



New Testament Survey 1
The Gospels and Acts
Teaching Notes

Dr. Nathan H. Gunter
Lusaka

Lesson 1

Introduction

This course is designed to provide students a general introduction to the New Testament and a look at the important details and theological themes included in the four Gospels and the book of Acts. Students will take New Testament Survey 2 and New Testament Survey 3 in the following terms this year, courses which will look more closely at Paul's letters and at the general epistles and Revelation. In this first lesson, we will introduce basic information about the New Testament as a whole, review the five steps of the Interpretive Journey learned in the New Testament Interpretation course, and study the book of Matthew. Each lesson in this course will include a section in which students will use information they learn about these New Testament books to continue practicing faithful biblical interpretation using the steps of the Interpretive Journey.

Part One – The New Testament

It is impossible to understand the Christian faith or to lead others to grow in faith without knowing the New Testament. Each of the 27 books in the New Testament was written either by one of the 12 apostles who were called and trained by Jesus Christ or by a close associate who knew the apostles and carefully investigated all of the details about the life and ministry of Jesus and the early church. Together, these books reveal to us the person, the teachings, the ministry, and saving works of Jesus Christ, as well as the ministry and teachings of his apostles.

The New Testament includes 27 different books written by nine different authors. In this Bible School, we will study all 27 books through three different New Testament Survey courses. This course will examine the first five books of the New Testament: the four Gospels (biographies of Jesus life and ministry) and the book of Acts (the work of the Holy Spirit and the Apostles to spread the gospel and the build the church).

The New Testament includes one central, undeniable theme: Jesus Christ is Lord of all! As we read in Philippians 2:9-11,

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To declare, "Jesus is Lord!" is more than simply repeating words or agreeing that Jesus can save us. When Christians confess this truth, we are declaring that Jesus Christ is the resurrected King who rules over all of creation, who sacrificed his own sinless life on a cross to pay for the sins of all who believe in him, who has achieved complete victory over all sin, and death, and the devil, and who saves us by his grace when we come to him in faith. Each book in the New Testament builds our understanding of who Jesus is, what He has done for us, and how He calls us to live as his people today.

The New Testament reveals the ways that God fulfilled all of the promises found in the Old Testament. Everything that God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, plus everything He

prophesied through Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms – everything that the people of Israel heard and believed, waiting in faith for the day that God would bring them salvation – all of these things are revealed and explained in the books of the New Testament. By looking closely at each of these 27 books, we will be able to see more clearly who Jesus is, who He is calling us to be as his people, and what He is doing to rule over and redeem all of creation as King.

ASK: What is one passage in the New Testament that is very meaningful to you? How does this passage help you know or trust Jesus more?

Allow students to share a few thoughts, but do not get stuck on this question for more than 5 minutes.

ASK: Are there parts of the Gospels or Acts that you find difficult or confusing? Which ones? Why do you think these are difficult?

As before, allow students to share different thoughts, but do not try to answer each one at this time. We will explore each book individually through these lessons, and students will have opportunities to ask questions later.

Part 2 – Review the Interpretive Journey

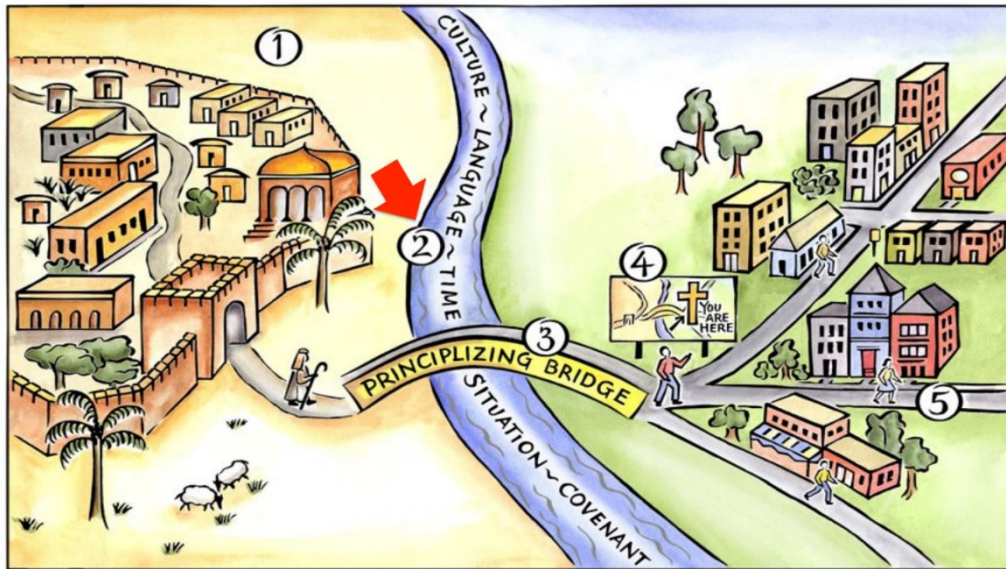
Explain to the students that we will continue using the five steps of the Interpretive Journey learned in the previous course to develop our skills in faithful and accurate biblical interpretation. Distribute copies of the full-page picture of the Interpretive Journey found at the end of this lesson, and lead students through the questions below to refresh their memory of the process.¹

ASK: What are the five steps of the Interpretive Journey? What is the Key Question that goes with each step?

- Step One – Grasp the text in their town.
 - Key Question – What did the text mean to the original audience?
- Step Two – Measure the width of the river to cross.
 - Key Question – What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
- Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth
 - Key Question – What is the unchanging biblical principle in this passage?
- Step Four – Consult the biblical map.
 - Key Question – How does our timeless truth fit with the rest of the Bible?
- Step Five – Grasp the text in our town.
 - Key Question – How should individual Christians and churches live out the timeless truth in this passage?

¹ The Interpretive Journey was developed by Drs. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays of Ouachita Baptist University and is used in this course with the authors' permission. A complete explanation of the Interpretive Journey can be found in their book, *Grasping God's Word*, 3rd ed. Zondervan Academic: 2012.

ASK: Look at the picture and explain what each step means as much as you can. What do we do for each step? What should we know when we have completed that step? What questions can we ask to help our study during each step in the process?



Part 3 – The Book of Matthew

Matthew’s gospel is the first book in the New Testament, and it sits in this first place for a very important reason. The book of Matthew is like a bridge in many ways, linking the Old Testament to the rest of the New Testament. Matthew, who was a Jew and one of the twelve disciples, wrote his gospel to demonstrate that Jesus was God’s Messiah who was promised to the people of Israel by the prophets in the Old Testament. He includes more quotations of Old Testament passages than any other gospel, showing how Jesus fulfilled every detail of the prophecies about the Messiah.

For each book we study in this course, we will explore the following areas: (1) key historical facts, (2) a basic outline of the book with key sections explained, (3) explanation of noteworthy passages, and (4) important theological themes.

(1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Matthew

Matthew, the author of this book, is the same Matthew (or Levi) who Jesus called to be his disciple in Matthew 9:9-13. Before joining Jesus, Matthew worked as a tax collector for the Roman government in Israel. His fellow Jews would have despised him as a godless man and viewed him as a traitor to their country because he collected money from his fellow Jews on behalf of the Romans. For this reason, it is fitting that Jesus was visiting Matthew’s home when he said, “For I came not to call the

righteous, but sinners” (9:13)

- **When was it written?**

AD 50s or 60s

The exact date that Matthew wrote his gospel cannot be known, but several clues suggest that it was likely written in the 50s or 60s (that is, 20-30 years after the resurrection and ascension of Christ).

- **Where was it written?**

Unknown

Many scholars today believe that Matthew’s gospel was likely written either in Jerusalem or in Antioch (in Syria), both locations with significant Jewish populations. However, we cannot be certain exactly what the correct location is.

- **To whom was it written?**

Jewish readers

Matthew wrote as a Jew to his fellow Jews to demonstrate that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, the Savior whom God had promised to Israel centuries before in the Old Testament. This is the reason Matthew quotes Old Testament verses so frequently, demonstrating that Jesus has fulfilled all the prophecies to show that He is the Messiah.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Matthew?**

To show that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

More than any other gospel writer, Matthew intentionally connects Jesus to the Old Testament messianic prophecies, proving that Jesus is the One who has been sent to save Israel.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

Jesus is Immanuel, the Messiah, and the Savior of God’s people.

| Key Historical Facts | |
|---|---|
| Who is the author? | Matthew |
| When was it written? | AD 50s or 60s |
| Where was it written? | Unknown |
| To whom was it written? | Jewish readers |
| What was the purpose or reason for writing? | To show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament |
| What is the most important theological theme? | Jesus is Immanuel, the Messiah, and the Savior of God’s people |

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Matthew teaches the life of Jesus from his birth through his death and resurrection. The largest section of the book (chapters 4 through 16) focuses on his ministry and teachings in Galilee, an area north of Jerusalem in Israel. Some of the key features of Matthew's gospel are the major teaching sections. Matthew includes five major teaching sections in this book, each one containing lengthy teachings from Jesus. Unfortunately, we do not have time to discuss every chapter and verse of Matthew in this course. However, we will select a few important passages, including all five of the major teaching sections, to summarize and explain in the notes following the basic outline below.²

- I. Introduction (1:1–4:16)
 - A. The ancestors, birth, and childhood of Jesus (1:1–2:23)
 - B. The beginnings of Jesus's ministry (3:1-4:16)

- II. Jesus's Ministry in Galilee (4:17-16:20)
 - A. First days of ministry in Galilee (4:17-25)
 1. **First Major Teaching: The Sermon on the Mount** (5:1-7:29)
 - B. Second part of ministry in Galilee (8:1-9:38)
 1. **Second Major Teaching: Instructions to the Twelve** (10:1-11:1)
 - C. Third part of ministry in Galilee (11:2-12:50)
 1. **Third Major Teaching: Parables of the Kingdom** (13:1-53)
 - D. Ministry north of Galilee (13:54-16:20)

- III. Jesus's Journey to Jerusalem and Ministry There (16:21-25:46)
 - A. The return to Galilee (16:21-17:27)
 1. **Fourth Major Teaching: More Parables of the Teaching** (18:1-35)
 - B. Journey through Judea (19:1-20:34)
 - C. Final ministry in Jerusalem (21:1-23:39)
 1. **Fifth Major Teaching: On the Mount of Olives and More Kingdom Parables** (24:1-25:46)

- IV. Jesus's Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection (26:1-28:20)
 - A. Jesus's Trial and Crucifixion (26:1-27:66)
 - B. The Resurrection and the Great Commission (28:1-20)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Matthew

- *The Ancestors and the Birth of Jesus* (1:1-2:12)
The book of Matthew begins by tracing the family line of Jesus all the way back to

² The book outlines in this course are published in *The Cradle, The Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed.), written by Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016).

Abraham, showing that He is the direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even King David's royal line. It is especially interesting to notice some of the names in his family history that have unique stories. Of course, Abraham is the father of faith for all believers. But Tamar appears shortly after him, and she is best known as woman who tricked her father-in-law Judah into lying with her. Then we also see Rahab the prostitute, Boaz the redeemer, Ruth the foreign woman who was loyal to God, and many others. Why are all of these mentioned, the good ones, the bad ones, and the strange ones? They are mentioned because they show that Jesus came to all kinds of people – not just one tribe or nation.

