Disciple One

Group

Discussion Notes

Wednesdays, 9:30 to 11:30 am
Sept. 2012 thru May 2013

Rob Smith
PREFACE

These discussion notes were used to shape discussions that occurred in a Disciple One (“Becoming Disciples through Bible Study”) at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS during 2012-13. Participants enjoyed exploring scripture, meanings and issues, stimulated in part by this material. Toward the end of our year of study, we decided to assemble the weekly discussion outlines, and make copies for group members, plus a few spares for whomever might want to consider using our notes.

Approach.

We began expecting that every participant would contribute to our discussions about scripture, meaning, experience and spiritual growth. We were fortunately a group of mutually respectful and curious people, willing to listen and consider diverse viewpoints. To improve the relevance of our time together, we decided to share ideas and perspectives, rather than sit back and listen to presentations or lectures.

It soon became clear that group discussions benefited from a modicum of structure and some sense of priorities or directions. The present discussion notes evolved as a meeting leadership tool. The notes suggest a rigorous advancement from topic to topic, through the available time. Sometimes it went like that, but occasionally not so much: we found it best to let some discussions run longer than the outline notes might suggest, because more people had insights or alternate perspectives to share.

These notes suggest an approach to each weekly lesson, but probably shouldn't be construed to be a rigid discussion plan. Instead, we've found it beneficial to grow together, appreciating the desirability of addressing several important areas arising each week, but not shorting something that needs a bit more attention.

Structure.

These notes evolved from an outline summarizing ideas and discussion topics for the group, cast in a framework that combined coverage of workbook material, scripture reading assignments and life applications. Discussion topics and approaches vary from week to week, so there is some structural diversity, plus an occasional refreshing diversion or surprise.

These notes are succinct, and decidedly informal. They are unpolished, intended originally only for use by the discussion leader, but later (by request) made available to the entire group a few days prior to each meeting.

For each week, there are topic introductory questions, plus summaries of both answers and points that should be raised during discussion. Some of the less important issues are explicitly flagged for to skip unless time permits; very few of those tended to receive attention during our explorations.

In later lessons, there are also a few segments offering in-depth material about topics directly related to the lesson. This information is more informative in nature, and can optionally be explored if discussion time permits.
Notations.

Notation used in the discussion notes serves as a visual indication of text purpose or use. Framework text and the most important ideas or phrases are bolded. Discussion questions and topic introductions are underlined. Prefix (Skip) indicates a question or topic to be discussed only if time permits. Indention indicates a subordinate relationship to the less indented material immediately above. Vertical spacing separates sequential concepts or ideas.

Use.

Please feel free to use, reprint, distribute or modify these discussion notes to suit your specific situations or preferences. If you do make changes or improvements, please send a copy of the changed week materials to the author for potential use in a revised follow-on version. (See below.)

Suggestions.

It's always useful to receive suggestions regarding change or improvement. If you think that another view or explanation should be used (or included as an alternative), please let me know. Amplifications or expansions would also be useful. We don't know how these notes will evolve or be used, but we're willing to invest in developing upgrades, if that's useful to others leading D1 discussion groups. Contact rob.smith@ieee.org.

Disclaimer.

Our discussions have often been relatively stimulating, sometimes pointed or downright funny, but have pretty consistently been spiritual growth experiences. We are all thankful for our time together.

The ideas conveyed in these notes are solely those of the author, who has been wrong before and probably will be wrong again sometime soon. These notes do not reflect the views or positions of anyone else, nor any church organization or institution.

Rob Smith
Leawood, KS
May 22, 2013
Opening Prayer

NAME SIGNS – keep in front of you each week, until we decide that we don't need them any longer.

CONTACT INFORMATION. We are circulating a contact information sheet. Please verify or provide mailing address, home and/or cell phone numbers and email address. The class roster prepared from this information will NOT be given to anyone that's not in this class.

TREATS by Rob Smith (Do you want someone to bring treats each week?) If so, we'll circulate a sign-up sheet so that each of you can indicate when you will bring us goodies!

After each meeting, it's helpful to receive class notes by email:
who has treats next? Who did we miss in class? Especially noteworthy or humorous discussion segments. Prayers reminder for ourselves, friends and family members needing prayers this week. VOLUNTEER SCRIBE NEEDED

INTRODUCTIONS (let's go around the room, introducing ourselves, a minute or two each)

Your name, (briefly, please) how you CAME to Resurrection? about your family?, what's your work? What do you do for fun? why did you decide to take Disciple One??

How It Works

Bring one or two different Bibles, something to drink and your workbook.

Each participant is expected to prepare for the next group meeting, by
Reading and understanding the corresponding book chapter
Reading and studying the Scripture assignments for the week

Share your thoughts with us: It really helps to make notes regarding questions, interpretations, concerns, favorite or bothersome passages, etc.

Mark up your workbook! If you're comfortable with it, mark or Highlight in your Bible.

Sequence of Events

Opening Prayer
Brief discussion
View DVD relevant to the current lesson
Discuss DVD
Discuss assigned Scripture and the corresponding workbook chapter
Marks of Discipleship: what it means to be a disciple.
Joys and Concerns
Closing prayer.
Effort

Your investment of time and energy will be non-trivial, but everyone that works through Disciple One grows in amazing ways: it can and will happen to you.

Some lessons require more time than others. Your time may depend on reading speed, volume of notes or questions developed, etc. It's usually a good idea to split your preparation work up. Some do smaller studies daily. Others divide each assignment into two or more segments, so you don't get overwhelmed. The workbook suggests six shorter (daily) study sessions, but see what works for you.

Surprisingly, after a few weeks, many participants find that they're looking forward to preparation time.

Discussion

Plan to participate in meeting discussions by asking questions, seeking clarifications, requesting interpretations, responding to queries, taking part in group assignments and readings.

Try to keep your discussion inputs short, as a courtesy to listeners and other speakers.

Consider alternate points of view, and learn from others' perspectives.

Expect occasional disagreements, but really try to bring grace and respect with your views.

We're here to focus on mutual growth through scripture and mutual support: let's try to keep discussions from derailing into news of the day, politics, opinions and the like.

Keywords: most weeks, I'll mention a couple of lesson-related words or phrases to look up, bring details to class next week. Google is really helps find such information!

Confidentiality.

As we grow together and become more confident of our mutually supportive relationships, it may happen that sensitive or very personal information is shared within the group. It is really important that what we share in confidence stays within the group. We commit to trust and support one another, and will not discuss confidential matters outside the group.

Schedule

We meet as a group in this room (2203) weekly 9:30-11:00 am each Wednesday, unless we as a group decide otherwise ahead of time. Reasons for postponing a weekly meeting might include inclement weather, conflicting use of church facilities, major holiday (not Halloween!), or lack of a quorum. We will cover all 34 lessons, one per week.

If Rob can't be at a specific meeting, I'll ask someone in the class to lead the class discussion; hopefully this won't happen!

About once per quarter, we might consider having a potluck lunch after our meeting, or an evening dinner when spouses can also participate. It's up to you to decide whether or not you want to have these sorts of fellowship times together.
You might also decide to do some sort of community service project as a group, e.g., serve a holiday meal at a soup kitchen, Faithworks project, make reading prize bags for one of our Elementary schools, etc. I'd like to suggest doing at least one or two service projects during our time together, but it is entirely up to the group.

Announcements
Contact information sheet?
Treats signup?
Turn in name signs, please
Next week: Lesson One –
Key words for next week (remember, bring to class specific detailed information)
   Great but Unworthy King David
   Escape thru the Red Sea
   Who wrote Exodus, and why?

Closing Prayer
Treats by _____________________________  Next week: _____________________________

Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion  HANDOUT  7 Principles for Bible Study

READ ALOUD:  Our Human Condition, p. 6

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Why the Bible is important to Christians, and sampler of various literary styles of writing found in the Bible.

What to look for in the DVD:  How did the Bible get written?

Why we read the Bible in Community (Group)?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points:  (see above Look For)

Why is the Bible distinguished or different from other writings of that time?

Workbook Chapter 1. The Bible as Teaching

About God, and an envisioned “Perfect Life” lived in faith

History of the Hebrew People, good, bad, ugly --- Human stuff

How were faith leaders of that time moved to write their books?

Inspired writing connects each Reader with God

The STANDARD “canonical” Bible Which writings are included or excluded?  Basis for decisions?

What were some of the “standard” lists, Hebrew then Christian?

What's the deal with the “Apocrypha”?

Hebrew OT Bible excludes A
Greek Septuagent OT version 3rdC BC included A
Catholic OT includes A
Protestant OT excludes A, but some Christians occasionally include A in faith studies.

READ ALOUD:  p. 9 (short para below)  How Do We Read the Bible
p. 9 (nx to last para)  As our spiritual...
Can you view the Bible as *Teachings to be Understood*?

### Forms Of Writing in the Bible
Let's list some of the forms of writing found in the Bible?

(on whiteboard)

- Poetry
- Laws
- Historical accounts
- Liturgies (public worship ceremony or procedure)
  - What's a “liturgy?”
- Songs (we lost the tunes, but the Jews still sing scripture)
- Prophetic predictions (amazingly, things to come)
- Wise sayings
- Short stories (things that really happened)
- Parables (teachings cast as hypothetical stories)
  - What's the difference between a “story” and a “parable?”

### Thinking about the Bible:
(Skip?) **Why so large/long and complicated?**
Why so much stuff about an essentially unknowable God?

### READ ALOUD:
One para. p. 10 ¾ down, under “Why Study the Bible?”

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### Scripture

What is the focus topic presented in the scripture this week?  Style & topical diversity of Bible content

Whiteboard:
- What's the literary STYLE?
- Author: WHO wrote It?
- WHY was this written?
- Main CHARACTERS?
- LOCATION?
- What's the STORY LINE?
- What's the MAIN POINT here?
  - Contemporary audience of THAT TIME?
  - RELEVANCE TODAY

#### Day 2
**Psalm 84**  (OT unk author)
Poem or song of praise and thanksgiving

**Hosea 11**  (OT prophet ~750 to 710BC, aft. Daniel)
Poetic prophet: historical praise, threat of exile, forgiving God

### READ ALOUD:
**Exodus 15: 1-18**  (OT tradition: Moses, from Egypt 1446 BC then 40 yrs)
Poem of praising God wrt historical events
  - (Red Sea Crossing & Egyptian army destruction)

~3 verses then rightward.
“pass” if uncomfortable
Why include this song in Bible?  Celebrate & Remember HUGE event
Day 3

1 Kings 19  (OT unk author, compiled history, 562 BC or later)
Background: Evil King (of Israel et al) Ahab, Queen Jezebel idol worshiping!

Who were these idols?
Baal, or Baal-zebub, Sun God, fire in idol, baby burning
Ashtaroh, god of fertility, pole or penis symbol on highest ground, orgies

Queen J. caused killing all Hebrew prophets (Jewish priests) to suppress Hebrews

Prophet Elijah survived, fled to desert, gave up, starved, gave up, God gave E food/drink, ordered anoint 2 successor kings & his successor prophet

1 Chronicles 22  (OT, tradition Ezra wrote, ~480BC historical account)

Summarize? (STYLE, WHO, WHY, etc)

Value of 100,000 talents of gold King David accumulated to help fund Temple?
Talent ~94 lbs, 12 troy oz/lb, $2m/talent ==> $200 Billion!


READ ALOUD:
verses 1-19
Classic story of Saul conversion on the road to Damascus.

What were Saul's beliefs at beginning vs. end this story?

What was Saul's new job, assigned by God?
Saul became Paul, early missionary spreading Gospel to the Gentiles, his writing (many letters) became NT books.

Who were the “Gentiles?”
All non-Jews throughout the known world were called “Gentiles” by Jews.

(skip?) Who was Ananias, and what was his role in this account?

LOOK
Map of Roman Damascus (in some Bibles): walls & Straight Street still survive!

Day 4

Exodus 20  (OT prophet, Moses, Ten Commandments)

No graven images (IDOLS) Statuaries OK?

No adultery: any prohibition on other sex?
What does EXO 20:26 mean? (dishoner God bare bottom up alter steps)

Deutromony 5-6 (Law) (Moses collected speeches, nearing end of life just B4 Hebrews enter Promised Land)

Why are the 10 Commandments repeated here? Redundant?
Farewell speech –
Retrospective recollection of earlier events:
“As I prepare to depart, let us remember...”

Micah 4 (OT Micah 750-686 BC, poetic prophecy)
Micah predicts Last Days from Hebrew viewpoint
Plus future events that actually happened later!
(skip?) How can it be that prophecies of future actually came about?

Day 5
Philemon NT, half page letter, Paul/Saul, 60 AD, from prison in Rome)

Is Philemon shortest book of NT? (No, only. 3 John shorter)

What's the story line here?
Slave Onesimus stole, ran away, met Paul, converted, wants return to his Master.
Onesimus means “useful”

(skip?) What does Paul want Philemon to do?
Forgive Onesimus, take him back no punishment, treat him as fellow Believer.

The three LOST parables (hypothetical teaching stories) sheep/coin/son

What's the point of these three parables?
Nature of God wrt lost souls

(Skip?) Notice strangeness of lost sheep parable?
What prudent shepherd would abandon 99 sheep just to try to rescue one lost?

Doesn't this run counter to common sense?
Point: God is not like a prudent shepherd!

== Marks of Discipleship ==

Some may be seeing a glimmer of light at this point, perhaps beginning to consider a change in your answer to the question
Why am I participating in Disciple Bible Study?

Understanding God and gaining insight into many specific faith issues.

Joys and Concerns

Announcements:

Next week we'll start at the beginning, Genesis & Creation, with added material on the Nature of God

Research question:  **Who was the apostle John who wrote the 4th Gospel?**

Treats Next week: _____________________________

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion  
What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Teachings about  
a) Faith-oriented accounts of how the Universe came to be – Creation  
b) the essential nature of God

There is one God, who created EVERYTHING, and He has a special relationship with Humans

What to look for in the DVD: Why are there two distinct Creation Stories?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points  
What did you think of the video? Did you already know all of that?

Earlier question: Why are there two distinct Creation Stories?

What is different/unique about the God introduced in Genesis?

============== Workbook Chapter 2. ===============

READ ALOUD  
p. 12, Our Human Condition

The Word  
God spoke, creating the Universe

Key point: God is not an element of the Universe, e.g., Sun, Moon, Fire, Thunder

Job teachings about God? Wonders beyond our grasp, incomprehensible Divine understanding, God's incomparable power, God's values beyond human understanding, God cares about His creation, and us.

In Creation stories, we look for faith statements and core beliefs.

Story #1: Universal view; #2 Story: God & humans [Adam & Eve].

Creation poems: wonder, appreciation, praise. Creation is GOOD, and humans are its STEWARDS.

Hard Questions toward the end of the lesson notes:

ROB READ ALOUD  
p. 18 (mid) “...what means by...breath of life...?”

ROB READ ALOUD  
p. 18 (mid) “...what means ...tree of the knowledge of good and evil...?”

============== Scripture ===============

Day 1. 1st Creation Story. What key points did YOU FIND in this FIRST account?
Universal focus. God chose to create. Orderly, purposeful creation. Inherent human self-worth (made in image of God). Mankind is given dominion over all. Rest is good, regenerating, required.

Day 2. 2nd Creation Story. What key concepts did YOU FIND in this SECOND account?


Adam/Eve offspring: Cain (farmer, sinner), Able (herder), Seth (future leader of the faithful), many other sons.

**Why did God reject Cain's offering, resulting in Able's murder?**

**Mark of Cain**, the banished murderer, wandering. Where did Cain's wife come from?

Cain's descendents were probably violent (Lamech killed young man).

If man was made in the image of God, where did the less desirable human attributes come from? Possibly rooted in bad choices?

Start with study notes from the NIV Bible, then TNIV, then Scripture from The Message.

READ ALOUD PS 8:2  What does this verse mean? (Read verse from various Bibles)

Day 3  Psalms praising Mighty God the Creator.

Any questions or issues with this Scripture reading?

(skip?) PS 19:1  How does Creation inherently praise God?

READ ALOUD Romans 1: 19-20  (Saul → NT, 6th Book, Paul's letter to the church at Rome, written long after his conversion)

READ ALOUD  (skip?) PS 33: 20-22  What does it mean to put your hope in God?

Faithful living usually results in betterment of imperfect lives and imperfect world.

Day 4  Job 38-41 Inspired  poetic Godly monolog. (Job is in OT before Psalms)

What is the point repeatedly made here? (Job 38-41)

Mankind's small and incomplete comprehension of God's Greatness.

Day 5  Praise the Lord.

**Research question:** Who was the apostle John who wrote the 4th Gospel? Prosperous fisherman. The disciple that Jesus loved. With brother James “Sons of Thunder,” perhaps due to anger outbursts. Previously disciple of John the Baptist. One

Lesson 3 12 D1 Discussion Notes
of the “Inner Three” disciples with Peter and James. Tradition: wrote (to both Jews and Gentiles) 5 NT books: Gospel, 3 letters, Revelation.

ISSUE: how could a simple fisherman write so much so well? # diff Johns, scribes

PS 104: 26 (skip?) What's a Leviathan? Whale or large sea creature. Whales in Med?

ON WHITEBOARD: Hallelu Yah (Hebrew) “Praise the Lord.” Many Psalms begin or end with this phrase.

READ ALOUD John 1: 1-5 (4th & youngest NT Gospel or account of Christ's ministry)

This is a challenging Scripture segment, let's try to figure out what John is saying here. This text would have been considered blasphemy (false teaching) by both Jews and Greeks.

READ ALOUD TNIV Study Bible footnotes for John 1 1:5

READ ALOUD NIV Study Bible footnotes for John 1 1:5

John's essential introduction (his “upfront” thesis):
In the Beginning Jesus was God, the Creator, the giver of Light and Life.

================= Marks of Discipleship ==================

READ ALOUD p. 19 para below “Marks of Discipleship”

How do you show in in your daily life that you belong to God?

Do you have a Day of Rest? If not, is that a big deal? Too busy for rest, R & R?

Might you consider (just for a few weeks) trying a change?

Announcements

Treats this week ___________________________ , Next Week ___________________________

Next week our assignment is Chapter 3 and Scripture accounts of Bad Choices, Sin and Rebellion

Research question: What is a ZIGGURAT? WHITEBOARD

Two Dates for Service: 10/6 Sat. Christmas in October, sign up online

10/13 Sat. 9am Flood Cleanup Kit Assembly, Leawood Narthex

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion  STUFFED ANIMALS FOR READING PRIZES: want to help?

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Teachings about disobedience/sin & bad consequences. Four different stories:

a) Noah & Ark,
b) Tower of Babel,
c) Jeremiah's warnings to the Hebrews,
d) David & Bathsheba

What to look for in the DVD:

Why didn't the “Flood Fix” work?
Why didn't the “Babel/Displacement” fix work?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points  What did you think of the video this week?

If God is all-powerful and all-knowing, why did He try “Fixes” that did not work?

Perhaps not “Fixes” but rather punishments or hard love lessons, consequences.

Workbook Chapter 3.

READ ALOUD  p. 20, Our Human Condition

People Rebel  Four accounts of Bad Choices, God's Response, and the Consequences

Key point: God holds people (individuals, nations, Mankind) accountable
And there are serious consequences for seriously bad behavior.

READ ALOUD  p. 22 2nd para. “Sin with its many manifestations...”

Why is it important to study and learn about sin?

Not just about right and wrong, 1) defining/showing what is wrong,
2) historical accounts of warnings and consequences that teach lessons, but also about
3) betterment (toward ideal) of self, others and the world

How does sin corrupt relationships, including your self-perception, w/others, and w/God?

Is temptation always evil? Probably not, e. g., consideration of non-sinful choices.

Have you ever experienced rebellion, willfully embracing a lifestyle that ignores or rejects what you've been taught is right, what might be called “right living?”

Not relevant to us, but worth contemplating: What if you've never been taught “right?”

Hard Question  God's Grace and willingness to forgive sin presents a dilemma:

Lesson 4 14
Why not enjoy intentional sin, knowing that forgiveness is assured?

Many sins have consequences, and right living is expected of the Faithful.

Scripture

Day 1. Fall of Adam & Eve; Cain & Abel. What were key points in the story of Adam & Eve's Fall?


Adam/Eve offspring: Cain (farmer, sinner), Abel (herder), Seth (future leader of the faithful), many other sons.

Why did God reject Cain's offering, resulting in Able's murder?

Mark of Cain, protected the banished murderer during his wandering.

(skip?) Where did Cain's wife come from?

Cain's descendents were probably violent (Lamech bragged that he killed a young man).

Day 2. Noah and the Flood. What caused God to be angry with Mankind before the Flood?

Pervasive evil & wickedness of Mankind: God's Creation not working out very well...

Is Lamech the killer of GEN 4:23 the same Lamech father of Noah in GEN 5:30? YES

(skip?) How big was the ark? 450 ft long, 75 ft wide, 75 ft tall, ~45,000 animals

Rain 40 days and 40 nights: this number 40 occurs through the Bible.

(skip?) After the rain stopped they had to wait (patiently?) how long for things to dry?

600th Birthday + 7 (rain starts GEN 7:10); rained 40 days, so stopped when Noah was 600 yrs + 47 days GEN 7:12; out of arc when Noah 601 yrs + 1 mo (30 days) + 27 days GEN 8:14 = 601 yrs + 57 days, so they waited a year and ten days!

What is the teaching point of the “Noah drunk” story told in GEN 9:21-29?

Noah drank to excess, passed out, awoke, got mad and cursed Ham his disrespectful youngest son. Even Godly people make bad choices (sin), and make mistakes.

Day 3 The Tower of Babel.

Research question this week: What is a ZIGGURAT? See notes Red Book p. 23

Where was the Tower of Babel located? Babylon 300' x 300' x 300' Idol worship temple!

What caused God to be angry with the Tower Builders? Monumentally self-impressed, egotistical, self important
Babel (sounds like Hebrew for “confused”)

**Day 4**  **Job 38-41 Prophetic lament for sinful Hebrews.**  Jeremiah in OT ~180 pp after end of Psalms

What is the point repeatedly made here? Sinful (idol-worshiping, adulterous, deceiving, lying) Judah will be “tested” [PUNISHED !]

**Day 5**  **David's Kingly Sin with Bathsheba, Consequences and Prayer for Forgiveness.**

Was Bathsheba a willing participant in this affair?

Probably yes, but remember the all-powerfulness if the King, and the “women as property” model in those times.

(skip?) How did they seemingly get away with the deception?

Probably didn't, but David was the very successful and all-powerful king, in harsh times.

READ ALOUD     PSA 51: 10-12     Several translations!

**What were the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba?**

Hebrews lost a fine military leader, baby died, David humbled himself and publicly sought forgiveness, murderous dysfunctionality down through David's family tree, years later rebellious son humiliated David by sleeping w/ten of David's concubines in public.

However, David & Bathsheba had another son named Solomon, who became King.

Christ's lineage is traced from the “house of David” namely David and Bathsheba!

=================================  Marks of Discipleship  =================================

READ ALOUD      p. 25 para below “Marks of Discipleship”

Have you noticed that sincere repentance is harder than you'd think?

**Treats this week**  Treats by ________________________Two Weeks ____________________

**Next week** our assignment is Chapter 4: People called into a Special Relationship with God.

Pay special attention to these accounts, they provide important foundations for our faith.

Two Dates for Service:  10/6 Sat.  **Christmas in October**, sign up online
                     10/13 Sat. 9am   **Flood Cleanup Kit Assembly**, Leawood Narthex

To help buy the stuffed animals for reading prizes, check to “CoR” memo School Reading Prizes

Research Question:  What is a Birthright?

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**

Lesson 4  16     D1 Discussion Notes
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the focus or point of the lesson today?

First 4 generations of God's Chosen People had a special “Covenant” arrangement and expectation

Is a covenant a contract? No, it's a binding agreement between God and God's chosen people. Choice to either accept or reject; blessings in exchange for trust & obedience. Term: Forever!

What to look for in the DVD: Covenant agreement involves wives, not just the men
Important roles of women in earliest, critical Covenant events.

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Account of critical events to be taught and remembered
Women proactive, influential, steering in patriarchal society
Women also to trust and obey. Not just men

Workbook Chapter 4.

Abram's father Terah started in Ur (now eastern Iraq) toward Canaan, but stopped and settled in Haran.

Abram's Covenant: depart Haran [in Syria] to Promised Land, obey God, be blessed, make Great Nation

READ ALOUD  p. 29 1st para “God does not reveal...” Study scripture to learn about God's will

God's unlikely choice to found this Great Nation: elderly man (75 years old) with barren wife.
Repeated scriptural theme: God chooses the unlikely to play important roles

Who was Melchizedek? Priest King of Salem (later Jerusalem), God Believer, received tithe (10%) of war spoils, blessed Abraham.

READ ALOUD  NIV Study Bible footnotes on GEN 14:18-20

Tithe became a mark of discipleship for People of God.

God tested 4 successive Patriarch generations: situation -->test-->reaffirmation. Stories of Faith, Obedience:

Abraham ordered to sacrifice his precious son Isaac
Selection of Isaac's wife: No Caananite wife, family relation to continue the line of Covenant people.

Jacob → Israel wrestled with God, changed forever, reconciled with brother Essau

Joseph resolved conflict with his 10 brothers, good from evil.

We close Genesis learning about the foundation 12 Tribes of Israel.
Covenant: God tells 75 yrs old Abram move from Comfort Zone home (Haran, Syria) to Caanan, unknown Promised Land. Barren wife Sari, her servant Hagar, nephew Lot & wife, ... Famine. Hebrews to Egypt, Sari his “sister” to harem. Diseases inflicted, Pharaoh found out.

Why this story? Abram lost faith in God's protection, lied, many complications, troubles

Lot lived in evil Sodom. What happened to him? captured in war, God caused rescued by Abram et al, v. many spoils.

Why did barren Sari “give” her Egyptian servant Hagar to Abram?
Sari allegedly to continue the Covenant line but lost faith in covenant. (A=86 yrs!) Sari tried to “fix,” complications, troubles. Pregnancy (duh...) Sari can't cope, abuses Hagar, runs off Hagar to desert. Rescued, sent back by God, Ishmael born

How many times did we read in this Scripture about Covenant promises from God?
GEN 12:2 Go to Caanan, Great nation, blessings
GEN 13:14 Giving all of the Land of Caanan
GEN 15 Son, mm descendants, again commitment to give all Caanan (after enslavement)
GEN 17:3 Abraham (new name, 99 yrs), father many Nations, given Caanan, circumcision

Day 2. Character of God

Abram negotiates with God trying to save evil Sodom. LESSON: humble dialog with God is OK

Angels visit Lot @ Sodom, mob rape threat, offered daughters, S & Gomorrah destroyed. LESSON: God can be angered, with terrible consequences.

Story threaded with depravity and excessive badness, Was Lot corrupted by his environment?

Lot's wife turned into pillar of salt for looking back. Was this excessive punishment?
LESSON: (hard) God does not tolerate disobedience.

Lot's daughters incest with father, both bore sons Moab (Moabites), Ben Ammie (Ammonites)
No judgment here? These tribes became enemies of Israel.

BON AMI can

King Abimelech of Philistines (coastal, seafaring peoples) took “sister” Sarah.
God told King A in dream, Sarah returned, with wealth, thus protecting Covenant People
LESSON: Good intentions do not relieve accountability for sin

Son Isaac born to Abraham (100), Sarah (90)
abrham sent Hagar & Ishmael away, rescued by God in desert, promised another Nation
LESSON: merciful God honored Covenant Commitment implied for Ishmael

Abraham's faith tested by being told by God to sacrifice Covenant son Isaac
What's the point of this story? LESSON: God can test in terrible, surprising ways.
Day 3.  Stories of Isaac, Rebekah, and their twins Essau & Jacob

Abraham sent servant back to Syria to find wife Rebekah for son Isaac.

Rebekah had twins Esau red (Hairy, Harry), Jacob (he grasps the heel, or the deceiver)

Where previously mentioned heel vulnerability? Garden/Edon expulsion, snake

CHILI RECIPES
Youthful Esau gave up birthright for bowl of red stew (despised his birthright)

Isaac told Philistine King Abimelech that His wife Rebekah was his sister ! (fatherly trick?)
Pervasive custom: All-powerful kings took beautiful women for wives, concubines.
“Sister” of Isaac chickened out, submission, lost faith in God's protection, set up for taking

Rebekah plots for younger son Jacob to receive blind Isaac “eldest son blessing” by deception
End justifies means?

What's a “birthright?”

Birthright: (Property & leadership succession in Biblical times) traditionally eldest son got
double portion of inheritance from father, recognition as leader, next generation head of household or family group

Jacob sent by Rebekah away (back to family in Haran in Syria) to keep Esau from killing him!

What about all of the discussion of wells in GEN 24, 27?
Arid country, hand dug wells only water sources many places. Essential to habitation. Wells were strategic community resources. Unwelcome: keep away nomads, eject undesirables, enemies by filling in their wells, hostility.

Day 4 Jacob’s blended and dysfunctional family of 12 sons
Jacob dreamed of ladder/stairway to heaven, God renewed Covenant commitment.

How was Jacob deceived by Uncle Laban? How did it work out?

Jacob worked 7 yrs for his favorite Rachel but was given older, plain (“cow-eyed?”) Leah, then 7 yrs for beautiful Rachel. Servants Zilpah & Bilhah became concubines. 4 “wives,”11 sons (see GEN32:27 concubines status)

Jacob became wealthy at Laban's expense, with “fair” stock breeding deal managed by Jacob

Jacob sneaks for Caanan w/everything (Rachel steals Laban's household gods/goodluck charms)

Hard feelings btn Jacob & Laban, agreed to keep apart, not harm each other. Jacob prevailed.

Jacob wrestled God, injured hip, reconfirmed Covenant Blessing. God renamed him Israel (struggles with God)

Rachel (2 sons) dies giving birth to Benjamin; Leah (6); Bilhah (2); Zilpah (2)
Day 5. Favorite youngest son Joseph had a fancy robe (coat), betrayed by brothers, later he became an Egyptian VIP, then brings Israel to Egypt during famine.

In 10 Steps, what happened to Joseph?

