**First Step – Teacher’s Guide**

May the people raise you, O God. Then the earth will yield its harvests.

1. What is the Bible and How Do I Read It

**The Lord is with you!**

How the Bible itself is a **miracle** and is **historically** and **scientifically** accurate. As it is God **breathed**, it **releases** life, creativity, success and great increases.

**To Prepare:**

**Physical Bible**

**Introduction:**

Hello everyone – glad to see you again for our second class! Hope you have managed to read the book we gave out last week on the 7 Miracles of Jesus.

That magazine we made contains stories of the time of Jesus and the miracles that He has performed. It was taken from the Holy Bible.

Today we will be sharing about the Bible.

Have any of you read the Bible before?

**MAIN RULES:**

**1. Respect each other’s privacy**

**(do not ask for contact number, no business transactions)**

**2. Honor the vision of this church**

**(do not promote or invite to other church events and programs)**

**3. Humility and Order**

**(humble despite disagreements. Other questions can be discussed after the class)**

**Attempt & Failure:**

There are some common misperceptions about the Bible.

These are such as:

1. The Bible is outdated

2. The Bible is only stories

3. The Bible is anti-women

4. The Bible is inconsistent

So how do we address it?

Firstly, by looking at:

* + - 1. What is the Bible?

**Explanation:**

The Bible is the Holy Scriptures that we receive from God.

It was written down by various authors from different cultural background and languages.

Mainly Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

The Old Testament **points to** the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The New Testament **speaks** of the life, teaching and works of **Jesus, the Messiah. It also contains** the **writings** of His **apostles** (the sent ones), setting forth clear truths of the Christian faith.

Written over **1500** years by over 40 different people with different backgrounds, they all point to one thing: **Jesus Christ**.

Such a unity shows that there is a divine hand guiding the various authors with various backgrounds and experiences.

The chances of such a thing happening is like an explosion in a printing store, producing the Oxford dictionary: a mathematical impossibility!

The Bible can be identified into 2 sections: Old Testament and New Testament.

**The Old Testament**

The Old Testament speaks of the covenant God made with Abraham, calling him to be the father of many nations, out of whose descendant, the Messiah (Christ), would be born.

The Old Testament saw paradise lost for Adam, but the New Testament shows how paradise is regained through the second Adam (Jesus Christ).

The Old Testament begins with a group of historical books, some poetic books (Psalm, Proverbs) and prophetic books (like Isiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, etc)

**The New Testament**

The New Testament is about the Messiah. It tells us about the New Covenant that God made with all people through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

It starts off with the four Gospels, which describe the life of Christ, and the book of Acts, which tells the story of the early church.

The rest are letters that the apostle wrote and ends with a prophetic book of the end of the world by John for the last days known as Revelations.

If you’re interested to know more about the historical accuracy of the Bible and its impact on areas of archaeology, biology, astronomy, anthropology and geology, sign up for our Kingdom Discovery class which studies this in depth.

* + - 1. Why do we read the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. NIV

Breathed: God breathed in, inspire.

God is the **Author** of the Scriptures. His Spirit “breathed” His own thoughts in the minds of the men who wrote the Bible.

God used writers unique personality to record down but the words are divinely inspired.

human writers were inspired by God and moved by the Holy Spirit to record accurately what God wanted them to preserve. It does not mean God took control of people in the sense of some occult practices known as automatic writing, where the writer is in a trance-like state. It also doesn't mean the writers of the Bible were simply taking dictation. But it does mean that their words were divinely inspired and recorded.

The Bible was written by real people recording real historical events, communicating God's truths with their unique personalities and cultural contexts.

The 4 gospels have different backgrounds in mind:

Matthew writes from a Jewish background. He traces Abraham’s lineage to identify Christ as the promised Messiah, the Root and Seed of David and the prophesies fulfilled

Mark writes from a Roman background which therefore focuses on the power, might and strength of Christ.

Luke writes from a Physician/Doctor background and to the Greeks in which he gives special insights.

John writes with a theological theme in mind, linking the Father and the Son.

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. Have you read the Bible before?

2. Is reading the Bible easy or difficult?

3. Why do Christians need the Bible if we can pray?

* + - * 1. It releases life and faith

Prov 4:20-23

20My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. 21Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; 22For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. *NKJV*

**Health** מַרְפֵּא*marpe* **Lit**: medicine. **Fig**: Healing, renewal, peace, security, wholeness, soundness. **Root**: *raphah healing, doctor, restoration, health.*

**Illustration:**

In this sin-sick world, God has given us Bible principles and promises to stand on. Treat it just like medicine from the doctor. A prescription is written for the type of medicine and the dosage.

