

BE100 INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE¹

Equip exists to prepare God's people to do God's work. (Eph 4:12)

Course Overview

Course Description: No book in the history of Western civilization has had a more profound effect than the Bible. Western cultures, traditions, laws, and beliefs have all been influenced by this holy book. However, the unfortunate truth is that many perceive this same Bible to be intimidating and confusing, and, therefore, they never truly search and discover its richness and power. **Introduction to the Bible** is designed to help you develop a firm foundation for understanding and studying your Bible. It covers topics such as how the Bible came into existence, why we consider it inspired by God and authoritative for our faith and living, and how to interpret its message.

Course Instructor:

- Gwendolyn Lau | Equip Director
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- Office Hours | By Appointment

Confessional Context:

As a ministry of Preston Trail Community Church, courses offered by Equip hold to the general principles and doctrinal beliefs of Preston Trail Community Church. All courses will be taught within this context.

Course Objectives:

This course fulfills the following goals of Equip:

- Deepen appreciation for the Bible by increasing biblical literacy
- Deepen appreciation for the Bible by examining its history, development, and cultural impact
- Deepen appreciation for the Bible by exploring several approaches to interpreting its various books
- Strengthen personal faith by learning to express personal theological beliefs and convictions
- Develop disciples who are biblically grounded, spiritually mature, culturally engaged, and prepared to lead in a variety of contexts

¹ Created by Gwendolyn Lau, August 2018 and subject to change

Course Goals

Goals for your “Head”

The student will demonstrate an understanding of...

1. The various ways the Bible is analyzed by scholars
2. The overall story, ultimate purpose, and practical use of the Bible
3. How the Old Testament got from God to us
4. How the Old Testament books were selected
5. How the New Testament got from God to us
6. How the New Testament books were selected
7. The extra Old Testament books some people have in their Bibles that we don't
8. The extra New Testament books some people think were left out for political reasons
9. The history of English Bible translations
10. The best practices for reading the various types of books in the Old Testament
11. The best practices for reading the various types of books in the New Testament

Goals for your “Heart”

The student will develop...

1. Trust that the Bible we currently possess is enough to communicate accurately the things God wants us to know about himself and living in relationship with him and others
2. Appreciation for the sacrificial work of those who have helped translate the Bible into languages common people could read and understand
3. Confidence in the role Scripture plays in his/her life
4. A deepening love and appreciation for God's Word
5. Confidence in interacting with the various types of literature found in Scripture
6. Confidence in interacting with others who hold different views of the Bible

Goals for your “Hands”

The student will...

1. Share what they are learning with someone in their circle of influence
2. Be able to explain why the Bible they possess is trustworthy and authoritative for them personally
3. Begin or continue a daily reading plan of the Bible in order to grow in their relationship with the God of the Bible
4. Learn to rightly apply biblical truths to everyday situations and circumstances

Evaluation

Learning Format

Each course will involve learning in three types of settings

- Individual: Reading assignments, reading reports, and final project
- Online: Weekly discussion forums
- Class: Lectures and group discussions

Course Evaluation

Traditional educational classes are measured by grades. Here at Equip, however, we don't believe grades are the best reflection of a student's success. Rather than getting fixated (for good or evil) on a particular grade, we will mark classes as "COMPLETE" or "INCOMPLETE." This standard will be applied to both individual assignments as well as for the course as a whole. A "Complete" is considered a minimum of "C" proficiency.

Students will earn an "Incomplete" for the following reasons:

- Failure to submit two or more Reading Reaction Reports
- Failure to attend three or more class meetings (can miss for extenuating circumstances with instructor approval but must make up the missed material)
- Failure to submit a final project

Students may officially "withdraw" from any course at any time but must make the instructor aware so that an "Incomplete" is not issued. **Tuition refunds** may be made upon official withdrawal based on the table below. Please see the Equip director with questions.

Up until the start of the first class	100% refund
After the first class, up until the second class	50% refund
After the second class through the end of the course	0% refund

Learning Activities

- Approximately 100 pages of reading are assigned each week as well as a Reading Reaction Report (see Reading Reaction Report notes). This reading is foundational to the class topics and discussion.
- After each weekly class, students will participate in an online forum to discuss the topics/implications of the class (see Discussion Forum notes).
- As a conclusion and application of the material in the course, students will complete a final project (see Final Project notes).
- All assignments are expected to be submitted by the beginning of class on the assigned due date. All assignments must be submitted and evaluated as "complete" by two weeks after the final class period.
- All assignments should be submitted via Populi.