- *First Major Teaching: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)*
In many ways, the Sermon on the Mount displays Jesus as the newer and greater Moses (the greatest prophet in Israel's history before Jesus). Jesus went up a mountain as Moses did, but when He began to teach, He spoke with a power and authority that was far greater than Moses. First, Jesus spoke a series of Beatitudes (5:1-12), or spiritual blessings, which declared that those who followed him and lived by the ways of his Kingdom were truly accepted and blessed by God. Jesus taught on many topics that are addressed in the Ten Commandments and other laws from Moses, including marriage and adultery, hatred and forgiveness, generosity, and the “three pillars” of Jewish religious life – prayer, fasting, and giving alms (giving to the poor). However, Jesus taught that every one of these matters were decided in the heart before they are acted out in life with others. Thus, God judges us for the attitudes and intentions of our hearts, not just our outward actions.
- *Second Major Teaching: Instructions to the Twelve (10:1-11:1)*
Immediately after condemning the hard-hearted spiritual leaders of Israel, Jesus called twelve disciples to follow him and learn from him. He sends them to find the “lost sheep” and commands them to announce that the Kingdom of heaven has arrived. He gave them power to perform miracles to prove their message was real. When the disciples came back from this mission, he assured them that they would continue to serve him and proclaim his message, and that they should not fear any who would oppose them.
- *Third Major Teaching: Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-53)*
This section includes a number of parables told one after another, each one teaching something about the Kingdom of God. The parable of the Sower explained all the different ways people would react when they hear the gospel of the Kingdom. The parable of the Weeds explained why God does not immediately destroy the wicked even as his Kingdom is growing. The parables of the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, and the Pearl show how far the Kingdom will spread and encourage the disciples that this Kingdom is worth any cost that they must endure to receive it.
- *Peter's Confession of Christ (16:13-20)*
The book of Matthew is written for the clear purpose of convincing Jewish readers that Jesus is the promised Messiah. This is why Matthew includes so many quotations from Old Testament prophecies. But these verses in chapter 16 are the clearest, most

direct statement about the identity of Jesus in the entire book. When Peter says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (verse 16), he is declaring that Jesus is the One Israel has been waiting for. There is no question who Jesus truly is. The only question is how people will respond to him.

- *Fourth Major Teaching: More Parables of the Kingdom (18:1-35)*
This section of teaching about the Kingdom is very different from the one before. In this chapter, Jesus emphasizes the childlike humility that is required of anyone who would be part of his Kingdom, as well as the incredible grace and forgiveness that are to be practiced by his followers. Jesus states that his disciples must forgive one another “seventy-seven times” and that “if you do not forgive your brother from your heart,” then God will not forgive them. The humility, sincerity, and forgiveness that Jesus demands of his followers is an important part of his Kingdom.
- *Fifth Major Teaching: On the Mount of Olives and More Kingdom Parables (24:1-25:46)*
The Olivet Discourse – the teaching that Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives – describes the soon coming destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the time of his Second Coming. The signs for these two events can be difficult to distinguish as you are reading, but a few things are clear. Regarding the destruction of the Temple, Jesus assures the disciples that the destruction will be complete, and that it will be preceded by a time of tribulation and terrible suffering, but that He would reduce the time of suffering. He also warned the disciples not to be deceived by false prophets and false messiahs, because his Second Coming would be clear and undeniable, not a secret. He encouraged his disciples to remain prepared and faithful waiting for the day of his return. He also taught one positive thing which must precede his coming: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (24:14).
- *The Great Commission (28:16-20)*
The final words that Jesus spoke to his disciples declared the mission of all Jesus’s followers, from that day until He returns. Jesus had risen victorious from the grave and was soon to ascend to heaven in glory. He announced that He has received all authority from his Father and issued the following command and promise: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:19-20).

(4) Important Theological Themes

- *Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.*
Throughout this gospel, Matthew shows many ways that Jesus fulfills the prophecies about the Messiah found in the Old Testament. He directly quotes the Old Testament 15 times, each time showing another way that Jesus fulfilled prophecy. In chapter one,

he lists the genealogy of Jesus to demonstrate that He is descended from Abraham and from the line of King David. In the Sermon on the Mount, he presents Jesus as greater than Moses, and at the Transfiguration (17:1-8), he shows that Jesus is greater than Moses and Elijah (who represent the Old Testament Law and Prophets).

- *Jesus is the “Son of Man.”*

All four gospels use the title “Son of Man” to refer to Jesus, and Matthew uses this title 31 different times. It is a title Jesus frequently used to refer to himself. But what does it mean? The title “Son of Man” comes from an Old Testament passage in Daniel 7. In these verses, we read:

“And I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

From these verses, it is clear that the Son of Man is not a simple human king, but One who stands before God uncondemned and who is given power and dominion over all the earth. We can understand that when Jesus called himself the Son of Man, he was claiming to be holy King of all the earth, the very Son of God.

- *People responded to Jesus in different ways.*

Here is an interesting thought to explore. In the book of Matthew, Jesus is worshipped by the Magi, a Roman army officer, and a Canaanite woman – all foreigners who did not belong to God’s chosen people Israel. But Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders of Israel and was not believed by his own family. Even Peter, the leader of his disciples, was inconsistent with his faith. In one moment, he confessed, “You are the Christ,” (16:16), and immediately after this he tries to rebuke Jesus for predicting his own death (16:22). This gives us both an encouragement and a warning to respond to Jesus in faith whenever we hear his words.

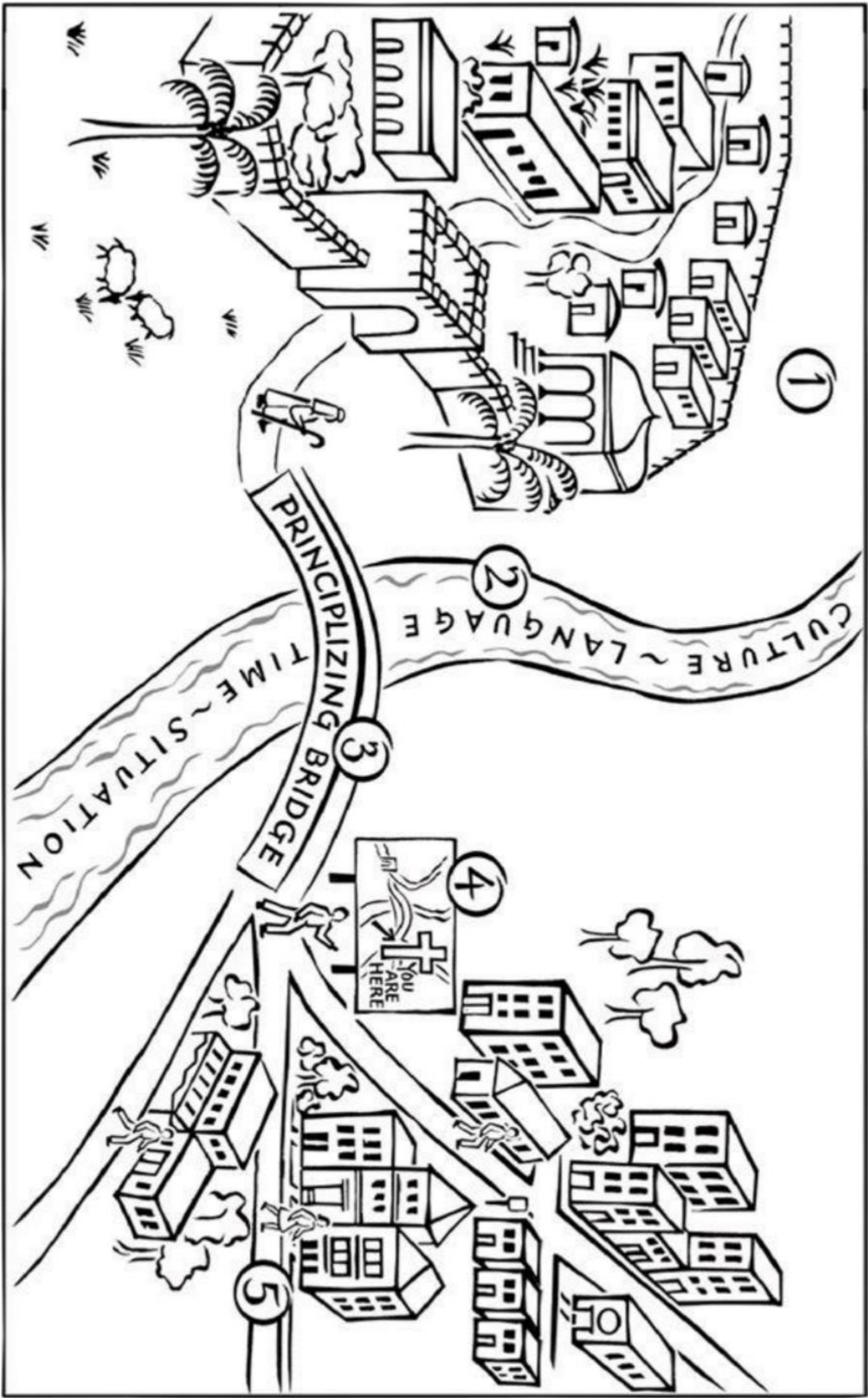
- *The Great Commission includes all nations in the Kingdom of God.*

While Matthew’s reason for writing his gospel was to convince Jews to believe in Jesus, he included many clues that point to the truth that Jesus did not come to save only the Jews. In chapter one, the genealogy of Jesus mentions the Gentile woman Ruth. In chapter two, some of the first people to worship Jesus after his birth are the Magi, foreigners who do not know the God of Israel, and in Matthew 8, Jesus showed that He was willing to visit the house of a Roman. All of these are hints, but the truth becomes obvious at the end of the gospel. In the Great Commission, Jesus commands: “Go therefore and make disciples *of all nations...*” This cannot be misunderstood. Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies to show that He is the Messiah promised to the Jews, but He came to save all who will believe in him from every nation and tribe on earth.

Part 4 – Review and Discussion

This first lesson has provided much information, and the lessons that follow will be challenging as well. Ask the following questions to give students an opportunity to remember some of the details and think about the new ideas they have learned so far.

1. How many books are in the New Testament?
27
2. How many authors wrote the New Testament?
9
3. When was the book of Matthew written?
AD 50s-60s
4. To whom did Matthew write his gospel?
Jewish readers
5. Who is one person in the genealogy of Jesus (chapter 1) that catches your attention as you read? Why is it important that these people are included?
Students may mention Tamar (the sister of Judah who was raped), Rahab (a prostitute), Boaz (the redeemer) or Ruth (a faithful non-Jew), David (the greatest king of Israel), or any other.
6. What are the Beatitudes?
The Beatitudes are statements of blessing at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus declares that all who follow him and live by the ways of his Kingdom are accepted and blessed by God.
7. Why is Peter's confession in Matthew 16 important?
This is the clearest declaration of Jesus's true identity spoken by his disciples in this book. Peter's words cannot be misunderstood: Jesus is the Messiah of God, the long-awaited Savior.
8. Why is the title, "Son of Man," important in the book of Matthew? Explain.
This is the title Jesus uses to show that He is the One seen in the vision of Daniel 7. He stands before God and is given power and authority and an everlasting kingdom to rule over all the earth. This is a title that shows that He is not a mere man, but He is the Son of God who has come as King.
9. We see different people respond to Jesus in different ways in Matthew's gospel. What are some of the different responses to Jesus or beliefs about Jesus that you have seen from people in Zambia today?
10. What is the Great Commission? What does it require of us today?
See Matthew 28:18-20



Lesson 2

Introduction

There is a restaurant in Lusaka that is known for waking up the neighbors in the night. Many times when it is late in the evening and quiet, after children have gone to sleep, the restaurant suddenly erupts with shouting, cheering, and clapping. Then in just a few moments, all is quiet again, only to erupt with shouting and cheers again after several minutes. You might have guessed what is happening at this place. The restaurant shows football games on a large screen, and men from all over Lusaka gather to watch late into the night. Every time a team scores, loud shouts and cheers from the restaurant fill the streets to let everyone know.

Why are people so attracted to an event like watching football matches on a large screen? The answer can be very simple. We are drawn to action. We like to see things happening. This is one reason that so many people love to read the book of Mark. Mark's gospel is filled with action and powerful works from Jesus, showing that He is truly the Son of God with power over all created things.

