ministry in spite of intense persecution (4:8-18).
6. Chapter 5 outlines the basis of the Christian faith—the new nature (v. 17) and the exchange of our sin for the righteousness of Christ (v. 21).
7. Chapters 6 and 7 find Paul defending himself and his ministry, assuring the Corinthians yet again of his sincere love for them and exhorting them to repentance and holy living.
8. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul exhorts the believers at Corinth to follow the examples of the brothers in Macedonia and extend generosity to the saints in need. He teaches them the principles and rewards of gracious giving.
9. Paul ends his letter by reiterating his authority (chapter 10) and his concern for their faithfulness in the face of fierce opposition from false apostles, calling himself a "fool" for having to reluctantly boast of his qualifications and his suffering for Christ (chapter 11).
10. He ends his epistle by describing the vision of heaven he experienced and the "thorn in the flesh" he was given by God to ensure his humility (chapter 12).
11. The last chapter contains his exhortation to the Corinthians to examine themselves, and ends with a benediction of love and peace.

Practical Application:

1. This letter is the most biographical and least doctrinal of Paul's epistles. It tells us more about Paul as a person and as a minister than any of the others.
2. That being said, there are a few things we can take from this letter and apply to our lives today.
3. One thing is stewardship, not only of money, but of time as well. Like the Macedonians, we should dedicate not only all we have to the Lord, but all that we are. 2 Cor. 8:5
4. He really doesn't need our money. He is omnipotent! He wants the heart, one that longs to serve and please and love.
5. Stewardship is more than just money. Yes, God does want us to tithe part of our income, and He promises to bless us when we give to Him. There is more though. God wants 100%. He wants us to give Him our all. Everything we are.
6. We should spend our lives living to serve our Father. We should not only give to God from our paycheck, but our very lives should be a reflection of Him.

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GALATIANS

Author and Date of Writing: Galatians 1:1 clearly identifies the Apostle Paul as the writer. It was written somewhere between 48 and 55 A.D.

Purpose of Writing: Paul wanted to encourage the Galatians in their faith, especially concerning the important point of justification by faith alone, without the works of the law.

Key Verses:

1. *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* Galatians 2:20
2. *"Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.'"* Galatians 3:11
3. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."* Galatians 5:22-23

Brief Summary:

1. The result of justification by grace through faith is spiritual freedom. Gal 5:13
   a. Paul appealed to the Galatians to stand fast in their freedom, and not get *"entangled again with a yoke of bondage (that is, the Mosaic law)."* Gal. 5:1
   b. Such freedom does not insulate one from life's struggles. Nevertheless, the Spirit bears His fruit, such as love, joy, and peace. Galatians 5:22-23
2. If Paul had not been successful in his argument for justification by faith alone, Christianity would have remained a sect within Judaism, rather than becoming the universal way of salvation. Galatians, therefore, is not only Luther's epistle; it is the epistle of every believer who confesses Christ as their Savior. Gal. 2:20

The message of Galatians and the message of James illustrate two truths that can seem to be in conflict, though in reality they are complementary.

1. James insists that faith prove its existence through works, while Paul in Galatians stresses "faith alone." Nevertheless, they both emphasize the need for transformation of the individual by the grace of God. James 1:18, Galatians 5:13
2. Like the two sides of a coin, these two aspects of Christian truth must always accompany each other.

Practical Application:

1. One of the main themes of the Book of Galatians is found in 3:11: *"The righteous shall live by faith."* Not only are we <u>saved</u> by faith, but we <u>live</u>—day by day, moment by moment—by and through that faith. John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9
2. Not that faith is something we conjure up on our own—it is the gift of God, not of works—but it is our responsibility and joy to exhibit our faith so that others will see the fruit of Christ in us. Matthew 7:16-20
3. All Christians should be diligent in expressing the saving faith within us so that others will see Christ in us and *"glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Matt. 5:16

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EPHESIANS

Author and Date: Paul wrote this epistle (Eph. 1:1), probably around A.D. 60-63.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and equip a maturing church.
2. Paul was especially concerned about divisions among the believers.
3. He also gave practical teaching for Christian families, employers and employees.

Key Verses:

1. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* Ephesians 2:8-10
2. *"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to*
3. *one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."* Ephesians 4:4-6
4. *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* Ephesians 6:10-12

Brief Summary:

1. Doctrine occupies the greatest portion of the Book of Ephesians. Half of the teaching in this epistle relates to our standing in Christ, and the remainder of it affects our condition. All too often those who teach from this book bypass all the foundational instruction and go directly to the closing chapter. It is this chapter that emphasizes the warfare or the struggle of the saints. However, to benefit fully from the contents of this epistle, one must begin at the beginning of Paul's instruction in this letter.
2. First, as followers of Christ, we must fully understand who God declares us to be. We must also become grounded in the knowledge of God's accomplishment for all humanity. Next, our present existence and walk must become exercised and strengthened. This must continue until we no longer totter or stagger back and forth with every spirit of teaching and subtlety of men.

Two brand new concepts:

1. Paul explains in Ephesians a startling (to the people of that day) new “mystery:” that Gentile believers were full sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:6). Until this time the Jewish followers of God had always believed they alone were God’s chosen people. Deuteronomy 7:6
2. Paul also speaks of the mystery of the Church as the *“bride of Christ,”* a previously unheard-of concept in the Old Testament. Eph. 5:25-27

Practical Application:

1. The Book of Ephesians strongly emphasizes the connection between sound doctrine and right practice in the Christian life.
2. Far too many people ignore "theology" and instead want to only discuss things that are "practical." In Ephesians, Paul argues that theology is practical.
3. In order to live out God's will for us in our lives practically, we must first understand who we are in Christ doctrinally.