Do you need to believe that the medicine will work?

No, you take it as the doctor prescribes it.

You may not understand what the ingredients are or how the chemicals combine, how the medicine is made but it still carries potency.

**Application:**

(Teachers, please use your own illustration if you have)

A few years back, my friend was diagnosed with 3rd stage lung cancer. The news was sudden, everyone was shocked. We knew of others whose life was taken quickly because of the fast-growing tumor. We prayed, we had Holy Communion and the Voice of Scriptures.

Every night she went to bed listening to the Voice of Scriptures proclaiming God’s healing to her. Miraculously as the tough months went by, the tumor actually shrank and there was no need for chemotherapy. Not only that, the medicines and treatments required were paid off with no cost to her or her family.

Now isn’t that a God-sized miracle!

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. Are there any areas in which you need healing?

2. Have you personally witnessed a miracle taking place?

* + - * 1. It releases success and increase

**Argument:**

Does God really want us to be prosperous in every single area of our life?

Acts 20:32

32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. NKJV

**Explanation:**

In the Bible, there is an account in which one day, Jesus talks about the seed that fell on good soil and grew abundantly.

Mark 4:8

8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred. NKJV

**Illustration:**

How many of you like gardening? Why do you enjoy it? How long does it take for your favorite plant to grow?

With seeds, we have an expectation for it to grow.

God’s Word are like seeds which carry amazing creative power when we read it DAILY or as often as we can.

This is seen illustrated in the 4 Gospels:

***Matt***: **Hearing** and **understanding** the Word. Matt 13:23

***Mark***: **Hearing** and **accepting** the Word.

Mark 4:20

***Luke***: **Hearing**, **retaining** and **persevering** in the Word produces the **hundredfold increase**.

Luke 8:15

**Application:**

(Teachers, please use your own illustration if you have)

When I was younger, the book of Proverbs was just about the driest book in the Bible. I didn’t understand it. It was boring.

As I got older, some of the major problems I made I realized could have been avoided because Proverbs had addressed it.

It may be more than 3000 years old but the people back then also faced problems just like us.

Problems like putting money over people, being kind to others, and that humility and wisdom go a long way in maintaining peaceful relationships.

Discussion:

Q: What does this tell us about the Bible?

Q: Why would we need teaching, rebuking, correction and training?

Q: How do I know the Bible is reliable?

Q: How will God’s Word influence your life

Q: Describe the Bible in 3 words.

Q: What are some questions you have about the Bible?

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. Does God want you to be healthy or wealthy?

2. How can mere words make us grow?

* + - 1. How to read the Bible?

*(Adapted from Ps Craig Groeschel)*

* + - * 1. Choose a Translation You Understand

There are many:

**New International Version (NIV), New Living Translation (NLT), English Standard Version (ESV), New King James Version (NKJV)**

* + - * 1. Choose a time, place and plan to study

Be consistent as you study the Bible. It is recommended to do this first time in the morning. Following a bible devotional plan is also helpful.

* + - * 1. Understand the context

Read the verses before and after. This is because our modern context will differ from ancient times therefore context matters. Some helpful questions to guide you are these:

- Who wrote it?

- To whom was it written?

- What is its purpose?

* + - * 1. Meditate and ponder

Joshua 1:8

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. NKJV

Read it all over again, emphasizing on a different word. For example: Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

What kind of things?

All things.

How?

Through Christ.

What does He do?

He strengthens me.

Here’s a verse to practice this: Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

See Him in **both** the New and Old Testaments.

John 5:39

39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. NKJV

Col 2:3

3All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. *HCSB*

Read the **whole** counsel of the Word

Don’t just read some favorite books. Read short passages from the **Gospels**, **New** Testament letters, **Old** Testament historical book, the **Psalms** and **Proverbs** each day.

*Skip* over difficult passages. You can go back later.

**See the theme of each book for example restoration, love or peace.**

The Power of Daily Reading

When we meditate on the Word, it is like a cow chewing on grass. A cow has 4 stomachs. Finally, a miracle happens – green grass becomes white milk

Worry is a form of meditation

But on the negative

When you hear, you retain 10%,

When you read – 10%, When you study – 40%

When you memorize – 60%.

