



New Testament Survey 2

The Letters of Paul

Teaching Notes

Dr. Nathan H. Gunter

Lusaka

Lesson 1 – Paul the Apostle, Galatians, and 1st & 2nd Thessalonians

Introduction

This course is designed to provide students a general introduction to the Apostle Paul and a look at the important details and theological themes included in the 13 letters he wrote to different churches and individuals that we find in our New Testament. In this first lesson, we will introduce basic information about the Apostle Paul himself, examine the books of Galatians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians, then review and practice the 5 steps of the Interpretive Journey. Students will notice that we will not study Paul's letters in the order that they appear in the New Testament. Instead, we will look at the books in an order which is close to the order that they were originally written. 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 1 – Paul the Apostle

Before studying the 13 books written by Paul, it will be helpful for us consider who this man was and how we should understand him. We need to look at Paul's background and training, his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ, and his calling as an apostle. After that, we will also review a few simple guidelines to help us read and understand the letters in the New Testament.

(1) Who is Paul the Apostle?

Paul was born to a Jewish family in the Roman city of Tarsus (modern day Turkey). He was a Roman citizen by birth, and his citizenship status helped him several times during his missionary work later in life (Acts 16:35-39; 21:37-40; 25:11-12). His birth name was Saul (in honor of King Saul of Israel), but he changed his name to Paul after he became a Christian. Paul came from a family of tentmakers, and he learned that skill as well. During his travels as a missionary, Paul often practiced his tentmaking in order to make money to support himself and those traveling with him.

Paul moved to Jerusalem when he was still young to begin studying as a Pharisee under the teaching of Gamaliel, a well-known leader among the Pharisees. He became an expert in Old Testament law, and he was extremely zealous both to obey the Law himself and to urge others to do the same. Because of his passion for God and the Law, Paul immediately became an opponent of the first Christians after Jesus ascended to heaven and the apostles started preaching the gospel. Paul persecuted those who believed in Jesus, beating some and putting others in prison. Acts 8:1 even tells us that Paul was present at the execution of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and he stood watching and giving his approval as Stephen was killed. Finally, Paul received permission to travel to the city of Damascus (north of Jerusalem) to persecute Christians who had gone there. This was the time when his life would be changed forever.

(2) Paul's Conversion and Calling

Paul's conversion to faith in Jesus Christ is recorded in Acts chapter 9. Paul also summarizes his conversion again in Acts 22:1-16, Acts 26:2-18, and Galatians 1:13-23. As he was walking the road to Damascus, suddenly a bright light shone in the sky above him, and Paul was blinded.

READ: Ask someone in the class to read out loud, Acts 9:3-9.

ASK: What was the first thing that Jesus asked Saul?

He said, "Why are persecuting me?" Notice that Saul had been persecuting Christians, yet Jesus says that is the same as persecuting him.

ASK: What does Saul call Jesus when he first responds to the voice?

He calls Jesus, "Lord," although he did not know yet that it was Jesus who was speaking to him.

After seeing the light and hearing the voice, Paul continued his journey in blindness until he reached Damascus and found Ananias. The Lord had given Ananias a vision and explained to him that He had called Paul. Paul would no longer persecute Christians, but he himself would suffer greatly as a follower of Jesus. God had called Paul to declare the gospel to the Gentiles throughout the Roman world (Acts 9:15-16). When Ananias prayed for Paul, he received his sight again and was filled with the Holy Spirit. After his salvation, Paul stayed in Damascus for awhile, traveled to Jerusalem to meet the other apostles, and even spent three years in the desert – all of this time he was learning the gospel of Jesus Christ and preparing to carry the message to the world.

ASK: What do you think about Paul's decision to continue learning the gospel and preparing himself for more than three years before he started his ministry? How would our ministry be better and our churches stronger today if leaders studied and prepared before immediately beginning preaching?

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

(3) Guidelines for Reading New Testament Letters

These are a few important things to remember when reading the letters of the New Testament:

- Most of the letters were written to churches or individuals, although a few were not specific (for example, Hebrews and James).
- Most letters are organized in a basic pattern: author's name, recipient's name, greeting and prayer, doctrinal teaching or explanation, practical instructions, and a good-bye.
- Each letter addresses a specific problem or situation the recipient was facing. Understanding the situation behind the letter is a key to understanding the meaning of its teachings.
- Remember that these letters were intended to be read aloud to the congregations. Reading the letters would have been a big event for the congregation. Many of the teachings and instructions are directed toward the entire congregation, not just an individual.

Part 2 – Galatians

The book of Galatians is probably the first book that Paul wrote in the New Testament. Paul was writing to a group of churches in an area called Galatia where he had preached the gospel during his first missionary journey. Unfortunately, a group of false teachers called the Judaizers arrived after Paul and were teaching the Christians there to believe a false gospel. Paul's letter includes some very strong words and a complete rebuke of these false teachers. He calls the Galatian Christians to place their hope of salvation in the work that Jesus did by dying on the cross and rising again from the dead, not on their own obedience to the Old Testament Law.

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?**
Paul

- **When was it written?**
AD 48 or 49

The exact date of many of Paul's letters is difficult to know, but there are several clues that help us identify when they were probably written. Galatians was written shortly after Paul established these churches during his first missionary journey.

- **Where was it written?**
Antioch or Jerusalem

After completing their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to their home church of Antioch (in modern day Syria) and also visited the other apostles in Jerusalem. Paul probably wrote this letter from one of those two places.

- **To whom was it written?**
The churches of South Galatia

Most of Paul's letters are written to an individual church, but this letter is written to a group of churches in the south part of the Roman province of Galatia. The letter would have been passed from church to church so that all the believers there could hear it.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to send this letter?**
False teaching (Judaizers)

The Judaizers were a group of Jewish Christians who believed that salvation comes

from believing in Jesus *and* continuing to obey all of the Old Testament Law (including circumcision, observing the Sabbath, following diet laws, etc.). They believed that Paul’s message of salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection was offensive to Moses and the Law of God. They frequently followed Paul on his missionary journeys, confusing people with their false teaching and often causing groups of people to reject and attack Paul (see Acts 13:45-50).

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

To defend the true gospel.

Paul would not allow these new Christians to be deceived by this false gospel. He uses some of the strongest words in the New Testament to reject the teaching of these Judaizers, even stating that if anyone (including angels!) comes and preaches a different gospel to them, that person is cursed (Galatians 1:9). He teaches that the gospel of salvation through faith is even found in the Old Testament and calls the believers there to put all of their faith and hope in Jesus alone.

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

All people are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ; works of righteousness will not save.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	AD 48 or 49
Where was it written?	Antioch or Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The churches of South Galatia
What was the situation in the churches?	False teaching (Judaizers)
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To defend the true gospel.
What is the most important theological theme?	We are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness.

(2) Basic Outline

Galatians is organized into two major sections. The first is rebuking the false gospel of the Judaizers and teaching the true gospel of salvation by faith alone in Jesus. Paul even uses the example of Abraham in the Old Testament to demonstrate that righteousness before God has always come from believing God, not from obeying religious rules. In the second part of the book, Paul calls the Galatian Christians to live holy lives because of their freedom in Christ.

They are no longer slaves to sin and the Law, but they are free to serve God because of the Holy Spirit living within them.¹

- I. Introduction (1:1-5)
- II. Rebuke: The True Gospel and the “Other” Gospel (1:6-4:11)
 - A. Historical Section (1:6-2:21)
 - 1. No Other Gospel (1:6-10)
 - 2. Paul’s Conversion, Visits to Jerusalem, and Confronting Peter (1:11-2:14)
 - 3. No Justification by Works of the Law (2:15-21)
 - B. Theological Section (3:1-4:11)
 - 1. Justification by Faith: The Example of Abraham (3:1-18)
 - 2. The Purpose of the Law (3:19-4:7)
 - 3. Don’t Turn Back (4:8-11)
- III. Appeal: Choose the Liberty of Life in the Spirit (4:12-6:10)
 - A. Children of the Free Woman (4:12-31)
 - 1. Paul’s Frustration (4:12-20)
 - 2. An Illustration: Sara and Hagar (4:21-31)
 - B. Living a Life of Liberty (5:1-6:10)
 - 1. Stand Firm: The Freedom of the Christian (5:1-15)
 - 2. Walk by the Spirit (5:16-26)
 - 3. Fulfill the Law of Christ (6:1-10)
- IV. Conclusion (6:11-18)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Galatians

- *No Other Gospel* (1:6-10)

Paul was shocked when he heard the news that some believers in the Galatian churches had gone back to following the Old Testament laws. He told them that “another gospel” was really no gospel at all. The word “gospel” means good news, and believing that you are saved by perfectly obeying the Law is not good news in any way. No one is able to obey the Law completely, so if we try to earn our salvation by doing good, we are left truly hopeless. Paul wanted to be completely clear in what he said to the Galatian Christians, so he repeated his point to make sure they heard him. He said that if anyone – even an angel from heaven – brought them a message of salvation by anything other than faith in Jesus Christ, that person should be cursed.
- *Freedom in Christ* (5:1-15)

The opposite of slavery under the Law is freedom in Christ. Paul teaches the Galatians that Christ has fulfilled the Law for us, so we are free from its burdens and requirements. But he also warns them against another danger. On one hand, some people fall back into slavery by trying to earn salvation by obeying the Law, forgetting that Christ made them free. On the other hand, some people think that if they are free from the Law, then they are free to live in any way that they want, and they use their freedom to chase after sin. Paul taught, “Only do not use your freedom

¹ 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).

as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (5:13). Loving and serving others instead of only helping yourself is not natural for anyone. When we commit to a life of love and service in Christ’s name, we show that the Holy Spirit has truly changed us.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *We are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness.*

If we want to understand Paul’s most important point in Galatians, we can see it clearly in one verse:

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

- Galatians 2:16

Three times in one verse he says that good works cannot justify someone (or make them right) before God. We are accepted by God only through faith in Jesus Christ. Any other message about salvation is a false Christian and should never be believed by Christians.