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PHILIPPIANS – Part One

Author: While Galatians and Philippians were written by Paul, Timothy evidently helped Paul write the letters to the Philippians and Colossians.

Date and Purpose of Writing:

1. Bible scholars believe Philippians was written around A.D. 61, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, about thirty years after Christ's ascension and about ten years after Paul first preached at Philippi. Philippians 1:13; 4:22
2. The fact that Philippians is addressed to the saints--including "bishops (elders) and deacons" (Phil. 1:1) suggests that the church was well established. (The church there had first been planted by Paul on his second missionary journey, as reported in Acts 16:12-40.)
3. Perhaps the main reason for writing this epistle was to acknowledge a gift of money from the church at Philippi. Philippians 4:18
4. This is a tender letter to a group of Christians who were especially dear to Paul, and little is said about doctrinal error.

Key Verses:

1. *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Philippians 1:21
2. *"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."* Philippians 3:7
3. *"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 3:14
4. *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"* Philippians 4:4
5. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 4:6-7
6. *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."* Philippians 4:8
7. *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."* Philippians 4:13

Brief Summary:

1. Philippians could be entitled "Power Through Suffering." The book is about being filled with Christ, about Him filling our minds, being our goal, being our strength, and about having His joy even in suffering.
2. Paul was Nero's prisoner, yet the epistle fairly shouts with triumph, the words "joy" and "rejoice" appearing frequently.
3. The mature Christian life is the outworking, regardless of our circumstances, of the life, nature, and mind of Christ living in us. Philippians 1:6, 11; 2:5, 13
4. Philippians reaches its pinnacle at 2:5-11 with the glorious and profound declaration regarding the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Philippians may be divided as follows:
   a. Introduction, 1:1-7
   b. Christ the Christian's Life: Rejoicing in Spite of Suffering, 1:8-30
   c. Christ the Christian's Pattern: Rejoicing in Lowly Service, 2:1-30
   d. Christ the Object of the Christian's Faith, Desire, and Expectation, 3:1-21
   e. Christ the Christian's Strength: Rejoicing Through Anxiety, 4:1-9
   f. Conclusion, 4:10-23

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PHILIPPIANS – Part Two

Grace versus Works:

1. As with many of his letters, Paul warned the believers in the church of Philippi to beware of the tendency toward legalism which continually cropped up.
2. The Jews were so tied to the Old Testament law that they constantly tried to return to the old notion of salvation by works.
3. But Paul reiterated that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

Shining like Stars:

1. Paul exhorts the believers to follow his example and, even in times of crisis and persecution (Paul was writing from prison), to be *"encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."* Philippians 1:14
2. He encourages them to live such pure lives in this wicked world that their witness would, in contrast, shine like stars in the universe. Philippians 2:15
3. Paul offers himself as an example of how they should *"press on toward the goal to win the prize …*" Philippians 3:10-14

Practical Application: Philippians is one of Paul's most personal letters, and as such it has several personal applications to believers.

1. All Christians have experienced, at one time or another, the animosity of unbelievers against the gospel of Christ.
   a. This is to be expected. Jesus said that the world hated Him and it will hate His followers as well. John 5:18
   b. Paul exhorts us to persevere in the face of persecution, to *"stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel."* Philippians 1:27
2. Another application of Philippians is the need for Christians to be united in humility.
   a. We are united with Christ and we need to strive to be united to one another in the same way. Paul reminds us to be *"like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose"* and to put away conceit and selfishness, *"but in humility consider others better than yourselves"* looking out for the interest of others and caring for one another. Philippians 2:2-4
   b. There would be far less conflict in churches today if we all took to heart Paul's advice.
3. Another application of Philippians is that of the joy and rejoicing which are found throughout his letter.
   a. Paul rejoices that Christ is being proclaimed. Philippians 1:8
   b. He rejoices in his persecution. Philippians 2:18
   c. He exhorts others to rejoice in the Lord. Philippians 3:1
   d. He sums up with this exhortation to believers: *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say Rejoice."* Philippians 4:4-7
   e. As believers, we can rejoice and experience the peace of God by casting all our cares on Him, if we *"in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God."* Philippians 4:6
   f. Paul's joy, in spite of persecution and imprisonment, comes shining through this epistle, and we are promised the same joy he experienced when we center our thoughts on the Lord. Philippians 4:8

Assignment: Have the students find and mark the words "joy" and "rejoice" in Philippians. Philippians 1:4, 18, 25, 26; 2:2, 28; 3:1, 4:1, 4, 10

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COLOSSIANS

Author and Date: Colossians 1:1 identifies Paul and Timothy as the authors. It was likely written between A.D. 58-62.

Purpose of Writing: The theme of this book is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His sufficiency in meeting our needs in every area.

1. The first half of the Book of Colossians is a theological treatise that includes a beautiful and profound description of Christ. (Colossians 1:15-20)
2. The second half is a mini-ethics course, addressing every area of Christian life. Paul progresses from the individual life to the home and family, from work to the way we should treat others.

