CREATION – Week One

Pray each day:

“Your hands have made me and set me in place. Help me understand so I can learn your commandments” (Psalm 119:73)

READ:

Day 1: The Contents in your Bible listing each of the Books. Recognize that they are each written separately with different types of literary styles.

Day 2: Psalm 84-poetry, 1 Chronicles 22-history, Exodus 20-law

Day 3: Micah 4-prophets, Philemon-letter, Luke 16-parables

Day 4: Aloud Genesis 1:1-2:3 (the first creation story) and Genesis 2:4:25 (the second creation story), Psalm 8-praise

Day 5: Psalm 19:1-6-God’s glory, Psalm 150-praise, Job 38-God’s mystery and majesty

Day 6: Ponder

What are your favorite types of scripture?

How do you show in the way that you live that you belong to God?

What are you doing to exercise stewardship of all creation?

How does your day of rest reflect a quiet trust in the great, good, and loving God who has created you and who sustains you? Can you think of some ways to rest more creatively on your Sabbath?

DISCIPLES KNOW THEY BELONG TO GOD, THAT GOD HAS CLAIM ON THEM. THEY PLACE THEMSELVES UNDER THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

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SIN – Week Two

Pray each day:

“Come back to me and have mercy on me; that’s only right for those who love you name” (Psalm 119:132).

READ:

Day 1: Genesis 3-4 (the Fall, Cain and Abel)

Day 2: Genesis 6:5-9:29 (Noah and the Flood)

Day 3: Genesis 11:1-9 (the tower of Babel)

Day 4: Jeremiah 8:18-9:11 (a lament for Judah and Jerusalem)

Day 5: 2 Samuel 11:1-12:7 (David’s sin and Nathan’s reproof); Psalm 51 (confession)

Day 6: Ponder

We all try to hide our sinfulness, even from ourselves. Recall a time when some person or some event caused you to see your sinful nature.

Because we tend to defy God and take life into our own hands, how do we go about putting ourselves back under God’s authority? Read again Psalm 51.

We are part of the collective wickedness of the world. We have the capability of destroying ourselves. What, in your view, are the means and our chances of our survival?

DISCIPLES ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR REBELLION, ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR SIN, AND REPENT.

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COVENANT – Week Three

Pray each day:

“You, LORD my God! You’ve done so many things – Your wonderful deeds and your plans for us – no one can compare with you! If I were to proclaim and talk about all of them, they would be too numerous to count!” Psalm 40:5

READ: Day 1: Genesis 12-13; 14:17-17:27 (call of Abraham, covenant with God)

Day 2: Genesis 18-23 (birth of Isaac, testing of Abraham)

Day 3: Genesis 24-27 (Isaac and Rebekah)

Day 4: Genesis 28-33; 35 (Jacob, Rachel, Leah and the twelve sons)

Day 5: Genesis 37; 39-41 (Joseph in Egypt); 42-45 (Joseph’s brothers in Egypt; 47-50 (Jocob’s move to Egypt)

Day 6: Ponder

What weaknesses do you have that God might see as strengths and use?

Recall an experience in your life when God made good come out of evil.

What helps you feel a sense of belonging to the called corporate people of God? DISCIPLES RESPOND TO GOD’S CALL TO ENTER THE COVENANT COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND EXPRESS COMMITMENT TO THE COVENANT THROUGH THE TITHE.

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DELIVERANCE – Week Four

Pray each day:

“Hear my words, LORD! Consider my groans! Pay attention to the sound of my cries, my king and my God, because I am praying to you! LORD, in the morning you hear my voice. In the morning I lay it all out before you. Then I wait expectantly” Psalm 5:1-3

READ: Day 1: Exodus 1-4 (the oppression of the Hebrews and the call of Moses)

Day 2: Exodus 5-7 (Moses confronting Pharaoh, beginning of the plagues)

Day 3: Exodus 8-11 (remaining plagues)

Day 4: Exodus 12-14 (explanation of Passover, death of the firstborn, escape from Egypt)

Day 5: Exodus 15-18 (song of Moses, experiences in the wilderness; Psalm 105 (thanksgiving for God’s faithfulness to the covenant with Israel)

Day 6: Ponder

Have you ever felt you had too much power over others or they had too much power over you? Do you have a deliverance story?