Part 1 – The Book of Mark

In this lesson, we will explore the powerful acts and teachings of Jesus found in the book of Mark. Just as we did in the previous lesson, we will (1) learn the historical facts about Mark's gospel, (2) look at a basic outline of its contents, (3) explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the important theological themes found in this book. After we have learned all these things, we will use our new knowledge by practicing the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to study a section of Mark's gospel together.

(1) Historical Facts

Who is the author?

John Mark, who wrote based on the testimony of Peter

John Mark was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, but his gospel is based upon the Apostle Peter's testimony about Jesus. John Mark also appears in the book of Acts, where he joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.

When was it written?

Mid to late 50s

Most pastors and scholars today believe that Mark was the first gospel written. Therefore, it is most likely that his gospel was written sometime before the year AD 60.

Where was it written?

Rome

Although we do not have a great deal evidence, there are some clues in Mark's gospel to suggest that he was in Rome when he wrote this gospel. First, tradition tells us that this is where Peter died, and Mark is writing based on Peter's testimony. Another hint is that he

mentions Rufus in chapter 15, the same Rufus who was later well-known among the Christians in Rome.

To whom was it written?

Gentiles who were living in Rome

It is clear that Mark is writing for a Gentile audience, most likely those in Rome (although certainly it was expected that this gospel would be read in many other places).

What was the purpose or reason for writing Mark?

To explain the meaning of the cross and the life of discipleship

What is the most important theological theme?

Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God.

| Key Historical Facts | |
|---|--|
| Who is the author? | Mark |
| When was it written? | Mid to late 50s |
| Where was it written? | Rome |
| To whom was it written? | Gentiles who were living in Rome |
| What was the purpose or reason for writing? | To explain the meaning of the cross and the life of discipleship |
| What is the most important theological theme? | Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God. |

(2) Basic Outline

Mark's gospel is very different from the book of Matthew, even though they report many of the same events and teachings from the life and ministry of Jesus. For example, the book of Matthew begins with a complete genealogy of Jesus and a report of the events surrounding his birth and childhood. Mark skips all of this and goes directly to the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry. From the very beginning, Mark's gospel moves quickly and is full of action and strong words from Jesus. It is not only his miracles and power that catch your attention, the words that Jesus speaks and the demands that he makes of his disciples might surprise you as well. Notice in this outline that Mark's gospel includes two major sections. In the first section (chapters 1-8), we see the power and authority of Jesus. In the second section (chapters 8-16), Jesus shows us that He has come as a humble servant to give his life in order to save us.

- I. Jesus the Son of God is the Powerful Messiah (1:1-8:26)
 - A. Preparing for Jesus's ministry in the wilderness (1:1-13)
 - B. The beginning of Jesus's ministry in Galilee (1:14-3:35)
 - C. Jesus ministers near the sea of Galilee (4:1-8:26)

- II. Jesus the Son of God as the Suffering Servant (8:27-16:8)
 - A. Jesus on the way to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52)
 - B. Jesus at the Temple (11:1-13:37)
 - C. Jesus's Death and Resurrection (14:1-16:8)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Mark

- *The Trinity represented at the baptism of Jesus (1:9-11)*
 In the first scene in the book of Mark, Jesus comes forward to be baptized by John the Baptist. As he comes up out of the water of the Jordan River, a miraculous moment occurs in which all three Persons of the Trinity are represented together. Jesus, the Son of God in a human body, is rising up out of the water from his baptism. He sees heaven opened above him and the Holy Spirit descends to him in the form of a dove. At the same moment, the voice of God the Father speaks, declaring, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased" (1:11).

- *The chain of power stories (4:35-5:43)*
 Mark's gospel demonstrates the absolute power of Jesus to convince Roman and pagan readers that Jesus is the all-powerful God. In chapters four and five, Mark includes several power stories in a chain, one after the other, to show how great his power truly is. At the end of the chapter four, Jesus demonstrates perfect power over all nature by calming the storm and the wind. At the beginning of chapter five, he shows his perfect power over demons and the spiritual world by healing a demon-possessed man. After that, he shows his power of physical diseases by healing a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. Finally, he reveals that He has power over death itself by resurrecting a young girl who had died from sickness. These stories are included to teach clearly that Jesus has absolute power over everything that exists.

- *Jesus declares that He has come as a servant and a sacrifice (10:42-45)*
 Many pastors and scholars point to these verses as the most important verses in the book of Mark. While the first half of the book has been revealing the power and divine authority of Jesus as the Son of God, this is the place where the story turns toward the cross. Even though Jesus has perfect power over all things, He did not come to earth to force all things to serve him. Instead, He says that He came as a servant and a ransom, a sacrifice to save all those who come to him. He shows that his heart and attitude are completely different from rulers and those with power in this world. He also tells his disciples that they are to imitate his way of leading through service and sacrifice rather than pursuing power and authority for themselves.

- *Jesus cleanses the Temple (11:15-19)*

Just as Matthew's gospel included hints that Jesus had come for all people, not only the Jews, Mark's gospel shows the same idea in this passage. Jesus enters the temple and begins chasing out merchants and money changers, declaring: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?'" (11:17). These merchants had set up booths for their businesses in an area known as the Court of the Gentiles, a large courtyard that was part of the Temple. Jews could pass through the gates of the Temple to worship inside, but anyone from other nations could only go as far as the Court of the Gentiles if they desired to worship the God of Israel. However, the Jews believed that God did not care for Gentiles, so they filled the space with their own business and booths. Jesus was angry about this, and he chased them out so that anyone from any nation would be able to come and worship.

(4) Important Theological Themes

1. *Jesus is the Son of God.*

Mark demonstrates the power and authority of Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God throughout his gospel. However, there are several examples of times when this book says plainly that Jesus is truly the Son of God. God the Father calls Jesus his Son at his baptism (1:11) and at the Transfiguration (9:7). Jesus himself says that He is the Son of God in 12:6 and 13:32. Demons confess that He is the Son of God multiple times in his ministry. However, until He was crucified, no human in the book of Mark confesses that Jesus is the Son of God. The only time this happens is when Jesus is on the cross and a Roman army officer says, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39).

2. *Jesus defined true discipleship.*

The book of Mark shows that Jesus is in command and authority of all things. Even the way he calls his disciples shows this authority. When he calls his first disciples (1:17-20), he simply commands, "Follow me," and the men respond in obedience immediately. As the book continues, Jesus teaches his disciples that following him will cost them reputation, rejection (even by their own family), persecution, and even carrying a cross. He also taught them that discipleship requires following the example that He set, an example which includes humbling yourself and serving others instead of seeking your own gain and power over others.

3. *Jesus came as a ransom to save sinners.*

When Jesus said that He had come to give his life as "a ransom for many," (10:45, he was referring to a passage in Isaiah 53. These are the verses He had in mind:

But he was pierced for our transgression;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned – every one – to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Jesus knew exactly why He had come to earth, and this is what He had in mind each time he predicted his death on the cross. He gave his life to pay for our sins, so that all who believe in him will find forgiveness and eternal life.

Part 2 – Practice Interpreting Scripture

In this section, guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Mark 10:42-45. Encourage the students to use the information they have just learned about the book of Mark to better understand what this passage meant to the original audience, then to work through the remaining steps to find the unchanging truth that applies to the lives of Christians and churches today. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take 30-45 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read Mark 10:42-45.

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text.

ASK

Observing the Situation

- What is happening in this passage? Describe the situation.
Students should work together to retell the story in their own words. Include as many details as possible and be very specific about words spoken and the order that events happened.
- When is this happening?
This happens during the time of Jesus’ ministry on earth, somewhere around the year AD 30.
- Where is it happening?
This event happens on the road to Jerusalem (10:32).
- Who wrote this book?
This gospel is written by Mark.
- Who is speaking?
Jesus is the only one speaking in these verses.
- Who is being spoken to?
Jesus is speaking to his twelve disciples.

- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
This passage does not tell us how the disciples reacted.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
It seems clear that Jesus expected the disciples to be surprised and challenged by these words. He is explaining that those who want to be great at following him must humble themselves and become a servant to others.

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this passage fit in the history of the New Testament?
This passage is in the gospels, right in the middle of Mark's gospel.
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
This takes place in Israel on the road from Galilee to Jerusalem.
 - Who was the king or ruler?
There are local rulers over the Jewish people, but Caesar is the ruler of the Roman Empire, including the Jews.
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
The disciples were Jewish men, not too young or too old. They had been seeking a Messiah, and now they had hopes that Jesus might be the one to set them free from bondage to Rome. Mark wrote his gospel to Gentile Christians in the Roman empire. He wrote to all kinds of people to show them who Jesus truly is.
 - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
This story occurs before the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it is at a time when Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem where he will be crucified.. The disciples do not fully understand what is happening, but Jesus is training them to be faithful shepherds and leaders of his people after He is gone.
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the gospels and is one of the stories of Jesus' life.
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
Immediately before, two brothers ask Jesus to give them the seats of honor and authority beside him when He establishes his kingdom.
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
The book of Mark emphasizes the Jesus is the true Son of God come to earth to save us. This passage shows that Jesus has come not as a conquering king, but as a suffering servant, and that his disciples are to imitate his attitude and service.

- Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

This passage sits right in the middle of Mark's gospel, and it is one of the most important verses in the book. Jesus declares his purpose in coming to earth and calls his disciples to give themselves to the same calling

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus explains that He has come not as a conquering king, but as a suffering servant, and that his disciples are to imitate his attitude and service.

Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language were Jesus and the disciples speaking? What language did Mark write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today? (For example, they lived in a Jewish culture eagerly waiting for a Messiah. We are waiting for our Savior to return, although many Christians today do not seem as eager as Jews did back then.)
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples' relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Mark's gospel? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town?) What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?

Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: What are some details of Jesus' message to the disciples and their situation that might not apply today? What are the most important parts of this text that still need to be believed and obeyed today?

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions we introduced earlier.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in "their town" and today's Christians in "our town?"

An example of timeless truth from Mark 10:42-45 might be:

"Jesus calls his disciples to adopt the attitude of a slave, giving their lives to serve and bless others, just as Jesus gave his life to save us."

Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

Examples: John 13:14-16; Philippians 2:3-8

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God's Word?

Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

Take note of each of the practical applications that the students suggest as you work through these questions. Help them keep their applications tied closely to the text we are studying and the timeless truth we have stated. If someone suggests an application that does not connect to our text or timeless truth, offer a gentle correction to guide them back. For example, imagine you are asking the question, "According to this biblical principle, what must we do?" How would you respond if a student answers, "We should love God?" It is true that we should

always love God, but that is not what this passage is teaching. When students suggest an application that is not directly connected to the timeless truth, we need to help them see the mistake so that they can understand and avoid repeating it in the future.

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

Part Three – Review

The New Testament

1. How many books are in the New Testament?
27
2. How many authors wrote the New Testament?
9

The Book of Matthew

3. To whom was the book of Matthew written?
Jewish readers
4. What was the main purpose or reason for writing Matthew’s gospel?
To show that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament
5. What is significant about Peter’s confession in Matthew 16?
These verses in chapter 16 are the clearest, most direct statement about the identity of Jesus in the entire book. When Peter says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (verse 16), he is declaring that Jesus is the One Israel has been waiting for. There is no question who Jesus truly is. The only question is how people will respond to him.