Key Verses:

1. *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him."* Colossians 1:15-16
2. *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* Colossians 3:12-13
3. *"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."* Colossians 4:5-6

Brief Summary:

1. Colossians was written explicitly to defeat the heresy that had arisen in Colosse, which endangered the existence of the church. While we do not know what was told to Paul, this letter is his response.
2. We can surmise based on Paul's response that he was dealing with a defective view of Christ. Paul appears also to dispute the "Jewish" emphasis on circumcision and traditions (Col. 2:8-11; 3:11). He does a remarkable job in pointing us to the sufficiency of Christ.
3. The Book of Colossians contains doctrinal instruction about the deity of Christ and false philosophies (1:15-2:23), as well as practical exhortations regarding Christian conduct, including friends and speech (3:1-4:18).

Practical Application: Colossians teaches us today about the total and complete sufficiency of Christ in our lives, both for our salvation and our sanctification.

1. We must be on guard for any deviation that would diminish the centrality of Christ as Lord and Savior, including any subtle forms of legalism and heresy.
2. Any "religion" that tries to equate itself with the truth using books that claim the same authority as the Bible, or which combines human effort with divine accomplishment in salvation must be avoided.
3. Christ gives us absolute standards. There is no compromising with sin.
4. Christianity is more than a religion or way of life; it is a relationship with God.
5. Good deeds, astrology, occultism and horoscopes do not show us God's ways. Only Christ does.
6. His will is revealed in His word, His love letter to us; we must get to know it!

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1 THESSALONIANS

Author and Date of Writing: The authors are Paul, with Silas and Timothy.
First Thessalonians was written in approximately A.D. 50. 1 Thess. 1:1

Purpose of Writing: Paul wrote to clear them up some misunderstandings in the church of Thessalonica about the return of Christ. He also gives teaching on holy living.

Key Verses:

1. *"Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith."* 1 Thessalonians 3:7
2. *"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."* 1 Thess. 4:16-17
3. *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* 1 Thess. 5:16-18

Brief Summary:

1. The first three chapters are about Paul's longing to visit the church in Thessalonica but not being able to because Satan stopped them (1 Thessalonians 2:18), and how Paul cared for them and was encouraged to hear how they had been.
2. Paul concludes this portion with a prayer for them, that their love would increase, their hearts be strengthened so that they would *"be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when out Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."* 1 Thess. 3:11-13
3. In chapter 4, Paul instructs the believers in Thessalonica on how to live a holy life in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess. 4:1-12
4. Paul goes on to instruct them regarding misconceptions some of them apparently had about Christ's return and those who had already died. He tells them that the people who had died in Christ Jesus would also go to heaven when He comes back. 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 5:1-11
5. The book ends with final instructions of living the Christian life.

Facing Persecution:

1. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the persecution they received is similar to that which the Old Testament prophets and Jesus had suffered. 1 Thess. 2:14-16
2. He encourages them to remain strong in their faith in spite of the persecution which they evidently were facing, just as Paul experienced daily. 1 Thess. 3:4 & 7
3. Jesus had warned that true prophets of God would always be opposed by the unrighteous. Luke 11:49

Practical Application: This book can be applied to many life situations.

1. It gives us the confidence that when Christ comes back we Christians, both dead and alive, will be together with Him. 1 Thess. 4:13-18
2. It assures us as Christians that we won't receive God's wrath. 1 Thess. 5:8-9
3. It instructs us how to walk the Christian life daily. 1 Thess. 4–5

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2 THESSALONIANS

Author and Date of Writing: Like 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thess. was written by Paul, with Silas and Timothy. It was likely written in AD 51-52.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The church in Thessalonica still had some misconceptions about the Second Coming of Christ. They thought it had come already so had stopped working.
2. They were being persecuted badly. Paul wrote to clear up misconceptions and to comfort them.

Key Verses:

1. *"God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with powerful angels."* 2 Thess. 1:6-7
2. *"But we ought always thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth."* 2 Thess. 2:13
3. *"But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."* 2 Thess. 3:3

Brief Summary:

1. Paul greets the church at Thessalonica and encourages and exhorts them.
2. He commends them for their perseverance and faith in the face of persecution (2 Thess. 1:3-4), and prays for them in verses 11 and 12.
3. In chapter 2, Paul explains what will happen in the Day of the Lord (Christ's return to earth). 2 Thess. 2:1-12
4. Paul then encourages them to stand firm. 2 Thess. 2:13-15
5. He instructs them to be good workers, and even to stay away from idle men who don't live by the gospel. 2 Thess. 3:6-13

Practical Application:

1. The Book of 2 Thessalonians has a lot of helpful information about the end times.
2. It also exhorts us not to be idle and to work for what we have.
3. We read several prayers for the believers in Thessolonica. These prayers can be an example for us of how to pray for other believers today and for ourselves:
   a. That God would count them worthy of His calling, and that by His power He would fulfill every good purpose of theirs and every act prompted by their faith. 2 Thess. 1:11-12
   b. That God would encourage their hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word. 2 Thess. 2:16-17
   c. That the Lord would direct their hearts (to grow) into God's love and perseverance. 2 Thess. 3:5
   d. That the Lord Himself would be with them and give them peace at all times and in every way, and that His grace would be with them. 2 Thess. 3:16, 18
4. We also see the writer(s) exhorting the believers to pray, that the message of the Lord would spread rapidly and be honored, and that they would be delivered from wicked and evil men. 2 Thess. 3:1-2
5. We must likewise pray that the message of God's good news would spread rapidly and that God would receive great honor, as He deserves.

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1 TIMOTHY

Author and Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Timothy was written by Paul in A.D. 62-66.