Have you felt a reluctance about responding when God calls you to something you find difficult?

What is it about being Christian that causes us to weep with the suffering and hope with the despairing?

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ORDER – Week Five

Pray each day:

“LORD, teach me what your statutes are about, and I will guard every part of them. Help me understand so I can guard your instruction and keep it with all my heart. Lead me on the trail of your commandments because that is what I want.” Psalm 119:33-35

READ: Day 1: Exodus 19-20 (Israel at Sinai); Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33 (summary of the Law) Compare them.

Day 2: Exodus 21:1-23:19 (laws concerning slaves, restitution, sabbath, and feasts); 31:18-32:35 (the golden calf)

Day 3: Leviticus 11 (clean and unclean animals); 17:10-19:37 (sexual relations, the law of love)

Day 4: Numbers 13:1-14:38 (spies sent to Canaan). Deuteronomy 5;6;9 (what God requires). Notice Deut. 6:4-9. This passage is called the Shema, which means “Hear”

Day 5: Number 18 (priests and Levites); Deuteronomy 14:22-15:23; 34 (tithe, sabbatical year, death of Moses)

Day 6: Ponder

Identify some of the words of the law that, through you obedience, bring order to your life.

…that bring security to your family.

…that give you a sense of belonging.Has there been a time in your life when failure to obey God’s law resulted in chaos?

DISCIPLES KEEP GOD’S LAW BY DOING IT.

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ATONEMENT – Week Six

Pray each day:

“I will fulfill my promises to you, God. I will present thanksgiving offerings to you.” Psalm 56:12

READ:

Day 1: Exodus 24-27 (covenant ratification, the ark of the covenant, the Tabernacle)

Day 2: Exodus 34:29-36:1 (new tablets, offerings for the Tabernacle); 40 (glory of the Lord)

Day 3: Leviticus 1-4:12; 5:1-6 (the burnt offering, offerings of well-being, sin and guilt offerings)

Day 4: Leviticus 6-7 (ritual for offerings, the priest’ portion); Deuteronomy 18 (Levites)

Day 5: Leviticus 16-17 in the New Revised Standard Version (Day of Atonement); Leviticus 23 (appointed festivals)

Day 6: Ponder

Do your church’s rituals help you feel freed of guilt and shame? ..feel reconciled to God and neighbor? …what element do you find most meaningful: remembrance, atonement, or thanksgiving?

DISCIPLES COMMIT THEMSELVES TO CORPORATE WORSHIP

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LEADERSHIP – Week Seven

Pray each day:

“Rise up, God! Judge the earth because you hold all nations in your possession!” Psalm 82:8

READ:

Day 1: Joshua 1-3 (Joshua’s commission, Rahab and the spies, entering the land)

Day 2: Joshua 4-6 (memorial stones, fall of Jericho; 24 (covenant at Shechem, death of Joshua)

Day 3: Judges 1-2 (incomplete conquest, apostasy); 4 (Deborah)

Day 4: Judges 6-8 (Gideon)

Day 5: Judges 13-16 (Samson)

Day 6: Ponder

What kind of people do you think God chooses as leaders?

What does it mean to place yourself under the authority of your spiritual leaders?

Describe what would happen if in our country, church and households “each person did what they thought to be right”. (Judges 21:25)

DISCIPLES PROVIDE A SENSE OF DIRECTION AND PURPOSE THROUGH GODLY, OBEDIENT LEADERSHIP.