Part 3 – 1st & 2nd Thessalonians

These two books are not read as often as some of Paul’s other letters, but the letters to the Thessalonian church contain important teachings about God’s plan that all believers should grow in holiness, about some of the events that we will experience at death and at the return of Christ, and even about God’s command that Christians should be hard workers.

(1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Paul

- **When was it written?**

AD 50

Paul experienced serious persecution and was chased out of Thessalonica during his second missionary journey (Acts 17:5-10), probably around the year 50. He wrote 1 Thessalonians several months after leaving the city, and 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after that.

- **Where was it written?**

Corinth

After escaping the persecution in Thessalonica, Paul traveled to the cities of Berea and then Athens. Then, he went to Corinth and stayed in that city for 18 months, preaching the gospel and teaching the new believers. The two letters to the

Thessalonians were likely written during his stay in Corinth.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Church in Thessalonica (in Macedonia)

Thessalonica was a church in the region of Macedonia, the place Paul visited to preach the gospel after seeing a vision in the night in Acts 16.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to send these letters?**

Persecution of the believers and confusion about the end times.

Just as Paul was persecuted and chased out of Thessalonica, the new believers who remained there after his exit continued to experience persecution. The Jews in the city were the first to cause problems for the city, but soon the whole city was against them. As some of the believers started to die, those who were left were asking serious questions about death and the coming of the Lord Jesus.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing 1 and 2 Thessalonians?**

To encourage believers who were being persecuted and to give clear teaching about the end time.

Paul teaches about many things in these two letters. Some of the most important reasons he wrote this letter are (1) to encourage believers to continue in faith even when they are persecuted, (2) to remind Christians that God has called them to live holy lives, and (3) to teach them what to expect when Christ returns.

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

Persecuted Christians find hope by looking forward to the return of Christ.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	AD 50
Where was it written?	Corinth
To whom was it written?	The Church in Thessalonica (in Macedonia)
What was the situation in the church?	Persecution of the believers and confusion about the end times.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage persecuted believers and to give clear teaching about the end time.
What is the most important theological theme?	Persecuted Christians find hope by looking forward to the return of Christ.

(2) Basic Outline

Though these two books are short, they contain much important teaching. 1 Thessalonians includes an extended section of prayer and giving thanks for the believers in Thessalonica before sharing several points of clear instruction. 2 Thessalonians emphasizes that the Day of the Lord has not yet come. (It appears that some people had visited the church and taught them the Lord returned in secret.) He explains what Christians should expect and urges them to place their hope in Christ as the Day draws closer.

- I. 1 Thessalonians
 - A. Introduction (1:1)
 - B. Prayers and Giving Thanks for the Thessalonians (1:2-3:13)
 - C. Encouragement and Instructions (4:1-5:22)
 1. Called to Personal Holiness and Sexual Purity (4:1-8)
 2. Called to Christian Love and Responsible Life (4:9-12)
 3. Instructions about the Second Coming (4:13-5:11)
 4. Extra Encouragement (5:12-22)
 - D. Conclusion (5:23-28)
- II. 2 Thessalonians
 - A. Introduction (1:1-12)
 - B. Central Truth: The Day of the Lord has not come yet. (2:1-2)
 - C. Evidence for the Central Truth (2:3-19)
 1. The Day of the Lord has not happened (2:3-12)
 2. Christians Can Have Hope as they look forward to the end time (2:13-17)
 - D. Encouragements (3:1-15)
 1. Encouragement to continue in prayer (3:1-5)
 2. Encouragement to avoid idleness (3:6-15)
 - E. Conclusion (3:16-18)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in 1st & 2nd Thessalonians

- *Called to Holiness* (1 Thess. 4:1-8)
Paul's teaching sections in 1 Thessalonians are written very clearly so that all will hear and understand. For example, many Christians ask, "How do I know God's will for my life?" Paul gives a direct answer in 4:3 – "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality." It is impossible to misunderstand this. God expects all believers to live holy lives, and one way of showing this is through obeying God's command to flee sexual immorality. Both the church in Thessalonica in the year 50 and the church in Zambia today are surrounded by a culture of sexual sin. Paul teaches that one thing that makes Christians unique in this world is our commitment to holiness before God in this matter.
- *The Coming of the Lord* (1 Thess. 4:13-18)
What happens to Christians who die in faith without seeing Christ return? Are they lost? Will we see them again? The believers in Thessalonica asked some of the same heavy questions that we ask today. Paul explains that we Christians do not grieve like

those who have no hope, because we know that death is not the end for us. We know that the resurrection of Jesus was a first taste of the resurrection that all Christians will one day experience. Whether we die or remain alive until Jesus returns to the earth, we live each day with hope and confidence that even death cannot separate us from our Lord. On the Day that Jesus returns, the dead will be raised from the grave, and those who are alive will be caught up in the air, transformed into our eternal bodies to live with Christ forever. Paul finished this teaching with these words: “And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (4:17-18).

- *Perseverance, Judgment, and the Antichrist* (2 Thess. 1:5-2:12)
No one wants to be persecuted for their faith, and no one wants to suffer. The believers in Thessalonica were experiencing these things, and they felt afraid. Paul wrote to encourage them, reminding them “God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you” (1:6). As Christians, we understand that we may experience times of great suffering and loss in this world as we wait for Jesus to return. Paul even explains that before Jesus returns the world will go through a time of great rebellion led by a “man of lawlessness,” one who is often called the Antichrist today. Paul teaches that this one will come and deceive many with persuasive words and with powerful signs and wonders, living as a sworn enemy of Jesus Christ. But Jesus will return and destroy him with a simple spoken word. Our calling is to understand these things, and to continue to patiently wait for Christ, trusting in his goodness to save us and bring justice to wrongdoers in the end.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *Persecuted Christians find hope by looking forward to the return of Christ.*
When Paul explains the truth about persecution and the return of Christ, he always includes words to strengthen the believers to continue in their faith. He says things like, “encourage one another,” “build one another up,” and “stand firm.” His message is clear to us. Suffering in life, and even death itself, is not something that Christians should fear. Our Lord has conquered death, and He has promised that those of us waiting for him in faith will conquer death and live with him forever.

Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

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.²

² 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: What are the five steps of the Interpretive Journey? What is the Key Question that goes with each step?

Lead the students through this review of the 5 Steps and Key Questions quickly. They should be able to answer this with no problems.

- 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 guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Galatians 5:16-25. At this point, student should be familiar with the Interpretive Journey and its steps. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 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 Galatians 5:16-25.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

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. Refer to information from earlier in this lesson about Paul, about interpreting the New Testament letters, and about Galatians.

ASK

Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.
Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
Paul
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
Paul visited the churches in Galatia during his first missionary journey. He probably personally shared the gospel with many of the believers reading this.
- Who is being spoken to?
The churches in Galatia
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
Paul cares deeply for the churches, but he is shocked that they have abandoned the true gospel message so quickly.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
Paul wants them to reject the false gospel of the Judaizers and place their faith in Christ alone for their salvation again.

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
Galatians was the first letter Paul wrote, early in his missionary work.
 - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
The churches in the region of Galatia were part of the Roman empire, although they were not the wealthiest or most important cities. They were mostly Gentiles and Greek speakers, although some Jews lived and worshiped in each city. The churches were a mix of Jewish and Gentile background Christians.
 - What was the attitude and life 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 believers in Galatia were likely a mix of different backgrounds: Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, male and female, young and old. It is likely that many felt confused or frustrated by the different messages they were hearing from Paul and the group of Judaizers.

- Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?

All of the New Testament letters take place after the resurrection and after the Pentecost. These believers were living under the same New Covenant that we live under today.

- **Literary Context**

- What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the New Testament letters.

- What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?

In the paragraph immediately before, Paul explains that all Christians are made free in Christ, yet they are not to use their freedom to pursue fleshly pleasure and sin. They are made free so that they may serve Christ and love others. Immediately after this paragraph, Paul gives a series of brief commands to the believers to help one another and gently restore those who have fallen into sin.

- What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?

The main theme of Galatians is that we are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness..

