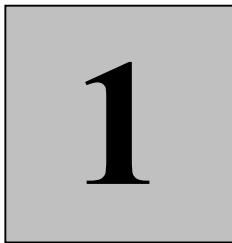

Know Your Bible

THE COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To inspire a passion and an understanding for the Scriptures
2. To familiarise students with an understanding of the basic origin, content and structure of the Bible
3. To introduce the student to basic “hermeneutical tools” for accurate Bible study and interpretation
4. To introduce students to the Great Author of the Bible

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15



In the beginning God...In the beginning was the Word...

You cannot separate God from His Word, and an understanding, a passion, and a commitment to the Scriptures are all essential to the life of a disciple.

The Bible is God’s complete “self-revelation.” Before we look at the “information” about Scriptures, we will spend the first session considering the “revelation” and “inspiration” of which the Scriptures themselves speak:

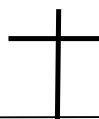
John 1:1-5 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

¹⁴ ***The Word became flesh*** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁶ *From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.*

¹⁷ ***For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.***

Old Testament
Law & Works



New Testament
Grace & Truth

Ps 1:1-3 ¹Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. ²But **his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.** ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

2 Tim 3:16-17 ¹⁶ **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Ps 138:2 (NKJV) **For You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.**

Ps 119:104-106 ¹⁰⁴gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. ¹⁰⁵ **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.** ¹⁰⁶I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.

Job 23:11-13 ¹¹My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. ¹²I have not departed from the commands of his lips; **I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.**

Is 55:9-11 ⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹so is **my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

Prov 4:20-22 ²⁰My son, pay attention to what I say; **listen closely to my words.** ²¹Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; ²²**for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.**

Matt 7:24-25 ²⁴"Therefore **everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.** ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Heb 4:12 **For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**

2

An overview of the Bible

The Bible is probably the best known, but least understood, book in all the world.

This session is an overview of information about the Bible to give the student a practical understanding of the Scriptures.

Exercise: List the names of your top ten Bible Characters below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Old & New Testament

The Bible is divided into two main parts: The Old Testament, and the New Testament. Another word for “testament” is “will,” as in “last will & testament”.

The “Old Covenant” ends at the Cross, as Jesus declares that *“this cup is the new covenant in My blood...”* (1 Cor 11:25).

Heb 12:23-24 ²³“...You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (For further reading see also Heb 8:7 – 9:28)

The Old Testament has...

- 39 books (Note: The chapters and verses were only added in the 1500's for easier referencing)
- It is divided into three parts: History, Poetry, and Prophecy.
- a. 17 Historical books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The first five of these books are called the Pentateuch (Greek) meaning “5 scrolls, or the Torah (Hebrew) meaning “instruction or law.” These books were written by Moses.

- b. 5 Poetical books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.
- c. 17 Prophetic books, Five of Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel; and twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The New Testament has...

- 27 books (Note that the Catholic Bible has 63 books in total, and most Orthodox Bibles have 73 books, as they include the books of the “Apocrypha” – see www.christiananswers.net for more on this.)
- The New Testament consists of 4 Gospels, The book of Acts, 21 Epistles, and Revelation.
 - a. The 4 Gospels are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These are accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry, arranged not as a biography or chronological narrative, but as a theological sermon to meet the needs of a particular group.
 - b. The 21 Epistles or “letters of instruction”, are: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1& 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2, & 3 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude.

Language:

The Old Testament was written in common Hebrew, except for a few sections in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in common market-place Greek, not classical or Modern Greek.

Who wrote the Bible, and when?

Over forty different authors, from shepherds to statesmen and everything in between, on three continents, wrote the Bible over a period of more than 1500 years (from 1400 B.C. to A.D. 100), and yet it has an amazing harmonious consistency.

The “Canon” of Scripture

Together the 66 Books listed above are called the “Canon” of Scripture. The word canon comes from a Greek word meaning a “measuring rod.” It is used to describe the inspired books of the Bible.

The Canon was formed within the first 350 years AD through a variety of Early Church councils. For more on this do some research at www.christiananswers.net

Different Versions of the Bible Today

Because most of us cannot read any of the languages in which the Bible was written, we need good translations to help us read the Word. Today there are countless different versions of the Bible available in the English Language, Some of these are classified as “Translations” and others as “Interpretations”, though all are really a mix of both in various proportions.

What version of the Bible do you generally read?

What Questions do you have, or have you been asked about the Bible?



HERMENEUTICS

Definition:
Biblical hermeneutics is the science of knowing how to properly interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.

Definition of Hermeneutics

Webster's dictionary defines hermeneutics as, "The science of interpretation, or of finding the meaning of an author's words and phrases, and of explaining it to others."