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SECURITY – Week Eight

Pray each day: “I will give thanks to you, my LORD, among all the peoples; I will make music to you among the nations because your faithful love is as high as heaven; your faithfulness reaches the clouds. Exalt yourself, God, higher than heaven! Let your glory be over all the earth!” Psalm 57:9-11

READ:

Day 1: 1 Samuel 1-3; 7:3-17 (Samuel)

Day 2: 1 Samuel 8-10; 12 (Saul, Samuel’s farewell address)

Day 3: 1 Samuel 14:47-19:24; 31 (Saul rejected, David anointed king, David and Goliath, David and Jonathan, death of Saul)

Day 4: 2 Samuel 7-8; 11-12 (God’s covenant with David, David and Bathsheba)

Day 5: 1 Kings 1-2:12; 3; 4:20-34; 5-6:14; 7:1-12; 8; 11-12 (David’s death, Solomon’s prayer, building and dedicating the Temple, Solomon’s apostasy)

Day 6: Ponder

Why do people put such high hopes in their leaders?

What kinds of actions and attitudes of leaders do you think God blesses? What kinds of actions and attitudes demonstrate faithfulness to God’s will?

DISCIPLES MAINTAIN A PERSPECTIVE ON LEADERSHIP THAT SUPORTS AND RESPECTS GODLY LEADERS BUT GIVE TRUE ALLEGIANCE ONLY TO GOD.

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WARNING – Week Nine

Pray each day: “Won’t you bring us back to life again so that your people can rejoice in you? Show us your faithful love, LORD! Give us your salvation! Psalm 85:6-7

READ:

Day 1: 1 Kings 16:29-19:18 (Elijah and Ahab)

Day 2: 1 Kings 21-22 (Ahab, Naboth’s vineyard)

Day 3: Amos 2:6-4:13 (repeated warnings)

Day 4: Amos 5; 7:1-9; 9 (lament and visions of Amos, a plumb line in Samaria)

Day 5: Isaiah 3-6 (rebellious Judah, Isaiah’s call)

Day 6: Ponder

What are the sins against neighbors described in the Amos readings? What do you hear about attitudes against human suffering?

How do you stay balanced about economic matters? Jobs and money are necessary to operate today, but greed violates God’s law.

Has God’s Spirit given you a holy warning that you felt you needed to share with others?

DISCPLES RECOGNIZE AND LISTEN TO PROPHETIC VOICES RAISED ABOUT COMMUNITY, NATION, AND WORLD AND AT TIMES BECOME THE PROPHETIC VOICE.

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CONSEQUENCES – Week Ten

Pray each day: “Please, for the sake of your good name, LORD, forgive my sins, which are many!” Psalm 25:11

READ:

Day 1: 2 Kings 17 (fall of the Northern Kingdom); 2 Kings 18-20 (King Hezekiah of the Southern Kingdom)

Day 2: 2 Kings 22:1-2; 23 (King Josiah’s reforms in the Southern Kingdom); 2 Kings 25 (fall of the Southern Kingdom)

Day 3: Jeremiah 8 (warnings to the Southern Kingdom before the fall); Jeremiah 37-39 (Jeremiah imprisoned); Isaish 28:16-26 (warnings to Jerusalem); Lamentations 1 (Jeremiah’s sorrow over Jerusalem)

Day 4: Isaish 40; 42:1-9; 43:1-13 (words of comfort in exile); 44:21-23 (Israel the chosen); 49 (God’s help); 55 (God’s offer of mercy)

Day 5: Ezekiel 1-3:15 (Ezekiel’s call); Ezekiel 37 (vision of valley of dry bones); Jeremiah 31-32 (the new covenant)

Day 6: Ponder

Think of some times you were given a second chance. Think of some times you were held accountable. How did you handle the consequences?

DISCIPLES ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR SIN, SEEK FORGIVENESS, AND LOOK FOR HEALING AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAITHFULNESS. DISCIPLES CHOOSE TO SERVE RATHER THAN TO DESPAIR WHEN SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

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WISDOM – Week Eleven

Pray each day: “LORD, you have examined me. You know me. You know when I sit down and when I stand up. Even from far away, you comprehend my plans. You study my traveling and resting. You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways. Psalm 139:1-3

READ: **Day 1**: Psalm 136 (Salvation History); Psalm 90 (Lament); Psalm 38 (Penitence) **Day 2**: Psalm 65 (Thanksgiving); Psalm 100 (Praise); Psalm 73 (Wisdom) **Day 3**: **Proverbs – Consider Integrity**

