

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

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History —
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Esther

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Proverbs
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Daniel

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Zechariah
Malachi

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I. INTRODUCTION

A study of the Bible must begin with recognition of its divine authority as the Word of God. The Bible is a record of *God's word to man*, recorded by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21). Since it is the Word of God and not the word of men, its power and authority originate with God Himself. All scripture is inspired by God ("God-breathed" — II Timothy 3:16) and so has all the integrity and dependability of God.

Any attempt to understand God and His ways without the Word of God is fruitless. The Bible must be the starting point of all doctrinal discussion, because it is God's revelation of Himself to mankind.

II. WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is made up of 66 books, divided into two testaments (i.e. covenants): the Old Testament and the New Testament. It was written down by approximately 44 inspired authors over a period spanning 1600 years. The Old Testament contains 39 books, spanning the time period from the creation of the world to the return of the Israelites from Babylonian exile. The New Testament contains 27 books, covering the time from Jesus' birth to the end of the 1st century. (See the end of this lesson for an overview of all the books of the Bible.)

A. THE OLD TESTAMENT

The 39 books of the Old Testament can be divided into five major parts: Pentateuch, History, Poetry, the Major Prophets, and the Minor Prophets. These books contain the story of God's dealings with His chosen people, the Israelites, and are recognized by Jews today as their canon (the genuine and inspired scriptures, God's Word to the Jewish race). The major divisions of the Old Testament are as follows:

The Law (Pentateuch) — Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

II Peter 1:21

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

II Timothy 3:16

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1. Original language

The Old Testament was written down in Hebrew, a Semitic language akin to Arabic. Small segments of Ezra, Daniel, and one verse in Jeremiah, are written in Aramaic (the language of Palestine in Jesus' day).

2. Archaeological proofs

Numerous attempts by critical scholars have failed to prove that facts listed in the Old Testament are erroneous. Here is just one of many examples:

At least 47 times the Old Testament makes mention of a group of people called the "Hittites." However, in no other ancient writings was there any mention of this nation. Skeptical scholars, during the late 19th century, used to point out this "mythical" kingdom as proof that one couldn't trust the historical facts written in the Old Testament. Then, in 1906, a German archaeologist unearthed the ruins of a large city in modern-day Turkey, which proved to be the capital of a vast empire, the *Hittite* empire. Its existence had up to this time been little known and only suspected by archaeologists, yet the Old Testament had been speaking of Hittites for thousands of years.¹

Merrill Unger —

Unger's Bible Dictionary

Today, archaeological expeditions in the Middle East continue to prove the authenticity of the Old Testament.

3. How it was recorded

Although at first God's revelations were oral (Genesis 15:1), He later commanded that what He had spoken should be written down (Exodus 34:27). Throughout the history of Israel, there were men who recorded what God was doing or saying (Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 17:18; Joshua 24:26; I Samuel 10:25; Isaiah 8:16; Jeremiah 36:2).

These writings were the scriptures to the people of God at that time, and God expected them to revere them as such (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2). These books have been passed down to our day, and make up what is now known as the Old Testament.

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."

Genesis 15:1

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

Exodus 34:27

And Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the Lord, and these are their journeys according to their starting places.

Numbers 33:2

Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

Deuteronomy 17:18

And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

Joshua 24:26

Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house.

I Samuel 10:25

"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples."

Isaiah 8:16

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

Joshua 1:8

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“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Genesis 3:15

When reading the Old Testament, it is important that one realize that all the books in it *look forward*. When man fell, God promised a redeemer (Genesis 3:15), and the books of the Old Testament point to that Redeemer. Whether by allusion or direct prophecy, you'll find Jesus in every book of the Old Testament (see Oral Roberts' *Christ in Every Book of the Bible*).

The Old Testament is the story of the nation Israel, but it is also God's repeated promise that He was going to send a Redeemer to purchase our salvation.

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament consists of 27 books, written by 8 authors over a 50 year period. It can be roughly divided into five segments: the Gospels, History, the Epistles of Paul, the General Epistles, and Revelation.

The Gospels are a record of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the Acts give you a history of the early church; the Epistles are letters from apostles to churches, explaining Christian doctrines; Revelation is John's record of a vision of the end times that he received while in exile on the isle of Patmos.

While the Old Testament contains God's promise of a Redeemer, the New Testament tells us how that Redeemer came and what He accomplished.