- 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 near the end of the letter. Paul has explained the true gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, and now he is giving practical instructions to those who have been made free in Christ to live by the Spirit.

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.

Example: In Galatians 5:16-25, Paul instructs those who are free in Christ to live in the Spirit by crucifying the sinful desires of the flesh and displaying the fruit of the Spirit in their daily living..

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 did Paul 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?
- 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 Galatians? 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: 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 for this step.

- 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?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

Example: “Because Christ has made us free, all true Christians are called to live in the Spirit by rejecting the works of the flesh and displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives.”

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: Ephesians 5:1-18; Colossians 3:5-15

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?

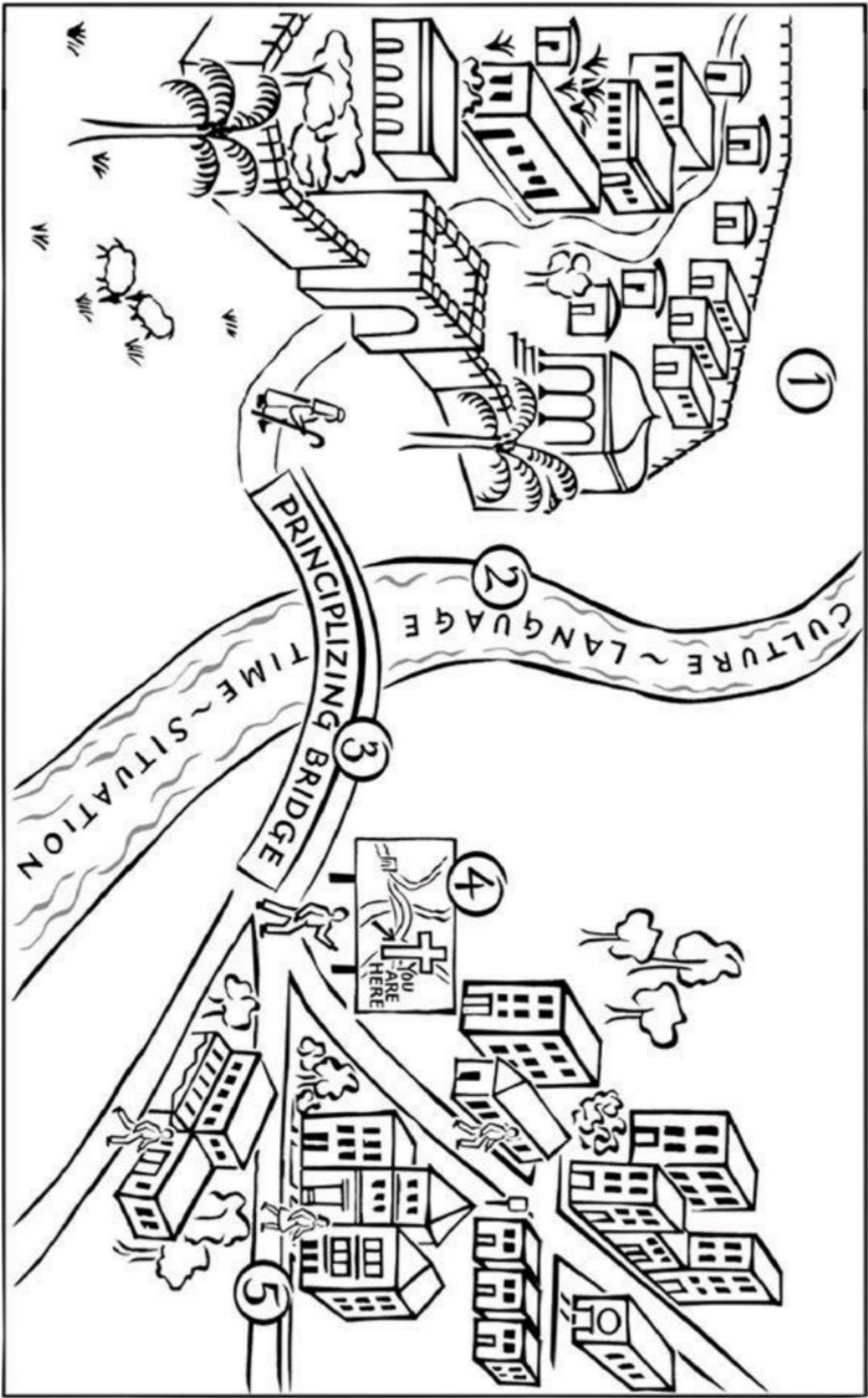
ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

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 5 – 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. Where was Paul born?
Tarsus
2. What was the name of the Pharisee who taught him in Jerusalem?
Gamaliel
3. What city was Paul traveling to when he had a blinding vision on the road?
Damascus
4. When was the book of Galatians written?
AD 48 or 49
5. What is the main theological theme of the book of Galatians?
We are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness.
6. When were the letters to the Thessalonians written?
AD 50
7. What was the situation that caused Paul to write his letters to the Thessalonians?
Persecution of the believers and confusion about the end times.



Lesson Two – 1st & 2nd Corinthians

Introduction

Everyone loves practical teaching. Teaching important truth (doctrine) is necessary, but many people really only want to know what God expects us to do. People who love practical teaching will love 1 and 2 Corinthians. These two letters were probably written next after Galatians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and they contain both strong doctrine and clear instructions for practical Christian living. In these books, Paul talks in detail about responding to divisions in a church, moral standards and Christian marriage, and even how to understand and use the spiritual gifts. Of course, these books contain much more than those topics. The church at Corinth had many questions and many problems, and Paul's letters to them help us to know how God expects us to live as his people in the world today.

Part 1 – 1st Corinthians

In this lesson, we will explore the powerful teachings written by the apostle Paul in the letters of 1 and 2 Corinthians. Just as we did in the previous lesson, we will (1) learn the historical facts about these letters, (2) look at a basic outline of their contents, (3) explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the important theological themes found in these books. 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 the Corinthian letters together.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Paul

- **When was it written?**

AD 53 or 54

Paul first visited the city of Corinth and established the church there on his second missionary journey. He wrote this letter during his third missionary journey a short time later.

- **Where was it written?**

Ephesus

Paul's longest stay in one place during his missionary journeys was almost three years in the city of Ephesus. He wrote 1 Corinthians while he was staying in Ephesus and teaching the church there.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Church at Corinth

Both 1 and 2 Corinthians are written to the church in Corinth, but we know that Paul expected the letters to be shared with other churches in the surrounding region. Just like his letter to the churches in Galatia, 1 and 2 Corinthians were passed around to teach and encourage many churches.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**

Paul had heard reports about problems and received a letter from the church.

The church in Corinth had a lot of problems. Church divisions and fighting, sexual immorality, drunk members at the Lord’s Supper, and many more things made this a difficult group of Christians. But it is important that we remember, these are genuine Christians who were confused and caught in sin. They are treated like brothers, and we need to remember the same when dealing with problem people in our churches today.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing 1 Corinthians?**

To address practical problems within the church and to give clear teaching on important doctrines.

1 Corinthians is a strong mix of truth (teaching doctrine) and instructions. These believers needed someone to remind them of the gospel and to help them learn how to live in Christ.

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

The message of the cross unites Christians in holiness and love.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	AD 53 or 54
Where was it written?	Ephesus
To whom was it written?	The Church in Corinth
What was the situation in the church?	Paul had heard reports of problems and received a letter from the church.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To address practical problems within the church and to give clear teaching on important doctrines.
What is the most important theological theme?	The message of the cross unites Christians in holiness and love.

(2) Basic Outline

1 Corinthians includes two major sections. The first section (1:10-6:20) includes Paul responding to different reports he has heard about problems in the church, including immorality and fighting between church members. The second section (7:1-16:4) includes Paul’s response to a letter the church itself had sent to Paul asking for help. When we see all

the different topics that Paul addressed in this letter, we know that this church had many serious questions and misunderstandings. Their questions and Paul's answers give us great help today to know how we can continue live in faith, even if our churches are full of problems.