Textbooks - Required Reading

- Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Jones, Timothy Paul, *How We Got the Bible*. Massachusetts: Rose Publishing, 2015.
- Stott, John R. W., *Understanding the Bible, expanded edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- A modern translation of the Bible (ESV, NIV, NLT, etc.)

If you're interested in more, here are some books we recommend:

- Bruce, F.F., *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.
- Hamilton, Adam. *Making Sense of the Bible, Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today*. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.
- Holsteen, Nathan D. and Szigel, Michael J. eds., *Exploring Christian Theology, Volume One: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2014.
- Metzger, Bruce M., *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth and Content*, 3rd ed., Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- Yancey, Philip, *The Bible Jesus Read*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Expectations

Educational Standards

- The instructor and students commit to be on time and prepared for class.
- The instructor commits to provide honest and constructive feedback on assignments.
- The instructor commits to respond to communication in a timely manner.
- Students commit to present their own work as their own work and avoid plagiarism.
- Class communication will be done through Populi, so please check frequently for information, updates, announcements, etc.

Relational Values

- The instructor and students commit to demonstrate respect for different opinions and viewpoints in our words, actions, and attitudes.
- The instructor and students commit to allow all students to participate in the discussions and to ask questions.

Classroom Environment

- While drinks are allowed, please refrain from eating during class unless we are on a break.
- Please refrain from using your phone or computer for anything non-class related unless we are on a break.
- Students commit to fully participate in learning activities and class discussions.
- Students may audio record any class for personal use only.
- Equip will video record the class for the purposes of missed material for approved absences and personal archive. By attending Equip you are giving your consent.

ADA Accommodation

- If you have a disability and are requesting accommodations, please contact the Equip director at 469.353.2799 as soon as possible. We will make every effort to accommodate your learning needs.

Learning Activity Specifics

Discussion Forums

- A weekly Discussion Forum follows each class section.
- Students should post one question from their Reading Reaction Report or from the previous instructional time to which the class can respond.
- Every student should respond to two other student's questions.
- Post your questions and comments as soon as possible following the class (preferably by Friday evening).
- Check back throughout the week to engage in the discussion.
- Strive for clarity in your replies. Keep your reply to fewer than 100 words.

Netiquette Guidelines for Discussion Forums

- *Be kind and gracious. It is possible to disagree without attacking or being mean-spirited. Remember that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and need to "bear with" one another in both truth and love.*
- *Ask questions. If there is something that needs clarification, ask for it.*
- *Stay calm. THERE IS NO NEED FOR ALL CAPS OR EXCESSIVE EXCLAMATION MARKS!!!!!!*
- *Be clear. Sarcasm can subtly get lost when you are not face-to-face.*
- *Be authentic. Address people by name and use your name when posting comments.*
- *Stay positive. The best way to continue a conversation is to remain respectful and positive.*
- *Be expressive. Feel free to use emoticons or short phrases that help explain your tone (but avoid being passive/aggressive).*
- *Keep on topic. If you wander off topic, start a new discussion thread so everyone can see.*
- *Write professionally. Spell things out and save abbreviations for texting and Twitter.*
- *Proofread before posting.*

Reading Reaction Reports

The purpose of the Reading Reaction Report is two-fold: to demonstrate completion of the assigned reading and to reflect on the material itself. Each report should include the following:

- Three observations you made from the reading (2-3 sentences per observation on what you learned)
- Two questions you have regarding the reading (1-2 sentences per question)
- One application step or action you can take as a result of the reading (4-5 sentences)

Reports will be uploaded to the Populi course site. Please save documents in .doc, .docx, .pdf, or .rtf format.

Late Work

Late work will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may or may not be accepted (at the discretion of the instructor).

Responses to Your Work

You may generally expect replies to email or phone messages within 24-48 hours. For written assignments, the instructor will endeavor to grade and give feedback within seven days of the due date.

Final Projects

The purpose of the final project is to allow the student to apply the material in a personally unique way. Remember, we are blessed to be a blessing (Gen 12:2). Learning as discipleship takes information from our heads to our hearts and then out through our hands and into our habitats. Therefore, the goal of the final project is to summarize a specific topic related to the content of the course in a manner that can be shared easily with others.

The student will decide the topic of their project with the approval of the instructor.