The major divisions of the New Testament are as follows:

Gospels —	Matthew	
	Mark	
	Luke	
	John	
History —	Acts	
Epistles of Paul —	Romans	I & II Thessalonians
	I & II Corinthians	I & II Timothy
	Galatians	Titus
	Ephesians	Philemon
	Philippians	
	Colossians	

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Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

I Timothy 4:13

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

I Peter 1:10,11

And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and he said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: 'He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who shall relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.' And the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?' And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

Acts 8:30-35

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

I Corinthians 10:11

accumulate the various writings of the apostles. Remember, at this time there were no printing presses; these handwritten copies of the gospels and epistles were the only available scripture. One had to come to the place of fellowship to hear the scriptures; this is why Paul exhorted Timothy to practice the ". . . public reading of scripture. . ." (I Timothy 4:13).

Consider what those early believers had for New Testament scriptures — a handful of laboriously written copies. What a privilege it is for us to have such easy access to the Word of God. Let's not waste that privilege by failing to read what modern technology has made so conveniently available to us.

C. PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

When studying the Old and New Testaments, the following guideline is an aid in rightly dividing the word of truth: ***Always interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament! The Bible is progressive revelation.*** The Old Testament foretells the coming of a Messiah; the gospels tell us of His coming; the Epistles (especially the epistles of Paul) tell what He accomplished through His death and resurrection.

One cannot understand all the things written in the Old Testament without a knowledge of the New Testament revelation of Christ. Even the men who wrote the Old Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit didn't fully understand what they had written, because Christ had not yet been revealed (I Peter 1:10,11). The Ethiopian eunuch needed someone with a working knowledge of this New Testament revelation to explain to him the meaning of Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:30-35).

With the New Testament to shed light on it, the Old Testament becomes a rich treasury of the knowledge of God, full of examples and instruction which are invaluable to a New Covenant believer (I Corinthians 10:11).

III. THE NATURE OF THE WORD

Although it is interesting and helpful to study how the books of the Bible were written down and compiled, we must never lose sight of its real nature. The Bible is much more than just

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General Epistles — Hebrews
James
I & II Peter
I, II & III John
Jude
Prophecy — Revelation

1. Original language

The New Testament was written in Greek. This includes the gospels, even though the language which Jesus and all the men of Palestine spoke at that time was Aramaic, not Greek.

At the time the New Testament was written, Greek was a world-wide language. A gospel written in Aramaic or Hebrew would only be useful in Palestine, but one written in Greek could be read anywhere in the known world. Thus, the Greek language was an invaluable tool in the early spreading of the gospel.

2. How it was recorded

Although the books of the New Testament are arranged somewhat chronologically, they were not written in that order. The first New Testament "scripture" anyone received in those days was oral, coming from the mouths of those who preached the gospel. Paul commended those who received his teaching "not as the word of men," but as the divinely inspired Word of God (I Thessalonians 2:13).

The first part of the New Testament to be written down was the Epistles (specifically, the Epistles of Paul). These were written during the period 48-60 A.D. The gospels, written from about 60-100 A.D., were recorded from the memory of those who had walked with Jesus while He was on the earth (Luke 1:1,2).

It is generally believed that the entire New Testament was written before the end of the first century A.D.

3. How it was compiled

It was common practice among the churches in the 1st century to share and exchange letters written by the apostles to the churches. In fact, this practice was encouraged by Paul himself (Colossians 4:16). In this way, each church began to

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.
I Thessalonians 2:13

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word have handed them down to us.

Luke 1:1,2

And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.
Colossians 4:16

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a book. It is the **Word of God**, and as such it is *supernatural!* By His Word God created the world and the universe (Hebrews 11:3), and even to this day “. . . *all things are upheld by the Word of His power*” (Hebrews 1:3). God’s Word is alive and full of power (Hebrews 4:12), imparting life to all who will partake of it (John 6:63; Proverbs 4:22).

A. ALIVE AND POWERFUL

Far from being a dead book, the Word of God is living and powerful. It has within it all the life and power necessary to maintain a believer in victory. Paul had such confidence in this fact that he could leave the Ephesian church while it was still in its infancy; he was convinced that the Word was able to build them up and sustain them (Acts 20:32).

1. God’s agent

God’s Word is the agent by which He accomplishes His will on the earth. God created the world by His Word (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6,9). Men are born again by the Word (I Peter 1:23). God heals by His Word (Psalm 107:20). **God’s Word is His power.**

2. The effects

Because it is alive and powerful, God’s Word has a *profound effect* wherever it is preached. In Acts 19 we find the record of a mighty move of God’s Spirit which took place in Ephesus and affected all of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The sick were healed, demons were cast out, and many came out of occult practices to serve the Lord. Acts 19:20 gives us a clue as to why all this took place: “*So the Word of God was growing mightily and prevailing.*”

God’s Word was the source of all this outpouring, because **God’s Word is His power.** Here we see an example of what Paul meant when he said, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel (Word of God) because it is the POWER OF GOD unto salvation to all who believe . . .*” (Romans 1:16).