Purpose of Writing: Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him in his responsibility for overseeing the work of the Ephesian church and possibly other churches. 1 Tim. 1:3

Key Verses:

1. *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* 1 Tim. 2:5
2. *"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money."* 1 Tim. 3:1-2
3. *"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."* 1 Tim. 6:12

Brief Summary:

1. This is the first letter Paul wrote to Timothy, a young pastor who had been a help to Paul in his work. Paul was more than just a mentor and leader to Timothy, he was like a father to him, and Timothy was like a son to Paul. 1 Tim. 1:2
2. Paul begins the letter by urging Timothy to be on guard for false teachers and false doctrine. However, much of the letter deals with pastoral conduct.
3. Paul instructs Timothy in worship (chapter 2) and developing mature leaders for the church (chapter 3).
4. Most of the letter deals with pastoral conduct, warnings about false teachers, and the church's responsibility toward single members, widows, elders, and slaves.
5. All throughout the letter, Paul encourages Timothy to stand firm, to persevere, and to remain true to his calling.
6. This letter lays the foundation for ordaining elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7), and provides guidance for ordaining people into offices of the church (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Practical Application:

1. Jesus Christ is presented by Paul as the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), the Savior to all who believe in Him. He is Lord of the Church, and Timothy serves Him by serving and leading His church.
2. Paul instructs Timothy on matters of church doctrine, church leadership, and church administration. We can use those same instructions in governing our local assembly today.
3. Likewise, the work and ministry of a pastor, the qualifications for an elder, and the qualifications of a deacon are just as important and pertinent today as they were in Timothy's day.
4. Paul's first letter to Timothy amounts to an instruction book on leading, administrating, and pastoring the local church. The instructions in this letter apply to any leader or prospective leader of Christ's church and are equally relevant today as they were in Paul's day.
5. For those not called into leadership roles in their church, the book is still practical. Every follower must contend for the faith and avoid false teaching. Every follower must stand firm and persevere.

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2 TIMOTHY

Author and Date of Writing: 2 Timothy 1:1 identifies the author as the apostle Paul. It was written in approximately A.D. 67, shortly before Paul was put to death.

Purpose of Writing:

1. Imprisoned in Rome yet again, the apostle Paul felt lonely and abandoned. Paul recognized that his earthly life was likely coming to an end soon. The Book of 2 Timothy is essentially Paul's "last words."
2. Paul looked past his own circumstances to express concern for the churches and specifically for Timothy. Paul wanted to use his last words to encourage Timothy, and all other believers, to persevere in faith (2 Timothy 3:14) and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:2).

Key Verses:

3. *"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."* 2 Tim. 1:7
4. *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."* 2 Tim. 2:2
5. *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* 2 Tim. 3:16-17
6. *"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."* 2 Tim. 4:2
7. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."* 2 Tim. 4:7-8

Brief Summary:

1. Paul encourages Timothy to remain passionate for Christ and to remain firm in sound doctrine. 2 Tim. 1:1-2, 13-14
2. He reminds Timothy to avoid ungodly beliefs and practices and to flee from anything immoral. 2 Tim. 2:14-26
3. He warns Timothy that in the end times there will be both intense persecution and apostasy from the Christian faith. 2 Tim. 3:1-17
4. Paul closes with an intense plea for believers to stand firm in the faith and to finish the race strong. 2 Tim. 4:1-8

Practical Application:

1. One of the greatest, most strategic principles in all of Scriptures about Christian ministry is found in 2 Timothy 2:2—that we are to teach others who will teach yet others. In our ministries we must ask God to allow us to teach and lead people who will then teach others. In this way the fruit of our ministry can become multi-generational, growing ever wider and wider.
2. It is easy to get side-tracked in the Christian life. We have to keep our eyes on the prize—being rewarded in heaven by Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. 4:8
3. We must strive to avoid both false doctrine and ungodly practices.
4. This can only be accomplished by being grounded in our knowledge of God's Word and firm in our refusal to accept anything that is unbiblical.

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TITUS

Author and Date: Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus in approximately A.D. 66

Purpose of Writing:

1. Paul had left Titus, his brother in the faith, in Crete to lead the church which Paul had established on one of his missionary journeys. Titus 1:5
2. This letter advises Titus about what to look for in leaders for the church. He also warns Titus of the reputations of some on the island of Crete. Titus 1:12

Key Verses:

1. *"The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."* Titus 1:5
2. *"These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you."* Titus 2:15
3. *"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,"* Titus 3:4-5

Brief Summary:

1. The Epistle to Titus is known as one of the three Pastoral Epistles, along with 1st and 2nd Timothy.
2. Paul had assigned Titus with the task of appointing elders for all the house churches on the island of Crete, and was now writing instructions about the characteristics these elders were to have. Titus 1:5-9
3. As the apostle Paul directed Titus in his search for leaders, Paul also suggested how Titus would instruct the leaders so that they could grow in their faith in Christ, both men and women of all ages. Titus 2:1-8
4. To help Titus continue in his faith in Christ, Paul suggested Titus come to Nicopolis and bring with him two other members of the church. Titus 3:12-13

Practical Application:

1. Paul gives godly instruction on how to live a life pleasing to our Lord, as well as what we should avoid.
   a. Paul suggests we seek to be pure as we avoid the things which will defile our minds and consciences.
   b. And then Paul makes a statement which should never be forgotten: *"They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good."* Titus 1:16
   c. As Christians, we must examine ourselves to be sure our lives line up with our profession of faith in Christ. 2 Cor. 13:5
2. Along with this warning, Paul also tells us how to avoid denying God: *"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior."* Titus 3:5b-6
3. By seeking a daily renewal of our minds by the Holy Spirit we can develop into Christians that bring honor to God by the way we live.