Biblical hermeneutics is perhaps summarized best by the following two scriptures:

2 Tim 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Inspiration, Interpretation & Application

Once we accept the Bible as God's inspired word, we still have the challenge of

- Interpretation (what does it say to us today?),
- Application (How do we live out what He says?)

Hermeneutics is both a science and an art. It is a science because it is concerned with principles within an ordered system. It is meant to derive and classify the principles necessary for the proper interpretation of Scripture. It is also an art because it is concerned with applying the principles derived. The application of these principles cannot be mechanical, but must involve the skill of the interpreter.

Exegesis and Eisegesis

"Exegesis" and "Eisegesis" are two conflicting approaches in Bible study. Exegesis is the exposition or explanation of a text based on a careful, objective analysis. The word exegesis literally means "to lead out of." That means that the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text.

The opposite approach to Scripture is eisegesis, which is the interpretation of a passage based on a subjective, non-analytical reading. The word eisegesis literally means "to lead into," which means the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text, making it mean whatever he wants.

Obviously, only exegesis does justice to the text. Eisegesis is a

mishandling of the text and often leads to a misinterpretation. Exegesis is concerned with discovering the true meaning of the text, respecting its grammar, syntax, and setting. Eisegesis is concerned only with making a point, even at the expense of the meaning of words.

2 Cor 4:2 *Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

An honest student of the Bible will be an exegete, allowing the text to speak for itself. Eisegesis easily lends itself to error, as the would-be interpreter attempts to align the text with his own preconceived notions.

- Exegesis allows us to agree with the Bible
- Eisegesis seeks to force the Bible to agree with us.

The process of exegesis involves

1. Observation: what does the passage say?
2. Interpretation: what does the passage mean?
3. Correlation: how does the passage relate to the rest of the Bible?
4. Application: how should this passage affect my life?

Eisegesis, on the other hand, involves

1. Imagination: what idea do I want to present?
2. Exploration: what Scripture passage seems to fit with my idea?
3. Application: what does my idea mean?

Notice that, in eisegesis, there is no examination of the words of the text or their relationship to each other, no cross-referencing with related passages, and no real desire to understand the actual meaning. Scripture serves only as a prop to the interpreter's idea.

The need for hermeneutics to bridge the gaps

The Scripture is communication from Divinity to Humanity, and whenever communication takes place, it must be recognised that a gap in understanding may exist between the communicator and the receiver.

For communication to be successful there must be a common medium between the two in order that this gap is bridged. General Hermeneutics refers to the various sets of rules which supply us with the materials with which the bridge can be built to bridge the gap between our minds and the minds of the Biblical writers. This bridging of the understanding gap is the foundational means for reaching the desired end: knowing what God meant by what He said. Consider the following "gaps" to be bridged:

1. The Linguistic Gap:
Problem: The Bible is written in three languages which are no longer in use
Solution: The way to bridge this linguistic gap is to study linguistics (or make use of available helps).
2. The Cultural Gap
Problem: The cultural contexts of Biblical writers differ vastly from the cultural context of the modern day reader.
Solution: This gap may be bridged by studying the cultures in which the writers of Scripture lived, remembering that different writers lived in cultural settings diverse from one another.

3. The Geographical Gap
Problem: The geographical context of the Biblical writers is foreign to the modern day reader.
Solution: This gap may be bridged by a study of the geographical setting in which the events and writing of the Bible occurred.
4. The Historical Gap
Problem: The historical context of the Biblical writers differs greatly from that of the modern day reader.
Solution: Become familiar with the historical setting for the events of the Bible and in which the writers lived.

Five methods of interpretation

1. The Allegorical Method: This method presumes that beneath the plain and obvious sense of Scripture lies its true meaning.
2. The Mystical Method: This method presumes that hidden beneath the surface of the words and their plain sense there lies a multiplicity of meanings.
3. The Devotional Method: The devotional method believes that the Bible was written for the personal edification and searches beyond the plain obvious meaning for a spiritual meaning applicable to the believers life.
4. The Rationalistic Method: This method presumes that the Bible is not the authoritative inspired word of God. It interprets Scripture as a human document in the light of human reason.
5. The Literal Method: The literal method assumes that the words of Scripture in their plain evident meaning are reliable; that God intended His revelation to be understood by all who believe.

The literal method does not exclude the figurative - we don't take what God says in figure of speech literally. It does not exclude the spiritual meaning either, neither excluding personal application. The General rule is: There is one interpretation, with different applications.