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Responding to Spoken Reports (1:10-6:20)
 - A. A Right Understanding of Christian Ministers and Ministry (1:10-4:20)
 - B. Immorality Inside the Church (5:1-13)
 - C. Arguments between Believers (6:1-11)
 - D. The Limits of Our Freedom in Christ (6:12-20)
- III. Responding to a Letter from the Corinthians (7:1-16:4)
 - A. Questions about Sex and Marriage (7:1-40)
 - B. Questions about Idols and Feasts (8:1-11:1)
 - C. Questions about Christian Worship (11:2-34)
 - D. Questions about Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)
 - E. Questions about the Gospel and Resurrection (15:1-58)
 - F. Questions about an Offering to Give Aid (16:1-4)
- IV. Conclusion (16:5-24)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in 1 Corinthians

- *Christ the Wisdom and Power of God (1:18-31)*

“For the word of Christ is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1:18). With these words in his first chapter, Paul began to explain that the Christian faith will never fit the expectations of the world. Corinth was major city in the Roman empire with a strong economy and many well-educated people. They considered themselves wise to the ways of the world, and they looked down on people who didn't live for the wealth, power, and pleasure that they enjoyed. Yet God says those things are foolish. He offers us eternal life not through worldly power, wealth, and victory. He gave us life by sending his son to die on a cross. He reminds the Corinthians that not many of them were of high status or wealth before they became Christians, so it would be foolish for them to try to live a life that impresses the important people of the world now.
- *The Love Chapter (1 Corinthians 13)*

1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most famous chapters in the entire New Testament. Known as the “love chapter,” this chapter uses beautiful language to call the church in Corinth to live together in love, showing one another the patience, kindness, grace, truth, and hope that is found when we look to Christ. Paul insists that love is greater than knowledge, greater than prophecy, greater than any spiritual gift, and even greater than faith. It is interesting to notice the two chapters that surround chapter 13. Chapters 12 and 14 include Paul's teaching and instructions about the different gifts that Christians receive in the Holy Spirit, including prophecy and speaking in tongues. Yet Paul insists that all spiritual gifts are given to the individual for one reason, so

that each person may serve the church and love others. Spiritual gifts are not given for personal blessing or to show that one person is greater than another. Chapter 13 shows that our most important calling is to love one another in the church. Christian love between believers will convince people in the outside world that Christ is true (John 17:21). Spiritual gifts are given only to help us love one another more.

- *The Heart of the Gospel (15:1-11)*

While much of 1 Corinthians includes very practical instructions, Paul includes a valuable jewel of truth in chapter 15. In these verses, Paul shares a short and powerful summary of the gospel message that all true Christians believe. Scholars believe that verses 3 through 7 come from a very early hymn that Christians sang to learn and remind each other of the truth that Christ is risen from the dead. This hymn may have been written less than ten years after Christ was raised. This shows us that from the very earliest days of Christianity, our faith has been built upon one amazing truth: “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. . .” (15:4-5).

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *The message of the cross unites Christians in holiness and love.*

How did Paul try to bring unity to a church divided between rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, people devoted to different teachers, and people devoted to gaining power and position in the church? He reminded them that it is the cross of Christ that makes us one. He died for all, and we all live him. Even today, our churches are full of very different people, and often have very serious problems. How do we come together in unity? We do it by looking to the cross, and remembering that in Christ we are brothers and sisters, united in faith and hope.

Part 2 – 2nd Corinthians

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Paul

- **When was it written?**

AD 54 or 55

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:2 that the church had been collecting an offering to help Christians in Jerusalem “since last year.” This is a good clue that the letter is written about one year after the first letter they had received from Paul.

- **Where was it written?**

Macedonia

Paul was in the region of Macedonia when he wrote this letter, and some clues suggest that he was in the city of Philippi. The letter was delivered to Corinth by Titus.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Church at Corinth

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**

Titus brought Paul a report about the church; he also heard of false apostles misleading the church.

When Titus found Paul in Macedonia, he brought great news. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians had a strong effect, and the church starting to become healthy again. Unfortunately, Paul also heard that a group of false apostles or “super apostles” had arrived and were criticizing Paul and his ministry. They suggested that they were far more qualified than Paul to lead the believers in Corinth, but they also preached a false gospel that was confusing and misleading many believers in the church.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing 2 Corinthians?**

To challenge the false apostles, to teach the nature of the new covenant in Christ, and to encourage the church to give generously to aid other churches.

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

The true calling of all Christians is to be ambassadors for Christ who call others to be reconciled to God.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	AD 54 or 55
Where was it written?	Macedonia
To whom was it written?	The Church in Corinth
What was the situation in the church?	Paul had heard reports of problems and received a letter from the church.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To challenge the false apostles, to teach the nature of the new covenant in Christ, and to encourage the church to give generously to aid other churches.
What is the most important theological theme?	The true calling of all Christians is to be ambassadors for Christ who call others to be reconciled to God.

(2) Basic Outline

Much of 2 Corinthians includes Paul defending the authority of his ministry as an apostle. He does not like boasting about himself (3:5; 11:30-31), but he does show the Corinthians that his calling from God is real and that the proof is not in his power, but in his suffering on their behalf (just like Jesus suffered for all of us). Paul also includes a powerful teaching about the

nature of our ministry in Christ as we seek to help others find peace with God (chapters 3-5), and he writes a great section about generosity and giving (chapters 8-9) to help the believers know what God expects from them in that area.

- I. Introduction (1:1-11)
- II. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians (1:12-2:11)
- III. Paul Defends His Ministry and Authority (2:12-7:16)
 - A. Paul's Work in Troas and Macedonia (2:12-17)
 - B. Paul's Reasons for Confidence in Ministry (3:1-6)
 1. His love for the church (3:1-3)
 2. God has made him sufficient for the work (3:4-6)
 - C. Ministry of the New Covenant (3:7-4:18)
 - D. The Resurrection of Christians (5:1-10)
 - E. The Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-6:2)
 - F. Call to Separate from False Believers and Unite with Paul (6:3-7:16)
- IV. Call to Give Aid to the Church in Jerusalem (8:1-9:15)
- V. Paul Defends His Ministry and Authority Again (10:1-13:4)
 - A. God Affirms Paul's Ministry (10:1-18)
 - B. The Danger of False Apostles (11:1-15)
 - C. Paul's Sufferings and Miracles (11:16-13:4)
- VI. Conclusion (13:5-13)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in 2 Corinthians

- *Ambassadors for Christ (5:16-21)*

What does it mean to be a leader in the church? It means becoming an “ambassador for Christ” (5:20). Paul explains that serving Christ means seeing the world and its people the way that Jesus sees them and loving them the way that Jesus loves them. “We regard no one according to the flesh” (5:16). That is to say, Christians are not impressed by titles, status, power, wealth, beauty, or intelligence. We are not to overlook some who have no power, no status, no wealth, no beauty or intelligence. Because Christ has died to remove our sin and bring us to God, we plead with all who will listen to come to God and be forgiven in Christ.
- *Warning Against False Apostles (11:1-15)*

In these verses, Paul reveals some of the marks of false apostles creeping into the church. They proclaim a different Jesus than Paul taught (11:4). They use elegant and beautiful speech to convince people of their high knowledge (11:5-6). They claim to be equal or superior to the original apostles (11:12). Yet they are deceivers pretending to represent truth, just as Satan himself pretends to be an angel of light (11:13-14). They present themselves as righteous, but their teachings and their works will reveal that they are not of Christ (11:15). Even today, many churches are led by men and women who call themselves new prophets, apostles, and wonder workers. They claim to see visions, to do great miracles, and to speak for God – but they do not preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They do not speak of his death and resurrection. They do not

call people to repent of sin and be reconciled to God. They do not preach salvation by grace through faith in only Jesus. They preach worldly comfort, success, and pleasure – and their end will be the same as the false “super apostles” who were troubling the believers in Corinth.

- *My Grace Is Sufficient for You (12:1-10)*

Paul was the opposite of the proud and boastful “super apostles.” If he was forced to boast about his qualifications as an apostle, he chose to boast in his weakness (12:5). Just as Jesus came to earth humble and obedient, Paul was always aware of his weakness before God. This weakness included a “thorn in the flesh,” to “keep me from becoming conceited” (12:7). This is where we learn a beautiful and important truth about how God sees our weakness. When Paul begged God to remove his suffering, God refused. Instead, he told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (12:9). Perhaps God allows us to suffer today for the same reason. As long as we are strong and successful, we can be tempted to lean on our own wisdom and power. But when we are weak, only the power of God shines through, and that is when He is most glorified in us.

(4) Important Theological Theme

The true calling of all Christians is to be ambassadors for Christ who call others to be reconciled to God.

As Christians, this world is not our home. We are not to set our hopes on gaining power, status, or wealth the way that others do in the world. Instead, we are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, “ambassadors for Christ” who are here to serve him and carry his message to this world. Just as an ambassador for one country is assigned to live in another country to represent their President and deliver his messages, we live in this world to represent Christ and deliver his message here. And what is our message? “We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God!” (5:20).

Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:6-10. At this point, student should be familiar with the Interpretive Journey and its steps. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 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 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that

each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

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. Refer to information from earlier in this course about Paul, about interpreting the New Testament letters, and about 2 Corinthians.

ASK

Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.
Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
Paul
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
Paul wrote 2 Corinthians after he had started the church himself and after he had written at least one letter to them to deal with serious problems in the church. He was frustrated with the church before because of the sin and division among them.
- Who is being spoken to?
The church in Corinth
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
Paul is encouraged by the good news he received about the church from Titus, but he is concerned about the report of false apostles who have come in to the church.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
In this passage, Paul is trying to give the believers hope and courage to live by faith no matter their circumstances.

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
2 Corinthians was written somewhat early in Paul's missionary work.
 - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
The church in Corinth had responded well to Paul's instructions in his first letter and appeared to be getting stronger. However, false apostles have come in and taught a false gospel. Paul is explaining the true Christian gospel and showing the believers that they are to live by faith with their hope in Christ, not in this world.
 - What was the attitude and life 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 believers in Corinth were a very mixed group with people from all

different backgrounds. We do not know their exact attitude, but it is likely that some are confused due to the false teachers who have come in and disagreed with the gospel that Paul taught them.

- Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?

All of the New Testament letters take place after the resurrection and after the Pentecost. These believers were living under the same New Covenant that we live under today.

- **Literary Context**

- What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the New Testament letters.

- What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?

In the paragraph immediately before, Paul explains that our earthly tent (our bodies) will one day be destroyed, but that is not bad news for Christians. When our earthly body dies, we will receive our heavenly dwelling (a glorified life with Christ) which will never die. Immediately after this paragraph, Paul gives a call to commit our lives to sharing the gospel message with others, because we know that our time here is short, and this was never meant to be our true home.

- What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?

The main theme of 2 Corinthians is that the true calling of all Christians is to be ambassadors for Christ who call others to be reconciled to God.

- 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 in the middle of the letter, but nearer to the front. It is part of the large section in chapters 3-5 leading up to the major theme of the book in 5:16-21.

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.

Example: In 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, Paul urges the Corinthian believers to be courageous as they live by faith trusting in God's promises and striving to serve him well, not chasing after the empty promises of this world.

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 did Paul 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?
- 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 Galatians? 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: 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 for this step.

- 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?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

Example: “Christians know God’s promises of eternal life with him, so we live today with faith and courage until the day we are at home with the Lord.”

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: Ephesians 5:15-16; Hebrews 3:12-14

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?

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 Five – Review

1. What professional or work skill did Paul learn from his family?
Tentmaking

2. What chapter in the book of Acts first records Paul’s conversion to faith in Christ?
9

3. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Corinthians?
Ephesus

4. What was the situation that caused Paul to write 1 Corinthians?
Paul had heard reports about problems and received a letter from the church.

The church in Corinth had a lot of problems. Church divisions and fighting, sexual immorality, drunk members at the Lord’s Supper, and many more things made this a difficult group of Christians.

5. What is unique or special about the hymn Paul wrote down in 1 Corinthians 15?
Scholars believe that verses 3 through 7 come from a very early hymn that Christians sang to learn and remind each other of the truth that Christ is risen from the dead. This hymn may have been written less than ten years after Christ was raised. This shows us that from the very earliest days of Christianity, our faith has been built upon the truth that Jesus is resurrected from the dead.

6. Where was Paul when he wrote 2 Corinthians?
Macedonia (possibly Philippi)

7. What was the situation that caused Paul to write 2 Corinthians?
He received a positive report from Titus that the church had responded well to Paul’s first letter and was getting stronger. He also heard reports that false apostles had

come into the church and were teaching a false gospel.

8. What are some of the warning signs of false apostles that Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11?

The proclaim a different Jesus than Paul taught (11:4). They use elegant and beautiful speech to convince people of their high knowledge (11:5-6). They claim to be equal or superior to the original apostles (11:12). Yet they are deceivers pretending to represent truth, just as Satan himself pretends to be an angel of light (11:13-14). They present themselves as righteous, but their teachings and their works will reveal that they are not of Christ (11:15)

Lesson 3 – Romans

Introduction

What is the gospel? By now, most of us know that the word gospel means, “good news.” But what is that news? And why do we say that it is good. When Christians say that want to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are saying that we have a message or an announcement from God that is good news for all who hear it. In the book of Romans, Paul writes the most detailed and organized explanation of the gospel message that we find in any of his letters. Even more than that, Paul also explains how our lives are changed by the power of God when we believe the gospel and put our faith in Christ alone. Serious Christians have recognized Paul’s letter to the Romans as a treasure within the New Testament for many, many years. In this lesson, we will examine the message that Paul wrote to the Romans so that we can also gain a deeper understanding of God’s Good News for all the world.

Part One – Romans

In this lesson, we will explore the powerful teachings written by the apostle Paul in the letter of Romans. Just as we did in the previous lesson, we will (1) learn the historical facts about this letter, (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 Romans together.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Paul

- **When was it written?**
Mid to late 50s

Paul wrote this letter sometime before the year 60. It is interesting to note that the gospel of Mark, which is also written to the Roman church, was being written around the same time. This church would have received both the gospel of Mark and Paul’s letter explaining the meaning of the gospel close together.

- **Where was it written?**
Corinth

We find clues to answer this question in chapter 16 of Romans. Paul asks the church to welcome Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae, which is a town very near Corinth. He sends greetings from Erastus, who was known to be the city treasurer in Corinth at that time. He also mentions Gaius, who is one of the few people Paul baptized while he was in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). When we look at all of these facts, we can have confidence in our conclusion that this letter was written while Paul was in

the city of Corinth.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Church in Rome

Paul writes this clearly in 1:7, “To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.”

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**

Paul was preparing to travel through Rome on his way to Spain.

By the time Paul was in Corinth, he was nearing the end of his second missionary journey. He had traveled, preached the gospel, and established churches in all the areas stretching from Antioch (his home church) to Rome (the capital of the empire). However, Paul says, “I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named...” (Romans 15:20). Paul’s desire was to move beyond Rome, going further west into Spain where the gospel had not yet been preached.

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

To advance unity within the church by explaining the gospel in great detail.

The church in Rome had a high number of both Gentiles and Jews, and there was some misunderstanding within the congregation about how the gospel applied to people coming from these different backgrounds. Additionally, some statements by Caesars (kings) in Rome at that time had stirred up serious problems between Jews and Gentiles within that city. Paul’s explanation of the gospel in Romans helps to unite and strengthen that church in their faith together.

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

The gospel reveals God’s power for salvation and his righteousness.

The theme verse for this letter is Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The rest of the letter is dedicated to explaining what the gospel message is and how God works powerfully to save those who believe it and to transform their lives.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	Mid to late 50s
Where was it written?	Corinth
To whom was it written?	The Church in Rome
What was the situation in the church?	Paul was preparing to travel through Rome on his way to Spain.

What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To advance unity within the church by explaining the gospel in great detail.
What is the most important theological theme?	The gospel reveals God's power for salvation and his righteousness.

(2) Basic Outline

After his introduction, Paul organizes his teaching on the gospel into four major sections. These sections explain how God saves us (chapters 1-4), how we are changed when God saves us (chapters 5-8), how God unites Jews and Gentiles under one gospel message (chapters 9-11), and how we should live as Christians in response to God's mercy that saves us (chapter 12-15).

- I. Introduction (1:1-15)
- II. Central Truth: The Gospel Reveals God's Power for Salvation and His Righteousness (1:16-17)
- III. The Promise of the Gospel: Justification by Faith in Christ (1:18-4:25)
 - A. Man's Need for Justification (1:18-3:20)
 - B. God Provides Justification (3:21-4:25)
 1. Justification is found in Christ through faith (3:21-26)
 2. Both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith, not works (3:27-4:25)
- IV. The Benefits of the Gospel (5:1-8:39)
 - A. Believers Receive Peace, Righteousness, and Joy (5:1-11)
 - B. Believers Escape the Punishment for Adam's Sin (5:12-21)
 - C. Believers Are Freed from Slavery to Sin (6:1-23)
 - D. Believers Are Freed from Slavery to the Law (7:1-25)
 - E. Believers Receive Power in the Spirit to Live Righteous Lives (8:1-17)
 - F. In the End, Believers Will Enjoy Full Victory over Corruption (8:18-39)
- V. Israel Rejected the Gospel (9:1-11:36)
 - A. Israel's Unbelief Is Part of God's Eternal Plan (9:1-29)
 - B. Israel's Unbelief Is Because of Her Own Stubbornness and Self-Righteousness (9:30-10:21)
 - C. In the End, God Will Also Save Israel (11:1-36)
- VI. Practical Instructions for All Who Believe the Gospel (12:1-15:13)
 - A. Christians Respond to the Gospel by Living Transformed Lives (12:1-2)
 - B. Transformed Relationships in the Church (12:3-21)
 - C. Transformed Relationships with Government Authorities (13:1-7)
 - D. Transformed Relationships with All People (13:8-14)
 - E. Shared Love and Acceptance between Weaker and Stronger Christians (14:1-15:13)
- VII. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Romans

- *God's Power for Salvation (1:16-17)*

As we already mentioned, these verses present the central theme of Paul's message to the Romans. The first thing to notice is what this verse teaches about God's power. According to verse 16, **the gospel** is the power of God which leads to salvation for all who hear it and believe. He does not connect miracles, healings, prophecies, or great spiritual revelations to our salvation. Instead, Paul is teaching this church that God's power is most clearly displayed when the gospel is proclaimed. In God's perfect plan to bring us salvation, his power to save us works when we hear the true message about Jesus Christ. This is why it says in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." And why is this gospel message so powerful? We can find that answer in 1:17, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed." The truth about God's power and righteousness is revealed to the world when we declare the gospel. This is the power of God, his gift to all of us who believe.