When you think or dwell, you retain 80-100%.

instead of set mind - lady

**Lady** – War II – nazi – bomb shelter –

at home – in tact – why afraid – Bible – God neither sleep nor slumber, guess – no point – both awake

**Sol** sleep – wisdom; **Adam** sleep – wo man ! – **Abraham** – deep sleep

Word – will surely – bring the results – **CDS**

* + - * 1. Declare and apply

Job 22:28

28 You will also declare a thing, and it will be established for you; so light will shine on your ways. NKJV

Luke 5:17

Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, … And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. NKJV

Cancer – sent to ano hosp to have tumour removed

– went with the medical records – hosp – Doc asked retake test – double check – verify – ready for surgery – new doc – not seeing what I saw – you are healthy as can be

Back home – doc – 26 yrs – never seen

Some peo probably – missed diagnosed – well – I chose to be a believer - it is the surpassing – awesome – some don’t believe – Red Sea

Some – don’t believe no matter what – explain away – Red Sea

Some experts – 1 foot – deep – tide – wind nat parted sea

All of army drawn in 10 inches of water

Believer and not a doubter

Amazing even – Corinth church – still addressed as saints – even judge angels

Like that peo sin more – preach more on repentance?

Of course – what r? - Change of mind – word - key

In ch – cannot come – all the more – not so much – altars in tears (also expression of repentance) – more so – change of mind – heart

Don’t use your words to **describe** your situation, use God’s Word to **change** the situation.

SUGGESTED for INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Open any bible verse in the bible or online. Read the verses, before and after.

What can you observe?

What can you learn?

What is the context in that period and how does it translate to today’s context?

How can you apply?

* 1. Article I

How Did We Get The Bible

There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testaments. The 66 books are referred to as the **canonical** books. *“Canon” means “rule or standard*,” and the canonical books are those that have been accepted by the church as part of the inspired Word of God.

**The Old Testament Canon** was already established and recognized in the time of Jesus. The Old Testament was referred to as “the Scriptures,” and were **read** publicly in synagogues, Luke 4:17.

Jesus Himself repeatedly called the Old Testament as the “**Word** of God,” Matt 4:4. The New Testament frequently **quoted** the Old Testament.

Divine inspiration is evident in the fulfillment of the Old Testament **prophecies.**

For example, Psalm 22 describes the crucifixion of Jesus in vivid details. And Psalm 22 was written hundreds of years before the Roman crucifixion was even invented!

The prophecies of the things that happen to Babylon, Persian and the Greeks were so vividly depicted in Daniel that many believed it was a record of what happened **after** the events. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, **carbon dated years before** the events clearly shows the prophetic supernatural element of the prophecies.

**The New Testament Canon** was written while the apostles were still living.

The **Apostles** ( *the Sent-out ones, messengers)* were called by Jesus to be the leaders of His church. Collections of their writings were placed by the early church fathers to be with the Old Testament as the Word of God. Many were **eyewitness** accounts of what they have seen, felt and touched, concerning Jesus, 1 John 1:1.

Paul wrote that his teaching came by the **command** and **inspiration** of God, 1 Cor 14:37.

*1 Cor 14:37*

*37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.NKJV*

*1 Cor 2:10-13*

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. … 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches. NKJV*

*1 Thess 2:13*

*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the* ***word*** *of God, which also* ***effectively*** *works in you who believe. NKJV*

The apostle’s ministry was **attested** to with many signs and wonders.

Peter set Paul's letters to be as authoritative as “other Scriptures,” 2 Pet 3:15-16.

2 Peter 3:15-16

15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation -- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

NKJV

John also made mention of divine inspiration for the book of Revelation, Rev 1:2, with a direct encounter with the Lord Jesus as the Alpha and Omega.

When other books were written hundreds of years later, it wasn't difficult for the church to spot them as **forgeries**. For example, the Gospel of Thomas, written around 140 A.D., is an example of a counterfeit writing erroneously bearing an apostles' name.

the Gospel of Judas was written by a sectarian group, around 130-170 A.D., long after Judas' death.

These so called gospels were in conflict with the known teachings of Jesus and the Old Testament, and often contained numerous historical and geographical errors.

Paul intended that his epistles should be read in the churches (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

* 1. Article II

Peter wrote that “these things” might remain in the churches “after my departure” (2 Peter 1:15; 3:1-2).