The Book of Mark

6. When was the book of Mark written?
Mid to late 50s
7. To whom was the book of Mark written?
Gentiles in Rome
8. Why did Jesus chase the merchants out of the Temple in Mark 11?
The Jews believed that God did not care for Gentiles, so they filled the space with their own business and booths. Jesus was angry about this, and he chased them out so that anyone from any nation would be able to come and worship.
9. Explain why Jesus said that He came as a ransom for sinners in Mark 10:45.
When Jesus said that He had come to give his life as “a ransom for many,” (10:45, he was referring to a passage in Isaiah 53. These are the verses He had in mind:
But he was pierced for our transgression;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;

*we have turned – every one – to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:5-6)*
*Jesus knew exactly why He had come to earth, and this is what He had in mind each
time he predicted his death on the cross. He gave his life to pay for our sins, so that
all who believe in him will find forgiveness and eternal life.*

Lesson 3

Introduction

How much does a trustworthy friend mean to you? Think about this for a moment. When you have a friend who you know will be there for you, you have a certain kind of peace. You know he will tell you the truth. You know he will do exactly what he said he would do. You know that if he speaks about something, it is because he has studied it and is telling you what is real. You can make decisions based on his word, because you know he will not mislead you. This is the kind of friend we all desire to have. And it is exactly what we find in Luke.

More than any other writer of the gospels, Luke is known for being extra careful to study, understand, and report exact details about the life and the teachings of Jesus. As he says at the very beginning of this book:

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us. It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” (Luke 1:1-4)

In other words, Luke worked and studied to learn everything he could about Jesus, and then he wrote it all down in an organized way so that “you may have certainty” about your faith in him.

Part 1 – The Book of Luke

In this lesson, we will examine the careful record of Jesus’s life, teachings, and ministry as Luke has written them for us. We will follow the same pattern as the previous two lessons: (1) learn the historical facts about Luke’s gospel, (2) look at a basic outline of its contents, (3) explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the important theological themes found in this book. We will also continue practicing the steps of the Investigative Journey to look closely at one passage in Luke’s gospel.

(1) Historical Facts

Who is the author?

Luke - a Gentile, a physician, and a world-class historian

Luke was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, although it is evident from his detailed writing that was able to talk to multiple apostles and other eyewitnesses of Jesus, including the apostle Paul.

When was it written?

AD 58-60

Luke wrote his gospel before he wrote the book of Acts. Because the book of Acts closes with the Apostle Paul still alive, we can be confident that both books must have been written

before the beginning of Emperor Nero’s persecution of Christians in the mid 60s. (Paul was martyred during the persecution of Nero.)

Where was it written?

Rome (most likely)

To whom was it written?

Theophilus

Theophilus – which means “friend of God” - was probably a man of high status, although it is possible this was not his real name. Luke addresses his gospel to Theophilus in chapter one, and he may have been the sponsor for Luke’s research and writing of the gospel.

What was the purpose or reason for writing Luke?

To defend the Christian faith, and to aid in sharing the gospel and teaching believers

What is the most important theological theme?

Jesus is the Savior of all peoples, fulfilling God’s promises from the Old Testament.

| Key Historical Facts | |
|---|--|
| Who is the author? | Luke |
| When was it written? | 58-60 |
| Where was it written? | Rome (most likely) |
| To whom was it written? | Theophilus |
| What was the purpose or reason for writing? | To defend the Christian faith, and to aid in sharing the gospel and teaching believers |
| What is the most important theological theme? | Jesus is the Savior of all peoples, fulfilling God’s promises from the Old Testament. |

(2) Basic Outline

The gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament, and his other book (Acts) is the second longest book. Together, Luke is the writer of more than one fourth of the entire New Testament. In this gospel, Luke provides a careful look at the entire life and ministry of Jesus. In the first two chapters, he provides the longest and most detailed description of the birth of Jesus. From there, he follows Jesus through his earthly ministry, recording where He went, what He did, what He said, and how others reacted to him. Luke begins by introducing the birth and mission of Jesus, then the rest of this book follows the pattern of Mark’s gospel, describing Jesus’s ministry in Galilee followed by his journey to Jerusalem where He would be crucified and resurrected. Because of these similarities, the basic outline of Luke’s gospel looks somewhat similar to Mark’s gospel.

- I. Introduction to Jesus and his mission (1:5-4:13)
 - A. Births of John the Baptist and Jesus (1:5-2:52)
 - B. Preparations for Jesus’s ministry (3:1-4:13)

- III. Jesus’s ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)
 - A. First part of ministry in Galilee (4:14-7:50)
 - B. Second part of ministry in Galilee (8:1-39)
 - C. Third part of ministry in Galilee and to the north(8:40-9:50)

- IV. Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, his death, and his resurrection (9:51-24:53)
 - A. The journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)
 - B. Final ministry in Jerusalem (19:28-22:38)
 - C. Jesus’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (22:39-24:53)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Luke

- *The birth of Jesus Christ (2:1-38)*
 Luke provides the longest and most detailed account of the birth and childhood of Jesus. He includes visits from angels to Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist), Mary (the mother of Jesus), as well as the shepherd watching their flocks outside of Bethlehem on the night of Jesus’s birth. Luke shows how the birth of the Savior brought joy and fulfilled the longing of many different kinds people, from elderly saints who had waited and prayed for years to poor, low-status shepherds who were not expecting anything to happen. This sets up Luke’s emphasis throughout this gospel that Jesus has come as a Savior for all people.

- *The temptation of Jesus (4:1-13)*
 Immediately following his baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days. While He was there, Satan came and tempted Jesus in different ways. We should notice that every time Satan came to tempt Jesus, Jesus rebuked him by quoting Scripture. Jesus did not declare his authority or attempt to drive away Satan at this time. He depended on the truth found in God’s Word and was able to resist temptation. This is example that we can learn from and follow today.

- *The transfiguration of Jesus (9:28-36)*
 In Luke’s gospel, the story of Jesus’s transfiguration on the mountain immediately follows Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, and Christ’s calling to follow him by taking up a cross. Jesus also stated, “There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God” (9:27). This statement points to the Transfiguration that was to follow, when three of his disciples (Peter, James, and John) went up the mountain with Jesus and saw him transformed into his heavenly glory and is joined by Moses and Elijah. At this moment, God the Father speaks again and says, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!”

These verses reveal several important truths. First, at least three of the disciples were eyewitnesses to the heavenly glory of Jesus before his resurrection. Second, Moses

and Elijah appear, representing the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, and show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Third, the voice of the Father speaks again from heaven, affirming the Lordship of Jesus. All of these things confirm a clear message in Luke's gospel that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world.

- *On the road to Emmaus (24:13-35)*

Luke describes an event that occurred after the resurrection of Jesus that no other gospel writer included. On the day of the resurrection, two men who had been following Jesus were walking on the road from Jerusalem to a small village called Emmaus, about 4 kilometers away. As they were walking, Jesus appeared and joined them, although they were not able to recognize him in his resurrected body. After the men complained to Jesus about all that had happened in Jerusalem leading up to his death, Jesus rebukes them for not understanding or believing what the prophets had spoken concerning his resurrection. Luke writes that Jesus said to them, "'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:26-27).

We can learn at least two important lessons from these verses. First, Jesus explained that his death on the cross was necessary. In other words, this was God's plan for our salvation. This was not an accident, nor was it a temporary victory for Satan. Jesus went to the cross both to display God's love for us and to satisfy God's justice which requires that our sins be punished. Second, Jesus shows that all of the Old Testament was written to point to himself. This helps us anytime we go to study and interpret a passage in the Old Testament. We should always be asking, "How does this passage reveal or explain who Christ is?"

(4) Important Theological Themes

- *Jesus is concerned for women, children, and the poor.*

It is true that Jesus spent the majority of his training and teaching men, his disciples. But Luke reveals that Jesus showed special concern for the weaker or lowly people surrounding. Women, children, and the poor received special care and attention from Jesus. Luke draws attention to the joy of Mary and Elizabeth as they celebrated events leading to the birth of Christ. Later in the book, Jesus shows compassion for a widow and "a woman who had lived a sinful life" in chapter seven. In chapter ten we learn about his friendship with Mary and Martha. And of course we also learn that women were the first to discover the empty tomb on the morning that Jesus rose from the dead.

Luke also writes that Jesus welcomed and healed children (8:41-42; 9:47-48), and that Jesus not only cared for the poor, but he himself was born into a poor family. We know this because Luke tells us that when Jesus's parents dedicated him in the temple as a baby, they only brought a pair of doves. According to Leviticus 12, the family should have brought a lamb unless they were too poor to afford one. All of these

things reveal a very important truth. Jesus did not overlook anyone. No matter how small, how weak, how vulnerable, or how unloved a person may have been in the eyes of the world, each one found care and compassion when they came to Jesus.

- *Jesus is concerned for the nations.*

Luke also shows in his gospel that Jesus has come as a Savior for the whole world, not only for the people of Israel. The first place this is found is in the genealogy that Luke includes in chapter 3. Matthew traced the ancestors of Jesus back to Abraham, showing his Jewish heritage. But Luke traces his ancestors all the way back to Adam, the first man, indicating that Jesus has come to be the Savior of all nations and tribes. Another good example of this idea is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the story of the ten lepers who were healed in Luke 17. In both of these passages, Jesus reveals that a Samaritan (someone who would have been hated by the Jews) is the one believing and living according to God's ways.

- *Jesus is concerned for the lost.*

Jesus showed true concern for the souls of lost people in several different ways. First, he spoke of judgment. This may sound unkind and uncaring, but Jesus taught that God's judgment is real (10:14; 11:31-32). Rather than ignore the sin of lost people and allow them to be condemned on the day of judgment, Jesus showed that he cared for these people by telling the truth about God's judgement. Second, Luke shows the Jesus cared for the lost by coming to bring them salvation. Even from the time of his birth, we read that Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and the angels each rejoiced and proclaimed that the Messiah had come to be a Savior. From the moment He entered the world, Luke explained clearly that He had come to save the lost. Finally, Jesus proved that he cared for the lost by suffering for their sin. This is why he explained to the men on the Emmaus Road that the Christ had to suffer first (24:26), and then "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (24:46). It is easy for us to say that we know that Jesus has come to save sinners. But it is important that we are able to see this in the Bible and know how to teach it clearly to others.

Part 2 – Practice Interpreting Scripture

Repeat the process you followed in the previous lesson to guide the students through the Interpretive Journey. Again, try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take 30-45 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read Luke 18:1-8.

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor

respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down with her continual coming.” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text.

ASK

Observing the Situation

- What is happening in this passage? Describe the situation.
Students should work together to retell the story in their own words. Include as many details as possible, and be very specific about words spoken and the order that events happened.
- When is this happening?
This happens during the time of Jesus’ ministry on earth, somewhere around the year AD 30.
- Where is it happening?
This event happens on the journey to Jerusalem (17:11).
- Who wrote this book?
This gospel is written by Luke.
- Who is speaking?
Jesus is the only one speaking in these verses.
- Who is being spoken to?
Jesus is speaking to his disciples.
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
This passage does not tell us how the disciples reacted.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
It appears that Jesus wanted his disciples to listen carefully and reflect on this parable. He is urging his disciples to commit themselves to constant prayer (verse 1), and he ends by asking if anyone will still be praying in faith when he returns (verse 8).

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this passage fit in the history of the New Testament?
This passage is in the gospels, as Jesus was getting near to Jerusalem.
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
This takes place in Israel on the road from Galilee to Jerusalem.

- Who was the king or ruler?
There are local rulers over the Jewish people, but Caesar is the ruler of the Roman Empire, including the Jews.
- What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
- Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
This story occurs before the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it is at a time when Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem where he will be crucified. Jesus is instructing his disciples how to live by faith after he has left them, and he is showing them that persistent prayer should be an important part of their lives.
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the gospels and is one of the parables of Jesus’s teaching. Remind the group that a parable is a simple story used to teach an important spiritual truth. Help them think about what Jesus wants the disciples to learn about how to live by faith from this story.
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
Immediately before, Jesus was teaching that his return would be unexpected and catch many people by surprise. In this parable, he links to that idea by asking if anyone will be praying in faith when he returns.
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
The book of Luke emphasizes that Jesus has come as a Savior for all peoples who receive him by faith and live as his disciples. This passage, which features a poor widow as a model of faith, and the following passage, which features a sinful tax collector as a model of faith, both demonstrate the Jesus is looking for those who will truly believe in him and depend on his mercy.
 - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?
This passage is included shortly before Jesus arrives in Jerusalem where He would be crucified and resurrected. As with many teachings in Luke, this parable emphasizes that anyone – no matter how small or unimportant – who cries out to God can depend on him to hear them and care for them.