B. ETERNAL

Read I Peter 1:23

Jesus said to His disciples, “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away*” (Matthew 24:35).

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Hebrews 11:3

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

John 6:63

For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body.

Proverbs 4:22

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

Acts 20:32

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Genesis 1:3

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.

Psalms 33:6

For He spoke, and it was done.

Psalms 33:9

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.

I Peter 1:23

He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Psalms 107:20

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Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.

Psalm 119:89

Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it."

Jeremiah 1:12

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55:10,11

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

James 1:17

Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Hebrews 4:1-3

God's Word is an eternal, absolute reality that cannot be altered. It is as unchanging as God is unchanging. As far as God is concerned, what He has spoken is "... *settled forever in Heaven*" (Psalm 119:89).

1. Unfailing

One can be assured of the absolute *integrity* of God's Word; it cannot fail. God Himself stands behind every promise that He has made (Jeremiah 1:12), and has stated that His Word will not return to Him empty, or fruitless (Isaiah 55:10,11).

2. Reliable

"*God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?*" (Numbers 23:19 KJV).

A person's word is only as reliable as that person's character warrants. The word of a liar or a cheat would not be very valuable; even a good man's word is not absolutely reliable, because that good man could change with time. We have this assurance about God: **He does not lie, and He cannot change** (Numbers 23:19; James 1:17). God's Word is reliable because God Himself is reliable.

Our assurance and faith lie in the Word of God, a God who cannot lie and who cannot fail.

IV. HOW TO PROFIT FROM THE WORD

We have seen that the Bible is a supernatural book, and as God's Word, it contains all the power and life necessary to meet any one of our needs. However, there is a part which we must play in order to appropriate all the power that the Word has for us.

A. MIX FAITH WITH THE WORD

In Hebrews 4:1-3 we are told that although the Word was preached to the children of Israel, it did not profit them, because they didn't mix it with faith.

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Read Numbers 13:17-33.

1. The evil report

Here we find the account of the spies going into the land of Canaan and coming back with a report that was directly opposite to what the Word of God said. The ten spies with the evil report said that they were as grasshoppers in their own sight.

In reality, with God on their side and with His Word promising their victory, they were conquerors; they could not have failed. But, they chose to put their faith in what they saw and so perceived themselves as grasshoppers.

2. The truth

All the power needed for them to take possession of the land was made available when God spoke His Word; yet that power was of no avail to them, because they didn't appropriate it. The problem lay not with God, nor with His Word (the truth), but with the people of God. Their lack of faith kept the Word from prospering them as God had intended.

3. Faith vs. unbelief

Faith is the factor that activates the Word of God and brings out the great power resident in it. The Word won't work for you unless you mix faith with it. This doesn't mean that the Word lacks for power; all scripture is profitable, even if some don't profit through unbelief. Their unbelief doesn't decrease the profitability of God's Word in any way.

4. The Word vs. circumstances

The children of Israel chose to put their faith in the circumstances (how thick the walls were, how tall the giants were) rather than in God's promise that He would fight for them. Thus, they failed to appropriate the power and blessings of God.

The lesson we can learn from their mistake is this: **Never base your judgments, with regard to any situation, upon the circumstances which you face. Always judge the matter by the Word of God!**

When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land.

Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

"Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.

"Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan."

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it."

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us."

So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.

"There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Numbers 13:25-33

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The sower sows the word.

Mark 4:14

And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the ground."

Mark 4:26

It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the ground, . . .

Mark 4:31

And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the ground; and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows — how, he himself does not know. The earth produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head."

Mark 4:26-28

B. PLANT THE WORD AS A SEED

In numerous parables in the gospels, Jesus likened the Word of God to a seed (Mark 4:14,26,31). The Word is called many things in the scriptures (e.g. a sword, a light, a rock, etc.), but in these parables Jesus is trying to show how the power in God's Word can be released. As a seed has life and power, so God's Word has life and power. If you know how to release the power in a seed, then you'll know how to release the power in the Word.

Seed is of benefit only if it is planted; seed in a seed bag won't grow. The same is true of God's Word; if it's not planted in our hearts, but left sitting on the shelf or even in our minds, it will never produce the harvest which God intended it to. The Word contains all the power that will ever be needed to produce results, but as with seed, if it's left sitting, and not planted, nothing will happen. However, if you treat it like seed, and plant it in your heart, it will work for you.

Read Mark 4:26-28. From this parable, we can see some principles regarding how to receive a harvest from the Word.

1. The first step

The first step in getting God's Word to work for you is to put it in your heart. Find the appropriate scriptures that pertain to what you need from God and plant it in your heart by meditating upon it. Faith is the way to receive from God, and faith won't come until the Word is planted in you.