Paul quoted as Scripture “The laborer is worthy of his reward” (1 Timothy 5:18 kjv). This sentence is found nowhere in the Bible except Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7—evidence that Matthew or Luke was then in existence and was regarded as Scripture.

The apostles, it seems, wrote many letters with the immediate needs of the churches in mind. As to which of those letters were to be preserved for future ages, we believe that God Himself watched over the matter and made His own choice.

The Old Testament

**Genesis** — Creation of the world, and the call of Abraham and a unique nation.

**Exodus** — God’s power in deliverance from slavery.

**Leviticus** — Laws that set the nation as distinct, and the sacrifices and offerings that point to Christ.

**Numbers** — Journey towards the Promised Land despite the wandering in the wilderness.

**Deuteronomy** — Just prior to entering the Promised Land, Moses recounts the experiences of the past 40 years in the wilderness, restates the guidelines to follow, recalls God’s goodness and His unconditional promises of blessings for the future.

**Joshua** — Entering the Promised Land and occupying our unique inheritance.

**Judges** — First 300 Years in the Land, from Joshua to Samson. Cycles of turning from God, oppression by enemies, calling out to God, and deliverance by leaders God called “Judges”.

**Ruth** — Beginning of the Messianic Family of David through two widows in the worst of circumstances.

**1 Samuel** — Early history of the nation from Samuel. Rejecting God’s rule to being ruled by a king, Saul.

**2 Samuel** — Reign of David, a man who is after God’s heart.

**1 Kings** — Israel prospers under King Solomon but the kingdom splits as kings turn away from God.

**2 Kings** — How some kings ignore God’s ways until the kingdom falls captive to Babylon and Persia.

**1 Chronicles**

The life of David particularly in commissioning the temple of God.

**2 Chronicles** — David’s son Solomon builds the temple, but after centuries of kings and people rejecting God, the Babylonians took the southern Israelites captive and destroyed the temple.

**Ezra** — Return from captivity and rebuilding of the Temple.

**Nehemiah** — Supernatural restoration and rebuilding of the city and the walls of Jerusalem.

**Esther** — the Unseen hand of God in deliverance and promotion in a foreign land through a woman raised for ‘such a time as this’.

**Job** — Temporal suffering and double restoration. He has **heard** of God but now **sees** God as His the Redeemer. Instead of focusing on justifying himself, he turned to justifying God.

**Psalms** — Hymnbook of worship.

**Proverbs** — Wisdom for successful daily living.

**Ecclesiastes** — Vanity of an earthly life without God.

**Song of Songs** — A collection of love songs celebrating love, desire, marriage, and God’s love for us.

**Isaiah** — Prophecies of Christ, the coming king and servant who will “bear the sins of many”.

**Jeremiah** — The prophet warned about the coming Babylonian captivity. Promises of a new beginning and a new covenant.

**Lamentations** — God’s faithfulness despite the desolation of the Holy City.

**Ezekiel** — God of vision and glory – He is in control even in exile.

**Daniel** — Rising to the top and impacting two world empires. The sovereignty of God in history and world empires, and prophecies on Christ and the Last Days.

**Hosea** — Told to marry a prostitute who leaves him, and he must woo her back: A picture of God’s faithfulness despite our unfaithfulness.

**Joel** — Day of the Lord – His favor and Holy Spirit for those that receive Him.

**Amos** — Ultimate universal rule of the Messiah.

**Obadiah** — Destruction of the one that plunders the holy city.

**Jonah** — God’s unexpected mercy to Nineveh.

**Micah** — Prophecies that one day the Lord himself will rule in perfect justice, and Bethlehem prophesied to be the birthplace of the Messiah.

**Nahum** — God’s dealing with a wicked nation.

**Habakkuk** — “The Just Shall Live by Faith” amidst the unusual work of God.

**Zephaniah** — Coming of the Day of the Lord and restoration of peace and justice.

**Haggai** — God of renewal and rebuilding despite the people’s reluctance.

**Zechariah** — Supernatural restoration and deliverance with the Messiah.

**Malachi** — Move from rituals to real worship, and open heaven in the Last Days.

* 1. Article III

The New Testament

**Matthew** — Jesus the promised Messiah, the **Root** and **Seed** of David. Matthew traces Jesus’ **ancestry** back to **Abraham**. He is the **root** and **seed** of David, the promised Messiah. He speaks from his **Jewish** background. **Key word: Fulfilled**.