Recommended resources

Websites:

- www.christiananswers.net
- www.biblegateway.com

Books:

- "How to read the Bible for all its worth" by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart
- "Interpreting the Scriptures" by Kevin Conner and Ken Malmin

Exercise: Consider the meaning of the following passage:

2 Chron 27:1-2 *Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. . . . He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the LORD.*



Knowing the Great Author

To properly understand the Scriptures we need to know its Author. The Bible is God's self-revelation, and in this section we will look at some of the attributes of God which are stated and revealed in the first 3 chapters of Genesis.

1. GOD IS ETERNAL – He has no beginning.

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning God...*

Creation marks the beginning of time, not the beginning of God. By definition, God is eternal, and has no beginning. God never explains himself. We must believe that "He is" - **Heb 11:6**.

The Hebrew word for God in Genesis 1:1 is "Elohim," designating God as God, Almighty God, the great "I am who I am".

2. GOD IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THAT EXISTS

Gen 1:1 ... *God created the heavens and the earth.*

Here, as throughout Scripture, God is revealed as the creator of ALL that exists.

Heb 11:3 *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

Col 1:16 *"For by Him, all things were created."*

In Acts 14:15, Paul and Barnabas are preaching the gospel in a pagan environment at Lystra and they say, *"The God who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them."*

In Acts 17:24, Paul runs into the philosophers on Mars Hill and tells them of the God they don't know, *"He is the God who made the world and all things in it"*.

So if you don't believe Genesis 1:1, you have a lot of other things in the Bible not to believe ...

By the way, this same God who created everything will also create a new Heaven and a new earth and all in it.

The correct account of origins (i.e. creation versus evolution) has implications as to the veracity and truthfulness of Scripture, implications as to the Gospel and implications as to the end of human history – these are all wrapped up in how we understand origins in the book of Genesis. So the matter of origins is absolutely critical to all human thinking. If you don't believe what Genesis says about creation, what kind of precedent have you established for the rest of the Bible? And what about the end, when God creates a new heaven and a new earth? Will it really take billions of years? If you

believe God can do it instantly in the future, then what's your problem with Genesis? Believing the Genesis account to be historically and factually true and real is critical to a Christian worldview.

3. GOD IS A TRINITY

Gen 1:26 *"Let US make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ..."*

"Us" & "Our" reveal the Triune God of Scripture: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Let us make* shows God *personally* and *intimately* creating man.

The One God exists as three persons in the one being or substance or essence or reality. And this involves personhood or personality. So God made us as persons – for relationships. For this reason, relationships are the richest thing in all of life ...

There are not three gods, but one God in three personalities.

Deut 6:4 *"Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one God."*

This "one" here is the Hebrew "ECHAD" meaning "one, but many; the united One." This differs from "YACED", meaning "one, singular."

The Westminster Catechism states: "...there are three persons within the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

The Tri-unity of God tells us that Love, Communication, Fellowship, Unity and Order have always existed.

4. GOD IS A PERSONAL RELATING GOD

Gen 1:27 *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

1. Man is created in God's image: intelligent, with personality, with self-consciousness and cognition (the ability to think and reason).
2. Man is able to relate to God in a personal way as no other creature can.
3. Man is given a "dominion mandate" (Gen 1:28-30) and a "stewardship mandate" (Gen 2:15)
4. God made them male & female to be joined as "one flesh" in marriage (Gen 2:24, 25).
5. Eph 5:20-32 shows marriage as a "mystery" which reveals the relationship between Christ and His Bride the Church.

5. GOD IS THE MORAL LAW-GIVER

Gen 2:17 *"...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

This is the first "you must not" in the Bible. God gave man a free will so that love and obedience will be by personal choice, not programmed loyalty. We are free to choose blessings (life in all its fullness), or curses ("death") – Deut 28

Adam & Eve soon broke the law, and their relationship with God, they, “died” as they lost His covering (His glory - Rom 3:23) and were separated

- from Gods presence,
- from one another,
- from fulfilling their dominion and stewardship mandate.

In John 14: 15 Jesus echo’s this as He says: *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”*

Later, through Moses, God would introduce the law which would establish a clear revelation of “sin” and our need for a Saviour.

6. GOD IS THE GREAT REDEEMER

Gen 3:9 *“Then the LORD (Jehovah = Savoir), called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”*

Notice that it was God who came seeking man, and not man who sought God. The Creator (Elohim) now becomes Saviour / LORD (Jehovah).

Is 43:1-3 *“But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine... 3 For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.”*

Gal 3:13,14 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

(We continue this theme of redemption in the next subject of the course entitled “Jesus in Genesis” – don’t miss this exciting teaching!)

Luke 24:27 *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

SUBJECT SUMMARY

God speaks to us through His word. We need to diligently apply ourselves to hear His voice through the word, and for this we must learn to accurately interpret the Scriptures. We cannot truly know the word without knowing the Great Author:

John 5:39-40 *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

Let’s come to Him and His word to find LIFE!