2. Time

Once the seed is planted, the man in the parable sleeps and rises, that is, goes about his business, and the seed sprouts. We must believe God's Word is working even when we see no results; seed doesn't sprout the instant it is planted. Put the Word in your heart and don't become discouraged if you don't see immediate results.

3. Trust & patience

The seed grows, and the man doesn't know how. It is not necessary for you to understand how God is going to work; just believe the Word and leave it planted. "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own under-*

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standing. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

4. The full harvest

The fruit, in this parable, comes forth and matures in stages: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. God’s Word brings forth the manifestation in stages, so you may not see full deliverance, prosperity, or healing *immediately*. Some, when they see improvement, but not total manifestation, become discouraged, and give up. They see a blade, and think that’s all they’re going to get; or they see an ear, and think that’s all they’ll receive. But, the farmer in the parable waited and received the blade, then the ear, and finally the full corn in the ear. **If you leave the Word planted and don’t give up, you’ll receive the full harvest that God intends His Word to produce.**

V. HOW TO ESTABLISH THE WORD IN YOUR LIFE

We have seen that the Word is the power of God, and how it will prosper anyone who puts faith in it. But, how does a believer establish God’s Word in his own life? How can he deepen his knowledge of God and His Word?

This doesn’t happen accidentally! It only happens when a believer makes a quality decision to come to know the scriptures. Throughout the Bible God speaks of the value of giving careful attention to His Word (Deuteronomy 11:18-31; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 19:7,8; 119:9,11; Proverbs 4:20-22; Acts 17:11).

*“Watch over your heart **with all diligence**, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23).* The key to establishing your heart in the Word is **diligence**. If a believer will diligently give attention to the scriptures, he’ll find his knowledge of God and God’s Word growing deeper and deeper.

A. READ THE WORD

Giving careful attention to the Word *begins* by establishing a daily discipline of Bible reading. Any believer’s knowledge of the Word will not start with “heavy-duty” revelations, but

“You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart, and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

And you shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up.

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth.

For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do it, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him; then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.

Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours. . . There shall no man be able to stand before you; the Lord your God shall lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you.

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.”

Deuteronomy 11:18-28

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“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

Joshua 1:8

The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalms 19:7,8

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.

Psalms 119:9,11

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body.

Proverbs 4:20-22

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

Acts 17:11

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 4:23

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson ONE THE BIBLE — THE WORD OF GOD

with disciplined daily Bible reading. **You've got to read it before God can reveal anything to you.**

Many Christians get discouraged with daily Bible reading because they don't get revelation every time they read. The fact is, however, that whether you *feel* like it or not, reading the Word has a very positive effect on your inner man. **"The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart"** (Psalm 19:8).

Jesus said, **"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"** (Matthew 4:4), and **"the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life"** (John 6:63). The Bible is food for your spirit, and every time you read, your inner man is being fed, even when your emotions don't feel like this is the case.

Here are some suggestions to help you establish a daily Bible reading habit:

1. Set a time

Set apart a time of the day when you can read your Bible. This time should be compatible with your schedule, so that you can keep it consistently.

2. Set a goal

Set a Bible reading goal for yourself. There are many reading schedules available which will enable you to read through the entire Bible in one year. (You'll find one at the back of this lesson.)

3. Pray

Pray before you read. **"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law"** (Psalm 119:18). Also read Ephesians 1:17,18.

4. Make no exceptions

Make no exceptions once you have established your daily reading schedule. Don't allow anything to pre-empt it. Our daily time in the Bible should be as important to us as our daily bread (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:103). Some have committed themselves to the following rule: No Bible, no breakfast.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalm 19:8

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" "

Matthew 4:4

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

John 6:63

Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.

Psalm 119:18

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Ephesians 1:17,18

How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 119:103

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Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

I Timothy 4:7

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

Acts 17:11

It's obvious that establishing this time of Bible reading will involve some degree of *discipline*. But lest we think that discipline is "bondage" and "unspiritual," let's read what Paul wrote to Timothy: "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth*" (II Timothy 2:15). Paul also said that **we should discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness** (I Timothy 4:7).

B. STUDY THE WORD

Studying the Word involves a little more than just reading. In Acts 17 the Bereans are noted for ". . . *examining the scriptures daily . . .*" (Acts 17:11) in order to understand what Paul was preaching. Sometimes, in order to fully understand a certain doctrine or passage of scripture, one must read the text more than once and compare it with other scriptures on the same subject (i.e. cross-reference). This, of course, demands more time than reading, but the rewards in understanding the scriptures are rich.