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus uses a parable to teach that his disciples should always pray in faith, trusting that God hears the humble who cry out to him.

Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language were Jesus and the disciples speaking? What language did Mark write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today? (For example, they lived in a Jewish culture eagerly waiting for a Messiah. We are waiting for our Savior to return, although many Christians today do not seem as eager as Jews did back then.)
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples’ relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Luke’s gospel? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town?) What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?

Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: What are some details of Jesus’ message to the disciples and their situation that might not apply today? What are the most important parts of this text that still need to be believed and obeyed today?

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions we introduced earlier.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

An example of timeless truth from Luke 18:1-8 might be:

“Jesus calls all his disciples – no matter how small or weak – to pray constantly, trusting that God listens and will act to save us.”

Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

Examples: Matthew 15:27-28; Luke 18:13-14

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God's Word?

Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

Take note of each of the practical applications that the students suggest as you work through these questions. Help them keep their applications tied closely to the text we are studying and the timeless truth we have stated. If someone suggests an application that does not connect to our text or timeless truth, offer a gentle correction to guide them back. For example, imagine you are asking the question, "According to this biblical principle, what must we do?" How would you respond if a student answers, "We should love God?" It is true that we should always love God, but that is not what this passage is teaching. When students suggest an application that is not directly connected to the timeless truth, we need to help them see the mistake so that they can understand and avoid repeating it in the future.

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in "our town." If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

Part 3 – Review

The Book of Matthew

1. When was the book of Matthew written?
AD 50s or 60s
2. Why did Jesus say that we must forgive a brother who sins against us up to 77 times?
Because if we do not forgive each other from the heart, God will not forgive us.
3. Explain one of the important theological themes revealed in Matthew.
Possible answers: Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament; Jesus is the

“Son of Man”; People responded to Jesus in different ways; the Great Commission includes all nations in the Kingdom of God.

The Book of Mark

4. To whom was the book of Mark written?
People living in Rome
5. Which very important verses in Mark’s gospel reveal the humility of Jesus and the reason he came?
Mark 10:42-45
6. What is significant about the moment when Jesus was baptized in Mark 1?
All of the Trinity is represented: Father (voice), Son, (being baptized), Holy Spirit (dove)

The Book of Luke

7. To whom was the book of Luke written?
Theophilus
8. When was the book of Luke written?
58-60
9. What is important about the story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness?
Every time Satan tempted him, he overcame the temptation by quoting Scripture.
10. Explain what happened on the Emmaus Road in chapter 24.
We can learn at least two important lessons from these verses. First, Jesus explained that his death on the cross was necessary. In other words, this was God’s plan for our salvation. This was not an accident, nor was it a temporary victory for Satan. Jesus went to the cross both to display God’s love for us and to satisfy God’s justice which requires that our sins be punished. Second, Jesus shows that all of the Old Testament was written to point to himself. This helps us anytime we go to study and interpret a passage in the Old Testament. We should always be asking, “How does this passage reveal or explain who Christ is?”

Lesson 4

Introduction

John's gospel is different. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "synoptic gospels." The word synoptic means, "to see together." They are called that because each one describes the life and ministry of Jesus in a similar way. They tell many of the same stories, even though each one tells the story in his own way. But John is different.

John reveals the divine identity of Jesus Christ – the Son of God who has come down from heaven to live among us. John tells different stories, and he tells his stories in a different style. But everything he does is with a clear purpose in mind. Just like we saw from Luke, John tells us exactly why he has written his gospel:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

Everything written in the book of John is written to help us believe and to help us have eternal life. That is a good reason to pay careful attention to this lesson.

Part 1 – The Book of John

We will follow the same pattern as the previous lessons: (1) learn the historical facts about John's gospel, (2) look at a basic outline of its contents, (3) explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the important theological themes found in this book. We will also continue practicing the steps of the Investigative Journey to look closely at one passage in John's gospel.

(1) Historical Facts

Who is the author?

John – one of the twelve apostles, who called himself "the beloved disciple"

John was one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus. In fact, John is considered part of the "inner circle" of Peter, James, and John, the three disciples who Jesus often took with him in his most private moments.

When was it written?

Mid 80s – early 90s

John's gospel was written later than the three synoptic gospels. John wrote after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, while the other gospel writers wrote their books several years before.

Where was it written?

Ephesus

The church fathers Eusebius and Irenaeus both recorded that John was in Ephesus when he wrote his gospel.

To whom was it written?

The church in Ephesus

Because John was in Ephesus when he wrote, it is most likely that the first people to read his gospel were Christians living in Ephesus and the nearby areas.

What was the purpose or reason for writing John?

To show that Jesus is the true Son of God so that all who believe in him will have eternal life

John states his purpose clearly at the end of the book in 20:31. He is not writing to provide a complete or a chronological report of Jesus’s life and ministry. He has chosen and arranged particular teachings and events in order to help readers believe in Jesus and be saved.

What is the most important theological theme?

Significant signs which reveal that Jesus is the Messiah

| Key Historical Facts | |
|---|---|
| Who is the author? | John |
| When was it written? | Mid 80s – early 90s |
| Where was it written? | Ephesus |
| To whom was it written? | The church in Ephesus |
| What was the purpose or reason for writing? | To show that Jesus is the true Son of God so that all who believe in him will have eternal life |
| What is the most important theological theme? | Significant signs which reveal that Jesus is the Messiah |

(2) Basic Outline

The gospel of John is organized in a very different way from the synoptic gospels. John makes very little effort to arrange his teachings in the order that they happened. Instead, John has written in a way that will help the reader grow in understanding of who Jesus is and to put their faith in him. John can be divided into two major sections. The first section is often called “The Book of Signs” (1:19-12:50), and it includes a number of extended teachings and miracles which reveal the identity and power of Jesus. The second section is called “The Book of Exaltation” (13:1-20:31), and it points to the coming glory that Jesus receives after his crucifixion and resurrection. Within these two sections we find some of the most powerful and inspiring teachings of Jesus in the New Testament.

- I. Introduction: the Word made flesh (1:1-18)
- II. The Book of Signs: the signs of the Messiah (1:19-12:50)
 - A. The one who came before, and the coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)
 - B. The Cana cycle: Jesus's first signs and revealing conversations (2-4)
 - C. The Festival Cycle: More signs and growing unbelief (5-10)
 - D. Final Passover: The last sign, the raising of Lazarus, and other events (11-12)
- III. The Book of Exaltation: Preparing the new Messianic community and the death and resurrection of Jesus (13-20)
 - A. The cleansing and instruction of the new covenant community (13-17)
 - B. The death and burial of Jesus (18-19)
 - C. Jesus's resurrection, appearances, and the disciples' mission (20:1-29)
- IV. Conclusion: The roles of Peter and the Beloved Disciple (21)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in John

- *The true identity of Jesus: the Word made flesh (1:1-18)*
 The first verses of John's gospel contain some of the most important theological statements about the divine nature of Jesus Christ found in the Bible. Verses 1-4 teach that Jesus is not created, but has existed from eternity past. They also teach that Jesus is the One through whom all things were created, showing that He is fully divine and equal to God the Father in his divine nature and power. Verse 14 explains that this Jesus (the Word) who is fully God in every way, has come down from heaven and "dwelt among us," taking the body and the life of a man so that we might know God in truth.
- *John 3:16-17*
 These might be the most famous verses in the entire Bible, known by Christians in churches all over the world. Their message is a simple explanation of the true gospel, spoken by Jesus himself:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
- *The "I Am" statements*
 The seven "I Am" statements spoken by Jesus in the book of John are important for at least two reasons. First, when Jesus uses the name, "I Am," he is claiming the name of God that was given to Moses in the book of Exodus (Yahweh). Jesus is claiming to be God. Second, each "I Am" statement reveals an important truth about Jesus's identity

and mission. The table below summarizes these statements.³

| • Statement | • Verses | • Significance |
|--|----------------|---|
| • “I am the bread of life.” | • 6:35, 48, 51 | • Spoken after feeding a multitude; similar to the manna from heaven that fed Israel in the wilderness; Jesus is the true bread of heaven who satisfies our spiritual hunger. |
| • “I am the light of the world.” | • 8:12; 9:5 | • Jesus is the salvation that was foreshadowed by lamps of the Feast of Tabernacles. |
| • “I am the door.” | • 10:7, 9 | • Jesus is the exclusive way to salvation – the only way to be saved is through him. |
| • “I am the good shepherd.” | • 10:11, 14 | • In contrast to the Pharisees who are worthless shepherds, Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. |
| • “I am the resurrection and the life.” | • 11:25 | • Jesus himself is the resurrection that Mary and Martha (and the people of Israel) had been waiting for in the last day. |
| • “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” | • 14:6 | • Jesus states strongly that He is only way to salvation and eternal life. |
| • “I am the true vine.” | • 15:1 | • The Old Testament often used the vine as a symbol for Israel; now Jesus is the source of life for the new Israel. |

- *The final sign – Lazarus is raised* (11:1-44)
Of all the miracles and signs John includes in this gospel, this is the final and most powerful one. Jesus declares to Mary and Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Then, after he had already been dead four days, Jesus calls Lazarus back to life and out of the tomb.
- *Gentiles seek Jesus* (12:20-26)
John tells us that following Jesus’s triumphal entry in Jerusalem, some Greeks find Philip and request to see Jesus. Why is this important? Because this is a sign that Jesus has been waiting for, indicating that the time has come for him to lay down his life. He says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:23-24). Notice the contrast that Jesus says the time has come to be “glorified,” then immediately speaks of his death. This is another example of Jesus knowing and teaching others that his purpose in coming was to give his life

³ This table is adopted from the original table found in Kostenberger, et. al., *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, p. 363.

“as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Jesus also explains that his followers must take on the same attitude, willing to lose anything in this life in order to gain eternal life through him. “If anyone serves me, he must follow me. . . . If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” (12:26). It appears that the disciples did not yet understand exactly what Jesus was trying to say, but the meaning is clear to us today. The Christian life is a life of denying oneself, losing the promises of the world, and possibly even losing our own lives, and yet the assurance we receive from Christ is that the Father will honor those who lose for his sake, and they will have eternal life with Christ.

- *Jesus and Thomas (20:24-29)*

When Jesus appeared to the disciples on the day of his resurrection, Thomas was absent. He swore that until he could see and touch Jesus himself, “I will never believe” (20:25). Eight days later, Jesus appeared again and presented himself to Thomas, even inviting him to put his fingers in the holes in his hands and side. Thomas responded in awe, declaring that Jesus is Lord and God. But Jesus spoke a reply that is critically important to us today: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29). This is the challenge of the life of faith. We cannot make the demand that Thomas made. Christ is not our servant, and He cannot be commanded to appear and present himself for us to inspect. Instead, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), and we know that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). This is the nature of our Christian life today. We do not see, we hear. We hear the word of Christ spoken to us through the pages of Scripture, and we believe all that He has said and done, and all that He has promised He is yet to do. If we can believe without seeing with our eyes, Jesus says we are blessed.

(4) Important Theological Themes

- *The full identity of Jesus is displayed.*

More than any other gospel, John emphasizes the divinity of Jesus. He is God who has come to dwell among us – fully God and fully man. John describes Jesus as the “Word” who is eternally existent and is the Creator of all that exists (1:1-4). He shows that Jesus is, “The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). He also clearly teaches that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by the Father in heaven, to save the lost and give them life (3:16-17; 5:19-26; 8:35-36).