* Proverbs 12:17; 12:22 (Truth telling)
* Proverbs 11:1; 20:23 (Honest measurement)
* Proverbs 1:19 (Stealing)

**Proverbs – Consider concern for the poor**

* Proverbs 11:25; 25:21 (Generosity)
* Proverbs 31:20 (Hospitality to strangers)
* Proverbs 15:25; 23:10 (Care for widows and orphans)

**Proverbs – Consider care for one’s own family**

* Proverbs 1:8-9; 4:1-7 (Concern for teaching children)
* Proverbs 29:17 (Discipline of children)
* Proverbs 16:31; 20:29 (Respect for elders and for spouse)

**Proverbs – Consider faithfulness to God**

* Proverbs 3:1-6 (Faithfulness)
* Proverbs 15:8; 15:29 (Prayers of the righteous)
* Proverbs 3:9-10 (First fruits as gifts

**Proverbs – Consider food and drink**

* Proverbs 23:2-3, 20-21 (Gluttony)
* Proverbs 20:1; 21:17 (Alcoholic drink)

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**Day 4**: Ezra 1; 3; 4:1-5; 7:8-10 (story of the return of the exiles to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple). Nehemiah 1; 2; 4:15-23; 8:1-9:3; 10:28-39 (Reading of the Law and renewing the Covenant) **Day 5**: Read Job. **Day 6**: Ponder

Note: The Old Testament Hebrew word sa-tan means opponent, adversary, accuser, attacker. In Job, it is used with the definite article – *ha-sa-tan,* meaning the adversary or accuser. It is not a proper name but A description of a function or role. When the Book of Job as written, probably during the sixth century B.C., the Israelites had no concept of the devil,and their understanding of Satan was quite different from the way Christians today think of Satan. In Job, Satan is not the enemy of God but a kind of official accuser, a member of the heavenly council. His job is to point out specific accusations to God. During the Exile (587/586-583 B.C.), the Israelites had come into contact with the Persian and Babylonian ideas of two main gods, one good and one evil, competing eternally in the affairs of human beings. They gradually attached this idea to their idea of the figure of Satan, which by about 200 B.C. had developed into a personification of everything opposed to God. By the time the New Testament was written, people thought of Satan and the devil as the same – the leader of the forces of evil, “the evil one” of Matthew 6:13, tempting human beings to sin, and archenemy of Christ and the Church. **DISCIPLES TRUST GOD WITH ALL THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, STRIVE TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH GOD’S LAWS, AND TRUST GOD IN THE FACE OF UNEXPLAINED SUFFERING.**

**Day 4**: Ezra 1; 3; 4:1-5; 7:8-10 (story of the return of the exiles to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple). Nehemiah 1; 2; 4:15-23; 8:1-9:3; 10:28-39 (Reading of the Law and renewing the Covenant) **Day 5**: Read Job. **Day 6**: Ponder

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HOPE – Week Twelve

Pray each day: “God! My God! It’s you – I search for you! My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere” Psalm 63:1

READ:

**Day 1**: Read attached page

**Day 2**: Daniel 1-3 (young Daniel and his three friends, the fiery furnace)

**Day 3**: Daniel 4-6 (two kings, Daniel in the lions’ den)

**Day 4**: Daniel 7 & 10; Isaiah 8:21-9:7; 11:1-10; 42:1-9; Micah 5:2-4 (Messiah and end times, future hope of Israel)

**Day 5**: Jonah 1-4 (Israel’s mission to the world)

**Day 6**: Ponder

**DISCIPLES HEAR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE CONTEXT OF UNITY WITH THE HISTORIC PEOPLE OF GOD.**

Disciples sense their unity with the historic people of God (descendants of Abraham and Sarah) and bring that understanding to their hearing of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Disciples keep the dream alive and live in hope with a vision of God’s kingdom.

In what ways are you beginning to understand the unity of the Bible and the central theme of salvation history?

Terms:

**Apocalypse**-prophetic revelation of what is to come, especially end times. Literally, the word means to uncover, to reveal. The Book of Revelation is sometimes called the Apocalypse.