1. Some tools for studying

- a. **An accurate Bible translation**, one with which you are comfortable and accommodates your vocabulary (e.g. New American Standard, New International, King James, Revised Standard Versions).
- b. **Amplified Bible** — A translation of the Bible that expands the meaning of the original languages.
- c. **Bible concordance** — A concordance lists alphabetically all the words used in the Bible with their context and location (be sure that the concordance you buy matches the translation of Bible that you read, e.g. Young's, Strong's, Cruden's).
- d. **Bible Dictionary** — Defines Biblical names, places, and concepts (Unger's, Zondervan, Davis).
- e. **Bible Handbook** — A synopsis of the entire Bible, giving much historical and geographical background information (Halley, Unger's).
- f. **Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**
- g. **Pen and notebook** — Write down what you discover from your examining of the scriptures.

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The above listed tools of study are suggestions to help you in your study of the scriptures. They are not requirements for this course, neither are they requirements for a real understanding of the Bible. They are, however, very useful if they are kept in their proper perspective. They are *tools* for study, not the thing to be studied.

2. Some methods of study

a. Read your entire Bible. Every Christian should read the Bible all the way through. Use a daily Bible reading plan that will systematically take you through the whole Bible in a specified period of time. The plan which we have included at the end of this lesson will take you from Genesis to Revelation in one year at the rate of about 20 minutes of reading per day.

b. Bible study by chapters. Outline chapters according to author, time period, main subject, main thoughts, key verses, and key words.

c. Bible study by words. By tracing certain words, such as love, grace, healing, the tongue, you'll gain greater insight into the nature of God and the nature of the new creation. Use a concordance or the cross-reference in your Bible margin. (A reference Bible will give a notation in the margin or by footnote of related scriptures.)

d. Bible study by topics. Closely related to word study is a study of basic Bible topics. By choosing fundamental subjects such as prayer, sowing and reaping, faith, healing, freedom from fear, you can group related scriptures for a greater understanding of Bible principles.

e. Bible study by Proverbs. This book is rich in wisdom and basic moral instruction. It can be studied by outlining each chapter or by tracing basic principles: e.g. contrasts — wisdom and folly, good and evil, diligence and sloth; honesty, family life, mercy, love.

f. Bible study by prophecy. It is of great value to trace the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, particularly as it relates to Jesus. It can be done easily in a Bible with marginal cross-references.

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Sample study of prophecies of the Messiah fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

Joshua 1:8

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.

I Corinthians 2:11,12

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

But just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

I Corinthians 2:9,10

(Cross-reference)
Related scripture/
fulfillment

Prophetic
scripture

Subject

Gen. 3:15	seed of a woman	Gal. 4:4
Gen. 49:10	from tribe of Judah	Luke 3:33
Mic. 5:2	born in Bethlehem	Luke 2:4,5,7
Isa. 7:14	born of a virgin	Luke 1:26,27,30,31
Zec. 9:9	triumphal entry	Mark 11:7,9,11
Zec. 11:12	sold for 30 pieces of silver	Mat. 26:15
Zec. 12:10	pierced through hands and feet	John 20:27
Psa. 68:18	His ascension to God's right hand	Mark 16:19; I Cor. 15:4; Eph. 4:8

C. MEDITATE ON THE WORD

God told Joshua: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Joshua 1:8).

The word meditate means to mull over, to muse, to ponder, to reflect. In effect, it is saying the Word to yourself over and over again. Meditation will unlock the scriptures to your spirit and enable the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the things of God (I Corinthians 2:11,12).

As we meditate in the Word and allow the Word to "dwell in us richly" (Colossians 3:16), the Holy Spirit will begin to show us the reality of the spiritual realm which the Word describes (I Corinthians 2:9,10).

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Lesson ONE THE BIBLE — THE WORD OF GOD

VI. SUMMARY — GIVE THE WORD FIRST PLACE

God Himself has exalted His Word above even His own name (Psalm 138:2). As His children we also need to exalt the Word and make it the priority in our lives. By putting the Word first in your life, you'll experience far more of God's life and blessing. The Word shows clearly who God is and what He has done in us and for us. God's Word is full of His life and power, and if we'll meditate on it, plant it in our hearts, and mix it with active faith, we'll begin to experience that life and power in fuller and fuller measure.

I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, and give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; for Thou has magnified Thy word according to all Thy name.