- *God's Righteous Plan for Our Salvation (3:21-26)*

Many years ago, a pastor and professor who was an expert on the book of Romans read these verses and said, "I am convinced today, after these many years of Bible study, that these verses are the most important in the Bible" (Donald Grey Barnhouse). Why would he say something like that? All we need to do is look closely at the verses to discover that they explain a great and beautiful truth. These verses reveal exactly how God has saved us from our sin. No one can be made righteous before God by obeying the Law or doing good works (verse 21). Instead, because everyone is guilty of sinning before God, the only way that we can be made righteous in his eyes is through faith in Jesus Christ (verses 22-23). When we place our hope and trust in Jesus alone, God declares us righteous as a gift of grace (verse 24). But how can God do that? Does he simply ignore our sin and say that it doesn't matter? Not at all! God is far too holy and just to do that. Our sin is an insult to his holy nature. Instead, God says that he sent Jesus to the cross as a propitiation, a sacrifice which both removes our guilt and grants us peace and righteousness (verse 25). His blood, which is sinless and holy before God, has paid a price which we could never pay to God. By sending Jesus to be a sacrifice – his holy life offered to God in place of our sinful lives – God is able to remain just because our sin is punished and to display his glorious grace by saving all who believe (verse 26).

- *Consider Yourself Dead to Sin (6:1-16)*

One of the wonderful things about Paul's style of teaching is that he often guesses what questions we will ask and then gives us the true answer. This passage is a great example of that. After explaining that through faith in Christ we receive forgiveness, peace with God, and a grace which is greater than all our sin, Paul knows that some people will misunderstand what this means for us. In verse one, he asks a question that he knows some people will be thinking, "Are we to continue to sin that grace may abound?" Some people assume that if God displays his glory by giving grace to cover our sins, then we should be free to sin even more so that God's grace can be seen even more. Paul declares that this kind of thinking is nonsense and should be rejected by anyone who loves Jesus. He says, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?... We

were buried with [Christ] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (6:3-4). In other words, God does not save us so that we can sin even more. We must consider ourselves dead to the power of sin over us. God has saved us so that we “might walk in newness of life.” Because of his grace, we can live holy lives as God desires. This passage goes on to explain that Christians are no longer slaves to sin, and we do not have to submit to temptations to sin. Therefore, we are called to resist sin and offer our lives to God for righteous and holy living.

- *Never Separated from the Love of Christ (8:31-39)*

We have already seen that the book of Romans includes deep and important explanations of truth, as well as instructions for living in faith. But this letter also includes great hope and joy for everyone who belongs to Jesus. The end of chapter 8 includes some of the most encouraging and inspiring verses in the entire Bible. According to these verses, the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in us from the moment that we believe in Jesus gives us complete confidence that the love God has shown us can never be taken away from us. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (verse 31) “Who shall separate us from the love of God?” (verse 35) The answers to these questions are greater than we can possibly describe. Because God gave his Son to rescue us and redeem, no one can ever condemn us before God again. Because Christ is raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father, He is praying and interceding for us in heaven even today! And the greatest statement is at the end of this chapter: “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verses 38-39). If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose from the dead to give us eternal life, then your life is secure. There is no power anywhere in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, which is able to take you away from the God who loves you.

- *Salvation is for Anyone Who Believes in Christ (10:9-13)*

After so much powerful teaching about the gospel message and all that God has done to save us, another important question remains: Who can be saved? This was an important issue to the church in Rome. Who has access to this salvation in Jesus? Are the rules the same for both Jews and Gentiles? What exactly does God need to see in us? These verses in chapter 10 provide clear answers. What does God say we must do? We read in verses 9-10: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” We can see that it is very simple. But we must also understand that these words have serious meaning. To confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord does not mean that we only have to say some magic words and God will save us. The Roman Christians understood Paul was asking them to do something very serious. In those days, people were allowed to believe whatever they wanted and practice any religion as long as they obeyed one rule. Everyone in the Roman empire was expected to confess that Caesar is Lord. This was a way of saying that people could worship or pray in any way to any God, but they must declare is Caesar was higher and more powerful than

any other god in their life. Their highest loyalty must always belong to Caesar. God takes that idea and turns it upside down. According to these verses, Christians cannot confess that Caesar is Lord. We cannot worship other gods or follow other religious beliefs. When we confess that Jesus is Lord, we are declaring that He is above all other gods and powers, and that our only commitment and loyalty is to him. He is demanding the complete devotion of our entire lives.

But we have not answered the original question yet: Who can be saved? We can see that God calls us to place all of our faith and hope in Jesus, but can anyone do this? Are there different rules for different groups of people to come to Jesus? The answer is found in the simple words of Romans 10:13, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved?” The actual process that God uses to save us is both simple and unbelievably powerful. The true gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. Those who hear it believe in their heart that Jesus is raised from the dead and confess that Jesus is Lord alone, greater than any other power or god. And when those who believe call out to God through faith in Jesus Christ, they are saved. This is the good news which Christians have been given to treasure in our own hearts and to spread throughout the world.

(4) Important Theological Theme

*The gospel reveals God’s power for salvation and his **righteousness**.*

This theme has already been explained in the comments about Romans 1:16-17 above. However, the theme is so important that it is worth mentioning again. Many different people have many different ideas about what the gospel is or what it means for our lives. If we were to walk down the street and ask people what the gospel is, many would struggle to give a clear and true answer. Some might say, “The gospel is God’s love.” Others might say, “The gospel is that God has a good plan for your life.” These are good statements, but they are not the gospel message which God has given to us. When we study the book of Romans, we can understand the gospel message clearly and completely. It might be helpful for you to think of the gospel in five parts:

- (1) God’s righteous and holy nature
- (2) our sinful nature
- (3) Christ’s saving sacrifice and resurrection
- (4) God’s call for us to hear and believe in Christ
- (5) God’s promise to save and to keep all who believe.

Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Romans 5:1-5. At this point, student should be familiar with the Interpretive Journey and its steps. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 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 Romans 5:1-5.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

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. Refer to information from earlier in this course about Paul, about interpreting the New Testament letters, and about Romans.

ASK

Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.
Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
Paul
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
Paul had never visited the Roman church, but he was familiar with their situation and was looking forward to visiting them soon.
- Who is being spoken to?
The church in Rome
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
Paul is eager to meet this church soon, so he is writing to help them understand the gospel message and to help them find unity within their church.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
In this passage, Paul is explaining how our faith in Jesus Christ changes our standing before God and our own character. He wants the believers there to feel peace and hope because of the work God is doing in them.

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
Romans is written during Paul's second missionary journey. The gospel has been spreading throughout the Roman empire for several years, and Paul is getting closer to the end of his life and ministry.

- What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
The Roman church had a mix of Christians from Gentile and Jewish backgrounds. This had created some confusion about how different people could believe in Jesus and be saved. Additionally, Roman rulers had been stirring up division between Jews and Gentiles in the city, so many people were unsure how they should get along with one another.
- What was the attitude and life 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 believers in Rome were a very mixed group with people from all different backgrounds. We do not know their exact attitude, but we have reason to believe that they knew about Paul and welcomed his teaching.
- Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
All of the New Testament letters take place after the resurrection and after the Pentecost. These believers were living under the same New Covenant that we live under today.
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the New Testament letters.
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
All of chapter 4 is describing Abraham as the model of faith for Christians. “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (verse 3). Paul used this chapter to convince the Romans that our relationship to God is based upon faith, not good works. In chapter 5, he begins explaining how this truth can give us hope, joy, and assurance instead of fear.
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
The theme of Romans is that the gospel reveals God’s power for salvation and his righteousness.
 - 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 in the second section of Romans where Paul is teaching how our lives are changed when God saves us.

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Romans 5:1-5, Paul assures the Roman believers that they can have hope, peace, and joy in their relationship with God because He saves us through faith in Christ instead of through our own good works.

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 did Paul 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?
- 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 Galatians? 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: 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 for this step.

- 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?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

Example: “Christians can be assured that we are accepted by God when we put our faith in Christ instead of trusting in our own works. When we have faith in Christ, we live with hope, peace, and joy because of what He has done 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: Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:15-16; Colossians 1:21-23

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?

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

1. Who was Paul's teacher in Jerusalem when he was training to become a Pharisee?
Gamaliel
2. Where was Paul going when he was blinded by a vision of Jesus?
The city of Damascus, to persecute Christians there
3. Who were the Judaizers that Paul writes about in Galatians?
They were a group of Jews who taught a false gospel, claiming that Christians must continue to follow the Old Testament law in addition to believing in Jesus to be saved.
4. What is the main theological theme of 1 Corinthians?
The message of the cross unites Christians in holiness and love.
5. What did God say to Paul when Paul begged him to remove the thorn in his flesh?
"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
6. When was the book of Romans written? What other book was written to the Roman church at about the same time?
Mid to late 50s; the Gospel of Mark

7. Where was Paul when he wrote the book of Romans?
Corinth
8. Which verse states the main theological theme for the book of Romans?
Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
9. Which verses in Romans were called "the most important verses in the Bible" by one well-known pastor?
Romans 3:21-26
10. According to Romans 8:38-39, what can separate you from the love of God if you are in Christ Jesus?
NOTHING

Lesson 4 – The Prison Letters

Introduction

After Paul wrote his letters to the Corinthian church and the church in Rome, he was getting closer to the end of his ministry as an apostle. He continued to teach and to preach everywhere he went to anyone who was willing to listen to him. This was his pattern until he was arrested in Jerusalem and ultimately sent to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. At the end of the book of Acts, we find Paul under house arrest in Rome, welcoming visitors and continuing to proclaim the gospel. The next four letters that we will study – Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon – were likely written from this place. For that reason, these four letters are often called The Prison Epistles. We will examine these letters one at a time to discover the rich theological truth and the practical instruction included in each.