1. Joseph Dreamed of superiority, enraged brothers, who wanted to murder him.
2. Sold into slavery, Egypt, bought by Potiphar, Sr. Officer. Manages P’s household well.
3. Potiphar's wife tries seduce Joseph who refuses. Accused by scorned wife, jailed long time.
4. Through God's gift, interprets dreams of Pharoh's cup bearer (food/wine taster) and baker.
5. God revealed to Joseph Pharoh's dream 2 yrs later. Warning: 7 prosperous, 7 famine years.
6. Joseph made VIP, put in charge of all Egypt, preparations for famine.
7. Jacob thought Joseph dead. Early in famine sent sons to Egypt to buy grain.
8. Jacob recognized brothers, made them bring back Benjamin.
9. During 2nd Egyptian grain trip, brothers reconciled, invited to live high in Egypt.
10. Israel moved all to Egypt, where lived apart (herdsmen not well liked) on best land.

(skip?) Trick question: How many times was Joseph sold?

Five times: By Bros, Ishmaelites, Midianites, Midanites, Egyptian traders, Potiphar.

(skip) Had Benjamin been born when Joseph had his trouble-making dream?

(skip) What would this material mean to Jews of that era?

God's People: Foundation and roots in Covenant commitments, very long ago.

Why is today's Scripture relevant to us now?

Describe how the relationship between God and Jewish people get started, what kind of people were involved, earliest revealed aspects of the Nature of God.

----------------------------- Marks of Discipleship ----------------------------------

READ ALOUD p. 32 rt. Column, para. in red

Is tithing an important indication of your faith commitment?

Announcements. 10/13/12 Saturday Flood Cleanup Buckets, Narthex, 9am

Joys and Concerns

Research question: When the Israelites left Egypt, how were they able able to come away with so much wealth (gold and silver)?

Closing Prayer
Rob's Bowl of Red
(*Recipe from Super Sunday Super Bowl Holiday Menu)  
(Serves 8)

2 tablespoons olive oil or butter  
4 pounds lean beef roast, round or sirloin, cut into ¾-inch cubes  
1 cup crushed tomatoes in puree  
1-10½ ounce can beef broth  
3 cups water  
3 medium onions, coarsely chopped  
1 medium to large, green bell pepper, coarsely chopped  
2 medium cloves fresh garlic, minced  
6 large dried ancho chili peppers, finely ground  
1 tablespoon dried oregano (preferably Mexican)  
½ teaspoon dried basil  
1 tablespoon cumin seed or ground cumin  
1 to 2 teaspoons salt  
½ tablespoon cayenne pepper  
2 jalapeno peppers, finely chopped  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Heat oil in a heavy 6 quart or larger stock pot over medium heat. Add meat and brown evenly. Break up any large chunks. Stir in remaining ingredients and bring to gentle boil. Lower heat and simmer for 2½ hours or more. Stir occasionally, adjust seasonings to taste. Add water if chili becomes too thick. (This dish freezes well.)

Recipe courtesy – Rob Smith – Austin, Texas

Serve pork chile verde over Mexican rice or taco-style in warm tortillas topped with chipotle sour cream. Make it the day before the game and reheat before serving.

Pork chile verde

2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
2½ pounds pork shoulder, cut into 1-inch dice  
Salt and pepper  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1 cup chicken stock  
6 canned or parboiled and peeled tomatillos, finely chopped  
6 Anaheim or poblano chiles or other mild fresh green chiles, fire-roasted and seeded, or 7 ounces green chiles, seeded and chopped  
2 bunches cilantro  
Salt, pepper and lime juice to taste

Heat the oil in a skillet. Season meat with salt and pepper and brown over medium heat for about 5 minutes a side. Remove the meat and reserve.

In the oil remaining in the skillet, cook the onion and garlic until soft, about 10 minutes. Mix in the chiles and add the stock, tomatillos and reserved meat. Bring to a boil, add the chiles and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for 1½ hours or until meat is tender. Discard any roots from the cilantro and finely chop the stems. Add to the pot and cook 10 more minutes. Coarsely chop the cilantro leaves. Reserve ¼ cup of chopped cilantro for garnish and add the remainder to the pot. Cook for 5 more minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste, and add enough lime juice to give a slight tang to the sauce. Makes enough for 12 tacos or 4 servings as a main course over rice.
CHILI BY SARAH

2# ground beef
1 onion
1C green pepper
1C celery
2-16 oz cut up tomatoes (I use rotel w/chiles)
6 oz tomato paste
2+ garlic cloves
1 ½ T. chili powder
2 tsp. salt
Add a can of chopped green chiles (opt.)

Saute beef, onion, green pepper and celery until brown and vegetables are tender.
Drain beans. KEEP LIQUID. Add all ingredients.
Cover and simmer for 1 1/2 hrs.
(Use bean liquid to thin if desired. I use beef broth or tomato juice for better flavor.)
Chapter 5: God Hears the Cry of the Enslaved

Discussion Notes

Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion: What's the central issue or point of the lesson this week?

God heard pleas of oppressed Covenant Israelites, brought them out from Egypt in 1446 BC after they were enslaved (in Egypt 430 years, since about 1876 BC, almost 3900 years ago).

One of the most memorable and significant events in Biblical OT history.


Play DVD: Find the darkness in 9th plague, death/firstborn, destruction Pharaoh's army.

DVD Discussion Points:
- Salvation: Symbol of individual, collective salvation, hope.
- P & LS: Direct P & LS linkage: mysteriously identical on several levels: Lamb, commemoration of same night, same (yet evolved) salvation, same hope, same central faith role.
- Darkness: Curse of unnatural 3 days darkness, midnight firstborn died, Army drowned at “last watch of the night” (just before dawn).
- Concern: Moses training as a Hebrew youth?

Workbook Chapter 1.

POP QUIZ HANDOUT: 5 minutes to complete (see below)
15 minutes discussion (see below)

Scripture: Exodus 1-18

Day 1: According to Pharaoh's orders, how were the male Israelite babies to be killed?
- Midwives to kill at birth (refused: they give birth too quickly for us to get there...)
- Throw boy babies into the Nile

Central figure Moses wrote and reluctantly starred in this memorable account.

Why did Jethro (aka Reuel) give his daughter Zipporah as Moses' wife?
Moses rescued his seven shepherd daughters from hostile group of shepherds at a well.
- Saved territorial access, plus sheep and daughters.

Moses & burning bush: inadequate for job, humble protestations, negotiation, Aaron to help.

Who was Aaron? Moses' older (by 3 yrs) brother.

Renewal / reminder of Covenant commitments, Promised Land of Caanan in EXO 3:8

READ ALOUD: EXO 3:14
- Several Biblical translations about the name of God

God outlines to (80 yrs old) Moses the “plan for Exodus:” Pharaoh's hard heart, many plagues,
release, **You will plunder the Egyptians.** [Later renews Covenant commitment to PL & B]

**Day 2. Moses returns to Egypt with his Shepherd's Staff, symbol of God's Presence & Power**

What role did Moses Staff play in Pharaohic encounters, later Exodus wandering?
First, staff becomes snake, then 1st plague: strike Nile w/Staff, turning all Nile to **BLOOD**
Also symbol of God's power & Might as well as Moses' special relationship with God.

(skip) **What was going on with EXO 4:24-26?**
Moses son not yet circumcised, Moses disobedient, God threatened to kill Moses son on travel.

Pharaoh refuses 1st demand “Let My People GO,” requires unreasonable bricks w/out straw
Moses & Aaron blamed for angering the Pharaoh, bringing more harm to Israelites.

Moses announced Covenant reminder, commitment of God to free them, **rejected by oppressed Israelites.**

Begin repetitive cycle of plague stories: what's the pattern
Go to Pharaoh, demand LMPG or X disaster, plague X, hard hearted Pharaoh refuses.

**Day 3. Lots more Plagues:**

**BLOOD, FROGS, GNATS, FLIES, DEAD LIVESTOCK, BOILS, HAIL LOCUSTS, DARKNESS,**
finally, the clincher:
**DEATH of ALL FIRSTBORN SONS in patriarchal society**

Explain what Israelites were to do to avoid death of their firstborn sons & animals?
Sacrifice, roast, eat lamb, paint front door jamb (Top & sides) with lamb's blood
so **angel of death will “Pass Over”**

**Did only the young firstborn die Or all ages?** All ages: leadership & future leaders of Egypt were all decimated.

**Day 4** Passover celebration specified & required to commemorate escape from Egypt

(skip?) **Have you ever celebrated Passover with Jewish friends? Did they follow these rules?**

**HUGE migration:** ~2 million Departed w/herds, plunder. Not only Israelites (EXO 12:38)

When enslaved Israelites left Egypt, how were they able able to come away with much wealth?
Egyptians were terribly afraid of the Israelites and their God (after gazillions of firstborn deaths)
**REALLY** wanted them to leave ASAP (bribe).

Consider economic impact of 600,000 men (laborers) suddenly departing.

**READ ALOUD** EXO 13:12-16 plus study notes 12-14 (various Bible versions) **Redeem every firstborn...**
**READ ALOUD** NIV footnotes for EXO 14:27-28

(skip?) ref EXO 13:17  Where was “Philistine country?”

D1 Discussion Notes  Lesson 6
Day 5. Israelites getting started on Desert Journey

**ISSUE:** Complaints, no food (bread & meat), insufficient water.
SOLUTION: God Provides sufficiently (Moses staff miracle again, Sabbath kept)

**ISSUE:** Moses overwhelmed by administering 2,000,000, almost ~size as KC or Austin TX
SOLUTION: (mgt 101 per father-in-law Jethro) Hierarchical delegation 1000, 100, 50, 10
our first practical Biblical leadership structure, span of control model...
Unmentioned but subsequently relevant: Tribes as highest level division of Israelites.

Who, when, where was Exodus written? Moses, during desert wanderings, ~1440 -1410 BC

What would this material mean to Jews of that era?

How we became a Nation, Enslaved to Free, Freedom, separation as core value and aspiration,
Not Forsaken by God, Covenant Renewed after many generations

There seems to be a Long Cycle of away/oppressed, renewal/recommitment/return in Jewish History!

Why is this story relevant to us today?

History of Jewish Nation founding & key historical traditions, mysterious linkages between OT Israelite tradition of Passover and later Christian Last Supper/Communion, hope and faith that God will give Deliverance from oppression. 3900+ years of Faith continuity.

============== Marks of Discipleship ==================

From last time: Is tithing an important indication of your faith commitment?

Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Research question: Why was there so much emphasis on Jewish food rules, and where did these “laws” come from?

Closing Prayer
1. Why did the Pharaoh (King) of Egypt perceive the enslaved Israelites as a threat?
   
   Became numerous, lived separately, did not worship the Egyptian gods, might have (to paranoid Pharaoh) become a subversive factor.

2. Why did the Pharaoh order that Israelite baby boys be killed?
   
   So that one generation hence the Israelite population would be diminished and leaderless.

3. Can you recall another king that ordered Israelite baby boys be killed?
   
   Herod, after he learned that the Messiah had been born in Bethlehem.

4. How was Moses raised?
   
   As a highly educated Egyptian prince, but with Hebrew mother and traditions, oral history (e.g., Genesis stories that he recorded).

5. Why did Moses flee Egypt into Midian?
   
   Murdered an Egyptian that was abusing a Hebrew slave; Pharaoh found out about the murder.

6. At the time of the burning bush, what did Moses think about himself?
   
   He had self-esteem issues, believed himself unworthy of and unable to serve Lord as commanded.

7. What was the religious background of Jethro, Moses father-in-law?
   
   Midianite priest, idol worshiper, pagan.

   How did his beliefs change after the Israelites left Egypt?
   
   Met Moses in desert, recommended management hierarchy, became a God believer.

8. Name the ten plagues imposed on the Egyptians to motivate release of the Israelites.
   
   BLOOD, FROGS, GNATS, FLIES, DEAD LIVESTOCK, BOILS, HAIL, LOCUSTS, DARKNESS, DEATH of FIRSTBORN SONS.
1. Why did the Pharaoh (King) of Egypt perceive the enslaved Israelites as a threat?

2. Why did the Pharaoh order that Israelite baby boys be killed?

3. Can you recall another king that ordered Israelite baby boys be killed?

4. How was Moses raised?

5. Why did Moses flee Egypt into Midian?

6. At the time of the burning bush, what did Moses think about himself?

7. What was the religious background of Jethro, Moses father-in-law?

   How did his beliefs change after the Israelites left Egypt?

8. Name the ten plagues imposed on the Egyptians to motivate release of the Israelites.

   __________, __________, __________, __________, __________,
   __________, __________, __________, __________, __________,
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion

What's the **central issue or point** of the lesson today?

Responsibilities of the Covenant people were explicitly defined by a complex set of laws, resulting in a distinct (separate) and unique Hebrew identity, behavior, and concept of morality.

What to **look for** in the DVD

Law as an essential element of the **Covenant: Instructions must be obeyed**.  
Nucleus or Central Focal Point of the Law: Ten Commandments  
Discussion: ramifications and meanings of 10 Commandments

**Play DVD**

**DVD Discussion Points**

Which Commandment has been the most challenging in your life?

============== Workbook Chapter 6. ================================================

Our Scriptural study today deals with definition and Launch of a new Nation, including behavioral expectations, morality, worship practices and cultural differentiation. In a sense, this was the **National Beginning**, analogous to the revolutionary war of the USA, but with **intentional co-mingling of church and state**, which continues to this day.

READ ALOUD p. 42 Our Human Condition “We cannot abide...”

READ ALOUD p. 44 (middle 2nd para to end para) “Certainly Moses began the law process...”

Do you think that this means the Hebrew Law evolved over about a thousand years?

Our workbook divides Law discussion into several useful categories, first

**Social Welfare**  Focus on social compassion, treatment of marginalized and “aliens.”

God is caring and compassionate, as **we must be**

Integration of civil & religious law typical of Biblical times.

**Food Laws**  Mix of healthful practices and cultural differentiation, setting Jews apart by how they eat

Research Question: **Why was there so much emphasis on Jewish food rules, and where did these “laws” come from?**

**Justice Laws**  Uniformity, accountability, fairness defined. No one is above the Law. God is Just.

Did you find any of the Justice Laws inappropriate for modern society?

**Imprisonment unaffordable**, self-support essential, so life and limb cheaper in OT times: harsh penalties inevitable (punishment degrees: property loss or temporary stigma, permanently marginalized, banishment, execute).
What about modern false or misleading advertising?

**Family Life Laws**  
Family strength essential: deep respect for parents. Lots of Laws on sexual behavior.

Did you find any of the Family Life Laws inappropriate for modern society?

- Compare OT Jewish Law with the New Covenant as you understand it now:
  - Inclusion trumps Separateness
  - Much more judgment, lots less forgiveness, harsh punishments.
  - Social welfare, justice and sexual morality remain reflections of Godlike behavior

**Something to think about:**
READ ALOUD  
Question atop p. 49: “Describe who...”

**Practicing** believer differs greatly in **behavior** from a “nominal” believer, perhaps a major difference between “nominal” and “deeply committed” Christians.

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**Scripture**

**Day 1.**  
**Ceremonial Worship Laws, Ten Commandments**

EXO 20:5 punishment of children for parents “God-hating sin” unto the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> generation?  
God's character: **explicitly very harsh**, jealous of other gods, or wrong priorities. **Hard lesson!**

(skip?) Coveting commandment: what's enough? Can you accept what you have been given?

Why are the 10 Commandments repeated in DEU 5?  
Moses “farewell speech” recollecting his life events just before old man dies. Important reminder of important stuff.

**Day 2. What did you find most noteworthy about this scripture?**

- Slavery/servitude for max 7 years vs lifetime.  
- OK for father to sell daughter as slave (EXO21:7-11)  
- Many death penalty crimes (many more than modern times) **Why?**  
  - Interest-free Hebrew vs interest-bearing Alien loans; forgiveness in every 7<sup>th</sup> year  
  - (sin to anticipate forgiveness of loan to Hebrew that needs financial help)

READ ALOUD  
footnotes for EXO 31:18

Moses on Mt. Saini 40 days meeting God, Israelites become impatient, Aaron & people decide to make a golden idol. Aaron later (after caught and reprimanded severely) claims in an absurd excuse:

READ ALOUD  
EXO 32:22-24 “...and out [sorta accidentally, don't blame me, huh] came this calf!”

Aaron: a very poor leadership example.  
Is Aaron the worst leader we've seen so far?

**Day 3. What are some of currently relevant highlights of this scripture reading?**

- Cultural differentiation via clean/unclean animal eating.}  
- Sexual behavior prohibitions, including male homosexuality (LEV 18:22).  
- Slandering another prohibited (including political negativism & robo-calls?) (LEV 19:16)
Tattoos and decorative scars prohibited (LEV 19:28)
Treat aliens as one of your own (LEV 19:33)

Day 4 Preparation for the Promised Land (more history-based teachings)

(skip) Who were “Nazirites?” Read study footnotes NUM 6:1)

12 spies sent to Caanan to scope out the Promised Land, gone 40 days.
Joshua & Caleb really favored Caanan, other 10 spies pessimistic, people afraid to go, rebel.

Why was God vv. Angry with those Israelites afraid to go into Caanan?
Again lost trust & belief in God's Covenant: they forgot that God was on their side!
Moses again negotiates w/God for forgiveness. Heavy penalty imposed:
No adults (except Joshua & Caleb) that started Exodus will enter Promised Land, wander 40 yrs!
Pessimistic spies struck down by God, died of plague
People decided to go anyway, (NOW!) and were defeated in battle, then had to wander.

READ ALOUD Bible study notes related to DEU 5:1-7

Troubling scripture:
READ ALOUD DEU 7:2-4 Show no mercy to faithless, don't contaminate yourselves by intermarriage and DEU 7:16

Contrast with:
READ ALOUD DEU 21:10-13 Enemy women captured, taken as wives after a month?

Day 5. Aaron forgiven after Golden Calf, commanded to establish priesthood w/ Levite tribe.

Redemption of Firstborn clarified (pay 2 oz silver or equivalent, $64) NUM 18:16
Stone to death disobedient youths (sons) DEU 21:18-21 (Exaggeration makes a strong point?)

(skip?) Comment on timeless human condition: Law: no cross-dressing! (DEU 22:5)

Who wrote DEU 34? Not Moses, whose death account is there.

(skip) Do you believe that the Laws recorded in the Pentateuch were defined during the Wanderings, or evolved over ~1000 yrs, 1400 BC to perhaps 400 BC?

Why is this scripture relevant to us today?
Important part of our Judeo-Christian religious and cultural heritage: rules applicable to Christ and His time/place. Tell us much about the nature of God, and His timeless expectations of Believers.

Marks of Discipleship

Research question:
What is the significance of the “scapegoat” in the Jewish Yom Kippur rituals?

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer

Lesson 7  30  D1 Discussion Notes
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion

Why are we studying today all of these details regarding the Tabernacle, worship rituals and sacrifice?

Differentiation and complex worship rules. **God demands specific forms of worship, hence respect.** Early Jewish worship practices involved lots of animal sacrifice, strange and a bit off-putting. These people mostly ate grain, vegetables, fruit (olive oil), so **meat sacrifice was special** Specific worship celebrations at special times each year: **REMEMBERANCE**

What to look for in the DVD

Play DVD

**DVD Discussion** Points

Purpose Tabernacle: Symbol of God's presence w/Hebrews.
Facets of Godly behavior (insights about God) and Hebrew culture
Ritual atonement so that sins/misdeeds don't accumulate to become overwhelming

Look on Internet for Tabernacle floorplans and furniture pictures

How do you see life lived well (that is, in faith) as an act of worship?

===================================================================

What are distinctive characteristics of Hebrew worship, the sacred traditions underlying Christian worship:

- **Communal** (or corporate) not individual
- **Mandatory**, not optional or casual
- **Prescribed**, specific times and rituals
- Agricultural ties & annual cycle

Three important aspects of early Hebrew worship: Remembrance, Atonement, Thanksgiving

**Remembrance**

Which aspects of Passover were to be remembered?
Deliverance against impossible odds, divine sustenance, Law & way of Life, freedom & Promised Land.

**Atonement** restoring oneness with God
Wrongdoing damages relationships w/ God, w/ family, w/ neighbors.

**Individual, Communal Accountability**: Ritualized expressions of guilt & shame, making amends to God, reconciliation with God

**What was the Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement ritual?**

Purification of people and sanctuary

Chief priest ceremonial sacrifice bull: ceremonial penitence & sin offering for self and family (“house”)

Two goats represent sins of the Hebrew People. Choose by “lot”
1) goat sacrificed for atonement of Peoples Sins
2) Cord of red wool on horns represent peoples sins, goad led into the wilderness AWAY “Scapegoat”

Do any of our Resurrection church rituals make you feel freed of guilt and shame?
e.g., Palm Sunday burning of Sins Confessed Lists

**Thanksgiving** & Ceremonial “Calendar” of Hebrew festivals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sept-Oct</th>
<th>New Year or Festival of Trumpets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+10 days</td>
<td>Day of Atonement Yom Kippur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2 weeks</td>
<td>Feast of Booths, Succoth, after autumn harvest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-April</td>
<td>Passover, Pesach,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P+ (7*7+1)</td>
<td>Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, Shavout, 50 days after Passover, first wheat harvest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 1.**  
**EXO 24 - 27** Covenant recommitment/ratification, Tabernacle and its furnishings

Covenant renewal or ratification ceremony

**READ ALOUD**  
**EXO 24: 7**

*What is this “Book of the Covenant” that Moses read to the People?*

“Book of the Covenant” is usually taken to refer to the legal, moral, and cultural literature found in Exodus 20:22–23:33 a) cultural requirements, b) legal rules, c) religious and moral instructions, d) conclusions

Appears that Moses had already written down the early parts of Exodus, which he read to the Hebrews !

**READ ALOUD**  
**EXO 24:6-8** study Bible footnotes.

**HAND OUT** Pictures of Tabernacle & Furnishings

**Day 2.**  
**EXO 34:29 – 36:1, 40 Psalm 81** Replacement Tablets, Tabernacle Building Drive and Construction

*What's the significance of the story about Moses face being “radiant” when he returned from speaking w/God?*

Clearly evident Moses had a **special and to-be-respected relationship with God.**

Lesson 8 32 D1 Discussion Notes
Who was to contribute materials and wealth toward construction of the Tabernacle?

Trick question: everyone asked, but only those willing were to contribute.

Day 3. LEV 1-5. Offering ceremonies (animal & grain sacrifices) detailed.

READ ALOUD Study Bible footnotes for LEV 1:4ff comparing Jewish and other nations animal sacrifices

Why no yeast allowed in grain offerings? Hint: read study Bible footnotes for LEV 2:11

What's the symbolic significance of salt in grain offerings? Hint: study Bible footnotes!

Day 4. LEV 6-7, DEU 18. Priestly instructions for offering ceremonies, provision for Levite priests.

(skip) READ ALOUD DEO 8:1-8 and footnotes in study Bibles, regarding support for priests.

READ ALOUD DEU 18:17-20 and footnotes: prophets and false prophets

Day 5. LEV 16-17, 23; DEU 16.

READ ALOUD LEV 16:1 What does this mean?

Study bibles: see the little superscript symbol (mine says “k”) at the end of the verse?

Over in the margin, there is a pointer to related Scripture.

READ ALOUD LEV 10:1-2. What happened here?

Aaron's sons (junior priests) abused priestly offices, were severely punished.

Another “God can be very harsh” lesson to think about.

Point: study bibles often provide embedded pointers to related scripture, often helping with comprehension.

What did this material mean to Jews of that era? Worship & sacrifice expectations of God.

Why is this scripture relevant to us today?

Although these worship facilities and practices have been abandoned by Jews, the concepts of acknowledgment of sin (errors), atonement and renewal remains central to our belief.

============= Marks of Discipleship ==============

READ ALOUD workbook p. 55, 2nd para, “Christian disciples commit...”

Research question: Why do you think that the Israelites fell into cycles of sinning and idol worship, followed by revitalization by an inspirational and Godly Prophet?

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

=== Please think about a Group CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION PLAN, we'll discuss next week =====

Introductory Discussion

What's the theme of the lesson today?

Cycles of sin, distress & insubordination, relief by Heroic Leaders that emerged during time of settlement of Promised Land: Israelite harsh times.

What to look for in the DVD

Repeated downhill slides into idolatry

After Joshua, were there any accounts of faith leaders?

Play DVD

What caused repeated declines into sin?

DVD Discussion Points

Relief from oppression not the same as living as God required?

Joshua

Starting Situation? Israelites coming into Promised Land at Jericho, Moses died, God designated Joshua the new leader.

Joshua Background. Slave in Egypt, Aide to Moses, military leader, one of two faithful spies sent to check out Promised Land. ~60s at Jericho

Leadership Challenge Met. Conquest of Jericho: spies sent, Rahab hid them. Red Cord. Followed Ark across Jordan River on dry ground (ala Red Sea?), marched around Jericho 6 days, 7 times around on 7th day then trumpets, yell LOUDLY, walls fell. All living things destroyed, but gold/silver/iron/bronze put into Tabernacle treasury.

Other Joshua stories: Achan kept plunder, found out, stoned w/family for sin, threat to Nation. City of Ai taken by ruse: attacked, fled, chased, 2nd force took town, killed all people there. TWO Covenant renewal ceremonies by Joshua: Mt. Ebal, many yrs later Mt. Shechem

Was there a 3rd set of stone tablets containing the 10 Commandments? see JOS 8:32

Duration of Leadership (in Promised Land) “...a long time...” died at age 110 (JUD 2:3) so ~45-50 yrs

Then What Happened? Israelites obedient to God, but later failed to complete conquest of Promised Land.

Lived alongside, traded & intermarried with, corrupted by pagan influences. Deborah
Starting Situation?  Covenant modified by disobedience of Israelites: failure to conquer Canaanites, ongoing interactions: wars, corrupted, idol worship, abandoned God! Repeatedly defeated by Canaanites, esp. King Jabin w/ 900 iron chariots (~tanks)

Deborah Background  Wife & widely respected Judge, Listened to God's call, song/poem  writer.
We do not know how Deborah was called or motivated to leadership

Leadership Challenge. Directed Israelite General Barak to defeat (w/God's help) enemy Sisera & 900 chariots. “Only if you go with me” (chicken?)  The Lord routed Sisera & chariots, all troops killed. Sisera fled, hid in womens tent, killed by Jeal with a tent peg & mallet while sleeping. Jeal related to Moses wife!

Duration of Leadership. Deborah led 40 years of peace. Honorable mention: Joyous Song of Deborah.

Then What Happened? Israelites again did evil in eyes of the Lord, conquered by Midianites, 7 years oppression.

To this day, chariots/tanks do not seem to work well against Israel, as Egyptians have learned twice....

Gideon

Starting Situation?  Israelites dominated, continuously raided by Midianites. Gideon hiding/threshing grain in winepress (stone basin) when visited by an Angel of the Lord.

Gideon Background. Farmer, least son of weak family of small tribe. Inadequate for leadership, excuses! Weak belief: TWICE asked God for signs (fleece and dew) as sign of God's support. God patiently provided the requested signs! God insisted on tiny force to clearly show God's Mighty Power

Leadership Challenge: At night, snuck into Midianites camp with 300 men, suddenly blew trumpets and broke pots over torches. PANIC awakened, fled. Jews from other tribes refused to help Gideon + 300 in pursuit (tribal discord). Refusers punished (more Israelite discord).

Duration of Leadership. 40 years of peace, BUT Gideon succumbed to temptations of conquest wealth

Then What Happened? Gideon's evil, power obsessed son Abimelech killed 70 (all but one) of his brothers, became king, but later was killed by a woman, during a siege.

Sampson

Starting Situation?  Israelites again did evil, and were conquered (40 yrs) by the Philistines.

Sampson Background. Childless wife visited by an Angel of the Lord: you will have a special son, Lifelong Nazirite, dedicated to the Lord. Sampson: fell in love with a Philistine (pagan) woman, killed Lion w/bare hands, wedding feast wager: 30 sets of clothing to solve riddle.

Leadership Challenge Met. An account of explosive anger that got 'way out of hand: Bride betrayed riddle solution so Sampson lost bet. In anger, Sampson killed 30 men, took their clothing to pay bet. His new wife given away. Angry revenge: Sampson burned lots of Philistine grain fields, vineyards, olive groves. Philistines killed his wife, her father etc. Sampson killed many Philistines. Later killed
1000 Philistines w/jawbone of donkey. Sampson made life-changing bad choices in women:

Duration of Leadership. Sampson led Israel 20 years, then fell in love with Delilah, who was bribed by the Philistines. Several false strength-secrets (fresh thongs, new ropes, weave hair into cloth), then Delilah & Philistines cut Sampson's hair, captured and blinded Sampson. In prison, Sampson ground grain while his hair grew back.

Then What Happened? Blind elderly Sampson exhibited at pagan temple mighty celebration, prays for renewed strength, collapses the temple onto huge Philistine crowd, killing rulers, thousands of enemies, himself.

Small group discussions.

We have studied several accounts of leaders that brought noteworthy betterment to their people, but failed to set an appropriate Faith-Direction and example.

Let's consider some issues related to the interactions of faith and leadership today, especially in civil and religious activities.

(See attached))

Marks of Discipleship

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Breakout Group Discussions

Break into small groups of 3 or 4. Each group has an assigned question to discuss. When we come back together in about ten minutes, the spokesperson for each group will report on your findings and conclusions.

Group 1.
What would it mean today to do what is evil in the eyes of God?

Group 2.
How does God raise up good leaders today, especially in government and in the Church?

Group 3.
What kind of people do you think God chooses to be leaders?

Group 4.
What causes you to believe that a particular leader is chosen by God?

Group 5.
What does it mean to place yourself under the authority of your spiritual leaders?
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion  What did all of these Kings of Israel have in common?

All were very far from perfect. All chose badly, sinned greatly, angered God and were reprimanded and punished.

What to look for in the DVD  After-the-fact historical account of several hundred years of Kings

Holding Good and Bad Leaders Accountable: Then vs. Now

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points  Before the DVD, had you realized that David had serious flaws?

Was it obvious from your readings that Solomon required oppressive governance to support his excessive “glories?”