Psalm 138:2

VII. ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Listen to tape number 1.
- B. Complete the study questions (to be turned in to your cell leader).
- C. Suggested reading:

The Implanted Word
Bob Buess

Let The Word Prevail
Clarence King

How To Study The Bible
John Job, editor

How To Study The Bible
Tim LaHaye

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson ONE THE BIBLE — THE WORD OF GOD

VIII. BIBLE SURVEY

A. OLD TESTAMENT

1. PENTATEUCH (5)

- Genesis — The book of origins. Our introduction to the Bible tells of four outstanding events — the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Babel dispersion; and four outstanding persons — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. God reveals His plan of redemption.
- Exodus — By the power of God and the leadership of Moses, Israel is delivered from Egyptian bondage. The Law is given; the Covenant established; and the tabernacle built.
- Leviticus — Israel is taught the holiness of God and how to approach Him in a holy manner through the sacrificial system, the precepts of the Law, and penalties for violation of the Law.
- Numbers — Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. We see God's "goodness and severity" — He judges the old generation and preserves the new.
- Deuteronomy — God renews His Covenant with Israel before they enter Canaan. The message is God's faithfulness — to His promises, His purposes, His people.

2. HISTORY (12)

- Joshua — Under Joshua's leadership, Israel enters and sets out to possess her predestined inheritance, Canaan — by conquest.
- Judges — God raises up leaders (judges) to deliver Israel from her enemies when she cries out to Him. Covers roughly the first 350 years of Israel's history in Canaan.
- Ruth — A story of faith, love and loyalty. The ancestry of David and Jesus are traced to this Gentile woman.
- I Samuel — The book of transition. Israel turns from leadership by divinely-appointed judges (theocracy) to a king (monarchy). It is the book of three remarkable men — Samuel, the last of the judges; Saul, the first of the kings; David, the greatest of the kings.
- II Samuel — The book of David's reign includes his triumphs and his trouble, resulting from his faith and his sin, and how Israel is affected by them.

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- I Kings — The remarkable reign of Solomon; the building of the temple; the division of the kingdom (north and south); the ministry of Elijah.
- II Kings — The history of the divided kingdom — the fall of Israel and Judah; the Babylonian captivity; the ministry of Elisha.
- I Chronicles — Genealogies of the patriarchs. The reign of David is recounted with emphasis on worship, the ark, the Covenant, and the temple of the Lord.
- II Chronicles — Solomon's 40 year reign; the division of the kingdom; the 20 kings of Judah; the Babylonian exile.
- Ezra — Restoration of Israel. Exiles return from Babylon; temple is rebuilt; prophets Haggai and Zechariah arise; worship life of Israel rebuilt under Ezra's leadership.
- Nehemiah — Reconstruction of Israel. Under Nehemiah's leadership, the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt; the people are reinstructed in the Law and reconsecrated to God.
- Esther — Israel escapes extermination. God delivers His Covenant people, who remain in Babylon after the exile, through the Jewess Queen Esther.

3. POETRY (5)

- Job — The source of our suffering and the source of our deliverance and blessing are clearly defined.
- Psalms — The hymnbook of the ages. Poetry written for music encompassing both praise and prayer. Themes range from thanksgiving, recognition of God's presence, power and mercy, His deliverance individually and corporately, personal communion and adoration — to Messianic prophecy.
- Proverbs — The teaching of moral and ethical precepts. Wisdom for practical living in sonnets and maxims.
- Ecclesiastes — A sermon with "vanity of vanities; all is vanity" as its text. Personal experience of the preacher proves that when wisdom and pleasure are sought as ends in themselves, the quest fails to satisfy the human soul. Reverence and obedience to God are extolled.
- Song of Solomon — A poem glorifying wedded love; a type of the love relationship between God and His chosen people, Christ and the Church.

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4. MAJOR PROPHETS (5)

- Isaiah — The prophet entreats Judah to repent and obey the Law to avoid judgment, assures them of God's grace and comfort, and describes the Prince of Peace — the salvation of Jews and Gentiles alike.
- Jeremiah — Judah receives her last warning to repent before the Babylonian seizure and rejects Jeremiah's message of judgment.
- Lamentations — A memorial poem written by Jeremiah on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
- Ezekiel — Prior to the captivity, Ezekiel preached repentance and judgment; subsequently, he envisions the restored Israel — the new temple and the new law.
- Daniel — Daniel prophesies of the nations of the world and of Israel's future in relation to them in the plan of God.

5. MINOR PROPHETS (12)

- Hosea — Hosea prophesies of Israel's unfaithfulness and judgment, the exile, her later conversion and renewal.
- Joel — Joel calls Judah to repentance to avoid judgment on her disobedience. Predicts outpouring of Holy Spirit and judgment on the nations.
- Amos — Amos prophesies of coming judgment on Israel's injustices and spiritual corruption.
- Obadiah — A sentence of judgment is pronounced on the Edomites (descendants of Esau) for their alliance with Israel's enemies and participation in the sacking of Jerusalem.
- Jonah — God warns Nineveh of impending judgment through a reluctant prophet, and the people respond with earnest repentance. Reflects God's concern for the salvation of sinful men.
- Micah — Micah declares the imminent judgment of Israel and Judah, envisions the ultimate triumph of Jerusalem, and foretells the coming of the Messiah.
- Nahum — Nahum follows Isaiah as God's prophet to Judah and picks up 100 years later where Jonah leaves off with Nineveh. Nineveh refuses to repent, and Nahum describes her siege and destruction.