Eschatology-concerned with ultimate or last things, such as death, judgment, heaven, and hell.

Messiah-the anticipated deliverer, the Anointed One who is to come.

Son of Man-Hebrew idiom for “man”, symbolizes the coming kingdom as a man in contrast to the past kingdoms symbolized as beasts.

Kingdom of God-different from earthly kingdoms; the concluding time when God will rule in justice, harmony, and peace. The term kingdom of God does not appear in the Old Testament, though the concept does.

The Book of Daniel-Why read this difficult book?

1. Daniel provides a perspective on Jewish people living in a culture alien to their religious practices and beliefs.
2. Daniel for Jews, like Revelation for Christians, was written to help the faithful “hang on: during persecution.
3. Many Christians see in the Book of Daniel as in other Old Testament passages a glimpse of Messiah, the Anointed One who is to come.
4. A study of Daniel formally introduces us to apocalyptic literature, which takes our thoughts beyond the kingdoms of this world into a concluding kingdom of God and lays groundwork for much New Testament thought. Understanding apocalyptic literature is necessary for understanding the early Christian community.

Apocalyptic literature reflects the belief that a cosmic struggle is being waged between the forces of good and the forces of evil. This struggle is leading up to a climactic battle in which good will triumph.

Apocalyptic literature emphasizes eschatology, or the study of end times. The “end” usually means the end of a particular age although it can refer to the end of time as we know it. The basic idea is that the present age is under the influence of evil and that the people of God are suffering persecution. Further, the suffering will increase until God suddenly intervenes on behalf of God's people and inaugurates a new age of peace and joy.

Apocalyptic literature often contains images and symbols that at the time of the writing were meant to be obscure and therefore are difficult for readers in later generations to understand. For example, the image of a horn generally represented power; The color white stood for victory or purity; The term ancient one emphasized God's eternity, sovereignty, and wisdom other than advanced age.

Apocalyptic literature is usually pessimistic about the current world order and regards the intervention of God as the only solution to the problems and suffering of God's people.

Despite its pessimism, apocalyptic literature is designed to give readers a sense of confidence and security. Its primary message is that God is in control and that God's people will ultimately triumph.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ravaged Judah, and deported the stronger, younger people in 597BC. (Ezekiel was one) and finally destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 587/586BC. Daniel and his young friends were selected to be trained to serve the empire. However, they refused to violate Jewish food laws and refused to worship Babylonian gods, perhaps including images of the kings. Jews exile have always had to face the difficulty of remaining faithful in an alien culture. The Book of Daniel says, “Be strong!” God will be with you. Just as God was with you in the fires of Egypt, so he was with Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

Daniel interpreted dreams for Nebuchadnezzar and his successor Belshazzar. Observe that the rulers thought they were all powerful, but God humbled them. Daniel read the handwriting on the wall: “You've been weighed on the scales, and you don't measure up” Daniel 5:27.

Be strong; The kingdoms of this world come and go. The four beasts were thought to refer to the kingdoms: the lion was the Babylonian Empire, the bear was the Median Empire, the leopard the Persian Empire, and the terrifying, dragon like beast was the Greek empire.

So much of the material in Daniel 7 through 10 is apocalyptic, visionary, and symbolic that it is difficult to interpret accurately. That is for a reason. Either it was written to prepare the people for times of trouble, or it was written to comfort the people during times of trouble by drawing on past courage and wisdom. Most scholars agree that the book of Daniel reached its present form during the terrible persecutions of 167-164BC under the Seleucid ruler of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Under that savage rule many people were killed. Foreign idols and an altar to Zeus were placed in the Temple, the sacred altar was desecrated, and Jerusalem was sacked. Jews were forbidden to observe Sabbath and dietary laws, to practice circumcision, or to offer sacrifices in the Temple.

Be strong; Do not lose heart; Remember whose people you are. Will not the God who rescued Daniel from the lions’ den save his obedient people even from the jaws of persecution?

Notes from Disciple Fast Track, 2016, Abingdon Press, Richard Byrd Wilke and Julia Kitchens Wilke