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PHILEMON

Author and Date: Paul wrote the letter to Philemon, in approximately A. D. 60. Paul was in prison at the time of writing.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The letter to Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's writings and deals with the practice of slavery. Philemon was a slave owner who also hosted a church in his home.
2. During the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon had likely journeyed to the city, heard Paul's preaching and became a Christian.
3. The slave Onesimus had robbed from his master, Philemon, and had run away, making his way to Rome and to Paul. Onesimus was still the property of Philemon, and Paul wrote to smooth the way for his return to his master.
4. Onesimus had become a believer (Philemon 10) and Paul wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not merely as a slave.

Key Verses:

1. *"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."* verse 6
2. *"…no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord."* verse 16
3. *"If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me."* verse 18

Brief Summary:

1. Paul had warned slave owners that they had a responsibility towards their slaves and showed slaves as responsible moral beings who were to fear God.
2. In Philemon, Paul does not condemn slavery, but he presents Onesimus as a brother instead of a slave. When an owner can refer to a slave as a brother, the slave has reached a position in which the legal title of slave is meaningless.
3. Even though the early church did not attack slavery directly, it laid the foundation for a new relationship between owner and slave.
4. Only after exposure to the light of the gospel could the institution of slavery die.

Grace at Work:

1. Both Roman law and the Law of the Old Testament gave Philemon the right to punish a runaway slave.
2. But the grace of the Lord Jesus compelled Philemon to forgive his slave, and allowed him to fellowship in love on an equal basis in the body of Christ.

Practical Application:

1. Employers, political leaders, corporation executives and parents can follow the spirit of Paul's teaching by treating Christian employees, co-workers and family members as members of Christ's Body.
2. Christians in modern society must not view those under them as stepping stones to be used to help them achieve their ambitions, but as people loved by God, who must receive gracious treatment.
3. In addition, all Christian leaders must recognize that God holds them accountable for the treatment of those who work for them, whether the helpers are Christians or not. Everyone must eventually answer to God for their actions. Colossians 4:1

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HEBREWS

Author and Date of Writing:

1. Although many believe Paul wrote Hebrews, we cannot be sure. Regardless of who held the pen, the Holy Spirit is the divine author of all Scripture. 2 Tim. 3:16
2. The fact that Timothy was alive when the epistle was written—along with some other small hints—suggest the book was written around A.D. 65.

Purpose of Writing: This letter is an exhortation for the persecuted believers to continue in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Key Verses:

1. *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."* Heb. 1:1-2
2. *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."* Heb. 4:15-16
3. *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."* Heb. 12:1

Brief Summary:

1. The Book of Hebrews addresses three separate groups: (1) believers in Christ, (2) unbelievers who had knowledge of and an intellectual acceptance of the facts of Christ, and (3) unbelievers who were attracted to Christ, but who rejected Him ultimately. It's important to understand which group is being addressed in which passage. To fail to do so can cause us to draw conclusions inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.
2. In the writings of the OT, the rites of Judaism were but shadows of things to come.
   a. Hebrews tells us that Christ is better than anything mere religion has to offer.
   b. All the trappings of religion pale in comparison to the person, work, and ministry of Christ Jesus.
3. It is the superiority of our Lord Jesus, then, that remains the theme of this eloquently written letter.

Practical Application:

1. Hebrews gives us encouraging examples of God's "faith heroes" who persevered in spite of great difficulties and adverse circumstances (Hebrews 11). Like them, we can maintain perfect confidence in God's rich promises, regardless of our circumstances.
2. The writer of Hebrews gives us five solemn warnings to heed. There is:
   a. the danger of neglect, Heb.2:1-4
   b. the danger of unbelief, Heb. 3:7–4:13
   c. the danger of spiritual immaturity, Heb. 5:11–6:20
   d. the danger of failing to endure, Heb. 10:26-39
   e. and the inherent danger of refusing God. Heb. 12:25-29
3. In Hebrews we find a magnificently rendered portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ—the great Author and Finisher of our salvation. Heb. 12:2

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JAMES

Author and Date of Writing:

1. The author is James, thought to be the brother of Jesus (Mark 6:3), who became a leader of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9).
2. James is probably the oldest book of the NT, written perhaps as early as A.D. 45.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The Book of James is directed to Jewish Christians scattered among all the nations. James 1:1
2. While Pauline teachings concentrate on our justification with God by faith, James' teachings concentrate on the life and works that exemplify that justification.
3. James emphasizes that good actions will naturally flow from those who are filled with the Spirit. James 2:17-18

Key Verses:

1. *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance."* James 1:2-3
2. *"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."* James 2:17-18
3. *"Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark."* James 3:5
4. *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* James 5:16b

Brief Summary:

1. The Book of James contains a remarkable parallel to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.
2. James begins in the first chapter by describing the overall traits of the faith walk.
3. In chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3 he discusses social justice and a discourse on faith in action.
4. He then compares and contrasts the difference between worldly and godly wisdom and asks us to turn away from evil and draw close to God.
5. James gives a particularly severe rebuke to the rich who hoard and those who are self-reliant.
6. Finally he ends with encouragement to believers to be patient in suffering, praying and caring for one another and bolstering our faith through fellowship.