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- Habakkuk — The prophet protests Judah's lawlessness and reveals God's instrument of judgment to be the Babylonians (Chaldeans). Also describes the triumph of faith.
- Zephaniah — God's witness to Judah warns of impending judgment, exhorts them to repent, and promises future restoration.
- Haggai — Haggai rebukes the Jews for their disobedience and apathy, encourages them to rebuild the temple, describes the future establishment of God's earthly kingdom and God's judgment on ungodly nations.
- Zechariah — God's prophet-priest exhorts Judah to rebuild the temple and describes for them the first and second comings of their Shepherd-King.
- Malachi — Through this last Old Testament prophet, God calls out to Israel one more time before the 400-year silence. The appeal is made with promise (blessing) and warning (judgment), and again God allows His people to choose.

B. NEW TESTAMENT

1. HISTORY (5)

- Matthew — The first book of the New Covenant links the Gospel to the Hebrew scriptures by introducing the New Testament as fulfillment of the Old Testament. His account of the life of Christ is clearly directed at the Jews in an attempt to reveal Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah.
- Mark — In this gospel, Jesus is presented as the Miracle-Worker with power over the natural and spiritual realms. It is the Good News in action.
- Luke — The Greek physician Luke bridges the gap between Jew and Gentile as he presents the common humanity of the perfect Son of man with all the human family.
- John — The eye-witness apostle John plainly declares Jesus the eternal Son of God, Israel's Messiah, Jehovah Himself, the world's Savior, the world's Creator, the Truth, the Word made flesh, the Life of the world.
- Acts — Luke explains how the Gospel began with the promise of Israel's restoration and ended with the Gentile church in Rome. The Holy Spirit comes; and the Church is born and grows.

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2. CHRISTIAN CHURCH EPISTLES/THE PAULINE EPISTLES (9)

- Romans — Christ, God's power to the believer. Paul relates how the Gospel saves the sinner, how the Gospel relates to Israel, and how the Gospel practically applies to our behavior.
- I Corinthians — Christ, God's wisdom to the believer. Paul reprovcs the church at Corinth for its divisions and disorder and then replies to specific problems concerning marriage, women, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, the doctrine of resurrection.
- II Corinthians — Christ, God's comfort to the believer. Paul answers his critics, gives an account of his ministry, and vindicates his apostolic office.
- Galatians — Christ, God's righteousness to the believer. Paul corrects the Galatian error — Mosaic Law and circumcision were not necessary for salvation. He exhorts them to receive God's grace by faith and walk in the liberty of love and the Holy Spirit.
- Ephesians — Christ, God's riches to the believer. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus of the believer's position in Christ (our wealth) and conduct in the world (our walk).
- Philippians — Christ, God's sufficiency to the believer. Paul writes to Philippi of Christian joy and rejoicing, our gain in Christ, teaching by example, and Christ as our Life, our Mind, our Goal, and our Strength.
- Colossians — Christ, God's fulness to the believer. Paul writes to Colosse of the Lordship of Christ and the completeness of believers in Him.
- I Thessalonians — Christ, God's promise to the believer. Paul describes for the Christians at Thessalonica how they were saved, how they are to live, and the glorious hope of the second coming.
- II Thessalonians — Christ, God's reward to the believer. Paul urges believers to wait patiently and work diligently until the Lord returns.

3. PASTORAL EPISTLES/THE PAULINE EPISTLES (4)

- I Timothy — Paul instructs Timothy of order and positions of leadership in the local church as well as his conduct as a pastor in faithful teaching and exemplary living.
- II Timothy — Paul discusses ministry in the local church. In his last epistle, Paul writes of the Gospel as a trust to be preserved, cherished and committed to faithful men.

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- Titus — Paul emphasizes the connection of sound doctrine with godliness of life and the need to maintain good works.
- Philemon — Conversion of a runaway slave. A practical illustration of Christian principle applied to social relationship.