- *Jesus formed a new covenant community of faith.*

Jesus has formed a new community of faith that lives in relationship with God because they are in Christ. John shows us that Jesus himself has replaced Israel at the place to connect to God. In the Old Testament, Israel was referred to as God’s vineyard (Isaiah 5), but in John 15, Jesus states that He is the “true vine” and source of life from God. Now we do not enter relationship and life with God by joining ourselves to Israel and their old covenant. If we want to know God and experience life in him, we can only receive this if we are in Christ. This is why He said, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me”

(John 14:6). In the Old Testament, relationship with God was found by joining a national community and outwardly following God's laws. In the new covenant that Jesus has brought, our life and experience with God can only be found as we put our faith in Christ and abide in him.

- *Jesus prepared us to know the Holy Spirit.*

John's gospel teaches more about the Holy Spirit than any of the others. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the Holy Spirit who would come after him, helping them to see the relationship between the way that He taught his disciples and how the Spirit would teach them when He was gone. He explains that after He has risen and gone to the Father, the Holy Spirit will come to them as the "other Counselor" (14:16). The disciples are assured that the Holy Spirit would remain with them, would remind them of all the Jesus had taught them, would guide those who believe into all truth (14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13). We also see Jesus pass the Holy Spirit to his disciples as he sends them out to declare his gospel, indicating that it is only in the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to effectively fulfill Christ's mission here on earth (20:22).

Part 2 – Practice Interpreting Scripture

Repeat the process you followed in the previous lesson to guide the students through the Interpretive Journey. Again, try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take 30-45 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read John 15:1-5.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text.

ASK

Observing the Situation

- What is happening in this passage? Describe the situation.
Students should work together to retell the story in their own words. Include as many details as possible and be very specific about words spoken and the order that events happened.

- When is this happening?
This happens during the time of Jesus' ministry on earth, somewhere around the year AD 30.
- Where is it happening?
This event happens in Jerusalem.
- Who wrote this book?
This gospel is written by John.
- Who is speaking?
Jesus is the only one speaking in these verses.
- Who is being spoken to?
Jesus is speaking to his disciples.
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
This passage does not tell us how the disciples reacted.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this passage fit in the history of the New Testament?
This passage is in the gospels, spoken on the night of his arrest.
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
This takes place in Israel in Jerusalem.
 - Who was the king or ruler?
There are local rulers over the Jewish people, but Caesar is the ruler of the Roman Empire, including the Jews.
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
 - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the gospels and is one of Jesus's teachings.
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
Guide the students to look carefully at the surrounding verses and paragraphs to understand what came before and after.
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
The book of John emphasizes that Jesus is the divine Son of God who has come to save all who will believe in him. This passage is Jesus's teaching to his disciples on the night of his arrest, knowing that He would be crucified to pay for the sins of the world the next day.

- Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In John 15:1-5, Jesus teaches his disciples that he is the vine – the true source of their life with God – who gives life and bears fruit in all who remain in him, but will not support anyone who tries to grow apart from him.

Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language were Jesus and the disciples speaking? What language did John write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today? (For example, they lived in a Jewish culture eagerly waiting for a Messiah. We are waiting for our Savior to return, although many Christians today do not seem as eager as Jews did back then.)
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples' relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of John's gospel? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town?) What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?

Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: What are some details of Jesus' message to the disciples and their situation that might not apply today? What are the most important parts of this text that still need to be believed and obeyed today?

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions we introduced earlier.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

An example of timeless truth from John 15:1-5 might be:

“Jesus is the eternal source of life for all who believe in him. When we abide in him through faith, he helps us grow and bear fruit. If we try to serve God apart from him, we will not be able to do anything.”

Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

Examples: John 14:6; Acts 4:12

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God’s Word?

Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

Take note of each of the practical applications that the students suggest as you work through these questions. Help them keep their applications tied closely to the text we are studying and the timeless truth we have stated. If someone suggests an application that does not connect to our text or timeless truth, offer a gentle correction to guide them back. For example, imagine you are asking the question, “According to this biblical principle, what must we do?” How would you respond if a student answers, “We should love God?” It is true that we should always love God, but that is not what this passage is teaching. When students suggest an application that is not directly connected to the timeless truth, we need to help them see the mistake so that they can understand and avoid repeating it in the future.

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

Part Three – Review

The Book of Mark

1. Where was the book of Mark written?
Rome
2. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Mark?
To explain the meaning of the cross and the life of discipleship
3. Which Old Testament passage is the background to Jesus's statement in Mark 10:42-45?
Isaiah 53

The Book of Luke

4. What is the purpose or reason for writing the book of Luke?
To defend the Christian faith, also to aid in sharing the gospel and teaching believers.
5. Explain one theological theme found in the book of Luke and why it is important.
Review notes in Lesson 3 outline above.

The Book of John

6. When was the book of John written?
Mid 80s to early 90s
7. Where was the book of John written?
Ephesus
8. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of John?
To show that Jesus is the true Son of God and that all who believe in him have eternal life.
9. What are the two major sections or "Books" that make up the outline of the book of John?
The Book of Signs (1-12)
The Book of Exaltation (13-20)
10. Which "I Am" statement spoken by Jesus in the book of John is most interesting or encouraging to you? Why?

Lesson 5

Introduction

Today we are studying the Book of Acts. Many Christians today talk about the book of Acts and preach from the book of Acts frequently, but many also misunderstand its message as well. Like a child stepping into a carpenter's workshop and finding a room full of tools that are fascinating but unknown, we can easily find ourselves drawn to the wonderful things in the book of Acts without fully understanding what it is teaching us. Healings, miraculous deliverance, speaking in tongues, even resurrections – all of these are found in the pages of Acts. But what do they mean? Why did Luke record these things for us to read in the Bible? And how can we learn what God wants us to learn and see what God wants us to see when we study this book? These are the questions we want to answer as we study the book of Acts today.

Note: This lesson contains much more information than most classes will be able to cover in a two-hour period. If you do not have extra time to cover all of the material included below, skip the Interpretive Journey practice in Part Two of this lesson and go straight to the Review.

Part 1 – The Book of Acts

We will follow a similar pattern from the previous lessons, but with an extra help added in the middle. (1) First, we will again learn the historical facts about the book of Acts. (2) Second, we will look at a basic outline of its contents. (3) Third, we will explain some basic rules to remember to help us read and understand the book of Acts well. (4) Fourth, we will then explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail (5) And finally, we will think about the important theological themes found in this book. We will also continue practicing the steps of the Investigative Journey to look closely at one passage in Acts. At the end of this lesson, the review section will focus on helping students prepare for the written exam.

(1) Historical Facts

Who is the author?

Luke - a Gentile, a physician, and a world-class historian

Luke was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, although it is evident from his detailed writing that was able to talk to multiple apostles and other eyewitnesses of Jesus, including the apostle Paul.

When was it written?

Early 60s

Because the book of Acts closes with the Apostle Paul still alive, we can be confident that both Luke and Acts must have been written before the beginning of Emperor Nero's

persecution of Christians in the mid-60s. (Paul was martyred during the persecution of Nero.) This is why we say Acts was probably written in the early 60s.

Where was it written?

Rome (most likely)

To whom was it written?

Theophilus

Just as we saw in the book of Luke, Acts is also addressed to someone called Theophilus. Theophilus – which means “friend of God” - was probably a man of high status, although it is possible this was not his real name. Luke addresses the book of Acts to Theophilus in chapter one, and he may have been the sponsor for Luke’s research and writing of both the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

What was the purpose or reason for writing Acts?

To defend the Christian faith by explaining the growth of the early church as the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and the first Christians.

Luke helps us understand the birth and growth of the church by showing both the workings of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of early believers. These ideas will be explained a little more later in the lesson.

What is the most important theological theme?

The birth and mission of the early church and the spread of Christianity

| Key Historical Facts | |
|---|---|
| Who is the author? | Luke |
| When was it written? | Early 60s |
| Where was it written? | Rome |
| To whom was it written? | Theophilus |
| What was the purpose or reason for writing? | To defend the Christian faith by explaining the growth of the early church as the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and the first Christians. |
| What is the most important theological theme? | The birth and mission of the early church and the spread of Christianity. |

(2) Rules for Reading and Interpreting Acts

Reading the book of Acts does not have to be difficult, but it does require paying attention to some details and thinking carefully about what is happening and why in each passage that we read. Below are a few rules for reading and interpreting Acts to help us understand what is recorded in this book.

- Understand how individual passages relate to the purpose and plan of the whole book. At the beginning of chapter one, Jesus is giving final instructions to his disciples before He ascends to heaven. In Acts 1:8, he says, “But you will receive power then the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all

Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.” This verse provides a simple map to help us follow the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church through the rest of Acts. Beginning in chapter 2, the gospel is proclaimed first in Jerusalem, then it spreads to Judea (the area immediately surrounding Jerusalem), Samaria (a little farther out and including people who are not Jews), and to the end of the earth (including all nations and Gentile tribes). By the end of the book, the gospel has been proclaimed throughout the known world at that time.

- Watch for repeated themes, phrases, and theological points.
Repetition is a good teaching tool. In the book of Acts, certain words or ideas are repeated in order to help us understand that these things are important. For example, key ideas such as witness, prayer, the Holy Spirit, repentance, and baptism are found multiple times throughout the book. When we find a word (or a group of words) which is repeated, we should pay careful attention to what the text is saying about those things.
- Pay special attention to comments which interpret the significance of an event.
Occasionally, Luke concludes a story by adding a sentence or a short statement that explains exactly why that event was important. The seven summary statements listed in the next section are great examples of this. When we find one of these comments, the work of understanding and interpreting becomes easier. Luke is telling exactly what that text means!
- Carefully examine all Old Testament quotations and allusions.
Peter, Paul, and others quote the Old Testament frequently in their sermons which are recorded in Acts. Each one of these quotes and allusions helps us connect what was spoken in the Old Testament to what is happening in the New so that we can understand their meaning better. For example, when Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost (chapter 2), he quotes from Joel 2. While much can be learned from this, we can focus on just one point for this example. The first words that Peter quotes from Joel are, “In the last days. . .” One of the things that we can see from this is that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Last Days according to Scripture. Since that time, we have been living in the Last Days, and everything the Bible says about the Last Days applies to us today.
- Ask whether a section should be read as Normative or Descriptive?
A “normative” passage is one which is teaching what should be viewed as normal or expected for all Christians in all times and places. For example, when the Philippian jailer asked Paul how he can be saved, Paul said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (16:31). While Paul was speaking directly to one person, we know that his statement applies to all people everywhere. Anyone who puts their faith in Jesus will be saved. On the other hand, a “Descriptive” passage is one which simply describes what was happening in a situation without indicating that this should always happen. An example of this can be found in Acts 20:7. It reads, “Paul talked with them. . . and he prolonged his speech until midnight.” Does this verse mean that every pastor should always extend his speaking until midnight?

Obviously not! The verse is only describing what happening, not suggesting that everyone should do that. We need to be very careful to know the difference between verses which are normative (telling us how things should be) and those which are only descriptive (only reporting to us what happened). Here are three questions to ask to help decide if a passage is normative or descriptive.

1. Is this situation affected by the major changes in Acts (especially in the early part of the book)?

There are some things that we might read about in Acts that are not repeated because they are part of a time of transition. For example, in chapter one the apostles choose a new apostle by casting lots. Casting lots was a common event in the Old Testament (it happened 14 times), but it never happens again in Acts. Why not? Because in chapter two, the Holy Spirit came on the days of Pentecost. From that day forward, Christians have had the Holy Spirit living within us and guiding us. We no longer need to cast lots to find the will of God. If we read about something that is not repeated because of changes happening in Acts, we do not want to teach that as something we should continue to do today.