Practical Application:

1. We see in the Book of James a challenge to faithful followers of Jesus Christ to not just "talk the talk," but to "walk the walk." James 2:26
   a. While it is true that we must have faith, James questions whether we have faith if there's no evidence of it in action. James 2:15-18
   b. James focuses on the truths of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount and exhorts us to act upon what Jesus taught.
2. The epistle also puts to rest the idea that one can become a Christian and yet continue living in sin, exhibiting no fruit of righteousness.
   a. Such a "faith," James declares, is shared by the demons who "believe and tremble." James 2:19
   b. Yet such a "faith" cannot save because it is not verified by the works that always accompany true saving faith. Eph. 2:10
   c. Good works are not the cause of salvation, but they are the result of it.

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1 PETER

Author and Date of Writing: 1 Peter 1:1 identifies the author of the Book of 1 Peter as the apostle Peter. It was likely written between A.D. 60 and 65.

Purpose of Writing:

1. 1 Peter is a letter from Peter to the believers who had been dispersed throughout the world and were under intense persecution.
   a. If anyone understood persecution, it was Peter. He had repeatedly been beaten and jailed for preaching the Word of God.
   b. Nevertheless, he had endured without bitterness and without losing hope, living an obedient, victorious life.
2. Peter exhorted the believers to have hope in Jesus, following Christ's example of faithfulness in spite of suffering.

Key Verses:

1. *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* 1 Peter 2:9
2. *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed."* 1 Peter 2:24
3. *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."* 1 Peter 5:8-9

Brief Summary:

1. Peter quotes Leviticus 11:44 (*"Be holy, for I am holy")* but prefaces this by first explaining that holiness is not achieved by keeping the law, but by Christ through His grace bestowed upon all who believe in Him. 1 Peter 1:13-15
2. Though living in a time of desperate persecution, Peter reveals that it was actually a time to rejoice. He says to count it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ, as their Savior had suffered for them. 1 Peter 2:13-17
3. Peter repeatedly exhorts believers to live in harmony with one another, loving each other deeply. 1 Peter 3:8; 1 Peter 4:8
4. Peter confirms Satan as the great enemy of every Christian, but the assurance of Christ's future return gives hope. 1 Peter 5:8-9

Practical Application:

1. One way to identify with Christ is to share in His suffering. We must be prepared to stand up for what we know and believe to be true, and rejoice when the world and Satan persecute us for our faith.
2. Peter exhorts us to *"Live such good lives among the pagans that … they may see (our) good deeds and glorify God."* 1 Peter 2:12
3. Similarly, he admonishes the brothers—and us—*"to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that (we) have."* 1 Peter 3:15
4. These two dimensions of our witness of Christ to those around us are summarized by Peter in chapter 4:11: we are to speak as one speaking the words of God and to serve others with God's strength, so that in all things Christ would receive the glory. 1 Peter 4:11

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2 PETER

Author and Date of Writing: Scholars believe that 2 Peter was written by Peter toward the end of his life. It is known that Peter was martyred in Rome during the reign of Nero, prior to A.D. 68, so he very likely wrote 2 Peter between A.D. 65 and 68.

Purpose of Writing:

1. Peter was alarmed that false teachers were beginning to infiltrate the churches.
2. He called on Christians to become strong in their faith so that they could detect and combat the spreading apostasy.
3. He strongly stressed the authenticity of the Word of God and the sure return of the Lord Jesus.

Key Verses:

1. *"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* 2 Peter 3:9
2. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen."* 2 Peter 3:18

Brief Summary:

1. Knowing that his time was short (2 Peter 1:13-15) and these churches faced immediate danger (2 Peter 2:1-3), Peter called upon the readers to refresh their memories (2 Peter 1:13) and stimulate their thinking (2 Peter 3:1-2) so that they would remember his teaching (2 Peter 1:15).
2. He challenged the believers to become more mature in their faith by adding to it specific Christians virtues, thereby becoming effective and productive in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-9
3. Peter desired they become strong in their faith to withstand the false teachers that had crept in and adversely affected the churches. 2 Peter 3:3, 10
4. For the Christians, Peter taught that the Second Coming is the incentive for holy living. 2 Peter 3:14
5. After a final warning, Peter again encouraged them to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He concluded with a word of praise to his Lord and Savior. 2 Peter 3:18
6. "Knowledge" is a key word; it occurs, with its related words, at least 13 times.

Practical Application:

1. Peter's warning about false teachers is certainly relevant in our day.
   a. We must learn the Word of God well so that we won't be fooled by the false teachers and false doctrines that seem to increase in number.
   b. Remember the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:3-31 about the last days, particularly verse 11: "*and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."* Matthew 24:11
2. Peter gives a prescription for growth in faith in 2 Peter 1:5-11. When we apply this teaching in our lives, we *"will never fall, and (we) will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* 2 Peter 1:10b-11
3. The foundation for our faith is and always will be the same Word of God that Peter preached.

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1 JOHN

Author and Date of Writing: 1, 2, and 3 John are attributed to the apostle John, who also wrote the Gospel of John. 1 John was likely written between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing:

1. 1 John addresses the error of gnosticism, a false but popular teaching which held that matter is evil and spirit is good. This false doctrine taught that knowledge, or gnosis, was the solution which enabled man to rise from the mundane to the spiritual.
2. Gnosticism led to two false theories concerning the person of Christ: some taught that Jesus was actually a ghost (because they believed that if He had been physical He would have been evil). Others taught that Jesus had a dual personality, at times human and at times divine.
3. John wrote this letter to set the record straight on some important issues, particularly concerning the identity of Jesus Christ.
4. John exhorts believers to genuinely love one another. 1 John3:16

Key Verses:

1. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9
2. *"No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him."* 1 John 3:6
3. *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."* 1 John 5:13
4. As with 2 Peter "knowledge," with its related words, occurs at least 13 times.