Part One – Philippians

Philippians is one of the most popular letters written by Paul in the New Testament. This is because this letter contains a tone of joy throughout the chapters, giving great encouragement to those who read it. Just as we did in the previous lessons, we will (1) learn the historical facts about Philippians, (2) look at a basic outline of its contents, (3) explore noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the most important theological theme of this book. We will repeat this pattern for each of the four prison epistles in this lesson. 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 one of these letters together.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Paul

- **When was it written?**

AD 59

Philippians was most likely the first of the four letters that Paul wrote from prison.

- **Where was it written?**

Prison in Rome

All four of the prison letters were most likely written during Paul's time of imprisonment in Rome.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Church in Philippi

The letter is addressed to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi...” (1:1). The church in Philippi was the first church that Paul started on the continent of

Europe, immediately following his vision of a Macedonian man urging him to come to them (Acts 16:6-40, the city of Philippi is in the region of Macedonia).

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**

Paul is giving thanks for the church joining him as partners in the gospel, and he warns them against things that will hurt the spread of the gospel.

Paul rejoices and gives thanks for the Philippians because of their “partnership in the gospel” and because of the gifts that they sent to support him (4:18). Paul is writing to encourage the church and help them avoid problems that will hurt their gospel work.

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

To increase unity in the church so that the gospel will continue to advance.

Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that our lives are given to serve Jesus and to spread the news of him everywhere. To do that, believers must be united and work together, even enduring suffering so that the gospel can spread to those who have not yet heard.

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

Living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

How do we live a life that is worthy of the gospel? In the book of Philippians, Paul emphasizes two important points. First, we must remain united in love with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Division in the church is poison to our gospel message. Second, we must endure difficulties and suffering with joy, knowing that this is also the way our Lord Jesus lived.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	59
Where was it written?	Prison in Rome
To whom was it written?	The Church in Philippi
What was the situation in the church?	Paul is giving thanks for the church joining him as partners in the gospel, and he warns them against things that will hurt the spread of the gospel.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To increase unity in the church so that the gospel will continue to advance.
What is the most important theological theme?	Living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ

(2) Basic Outline

Philippians is shorter than some of the letters from Paul that we have already studied. Its main teaching is divided into two parts. In the first part (chapters 1-2), Paul gives encouragement to the church by describing several positive examples of humble and godly living that allow us to live in unity. In the second part (chapters 3-4), Paul warns the church about several things which can hurt their ministry and their witness to Jesus.

- I. Introduction: Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:1-11)
- II. Called to Unity for the Gospel (1:3-4:20)
 - A. Positive Examples of Putting Others before Self (1:12-2:30)
 1. The Example of Paul (1:12-30)
 2. The Example of Jesus (2:1-11)
 3. The Example of Timothy (2:19-24)
 4. The Example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)
 - B. Warning Against False Teachers and Division (3:1-4:9)
 1. The Danger of False Teachers (3:1-21)
 2. The Danger of Division (4:1-7)
 3. Encouragement (4:8-9)
 - C. Thanking the Philippians for Gifts and Partnership (4:10-20)
- III. Conclusion (4:21-23)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Philippians

- *Christ's Example of Humility (2:1-11)*

In these verses, Paul calls every Christian to “count others more significant than yourselves” (verse 3) and to “look not only to his own interests, but to those of others” (verse 4). In other words, Christians should be identified by a love for other believers that cares more for the needs of others than for our own personal desires. But this is not natural for anyone. We all have a natural instinct to put ourselves first. Not only our needs, but we place our desires for power, comfort, and recognition above others as well. So how can we live with an attitude that is the opposite of what feels natural? Paul tells us to take the mindset of Jesus, who humbled himself by leaving heaven and becoming a man, obeying the Father perfectly, even to the point of death. Verses 6-10 come from an ancient Christian hymn that praised Jesus for his humility and obedience on earth as well as his exalted glory in heaven.
- *God's Provision (4:10-13)*

Philippians 4:13 is one of the most famous verses in the New Testament, memorized and recited by millions of Christians all over the world. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most misunderstood verses. Many people have used this verse as a promise that God will help them to be successful in doing almost anything they desire. Students claim this verse before writing an exam. Athletes claim this verse before playing a match. Even some politicians have claimed this verse, believing that God would help them to win their election. But this verse is not about winning and success, it is about being content and peaceful no matter what our circumstances. Read the verses

carefully, beginning at verse 10. Paul is writing from prison. He has experienced suffering, rejection, persecution, and abandonment. He knows what it feels like to be humiliated and alone. But he has also experienced times of great joy and success. These were times when he had all that he needed, and he was surrounded by beloved friends. In verse 13, he is explaining that his peace in this world and the contentment of his soul does not come from wealth or poverty, comfort or suffering. No, he says he do all things – another way of saying he can endure all things – through Christ who is the true source of his strength.

(4) Important Theological Theme

Living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

The Christians in Philippi were true partners in the gospel for Paul. They sent gifts to support him and messages to encourage him. But they also faced difficulties where they were living. Persecution was common in their area, just as it was in Thessalonica. Some people in the church cared more for themselves than for others, and the church was at risk of being divided because of that. This letter reminds the church that all of us are saved by believing the gospel, and Christ has brought us together to spread his gospel to others. Because of God's great mercy shown to us, Christ is worthy of all that we can offer to him, our entire lives. As John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Part Two – Ephesians

The book of Ephesians contains some of the most powerful declarations of the gospel and our salvation in the whole Bible. Out of all Paul's letters, only the book of Romans has a more detailed explanation of how God has given us salvation in Jesus Christ. For this reason, Ephesians is studied and preached more often than many other books in the New Testament.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Paul

- **When was it written?**

AD 60

Philippians was the first of the prison letters to be written. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were probably written closely together at a time nearer the end of Paul's imprisonment.

- **Where was it written?**

Prison in Rome

All four of the prison letters were most likely written during Paul's time of imprisonment in Rome.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Church in Ephesus

Paul addresses this letter “To the saints who are in Ephesus” in 1:1. Ephesus was one of the strongest churches that Paul started in Asia, and at one point he stayed more than two years in this city preaching the gospel and teaching the Scriptures to those in the church. This was the most time that Paul stayed in any of the churches that he started.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**

Not sure.

One of the ways that Paul’s message to the Ephesians is different is that the situation that caused Paul to write them a letter is not obvious. However, his clear explanation of the gospel and Christian beliefs reveals that Paul had a genuine love for this church and a desire for them to know the truth and love the Lord.

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

To encourage unity in the church and to teach the nature of salvation and the Christian life.

Paul had stayed in Ephesus more than two years teaching and strengthening the church there. In fact, Acts 19:10 says that Paul taught so much in Ephesus that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” This probably means that the church in Ephesus also had influence in guiding and helping other churches in that area. This might be one reason that Paul’s letters included more general doctrinal teachings and instructions for Christian living, so that the contents could be shared widely with churches and believers across the region.

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

All things are completed in Christ.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	60
Where was it written?	Prison in Rome
To whom was it written?	The Church in Ephesus
What was the situation in the church?	Not sure.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage unity in the church and to teach the nature of salvation and the Christian life.
What is the most important theological theme?	All things are completed in Christ.

(2) Basic Outline

Ephesians is similar to many of Paul's other letters in its basic outline. The first half of the book focuses on theology, teaching the gospel and explaining Christian beliefs. The second half of the gospel emphasizes practical instructions, telling the believers how they should live in response to the truth contained in the first half of the letter.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. The Life of the Christian Is in Christ (1:3-6:20)
 - A. Spiritual Blessings from Union with Christ (1:3-3:21)
 1. Blessings and Prayers in Christ (1:3-23)
 2. The Christian's Life Before Christ and In Christ (2:1-10)
 3. Jews and Gentiles United in Christ (2:11-22)
 4. The Mystery of the Gospel and Unity in Christ (3:1-21)
 - B. Walking with Christ and Standing for Christ (4:1-6:20)
 1. The Church United in Christ (4:1-16)
 2. Live as Children of Light (4:17-5:17)
 3. Live in the Spirit at Home and at Work (5:18-6:9)
 4. Put on the Armor of God (6:10-20)
- III. Conclusion (6:21-24)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Ephesians

- *Saved by Grace through Faith (2:1-10)*

The first part of chapter 2 includes a description of what happens to Christians when we are saved that powerfully reminds us of all that God has done to show us his love. Verses 1-3 describe the life of every person before they were saved as “dead in trespasses” and “following the prince of the power of the air (Satan).” Paul says that “we all once lived in the passions of our flesh” before believing in Christ. These verses make it clear that no one is born as a Christian. Every person must personally believe in Christ to be saved. Verses 4 and 5 present a very important transition, “**But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us... made us alive together with Christ.” Every person is born lost and living in sin, but we are saved when God sets his love on us and interrupts our life of sin and selfishness. Just to be sure that we do not miss the point, Paul writes, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (2:8-9). No one get to boast or take credit for his own salvation or faith. No one can say, “I have always been good” or “I have always believed.” If anyone is saved, it is because God loved us first and poured out his grace on us. Once we were lost, and now we have been found and rescued by the God who loved us, even when we were sinners.
- *The Armor of God (6:10-20)*

Paul's description of the armor of God and spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6 is one of the most popular passages in this letter. But what does it mean? Here are two important points that can help us understand what Paul is teaching in these verses.