2. Are you assuming you know what a passage means without studying carefully?

Sometimes we make mistakes by jumping to conclusions. We can read something, assume that the meaning is obvious, then completely misinterpret it. For example, many people read in Acts 4:32 that the early Christians shared all things and kept nothing for themselves, and they assume that this is a normative passage (that is, they assume that all Christians should do the same). They even point to the example of Ananias and Saphira in chapter 5 as proof, claiming that God struck them dead because they tried to keep some money for themselves. However, if we read more closely, we find something different. Acts 5:3-4 says that they were free to keep some of the money, but God judged them because they lied to the Holy Spirit about what they were doing. We learn that Acts 4:32 is *describing* a situation where Christians were selling and sharing all things, but the very next chapter tells us that it is not necessary for all Christians to do that.

3. Does the Bible present a situation as exceptional?

Some events are recorded in the book of Acts because they were incredible works of God that only happened once, not because we are expected to repeat them over and over. One example of this is the prayer cloths that people had in Acts 19:12. Today, some preachers and prophets read this and believe that they can bless cloths and sell them to people who are desperate for help. But when we read these verses, we can see that Paul did not make these cloths, and he did not distribute them. He took no action at all. Other people started touching him with cloths and carrying the cloths away. This event is reported especially because it is *not* normal. It is never repeated and never

recommended anywhere else in the New Testament.

Another example of this is in chapter 8. The Bible says that these Christians in Samaria heard the gospel and believed in Christ, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit at that time. They received the Spirit a little later when Peter came and laid hands on them. Some groups today believe that this means that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate event from salvation. Once again, though, we see this is not the case if we look closely. Acts 8:16 says, “for he (the Holy Spirit) had not yet fallen on them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This is another situation that is reported because it is so unusual. This never happens again. In every other example of people being saved in Acts, they receive the Holy Spirit immediately.

(3) Basic Outline

The book of Acts can be outlined in different ways. The most obvious approach is to divide the book into two parts: chapters 1-12 focus on the events in and around the church in Jerusalem, then chapters 13-28 follow the missionary work of the Apostle Paul. However, we will use a more detailed outline. Reading carefully, we can see that Luke has included short summary statements throughout the book which help the reader follow the growth of the church and the spread of the gospel. These seven summary statements are listed below. Each one completes a section of Acts. Using the seven statements, we can see the outline of Acts which follows.

Summary Statements in the Book of Acts:

- *Acts 2:42-47*
And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received the food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
- *Acts 4:32-33*
Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
- *Acts 6:7*
And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
- *Acts 9:31*
So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being

built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

- *Acts 12:24*
But the word of God increased and multiplied.
- *Acts 16:5*
So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.
- *Acts 19:20*
So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

- I. Equipping the Church for Its Mission (1:1-2:47)
 - A. Preparing the apostles (1:1-14)
 - B. Replacing Judas (1:15-26)
 - C. Pentecost: the Birth of the Church (2:1-47)
- II. The Early Church in Jerusalem (3:1-6:7)
 - A. Peter's First Miracle (3:1-4:31)
 - B. Trouble in the Church (4:32-6:7)
- III. The First Expansion: Stephen, Samaria, and Saul (6:8-9:31)
 - A. Suffering: the Arrest and Martyr of Stephen (6:8-7:60)
 - B. Growth: Phillip, Saul, and Peter (8:1-9:31)
- IV. Continuing Expansion: the First Gentile Believers (9:32-12:24)
 - A. Proof of Gentiles Being Saved (9:32-11:18)
 - B. Gentile Salvation in Antioch (11:19-26)
 - C. Events in Jerusalem (11:27-12:24)
- V. Mission to the Gentiles: Part 1, Asia Minor (12:25-16:5)
 - A. Paul's First Missionary Journey (12:25-14:28)
 - B. Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
 - C. The Beginning of Paul's Second Journey (15:36-16:5)
- VI. Mission to the Gentiles: Part 2, Greece (16:6-19:20)
 - A. Paul's Second Journey Continues (16:6-18:22)
 - B. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23-19:20)
- VII. Mission to the Gentiles: Part 3, Italy (19:21-28:31)
 - A. From Ephesus to Jerusalem (19:21-21:16)
 - B. Paul's Final Visit to Jerusalem (21:17-23:35)
 - C. Paul's Defenses before Rulers (24:1-26:32)
 - D. Paul's Journey to Rome (27:1-28:31)

(4) Noteworthy Passages in Acts

- *The plan to spread the gospel and build the Church (Acts 1:8)*
In this verse, Jesus explains to the apostles how the gospel would spread and the church would grow as they preached and ministered in his name. Jesus told them that they would be witnesses to his power and salvation in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This statement describes exactly what happens through the rest of the book of Acts. In the first few chapters we see the Church established and new Christians being saved only in Jerusalem. However, as we continue reading the following chapters, the apostles and other believers begin to spread out from Jerusalem, and they share the gospel as they go. This allows others to believe, and we see God building his church beyond Jerusalem into the regions of Judea and Samaria. The last half of the book describes the apostle Paul's journeys to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ "to the ends of the earth," and the Church expands throughout Gentile nations in all the known world.
- *Pentecost (Acts 2)*
The entire second chapter of Acts is a full of wonderful things to study and understand. At the beginning of the chapter, the apostles and other disciples are gathered in secret, prayerfully waiting as Jesus had instructed. Then without warning, the Holy Spirit fell from heaven and filled the believers in a way never seen before. Each one started declaring the gospels in languages they did not know before, yet when they went outside people in the streets who had come from all over the world started hearing the Good News about Jesus. Peter finally stood up to preach and explain this extraordinary event. He declared that they were witnessing the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, that in the Last Days the Spirit of God would fill his people and work in powerful ways. Since that day, all Christians everywhere have experienced the indwelling of the Holy Spirit from the moment of their salvation. When Peter called the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, over 3000 people believed and were saved in one day. The chapter finishes with a description of the newly formed church in Jerusalem, a group that was committed to the apostles' teaching, to prayer, to celebrating the Lord's Supper, and to unity in fellowship with one another.
- *The Church starts expanding (Acts 8:4-17)*
If Acts 2 is significant for describing the birth of the church in Jerusalem, then Acts 8 is also extremely important because it describes the spread of the gospel to those outside of Jerusalem in the areas of Judea and Samaria. This is following the plan that Jesus explained to the apostles in 1:8. In Acts 8:4, we learn that persecution had come upon the Christians, and many of them scattered outside Jerusalem, telling the gospel to others as they went. Philip went to Samaria and declared the gospel there, and many believed and were saved. This is important because the Samaritans were the first group of people who were not true Jews to hear the gospel and receive salvation. They were related to the Jews, but the Jews despised them and looked down on them for their religious practices. Their salvation was so important that the apostle Peter left Jerusalem and came to Samaria to investigate when he heard the news. After meeting with this group, he saw that God had indeed granted faith and salvation to those

outside of traditional Judaism.

- *The first Gentiles are saved (Acts 10)*
Continuing the expansion of the gospel and the Church, Acts 10 describes the conversion of the first true Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ. A God-fearing man named Cornelius, an officer in the Roman army, received a vision of an angel from the Lord who instructed him to call Peter (who was in the city of Joppa at that time). Cornelius sent servants to find him, and he gathered his family and household to wait. At the same time, the Lord gave Peter a strange vision while he was praying. In the vision, God began preparing Peter for the moment by instructing him not to call anything unclean which God was making clean. When the servants arrived, Peter joined them and travelled to Cornelius's home. There, Peter explained the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, and the whole household believed and were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.
- *The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)*
The Jerusalem Council in chapter 15 is a very important event in Acts. Following the conversion of Cornelius and his household in chapter ten, the gospel had continued spreading to Gentile peoples, including the birth of a strong church of Jews and Gentiles in Antioch (in Syria, north of Jerusalem). As more and more Gentiles were saved, some Jewish Christians started teaching that a person must believe in Jesus but still continue to obey all of the Jewish law written in the Old Testament. Paul and Barnabas debated them fiercely, and finally the matter was brought to James, Peter, and the apostles at the church in Jerusalem. After discussion and extended prayer, the entire council agreed that Paul's gospel is correct. A person is saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ, not through following the Old Testament law. They gave Paul their blessing to continue preaching this gospel of grace to the Gentiles without adding the burden of following Jewish customs. From this point forward, the gospel message spreads and the Church grows quickly among Gentiles in nations throughout the Roman empire.
- *Paul instructs the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38)*
In this passage, Paul says goodbye to the leaders of the church in Ephesus and charges them to faithfully shepherd "all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (20:28). These verses represent the beginning of the last phases of Paul's missionary work. He knows he will not be returning to Ephesus, a church he loved, so he passes responsibility for leading and caring for the church to the elders there. This is a significant transition moment in the history of the church as we see leadership of the church passed from the apostle to the next generation of Christian leaders.
- *The story is not finished (Acts 28:15-31)*
The end of the book of Acts feels like an unfinished story. Paul is under house arrest in Rome, awaiting his trial before Caesar. For the moment, he is freely sharing the gospel and teaching the Word of God to all who wish to come and visit him. This is the fulfillment of Jesus's words from Acts 1:8. The gospel has spread from Jerusalem

all the way to Rome, the capital and most powerful city in the world at that time. But the book of Acts has no conclusion. There is no summary statement telling us that the story is finished. And that is because the story is not finished. The gospel is still being proclaimed to the ends of the earth. The church is still growing in nations around the world. The Holy Spirit is still working in powerful ways through the people of God to draw men and women everywhere to faith in Jesus Christ. We are now part of the story that began in Acts 2, and we must continue to proclaim the gospel and shepherd the churches that Jesus purchased with his blood until He returns to save us all.

(4) Important Theological Themes

- *The history of salvation.*

The book of Acts allows us to see how God's plan of salvation stretches from Jerusalem and the Jews to the furthest nations of the earth. In Genesis 12, God promised Abram that he would be blessed to become a blessing, and that through Abram God would bless all the nations of the earth. This theme is repeated many times in the Old Testament (such as Psalm 67, which declares, "Let the nations be glad!"), yet the Jewish people lost sight of God's plan to bring salvation to all peoples. When Jesus came, he taught that God loved all the world (John 3:16), and that He had also come to save "other sheep not of this fold (that is, not of Israel)" (John 10:16). After his resurrection, he commanded his followers to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). The book of Acts reveals how God finally extended his salvation to all the nations of the earth. As Jesus said in Acts 1:8, the apostles became his witnesses, declaring his death and resurrection and salvation in his name, beginning in Jerusalem, then extending to Judea and Samaria, and finally stretching to the very ends of the earth.

- *The gospel is for everyone.*

This is related to the first major theological theme. The book of Acts teaches powerfully that the news of salvation in Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed and offered freely to all peoples in all places. This was difficult for the Jewish Christians – and even the apostles who had learned from Jesus directly – to understand. When they first heard of Samaritans being saved, they sent Peter to investigate (Acts 8). When God was ready to begin saving Gentiles, he had to give Peter a heavenly vision and repeat it three times so that he would understand. The issue became so serious that it required the first church council in Jerusalem in chapter 15 to finally recognize and agree that God has given salvation through faith in Jesus to all peoples. Today, we are continuing the mission of making sure that gospel message is extended to all peoples, all tribes, and all nations, until all have heard that Jesus saves.

- *The Holy Spirit.*

The book of Acts records more of the activity and miraculous works of the Holy Spirit than any other book in the New Testament. Yet it can be tricky to interpret at times, especially when we are to understand how He works among us today. Even though we may still have questions, we can see many important truths about the Holy Spirit taught clearly in the pages of Acts. He is given to all believers at the moment of

salvation (2:38 and 9:17). He sometimes gives specific orders for ministry to individuals (8:29, 39). He leads the church to set apart some for special ministry (13:2, 4). And above all, the Holy Spirit is the One who empowers Christians to proclaim the gospel and advance the mission of the church according to God's perfect wisdom and guidance (4:8; 6:10; 7:55; 9:31; 13:9-10; 21:11).