Brief Summary:

1. False spiritual teachers were a big problem in the early church. Because there was not yet a complete NT to guide them, many believers fell prey to false doctrines and false leaders.
2. Because John's letter was about the basics of faith in Christ, it helped his readers answer the question, Are we true believers?
   a. John told them that they could tell by looking at their actions.
   b. If they loved one another, that was evidence of God's presence in their lives.
   c. But if they bickered and fought all the time or were selfish and did not look out for one another, they were betraying that they, in fact, did not know God.
3. That did not mean they had to be perfect. In fact, John also recognized that believing involved admitting our sins and seeking God's forgiveness.

Practical Application:

1. The Book of 1 John is a book of love and joy. It explains the fellowship we have with others and with Jesus Christ. It differentiates between happiness, which is temporary and fleeting, and true joy, which 1 John tells us how to achieve.
2. If we take the words written by John and we apply them to our daily lives, the true love, commitment, fellowship, and joy we long for will be ours.
3. The apostle John knew Christ well. He is telling us that we can all have that close, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. We have the witness of men who had direct and personal contact with Him. The Gospel writers present their solidly based testimony on a historical reality.

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2 JOHN

Author and Date of Writing: Though the author is identified only as “The elder,” all the evidence points to the apostle John. Second John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, 1 and 3 John, between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The Book of 2 John is an urgent plea that the readers of John's letter should show their love for God and His son Jesus by obeying the commandment to love each other and live their lives in obedience to the Scriptures.
2. The Book of 2 John is also a strong warning to be on the lookout for deceivers who were going about saying that Christ had not actually risen in the flesh.

Key Verses:

1. *"And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."* 2 John 6
2. *"Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son."* 2 John 8-9

Brief Summary:

1. The Book of 2 John is addressed to "the chosen lady and her children." This could either have been a lady of important standing in the church or a code which refers to the local church and its congregation. In those days when Christians were being persecuted such coded salutations were often used.
2. The Book of 2 John is largely concerned with an urgent warning concerning deceivers who were not teaching the true doctrine of Christ and who maintained that Jesus did not actually rise in the flesh but only spiritually.
3. John is very anxious that true believers should be aware of these false teachers and have nothing to do with them.

Practical Application:

1. It is extremely important that we check everything we see, hear, and read that claims to be “Christian” with the Scriptures.
2. This cannot be too strongly emphasized because one of Satan’s greatest weapons is deceit.
3. It is very easy to be taken in by a new and exciting doctrine that appears to be based on Scripture but which, if examined closely, is in fact a departure from the Word of God.
4. If what appears to be happening does not line up explicitly with Scripture, then this is false and not of the Spirit, and we should have nothing to do with it.

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3 JOHN

Author and Date of Writing: Again, the author is identified only as "The elder," but is attributed to John, the apostle. 3 John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, 1 and 2 John, between A.D. 85-95.

Purpose of Writing: John's purpose in writing this third epistle is threefold:

1. First, he writes to commend and encourage his beloved co-worker, Gaius, in his ministry of hospitality to the itinerant messengers who were going from place to place to preach the Gospel of Christ.
2. Second, he indirectly warns and condemns the behavior of one Diotrephes, a dictatorial leader who had taken over one of the churches in the province of Asia, and whose behavior was directly opposed to all that the apostle and his Gospel stood for.
3. Third, he commends the example of Demetrius who was reported as having a good testimony from all.

Key Verses:

1. *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* vs. 4
2. *"Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God."* vs. 11

Brief Summary:

1. John is writing with his usual strong emphasis on truth to this much-loved brother in Christ, Gaius, a layman of some wealth and distinction in a city near Ephesus. He highly commends Gaius' care and hospitality to his messengers whose mission was to take the Gospel from place to place, whether they were known to him or were strangers.
2. John exhorts him to continue to do good and not to imitate evil, as in the example of Diotrephes.
   a. This man had taken over the leadership of a church in Asia and not only refused to recognize John's authority as an apostle but also refused to receive his letters and submit to his directions.
   b. He also circulated malicious slanders against John and excommunicated members who showed support and hospitality to John's messengers.
3. Before John concludes his letter, he also commends the example of Demetrius, of whom he has heard excellent reports.

Practical Application:

1. John, as always, emphasizes the importance of walking in the truth of the Gospel.
2. Hospitality, support and encouragement for our fellow Christians are some of the main precepts of the teachings of Jesus, and Gaius was obviously an outstanding example of this ministry.
3. We should also show hospitality to those who minister the Word, welcoming them into our churches and homes. Those who are servants of the gospel deserve our support and encouragement.
4. We also need to be careful always to follow only the example of those whose words and actions are in line with the Gospel, and to be discerning enough to be aware of those such as Diotrephes whose behavior is far from being like that which Jesus taught.

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JUDE

Author and Date of Writing:

1. Verse 1 identifies the author as Jude, a brother of James. This likely refers to Jesus' half-brother Jude, as Jesus also had a half-brother named James (Matthew 13:55). Jude likely does not identify himself as a brother of Jesus out of humility and reverence for Christ.
2. The Book of Jude was written somewhere between A.D. 60 and 80.