Much of that wealth was due to oppressive exploitation of Israel as well as conquered peoples.

Workbook Chapter 9. 

Key Characters from Scripture this week:

Samuel – Last judge, first prophet, anointed King Saul then later King David increasing pressure for unification under an (earthly) King

Saul - First King of Israel, struggled to define and exert kingly authority,. Repeatedly disobeyed God
Became mentally unbalanced, tried to kill his successor David, died in battle

David - Shepherd, youngest of eight sons
Killed Philistine giant Goliath, became national hero
Chosen by God to become 2nd King of Israel
Many sins with Bathsheba, accused by Nathan, confessed and sought forgiveness.
Many bloody military conquests, accumulated great wealth and power
Kingly faith leader, but deemed unworthy to build Temple at Jerusalem
Viewed as Israel's greatest king.

Solomon - Great wisdom and wealth, built up mighty Kingdom,
Oppressed both conquered nations and Israel to support extravagant lifestyle
Constructed rich Temple at Jerusalem, but ~2X time and $ on Palace
Extravagantly wealthy, lived large and was famous throughout the Known World.
Loved and married many pagan women, 700 wives, 300 concubines,
Corrupted by pagan wives, angered God, who decided to split his Kingdom at Solomon's death
Scripture

Day 1. How did Israel lose the Ark of the Covenant, then get it Back?
Lost a (smaller) battle to the Philistines, brought Ark to battlefield, good luck (~idol) symbol! (violated God's express command that the Ark be kept in Most Holy Place of Tabernacle)
Lost larger battle, ark captured by Philistines, Ark put in Pagan Temple (Dagon rain god)
Dagon statue broken, many deaths, plagues of tumors and rats in 5 Philistine cities
Ark returned to Israel with guilt offerings 5 gold tumors and 5 gold rats, for 5 P. cities stricken!

How important was the Ark after its return?
70 Israelites killed by God for looking into Ark, then put into storage ~20 yrs, idols worshiped

READ ALOUD Scripture & footnotes for 1 SAM 7:1-4 (Ark not important, idol worship prevailed for a time)

Day 2. Was first King Saul Successful? No, he ultimately screwed up royally...

Strengths? Tall, selected by God, military leader, supported by the people, defeated many of Israel's enemies, fighting to the end of his reign.

Weaknesses? Smallest tribe, smallest clan, insecure & egotistical, disobedient many times, failed the plunder-destruction test: rejected by God as King

Opportunities? God said Saul's family could rule Israel forever.

Threats? External enemies, successor King David (jealous even though Saul was disobedient), doomed by God.

Day 3. Was David a Good King, or a Bad Person?
Both: he was human, but was a great Civic and Faith Leader. His Sins were forgiven, but still had consequences. Failed to discipline his sons.
Much family turmoil (really bad stuff: rape, incest, sibling murder, civil war)

What was David's Vision for Success? Conquest, freedom from surrounding enemies, riches, obedience to God & Covenant blessings forever.

READ ALOUD Psalm 51.

Why was David considered Israel's Greatest King? Many victories established unified strong Nation of Israel, strong faith in God (Psalms)

Day 4. Blessed by God with Wisdom, Wealth, Power & Fame, how did Solomon screw up?
Excesses (wives, concubines, palaces, chariots, horses, wealth, …) and corruption led to idol worship & loss of faith in God, punished by kingdom division on death

Day 5. What was the controversy that Split the Kingdom of Israel after Solomon's death?
Taxes: new King Rehoboam (heavier or lighter than Solomon's burden?) People wanted relief from oppressive rulers!
What happened to the Northern Kingdom (Israel)?
Rejected heavy taxation by King Rehoboam, new King Jeroboam split off 10 tribes, became evil and godless, worshiping golden calves, more vulnerable to external conquest.

What happened to the Southern Kingdom (Judah)? Tribes Judah & Benjamin, line of kings from House of David

What would this material mean to Jews of that era?
Recollection of the “Good Old Days” when Israel was a Big Deal, a World (OK, “regional”) Power.

Why is it relevant to us today?

Bad leaders can very quickly lead a strong and Faithful nation into abrupt decline. Choose prudently, for the consequence of bad leadership can be institutional or national destruction.

Have you ever decided to leave a poorly led organization?

============= Marks of Discipleship =================

Announcements

Joy In Service: Now time to make commitments to Thanksgiving, Christmas serving.

Christmas Activity? Volunteers to Plan & Organize? Date next week, please.
Pre-Thanksgiving: as we decided, no class meeting 11/21/12 (before Thanksgiving)

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
WARNING: Leave 15+ mins at class end to discuss Christmas Service Project & Party.

Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the **central issue or point** of the lesson today?

God sent prophets (visionaries) who warned against continuing misbehavior (mostly idol worship & social injustice), severe punishments to come.

What to **look for** in the DVD: King Ahab & Queen Jezebel worshiped Canaanite god Baal, supported 850 Baal priests [killed off most Hebrew priests remaining]

“Light my fire” Baal vs. God public sacrifice demonstration of power: Elijah prayed, God won, Baal priests all killed.

Play DVD

**DVD Discussion** Points. Look for when God won the “Light my fire” demonstration, Baal priests, King & Queen discredited: they clearly supported & worshiped a false god

Conclusion: (even from Kings) God demands **faithfulness** and **justice**.

== Workbook Chapter 10. ==

In the old “Wild West” movies, what were evil women called? **Jezebel**

How long ago did Queen Jezebel live?

~2700+ years ago. Womanly evil personified, remembered for a LONG time

Clarification about use of the term “Prophet”

a) **Before** Hebrew kings: political & military (sometimes but not always RELIGIOUS!) leaders e.g., Moses, Deborah

b) **During** the time of Hebrew Kings:

those who were called to announce God's words & forecast God's actions

Politically acceptable role: seemingly “protected” or “respected”

Prophets warned against the disobedient evils of paganism: **IDOL WORSHIP**.

Is idol worship a clear and present danger in our times?

Wealth, power, respect, “stuff” all seem very tempting in our materialistic society: is it worse now?

**Social wickedness** (inconsideration & injustice according to God's Covenant) also great concern to prophets.
Did you ever wonder why it is easier to ignore injustice than to understand and fix it?

If we really cared, wouldn't we do more than quickie little things?

Maybe changing your life because you really do care takes courage, commitment, and lots of very personal and impactful change.

**Bottom line:** the prophets we're reading about today seem concerned with behaviors and values that seem alarmingly relevant today!

=== Scripture ===

**Day 1.** 1 Kings 16:28 – 19:18. **King Ahab & Prophet Elijah**

Elijah predicted long drought, which happened. Elijah stayed with a widow: God provided their sustenance.

(already discussed) Bull sacrifice test, Baal vs. God. 850 Baal priests cannot get the fire lit. Elijah prays, God lights the God's Alter Fire.

Elijah receives a “whisper from God:” anoint pagan king Hazael, anoint Hebrew king Jehu, and anoint as your successor prophet Elisha.

READ ALOUD  Footnotes for 1 Kings 19:15-16

**Day 2.** 1 Kings 19:19 – 22:40 and 2 Kings 2:1-18, 9 **King Ahab steals Naboth's vinyard, Elisha**

What finally happened to King Ahab? (see 1 Kings 22:34-38)

He died in battle, then his body was washed in a pool where prostitutes bathed, and dogs licked up his blood.

What finally happened to Queen Jezebel?

Widowed, ordered executed (trampled by horses outside Jezreel) by new King Jehu, eaten by dogs..... not given an honorable burial.

READ ALOUD 2 Kings 2:11 and footnotes.

A memorable and noteworthy event in the life of a famous prophet!
Elijah did not die, he went directly to heaven (without passing “Go?”)

**Day 3 & 4.** Amos 1-4 and 5-9. **Prophet Amos**

Who was Amos?
Shepherd of Southern Kingdom Judah called to be prophet to Northern Kingdom Israel

What was the essence of Amos message? Poetic format

Repeated warnings about sinful Israel (Northern Kingdom): Must Repent!

Pride, complacency, false-hearted offerings, oppression of righteous, injustice, idolatry, etc, etc.

---------------------------------------------------------------
Predicted downfall of surrounding nations, then total destruction of Israel itself!
   Destruction of cities, people dragged away by hooks, etc.

READ ALOUD Amos 5:24. Recall Martin Luther King's sermon based in part on this passage.

Day 5. ISA 1-7 and JER 2. Isaiah: Israel & Judah sins, disasters to come, similar Jeremiah warnings

Poetic form of warning, with short text blocks interspersed, until ISA 6.

READ ALOUD ISAIAH 5:1-7, The “Song of the Vineyard”

What do you think this (symbolism) means?
Loved one == Hebrews, planting Vineyard == establishment of nation of Israel (incl. Judah)
   yield of bad fruit == corrupt, sinful (BAD) nation of Israel

Note the explicit analogy explained in ISA 5:7

READ ALOUD footnotes in several study bibles for ISA 5:7

What would the scriptures read this week mean to Jews of that era?

Warnings about disastrous punishments that subsequently happened, for really bad national class sins
National accountability (not just personal) for Covenant obligations.

Why is it relevant to us today?

Same sorts of national-class sinning seems prevalent, so perhaps we're cruising toward national disaster:

Do you recall any modern-day prophets proclaiming a disastrous future for this country?

================================ Marks of Discipleship =================================

READ ALOUD workbook page 77 far right para in red: “Disciples recognize...”

Announcements: discuss Christmas Service Project & Party

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Disciple One  LESSON 12  CHAPTER 11 Punishment by National Destruction  Discussion Notes

Opening Prayer  (Back from Lincoln just after Jerry passed.)

Introductory Discussion  **What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?**

Consequence of Consistent long-term Corruption & Covenant Violation was complete destruction of Israel (Sumaria) and Judah

What to look for in the DVD

Why was Josiah such a great king?

Why was Jeremiah's land purchase a symbol of hope?

Play DVD

Josiah: led religious revitalization, very strong commitment to God

DVD Discussion Points  Jerimiah's land purchase: predicted Babylonian conquest, exile, but symbolized longer-term hope by buying property that would not be worth much until exiles returned.

 =================  Workbook Chapter 11.  =================

Terrible accounts of national-scale Covenant accountability

Northern Kingdom (Israel) utterly destroyed by Assyrians (capital: Nineveh) 721 BC

Hebrew people dispersed, intermingled with other (distant, pagan) peoples ==> Lost Tribes of Israel

Assyrians imported distant conquered people to repopulate Israel area

Replacement people mixed Jewish & pagan practices & beliefs, became known as “Samaratians”

Southern Kingdom (Judah) totally destroyed by Babylonians 586 BC (135 yrs later)

Became vassal state of Assyria, paid tribute but survived

Subsequently became babylonian Empire satellite state

Two phased conquest and exile: a) 597 BC conquest w/ elite captives to Babylon, puppet king

b) 586 BC foolish decision to withhold tribute, Egyptian alliances

Main points made by prophets: 1) People of God brought it on themselves

2) Relief/solution via military alliances, **rather than Return to God**

3) hope for eventual revival, return of chastised exiles

Why were the terrible national scale punishments imposed on everyone, including innocents, Godly Believers and bystanders?

The way the world seems to work, innocents are sometimes (often) adversely impacted by bad decisions of others.  **Consequences splash onto the innocent.**

================= Scripture =================

Day 1.  **Good King Hezekiah (of Judah) 2 Kings 17-20**
READ ALOUD 2 Kings 18:4 and footnotes: What is this all about?

Judah's King Hezekiah paid tribute to Assyria for 8 years (after Israel/Samaria conquered) then stopped paying.

What happened next? Assyrians came, captured Judah cities, demanded all Temple & treasury silver also gave Assyrians all gold from Temple doors, doorposts.

BAD DECISION

Sr. Assyrian leaders slandered God before the walls of Jerusalem, attempting to scare Jews into surrender.

What happened next? King Hezekiah prayed for God's help.

READ ALOUD 2 Kings 19:35-37

An angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, army retreated, King of Assyria killed by his sons.

Day 2. 2 Kings 21-25. Fall of Judah & Jerusalem

Josiah's life-ending decision to attack the Egyptian army made Judah an Egyptian satellite state.

READ ALOUD 2 Kings 23:31-35 and study Bible footnotes

A few years later, Babylon defeated Egypt and invaded Judah, so Judah became a puppet state of Babylon and the 1st batch of exiles were taken to Babylon. Three cycles of Babylonian Invasion, conquest, exiles sent to Babylon.

What happened during and after the last Babylonian invasion of Judah, in 586 BC?

Judah destroyed. Temple destroyed, Jerusalem destroyed, deported huge numbers of Hebrews to Babylon.

Day 3. Jeremiah 8; 19; 24; 27 (Warnings about sin, Covenant violations and predicted demise of Judah)

JER 19. Prophet Jeremiah: Potters jar smashed warning to elders and priests.

What is the significance of the “Good figs/Bad figs” story in JER 25?

Good figs analogous to exiled Jews, whom God will renew and return.

Bad figs: King Zedekiah & officials & survivors who fled to Egypt: to be utterly destroyed, abhorrent to God.

JER 27. What is the significance of Jeremiah's YOKE?

Why were Judah and neighboring nations warned to subordinate themselves to Babylon after the 1st. conquest?

Why did King Zedekiah put prophet Jeremiah in prison?
Unpopular because he spoke for God, including submission to Babylon. Falsely accused of deserting to
the Babylonian Army, demoralizing citizens and soldiers during time of national crisis.

How long did the final siege of Jerusalem endure? About 18 mos...

How was the prophet Jeremiah treated by the Babylonian conquerers?
Protected and respected by Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.


READ ALOUD Isaiah 29:15 and study Bible footnotes. Is this applicable today?

Who wrote Lamentations? Prophet Jeremiah, after the fall of Jerusalem.

What was the most surprising thing about Lamentations?
Perhaps the explicit description of cannibalism that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem.
See Lam 4:10, Jer 19:9

Several prophets foretold the destruction of Sinful Israel & Judah, but the rulers, the leaders and the
people did not believe that obedience was necessary.

How does this scripture apply during modern times?

=================  Marks of Discipleship  ==================

READ ALOUD workbook p. 84 rt. Col (in red)

Announcements We will not meet 12/26/13.

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion  
What's the situation at the beginning of the times covered in this lesson? Both Northern & Southern Kingdoms destroyed, 10 Tribes lost, Judah exiled to Babylon, where there is a community of diminished/discouraged/demoralized Jews.

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

   God has punished but not abandoned the Hebrews: there is a better future, hope. Unified Israel will be restored.

What to look for in the DVD  
Who wrote the second part of the book Isaiah, and when?

Explain differences between Jewish, Christian interpretations of passages concerning the
   a) Suffering Servant, and b) the New Covenant?

Play DVD  
Isaiah 40++ written by anon. Prophet sometimes called “2nd Isaiah” ~30 years after exile began, perhaps while Cyrus was beginning to establish the Persian empire.

DVD Discussion Points  
Suffering Servant -- Jewish: refers to Israel; Christian: refers to Christ  
New Covenant – Jewish: Old covenant renewed, taken more to heart; Christian: Christ removes the sins of all who believe in him  
(see Luke 22: 20 and footnotes)

Workbook Chapter 12

READ ALOUD  Workbook p. 86  Our Human Condition  “In the darkest hour....”

Judah suffered very severe punishment, but not destruction nor total abandonment

What's the point? Why (in the view of assigned Prophets) did God insist that this price be paid?

   Huge, never-to-be-forgotten tough-love lesson.

Was the Covenant renewed with the People of Israel? (might need to use study Bible tools to answer this one)

Workbook p. 88 (lower left) suggests yes at ISA 42: 1-4, but this might be doubtful to some readers

   Yes, see EZE 37: 26. But also see an early ref to NEW Covenant in JER 31:31!

Words of personal comfort, relevant in many circumstances in our lives (especially Jerry's recent passing):

READ ALOUD workbook p.. 89 top left “Do not fear, for I...”

The Persian Empire: look up map and description in your Bible.  NIV p. 947
King Cyrus “united” the Medes and Persians, then conquered the Babylonians, thus “embracing” all of the Babylonian satellite states and their tributes.

Not only going home to the Promised Land, blessed to be a blessing, but the Jews have a new assignment: what is it?

See workbook p. 89 lower 1/3: witness to the whole world regarding the nature of God, justice, and their disciplined experiences. Subsequently, Jews have not so much emphasized spreading that word?

READ ALOUD scripture at bottom of workbook p. 89, “It is too light…”

How did Ezekiel come to understand the concept that God is everywhere?

While exiled in Babylon, his first vision of four-faced winged creatures and wheels. Called to be a prophet.

How did this change the Hebrews perspectives and worship practices?

Released from Temple-centric worship. God was with them, everywhere, even away from the Temple; synagogue worship began.

----------------------------------- Scripture -----------------------------------

Breakout Group Discussions

Divide class into groups of ~3, each group to consider an assigned Scripture segment plus associated study Bible footnotes.

When Class reconvenes, read aloud the assigned Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of that Scripture.

These writings were recorded over 500 years before Christ's ministry.

Day 1. Foretells release from captivity Isaiah 40-43 (“Second Isaiah” perhaps written by an anonymous prophet of the exile in Babylon)

READ ALOUD Isaiah 43: 1-3

Compare with Psalm 23: 1-4, a Davidic psalm written hundreds of years earlier

Same thought, similar style.

Day 2. Foretells Cyrus conquest, return to Jerusalem Isaiah 44-46 and 49-50

READ ALOUD Isaiah 44: 28 and study Bible footnotes

Cyrus role in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple, (~100 years or 15?) before it happened!

READ ALOUD Isaiah 45: 1-8, : 13 and footnotes.
Non-believer/Gentile King Cyrus of Persia “anointed” by God

**Day 3.** Isaiah 51-53

**Day 4.** Just before fall of Jerusalem, restoration promised. Jeremiah 30-33.

READ ALOUD JER 30: 1-3 and 31: 5

Doesn't this imply a future (promised) reunification of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms?

When? Must be after Christ's time?

READ ALOUD JER 31: 33-34 and study Bible footnotes

Perhaps the New Covenant is explicitly described, fortelling Christian era?

**Day 5.** Ezekiel 1-5 and 37

Who was Ezekiel, when did he prophesy?

Priest, exiled to Babylon 597 BC, addressed exiles in Babylon, before Jerusalem destroyed.

What were several public demonstrations that Ezekiel made to call attention to and symbolize his messages from God?

Symbolic siege of Jerusalem (tablet on map, “besieged”)
Times of sins of Northern & Southern Kingdoms (tied with rope, lie on side 390 + 40 days)
Bake bread daily over fire of excrement (human vs. cow)
Use sword to cut off hair & beard, chop/scatter/burn hair


(skip?) READ ALOUD Isaiah 65: 17-25.

Do you think that this passage refers to some future time for Israel, end times (Christ's second coming), or to Heaven?

================= Marks of Discipleship ==================

READ ALOUD workbook p. 91 rt. Col (in red) “Disciples choose....”

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Breakout Group Discussions

Divide class into groups of ~3, each group to consider an assigned Scripture segment plus associated study Bible footnotes. When Class reconvenes, read aloud the assigned Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of that Scripture.

These writings were recorded over 500 years before Christ's ministry.

**Group One. ISAIAH 42: 1-9**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

**Group Two. ISAIAH 49: 5-7**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

**Group Three. ISAIAH 52: 13-15**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

**Group Four. ISAIAH 53: 1-12**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

**Group Five. JEREMIAH 33: 14-16**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.
Breakout Group Discussion Notes

Divide class into groups of ~3, each group to consider an assigned Scripture segment plus associated study Bible footnotes. When Class reconvenes, read aloud the assigned Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of that Scripture.

**Group One. ISAIAH 42: 1-9**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

Christ foretold. Describes the future coming of God's Chosen One, a Servant Messiah, with a character of gentleness, encouragement, justice and truth. Israel will become a Light for the Gentiles.

**Group Two. ISAIAH 49: 5-7**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

Christ foretold. Described as a Light for the Gentiles, bringing salvation to the ends of the earth. Christ will be despised and abhorred by Israel, but Kings and princes will worship him.

**Group Three. ISAIAH 52: 13-15**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

Christ foretold, a wise and exalted servant, but suffering and disfigured. Nations and Kings will understand His message.

**Group Four. ISAIAH 53: 1-12**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

Christ foretold, humble and suffering servant, despised and rejected by men, but he took upon himself our sins and sorrows. He was pierced for our transgressions, by His wounds we are healed. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; for the transgressions of God's people he was stricken. He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Group Five. JEREMIAH 33: 14-16**

When Class reconvenes, read aloud this Scripture, and have a someone summarize your group conclusions about the meaning and significance of this Scripture.

Christ's coming foretold.
Opening Prayer. (Rob Read) Psalm 100. a Psalm of grateful praise.

Introductory Discussion What's the central focus of the lesson today?

Introductory sampling of various types of Psalms in the Bible.
Hebrew poetry in translation: a) different poetic traditions (esp structure),
b) rhythms, word plays lost in translation

What to look for in the DVD Two major types of Psalms?

What's an important reason to study Psalms?

Play DVD Praises to God (attributes, actions),
Laments (disasters, agonies)

DVD Discussion Points Examples and encouragements to pray candidly, BOLDLY

Psalms is the 1st book of the third (Sacred Writings) section of the Hebrew Bible

Amazingly, the book of Psalms is revered by the Jews, Christians and Muslims:

According to Muslim belief, Psalms or the “Zabur of David” is referred to in the Qur'an as one of God's books revealed to four selected messengers. Psalms is preceded by the Torah given to Moses and followed by the Injeel (or Gospel) given to Jesus, and finally the Qur'an given to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad.

Does this remind you at all of the Beatles “Give Peace a Chance?”

How to spell “Psalms?” Psalm (printed Bible) vs Psalms (workbook)

Lots of different answers on the Net, including:
(pre-Tattoo query) songs (more than one, whole book of) vs. song (one only)
In Greek or Latin, always plural, so seems to suggest English “Psalms” preferable

================================================================= Workbook Chapter 13.=================================================================

How are the Psalms organized?

150 Chapters, FIVE groupings sometimes called “book,” (just to confuse us!)

When were the Psalms written?
A few attributed to Moses, many from the time of the Kings (esp. David, some Solomon), others during exile, after exile. Present Psalms content & order probably finalized during Second Temple Times ~3rd C (200s) BC.

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK: If interested in literary aspects of Psalms as written in Hebrew, read in your study Bible “Psalm Types” and “Literary Features”
How were the Psalms used in Worship?

Individual and group prayers, songs of praise, thanksgiving, recollection, grief/lament, confession, thoughtful meditation. **Timeless expressions of FEELINGS,** some quite human.

===========================  Scripture  ===========================

Look at your scripture reading notes or Bible annotations. Please share with the group your highlights or especially significant remembrances of some of the Psalms we read.

**Day 1. Psalm 136.** Probably in the form of a **responsive reading,** recollecting Creation, Exodus, giving of the Promised Land.  **His love endures forever.**

**Psalm 78.** Instructions: God's laws to be heeded, warning: **don't repeat these sins** of the Exodus generation, and the time of the Judges (ends at David). (Maybe written during time of Divided Kingdom?)

**Day 2. Psalm 90.** (very old, perhaps by Moses) Prayer for compassion, a dark depiction of the Human state.  **Plea to restore the joys of life.**

READ ALOUD Psalms 90: 17.  **What does this mean?**  
Make our work effective, and the fruits of our labors enduring.

**Psalm 137.** Lament of exile, ends horribly with very human request for **vengeance on enemy babies.**  
Seems especially questionable in view of Sandy Hook CONN children murdered last Fri.  
We must continually resist temptations to “yield to the Darkness,” finding good in consequences of evil

**Psalm 42.** Personal relief from oppression by enemies.

**Psalm 43.** Rescue me (from my enemies).

**Psalm 22.** a Psalm of David, ~950 BC or ~3000 years old.

READ ALOUD  Psalm 22: 16-19.  **Seems to echo Christ's suffering on the cross?**

**Day 3. Psalm 130.**  **READ ALOUD.**  A timeless prayer

**Psalm 38.** Prayer for relief from severe illness: exact fit for Jerry's recent struggle.

**Psalm 51.** David, confession of sin and begging forgiveness, after Nathan “reminds” him of his Bathsheeba-related sins.  **This is one of my favorites,** because it is so open, so honest and heartfelt.  Wouldn't it be awesome to be able to pray like that?  (Well, maybe not the offenses part...)

**What does “blot out [my transgressions]” mean?**  
Writing on papyrus with quill & **ink, erase** by blotting away ink with water-soaked rag.

**Day 4. Psalm 65.**  Thanks for the bounty of a gracious God.

**Psalm 116.**  Thanksgiving for deliverance from death [*pneumonia*]
Psalm 117. **EXTRA** Praise. Unison Reading. **Shortest Chapter in Bible;** see Romans 15: 11 (Paul quotes)

**Day 5. Psalm 104.** Wondrous bounty and glory of all creation

READ ALOUD Psalm 104: 31-35. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 145. Praise God, by David.

READ ALOUD Psalm 145: 18-21. The Lord is near...

**Day 6. Psalm 73.**

READ ALOUD Psalm 73: 27-28. Another **reason to study scripture,** so that we can **Tell His Deeds!**

(skip?) How do you feel when the wicked prosper? Is it OK to wish them “down?”

Can you see that “How the world works” (e. g., pretty consistent [eventual] defeat of evil) reflects the **Glory of God?**

Psalm 127. Domestic happiness, blessings of children.

Psalm 133. OK, so it is male, culture-specific poetic imagery. Can you get beyond that part?


READ ALOUD Psalm 23. Certainly a keeper, really appropriate for many situations. **WOW.**

================================ Marks of Discipleship =================================

READ ALOUD workbook p. 97, left side [Marks of Discipleship] **“Disciples seeking connectedness...”**

Announcements **No Class next week, our next meeting is 1/2/2013** Merry Christmas!

**Joys and Concerns**

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Happy New Year!

Introductory Discussion: What's the theme of the lesson today?

Celebration of the bounteous rewards of righteousness (divine approval comes from right living); sampling of life-lesson wisdom: advices “Proverbs;” historic stories of exiles return and Second Temple construction.

What to look for in the DVD

The video focuses on a subtle aspect of assigned Scripture dealing with definition and defense of Community Boundaries

What were the key issues regarding after-exile community boundaries?

Are there seeming differences or inconsistencies among Biblical sources regarding proper or acceptable community boundaries?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Who are acceptable Jews? Returning exiles having Jewish family trees, returning exiles claiming unprovable Jewish roots, non-exiled Believers in God (practicing Jews), ….Shades of Grey!

How much co-mingling with pagans is acceptable?

Exclusion to preserve purity vs. welcoming inclusion of God's People

Wisdom of Solomon Proverbs 7: 15-16 “May God grant me....”

This scripture is also about cause and effect (consequences): God has made the world work that way.

Workbook Chapter 14.

After reading Lesson 14 (workbook & Scripture), why do you think “right living” is so difficult?

God has defined expectations, requirements and explicit guidelines in 30+ areas of living mentioned in our workbook. These rules seem contrary to our wants; they are hard or “unnatural” to most of us.

Much of our study for this week pertains to “wisdom.” How might you define “wisdom”?

Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action; sagacity, discernment, or insight.

The essence of wisdom is to have the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things that we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Application of knowledge to life.

To learn more: Google “define wisdom”
Proverbs 3: 7 “Do not be wise in your own eyes.” What does this mean?

Don't consider yourself to be especially good, smart or special; a wise man is truly humble, sets aside ego, always willing to learn, listen and be deeply respectful.

Day 1. Psalms 1, 19:7-14, 37, 112, 128. What's the theme here?

Joyful celebration of the blessings (seemingly guaranteed?) of living the Will of God.

SKIP? Is this idea (Goodness guarantees Blessings) a cornerstone of Jewish faith, or an aspiration?

Perhaps an aspirational oversimplification, with growing emphasis (obsession?) during later OT times.

Do you believe that right living has great rewards, consistently and always?

Mostly, but not always. Life isn't always a bowl of cherries, even if you're really good. The way God's world seems to work, we all have to cope with the negative consequences of others bad decisions, plus some hurtful natural events along the way.

Trust God to bring you through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but you still might have to go there!

During the time of the Return (from exile) and the Second Temple, there arose an obsession with righteousness and conformity to all of the nits derived from the Law, justified by an expectation of “Guaranteed Blessings.”

Accountability is assymetric!

What happened to Jewish concepts of forgiveness during this OT era?

Temple ceremonies and sacrifices were resumed, but we read little regarding forgiveness and God's Mercy. Indeed, in (unassigned) portions of Ezra there are accounts of prayers of confession of sins (but not seeking forgiveness!), as well as accounts of public humiliation and punishment of sinners (e. g., those who marry foreign women).

Many Jews evolved beyond that perspective, but Orthodox Jews remain strongly (from an external perspective perhaps obsessively?) committed to the Law.

Day 2. Proverbs 1-6. What were some of your favorite Proverbs from this section?

General: Transition from admonishments to “embrace generic wisdom” toward specific living guidelines.

PRV 3: 11-12 Harsh vs. loving discipline. (elsewhere: corporal punishment “the rod” seems OK, see PRV 13: 24)

PRV 4: 7-8 Get wisdom no matter what the cost.

PRV 6: 16-19 Seven things God hates.

Lesson 15 56 D1 Discussion Notes

READ ALOUD PRV 10: 16 Does this echo anything that you recall from the NT? 
See ROM 6:23 Who wrote this version, and what was their educational background?

Paul was a highly educated Jew who prior to his Christian conversion aspired to become a greatly respected Jewish faith leader.

READ ALOUD PRV 12: 27 What does this mean? “... roast any game.”
One who is too lazy to hunt later has no meat to eat. You reap as you sow...


(skip?) READ ALOUD PRV 20: 4 and footnotes

LOOK UP PRV 21: 9, compare with PRV 21: 9 and PRV 25: 24 In modern times, might we read “spouse?”

Better to live on a corner of the roof than to live in the house with a quarrelsome wife. 
Is there a message in this intentional (“proverbial?”) redundancy?