Students will prepare an **8-10 minute oral presentation of research** related to EITHER (**pick only ONE**) a scriptural passage highlighted in the course, a biblical theme highlighted in the course, OR a book critique covering an additional source the course did not explore.

Further details will be given as the course progresses.

Scriptural Analysis Guidelines:

- The student will select a biblical passage to research. The student will think through the verse in his/her own mind first and then consult different tools such as Bible commentaries or Bible dictionaries to better understand how others have interpreted that same passage. The student will then present their results in a format that would apply to their ministry context (ex: teaching your small group in TrailKids, sharing with your couples' group of adults, telling your neighbor, etc.).
- The student will upload their final video oral report (details to follow).
- The student will submit a one-page written outline of the presentation and a works cited page that lists a minimum of four sources (two may be internet sources but at least two need to be print materials—feel free to use our textbooks and your Bible as source materials).

Biblical Theme Guidelines:

- The student will research a specific biblical topic related to the course in tools such as Bible encyclopedias or Bible dictionaries. The goal is not to create new research but to understand and apply the process of preparing to share an idea with someone else. The student will then present their results in a format that would apply to their ministry context (ex: teaching your small group in TrailKids, sharing with your couples' group of adults, telling your neighbor, etc.).
- The student will upload their final video oral report (details to follow).
- The student will submit a one-page written outline of the presentation and a works cited page that lists a minimum of four sources (two may be internet sources but at

least two need to be print materials—feel free to use our textbooks and your Bible as source materials).

Book Critique Guidelines:

- The student will read and explore a specific book related to the course. While it must be different from the required readings, this could come from the additional resources listed in this syllabus or a book of your choosing with the instructor's approval.
- The student will upload their final video oral report (details to follow).
- The student will submit a one-page written outline of the presentation.

Course Schedule

Week One | The Origins of the Bible

Before Class (due by 6:30 p.m., January 30)

- READ: Jones, Chapters 1
- READ: Stott, Preface and Chapters 1, 5-6, 8

CLASS-January 30

- Review syllabus and reading strategies
- Introduction to the study of the Bible
 - o Doctrines of Revelation, Inspiration, and Illumination
 - o Authority of the Bible

After Class

- Discussion Forum post (due Friday, February 1)
- A minimum of TWO responses to other posts (due Tuesday, February 5)

Week Two | The Composition of the Bible

Before Class (due by 6:30 p.m., February 6)

- READ: Jones, Chapters 2-5, 7
- READ: Fee, Chapter 1
- SUBMIT: Reading Reaction Report

Class-February 6

- The need to and history of translating Scripture
- Requirements for inclusion in the Bible
- Old Testament and the "Apocrypha"
- New Testament and the "Pseudepigrapha"

After Class

- Discussion Forum post (due Friday, February 8)
- A minimum of TWO responses to other posts (due Tuesday, February 12)

Week Three | The Story of the Bible

Before Class (due by 6:30 p.m., February 13)

- READ: Stott, Chapters 2-4
- SUBMIT: Reading Reaction Report

Class-February 13

- The geography of the Bible
- The overarching story of the Old Testament and the years between the testaments
- The overarching story of the New Testament
- The overall story of Scripture

After Class

- Discussion Forum post (due Friday, February 15)
- A minimum of TWO responses to other posts (due Tuesday, February 19)
- **FINAL PROJECT TOPIC SUBMISSION FOR APPROVAL**

Week Four | Interpretation of the Old Testament

Before Class (due by 6:30 p.m., February 20)

- READ: Fee, Chapters 5, 9-12
- SUBMIT: Reading Reaction Report

Class-February 20

- How to interpret Old Testament histories
- How to interpret Old Testament law
- How to interpret Old Testament poetry
- How to interpret Old Testament wisdom literature
- How to interpret Old Testament prophecy

After Class

- Discussion Forum post (due Friday, February 22)
- A minimum of TWO responses to other posts (due Tuesday, February 26)

Week Five | Interpretation of the New Testament

Before Class (due by 6:30 p.m., February 27)

- READ: Fee, Chapters 3-4, 6-8, 13
- SUBMIT: Reading Reaction Report

Class-February 27

- How to interpret the New Testament gospel accounts
- How to interpret the parables of Jesus
- How to interpret New Testament history
- How to interpret New Testament letters
- How to interpret New Testament prophecy

After Class

- **FINAL PROJECT (DUE by 6:30 P.M., MARCH 6)**