4. HEBREW CHRISTIAN EPISTLES (8)

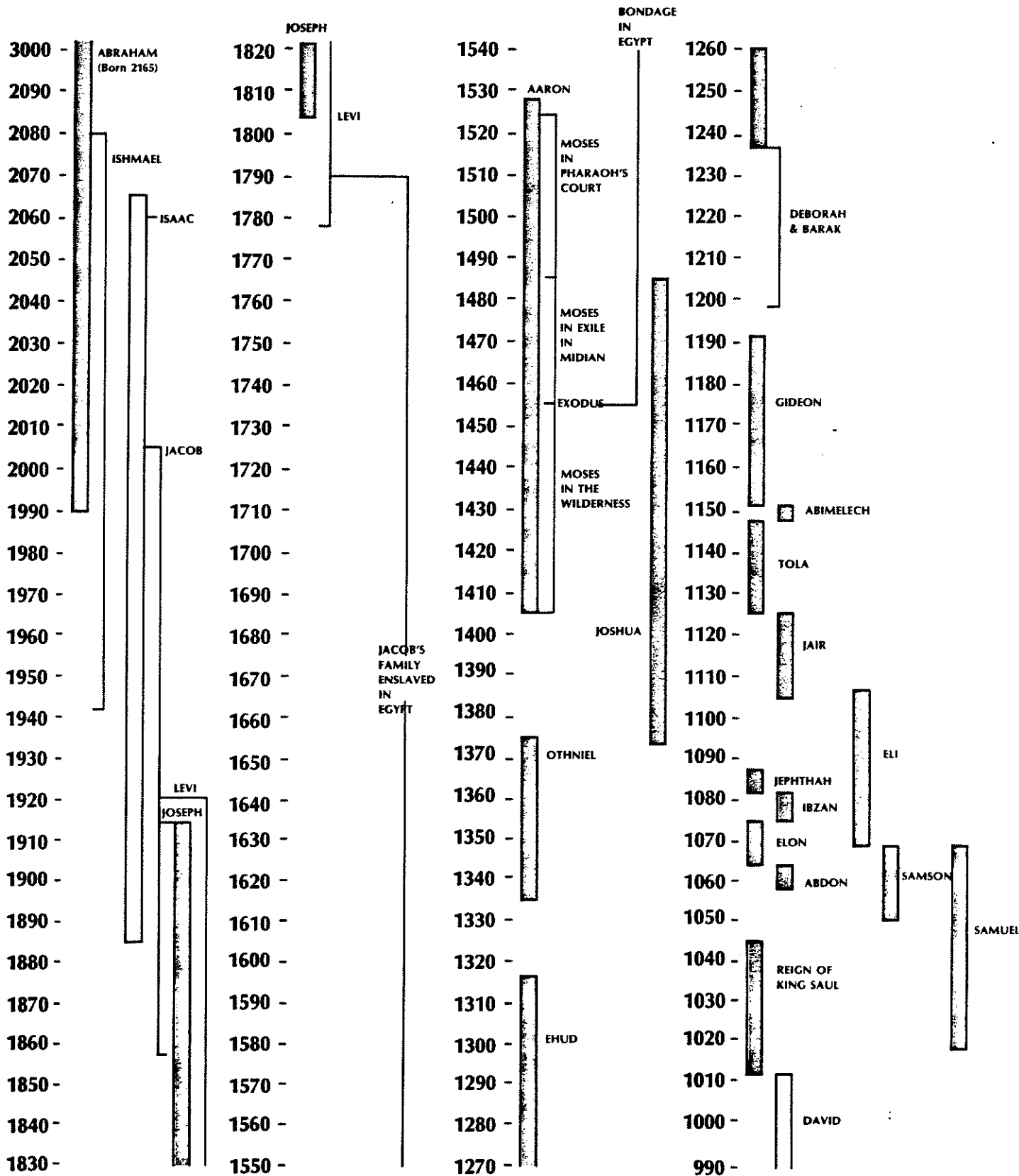
- Hebrews — Jesus is presented as the new (and better) Deliverer. Calvary is the new (and better) Covenant. Faith is the new (and better) principle.
- James — The Lord's brother gives the proof of true faith — endurance of temptation, impartial benevolence, control of the tongue, godliness in all things.
- I Peter — Peter encourages Christians in trial and instructs them in holy living.
- II Peter — Peter discusses the true knowledge, false teachers, and the sure promise of the second coming.
- I John — John defines God as love. His main thoughts are mutual Christian love, abiding in Christ, how to know truth from error, the traits of the born-again, and the believer and the world.
- II John — How to continue in the truth: walk in love and guard against error.
- III John — Truth and love vs. pride and strife.
- Jude — Warning to believers of the Gnostic heresy — a philosophy that distinguished between matter as inherently evil and spirit as inherently good.

5. PROPHECY (1)

- Revelation — Prophetic visions given to John portray the end of the age: the risen Christ enthroned, the Great Tribulation, the wrath of God, the millennial reign of Christ, Satan's final destiny, the Great White Throne Judgment, the new heaven and the new earth. The ultimate triumph of Christ, the Church, and the Kingdom of God!

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY CHART

Old Testament Patriarchs & Judges



Old Testament Kings & Prophets