(skip?) READ ALOUD PRV 21: 14. What does this mean? See also PRV 17: 8 and footnotes.
Soothing bribes...

Is this a pragmatic “wink” at bribery? (Do not bribe a fellow Jew, but it's OK to bribe Gentiles?)

READ ALOUD PRV 22: 6 What does this mean to you? (hint: see study Bible footnotes...)
Start children off in the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

*** A special piece of advice: PRV 23: 4-5 Important to stay vs. get rich? Or live richly...

(skip?) Bonus: PRV 31: 10-31. Ideal wife (mirror for husband)


Lots of non-Biblical ancient documentation confirms and dates Biblical accounts from this OT time. See first chapter Ezra footnotes.

Summarize what we learned about the first returning exiles:

happened about 70 years after the Exile, led by Zerubbabel, 50,000 people, King Cyrus

(skip?) READ FOOTNOTES ALOUD for EZRA 3:8
preparations & planning to build Second Temple took ~ 9 mos.

READ ALOUD EZRA 6:8 Second Temple construction costs? God works in mysterious ways: 
the 2nd Temple was fully paid for by King Darius (that is, by Kingly taxes levied on region)!
Summarize what we learned about the second returning exiles: led by Ezra, few thousand, ~80 yrs later, King Artaxerxes.

Compare the Second Temple with Solomon's Temple? Smaller, much less elaborate, yet focal.


READ ALOUD footnotes on NEH 8: 13ff. What should I do with this scripture? How should my life change?

NeEH 10: 28-39 Public ceremonial Covenant renewal by all of the Hebrew people:

We will not neglect the House of the Lord.

In unassigned scripture (Ezra 9-10), Ezra discovered that Jews had inter-married with Gentiles, violating Gods explicit rules not to do that. After prayerful consideration led by Ezra, all Jewish men and women that had intermarried were required by the Jewish leaders to divorce pagan spouses, permanently rending apart those families.

What would this material mean to Jews of that era?

We've learned a very hard lesson, and will do better, we promise.

Expected but childish: human. Maybe children reflect our inner human-ness?

How do you think it worked out for the returned Exiles?

== Marks of Discipleship ==

In our materialistic culture emphasizing personal wealth and power, how can we avoid greed, accumulation of “extraneous stuff,” overspending and under-giving?

Announcements.

Next week we'll consider a challenging Scriptural account: how to explain when really terrible things happen to very good, righteous people.

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer

Lesson 15
Opening Prayer
Please help us to be helping and supportive, not accusatory.

Introductory Discussion
Our reading today takes an unusual form: script for a drama (skit or play), in the form of a long poem.

Also, probably one of the earliest written books of the Bible, somewhat surprising because of the nature of the central issue. What's the central issue here?

Life is not “fair.” Why does our good and loving God let Good People suffer? How should they cope?

What to look for in the DVD. What are Job's perspectives during and after his suffering?

What's the outcome or conclusion mean?

Play DVD
Compliant & well-off > complaining/whining/deserved-better > humble, rewarded

DVD Discussion Points
Job mirrors many of our deepest thoughts about entitlement, sin and suffering.

Another (and rather different) view of the nature of God, and how the world works.

What about the [really common] admonition: “be very good so you won’t go to Hell?”

Workbook Chapter 15.

Today our discussion takes on a different form. We're going to read aloud a shortened plain English version of the “script,” together looking for:

1) What's the essence of the advice given by each of Job's four “friends”?

2) What's right about each of their specific viewpoints?

3) What's wrong with each piece of friendly advice?

4) Which parts of the advice given are questionable or unresolved in your mind?

As we read, make notes about answers for each of these questions.

We need six volunteers, each to read one “part” of the dramatic script. Who wants to read the part of:

Job: __________________
Eliphaz: __________________
Bildad: __________________
Zophar: __________________
Elihu: __________________
The Lord: __________________

D1 Discussion Notes 59 Lesson 16
The prolog defines the starting situation: Job is (unquestionably) a righteous and faithful man, greatly blessed.

A *predicament* is introduced (this is a dramatic or story-structuring device): all of Job's blessings are suddenly gone, and he is afflicted with ill health too. The good and Godly man **Job loses all**.

The central issue addressed is clearly: **WHY?**

***************
* Let's Read Now *
***************

Consider **Eliphaz**. What's **right** about what he suggested? Nobody is perfect.

(Sometimes) Man brings trouble on himself.

**How was he wrong?** Righteous people don't meet with disasters.  
Sin caused your suffering; suffering can be caused otherwise  
God made an error and should be corrected.  
(Bad things do happen to good people.)  
Job's prior life was blameless (we're all sinners...)  
Eliphaz thought he knew exactly how God works...

Did you find anything **questionable** about Eliphaz position?

Are people responsible for their own destinies?  
Yes, but **there's no guarantee of fairness in this world.**

**Cause & effect don't always, consistently work**  
the way we think that they should, in the real world ?

Consider **Bildad**. What's **right** about what Bildad suggested?  
God is always and consistently just.  
Sometimes parents get into trouble caused by children's sins  
Nobody is righteous and pure in God's sight

**How was Bildad wrong?** Job's children were the causation sinners  
Sins of children consistently cause parents trouble and suffering.  
Job's children died because of their (children's) sins.

Did you find anything **questionable** about Bildad's position?  
God never fails to do what's right?

Consider **Zophar**. What's **right** about what he suggested?  
God forgets (forgives) sins  
There are things too deep for human understanding.

**How was Zophar wrong?** Job's secret sins caused his suffering.  
Sin is the driver here.  
The wicked can't be happy for long  
Your life will be restored if you repent your secret sins
Did you find anything questionable about Zophar’s position?
“Know it all” advice and attitude not constructive.

Consider Elihu. What’s right about what he suggested? God is greater than any man
God is just in his dealings with Man
God is the only source of true wisdom
Sins of mankind afflict men, not God

God is incomprehensible, we can’t know Him completely

Faith in God is much more important than explaining suffering.

How was Elihu wrong? Suffering is meant to correct (causative sin), restore us.
Job was not listening to Godly messages.

Did you find anything questionable about Elihu’s position?

Does being faithful really matter, if our sins are eventually forgiven?

What was Job’s conclusion from all of this?

It’s foolish to claim understanding about the relationship between suffering and sin. God is incomprehensible.

A huge component of faith is trusting an essentially unknowable God.

What can we learn from Job?

God is so Great and Good that we can never hope to understand Him.
Suffering happens, for reasons that we cannot always explain or understand.

(Discussion Questions, If Time Permits)

What was the Satan model used here? (see footnotes at Job 1: 6-7)
Job 10: 13-14. Job assumed the worst: God was out to get him!
Job 12: 23-24 God deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason! (seemingly relevant now?)
Job 13: 4 (footnotes) Judgment can be challenging: Blame vs. Admonishment in love?
Job 35: 1-3 I will be cleared of my sins, so why not? What then do I gain by not sinning?
Job 19: 24-27 “I know that my Redeemer lives…”

Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
CHAPTER 16 People Hope for a Savior
Future Expectations
Intro to Apocalyptic Literature

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

FUTURE: What's the future hold, how will this phase of worldly sin and imperfection end, what should the faithful expect about what is to come?

What to look for in the DVD:

Focus on book of Daniel: what does it mean, how does it all come together?

What are two key underlying messages found in Daniel?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Context: Oppression
All six Daniel stories have a consistent theme:

1) non-violent resistance (can be seen)

Visions read in historical context, 167-165 BC

2) God will prevail, so teach God's Truth

If worldly powers will blow away like chaff, why does modern Israel resist with strength & violence?

Workbook Chapter 16.

READ ALOUD p. 114 upper left: OUR HUMAN CONDITION. "We swing..."

Different views of the future:

1) Hold fast to HOPE: better times will come. These Bad Times are not going to last forever.

2) Which sequence of SuperPowers will dominate the known world, and where Jews will fit into that picture? (~~ the geo-political highlights)

3) The “cosmic struggle” between Good and Evil (especially the persecution of God's People) will continue until the End of Time [as we know Time], when God prevails, God's People will triumph, all will be wonderful for the Faithful, the Kingdom Comes.
4) How will God transition Mankind from sinful imperfection into the idealized perfect conclusion, the End State (Heavenly Kingdom of God)?

What is the new Model of the Future implied by our Scripture readings for this week?

a) Sinful world of Jewish persecutions evolves with coming of new SuperPowers

b) Then a Messiah comes to save the People of God

c) Cosmic crisis, huge and calamity-laden terminal conflict between forces of Good and Evil

d) Triumph of Good, Heavenly Perfection

Six classic Daniel stories of the OT: Be strong, God is With You Three different Kings!

Daniel & friends refusing to eat faith-violating King Nebuchadnezzars Foods

Shadrach, Meshaach, Abednego Into the Fiery Furnace, refusing to pray to King Nebuchadnezzars Idol

Why wasn't Daniel put into the Furnace with his friends?

Daniel reads King Belshazzars' Handwriting on the Wall, and it comes true immediately.

Daniel survives the Lions Den for refusing to pray only to (Persian) King Darius.

When was Daniel written?

Almost certainly ~167 AD, not all during Daniels lifetime. Probably two distinct authors.

The 2nd part of Daniel is probably the youngest OT book.

For more fascinating insights about Daniel, strongly recommend: (neat book)

In God's Time, the Bible and the Future, by Craig Hill.

To what extent does God know history, and the future?

Is there a distinction between knowing and steering (or pre-determining) historical events?

Coin flip analogy: suppose that I can tell you how the next flipped coin lands (heads or tails up), but I cannot make the outcome happen either way: the flip outcome remains random, but can be foretold.

Think about timelines: God might be able to “see and appreciate” the entire line, forever. It's just time....

An “impressionistic painting” model of predestination vs. free will:
God might control the way the world works (having created it), the broad composition of evolution (because he set up that process), and maybe even influence some human decisions, especially if we pray for guidance.

**To what extent does God control historical and future events?**
Free will does impact history, a lot.

**Do you think that God has a Plan for Historical/Future events?**

Deterministic End of the World: Good will prevail.

Endtime transition: Chaotic, disasters-laden ultimate conflict relatively few will survive

**How much of this Daniel stuff was Jesus taught during his training to be a Jewish rabbi?**

Quite a lot, probably all of it: **WOW!**

*Timeline issue*: Did the coming and Resurrection of Christ signal the beginning of End Times?

**Are you a present times or a future-oriented Christian?**
We are called to a New Life **right now**: it's NOT about later!

**Day 4.** Isaiah 24-27 (apocalypse), 53-55, 65.

End times disasters predicted by Isaiah.

READ ALOUD Isaiah 24:6. **Nuclear war foretold?**

**Huge earthquakes envisioned in Isaiah 24: 18-20. The BIG ONE?**

Isaiah 53. Messiah described and foretold!

Isaiah 54. Israel restored and mighty.


**Why do you think that death is still implied to occur in this prophetic perfect future?**
(long lives still end...)

**Day 5.** Prophecies about the coming of the Messiah.

Review Isaiah 11: 2-10. Are we there yet? Christ has come, but Perfect Tranquility doesn't seem to be here yet?


Hint of an inclusive New Covenant pertaining to Everyone, including Gentiles.

Could this be another basis for rejection of Christ by “traditional” Jews?

**Who was Micah?**
Prophet during time of Divided Kingdom, evil (and a few good) kings, predicted downfall of both kingdoms, warned against Sin.

Micah 5:2-4  Christ to be born in Bethlehem, ~4 miles from Jerusalem. Like I-435 to Stanley down Metcalf...

Why do you think that the apocalyptic material was intentionally made hard to understand?

It was a literary style, traditional in those times: Imagery and symbols intentionally obscure to conceal meaning from “outsiders” (non-believers). Pessimism predominates: evil-dominated “hell on earth” and persecution typical starting points. Sometimes writings that must be intensively studied are taken more seriously?

=================  Marks of Discipleship  =================

Announcements.

Resurrection Annual Meeting 1/25/13 5pm supper, 6pm business meeting: priorities and special projects for 2013, building plans, budget.

In God's Time, the Bible and the Future, by Craig Hill. (Narthex Bookstore)

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion

Unusually, the workbook and Scripture assignments this week seem to cover different topics.

What's the central issue or point of the workbook material today?

The chosen People were scattered, and the Middle East (including remnants in Israel) was dominated by a long list of Empires that rose and fell in quick succession. The Jews were suppressed, abused, exploited...

What can we learn from the two Scripture stories (Esther and Jonah) read this week?

Esther rose to be Queen of the Persian Empire, and saved her people. (Feast of Purim)

Jonah was to tell Ninevah (capital of the Assyrian Empire) to repent, but hated them and got into a “whale of a mess.” Lesson: God cares a lot about the Gentiles.

What to look for in the DVD:

What theme ties these two stories together?

What are examples of humor in each of these stories?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Both stories: Both deceptively simple stories, probably fiction

Ethnic conflict

Jews successful in Strongly Gentile environments

God is for both Jews and Gentiles

Humor: Oddly funny how Esther became the queen, 2nd rather than 1st dinner,

Haman hung on own gallows

Jonah childishly decides to run away from his Godly assignments

Sailors don't want to offend Jonah's God, Jonah swallowed by a FISH?

Vine up one day /vine down next day, Jonah childishly in a tizzy about shade that went away

Workbook Chapter 17.

(Put timeline on whiteboard)

What entities had political control of Israel, and what were some of the major Headlines of each?

Persian Empire 200 yrs. Some Jews returned to Israel, most did not. Temple then Jerusalem rebuilt. 539-333 BC

Greek Period 130 yrs. Alexander the Great conquered the Known world, India to south-eastern Europe. 333-198 BC Pervasive Greek culture, language, sports (Olympics!), religious tolerance.
Alexander the Great may have been the greatest military leader in all history. After his sudden death at age 33 [no will] Kingdom divided 4 parts, Generals got regions.

Prosperity & much trade. Heavy, capricious taxation. Eventually dominated by Seleucids (General Seleucus). Alexandria founded in Egypt, Egyptian pharaohs (Kings) became Greeks starting with Ptolemy I! Greek culture mixed with Egyptian for 870 yrs. Romans conquered Egypt 30 BC after incest genetically weakened the royal line (married sisters!). Million+ Jews lived in Egypt.

Egypt never recovered from the Greek conquest: huge influx of Greek culture.

Seleucids
198-167 BC
30 yrs Re-consolidation of Greek sphere of influence with Egyptian conquest.
Cruel King Antiochus IV tried to eliminate Jewish religion, desecrated the Temple. Maccabean family led successful Rebellion!
(Apocrypha 1st, 2nd Book of Maccabees has interesting accounts of this rebellion!)
2nd part of Daniel probably written just before the rebellion started; might have been a subtle political incitation document.

Hasmonen Period
100 yrs. Israel independence, ending with Roman conquest of Middle East in 63 BC

Roman Empire
375 yrs. Judea: heavy, capricious taxation, ruthless (usually corrupt) civil domination.

How was the religious life of the majority of Jews in exile?

Away from rebuilt Temple. Synagogues became places of worship, community, discussion and study. Preservation of beliefs, practices, Law. No recognized priesthood. Lay leaders known as “rabbis.” (teachers) . Obedience to the Law (accountability), including the Torah, oral traditions and rabbinical interpretations.

Goal: live perfectly before God.

Trade & travel enabled a regional network of Jewish community relations, mutual awareness, communication between scattered Jewish communities.

= Scriptur unethical =

Day 2 & 3. Esther.

Who were the main characters in the story of Esther?

Esther Beautiful Jewish young woman, orphaned. Strong-armed into Kings harem, 12 mos of “beauty treatments” in preparation for one-night “evaluation”
Uncle Mordecai Raised Esther, coached her how to cope with her dangerous situation.
Persian King Xerxes Liked Esther better than other “candidates,” made Esther Queen.
Haman Villain, powerful, influential, 2nd in command over whole Persian Empire.

D1 Discussion Notes
Supporting role: Ex-Queen Vashti whose son Arta-xerxes later became Persian King. Interesting back story. Perhaps while pregnant, refused to appear before drunk King and his “party,” then removed as Queen.

How did Esther become Queen?
Won the Beauty Contest and “Try-Out” with King Xerxes.

Why were the Jews throughout the Persian Empire to be killed?
Mordecai refused to kneel down to Haman, who tricked King Xerxes into decreeing all Jews be killed Empire-wide, 12 mos hence (date selected by casting lots).

How did Esther arrange to save all Jews from annihilation?
Dinner #1 King Xerxes and Haman, 2nd feast (dinner) requested
King Xerxes asked Haman to devise a Kingly Recognition and Reward
Haman (really mad) had to give Mordecai the Kingly Recognition and Reward!
At 2nd Feast Dinner Queen Esther asked King Xerxes to save her people, the Jews
King Xerxes hanged/impaled Haman on his own 75’ gallows, intended for Mordecai
King Xerxes made Mordecai his 2nd in command, edict: Jews can defend themselves [permitted to kill their attackers] and to plunder attackers properties.
Jewish festival Purim celebrated Feb 28th every year to commemorate the Jewish Relief
Persian Kingly decrees could not be cancelled, but could be “augmented.”

Two versions of Esther:
First in Hebrew, but longer version in Greek (that oldest MS seems dated about 114 BC).
The (probably later) longer Greek version added a Godly religious aspect to the story.

Rob READ ALOUD from Apocrypha intro to “Additions to the Book of Esther.”


What was Jonahs assignment from God?
Go to Nineveh, tell those wicked Gentiles to repent and obey the Law, else be utterly destroyed.

Why did Jonah refuse his Godly assignment?
Despised the Ninevite Gentiles, the excluded not-Chosen, “the enemy”
Jonah disobeyed a direct order from a patient God

How did Jonah get into the belly of the fish?
Ran away in opposite direction on ship, huge storm, crew realized Jonah angered his God, tossed him.
Great Fish/whale “swallowed” Jonah, who survived three days in belly of that whale

What happened after Jonah finally got to Ninevah?
Ninevites believed Jonah, repented, were saved. Success (but Jonah displeased, angered, wanted to die). Went to sit in desert to die, God grew a vine to shade Jonah, who welcomed the relief.

How did the story end?
God sent worm that destroyed the vine, hacked off Jonah.
See Jonah 4: 3 and study Bible footnotes.

Jonah feeling sorry for himself, terminally remorseful for saving the terrible Ninevites. Jonah gets inappropriately and self-centered upset. Jonah selfishly was upset about own comfort, and his reputation as a prophet, but not pleased about salvation for 120,000 Ninevites & their cattle.

What's the lesson to learn from this story?

God cares for everyone, not just the Jews. Jews have responsibilities to bring God to the ignorant Gentiles.

Aside: God seems to care for the Ninevite livestock, too?

(skip?) Did anyone else find that this story ends quite abruptly? Any ideas why that sort of end?

Why is this story relevant to us today? Where are our Ninevites?

================= Marks of Discipleship =================

Announcements
Did you hear Adams sermon yesterday broadcast from the National Cathedral?
Treats Next Week Jack & Fran Paxton
Church meeting Friday 1/25/13

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Believer must abandon old life, old excessive stuff.

Non-negotiable demand for total commitment to a new beginning, new life, focus, expectations and priorities.

What to look for in the DVD:

What were five themes of Matthew?

What is the essential nature of the Higher Righteousness expected of Disciples?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Matthew: Jesus as Teacher
Little emphasis on miracles
Strong Jewish orientation: Christ was the Hebrew Messiah
Expectations, requirements for righteous living
Mission in specific DOING

Act on behalf of others without expectation of reward, because you WANT TO.

Workbook Chapter 18.

Matthew (Levi), a hated Jewish Tax Collector (cheater, liar, betrayer) working for King Herod and the Romans, became an apostle and Gospel author.

Matthew's audience was primarily Jews, whom he wanted to convince that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, fulfilling so many of the quoted or cited OT prophecies.

Would contemporary Jews have believed Matthew/Levi?

Maybe not: tax collectors were to good Jews the scum of the earth. IRS auditors still are, to an extent.

As you read Matthew's gospel, keep track of mentions of tax collectors: interesting how many times Matthew mentions his own profession, usually in a deprecating context. e.g., MAT 21: 32

Scripture

Day 1. Matthew 1-2 (Birth of Christ), 3-7 (Demands/Rules of Radical Discipleship)

Where did Mary & Joseph live when they became betrothed?

Nazareth, see Luke 1:26

Why was Joseph's genealogy recorded in Matthew, despite Christ's Virgin Birth?
Legal Jewish genealogy was traced down through fathers; “compressed genealogy” ==> “father of could be translated “ancestor of”

How many times did Matthew mention Joseph being visited by Angels with important messages?

Three times: Go ahead, get married; it's OK; flee to Egypt; return to Israel

How long did Mary, Joseph and Jesus stay in Bethlehem?

Probably about two years, until after the Wise Men visited; that's why Herod decreed killing babies 2 years old and younger

(skip?) What prophetic scripture is referenced in Matthew 2:23? (Messiah called a Nazarene)

Read study Bible footnotes; perhaps a reference to prophetic writings either lost or not in OT?

MAT 3 (John the Baptist); MAT 4 (Jesus tempted in the desert as begins his ministry)

READ ALOUD study Bible footnotes to MAT 4:23: Role of traveling rabbis in synagogue teaching, preaching

Do OT Jewish Laws apply to Christians today?

Read study Bible footnotes to MAT 5:17-20

Three divisions of Hebrew Law: Ceremonial (worship), Civil (daily living, Jewish society & culture), Moral (nature, will of God).

Sermon on the Mount (MAT 5-7) Jesus core teachings, many via Parables, short teaching stories.

Keep in mind the many conflicts between our materialistic, “Melting Pot” culture and Christianity.

What do you think about Jesus teaching about divorce (MAT 5 31-32)? See also MAT 19: 3-12.

Is there a conflict between worry and prudence (see MAT 6: 25-33)?

Love God and Love Neighbor, prudent emphasis on money & stuff much farther down the list...

Compare with MAT 10: 10 Stark instruction: disciples to be unencumbered by excess “stuff.”

Compare the judgment teaching of Jesus in MAT 7: 1-2 with that in MAT 18: 15-17. Do these conflict?

Clear-cut personal offense (sin?), one Christian by another; is that “judgment?”

Can you see any parallels between MAT 5-7 and exposition of the Law in Deuteronomy?

What is expected. Hard, challenging, impossible rules for living: Radical Discipleship!

How can these rules be considered “easy,” as stated in MAT 11: 28-30?

Day 2. Matthew 8-10. (The New Covenant Mission, Assignment)

Was Simon (Peter, “Rocky,” the 1st head of the Church) married?

Yes, he had a mother in law, see MAT 8:14.

Seems to conflict with Catholic “requirement” of priestly celibacy?

But many Popes were not Celibate; some married?

Jesus sent 12 disciples on a “practice run” missionary trip with specific, detailed instructions and warnings about what to expect, then resumed His ministry.
READ ALOUD MAT 10: 14. What does this mean? (If unwelcome, “shake off the dust” and depart).

Leave behind everything about the hostile place, even its dust.

Compare with MAT 10: 23. Don't be bothered by previous hostilities:

**Keep working, but elsewhere.**

Don't teach, help or work where you are not not welcome, don't be pushy.

Sometimes “move on” applies within the Church, too.

**Day 3. Matthew 11-13.**

MAT 11: 2-19. Jesus teaches about John the Baptist, a prophet coming just before the Messiah.

**READ ALOUD MAT 11: 28-30** The New Covenant Promise.

**READ ALOUD MAT 12: 38-42.** What does this analogy to Jonah mean?

Jonah was restored to his mission after 3 days in the Fish, as Christ will be resurrected.

Ninevites repented and will “stand up” at End Times Judgment,

but (self-perceived strictly perfect) Pharisees do not repent.

MAT 13, many parables:

- Seeds sown on 4 soils
- Grain and weeds grow together until harvest/Judgement
- Mustard seed grows to huge bush
- Yeast working
- Hidden treasure in field discovered, purchased
- Pearl merchant
- Fishing net, fish sorting at Judgment.

**Day 4. Matthew 13-18.**

**Why are there two distinct stories in Matthew about feeding large crowds?**

MAT 14: 15-21 5,00 men (plus many women, children), explicit leftovers.

MAT 15: 32-38 4,000 men (++ again, with leftovers)

**Trust** that God will find ways to solve seemingly insurmountable problems.

Also see MAT 16: 5-12, another (feeding-related) lesson.

**What is the significance of the story in MAT 15: 21-26?**

The woman seeking relief for her daughter is a Believing Gentile.

Matthew's Jewish audience would understand that the Messiah was including Gentiles in his Ministry.

Christ has no ethnic bias: the **New Covenant** is certainly inclusive, for Everyone.

**What's this about Jonah again?** See MAT 16: 4

(skip?) **What does MAT 16: 17 mean?** See Handout (Bar-Jona).

**How could MAT 16: 24 refer to “take up your cross...” well before the Crucifixion?**

Reference to ultimate Roman punishment, suffering that might be required of Believers.

Seems to conflict with MAT 11: 28-30 (easy yoke)?

MAT 19: 23 seems to indicate that its hard for wealthy to go to Heaven?

Jews thought wealthy had been especially blessed by God, so this was unconventional teaching.

Wealth becomes the Master Served, the god worshiped...

Could this be bad news for nicer parts of the USA?

What's the point of the parable told in MAT 20: 1-16, the equally paid workers that did not work all day

How do expectations on Christian leaders differ from those in business? See MAT 20: 23-28

Humble servant vs. intensive, dominant, demanding and driving master:

a hard lesson indeed for some of us....

What does the parable of the wedding feast (MAT 22: 1-14) mean?

Many invited, few show up, often the unworthy and inappropriate.

How would you explain the guy thrown out of the feast for dressing inappropriately?

Cultural thing: everyone dressed appropriately or otherwise insulted the host.

(Such expectations survive to this day.)

Can you accept Jesus teachings about marriage in Heaven? see MAT 22: 23-33

NO marriages in Heaven!

(skip?) Did your Bible skip a verse at MAT 23: 13-15? Why?

v. 14 did not appear in some of the oldest MSS.

Jesus taught about End Times in MAT 24, worth comparing with the last half of Daniel. [Later Revelations]

What would this Matthew material mean to Jews of Jesus' era?

Having studied the OT, isn't Matthew's Gospel more relevant to us today?

Marks of Discipleship

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Simon (Peter) son of Jonah?

Matt 16:17 says that Peter is the son of Jonah; while John 1:42 and 21:15-17 says that he is the son of John--though the KJV says son of Jonah. so we have two questions here: what does the most reliable Greek texts say (Jonah or John)?; and if John reads 'the son of John' then how do we address the discrepancy between Matt and John. The reading in John 1:42; 21:15-17 is simply a manuscript issue. The issue is raised because John says that Peter is the son of John (1:42; 21:15-17); while the Gospel of Matt says that he is Peter the son of Jonah (Matt 16:17). This discrepancy likely led some copiests to change the mss of John so that it agrees with Matthew. The result is a question among the manuscripts. The KJV of John simply sides with the mss tradition that favors Jonah (the mss tradition of the KJV, in my opinion, is not usually the most reliable tradition; the best mss of John 1:42; 21:15-17; say ‘son of John’). So was Peter the son of Jonah (Matt) or the son of John (John)?

There are several answers available. 1) ‘son of’ means ‘having the characteristics of.’ Thus, the Jews say they are ‘sons of’ Abraham and Jesus says, ‘then do the deeds of Abraham’ (John 8). Matthew may then have referred to Peter as someone like Jonah (with his father’s name being John as the Gospel of John says); note that Jonah is not a common 1st century name; 2) Peter’s father could have had multiple names--Jonah and John; 3) We don’t know I would opt for option 1 or 3: We would then ask, why was Matthew referring to Peter as someone like Jonah?

--Cornerstone Bible Academy Blog

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

New Living Translation (©2007)
Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.

English Standard Version (©2001)
And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Holman Christian Standard Bible (©2009)
And Jesus responded, "Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven.

Then Jesus told him, "How blessed you are, Simon son of Jonah, since flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, though my Father in heaven has.

King James Bible (Cambridge Ed.)
And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Aramaic Bible in Plain English (©2010)
Yeshua answered and said to him, “You are Blessed, Shimeon Bar Yona, because flesh and blood has not
revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven.”

GOD'S WORD® Translation (©1995)
Jesus replied, "Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! No human revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven revealed it to you.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.

American King James Version
And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven.

American Standard Version
And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

Douay-Rheims Bible
And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

Darby Bible Translation
And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens.

English Revised Version
And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Webster's Bible Translation
And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon-Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

Weymouth New Testament
"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah," said Jesus; "for mere human nature has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven.

World English Bible
Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Young's Literal Translation
And Jesus answering said to him, 'Happy art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible
And Jesus answered, Blessed art thou ... - Simon Bar-jona is the same as Simon son of Jona. Bar is a Syriac word signifying son. The father of Peter, therefore, was Jona, or Jonas, John 1:42; John 21:16-17.
Throughout His ministry, Christ conflicted with and was critical of Jewish religious leaders, who perceived him as teaching against the Law.

What to look for in the DVD

If Jesus supported the Law and Jewish religion, why was he rejected, and in conflict with the Jewish Leadership?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Christ was a Jew, sent to the Lost Sheep of Israel, to fulfill the Jewish Law?

Rejection had to do with wrong emphasis, sinful practices, hypocrisy

Matthew seems to suggest that conflict was due largely to castigation, spotlighting of sinful yet ultimately influential Jewish Leaders.

Have we seen wrong-minded Jewish Leaders before?

Will or do we see wrong-minded Christian leaders? Muslim Leaders?

Might religious Leadership be a hazardous occupation?

Workbook Chapter 19.

Analogy: Pharaoh killing (drowning) Hebrew babies (Exodus 2:16) in Egypt, Herod killing all Jewish babies and toddlers at Bethlehem.

Jesus came to fulfill rather than abolish the Law (MAT 5: 17-20, but he really redefined (stretched) the moral portions of the Law.

Many teachings hard to swallow in those times, since contrary to (opposite!) widely held beliefs and practices.

Christ especially concerned with religious pomp and hypocrisy, especially self-serving elevation.

How could the rules change so dramatically that the most learned and respected Jewish leaders were so wrong?