**Mark** — There is no mention of Jesus’ ancestry. His focus is on **miracles**, **power** and **action**. Mark, from a Roman background, sees Jesus serving with a **passion**! He came to serve and not be served. **Key word**: **Immediately**.

**Luke** — Luke traces Jesus’ **ancestry** to **Adam**, the **perfect** **man**, the perfect **sacrifice** for our sins. Luke, a **Greek** medical doctor, looks at the life of Christ from a very **precise**, **historical**, **analytical** and **scientific** perspective. For instance, he mentions Jesus shedding great ‘clots’ of blood. Luke 22:44

**Key word: Grace** for sinners.

**John** — John, the theologian, traces Jesus **ancestry** to the beginning of **time, as the Son of God,** John 1:1.

**Key word: Glory**

He lists the **7 signs** that point out that Jesus is the **I AM**.

Matthew traces Jesus’ **ancestry** back to **Abraham**. He is the **root** and **seed** of David.

He speaks from his **Jewish** background. It does not only appeal to the Jews but it also helps us see Him as the **Promised Messiah** for everyone.

**Key word: Fulfilled**. There are 300 prophecies, given over a period of 1500 years, precisely predicting the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Many of the prophecies are noted in Matthew. The chances of all these being fulfilled in one man is one in 100 quadrillions, a mathematical impossibility.

Mark

There is no mention of Jesus’ ancestry because the focus is on **servanthood**!

Mark speaks from his **Roman** background and perspective. His focus is on **miracles**, **power** and **action**.

**Key word**: **Immediately**. Mark sees Jesus as **the** **Servant** who serves with a **passion**! He came to serve and not be served.

Luke

Luke traces Jesus’ **ancestry** to **Adam**, the **perfect** **man**, the perfect **sacrifice** for our sins.

**Key word: Grace** for sinners.

Luke, a **Greek** medical doctor, looks at the life of Christ from a very **precise**, **historical**, **analytical** and **scientific** perspective. For instance, he mentions Jesus shedding great ‘clots’ of blood. Luke 22:44

*And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great* ***drops*** *of blood falling down to the ground. KJV*

Drops thrombos - a clot of blood, "thrombosis".

The above 3 Gospels are often called the Synoptic Gospel, Greek for seeing all together. It is seeing similar stories from different perspectives to build up a complete picture. The events are often in a similar sequence.

John

John, the theologian, traces Jesus **ancestry** to the beginning of **time**. *“In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word is God”,* John 1:1. Jesus is outside of time, space and matter.

**Key word: Glory**

*We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John 1:14*

He is writing in a **topical** way instead of in a historical chronology.

He lists the **7 signs** that point out that Jesus is the Son of **God, the I AM** and **what** He is like.

The **first** of the signs, the miracle of turning water into wine, tells us God wants us to have joy and the best.

**Acts** — Birth of the Church and the **outpouring** of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans** — The righteousness of God in our justification.

**1 Corinthians** — Various church issues identified and addressed

**2 Corinthians** — Comforted in adversities that we may comfort others. Great treasures in earthen vessel and the ministers of the new covenant.

**Galatians** — Justification by grace and freedom in Christ from the Mosaic Law.

**Ephesians** — Blessings in Christ and the power of grace.

**Philippians** — Joy and grace-filled life, and the call to reach out.

**Colossians** — The supremacy and deity of Jesus, holding all things together.

**1 Thessalonians** — Everyday life in the light of the Lord's Second Coming.

**2 Thessalonians** — Living in hope and alertness in the Last Days.

**1 Timothy** — Instruction to a young leader to care for His church.

**2 Timothy** — God’s endurance and faithfulness in service.

**Titus** — Exhortation and blessings to serve.

**Philemon** — God of reconciliation and uncommon kindness.

**Hebrews** — The superiority of Christ who is the substance of the shadows of the old Covenant.

**James** — Genuine faith tested in trials and the fruits that shine in our lives.

**1 Peter** — Exhortation to persevere in the midst of sufferings.

**2 Peter** — Challenges and opportunities in the Last Days.

**1 John** — God of love and intimate fellowship with God.

**2 John** — God of truth and alert discernment.

**3 John** — Call to hospitality.

**Jude** — Standing on your faith.

**Revelation** — The Ultimate unveiling and triumph of Christ and the church in the Last Days.

* 1. Benediction

Num 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord cause his face to smile on you and be gracious to you;

the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.’

Chose