Part 2 – Practice Interpreting Scripture

Today's practice of the Interpretive Journey should be different than the previous days. Explain to the students that they will work together today to practice following the steps of the Interpretive Journey with much less help from you, the instructor. As part of their final exam, they will be expected to work together to interpret an assigned passage from the gospels or Acts without help from you. Instruct them to take out the picture of the Interpretive Journey so that they can remember the five steps to follow. The five steps are listed below:

- Step One – Grasp the text in their town.
 - Key Question – What did the text mean to the original audience?
- Step Two – Measure the width of the river to cross.
 - Key Question – What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
- Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth
 - Key Question – What is the unchanging biblical principle in this passage?
- Step Four – Consult the biblical map.
 - Key Question – How does our timeless truth fit with the rest of the Bible?
- Step Five – Grasp the text in our town.
 - Key Question – How should individual Christians and churches live out the timeless truth in this passage?

Now direct them to work together to interpret the meaning of the following passage:

Acts 6:1-6

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

Once again, instruct them to talk through all five steps of the Interpretive Journey together. They should write down the following notes to show the work they have done:

- (Step One) Write a short, simple statement to summarize the message that God was revealing to the original audience.
- (Step Three) Write the timeless truth (or truths) that you discovered from studying this passage.
- (Step Five) Write two or three specific applications of your timeless truth that you would teach to others in your church.

Part 3 – Final Exam Preview

Explain to the students what will be required for their final exam. The exam includes two parts.

The first part is a written exam. Each student will take the written exam individually. The written exam will include 25 questions worth 2 points each. A score of 50% is needed to pass.

For this exam, students should carefully review all the notes that have been covered throughout this course. They should know all of the historical facts (see the informational tables in this section of each lesson) for all four gospels and for the book of Acts. They should be familiar with the important theological themes from all five books. They will need to be able to recognize which themes are included in each book. Also, students should be able to explain in one or two sentences at least one significant truth found in each of the following key passages studied in this course:

- The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20)
- Jesus came as a servant and a sacrifice (Mark 10:42-45)
- The transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9:28-36)
- The true identity of Jesus: The Word made flesh (John 1:1-18)
- The plan to spread the gospel and build the Church (Acts 1:8).

The second part of the exam is a group project. The group will work together for 30-45 minutes to follow the steps of the Interpretive Journey to the best of their ability. You will assign them a specific passage from one of the gospels or Acts to study and interpret. They can talk, use their Bibles and study Bibles, or use their class notes to complete the study. Smart phones and computers should not be allowed. The instructor will observe how well the group follows the five steps and assign a grade of “Pass” or “Fail.”

Each student must pass both the written exam and the group project to complete this course successfully.

New Testament Survey 1

Final Exam

1. How many books are in the New Testament?
 - a. 19
 - b. 27
 - c. 31
 - d. 33

2. How many different authors wrote the books of the New Testament?
 - a. 3
 - b. 9
 - c. 27
 - d. 1

3. Which 3 books are known as the synoptic gospels? (Circle all 3.)
 - a. Matthew
 - b. Mark
 - c. Luke
 - d. John

4. What is the one central theme of the whole New Testament?
 - a. Jesus Christ is Lord of all!
 - b. God loves you.
 - c. Grace
 - d. The power of the Holy Spirit.

5. What is the name of the 5-step process we have learned to help us faithfully and correctly interpret the Bible?
 - a. The Big Secret
 - b. Reading Like Jesus
 - c. Bible Study Methods
 - d. The Interpretive Journey

6. To whom was the book of Matthew written?
 - a. Jewish readers
 - b. Roman readers
 - c. All Gentiles
 - d. The Americans

7. What was the main purpose or reason for writing the book of Matthew?
 - a. To defeat the Romans.
 - b. To make the Jews feel ashamed.
 - c. To show that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament.
 - d. To write down everything that Jesus said and did.

8. What is the title that Jesus used for himself frequently in the book Matthew which comes from a vision recorded in chapter 7 of the book of the Daniel?
 - a. Son of God
 - b. Son of Man
 - c. Immanuel
 - d. Lord and Savior

9. Who is the author of the book of Mark?
 - a. John Mark
 - b. John
 - c. Luke
 - d. Paul

10. To whom was the book of Mark written?
 - a. Jewish readers
 - b. Roman readers
 - c. The Pharisees
 - d. Mary and Joseph

11. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Mark?
 - a. Satan is defeated.
 - b. Jesus performs powerful miracles.
 - c. Peter was the leader of the disciples.
 - d. Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God.

12. To whom was the book of Luke written?
 - a. Theophilus
 - b. Paul
 - c. Jewish readers
 - d. Roman readers

13. When was the book of Luke written?
 - a. AD 33
 - b. AD 58-60
 - c. AD 75-80
 - d. AD 2022

14. Which of the following are important theological themes in the book of Luke? (Circle all correct answers.)
- a. Jesus is concerned for the Pharisees.
 - b. Jesus is concerned for women, children, and the poor.
 - c. Jesus is concerned for the nations.
 - d. Jesus is concerned for the lost.
15. Where was the book of John written?
- a. Jerusalem
 - b. Antioch
 - c. Rome
 - d. Ephesus
16. When was the book of John written?
- a. AD 33
 - b. AD 65
 - c. AD mid 80s to early 90s
 - d. AD 125
17. Which of the four gospels contains more teaching about the Holy Spirit than any of the others?
- a. Matthew
 - b. Mark
 - c. Luke
 - d. John
18. Who is the author of the book of Acts?
- a. Luke
 - b. Paul
 - c. Peter
 - d. Unknown
19. To whom was the book of Acts written?
- a. Paul
 - b. Theophilus
 - c. The Jews
 - d. Caesar

20. What was the main purpose or reason for writing the book of Acts?
- a. To prove that Jesus is God.
 - b. To defend the Christian faith by explaining the growth of the early church as the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and the first Christians.
 - c. To show all the miracles and teachings of the apostle Paul.
 - d. To teach the history of places and people in the first century.

Write one or two sentences to explain at least one important truth taught in each of the following passages:

21. Matthew 28:16-20 | The Great Commission

22. Mark 10:42-45 | Jesus came as a servant and a sacrifice

23. Luke 9:28-36 | The transfiguration of Jesus

24. John 1:1-18 | The true identity of Jesus: the Word made flesh

25. Acts 1:8 | The plan to spread the gospel and build the Church

New Testament Survey 1

Final Exam – MASTER COPY

*Correct answers are in **bold letters**. Each correct answer is worth two points. This exam is worth a total of 50 points.*

1. How many books are in the New Testament?
 - a. 19
 - b. 27**
 - c. 31
 - d. 33

2. How many different authors wrote the books of the New Testament?
 - a. 3
 - b. 9**
 - c. 27
 - d. 1

3. Which 3 books are known as the synoptic gospels? (Circle all 3.)
 - a. Matthew**
 - b. Mark**
 - c. Luke**
 - d. John

4. What is the one central theme of the whole New Testament?
 - a. Jesus Christ is Lord of all!**
 - b. God loves you.
 - c. Grace
 - d. The power of the Holy Spirit.

5. What is the name of the 5-step process we have learned to help us faithfully and correctly interpret the Bible?
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 - b. Reading Like Jesus
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 - d. The Interpretive Journey**

6. To whom was the book of Matthew written?
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- a. To prove that Jesus is God.
 - b. To defend the Christian faith by explaining the growth of the early church as the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and the first Christians.**
 - c. To show all the miracles and teachings of the apostle Paul.

- d. To teach the history of places and people in the first century.

Write one or two sentences to explain at least one important truth taught in each of the following passages:

Count the answer correct if the student includes any of the information from the comments below each passage.

21. Matthew 28:16-20 | The Great Commission

The final words that Jesus spoke to his disciples declared the mission of all Jesus's followers, from that day until He returns. Jesus had risen victorious from the grave and was soon to ascend to heaven in glory. He announced that He has received all authority from his Father and issued the following command and promise: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (28:19-20).

22. Mark 10:42-45 | Jesus came as a servant and a sacrifice

Many pastors and scholars point to these verses as the most important verses in the book of Mark. While the first half of the book has been revealing the power and divine authority of Jesus as the Son of God, this is the place where the story turns toward the cross. Even though Jesus has perfect power over all things, He did not come to earth to force all things to serve him. Instead, He says that He came as a servant and a ransom, a sacrifice to save all those who come to him. He shows that his heart and attitude are completely different from rulers and those with power in this world. He also tells his disciples that they are to imitate his way of leading through service and sacrifice rather than pursuing power and authority for themselves.

- Luke 9:28-36 | The transfiguration of Jesus

In Luke's gospel, the story of Jesus's transfiguration on the mountain immediately follows Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, and Christ's calling to follow him by taking up a cross. Jesus also stated, "There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God" (9:27). This statement points to the Transfiguration that was to follow, when three of his disciples (Peter, James, and John) went up the mountain with Jesus and saw him transformed into his heavenly glory and is joined by Moses and Elijah. At this moment, God the Father speaks again and says, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!"

These verses reveal several important truths. First, at least three of the disciples were eyewitnesses to the heavenly glory of Jesus before his resurrection. Second, Moses and Elijah appear, representing the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament, and show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Third, the voice of the Father speaks again from heaven, affirming the Lordship of Jesus. All of these things confirm a clear message in Luke's gospel that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world.

23. John 1:1-18 | The true identity of Jesus: the Word made flesh

The first verses of John’s gospel contain some of the most important theological statements about the divine nature of Jesus Christ found in the Bible. Verses 1-4 teach that Jesus is not created, but has existed from eternity past. They also teach that Jesus is the One through whom all things were created, showing that He is fully divine and equal to God the Father in his divine nature and power. Verse 14 explains that this Jesus (the Word) who is fully God in every way, has come down from heaven and “dwelt among us,” taking the body and the life of a man so that we might know God in truth.

24. Acts 1:8 | The plan to spread the gospel and build the Church

In this verse, Jesus explains to the apostles how the gospel would spread and the church would grow as they preached and ministered in his name. Jesus told them that they would be witnesses to his power and salvation in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This statement describes exactly what happens through the rest of the book of Acts. In the first few chapters we see the Church established and new Christians being saved only in Jerusalem. However, as we continue reading the following chapters, the apostles and other believers begin to spread out from Jerusalem, and they share the gospel as they go. This allows others to believe, and we see God building his church beyond Jerusalem into the regions of Judea and Samaria. The last half of the book describes the apostle Paul’s journeys to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ “to the ends of the earth,” and the Church expands throughout Gentile nations in all the known world.

New Testament Survey 1

Group Project

For this part of the final exam students must work as a group to study a passage from the New Testament following the steps of the Interpretive Journey. Select one of the passages listed below for the student project. Instruct them to talk through all five steps of the Interpretive Journey together. The group should be allowed 30-45 minutes to complete this study. They should write down the following notes to show the work they have done:

- (Step One) Write a short, simple statement to summarize the message that God was revealing to the original audience.
- (Step Three) Write the timeless truth (or truths) that you discovered from studying this passage.
- (Step Five) Write two or three specific applications of your timeless truth that you would teach to others in your church.

Passages for Interpretive Journey Group Project:

- The Rich Young Man - Mark 10:17-22
- The Parable of the Great Banquet – Luke 14:15-24
- The Believers' Prayer – Acts 4:23-31

How to grade the group project:

After giving the students full instructions, watch them closely for the entire time of the project. Try to give as little help as possible; encourage them to follow the steps of the Interpretive Journey as they have learned. You should be able to see that the group has learned all five steps of the Interpretive Journey, the key questions for each step, and how to complete each step in the process. They are free to use their Bibles and any notes they have, but no cell phones or computers are allowed. The group should submit the statements they have written for steps 1, 3, and 5 as noted above.

The group will be graded as a whole with either a 'pass' or 'fail.' If you see that everyone in the group has learned the steps, understands how to follow the Interpretive Journey process, and shows some ability to interpret the passage in a faithful and accurate way, then award them a grade of 'pass' for their work on this project.