Jewish practices and beliefs were led far from the Old Covenant ways, diverging from God's Will.

What caused that divergence?

Forgot the core (God's explicit requirements), maybe selfish, maybe convenient, emphasis on twisted interpretations, rigidity, civil empowerment, exclusion (even of many Jews!)
Has Christianity experienced a similar divergence?
   Getting it wrong:
   Ever seen or been holier than thou hypocritical, judgmental, superficial, nominal Christian?

Can you see any essential conflict between Christ's teaching and the moral (not ceremonial or cultural) portion of OT Law?

================================== Scripture ============================

This week, we read Matthew with emphasis on discord: religious controversy, political clashes and conflicting values.

**Day 1. Matthew 1-7.** Conflict before Christ's ministry.

**Why was Herod so concerned about the birth of the Messiah?** (MAT 2: 3-16)

   Most Jews thought the Messiah would be a great political/military leader, thus Herod would be deposed when the child grew up.

**Why did John the Baptist preach against the Pharisees and Sadducees?**

   **Pharisees:** Emphasizing the letter of the Law, rather than its intent.
   
   **Sadducees:** using religion as a tool to advance and secure political power.
   
   *(skip?)* **Similar to some religious fundamentalists today?**

**Why did John the Baptist so explicitly preach against Herod (the King!)?**

   Herod (the King hence most powerful Jew) flagrantly violated the Law by marrying his brother's wife.

**Day 2. Matthew 8-18.** Controversy during Christ's ministry.

**REVIEW** Story MAT 8: 28-34, demons cast into herd of pigs subsequently drowned.

   **Is there a subtle anti-Roman pro-Jewish coloration to this Matthew story?**

   Demons named “Legion” perhaps a play on Roman military “Division” ==> “Legion” (perhaps drowning the ~~Roman pigs was a political good thing?)

   **Why did the whole town ask Christ to depart after that incident?**
   They were Gentiles, who suffered a big economic loss when valuable herd of pigs destroyed.
   *(Not so much importance that two crazy guys were cured, think of the PIGS, man!)*

**Consider MAT 9: 2. Why was it considered blasphemy to forgive sins of the paralytic?**

   Only God was believed capable of forgiving sins, no mere man could do that.

**See MAT 9: 10-12 Why did Pharisees criticize Jesus for eating with Matthew, other tax collectors and sinners?**

   Good Jews were forbidden to consort with unclean Jewish folks.

D1 Discussion Notes 77  Lesson 20
Notice that Matthew was a well-educated unclean Jew: wrote Greek, knew OT scriptures well.

What were some of the other things that Matthew says Christ was criticized for during his ministry?

MAT 9: 14 Disciples do not fasting
MAT 9: 34 Prince of Demons (Beelzebub) made Jesus drive out demons.
MAT 12: 2 Prohibited to pick grain (work) on Sabbath
MAT 12: 13 Cured shrunken hand (non-life-threatening healing) on Sabbath
MAT 12: 34++ Brood of Vipers (out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks...)
MAT 12: 24-28 Prince of Demons (Beelzebub) enabled Jesus to drive out demons.
MAT 15: 2 Ceremonial washing before meals
MAT 16: 6-12 Warning about the “yeast of the Pharisees”
MAT 16: 21 Christ foretells his suffering at the hands of leaders
MAT 17: 22 Another crucifixion warning
MAT 17: 24 Pay the Temple tax, or exempt?

How did John the Baptist die?
See MAT 14: 1-12. Herod's niece (daughter?) danced for Herod, asked for JtB's head on a platter as reward for earning King Herod's pleasure.

Day 3. Matthew 19-25. Into Jerusalem last time, conflicts with Establishment politics

Lots of conflict, once you look for it:

MAT 19: 3 Pharisees test about divorce teaching
23-25 Wealth conflicts with righteousness
MAT 20: 17 Betrayal warning again
MAT 21: 12 Temple merchants overturned, cleared out 2nd time! (Here he comes again!)
23 Challenge: by whose authority?
43-46 Parable of wicked vineyard tenants points out sins of Pharisees
MAT 22 15-22 Trap: is it OK to pay taxes to Caesar?
23-33 Trap: woman who married successive 7 brothers: which husband in heaven?
35-40 Test: which is greatest Commandment?
41-46 Christ queries Pharisees
MAT 23: 3-12 Warning against being like Pharisees
13-36 Woes (seven) on Pharisees, then condemnation
MAT 24 9++ Warning: you will be persecuted for my sake


How much was Judas paid to betray Jesus?
30 pieces of silver, about 30 days wages, or about $2200 to $3000 about a beater cars worth.

What happened to that money?
Judas felt guilty, so returned it: threw into Temple.
Chief priests acknowledged it was Blood Money (their Bad), so the priests used the “Blood Money” to buy a potters field (burial ground for Gentiles)

MAT 26: 25. Rabbi, in most English translation versions (parallel translations online)

What was the nature of the initial arrest of Jesus?
See MAT 26: 48 and footnotes. Arrested not by Romans, but by Jewish religious authorities.

**Explain MAT 26:50. How could the religious authorities put Him to death?**
- Death sentence could only be *imposed* by Romans rulers,
  but could be *recommended* by local (religious) authorities.

From the Roman perspective, blasphemy was a local religious issue, no death sentence was justified.

**Why do you think that Roman Governor Pilate gave in to the rowdy crowd (incited by religious leader(s)) intent on Jesus crucifixion?**
- See MAT 27: 19-24. Wanted to keep his job, and Pax Romana was threatened.
  Easy way out: let the crowd decide and “wash hands of entire affair.”

However, Pilate had Jesus flogged so severely that he probably would have died anyway.

**What three distinct groups mocked Jesus after He was condemned to Crucifixion?**
- Romans (MAT 27: 31), Jewish Leaders (MAT 27: 4-43),
  Robbers crucified with Him (MAT 27: 44)


**How did conflict manifest on Easter morning?**
- Evil Chief Priests gave tomb-guarding Roman soldiers bribes to lie about Resurrection.

READ ALOUD MAT 28: 19-20, the **Great Commission**.

**Do you think that directive applied only to the original Disciples?**

**Did anyone notice the singular “Name” in MAT 28: 19?**
- This verse seems to be a direct and unambiguous confirmation of the Trinity, in Jesus own words.
  See study Bible footnotes! *It is definitely a Mystery, but not a later theological invention.....*

**What would all of this conflict material mean to Jews of that era?**
- Surprising, unexpected, unconventional coming of Messiah, vs.
  Prophetic call to repentance, vs.
  Fairly well thought out account of another false Messiah written by a despicable tax collector.

**== Marks of Discipleship ==**

**Why are Christ's teachings in such fundamental conflict with our culture?**

Last week, several mentioned distress and discomfort reactions to Christ's teachings.

**Why do these teachings make us so uncomfortable?**

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**
Opening Prayer

What do we know about John Mark?

Young man mentored by Peter and Paul, but split with Paul for several years, then reconciled. (Left Paul's 1st mission trip early [Acts 13: 13], Paul refused to take John Mark on 2nd trip, so Mark went with Barnabas, Acts 15: 37-39.)

Probably (per early Christian tradition) a youthful Believer (but not apostle) who witnessed at least some of the events described, and was present at the Arrest of Jesus, see MK 14: 51-52 and footnotes!

Gospel of Mark: earliest written, shortest gospel. Fast-paced writing style. Intended audience: Church at Rome. Probably includes some stories, details provided to Mark by his mentor Peter.

What to look for in the DVD: Why did Christ repeatedly ask that his miracles not be advertised?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion

Christ did not seek or want Davidic fame and popularity as military/political leader.

Instead, He taught and by example lived as a humble loving, suffering servant, not wanting or needing public recognition or acclaim for good deeds. Actions louder than words.

Jesus true identity would be considered blasphemy (rather than true) deserving death penalty.

================ Workbook Chapter 20. =================

Emphasis on mysterious Powers of Jesus:

Over Demons, unclean spirits driven out.

Over Disease & Physical Handicaps, healings

Over Sin and Guilt, forgiveness.

Over Sabbath (legalistic rules & constrictive traditions, confusion & mis-direction), restful restoration

Over Nature (storms stilled, water walked, hungry fed)

Over Death, raised the dead, resurrection teachings (see MK 12: 18-27)

Workbook mentions our “bondage to decay” See Romans 8: 21-22. What does that mean?

Part of the way the world works, things age, get worn down, tired, Entropy.
What are the “various endings” of the Gospel of Mark?

How do we deal with this portion of scripture as the “absolute Word of God,” or the “inspired Word of God?”

was it added later, by another hand? **It is provably not in the original!**

Was there another ending that has been lost?

There are 18 Greek words in MK 16: 9-20 not used elsewhere in Mark; the “later added” end section style and grammar differ significantly.

Some respected experts say that this segment was “quite certainly not written by John Mark.”

Did it seem to you like there were many more miracles and cures in Mark than in Matthew?

Many study Bibles have tables comparing various aspects of the four Gospels.

One is Jesus Miracles, NIV p. 2293, TNIV p. 1790. Find that table in your study Bible.

CONCLUSION: **almost all miracles in MK are in MAT.**

**Exceptions:** MK 1: 23-26 Possessed man in synagogue (evil spirit sent out)
MK 7: 31-37 Deaf mute healed
MK 8 22-26 Blind man sees at Bethsaida

Five miracles in MAT are not documented in MK, so MAT has more...

**POWERFUL tools for quickly finding information about teachings, parables, cures, events.**

**Day 2. Mark 1-4.** The beginning of Jesus ministry: 12 disciples called, Parables.

Why do you think that the entire set of Christmas stories was excluded from Mark?

Christmas stories are also absent from Gospel of John!

Focus of Mark is on on ministry, actions and teachings, the essential Message.

Fulfillment of prophetic Jewish writings might not have boosted Christian credibility in Rome.

Why  (materialism/consumerism aside ) might Christmas stories be more important to Gentiles today?

Mark seems to imply that there were Pharisees watching Jesus and His disciples much of the time: See MK 3:23-28. **What is the teaching point here?**

Leglistic part: don't so overemphasize the Law that you miss the intent/purpose.
Judgment part: Caution when “applying” Law in judgment: factor in purpose & intent, less on “letter.”

See MK 7: 14:-23. What is the essential nature of being “unclean?”
Man made unclean by what comes out of their hearts, not what they eat. Cultural traditions regarding “unclean” foods set aside, all foods are clean?


How do you think that Mark learned about the Transfiguration event (MK 9: 2-9), if he wasn't present, and it was to be kept secret?

Peter, James and John probably told that story to others, after the Resurrection.

MK 9: 14: 29 Jesus heals an epileptic boy.

See Mark 9: 24 What does this mean? “I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.”
Footnotes: Human belief is (unfortunately) never perfect; growing in faith is a process, never done.

See Mark 9: 42-48. Isn't this a bit over the top? Why don't we see more handless, footless, eyes plucked out people?

Prophetic hyperbole: deliberate exaggeration writing style to make an important point.

Consider MK 10: 10-12. Compare with MAT 5: 32. Aren't they different in meaning about divorce?

“Never, ever” vs. “Never, except for adultery.”

See MK 10: 22. Could YOU abandon all of your wealth to go follow Him?

If not, is our cause hopeless?

See MK 10: 25. Google “Camel thru Eye of Needle Gate” Never has there been any evidence that such a gate ever existed. This is another literary construct, not “literal” [sic].

MK 11: 15-17 seems to be an account of Jesus judgment and anger. How can that be OK?

Anger isn't always sin. There is a place and time for righteous indignation.

Skipped verse: Mark 11: 26?


Why did Jesus not know the time of the End at MK 13: 32?

During His ministry on earth, Jesus the Son of Man lived by faith, and there must have been some limitations on his awareness/knowledge. WHO KNOWS?

(skip?) Where did Simon of Cyrene come from? See MK 15: 21

Cyrene was a North African Roman province corresponding roughly to eastern Lybia.
Many Roman ruins (pictures available online) survive from that time.

See Mark 15: 25. When was the “Third Hour?”
Jewish daytime counted from 6am, the “1st hour,” so 3rd hr was 9am-10am

See footnotes at LK 23: 50. How was Jesus buried, according to Mark?
Joseph of Arimathea (a member of the Sanhedrian Council who was a secret Christian) went to Roman Governor Pilate, asked for Jesus body. A Roman Centurian (officer, roughly corresponding to Army Captain) confirmed Jesus death to Pilate, who granted Joseph's request.

Why didn't Joseph of Arimathea vote against Jesus crucifixion?
Combining information in MK 14: 64 with Luke 23: 51, Joseph probably missed the meeting.

 Marks of Discipleship

Announcements

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**
Disciple One LESSON 22  CHAPTER 21 Gospel of Luke  Women and the Least, Last  Discussion Notes

RE-CIRCULATE TREATS SIGNUP SHEET

Treats by ______________________  Next Week ______________________

Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion.  Who was Luke?

Gentile Christian, highly educated Greek Physician and amateur historian.
Possibly a long-time friend of Saul/Paul.  Knew highly educated Jews of his time.
Gospel of Luke probably written a few years after Mark, has more facts, details and specifics.
Written to Theophilus, perhaps a wealthy Christian that was Luke's patron and publisher.
Luke undoubtedly accompanied Paul on some of his missionary trips.
Spread of the early Christian church is told in 2nd Luke writing, Acts.

For an entertaining and quite relevant fictional biography, try the classic

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Another account of Jesus life and teachings, from the perspective of a research-oriented
Gentile believer
Lots of specific details, especially teachings about women and the marginalized
(poor, lost, least, last).
Many of those to be loved and saved are Not Like You: beyond your comfort zone.

We also see themes of Christian Universality woven throughout Luke's account:
  e.g., Simeon, at Luke 2: 32,
  Luke 4: 26-27 (Nazareth: OT God reached out to Gentiles),
  Luke 13: 29-30 (Everyone comes to the Feast of the Kingdom of God)

What to look for in the DVD.

Believers need to get down and dirty, humble, low and involved with the lowly.
Those to be loved and saved are among the poor, disrespected, suffering, marginalized

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points
  How can we possibly devote so much time and energy to loving “those people” on the margins?
  You can't be a good Christian in your “Comfort Zone?”

================================= Workbook Chapter 21. =================================

Birth story of John the Baptist, unique to Luke's Gospel

Lesson 22  84  D1 Discussion Notes
Again: emphasis on humble beginnings: John's parents, Jesus' parents, humble Christmas story, shepherds.

How do we know that Jesus parents were very poor?

They sacrificed turtledoves rather than a lamb at Mary's cleansing (40 days after Jesus' birth).
See Luke 2: 22-24 and LEV 12 (which defines the required purification ceremony & sacrifices).

What is the teaching point about the account of Christ's Temptation in the desert as His ministry starts?

Why include so much specific detail about these Temptations?

The temptations and Jesus responses to them **preview** His teachings and His ministry:

Feed yourself bread from stone: one does not live by bread alone, but [from the Word of God].
Think about: Lord's Prayer “Daily Bread”
Authority over the World: humble non-political ministry, not the expected Conquering Hero.
Make a Mighty Sign, “a dramatic attention-getting crowd-pleaser:” God is not to be tested.
{Remember all of the tricky test questions later?}

Note that Christ consistently replied to these Temptations with Hebrew Scripture citations, perhaps an early indication that he came to Fulfill those prophesies.

Ever notice that the way the world works: everyone is tested? (Especially the earliest Christian Believers) **remember your faith at test times.**

(If Luke's audience was primarily Gentiles, why so much emphasis on Samaritans in Luke's Gospel?)

See Luke 9: 51-56 (unwelcoming Samaritan village);
Luke 10: 25-37 (parable of the Good S., all are your Neighbors);
Luke 17: 11-17 (10 lepers healed, only S. thanks Him).

Hostilities between neighboring cultures was a “fact of life” in those times: constant conflict/conquest.

Why do you think that Luke emphasized Jesus' attitude toward women?

Repeated examples of a new meaning of “Love:”
We're all Equal in the eyes of God,
Luke clearly wrote as though he thought that equality of women is important.

READ ALOUD **GAL 3: 23-28** or also EPH 2: 14-22. Unambiguous inclusion: all together, regardless of X.

Do you think inclusion made Jesus' teachings hard to swallow, for “conservative traditionalists?”

Why did Luke consider tax collectors to be “lost” or “outcasts?”

Throughout the Roman Empire they were considered corrupt, venal government power exploiters of the worst sort.
What was a “publican?”

Early Roman Empire: public contractor, primarily supplies or construction, but also tax collection (government revenue, a la IRS) services.

In Jesus' time: Predominantly a tax collector. The right to collect taxes for a particular region would be auctioned every few years for a value that (in theory) approximated the tax available for collection in that region. The payment to Rome was treated as a loan and the publicani would receive interest on their payment at the end of the collection period. In addition, any excess (over their bid) tax collected would be pure profit for the publicani. The principal risk to the publicani was that the tax collected would be less than the sum bid.

Middle ages: publicans == tavern keepers, providing their “public” with food, drink and other services.

Why do there seem to be poor folks in every time and culture?

Why are there social outcasts in every time and culture?

READ ALOUD p. 159 toward the bottom, “Deep down…”

Why is inclusion such a difficult and “unnatural thing to do?

Have you ever felt excluded? Excluded in a “Christian” scenario?

Is explicit inclusion a good thing? How about explicit inclusion quotas?

Scripture


Why didn't Luke include in his Christmas account the Herod killing Bethlehem babies, exile to Egypt, return material found in Matthew?


Luke traced Christ's genealogy through Mary, beginning with Mary’s father, Heli. (Men in ancient times often regarded their sons-in-law as their own sons, so in a sense Joseph was the “son” of Mary's father Heli.)


Did you notice that the story of Jesus choice of 12 apostles differs in Luke (6: 13), Matthew 10: 1, and MARK 3: 13-19, but isn't explicit in John?

See comparison tables, “Ministry and Message of Jesus Christ” e.g., NIV p. 2289.

What's the difference between “apostle” and “disciple?”

Lesson 22
apostle: messenger or sent one (one sent to deliver message)

disciple: follower of some doctrine or teacher, a learner.

The distinction is especially significant at MAT 10: 1-2: 12 disciples are sent out to become apostles.

Did you see any resemblance between Luke 6: 20-49 and the Sermon on the Mount, MAT 5-7?

See study bible footnotes at Luke 6: 20ff

(skip?) Was John the Baptist in jail or still preaching early in Jesus ministry?

John was preaching, but was uncertain regarding Messiahship of Jesus.


In the three Gospels studied so far, how many times did Christ send out apostles? How many sent each time?

1) MAT 10: 1-2 (12 – “trial run”)
2) MAT 28: 19 (11 - Great Commission)
3) Mark 6: 7-13 (12 – “trial run”)
4) Mark 16: 15-18 (11 - Great Commission)
6) Luke 10: 1-17 (72 – prepared the way into 36 towns, teams of two

Luke’s Gospel does not include the Great Commission: but see Acts 1: 8 where there's similar text.

READ ALOUD Luke 11: 17. (Kingdom divided will fail) Do you think that this is a timeless truth?

READ ALOUD these words of assurance: Luke 12: 11-12 Holy Spirit will help with what you say...


We talked about this a few weeks ago: another account about same teaching, almost same words.

Worry perhaps differs from prudence: take care, but not so much that it becomes obsessive, more important than love. “Daily Bread” concerns are challenges for the marginalized; those “blessed” should focus on other things.

(skip?) Why this redundant material found in two distinct Gospels?

Best efforts by two Christian authors to record for others the most important events, teachings, stories of Jesus' life. If teaching was thought important, authors included it.

READ ALOUD Luke 12: 33. Do you believe that this teaching is literally true? (Boggling priority shift!)
Safety and security abandoned? Indulgent fun gone forever? This is incredibly disruptive, counter-culture, hard. What if you simply can't, or your family won't shift gears with you?

Is gradual change sufficiently good?

I'm hopeful (does grace extend to this sort of thing?), but suspect that He really means it, right now.


See Luke 16: 1-13. This is a troublesome teaching: is Jesus encouraging dishonest use of others resources? Parable of the dishonest (shrewd) manager.

Shrewdly use available resources to help needy or non-Believers to find Christ.
e.g., find best possible value and effect when spending money for church Missionary projects.

See Luke 19: 26. What does this mean? Seems like an uncharacteristic teaching? (Kill my enemies in front of me.)

Hypothetical king unwanted by his subjects (see Luke 19: 14 and notes): those rejecting legitimate King authority will be severely punished? Still seems a bit uncharacteristic.

Warning to those that reject Christ? See various translations.

See MAT 25: 14-30 for another account of this teaching.

**Day 5.** Luke 19: 28 to end. Jerusalem, trial, Crucifixion, on road to Emmaus.

Luke (but neither MAT nor Mark) says King Herod played a role in the Crucifixion trials. What was it?


How many times did the Risen Christ appear in the accounts that we have read so far?

See Study Bible table, TNIV p. 1771, NIV pp. 2292-93.

============== Marks of Discipleship =================

Favorably impacting marginalized people: do-gooding vs. enabling positive change requires respect and long-term engagement.

See book: When Helping Hurts, by S. Corbett & B. Fikkert. (When helping, first, do no harm.)

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**

Lesson 22

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D1 Discussion Notes
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion  What's special and different about John's Gospel?

Foundations, basis differ from the “Synoptic” Gospels of MAT, MARK & LUKE (MML): different content. More developed theological concepts in John.

Dozens of “Gospels” were written and circulated among the earliest Christian churches; many survive. Only four were chosen for the NT.

Who was John, the author of this Gospel?

He was an elderly eye witness to events reported. Educated Jewish fisherman. With older brother James, apostles and cousins of Jesus. (Mother Salome younger sister of Mary). Father Zebedee. Website says: Previously was a disciple of John the Baptist. Probably also wrote three NT letters (Epistles) 1, 2, 3 John. (Another John probably wrote Revelation.) Youngest of the Twelve, AKA “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (see John 13: 23). According to John's Gospel, while dying on the cross Jesus asked John to take care of his mother, which John did until her death ~AD 54 (see John 19: 26). Became an important early leader of the Christian Churches, traveled with Peter. Outlived all other apostles.

Did you find John's content and writing style harder to understand? Why?

MML use common everyday language to recount parables and plain-spoken teachings and miracles. John's Gospel contains more abstracted theological commentaries, and dialogs of Christ speaking in a (some might think) less clear metaphor laden theological style.

Some scholars thing John probably paraphrased when recording these conversations from memory many years later, so the dialog style may actually reflect John's writing (or speaking) style, rather than how Christ spoke.

Most of the miracles described in John's Gospel are not found in MML. Many of the concepts and teachings in John are also unique. These stories are believed to consistently have subtle secondary (often symbolic) meanings. Many scholars think that John wrote his Gospel after the others 80-90 AD. Much of the unique content may have been developed to complete or “round out” aspects of Christ's life and teaching not included elsewhere.

The differences in perspective are challenging, but very important to help us “know and follow” Jesus.

What to look for in the DVD:

What are the most important differences between John and the other Gospels?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points  Spiritual rather than descriptive tone, some stories untold, theological emphasis.

D1 Discussion Notes 89  Lesson 23
Ministry duration perhaps 1 year in MML vs. 3 (or maybe even 4) years in John?
When was the Temple cleansed? Early or late in Jesus' ministry? Once or twice?
Crucifixion and death before Passover or after (Last Supper = P. feast) Passover?
For Believers blessings and abundance of the Kingdom of God starts in Heaven (MML)
or Now (John)?
No mention or teaching of eternal damnation and hell for non-Believers in John?
This is an important distinction because “damnation to Hell” is a cornerstone of
teaching/belief (and motivation) for some Christians.

How can all of this be reconciled?

----------------------------- Workbook Chapter 22. -----------------------------

Many of the concepts and teachings in John are also unique.

New life in Christ is a gift to be experienced NOW, an instant “new life” not just in the afterlife.
Have you noticed a difference in your life?

There are marked differences between being “nominally or superficially” Christian and being fully committed to the Way.

How does the story of Jesus requesting water of the Samaritan women by the well teach about Christian inclusion of the sinful, despised and marginalized, as well as early inclusion of non-Jews?

Woman, outcast (came at noon), sinful (living with non-husband man), Jewish contact forbidden with despised Samaritan who became a Believer, and brought many others to Belief.

It's (sometimes, and for a few people) relatively easy to acknowledge their imperfection, but how can it be that nobody “deserves” illness/injury/sickness/natural disaster as punishment for their sins?

Dealing with consequences of bad decisions (self-imposed or by others) vs. coping with natural tragedies and “the way nature works.”

“You really deserved THAT” may be true, but there's judgment in such statements, and it simply is not the way God set up things.

What about OT many examples of Godly intentional punishment for sin (e.g., Sodom & Gomorrah)?
God may judge, but we in our imperfection shouldn't judge nor say “God judged.”

Consider again DEU 5: 9: “The sins of the parents impact descendents unto the 3rd or 4th generation...” How can this also be true?

The sin referenced in DEU 5: 9 is specific (hate of God); the consequences of such bad decisions seem to be part of “the way the world works:” some bad consequences do propagate through familial generations.

Have we seen so far any accounts related to NT judgment and punishment by God?
YES, many examples (e.g., Christ condemning sinful behavior), see 3 examples in MAT 5: 20, 21, 22
Language used to describe “punishments” may be softer, but the warnings are definitely still there.
What positive can come of tragedy and suffering?

We must love and support those impacted; accept the challenges to “keep going in faith;” eventually, coming to more peaceful acceptance of the way God's world really works, even the most challenging parts dealing with evil, terrible decisions, natural disasters, etc.


See John 1: 35-42.

Apostles Simon Peter and his brother Andrew were earlier disciples of John the Baptist; probably John & brother James, too.

Research question: how many of Jesus' apostles had earlier been disciples of John the Baptist?

(skip?) Jesus 1st miracle recounted in John (only) was the wedding wine-into-water at Canna. Where was Canna?

See John 2: 1-11. Only 4 miles (~2 hours walk) from Jesus home town of Nazareth.
Headline: Local carpenter makes Great Wine at Wedding!
Not really: there's no mention in any Gospels of widespread acknowledgment of that 1st miracle.

Six of the 8 miracles recounted in John are unique to John's Gospel.

What is the teaching point made by John's story about driving the merchants from the Temple in John 2: 13-22?

Compare with the “later” Temple clearing, as described in MAT 21: 12-17; Mark 11: 12-19; Luke 19: 45-48. John makes earlier Temple clearing a lesson about the Resurrection, as foretold by OT Scripture.

What does John 2: 23-25 mean? READ ALOUD the MESSAGE translation of these verses.

Cautionary trust in shallow believers, vs. turn other cheek?

How can both teachings be applicable?

Issue of Christian vulnerability: one view might be that prudence is OK, even exemplified here?


See John 3: 14-15. Snakes again!


Theologically structured warning about believing in the Messiah. Hard for a Pharisee to hear!

How did John find out what Jesus said to Nicodemus?

Probably an eye witness account: John was there that night.

What does John 4:22 mean, telling Samaritan woman that “.. salvation is from the Jews?”

(see footnote on 4:22) Prophets foretold that the Messiah would come from Jews, have Davidic roots.

What does John 4:35-38 mean? (4 mos until the harvest; harvest/conversion analogy)

All believers are challenged, expected to spread the Good Word: delays, excuses not acceptable.

How easy is it for you to witness? Have you ever done it? Why is witnessing so tough?

What is the subtle lesson of John 4:50?

Act as though you Believe:
Many have seen that worry-some things really DO get taken care of thru prayer


See John 6:51-58. Why was this message so deeply offensive to many Jews?

Cannibalism was a terrible violation of the Law, repulsive to most Jews.
The message behind the symbolism seems to have been lost in the emotional responses:
see John 6:66-70. Seemingly huge losses consequent to this teaching: many disciples desert.

Do you think that this was a “communications error?”

Interesting alternate interpretations here: comb away the shallow Believers, over-reacting to symbolism.
Teachings difficult to understand caused those unwilling to work thru the issues to bail out...
(have you wanted to bail out of a faith-related situation, before you really dug into the foundations?)

Lessons here:

Don't be a “knee-jerk runner:” try to hang in and prayerfully work through the issues.
Help others whenever you see someone getting set to run!
The more challenging the situation, the more effort might need to be invested in resolution.
A cynic might take a more Darwinian (evolutionary) view: self-elimination of the unfit “semi-believers.”


See John 7:53 – 8:11. Trap/Trick question: Jesus forgives adulterous woman, sinless to cast first stone.

Jewish leaders violated the Law by not also arresting the adulterous man!
Under Roman law, they had no legal right to kill the accused woman.
This story (unique to John's Gospel) isn't in other Gospels, and also is NOT in the earliest
available MS for John.

A memorable lesson about Judgement: *Only if you are perfect should you be judging. You are not perfect, so do not judge.*

Suggestion: when tempted to judge, instead love.

See John 8: 6 (Jesus writing in dust with finger) We don't know what he wrote...

**Is compassionate forgiveness ever inappropriate?**

**Are we supposed to forgive those that sin against us, regardless of how bad that sin might be?**

What about grievous personal offenses (rape, murder), very public disservice, crimes against humanity, violation of a major trust (charities destroyed by investment theft), purely evil nasty unimaginable acts...

**What if you cannot forgive someone, or yourself?**

Over time, one seems to pay a great destructive personal price for holding onto any sort of offense.

Pray for the strength to forgive; don't give in to acceptance of the bitterness.

**Day 5. John 9-10.**

More accounts in John (than in other Gospels) of Jesus explicitly making Godly declarations to Jewish Leaders.

When combined with information in other Gospels, we see a more fully complete picture of Jesus explicit declarations of Godliness, as well as condemnation of Jewish Leaders. Scriptural accounts are consistently confrontational.

(skip?) Why were the Pharisees so concerned about specific details regarding the cured blind man (John Ch. 9)?

Trying to catch Jesus committing offenses or saying things that could justify termination of his ministry, or destroy his credibility

**What do you think that John 10:35 means? (The Scripture cannot be broken...)**

Seems to be an unambiguous statement that OT Scripture is true, the Word of God.