Purpose of Writing:

1. The Book of Jude is an important book for us today because it is written for the end times, for the end of the Church age, which began at the Day of Pentecost.
2. Jude is the only book given entirely to the great apostasy. Jude writes that evil works are the evidence of apostasy.
3. He admonishes us to contend for the faith, for there are tares among the wheat. False prophets are in the church and the saints are in danger.
4. Jude is a small but important book worthy of study, relevant to us today.

Key Verses:

1. *"Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."* Jude 3
2. *"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."* Jude 24-25

Brief Summary:

1. According to verse 3, Jude was anxious to write about our salvation; however, he changed topics to address the issue of contending for the faith.
2. This faith embodies the complete body of Christian doctrine taught by Christ, later passed on to the apostles.
3. After Jude warns of false teachers (verses 4-16), he advises us on how we can succeed in spiritual warfare (verses 20-21). Here is wisdom we would do well to accept and adhere to as we go through these days of the end times.
4. The Book of Jude is closely related to the book of 2 Peter. It's not clear whether Jude used content from 2 Peter, or Peter used content from Jude.

Practical Application:

1. This little book can help equip us for the untold challenges of living in the end times. Today's Christian must be on guard for false doctrines which can so easily deceive us if we are not well versed in the Word.
2. We need to know the Gospel—to protect and defend it—and accept the Lordship of Christ, which is evidenced by a life-change.
3. Authentic faith always reflects Christ-like behavior. Our life in Christ should reflect our very own heart-knowledge that rests on the authority of the Almighty Creator and Father who puts faith into practice.
4. We need that personal relationship with Him; only then will we know His voice so well that we will follow no other.

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REVELATION

Author and Date of Writing: Revelation 1:1, 4, 9 and 22:8 identify the author as the apostle John. It was likely written between A.D. 90 and 95.

Purpose of Writing: The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to John by God
"to show his servants what must soon take place." Revelation 1:1

Key Verses:

1. *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."* Revelation 3:20
2. *"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them."* Revelation 20:11
3. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea."* Revelation 21:1

Brief Summary:

1. The Revelation is lavish in colorful descriptions about the last days before Christ's return and the ushering in of the new heaven and new earth.
2. The Revelation begins with letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor, then goes on to reveal the series of devastations poured out upon the earth; the mark of the beast, "666"; the climactic battle of Armageddon; the binding of Satan; the reign of the Lord; the Great White Throne Judgment; and the nature of the eternal city of God.
3. Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ are fulfilled and a concluding call to His Lordship assures us that He will soon return.
4. This book gives us a tiny glimpse of heaven and all the glories awaiting us there, and foretells the fall of Satan and the doom he and his angels will suffer.

End-time Prophecies in the Old Testament:

1. The Book of Revelation is better understood when related to end-time prophecies in the OT. For example, the antichrist, fully described in chapter 13, is also mentioned in Daniel 9:27.
2. Other OT end-times prophecies are found in Daniel chapters 7-12, Isaiah chapters 24-27, Ezekiel chapters 37-41, and Zechariah chapters 9-12. All these prophecies come together in the Book of Revelation.

Practical Application:

1. Have you accepted Christ as your Savior? If so, you have nothing to fear from God's judgment of the world as described in the Book of Revelation. The Judge is on our side.
2. Before the final judgment begins, we must tell our friends and neighbors about God's offer of eternal life in Christ.
3. The events in this book are real. We must live our lives like we believe it so that others will notice our joy about our future and want to join us in that new and glorious city.

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CONCLUSION

The NT is the wonderful good news of God's redemptive love and salvation.

1. There are many verses in the NT that speak of God's love: John 3:16
2. The Bible also tells us that He is Love. 1 John 4:16
3. God has redeemed us through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Eph. 1:7
4. God's redeeming love and salvation are available to any who will receive it. Romans 10:9-10
5. God does not want any to perish. 2 Peter 3:9

Jesus' First and Last Words to His Disciples:

1. The first words the disciples heard from Jesus were: *"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* Matthew 4:18-20
2. The last words the disciples heard from Jesus (before He ascended into heaven) were: *"Go and make disciples of all nations."* Matthew 28:19-20
3. The fact that Jesus' first and last words to His disciples were about bringing the lost into God's kingdom illustrates well His heart for the world. He wants us to be "fishers of men," winning the lost to His salvation and discipling them.

We must take this message of hope and salvation to all the world.

1. In Matthew we read that we should *"go and make disciples of all nations."* Matthew 28:19-20
2. In Mark we are told to *"go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."* Mark 16:15
3. In Luke we see that *"repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem."* Luke 24:47
4. In John Jesus says *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* John 20:21
5. In Acts we read Jesus' instructions that we are to be His *"witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Acts 1:8
6. In Romans: *"And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?* Rom. 10:14-15
7. In 1 Corinthians: *"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."* 1 Corinthians 9:22b
8. In 2 Corinthians: *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors."* 2 Corinthians 5:20
9. Throughout the New Testament we find many more exhortations to take Christ's message of salvation to the world.

Run the race well, for His redemptions is drawing near:

1. Paul compares our life to the running of a race. Hebrews 12:1
2. Let us run and finish the race well, for the end of time is nearing. Luke 21:28
3. Very soon our race will be run, our work will be done, and we will enjoy our final reward in heaven with God our Father. John 9:4

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