================================== Marks of Discipleship ===================================

Announcements

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**
**Background:** John was rejected as heretical by many within the early Christian movement, but was ultimately accepted into the official canon, over many objections. It is now the favorite gospel of many conservative Christians, and the gospel least referred to by many liberal Christians.

**Differences in how Jesus is depicted.** The first three gospels portray him as a teacher, healer, and prophet whose main concerns are the problems of society and the need for people to live more virtuously. In these gospels he shows great compassion for poor, oppressed, and outcast people, and he heals many disabled and demon-possessed individuals. When he teaches, he talks in simple language, draws images from everyday life, and uses parables to make his points.

But the gospel of John depicts him quite differently. In this gospel he talks in a different style, and often uses words and ideas not found in the other gospels. Instead of making short penetrating statements about how people should live, he gives long speeches about why he came to earth and why people must accept him as their savior. He rarely uses parables, and he doesn't cure any cases of demonic possession.

Barnabas Lindars suggests that John was originally sermonic material that the Evangelist successively put together. Each episode of the first half John (chaps 1-12, the “Book of Signs”) might be envisioned to consist of sign(s) plus discourse and that each presents the Gospel in its wholeness, namely Christ manifested, crucified, risen, exalted, and communicating life. This arrangement of the evangelic material was in all probability due to the Evangelist’s use of it in his preaching, as he presented the episodes of the ministry in the light of their end in the redemptive death and resurrection of the Lord. No doubt the synoptic Gospels reflect a like process, but the Fourth Gospel is supremely the preacher’s gospel — every episode in the book shouts out to be preached — and it is so because (it is argued) it is the product of a highly effective preacher’s proclamation of Christ in the Gospel.
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Theological teachings, role of the Holy Spirit (Advocate) in the spiritual lives of Christians.

Historical context of scriptural writing impacts intended meaning (then as well as now). Intended meaning then should be considered when (in our minds) we try to understand the intended meaning in our modern context.

What to look for in the DVD: How does John explain the Holy Spirit?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points. According to John, how does the Holy Spirit support disciples (post-Resurrection)?

Teacher (supports learning, growth)

Guide (decision helper, whisperer)

Reminder (conscience, self-assessment)

Advocate (interceder, representative)

Empowerment, making things happen through Believers.

Comforter (supporter, “stretcher-bearer”)

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READ ALOUD workbook p. 168 upper left: Our Human Condition: “We want more...”

The Humble Servant washes the apostles feet:

Can you avoid the recognitions and honors, selflessly giving humble service, whatever is needed?

What's comparable in modern times to foot washing of that time? Common, debasing, lowly, humble.

READ ALOUD John 14: 26-27. Are you sufficiently along your faith journey to experience some of the learning and growth in understanding?

Read study Bible footnotes pertaining to John 14: 27.

Any experience yet of the inner peace promised in John 14: 28? How does this inner peace happen?

What three things did Jesus pray for in the “High Priestly Prayer” quoted by John in Chapter 17?
a) for Himself, and his return to Heavenly Glory at the end of His earthly time.

b) for his Disciples (not just apostles!), their safety, protection from evil, and sanctification.

What does “sanctify” mean in John 17: 17-19?

See study Bible footnotes: “Sanctify” means set aside for sacred use, cleansed, purified, made holy.

Have you begun to notice this cleansing process in your life, as you grow in your faith? Amazing, isn't it, all of those little increments of abandonment of the not-so-good stuff...

Doing (or not) doing something because you just want to, rather than because of some rules, or because you want to earn your way into Heaven.

c) for future believers (the Church), unified and filled with the Holy Spirit.

What does Jesus prayer for unity of believers say about Christian Denominational pride and hostility?

Bridge building needed. Obviously not what He wanted, nor what we should be about...

During the Crucifixion, the workbook seems to imply (based on John's accounts) that Peter's faith might have weakened. Do you think that Peter gave up and returned to his fishing career after the Crucifixion?

Scripture


(skip?) Why do you suppose that Peter refused to have Jesus wash his feet?


Still seems to be presenting convincing evidence to the apostles?


In the first part of John 15, what does the vine analogy have to say about nominal or superficial Believers?

See John 15: 6, discarded, and burned. Active doing and loving are essential, we must LIVE our belief. Nominal Christians probably should be a bit worried.

What are we taught here about praying “in Jesus name”? Compare John 14: 13 and John 16: 26-27.

Are we to prayerfully seek Jesus intervention with God the Father?

NO: Believers in Jesus may pray directly w/o intervention to God the Father. In contrast, the Hebrew worship model required a priestly intervention role.

We are to ask prayerfully for things that carry on His work.

Implication: not to ask other (non-Kingdom) stuff, like winning a baseball game, a war, or an election.

This can be a very slippery slope indeed: what's legitimate to ask for? (in your opinion)

See John 17: 16-16. What does “not of this world” mean?

“World” refers to the sinful, immoral bad-decision-driven base “natural” practices of non-believers.

Compare with 1 John 2: 15-16. Does this mean the same thing?

Look at John 18: 2. Why did John use the plural “Chief Priests?”

Why, according to John, was Jesus taken first to Annas [aka “Ananus”] after He was arrested?

(see footnotes) Annas had been the Jewish High priest from AD 6 to 15, but was deposed by Romans. “High Priest” was (in Jewish tradition) a lifetime office, so many Jews still considered Annas to be their High Priest. His son-in-law Caiaphas was High Priest from AD 18 to 36/37.

Annas was deposed for imposing death sentences on Jews after being explicitly prohibited from doing so by Roman authorities!

See www.Wikipedia.com for an online list of all of the High Priests of Israel.

Jesus questioning by Annas prior to his first trial by Caiaphas is NOT Mentioned in the MML.

But see Luke 22: 54, where “high priest” might refer to Annas?
Or Mark 14: 53? (again, taken to “high priest.”)
Or MAT 26: 57. (explicitly Caiaphas first)

The point: Annas and Caiaphas were corrupt, evil “religious” leaders in bed with the Romans.

Consider the four Gospel accounts taken together: what are the Six Stages of Jesus' Trial?
(see study Bible summary, NIV p. 2275)

Jewish authorities:
Hearing before Annas
Hearing before Caiaphas
Trial before Sanhedrin Council

Trials before Roman Authorities:
Pilate (Roman governor of Judea, hence Jerusalem)
Herod Antipas (Roman ruler of Galilee, Jesus home territory),
back to Pilate for condemnation

Why was it important to tell the story of Peter denying Christ thrice, in all four Gospels?

All four authors considered it a very important story: why?

Even Peter (the “Rock,” and one of Jesus favorites), denied his faith.
We all have made “denial” errors in judgment, et can be forgiven and grow greatly in our faith.

What's different about John's account of the Denial?

1st denial occurred in the courtyard of Annas (vs Caiaphas in MML); could have been same
courtyard, as households were extended in those times, especially for wealthy and powerful families.

**Day 4.** John 19-20. Crucifixion, Resurrection and later contacts with disciples.

*Compare John 19: 23-24 with Psalm 22: 18, written by King David long before the Crucifixion.*

Why was the sign put onto Jesus Cross by Pilate written in three languages (see John 19: 20-22)?

It was customary to set up over the heads of persons crucified the crime for which they suffered, and the name of the sufferer.

Pilate wanted everyone (local Jews, Roman officials, and everybody “cultured” that read Greek) to know his “government” view of the situation.

“Claimed to be King of the Jews” vs. “King of the Jews.” an ironic reversal of perspectives!

**Day 5.** John 21, 1 John 1-5. Appearance by Sea of G., Peter's instructions, letter on Love.

How would you summarize the short letter of 1 John?

Don't be led astray from Jesus' teachings, and love one another.

Consider 1 John 3: 9-10. Doesn't this scripture indicate that one must be sinless (“perfect”) to be God's children?

No, not perfect, but a life characterized by doing the very best that you can to avoid sin. **Is this a troublesome area of gray, or a great comfort for Believers...?**

---------------------  Marks of Discipleship  --------------------------------------------

Announcements

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**

Lesson 24 98 D1 Discussion Notes
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion

What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Early Church Growth driven by the explosive energy and power of the Holy Spirit.

READ ALOUD “Our Human Condition, We believe...” workbook p. 176 left column top.

Have you ever noticed that energy and power are often absent in stagnant or withering churches or communities of believers?

Why does that happen? Are faith-based entrepreneurial drive, excitement & energy in other arenas not as powerful, or have these groups lost their “steam.”?

What makes the power-difference?


What to look for in the DVD:

Where did all of the expansion energy driving early Church expansion come from?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points. God working powerfully through the disciples to grow the tiny Church.

How was this different from the entrepreneurial drive and inspiration that stimulates founding teams?

According to Luke, how long after Christ's departure was the Holy Spirit given to the group of Disciples?

(~120 Disciples, in Jerusalem) Very noteworthy happening on Pentecost, 50 days after Passover. Passover, then next day the Crucifixion, Resurrection 3rd day afterward, with/teaching them 40 days. Later he was “taken up.” Hence, Pentecost was about a week after Christ departed.

See Acts 2: 47 “And day by day...those who were being saved.” Why “saved?”

Rescued from a sinful world.

Who was Barnabas, and what was his role in early church growth?

Highly respected Christian leader, Hellenestic (Greek-speaking, culturally more worldly) Jew from Cyprus, mentor then peer of Paul, traveled (mission trip) w/Paul and John Mark.
What did Ananias and his wife Sapphira do so wrong as to deserve severe punishment?

Stricken dead for claiming to give all land sales proceeds to God, when in fact kept part.
Questioned, and condemned by Peter.
Not good attempting to deceive God. Immediate, harsh on the spot: Wham!

Was their punishment excessively harsh? Why not an opportunity for confession, remorse, forgiveness, grace?

Peter reprimanded (condemned?) each of them for lying to God and the Believers.
God judged and immediately punished them, setting a fearsome example.

Trick Question: How can it be that Believers could screw up so badly that God struck them dead, without any chance to beg forgiveness, or seek His Grace?

Judgment is NOT our job, so degree of offense isn't our call, but we really need to take warning: tough lesson – there remain some ways to terminally screw up!
Yes, it definitely is possible for Believers to sin so badly that they are terminated.
But then what?

How did the earliest Church in Jerusalem treat widows unfairly?

Communal food distribution favored Judean widows, and Hellenistic widows got shorted on food. How was that problem fixed fairly, satisfying everyone?

Community selected 7 well-respected Hellenistic men to organize fair food distribution to all widows. This delegation left the 12 apostles able to focus on prayer, preaching, teaching and conversion. Many of these men subsequently were described as effective Church leaders.

Scripture


When and where did it happen: the 1st Church business meeting: 120 disciples chose Judas replacement — Matthias?
At Jerusalem, Probably during the ~week between Christ taken up (Acts 1: 9) and Pentecost (which this year is May 19, 2013; wheat harvest here begins a few weeks later).

Little is known about Matthias; conflicting 2nd C documentation about his subsequent ministry and death. (Look it up on the Web.)

The Gospel of Matthias is a lost text from the New Testament apocrypha, whose content has been surmised from various descriptions of it in ancient works by church fathers. There is too little evidence to decide whether a Traditions of Matthias is the same work.

According to old tradition, St. Matthias's Day (February 24) is said to be the luckiest day of the year, because Matthias was chosen by lot [to replace Judas Iscariot] and thus has been seen as a good day on which to buy lottery tickets, etc.

(Skip?) Peter's 1st sermon is recorded in part in Acts 2: 14-40. What was his style, and how was that sermon received?

Lesson 25 100 D1 Discussion Notes
OT scripture references interwoven with Christ's story, pleas to repent and be baptized.

120 => 120 + 3,000 new converts! [Out of a population known to have been ~40,000: 7+% in one day!]

Issue: 40k normal vs ~250K population at Jewish Festivals: were converts “townies or tourists”?

Jerusalem was a bit smaller than Salina, KS.


See Acts 3: 1-10. Peter and John cured a crippled beggar, attracted a crowd, Peter preached, converted many, offended the Council, who jailed, threatened then “Ordered” Peter & John to cease preaching/teaching about Jesus.

Believers at Jerusalem then numbered about 5,000 men (1/8 of entire population), see Acts 4: 4.

At Acts 5: 6 we see again mention of high priests Annas and Caiaphas.

Aside: website BibleStudyTools.com says Annas was an adroit diplomat [with both Jews and Romans], shown by the fact that five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphas were appointed to the office of high-priest in almost unbroken succession, though Annas did not survive to see the office filled by his fifth son Annas (or Ananus) II, who caused Jas the Lord's brother to be stoned to death (circa 62 AD).

The Annas family was enormously wealthy, known for their rapacity and greed. The chief source of their wealth seems to have been the sale of requisites for the temple sacrifices, such as sheep, doves, wine and oil, which they carried on in the four famous "booths of the sons of Annas" on the Mount of Olives, with a branch within the precincts of the temple itself!

READ ALOUD Acts 4: 32-35 (shared possessions). Does this seem to indicate a socialistic economic arrangement prevailed in the earliest Church at Jerusalem?

Remember, at least 1/8 of the entire population was involved!

This account seems to be a motivating introduction to the story of Ananias & Sapphira, the late Mr. & Mrs. Deceitful

See Acts 5: 15-16. Many miraculous cures by Apostles, implied cures from being touched by Peter's shadow; "more and more” became Believers in Jerusalem. [Might be approaching 20% of entire population?]

Apostles again arrested, jailed by Jewish Council: what was Gamaliel's argument against punishing them?

If their purpose/activity is of man, many precedents clearly indicate that it will fail.
However, if it is from God, you must not fight against God.
Therefore, let them go free.

So the apostles were flogged (severely beaten) and freed.


Acts 7. Stephen (Hellenistic Jew, Believer, widows food distributor, preacher and miracle performer) falsely accused of blasphemy, arrested, tried, gave OT historical summary speech (quoted by Luke), then accused the Council of having “uncircumcised hearts and ears.” and murdering the foretold Messiah (which they had indeed done a few months earlier!).

D1 Discussion Notes 101 Lesson 25
In violation of Roman Law and previous prohibitions, the Council stoned Stephen to death, while Saul (his Hebrew name, later after conversion and redirection to apostolic work called by his Greek name Paul) watched over their cloaks.

Then there was a “great persecution” of the Church” in Jerusalem; **Believers scattered** throughout Judea and Samaria, which began to **Spread the Word.** (Must have had a great economic impact at Jerusalem, if so many people abruptly left town?) Saul began to destroy the Church,

**Who was the disciple named Philip who during that dispersal went to preach in Samaria (Northern Israel)?**
See study Bible footnotes at Acts 8: 5 and NIV p. 2329. Not the Apostle named Philip, Hellenistic Jew, widely respected (full of spirit & wisdom) disciple leader and widow food distributor

Philip was an evangelist who performed miracles and converted many Samaritans.

**What was noteworthy about the story of Simon the Samaritan Sorcerer (Acts 8: 9-25).**
Simon became a Christian, but wanted to buy from Peter & John the secret power to activate the Holy Spirit in Believers. Simon was severely reprimanded, remorseful for his sin.

Another kind of sin: aspiring to great powers, rather than humble servitude.

**What's significant about the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch?**

**Who was this eunuch, and what was he doing?**
CFO for Ethiopian Queen Candace, returning home after worshiping at Jerusalem., Tooling along the road in his chariot, reading aloud from a scroll of Isaiah.

Must have himself been greatly respected (worship vacation), educated God worshiper (Ethiopian reading Hebrew), very wealthy (owned an Isaiah scroll).

Angel (whisper?) told Philip to go down the road, where he met and converted the Ethiopian eunuch. Christianity was thus perhaps (by implication) spread into Africa South of Egypt.

**Where is Ethiopia?**
Near the East coast of Africa, (just West of Somolia and the Horn of Africa) just North of the Equator, on the southwestern shore of the Red Sea.

Trade with Egypt since about 3000 BC, and the Queen of Sheba who was “involved” with King Solomon probably came from that area. Jews were in Ethiopia at least since then.

**H owever,**

In ancient times the name Ethiopia was primarily used to refer to the modern day nation of Sudan based in the upper Nile valley south of Egypt, also called Kush (in Hebrew, “Cush” means “dark”). Ethiopia is frequently mentioned in English translation Bibles based on the Greek translation of "Kush" as "Ethiopia," however such references are in fact [long story] to Nubia in the modern day nations of Egypt and Sudan and not the modern-day nation of Ethiopia. An example of this conflation of the nations of Egypt and Sudan is in Acts 8: 27. This passage has been more properly identified as referencing the ancient Kingdom of Kush, in Sudan and not Ethiopia.

**Day 4. Acts 9-11. Saul's conversion, the role of Cornelius.**

Lesson 25 102 D1 Discussion Notes
After Saul's conversion, he escaped from hostile Jews at Damascus by being lowered in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

(skip?) Where else have we read about a similar escape? 
OT, Joshua 2: 15 Rahab the Jericho innkeeper (or prostitute) so saved the two spies sent by Joshua to scout out the defenses of Jericho during entry to Promised Land.

What was the evolving relationship between Saul and the evangelist Barnabas? 
About 3 yrs after conversion, Saul returned to Jerusalem, but was rejected by the Believers, who remembered his vigorous persecutions. Barnabas (older cousin of John Mark) befriended and mentored Saul, leading to his acceptance. Saul vigorously engaged Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem, and they eventually ran Saul out of town.

What's the significance of Peter's thrice-repeated vision recounted in Acts 10: 10-16? 
The context (as well as Peter's subsequent use of the vision) clearly indicates that the Church must be inclusive, welcoming all Believers, even (especially Gentiles).

This clearly applied wrt the Roman Centurian Cornelius, whom Peter converted with a large group of Gentiles, and they were blessed with the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Acts was written by a Gentile, Luke the Physician and lifelong friend of Saul.

Secondary: God created all things good, no inherently unclean animals. Separation/unclean laws related to socialization with Gentiles, food prohibitions set aside.

(skip?) What was the significance and importance of early establishment of the Church at Antioch? 
(see footnotes) Antioch in Syria was the 3rd largest city of the Roman Empire, huge economic power, after Rome and Alexandria, Egypt. Strong big church there. Became headquarters for Saul & Barnabas. Antioch Church sent relief to Jerusalem Church during famine and depression.

Note reference to NT Prophet Agabus who correctly foretold the famine. (Yes, there are prophets in the NT!)


(skip?) What happened when King Herod throw Peter in prison, yet again? 
Persecution of Believers pleased Jewish leaders, so Herod sought to strengthen his position by killing Apostle James, jailing Peter.

Angel rescued Peter the night before his trial before Herod. Herod executed the guards on duty when Peter “escaped.” Shortly thereafter, Herod was stricken by the Lord and died a terrible death by worms (probably Fournier gangrene).

During the first mission trip of Saul and Barnabas, how many times were they run out of towns by angry crowds? 
Acts 13: 14-51 town = Pisidian Antioch
Acts 14: 1-6 town = Iconium
Acts 14: 8-20 town = Lystra (cured crippled beggar, left for dead after stonings!)

Throughout Acts, there are strong themes of tension, persecution and extraordinary tenacity.

D1 Discussion Notes 103 Lesson 25
What important issue was considered by the Council at Jerusalem after Paul & Barnabas returned from their 1st mission trip?

Must all Believers be circumcised (and by implication, follow the Jewish Law of Moses?)

Jewish (Pharasee party): Gentile believers must be circumcised and strictly adhere to the Law
Peter: through Grace all Believers are saved; this is trying to test God, a yoke not to be borne.
James: quotes OT scripture including Gentiles in the {New Covenant}, four simple rules only.

What were the four rules consequently imposed by the letter (included verbatim) on all Believers by the Council at Jerusalem?

1. Eat no food sacrificed to idols.
2. Eat no blood.
3. Eat no meat from strangled animals
4. Abstain from sexual immorality.

------------------ Marks of Discipleship ------------------

Sometimes either passive (wait, listen, pray) or active (do something) response may be appropriate.
Which is easier for you?

READ ALOUD workbook p. 183 upper rt: Disciples experience...”

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
QUESTION about this group continuing next Fall with Disciple Two: it's up to us to decide together. Let's develop a consensus not later than 5/15/13. I'd prefer that we continue as a group, inviting others to join us for D2.

Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Eye witness accounts as missionary teams spread the Christian word through the Roman Empire.

What to look for in the DVD. What were the missionary strategies used to spread the Gospel?

Play DVD


Workbook Chapter 25.

Mission team compositions:

Team 1A: Barnabas, Paul, John Mark
Team 1B (later): Paul & Barnabas. John Mark abruptly left, went back to Jerusalem.

Team 2B: Barnabas & John Mark. (we don't know much about the adventures of that team...)
Team 3: Paul, Luke and several others...

Who was Lydia, and how did she meet Paul and Barnabas?
Lydia was an influential businesswoman, Gentile dealer in purple (expensive [WHY?], royal colored) cloth. Home in Phillipi, saved with her entire household. Asked Team T2 to stay at her home.

What was the cause of the turmoil in Phillipi?
Slave girl possessed by demons, foretold future, cured by Paul, owner felt cheated of future revenues, incited mob against Paul & Silas, jailed, earthquake opened jail doors, jailer & family converted, officials alarmed by illegal punishment of Roman citizens.

Did you notice that there were two definite classes of treatment: Roman Citizens vs. the exploited and conquered “locals?”

What upset occurred in Thessalonica?
Team T2A converted Jews, God-fearing Greeks and influential women, making the Jewish Leadership jealous. Started a riot. Believers sent T2A away...

How did the turmoil in Beroea [aka “Berea’] happen? Jews came from Thessalonica to run off Paul!

What happened in Corinth?
Paul stayed ~18 months, teaching and preaching mostly to Gentiles because the Jews there were upset with him and tried to have him arrested by the Roman Officials.

Does anyone have any issues with the Scripture that we read this past week?

=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=  Scripture  ==-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=


Three years after returning from 1St Mission Trip, why did Paul not want to take John Mark on 2Nd trip?

John Mark quit early during 1St trip, returned to Jerusalem; Paul was really disappointed with him...

What happened?
Paul & Barnabas split over whether or not to take John Mark; then a really good thing happened: the two teams doubled their missionary coverage.

How do we infer that Luke (author of Acts) accompanied Paul & Silas on 2Nd Missionary Trip?
See footnotes on Acts 16: 10. (“we” vs. “they”) Luke was probably a participant and eye witness to most of the events of the 2Nd 3Rd and Roman trips.

(skip?) Why did the Jewish crowd beat Sosthenes, the Corinthian synagogue ruler, after Paul's trial before Roman Proconsul Gallio?
They were mad at Sosthenes for losing the court trial, and weakening the synagogue.

**What was the real story of the knowledgeable Alexandrian Jew Appolos?**
He had a strong OT scripture familiarity, and knew about the repentance preached by John the Baptist. At Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquilla taught Appolos about Christ's teachings and the Resurrection; he became a Believer and a noteworthy preacher.

**Day 2. Acts 19-10.** Paul at Ephesus during 3Rd missionary Trip..

What was the situation at Ephesus when Paul arrived during his 3Rd Missionary Trip?
Ephesus was a large important city, a center of pagan worship, occult practices and superstition-for-profit. Paul stayed there for 2+ years, and converted many who had formerly practiced sorcery. Converts publicly burned hand-written witchcraft scrolls worth about $400,000.

Why were silversmiths at Ephesus so upset with Christians led by Paul?
Silver idols of the god Artemis were popular, profitable. The market for those idols was greatly weakened. The silversmiths incited the Ephesians into an uproar. City clerk quieted the crowd, Paul left town expediently.

Can you see a template or repeated story framework here in Acts?
Missionary team arrives, recruits converts, causes hot reaction by non-Believers, followed by chaos/riots, then sometimes arrest or jail time, then the Missionary team leaves town.


What did the NT Prophet Agabus say about Paul's return to Jerusalem ending 3rd Missionary trip? See Acts 21: 10-11. (belt demonstration) Paul will be bound by the Jews and turned over to the Gentiles. And it happened that way!

Trick Question: Was Jesus' brother James one of the original 12 apostles? No (see Acts 21: 18), but James was the highly respected leader of the Jerusalem Christian Church, sometimes respectfully referred to as an “apostle.”

The apostle James was a fisherman, brother of the apostle (and author) John; they were sons of Zebedee, because of their tempers sometimes called the “Sons of Thunder.”

How did Paul get into trouble with the Jewish Leaders at Jerusalem, after returning from his 3rd trip? Jews visiting the Temple from Asia (modern Turkey) accused Paul of bringing Greeks into the Temple, and of preaching blasphemies.

Paul spoke to the Jewish crowd about his conversion, further offending them.

Paul (Roman citizen) illegally put into chains by the Roman Centurian (Captain-equivalent).

What were the events leading to Paul being sent as a prisoner to Rome? Hearing before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Council) leading to uproar regarding Resurrection. (Paul might have intentionally set the Pharisees against the Sadducees.) Plot by 40 Jews to kill Paul; but Roman officials found out.

Paul was transferred for his own safety to Caeseria, where there was a trial before Governor Felix.


Gov. Felix held Paul ~2 years, hoping to receive bribes to release Paul. Implication: Paul had “friends of means.”

New Governor Festus retried Paul, Jews from Jerusalem failed to bring any charges provable. Paul appealed to Caesar, motivating his transport to Rome for trial before the Emperor.

Paul's hearing before Jewish King Agrippa II (speech/sermon) Agrippa noted that Paul should have been freed, if had not appealed to Caesar.


Where was Paul's ship wrecked on the way to Rome, and how long was Paul there? Ship wrecked on island of Malta, 60 miles south of Sicily. The group was there about 3 months, during the non-sailing season of Med. Weather conditions.
According to Luke (who was there), what did Paul do after he arrived in Rome?

Met with Jewish leaders there, making his peace with them.
Lived under house arrest in rental house.
For two years he boldly preached the Gospel.

Acts ends abruptly, leaving Paul in Rome. We'll learn more about his Roman time from surviving letters that Paul wrote to Believers during that last part of his life.

Day 6. Ephesians 1-4. Paul in Rome wrote an encouragement letter to the Church at Ephesus (and others).

Note that we're reading two very distinct styles of writing by two different authors in the lesson this week:

Luke, a physician, historian, participant and eye witness of the great events during the expansion of the church, wrote Acts, a detailed historical account by a Believer, active missionary and long-time friend of Paul.

Paul, a high energy, inspired and tightly focused missionary under house arrest in Rome, wrote an inspirational letter to people that he knew well, members of a young church in a large pagan city.

How long had Paul been in Ephesus, growing the Church there?

Trip 2 (see Acts 18: 19-21) Brief visit.

Trip 3 (see Acts 19: 1-20) Two years in Ephesus and environs. Paul knew those people well, had lived with them.

What was the thrust of (the 1st four chapters of) Paul's letter to the Ephesians?

Encouragement, inspiration, reminders about core beliefs, explicit faith-based directions and admonitions.

ISSUE: See EPH 1: 4-5, 11. Paul wrote “predestined” twice here. Does that mean that he's teaching that some are pre-ordained by God to become believers?

NO, we do have a choice. The offer of Belief and life-changing salvation (and our choices to accept or reject) is “predestined,” salvation (saving from worldly sin, the old lifestyle) is available to those that choose rightly, as well as to those who have not yet done so. Each has a choice, it's not (unfortunately) inevitable.

Why is the letter to the Ephesians relevant to us today?

Circumstances have not changed all that much: we now are surrounded by pagan temptations and “diversions” that pull us away from the Path.

Did you notice that EPH 4: 25-32 is a well composed and pretty succinct summary of how Believers are to behave?
After contemplating the examples and stories of Acts, does anyone else feel that they may have been pretty weak witnesses for Christ? These are powerful and compelling examples of people whose lives were much more completely dedicated to Christ. We are challenged to be much more dedicated, be effective and focused.

Why is it so hard to be a witness?

Announcements.

Easter services at Resurrection: try (if you can) to make room for 10,000+ visitors and infrequent worship participants by planning to come to one of the less visitor-intense services.

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
I have requested that Resurrection schedule continuation of this group next Fall, using the Disciple Two scripture study material. Unless changes are necessary, we'll plan to meet at the same time and place, continuing to grow and study together. Please invite anyone interested to join us.

Opening Prayer

What's the central issue or point of the lesson this week? Thought provoking theological essays.

Paul's letter to the Romans is rich with theological issues, briefly addressed and resolved.

Both Jews and Gentiles obtain justification (being put right with God) through faith in Jesus Christ.

Lots of intellectually challenging theological reasoning and interpretation, alignment with OT, followed by practical living guidelines.

Trick question: who wrote Romans?

Paul was the author, but he dictated the letter to a scribe named Tertius, see Romans 16: 22.

Was Romans written before or after the Gospels?

Probably contemporary with or before the earliest gospel, which was the one written by John Mark about 55-65AD (some say as late as 70 AD).

Romans written during 2nd missionary trip, while Paul was in Corinth, about 57 AD.
Recall that Paul refused to take Mark on his 2nd missionary trip.

What to look for in the DVD.

Can God be trusted (by Jews)?

Why was Paul's letter sent to the Roman Church?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points. Why is there so much emphasis on Jewish perspectives in Romans?

Christ was a Jew, Paul was a Jew, many early Christians were Jews.

Paul's Christian Church (e.g., Peter & James) support base at Jerusalem was mostly (if not all) Jewish. By implication, many early Roman Christians must have been Jewish.

Did you know that many of the common-use titles for the Roman Emperor (“Lord,” “Savior,” “Son of God”) were ones that early Christian writers used when referring to Jesus?

Using these terms to reference Jesus would have been considered highly undesirable by Romans, because they implied that Christ was equal to or in a sense superior to Caesar. Yet these terms of respect were said and written, many many times, stimulating avoidable Roman hostility toward Christians.
When the letter arrived, what is believed to have been Paul's relationship with the Leaders of the Roman Christian church?

Paul had heard of the Roman Christians and their work, knew some from times together during his Journeys, but had never been to Rome himself.

How many OT scriptural references did Paul include in his letter to the Romans?

45 or more distinct citations!

Why do you think that there were so many OT scriptural references?

Many of the Roman Christians must have been relatively well educated Jews, familiar with the OT. Gentile Christians must have (by implication) been expected to become familiar with the Hebrew OT (just as we Gentiles are expected to learn and study the OT still today!)

Conclusion: the OT is incredibly important to knowing and loving God, and understanding Christ the Rabbi.

The Jewish/Gentile composition of the Roman Christian Church at the time of the Letter arrival is unknown, but must have been a mix of mostly Jews and some Gentiles.

Paul seems to acknowledge that his intended audience is knowledgeable Jews and OT students at Romans 7: 1.

Why does Paul think that the Law of Moses is impractical to free people from sin?

All people are imperfect, sinners doing wrong much more than they'd like. (Even Paul himself!)

The Mosaic Laws tell us where we go wrong, but the Laws do not keep us from sin, or justify us (get us right with God)

Jesus sacrifice of atonement sets Believers free from enslavement to sin.

What does this mean? top of Workbook p. 194. “To be righteous does not mean to be “pure” or “perfect,” but rather [it means] to be in harmony, or in right relationships with God and with [your] neighbors.

Focus and thrust of living becomes radically different, with abandonment of self-centeredness, really getting into selflessly loving others, with a strong commitment to betterment.

A fresh and different person emerges over time, becoming seems to be a process of continuous improvement, so that Paul illuminates for us the “awesome responsibility of Christian Living.”

Day 1. Romans 1-2. Both Jews and Gentiles will be judged by God.

See Romans 1: 11. What does Paul mean by “mutual encouragement in faith?”

We greatly support each other in all aspects of life through Brotherly Love, loving our Neighbors.

We are supported and encouraged by others as our faith grows, and together we serve others. Christianity is not for a solitary individual, it's a group and outreach sort of thing.
See Romans 1: 18-20. Do you believe that there's any excuse for not believing in God?
   Does Creation “make God plain?”
   Does the unshaped/untrained conscience of a man dictate what's right and wrong?
   The “obvious” rules might not be nearly what we are trained and taught to believe are “right or wrong.”

   It may be hard to agree with Paul on this one, especially for non-Jews, with no OT, no Godly training or traditions.

If Creation makes God plain, what do you think are the self-evident characteristics of God?
   How about when you are having really bad days? Contrast that with Obvious God on quite good days?

See Romans 1: 26-27. Could Paul be any more explicit about the sinful nature of homosexual relations?

Did anyone go back and review the Mosaic Law at LEV 18: 22-23?
   How then do we love our neighbors who seem to have been made (in Gods image) that way?
   See Romans 2: 1 (Do not judge.) Aside: maybe judgment is really hard, and loving is easier?

   Wow: you who judge do the same thing: judgment is equivalent to committing the subject sin?
   Seems similar to Christ's teaching about lustful thoughts being equivalent to the act, doesn't it?

   This sort of reasoning could get us into lots of “sining via judgment” trouble, eh?

What is the meaning of Romans 2: 12? (sin apart from the [Mosaic] Law.)
   This is an issue that's arisen previously in our discussions.
   Paul teaches that each person will be judged [by God] based on what they know of right and wrong.

   Knowledge brings responsibility and accountability, so some might prefer “not to know.”
   Faith is at its core a very serious and challenging business.

See Romans 2:21-28. Can you see an element of judgment in hypocrisy?
   Hypocrites have judgmental attitudes toward others, contrary to their own practices.

Isn't it amazing how much intellectual challenge is packed into Romans? Paul's intellect shines through !

Day 2. Romans 3-4. Righteousness [being in a right relationship with God and Man] through faith.

See Romans 3: 8. Does Paul here say that the “end justifies the means?”
   No, to the contrary: the desirable end NEVER justifies sinful means.
   Just don't do that sinful thing.

(skip?) What does Paul say about God's judgment of pre-Christian sinners at Romans 3: 25?
   Having faith in (anticipation of) the future coming of the Jewish Messiah was sufficient for pre-Christian salvation.
This is a **troublesome teaching**, which is not palatable to some Believers. Let's not get into the “Judgment Business...”

Romans 3: 27-28 makes the point that freedom from sin (redemption) and “Eternal Life” cannot be earned by performing good deeds, but is instead a Gift from God, through faith.

**Day 3. Romans 5-8.** Struggling with and against sin.

**Why not sin more, enjoy life and so be more forgiven by God?** See Romans 6: 1. Taking advantage of forgiveness is careless. Life isn't supposed to be about sinful self-indulgence, ignoring the whole serious point of God's expectation that we do the very best that we possibly can.

See Romans 6: 17-18. You have been set free from sin, [but] are slaves to righteousness. Paul teaches that **nominal, even half-hearted** practices are **insufficient**, Believers must go all-out!

This is another of those explicit, unambiguous hard lessons about total commitment.

**Have you ever wondered if you are really deep down only half-heartedly committed to Christ?**

Consider Romans 7: 18-25, one of the classic expressions of Christian teachings. **What does this mean?**

Even those that desperately want to be and do what pleases God are [and will always be] sinners.

**What do you think that Romans 8: 28-30. means?**

There are various interpretations of this scripture: Paul about “predestined” again... If God knows all things “out of time” then He knows how we have decided in the past, and how we will decide in the future. We still have to decide whether to believe, and change.

**Day 4. Romans 9-11.** Salvation for Israel and for Gentiles.

If God is Love, then what does Romans 9: 13 mean? (“Esau I hated.”)

See MAL 1: 2-3 and footnotes. This means that Israel was the nation chosen by God to be blessed, and a blessing. God decides, it is His plan.

**How can Christ “be the end of of the [Mosaic] Law,” in two distinct ways?** See Romans 10: 4.

a) the Law must be seen as powerless (useless) to save us from sin. (Grace alone saves).

b) Christ was the 1st and only example of a perfect, sin free man, living as God intends for us all.

See Romans 11: 22. What is Paul saying here about loss, wavering or weakening of faith? Doesn't this imply that once saved is insufficient, or are we “forever saved?”

These verses probably are meant to address the Jews who have rejected Christ, and the possibility (hope) that such Jews will eventually come to Believe the gospel.

**Day 5. Romans 12-16.** Practical advice: how to behave in Faith.

Romans 12: 1-2. What does Paul mean by these verses?

Living in faith is a process, not always smooth, instant, total. Becoming is continuous transformation, growth and improvement
What do you make of Romans 13: 1-5: does Paul really teach that God made rulers and governments, and thus Christians must always submit to them?

These verses are troubling to many: submission to government authority is unambiguously required. Seems to be unacceptable, in some situations, e.g., Nazis during conquest of Western Europe. Paul seems to ignore some of the less palatable aspects of Roman rule, such as requiring that the Emperor be worshiped as a God, corrupt taxation and justice systems, etc.

The pragmatic [ideal?] interface between religion and politics challenges many thinking Christians.

How should differences of opinion, practice and beliefs be resolved among Christians?

Paul clearly teaches that Love trumps Judgment. We should accept and love Believers with whom we differ. See Romans 14: 1-13.

Insofar as you can, do not offend the sensibilities of another person, that's part of loving them. Understand and willingly be constrained by their rules; consistently consider their perspectives.

Why is unity so important to Paul, see Romans 15: 5-6?

Unity is very clearly a consequence of Love among Christians: if we love one another in the manner taught by Paul, we cannot avoid unity!

Marks of Discipleship

Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the **central issue or point** of the lesson today?

Corrective advice to the young troubled Corinthian church in a corrupting city, from the departed founding pastor.

What to **look for** in the DVD. How many letters did Paul send to the Corinthian Church?

Why is there so much emphasis on unity and brotherly love in 1 COR?

Play DVD

**DVD Discussion Points.** Paul sent at least 4 letters to Corinth: one lost, two combined into 2 COR.

The community of Believers at Corinth was being torn apart by disagreements and distention; Paul taught that not only did they need to get their individual lives back on the Path, but that they need to unify as a group, working together toward the Kingdom of God on Earth.

================================= Workbook Chapter 27. ==================================

**Working Group Assignments.**

We're going to break into five discussion groups, each assigned a specific working topic from 1 Corinthians. In the assigned topic area, your group will enumerate some areas of confusion, challenge or sinful behavior in the Corinthian church, then report on the guidance or requirements provided by Paul. Some of this material is challenging: thoughtfully evaluate Paul's guidelines, identifying ideas that are confusing, seemingly inconsistent with other teaching, or (you think) just plain wrong-headed

================================= Scripture =============================================

**Day 1. 1 Corinthians 1 – 4.**

This letter was written from Ephesus late in Paul's third missionary trip.

Did you find this writing by Paul to be easier to follow than the writing in Romans from last week?

Is the Sothenes mentioned at Acts 18: 17 the same fellow named in 1 Corinthians 1: 1?

Probably. A well-known Corinthian synagogue leader who became a Christian, traveler with Paul and might have served as Paul's secretary. See footnotes in your study Bible.

See footnote on 1 COR 1: 7-9. Suggests (although perhaps not self-evident in this Scriptural text) that even weak faith in Christ leads to salvation.

What did Paul mean by the scripture at 1 COR 4: 6-7?
Avoid Church “cults of personality;” all are equal in Gods eyes. Do not lift up any respected leader above others. There seems a natural human tendency to do this: Popes and Senior Pastors come to mind...

If that's true, why do some churches give special recognition to “Saints?”
It's pretty clear that many Believers can benefit from learning about or emulating especially great Christian faith leaders. Showing respect or honor to someone considered deserving or excellent is encouraged throughout both OT and NT. (For example, Honor thy father and mother, or see MAT 10: 41.)

Day 2. 1 Corinthians 5 – 7. Church Problems, and Judgments Concerning Blatant Sin.

See 1 COR 5: 9-12. This guidance seems to recommend judgment, shunning and EXPULSION?

Where's the love in that? How have we handled obvious situations of that sort in this church?
Paul is addressing a situation when others (especially the Body of Christ, the Church) are or could be hurt by a Believer sinning openly [blatantly] without remorse.

READ ALOUD this Scripture from The Message, which has an informative interpretation.

Is there an implication of “major vs. minor” sin consequence, impairment, impact here?
Banish the Believer blatantly Sinning Big; how about “blatant minor sins?” How is Sin Magnitude decided?

Paul seems to imply that the size of damaging consequences to others should be taken into account.

Is Paul in effect teaching here that God will judge outsiders, but We [Believers] must recognize Insider Sin, and ACT?
Yes, impairment of the Church must be opposed, but the actions taken must be taken in love. Unilateral love and forgiveness are important factors in such situations.

Are certain classes of sinners excluded from Heaven (aka The Kingdom of God)?
See 1 COR 6: 9-10. Paul teaches that some classes of non-Believing sinners are definitely OUT.

Why did Paul discourage marriage?
He was actually neutral on marriage, thinking it was necessary for some (1 COR 7: 9), but he thought that energies required to support wife and family could more beneficially be devoted by some to serving God.

ONE OF MY SCRIPTURE FAVORITES. 1 COR 7: 28b. Those who marry will face many troubles in this life...

Day 3. 1 Corinthians 8 - 11.

One of the ramifications of loving others is to try not to do anything that causes them to stumble, be tempted or become offended (See 1 COR 8:9).

Does this mean voluntarily subjecting yourself to “their rules” even when you may disagree with those rules?
Yes, helping and supporting are more important than your freedom. No tea or coffee in Salt Lake City, vegetarian lasagna for lunch, no wine when the Pastor comes to dinner, and all sorts of other things.

**What does 1 COR 10:13 mean?**
Everyone is subjected to the same old temptations of mankind: we all have the same inclinations to sin. God will help Believers resist temptations. It's a growth in faith process, another part of Becoming.

**Why is there so much discussion about head covering and hair length for men and women in 1 COR 11:4-16?**
This is really about insisting that Believers appear and worship in a culturally acceptable manner. The prohibited short/long hair and covered/uncovered heads had culturally significant meanings in that time. What's really meant is “As a Believer, keep your appearance and behavior within culturally acceptable bounds.”

Don't impair others by off-putting outrageous public behavior or appearance.

**Day 4. 1 Corinthians 12 – 14.**

**What are “spiritual gifts?”**
Special abilities that can be used to further the church. Some may seem to correlate with skills that you use at home or work, but there's usually a faith-based dimension or aspect to serving in the Body of Christ.

Example: it's impractical to “fire” an incompetent BTS school-painting volunteer.

**Do specific spiritual gifts make one believer more important or significant than another?**
No. Paul teaches that some spiritual gifts are more desirable than others (see 1 COR 12:31), in that they can be more beneficial, impacting more the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Self-importance is self-serving and undesirable; humility and humble service are good.

All Believers are equally important to God, and [so should be] to each other.

No contributions are to be considered better or more significant than others.

**READ ALOUD. 1 COR 13, a timeless, classic definition of love, the “most excellent way.”**

Some of us might still have a tiny little way to go to reach the ideal defined here.

**Day 5. 1 Corinthians 15 - 16.**

What did you make of the reference to the practice of “baptizing for the dead” referenced by Paul at 1 COR 15:29?

Proxy baptism today commonly refers to the religious practice of baptizing a person on behalf of one who is dead — a living person receiving the sacrament on behalf of a deceased person.

**Do any modern churches that have similar practices?** Mormons practice baptism for the dead.
The LDS Church teaches that performing baptisms for the dead allows this saving ordinance to be offered on behalf of those who have died without accepting or knowing Jesus Christ or his teachings during their mortal lives. It is taught that this is the method by which all who have lived upon the earth will have the opportunity to receive baptism and to thereby enter the Kingdom of God.

The LDS Church teaches that those in the afterlife who have been baptized by proxy are free to accept or reject the ordinance done on their behalf. Baptism on behalf of a deceased individual is not binding if that individual chooses to reject it in the afterlife. However, available records show that Mormons have baptized by proxy tens of thousands (some claim millions) of dead Jews, plus a long list of prominent Nazis and many many others, “converting” them posthumously to Mormonism. There is a HUGE controversy here.

The LDS believe that a man must act as proxy for a deceased man, and a woman must act as proxy for a deceased woman. The concept of a spiritual proxy is compared by some in the LDS Church to the belief that Jesus acted as proxy for every human when he atoned for the sins of the world.

Google “baptizing for the dead” to investigate further, and to see a very interesting 1912 photo of the baptismal font in the LDS Temple at Salt Lake City.

In 1 COR 15: 44-54 Paul writes that our spiritual bodies mysteriously differ from our material (worldly) bodies.

--------------------------------- Marks of Discipleship ---------------------------------

Announcements

Sat. 4/27/13 9am Flood Bucket assembly in the Narthex.

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Working Group Assignments.

We're going to break into five discussion groups, each assigned a specific working topic from 1 Corinthians. In the assigned topic area, your group will enumerate some areas of confusion, challenge or sinful behavior in the Corinthian church, then report on the guidance or requirements provided by Paul. Some of this material is challenging: thoughtfully evaluate Paul's guidelines, identifying ideas that are confusing, seemingly inconsistent with other teaching, or (you think) just plain wrong-headed

Christian unity.

The Corinthian Church was challenged by cliques and divisiveness. Based on Scripture and workbook materials, summarize the problems or difficulties the Corinthian Christians faced in this area and the corrective advice given by Paul. Discuss unclear, confusing or troubling directives, especially any of Paul's “suggestions” on unity with which you disagree. How do these unity guidelines apply to our Church today?


Christian marriage and sex.

The Corinthian Church was challenged in several areas related to marriage and immoral sexual practices. Based on Scripture and workbook materials, summarize the problems or difficulties the Corinthian Christians faced in these areas, and the corrective advice given by Paul. Discuss unclear, confusing or troubling directives, especially any of Paul's “suggestions” with which you disagree. How do these guidelines apply to our personal challenges today?

See workbook pp. 201-202 and 1 Corinthians 5: 1-5 and 9-13, 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20, 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 9: 5, 1 Corinthians 10: 8.

The role and behavior of Christian women.

The Corinthian Church had some problems and confusion about the proper roles and behaviors of Christian women. Based on Scripture and workbook materials, summarize the problems or difficulties the Corinthian Christians faced in resolving cultural and religious issues in this area, and the corrective advice given by Paul. Discuss unclear, confusing or troubling directives, especially any of Paul's “suggestions” that might not be gender-appropriate in our culture and times, or with which you disagree. How do you think that Paul's guidelines apply to our Church today?

See workbook page 202 and 1 Corinthians 11: 3-16, 1 Corinthians 14: 33-35, Genesis 3:16.

Food, drink and freedom [from the Mosaic Law].

The Corinthian Church had issues related to food, drink and (for Jewish Christians) release/ freedom from Mosaic Law. Based on Scripture and workbook materials, summarize the difficulties the Corinthian Christians faced in these areas and the corrective advice given by Paul. Discuss unclear, confusing or troubling directives, especially any of Paul's “suggestions” with which you disagree. How do these guidelines apply to us today?

See workbook page 203 and 1 Corinthians 8, 1 Corinthians 10: 23-33.
Life after death, resurrection and “new bodies.”

Christians at Corinth had differing ideas about what happened after death. They had disagreements about what to expect, especially concerning personal resurrection and heavenly versus worldly bodies. (Many of us remain a bit vague about such topics?) Based on Scripture and workbook materials, summarize the problems or difficulties the Corinthian Christians faced in conceptualizing life after death, and the guidance provided by Paul. Discuss unclear, confusing or troubling directives, especially any of Paul's “suggestions” with which you disagree. Is Paul helpful to us in thinking about life after death? Can this material help resolve differences of opinion about afterlife between various modern Christian groups? Should Christians fear death?

See workbook page 204 and 1 Corinthians 15: 12-54.
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Advice about living a good Christian life, in freedom from the Mosaic Law.

What to look for in the DVD:
What's the contrast between Luther's and more modern interpretations of Galatians?

How can the Christian Church address social, economic, racial, cultural diversity?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points

Luther: Mosaic Law in direct opposition to Grace

Unity and Christian love [respect] in the midst of diversity.

Slavery to Neighbors in a [diverse] community of care:
love is the only Law that matters.

================ Workbook Chapter 28. =================

Letter written about 49 AD by Paul while in Antioch (his “home base”) after first missionary trip, to churches in the region of Galatia. Before the 50 AD Council of Jerusalem resolved the issue of whether or not Christian Believers had to embrace and practice Jewish [Mosaic] Law.

Situation in the Galatian churches in modern Turkey: Troublemaking advocates requiring all Christians to adhere to Mosaic Law: all Christians must become Jews?

What's the essential argument that Paul makes against that position?
The Law defines sinful vs. desirable behavior, but there's no redemption mechanism in that Law: only by faith in Christ and the Grace of God can ones sins be forgiven.
That's the way to get “Right with God.”

Good living and good works cannot save anyone.

There can be no “having it both ways:” Living the Mosaic Law is either sufficient, or not. And Paul says NOT.

What does Paul teach about how to live when freed from Mosaic Law?
Christians live “above” the Mosaic law: loving God & Neighbor requires a life MORE RIGHTEOUS than Mosaic Law!
This behavior grows out of the heart, joyous and increasing obedience during the process of Becoming.

Why do you think that Christian Churches have so consistently developed such extensive sets of rigid expectations, directives, rules, “legalisms?”

Maybe we cannot trust all Christians with “freedom from rules and laws.”

Believers at various stages of Becoming may need guidance or structure.

We can all be expected to make a few wrong choices.

Insistence on following procedures (rules), doing things in a particular way is an accepted Business Management Technique.

Wouldn't it be chaotic to have everyone doing whatever they think is right, in terms of methods, procedures and practices?

One consequence of delegation is hierarchy. A consequence of hierarchical leadership structures seems to be down-flowing directives, and upward accountability. Directives, policies, procedures, rules might be rooted in hierarchy?

Have you ever thought that Our Church seems bound up by a huge list of documented and undocumented rules?

Some of those Church rules (experienced members might say “Many”) have been inhibiting, discouraging, off-putting, or exclusionary.

The Share the Warmth annual winter coats drive essentially died of rules-itis.

Many Church rules are justified by the argument that the Church is Better because of That Rule.

Is it practical to operate a Christian Church without mutually acceptable procedures and rules?

Probably not.

What is the loving, caring, generous and unifying thing to do if you come up against some Church Rule?

Either accept rule consequences, or find another rule-avoiding non-provocative way to love and serve.

What if a Church Leader imposes a rule that's overly restrictive or wrong?

See above: Either accept or find another way.

Do you think that our Church plans and conducts its ministries from a perspective of rules, or from a perspective of faith and love?

Motivations and strategic planning seem faith-based. Some implementation planning and executions are rule based, so that expectations are more rigidly managed. There are also intentional experiments and a refreshing commitment to continuous improvement. Some experiments, leaders and champions work out well, others not so much, or evolve.

See Philippians 2: 14: Do everything without complaining or arguing.

READ ALOUD Philippians 4: 12-13. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Paul stated that he had received the Gospel directly from Christ, although we know nothing about that event or experience: see GAL 1: 12. Much of Paul's early ministry (more than 10 years after the Damascus incidents) remains unknown.

Do you think that GAL 1: 19 suggests that James was probably the half brother of Jesus?

See MAT 13: 55 where Jesus' half brothers are explicitly named.

Jewish word can mean either “brother” or “near kinsman, cousin.” Jews called both “brethern”

By the 4th C. AD there were three rather distinct theories addressing this issue (see Internet).

Day 2. Galatians 2. Paul rebuked “Cephas” [really Peter, the Rock of the Jerusalem church!]

When did Paul go to Jerusalem with Titus and Barnabas, and what happened on that visit?

Probably about 14 years after his conversion on the road to Damascus, or AD 44.
About 5 years before GAL written.
Mission of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles confirmed and supported by the “Top Three” Leaders of the Jerusalem Christian church: Peter, James (Brother of Jesus) and John.

What was the controversy that arose some time after that Jerusalem trip, when Peter came to Antioch to see Paul?

Peter (a good Jew and Christian Leader) began to avoid Gentile Christians, which Paul believed to be huge error, “hypocrisy.” Even Barnabas (Paul's long-time mentor and missionary partner) was led astray. Christianity must be a unified fellowship of All Believers, with no special differentiations appropriate between Jewish and Gentile Believers.

How did Paul teach that important differences between faith leaders should be resolved?

In public, before other Believers, Paul writes that he rebuked Peter, and explained why he felt strongly that Peter erred. (See summary of that argument at GAL 2: 14-21, which lays out a straightforward reason for correct belief regarding the Mosaic Law as applies to Jewish and Gentile Believers.)

This became a preview of the disagreement that led to the Council at Jerusalem in 50 AD. Peter, Barnabas (and perhaps other leaders) had before the Council become aligned with Paul on this matter.


What is meant by GAL 3: 19, “The Law was put into effect through angels by a mediator?”

Jews believed that the 10 Commandments had been given by angels to Moses, who repeatedly acted as a mediator between God and the Hebrews


What does Paul mean when he wrote GAL 5: 1? (“It is for freedom that Christ.....do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”)

D1 Discussion Notes 123 Lesson 29
Freedom refers to no longer being enslaved by a life of sin, with no way of avoiding that entrapment. The New Covenant enables us to live unselfishly in Love, no longer bound up in self-centric desires, but rather free to serve others.

Footnote: We must resist those that would like to encumber Believers with rules, methods, procedures or special conditions necessary to be saved, or similar constraints limiting our growth in Faith.

So what about when well-meaning and sincere Christians “Rule Out” Believers that are Different?

First, remember unity and Love. Try to get along with and love them, regardless.

Then maybe suggest “I do not believe that it is my spiritual job to decide that sort of thing. Let's concentrate as much as we can on loving one another.”

Did any of you think that GAL 5: 12 was a bit much? (Paul wishing that the false teachers would castrate themselves.)

How can you receive Grace if you commit the sorts of sins enumerated in GAL 5: 19-21?

Those who live a sinful lifestyle are doomed, will not be blessed (“inherit the Kingdom of God”).

Faith and Belief are central: doing the best that you can might (modulo Judgment) suffice.


What are the main points in GAL 6: 1-4?

Lots of guidance packed into this brief passage.

1) restore gently a Believer caught in sin
2) be careful that you don't get sucked into that same sort of sin while gently restoring...
3) love fellow Believers by helping them with their burdens of all kinds.
4) Don't deceive yourself by thinking that you are “someone special,” hot stuff. (Be humble, even in your own mind!)
5) Continuously evaluate yourself, seeking to improve without self-centred comparison to others.

Do you think that Paul meant “don't get burned out or frustrated overdoing it” in service to others at GAL 6: 9?

Announcements

Flood bucket assembly 4/27/13 9am, Narthex. Please sign up online.

Joys and Concerns

Please pray for Jane Smith, who broke her leg just above a replacement knee in her 91st year.

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the theme of the lesson today?

Three short letters from Paul, giving advice about Christian conduct and leadership.

What to look for in the DVD

Play DVD
DVD Discussion Points

Workbook Chapter 29.

Background: When were each of these letters written, and where was Paul when he wrote them?

1 TIM ~64 AD, just before Paul's final imprisonment at Rome, from Rome or Macedonia (Philippi?)
2 TIM about 66 or 67 AD, during final imprisonment in Rome, probably just before his execution by Nero
TITUS ~64 AD, between times in Rome, perhaps written in Macedonia

Some authorities think that these letters might have been written later, “in the name of Paul” rather than by Paul, to address later challenges experienced in more established churches.

What was Timothy doing when he received the letters from Paul?
Leading (and countering false teachings) the Christian church at Ephesus

What were Paul's main points of advice to Timothy?
1. Focus on the essential main doctrine points. Avoid wasteful and diversionary debate and discussion of minor points and issues.

How well do you think that this church focuses on the essentials?
2. Teach diligently, coaching and training people to be good Christians, continuously growing in
   1. faith.
   There's always a need for teachers, having knowledge, willing to commit to the preparation and discipline.

Note that the “Scripture” referenced by Paul was the Hebrew OT. There writings were deemed essential to Believers (especially teachers and leaders).

3. Respect spiritual authority and leaders.

What were the roles of “overseers” or “bishops” (elders) in the early church?
Congregational care pastor, spiritual leader or presiding elder. (Not primarily a preacher or teacher.)
In the early churches, what were the responsibilities of “deacons?”

“One who serves,” workers that care for the physical needs of Christians, such as food and clothing distribution to poor widows.

4. Care for Christian family, especially orphans and widows.

Interestingly, Paul gave explicit guidance (instructions?) for two distinct classes of widows: what were those different groups of widows, and their guidance?

a) widows over 60 dedicated to serving the church community and to be supported, taken care of by the Christian community

b) “young widows to remarry, have children, establish a Christian household.


Jesus taught more [frequently] about money than about prayer!

There is a fundamental problem with starting up any entrepreneurial business: the required obsessive focus and intense concentration, long hours of hard work and “all in” energy/resources commitment is often directly conflicting with good Christian living. Unfortunately I have met only one successful entrepreneur that was also a good Christian. His “wealth” is spiritual rather than material.

In technology, it does not seem to work that way at all.

--- Scripture ---

Day 1. 1 Timothy 1-2.

Timothy to stay in Ephesus, strengthening the church there.

1 TIM 2: 9-10. Women to be quiet and dress modestly.

What do you think about 1 TIM 2: 11-12? (Women not permitted to teach or have [Christian leadership] authority over a man.) How can this be permitted/condoned in the face of Christian equality? Subordination of women was a cultural reality in those times, throughout the Roman Empire.

Was Paul a “sexist?”

From the perspective of our culture and times, probably he was, but primarily Paul reflected the bias of his culture and time. Then again, much of the world today is too. We seem not to be entirely out of those “sexist woods” in the USA.
Day 2. 1 Timothy 3-4.

Did you note anything unusual about Paul's behavioral guidelines and qualifications for Christian church “overseers” [bishops] at 1 TIM 3: 1-7?

“Only” one wife (implying that married bishops are OK); obedient and respectful children.

Implied discouragement of over-emphasis on Christian service to the detriment of “good family” (especially discipline and upbringing of children).

1 TIM 3: 8 Deacons also should have “only” one wife, and are to be “tested” regarding their suitability.

What is behind the reference in 1 TIM 4: 2-3 to “hypocritical liars” that advocate no marriage for Christians, and avoidance of some foods? Where might the hypocrisy come from?

First, the behaviors advocated were not in themselves sinful, and second, one cannot under any circumstances be saved from sin by voluminous good deeds.

(skip?) Read aloud 1 TIM 4: 12-13. Clear, demanding expectations for young church leaders everywhere.

Day 3. 1 Timothy 5-6.

Why do you think that there is so much emphasis on guidelines for Christian widows in 1 TIM 5?

The Christian church at Ephesus must have had a large population of widows, challenging to support and lead. Indeed, adult singles (the modern equivalent) remain a challenging aspect of our church life.

Did you think that Paul imposed very hard qualifications for being added to the “old widows list” at 1 TIM 5: 9-10?

By imposing such stringent qualifications, Paul was indirectly teaching that the “old widows” supported by the Church should be few in number. In that time, the average life expectancy for women surviving infancy was about 40 years, so a 60 year old widow was about the equivalent of a 95-98 year old widow today. [average life expectancy plus twenty]

Most of the Scripture for this week is quite good, but occasionally Paul seems to drift into troubling waters:

What is meant by Paul's directives (and comments) about younger widows at 1 TIM 5: 11-15?

There must have been a binding lifetime commitment of service expectation for widows supported by the Church at Ephesus. (perhaps nun-like?) Breaking that commitment [Paul says] by remarrying would “bring judgment” on the younger widows.

Then we read some troubling comments by Paul: not having a family household to take care of would lead to young widow troublemakers having idle hands [and mouths], etc. For some, these comments about young Christian widows might seem a bit of a justification stretch here? How could seriously good Christian widows of any age be expected to do such things with sufficient consistency to justify a Rule?

Paul seems to condone slavery in 1 TIM 6: 1-2?

This seems to be another example where NT scripture seems biased by cultural practices of that era. See also TITUS 2: 9-10
Consider the discussions regarding wealth and riches 1 TIM 6: 6-10 and 17-18. There must have been in the early Christian church both wealthy Believers, and those who were inappropriately focused on gaining riches, wealth.

**Day 4.  2 Timothy.**

Did you notice that Paul includes in 2 TIM 3: 1-5 some predictions about events happening at End Times?

At 2 TIM 4: 3-5 Paul predicts that there will be corrupt pastors that will distort the Message for their selfish purposes.

Noteworthy individual Christian aspiration at 2 TIM 4: 7-8. Paul's farewell Last Words, written to his dear friend Timothy just before being executed.

**What did Paul mean by 2 TIM 4: 14-15?**


**Day 5.  Titus.**  (establishing Churches on Crete)

See TITUS 1: 6. One wife and good children for Christian church bishops, again: really important to Paul!

Very troubling writings from Paul at TITUS 2: 5 (wives subordinated to husbands) and 2: 9-10 (slavery condoned). Can this be dismissed as cultural dependencies being reflected in NT apostolic writings, or is this sort of thing near the core of Christian beliefs?

========== Marks of Discipleship ===========

**Announcements**  Flood bucket assembly 4/27/13 9am, Narthex. Please sign up online.

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the central issue or point of the lesson today?

Relationship between Hebrew and Christian faiths, primarily targeting Jewish Christians considering reverting to the Jewish faith, abandoning Christianity.

Closely reasoned and carefully argued theological concepts, primarily aimed at Jewish Christians, but important to all Christians who appreciate that Christ was a Jew.

What to look for in the DVD. Who was the [real] intended audience of “Hebrews?”

What was wrong with the Old Covenant?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points Mostly Jewish Christians, but also Gentile Christians needing to appreciate the relationship between OT writings and the Gospel.

People distanced from God, atonement temporary, repeated.

========== Workbook Chapter 30. ================

What is the essential difference between Jewish cleanliness and Christian forgiveness?

Jewish cleansing from sin: temporary freedom from impurity, but repetitive sacrifices, repentance and priestly interventions were necessary in perpetuity. Sinfulness is ongoing, Jews strive to get beyond sin, but never can make it.

Conversely, God's Grace releases Christians from that continual sinning/atonement cycle: we can be freed by faith to grow in our commitment to God, continuously clean, peacefully at one with God.

(skip?) Why is Melchizedek so important in this scripture?

Melchizedek was viewed in Jewish tradition as an early (time of Abraham, pre Levite) ideal priest-king, the spiritual and political leader of the town of Salem, which became the site of the Jewish capital, JeruSalem. Melchizedek blessed Abraham and prayed for him, in a Scriptural account significant to Jews, Muslims and Christians. His priesthood (the first mentioned in the OT) came from God, rather than from inheritance. Some see an analogy here with Christ, the New Covenant Priest-King, from the tribe of Judah (rather than Levites).

The teaching here is that Christ is much more important in the role of New Covenant Priest-King than the idealized old Covenant Priest-King Melchizedek. There's no feasible comparison.

See also study Bible notes related to Melchizedek near Genesis 14-17.

========== Scripture ================

Day 1. Hebrews 1-3. Superiority of Christ to the angels, previous priests and all historical leaders. Who wrote Hebrews?
Unknown author, probably not Paul (style and structure differ from Pauline letters).
Probably written before Romans destroyed the Herodian Temple at Jerusalem in 70 AD.

All of the OT quotes in Hebrews are from the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament), which is inconsistent with Paul's usage of original Hebrew sources. Furthermore, Paul was an apostle who claimed to receive his revelations directly from the Lord Jesus but the writer of Hebrews specifically says that he was taught by an apostle (Hebrews 2:3).

Scholars of Greek consider its writing to be more polished and eloquent than any other book of the New Testament, which is perhaps an argument against Pauline authorship. The theology presented in Hebrews is consistent with Paul's. One plausible theory is that Hebrews might have been written by Luke, based on transcriptions of a sermon series preached by Paul.

Another hypothesis is that Hebrews was written by a highly educated early Christian woman (perhaps Priscilla), whose authorship was intentionally obscured to strengthen the theological position of this important writing.

What is meant by “God's Rest” at Hebrews 3: 11?
At least four interpretations have been offered:  a) Sabbath; b) Jewish occupation and enjoyment of the [ideal] Promised Land; c) the faith-based personal and communal “peace that passes all understanding;” d) Perfect, ideal heavenly after-life.


Does “make every effort” at Hebrews 4: 10-11 refer to focused diligent work?
To the contrary “make every effort to enter [God's] rest” means to take that Sabbath “rest” Commandment very seriously. Some think this means to focus very seriously on living in Christ, in order to enjoy the Heavenly afterlife [but we know that one cannot earn ones way Heavenward...].

Did you have any concerns when reading Hebrews 6: 4-6? (“It is impossible...to be brought back”) Does this mean that once saved you can still screw up and totally ruin your life, your after-life?
Good [Jewish] behavior per Jesus teachings but without faith in Jesus is definitely insufficient. (another version of “you can't work your way into Heaven.”). Faith must not be abandoned, regression from Christianity to Judaism isn't acceptable.

Here's the “Once and Done” issue again: Can one be Lost after really being Saved?
Explicit, intentional rejection of Christianity by Believers seems to be Really Bad: God will Judge, but it probably would be a Bad Idea to push the envelope.


What is the point made in Hebrews 7: 18-19?
Christ and the New Covenant established a new (only two parts) Law: Love God and neighbor. Believers were thereby released from need to comply with the 600+ part Mosaic Law. The Old Law was “Weak and Useless” because it defined sin (what is bad) rather than saving sinners.
Commendable behavior cannot save anyone or make them right with God. Conclusion: the New Covenant is greater than the “Old Covenant.”
Note that at Hebrews 7: 28 the Mosaic Law appoints priests that are weak [sinners], while the Priest of the New Covenant [Christ] is perfect.


Why does Hebrews 9: 22 teach that “there is no forgiveness without shedding blood?”
Identification with the very long-term tradition of constant Jewish blood sacrifices at the tabernacle, then three successive Temples.

(Did this OT requirement indicate that God is bloodthirsty?)
Jews believed that their faith in God and obedience [commitment] to the God-imposed requirements of sacrifice cleansed them of their sins.

Blood was then believed to be the essence of life, that which makes one alive.

In that context, Christ shed his blood in the conclusive, final, perfect sacrifice for all of our sins.

What does Hebrews 9: 27-28 say about what happens after death?
Every person will face Judgment, the implication being Judgment based on the life lived.

What does Hebrews 10: 26-31 say about Believers that deliberately keep on sinning? (This might be important!)
Deliberately sinning after really understanding the Christian Opportunity constitutes intentional rejection of Christ, which is insult earning the wrath and punishment of God.

This is a hard and important lesson: **casual commitment is clearly insufficient**, inadequate.

Half-in does not suffice, we're expected and required to be fully committed to the Way.


(skip) Why does the author say that the enumerated OT “famous faithful” in Hebrews 11 did not receive what had been promised?
This passage has stimulated much discussion and debate. The idea seems to be that total reward only came to the Jewish faithful after Christ's Coming, but there are subtle and challenging undertones.

God’s plan of salvation is worked out in stages; the OT Jewish faithful received the Blessings promised to Abraham (occupation of the Promised Land, numberless descendents, Blessed to be a Blessing, etc), but not the Heavenly afterlife.

Another interpretation is that the OT faithful did not receive the promised Messiah, so their Blessing was thereby incomplete. From that perspective, faith in the future coming of the Messiah could suffice to achieve the blessing of Eternal Life.

The author teaches that the OT Old Covenant faithful will eventually achieve the blessing of Eternal Life. No one could have been “made perfect” under the Old Covenant, because Christ had not yet come, nor had He died.
What is meant by Hebrews 12: 11 (perhaps parenting and life guidance worth considering)? (No discipline...)

Can you hear echos of Proverbs here?
Discipline when applied is discomforting, but produces valuable results longer-term.
Hard for teenagers to accept, and extremely challenging for many adults.

Then verse 12: each Believer is to aid those less capable, smoothing [in Love] the Path we all walk.

At Hebrews 13: 17 has another directive to obey constituted leaders. How does this teaching differ from Paul?

Here the author explicitly characterizes the leaders (to be obeyed) as accountable [well-intentioned].

Are Believers expected to follow and support well intentioned but wrong-headed leaders?

Even well-intentioned leaders can be human, and perhaps occasionally (or more often!) wrong.
History is full of wrong-headed but well-intentioned leaders.....So how can this guidance be correct?

=============== Marks of Discipleship ==================

Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Closing Prayer
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion.  How would you characterize the theme of Peter's letters?

Encouragement and guidance to suffering Christians everywhere, with some emphasis on Jewish Christians.

What to look for in the DVD:

Why are Christians called to become the Priestly Kingdom of the New Covenant?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points:

Our presenter explained the similar roles played by a) Hebrew Levite priests (worship leaders, priests administering places of worship, teachers, judges, healers) serving God and their fellow Jews, and b) the later requirement that New Covenant Christians humbly serving God by serving their Neighbors.

Background:  Peter is regarded as the Catholic Church's first pope. He is thought to have established the church in Antioch, leading there for about 7 years. Peter then went to Rome, and led the Roman Christian church (probably founded by Jewish Christians after Pentecost) for about 25 years. Paul sent the NT book of Romans to the Church at Rome about 57 AD; Paul later died in Rome about 64-66 AD.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that Peter had a wife and living (but ill) mother-in-law.

2 Peter was the last [least approved] book included in the NT canon. Related Christian texts that are not canonical (of uncertain authenticity) but available online: Acts of Peter, a “book” originally composed in Greek during the second half of the 2nd century. Another very early source of information on Peter's ministry is The Acts of Peter and Paul, a late text from the New Testament apocrypha, thought to date from after the 4th century.

When did Peter write his NT letters?

Probably from Rome, about 1-62 to 64 AD, then 2- about three years later, 67 AD.

Note that during this same period Paul was also writing his late NT letters from Rome.

What happened to end Peter's ministry?

Early writers indicate that Peter was crucified during Emperor Nero's 67-68 AD persecution of Roman Christians. (The “fiddled while Rome burned” Emperor accused Christians of starting the fire.) Peter was then a very old church leader, perhaps in his late 50's or early 60's. Christian tradition says that Peter felt himself to be unworthy to be put to death in the same manner as Christ, and was (at his own request) crucified head downward. Christ foretold Peter's death at John 21: 18-19.

What does Peter say about God's Plan at 1 Peter 1: 20?
Before the beginning of time, before Creation, God planned and intended the Coming of Christ, and all of the New Covenant consequences. This seems to be well aligned with our scripture readings from Isaiah this week.

What is meant by 1 Peter 1: 24-25? (Quoting Isaiah 40: 6-8)?
Every person indeed everything in life is quite temporary, but the Glorious Word of God is forever. (None of the stuff goes with you in the box...)

Recall that Peter had a strong bias favoring Jewish Christians, but was reprimanded by Paul: see GAL 2: 11-16.

What did Peter mean by the “priesthood of all believers” at 1 Peter 2: 9?
Jews believed that Levite priests were necessary intermediaries between God and sinful people. Christians all have direct relationships with God, no extra priests necessary. All Believers can make that “priestly” approach to God, and all Christians are expected to serve others.

Do you ever feel like an “alien and stranger” in this culture, as Peter suggests at 1 Peter 2: 11?
Sometimes the materialism, selfishness, greed and violence just seem so weird and wrong? How can people POSSIBLY think all that is OK?

1 Peter 2:13 again directs Christians to submit to authorities, the 3rd NT author to repeat that admonition. Why is this point so greatly emphasized in NT Scriptures?
Advance the faith and attract converts by not opposing authorities. Do not use your Faith as a reason or justification to flout the law and the authorities. Open rebellion would be counter-productive to the worldly Kingdom. Non-believers would consider “Enemy of the State Christians” to be Rebels [to be crushed], rather than Christians. [Besides, the Kingdom is coming really soon, so why bother?]

Indeed, refusal to “worship” the Roman Emperor as required caused many Christians to be killed.

Christianity came to be viewed as a set of religious practices that were not only different from all others, but corrosive to Roman society. “They” worshiped a convicted criminal, refused to swear by the emperor's genius, harshly criticized Rome in their holy books, and suspiciously conducted their rites in private [contrary to the conventional/expected public pagan worship ceremonies]. By 90 AD Jewish and Christian religions were explicitly distinct, but Christianity did not become an accepted Roman religion until 380 AD.

see www.wikipedia.com or Google “Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire”

Day 2. 1 Peter 3-5.

Why again do we see a 3rd NT author teaching wifely Christian submission?
Being a “good wife” in the context of those times was recommended as the best way to bring a non-believing spouse to Faith.

Historical context: in Roman times, wives had very few rights, were not citizens, could not own property, were very seldom educated; daughters could be involuntarily given in marriage or prostituted (c.f. LEV 19: 29).
How does Peter suggest dealing with a spouse that is a non-believer or at a different spiritual growth place?

Embrace Christian selfless “purity” by words and deeds. Demonstrate how it works in practice. Being yoked with a spiritually “different placed” spouse can be super challenging, in the real world. However, Peter later (see 1 Peter 3: 7) requires that husbands respect their wives.

The first part of 1 Peter 3\textsuperscript{rd} chapter can be viewed as pretty extremely sexist: what do you think about that teaching?

Christian love requires mutual respect, kindness, equality, hence there should be no hierarchy in marriage, and therefore no subordination.

From a Christian Love perspective, might we today read both husband and wife admonitions as “spousal” teachings? Mutual respect and absence of dominant relationships might be most appropriate, and even work better?

Note some apostolic hyperbole at 1 Peter 4: 4 “flood of [non-Believer] dissipation.”

Day 3. 2 Peter. Warnings about false teachings and false prophets.

How does the Wesleyan Quadrilateral relate to 2 Peter 2: 1-3 warnings about false prophets/ teachings/ interpretations?

Each believer should seek meaning and understanding of Christian teachings through application of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience. Spiritual growth is an important aspect of faith. False prophets may advocate interpretations that cannot withstand consideration applying Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience.

(skip?) How did the angels of 2 Peter 2: 4 fall from grace?

Non-Scriptural stories, beliefs and speculations about angels abound. Peter's writing here may be a reference to a Hebrew concept. In OT times, there was a Jewish tradition of fallen angels who before the Flood came from Heaven to mate with human women [which is one interpretation of GEN 6: 1-4]. Some experts think that this Jewish tradition predates the composition of GEN 6:1-4. Google “fallen angels” or “angels fall from grace” for more information.

Peter warns in 2 Peter 2: 21-22 about falling away from faith, or regression. How does this compare with Hebrews 6: 4-6?

Peter is certainly more colorful [dogs/vomit, etc.]. His warning is about explicit rejection of Belief, after having an opportunity to Believe. Hebrews addresses a slightly different situation, a Believer that later becomes an un-Believer, deliberately abandoning their previously embraced Faith.

What did you think about the commentary at 2 Peter 3: 15-16?

Peter's characterization of Paul's writings as sometimes “hard to understand” and “subject to distortion” were already apparent only a few years after Paul wrote those letters. However, Peter clearly supported all that Paul wrote, and encouraged his readers to embrace Paul's wisdom.

Day 4. Leviticus 11, 19. Mosaic Laws of ceremonial cleanliness (food) and neighborly love.

What was the difference between the Hebrew concepts of ceremonial uncleanness and sin?

Ceremonial uncleanness disqualified a Jew from worship participation and some social interactions.

Bad behavior or sin made Jews out of alignment with, separated from (and displeased) God.
At Leviticus 11: 10, the only fish to be eaten have scales, so eating catfish is prohibited.

Recall that the vision of Peter at Acts 10: 11-17 meant that all of God's creatures are Good [made by God], and under the New Covenant can be eaten, so the “Ceremonially unclean” Laws are set aside. Eating catfish is OK.

At Leviticus 19: 15 inverse bias is prohibited. Justice must be even-handed, impartial.

The prohibitions at Leviticus 19: 27-28 seem to have substantial cultural ramifications, resulting in male appearance that would (in our present day culture) be considered radical. Were these appearance-guidelines intended to reinforce differentiation from pagan neighbors?

Did you see any Immigration Reform current relevance to the scripture at Leviticus 19: 33-34?

Aliens [foreigners] must be treated with equality [not mistreated] when living among us. Even though this is a Mosaic Law, it remains applicable because it is what one should do as a Loving Neighbor. Can you support treating aliens just as you yourself would want to be treated?


When did Isaiah write about the future coming of the Suffering Servant, whom most believe to be referring to Jesus?

About 681 BC, almost 700 years before Christ was born.

Did you find it wondrous that Isaiah wrote about so many specific details of Christ's life and death, so far in advance of those actual events?

It is important to understand that most authors of NT accounts had studied and were quite familiar with the writings of Isaiah.

Workbook Chapter 31.

Christians are to be blatantly, obviously different, but in ways that are at odds with some aspects of Mosaic Law. Some of the key elements emphasized by Peter include:

Baptism, a public, ceremonial and symbolic cleansing. There must be a mutual (Believer and witnesses) commitment to living a New Way, and toward the resulting transformations.

Communion is a reminder of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, and an opportunity to refresh our commitments to the Path, to being Blessed, and serving as a Blessing to others.

Christ is the symbolic Cornerstone of the New Covenant Church, not a building but rather the timeless assembly of all Believers, with a mutual expectation of love and humble service to others.

Community is essential to Christian living: it's not at all to be a solitary individual Way. We [collectively] are to be distinctively disciplined, honest, caring and humble. Low profile communal respect and obedience to civil authority is encouraged.

Suffering. Peter makes a clear differentiation between suffering consequent to sinful misbehavior (to be
avoided!) and suffering imposed because of Christian beliefs and practices (to be endured). Do you think that it is ever God's will that Christians suffer (see 1 Peter 3: 17)?

Peter's marital relationship teachings are subject to various interpretations, depending quite a lot on understanding of the cultural context of those times. That spouses should be considerate and honor their partner (s) is clear.

============= Marks of Discipleship ==============

Announcements.

**Joys and Concerns**

Please pray for all among us struggling with forgiveness issues.

**Closing Prayer**
Opening Prayer

Introductory Discussion. What's the central point of the Book of Revelation?
Despite current terribly evil times, God will prevail. Tribulations are temporary. A sequence of symbolic, image-intense yet intentionally obscure [to moderns and to Romans] predictions. Evil Rome will fall, there will be a succession of evil vs. good conflicts [huge wars], natural disasters and destructions in which the world as we know it will end. Yet God will prevail over the forces of Evil and all [Jewish & Christian, maybe others?] Faithful will be perfected, entering a wonderful, ideal Paradise beyond earthly imagination.

Can you see that in the 1900+ years since Revelation was written that many of these predictions have come to pass?
Just recently we've had three really terrible, world-threatening sorta Good vs. Evil conflicts (WW I, WW II, Cold War), several Empires have fallen (German, Nazi, Japanese, British, French, Soviet).

Good (as we see it) has prevailed, but the future looks iffy: Global warming, China arising, Drug Cartels, Greedy International MegaCorps....

What to look for in the DVD: This is a particularly useful commentary on Revelation.

How do an appreciation of the historical context and an understanding of the apocalyptic literary style combine to make Revelation more relevant to us today?

Play DVD

DVD Discussion Points.

Rome [and many successors] is just another evil empire that God will drag down into chaos.

Be hopeful and rejoice: Nothing can possibly defeat the ultimate plan of Mighty God.

Don't despair, the world may be going to Hell in a Handbasket, but it will ultimately be OK.

Aside: there's a lot of graphic imagery in Revelation about how bad things will get, but it all ends Gloriously!

======================= Workbook Chapter 32. ===============================

Who wrote Revelation?
About AD 95. Some (including early Christian leaders) say John the apostle [then aged ~92], but probably not. Most modern authorities think John of Patmos might have been a circuit Pastor to the 7 churches addressed, banished [for his anti-conventional Roman preaching] to the political penal colony on Patmos Island.

From a Christian [and Jewish] viewpoint, the Roman Empire had precipitously declined into greater evil:

Lesson 33
64 AD  Immense fire destroyed 3, damaged 7 sections of Rome July 18-23. Emperor Nero blamed Christians, began **intense persecutions**. Many believed Nero had the fire deliberately set to clear off a big area on which he subsequently built a huge palace complex near the present day Colosseum. Urban Renewal the Roman Way...

70 AD  Jerusalem & Temple destroyed, citizens (Jews & Christians) mostly killed, some dispersed.

81 AD  Emperor Domitian declared himself to be a god, *demanded* Empire-wide respectful worship.

**What is Apocalyptic Literature?**
A writing style of those times: characterized by (often intensively symbolic) visions of last days, end times, the End of the World.

Sort of like modern “prophetic science fiction with lots of graphic symbolism & important Messages.”

Often it's hard for Moderns to understand, because commonly understood slang, contextual symbolism and nomenclature have been lost in the fog of history. Easily misinterpreted.

Sometimes useful to consider these writings as analogous to impressionistic or abstract paintings, requiring tasteful consideration and appreciation. It may take some work to “see” and understand the intent.

Supposed to be obscure and meaningless to “outsiders” but to clearly convey meaningful messages to “insiders” that understood the symbolic context.

**READ ALOUD** Our Human Condition paragraph, workbook p. 236.

Brief outline of Revelation structure: **WHITEBOARD**

**Warnings** for **seven churches** in Asia (modern Turkey).

Heavily symbolic warnings that **God's judgment** will cause many sorts of **troubles** and **disasters**. Very hard times are coming.

**Roman Empire** and several successor [sinful, evil] World Powers will **collapse**.

Remain deeply **hopeful: evil** will be **destroyed** forever. God [Good] will prevail, **Heaven on Earth** will come.

**Does Revelation end with Believers in a Perfect Garden, or in a Perfect City [New Jerusalem]??**

**YES**

(Garden or riverside park within a huge heavenly city; sort of like Austin, TX...)

**We are going to collaboratively “decode” some of the meaning and message of Revelation.**

__________________________  Scripture ____________________________

**Day 1. Revelation 1-3.** Circulating letter sent to seven Turkish churches.

D1 Discussion Notes  139  Lesson 33
John of Patmos must have been quite deeply familiar with the situations in all of the churches addressed in this section of Revelation: he succinctly warns about specific situations in each church.

What were the explicit messages sent in the “introductory section” to the seven named churches?

- Ephesus – warning to strengthen faded faith.
- Smyrna – remain faithful amidst terrible suffering and persecutions.
- Pergamum – repent, cease following false teachings.
- Thyatria – beware of that evil woman (Jezebel) teaching sexual immorality. [We see her on TV nightly!]
- Sardis – deepen your deathly spiritual superficiality.
- Philadelphia – hold tightly to whatever level of faith each one of you has.
- Laodicea – warning: you are rich, complacent and have lukewarm (neither hot nor cold) faith.

Which of these warnings are relevant to modern churches, especially around here? **ALL of them**

**Day 2. Revelation 4-7. Jesus the Lamb;** six seals (pending disasters), the **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.**

See REV 4-5. What are the main features of the intense imagery and symbolism of the Throne Room of Heaven?

- The Trinity: Beautiful God on a fancy throne, 7 lamps representing the Holy Spirit, and Jesus the slain Lamb of God.
- 24 elders (they appear several times later in REV) representing 12 tribes of Israel (leaders of Jewish faithful) and the 12 apostles (leaders of Christian faithful).
- Sea of incredibly rare crystal glass (one of my favorite decorative features...)

Four creatures represent Godly attributes:

- **Lion** – majesty & power
- **Ox** – faithfulness
- **Man** – intelligence
- **Eagle** – sovereignty

What does the scroll with seven seals represent? An historical account of the future, which can be “read” only if one can break the succession of eals.

Each scroll section (opened by breaking a seal) describes a **future judgment** event or period.

What happens in each of the seven future judgment events described in a scroll section? [Quarters destroyed]
Seal 1: Conqueror on a **White Horse**. God's judgment of sin brings the destructive chaos of conquest.

S2: Warrior on **Red Horse**. God's judgment of sin will bring warfare & bloodshed.

S3: Rider on **Black Horse**. God's judgment of sin will bring famine and plagues.

S4: Rider on **Pale Horse**. God's judgment of sin will bring natural disasters, death and condemnation.

### These disasters will destroy specific areas, a quarter of the World. ###

S5: Martyrs' souls awaiting justice must be patient: God will honor them.

S6: God's judgment causes worldwide earthquakes, mountains/islands disappear, sky falls, stars blotted out. Unbelievers will be terrified, try to hide from Judgment. Believers are marked (“sealed”), protected from God's wrath, sent to the Heavenly Throne Room, worship God.

Then more earthly storms and earthquakes. [Natural disaster chaos.]

**Day 3. Revelation 8-12.** Trumpet judgments, more partial destructions and disasters. [Thirds destroyed]

Seal 7: introduces trumpeting angels that signal announcement of 7 partial “trumpet judgments.”

Trumpet 1: Hail, fire, blood hurled earthward. 1/3 of earth & trees, all green grass burned away. (no grazing, no grain, diminished olives/oil, fruit: really bad news)

T 2: Huge mountain (asteroid?) into sea: 1/3 see to blood, 1/3 ocean creatures die, 1/3 ships destroyed. (there goes the fishing and shipping industries...)

T 3: Star falls into fresh water rivers, turning 1/3 of water “bitter” (salty?) and useless, killing water drinkers.

T 4: Sky 1/3 darkened: sun, moon, stars all 1/3 darkened.

T 5: huge (volcanic?) Abyss opens, launching the “First Woe--” swarms of locust/scorpions that sting/torture Nonbelievers for five months..

T 6: 2nd Woe – 200,000,000 cavalry come, kill 1/3 of all [Nonbelievers] mankind.

Abrupt transition: John told by angel to eat a little scroll (maybe symbolizing God's coming Judgment?)

“Tastes sweet” may mean judgment will be tasteful for Believers.

“Sour stomach” perhaps how Believers will react to the condemnation, eternal punishment of NonBelievers.

T 7: 3rd woe of natural disasters, transition to the seven total destruction “bowl judgments” of REV 16

**REV 12.** Woman (representing Israel) giving birth to baby boy (the Messiah), watched by a Satanic dragon (Roman government).

**Day 4. Revelation 13-16.** Beasts and Bowl Judgments.

Seven headed Beast from the sea representing Rome, or Satanic evil powers.

REV 13: 11-17. Subordinate Beast from the earth, representing false prophets.

**What is the “Mark of the Beast” and what did it mean?**

Number 666 stands for completely imperfect, really bad or evil. Roman numerals sum of letters in Emperor Nero's name.
Nero was a horrid guy: he demanded that Christians be persecuted throughout the Roman Empire (cruelly killing hundreds of thousands), had his own mother murdered, illuminated his nightly gardens with crucified and tarred burning Christians. Myth: Christians were torn apart by wild animals for “entertainment” of Roman crowds in the Colosseum, completed (after Nero) in 80 AD.

REV 14: 8. The fall of Rome (code word “Babylon”) predicted.

What is meant by REV 14: 18-20 referencing the “trampling of the grapes of God's wrath?”
A reminder and reference to a Hebrew OT graphic symbol for God's judgment against sin.

What were the seven “bowl judgments” described in REV 16?
Mechanisms causing the total and final destruction of the Universe, poured from bowls of God's wrath:

B 1. Agonizing bodily sores.
B 3. All bloody fresh water (nothing to drink).
B 4. Fires scorch people, torturing them with painful burns.
B 5. Darkened skies: no sun, no mood, no stars, refusal or tortured sinners to repent.
   (Implication: still not too late for relief, even at End Times...)
B 6. Euphrates dried up (cradle of Civilization and Eastern Hordes invasion barrier river gone)
B 7. Storms and earthquakes destroy civilization, huge hail stones, THE END.

John of Patmos clearly thought that Final Judgment would be sharp and intense. Eternal Perfection enjoyed by Beloved Faithful would be wonderful, but nonBelievers would suffer terribly and be utterly destroyed, then condemned to eternal punishment.

Day 5. Revelation 17-20. Fall of evil Roman Empire, Final Victory.

REV 18: Terminal disasters will cause the fall of evil Rome. Condemnation of all sinful previous, current, future kings. Condemnation of greedy Roman Empire merchants and all that basked in Roman wealth/ luxury.

Seems relevant today?

REV 19. Glorious joyful worship and celebration by the Faithful,

Who is symbolized by the rider on the white horse at REV 19: 11-16? Victorious Jesus.

At REV 20 4-6 and 12 does John of Patmos suggest that martyrs will receive preferential treatment on Resurrection Day?

They seem to go to the head of the line, judged “1000 years” sooner, but what's the difference, really?
Even martyrs that died for the Christian faith will be judged!

Can you see that the judgment imagery at REV 20: 12-15 is intentionally impressive and memorable?
**Day 6. Revelation 21-22.** Believers welcomed into the perfectly wonderful Heavenly City.

Believers to enjoy perpetual Heaven on Earth, while all others are condemned to eternal torment, the “lake of fire” in a “second death.”

Do you think that REV 21: 12-14 suggests that the Heavenly New Jerusalem is for both faithful Jews and Christians?

That seems to be the pretty clear implication.

**Whether or not the Heavenly possibility applies to post-Christmas Jews is another issue.**

Does REV 21: 27 imply that all Believers will be “purified” (made perfect) at admission to Heaven, because “nothing impure will ever enter [Heaven]?”

Might Purgatory be the place where “Perfecting” occurs?

Why do you think that John of Patmos chose to call Heaven the “New Jerusalem?”

Structural retrospective:

- Brief warnings to seven churches.
- Seven seal judgments causing partial disasters & torments.
- Seven trumpet judgments causing partial disasters & torments.
- Interspersed symbolic visions about destruction of the evil Roman Empire.
- Seven bowl judgments causing total worldly destruction.
- Final judgment and establishment of the ultimate perfectly wonderful Heavenly Kingdom for Believers.

============= Marks of Discipleship ==============

What did you (personally) take away from your reading of Revelation?

Example: Regardless of the time, temptations of a worldly self-centered lifestyle can destroy a person, an enterprise, an Empire and the entire world as we know it. Doesn't it seem in the “Revelation context” to be happening again?

Announcements:

Only two more meetings, then we take a summer break.
Do we want to have a final celebration Potluck Lunch 5/29/13?

**Joys and Concerns**

**Closing Prayer**

**Worth considering:** The Book of Revelation for Dummies, by Larry R. Helyer and Richard Wagoner. Mostly rather positive reviews, but “might make fundamentalist Christians unhappy.” eBook or Paperback.