First, the armor that we are called to put on is armor that comes from God. Notice that in verses 11 and 13 it says that this is the “armor of God.” Another way of saying this is that it is the “armor from God.” This might sound like a small detail, but it means much. God knows we are weak, and he knows we have an enemy. To protect us and demonstrate his love, he gives us what we need, from himself. Second, these verses teach that we are not responsible to win the victory in the spiritual realm, we are called to stand firm (see verses 11, 13, 13 again, and 14). This news is a relief to us. This is the good news that each one of us needs to hear and believe. God made you. He loves you. He knew you would sin and be weak. He made a plan to rescue you, and He sent his own Son to save you from sin, death, and the devil. When Jesus died on the cross, he paid for our sin and defeated the power of Satan. When he rose from the grave, he destroyed the power of death. There is no more victory to be completed. There is no more ground to be taken. We are called to look upon Jesus, to trust in all that he has done to save us, and to stand in faith. We believe his truth, not lies. We do not claim to be righteous in ourselves, we believe that his righteousness protects us. We do not trust in ourselves or the strength of our faith, we put all of our hope in God. We do not live in fear – even when we see evil and chaos – we live each day in faith. We put on the full armor of God, remembering that our protection is our Savior who loves us and gave himself for us.

(4) Important Theological Theme

All things are completed in Christ.

This theme is easy to see throughout the book of Ephesians. In chapter 1, we learn that God has revealed his will to us “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and on earth” (verse 10). In chapter 4, we learn that God has given leaders to the church “for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (verse 13). When Paul gives instructions for Christian living in homes, he commands wives to submit to husbands “as the church submits to Christ” (5:24). He commands husbands to love their wives “as Christ loves the church” (5:25). He commands children to obey their parents “in the Lord” (6:1). And he commands slaves to obey their masters with a sincere heart “as you would Christ” (6:5). Whether we are looking at heaven or earth, or in the church, or even in our lives and families, God completes everything in Christ. In all of these things, the book of Ephesians helps us to understand that all of the world and all of life finds its meaning and fulfillment in Christ.

Part Three – Colossians

In this lesson, we will explore the powerful acts and teachings of Jesus found in the book of Colossians. Just as we did in the previous lesson, we will (1) learn the historical facts about Colossians, (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 Colossians together.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Paul

- **When was it written?**
AD 60

Philippians was the first of the prison letters to be written. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were probably written closely together at a time nearer the end of Paul's imprisonment.

- **Where was it written?**
Prison in Rome

All four of the prison letters were most likely written during Paul's time of imprisonment in Rome.

- **To whom was it written?**
The Church in Colossae

Colossae was a city located on the road east of Ephesus. This town and its church were probably closely connected to Ephesus and its church. This might be one reason that the letters to these two churches are very similar to one another.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**
False teaching

The details are not completely clear, but it is obvious that a serious false teaching was spreading in the Colossian church. Many Bible scholars call the false teaching in this church the "Colossian heresy," and Paul

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Colossians?**
To correct false teaching by showing that Christ is over all things.

Paul writes to make sure the believers know understand exactly who Jesus is and how he saves us. He gives some hints to what it was in 2:8-23. This false teaching included worldly philosophies, human tradition about the spirits (not received from Christ), strange rules about eating and observing special days, and even ascetism (physically harming yourself to become more spiritual) and angel worship.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**
Christ is complete in every way; Christians are made complete in Christ.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	60
Where was it written?	Prison in Rome
To whom was it written?	The Church in Colossae
What was the situation in the church?	False teaching.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To correct false teaching by showing that Christ is over all things.
What is the most important theological theme?	Christ is complete in every way; Christians are made complete in Christ.

(2) Basic Outline

Ephesians and Colossians have sometimes been called twin epistles. The basic outline and the teachings included in each letter are very similar, although Colossians is a slightly shorter letter than Ephesians.

- I. Introduction (1:1-8)
- II. Christ is Supreme Over All Things (1:3-6:20)
 - A. Christ is the Center of All Things (1:9-2:23)
 1. Opening Prayer (1:9-14)
 2. Christ is Supreme (1:15-20)
 3. Christ Makes Peace between Believers and God (1:21-2:5)
 4. Danger of False Teaching in Colossae (2:6-23)
 - B. The New Life in Christ (3:1-4:6)
 1. Seeking the Things Above (3:1-8)
 2. Putting Off the Old Self and Putting on the New Self (3:9-11)
 3. Giving Grace and Forgiveness to Others (3:12-17)
 4. Living as a Christian Family (3:18-4:1)
 5. Praying and Acting Wisely toward Unbelievers (4:2-6)
- III. Conclusion (4:7-18)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Colossians

- *Christ Is Supreme (1:15-20)*
 These verses include some of the highest and richest language used to describe Jesus in the entire Bible. Paul makes it clear that Jesus is no ordinary man. Just as Jesus told Phillip, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:8), Paul now explains that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God.” In other words, if you want to know what God is like in truth, you only have to look at Jesus to know. These verses go on to declare that Jesus is greater than things in existence, including both the physical and spiritual realm, and that everything that exists is held together by his own power. God the Father has set Christ over all of creation, so that “in everything he might be preeminent” (verse 18) and that through his death he might establish peace between

God and all of creation again.

- *Seeking the Things Above (3:1-8)*

The “Colossian heresy” seems to have been a philosophy that taught people to be truly spiritual by following strange religious traditions and rituals, including self-harm and worshipping angels and spirits. After explaining that these ideas are false and worthless, Paul begins to show the Christians in Colossae a better way to think about their lives and how to grow in holiness. He commands them: “Set your minds on things above, not on things of the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (3:2-3). Sometimes it is difficult to accept the command to “set your minds on things above” when you feel like you are constantly dealing with needs and struggles here on earth. The Bible is not teaching that our earthly needs are unimportant, but it is teaching an important truth that our eternal life is with Christ in heaven. If this is true, it is even more important that we strive to live in a holy way for Christ today and to turn our backs on empty traditions, selfish ambition, and immorality in this world which is passing away.

(4) Important Theological Theme

Christ is complete in every way; Christians are made complete in Christ.

Here are two theological truths in Colossians that help us make sense of our lives in this world. (1) Christ is the source of life and the one who holds everything in this world in place. (2) According to Colossians 3:3, “You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” If we put these two things together, we will learn an incredible truth. Christ is greater than all things, above things, and so powerful that he holds all things together. And your eternal life is hidden safely in Christ. Because of the Holy Spirit living within you, your life is united to the life of Jesus Christ himself. And just as He lives forever and can never be defeated, your life is safe in him and can never be stolen away. You can worship him and live for with joy and confidence, because you know that nothing in this physical world or the spiritual world can ever take you away from him.

Part Four – Philemon

Philemon is different from the other prison letters. The other three letters were written to whole churches in well-known cities, but Philemon is a letter written to an individual man. It is the shortest of Paul’s letters and the last one in the New Testament before we begin reading the General Epistles. In this letter, Paul is writing to Philemon – a man he considers a friend and brother in Christ – about another man named Onesimus. Onesimus had been a slave in Philemon’s house, but he had run away trying to gain his freedom. He met Paul, heard the gospel and put his faith in Christ, then joined Paul and his team as they were ministering to others and sharing the gospel. When Paul learned that Onesimus was a runaway slave who had served Philemon, Paul sent him back to Philemon’s home with this letter, a letter in which Paul explains that Onesimus is now a brother in Christ and pleads that Philemon will show grace and receive him back warmly.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Paul

- **When was it written?**
AD 60

Philippians was the first of the prison letters to be written. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were probably written closely together at a time nearer the end of Paul's imprisonment.

- **Where was it written?**
Prison in Rome

All four of the prison letters were most likely written during Paul's time of imprisonment in Rome.

- **To whom was it written?**
Philemon

Though we do not know the exact city where Philemon lived, we know a few details about him. Paul uses very friendly and familiar language, indicating that they knew each other very well, and Paul may have been part of Philemon's conversion to faith in Christ. We also learn that Philemon hosts a church in his home. Along with the fact that he owned at least one slave (Onesimus), this suggests that Philemon was probably a wealthy man.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write this letter?**
Philemon's slave ran away, met Paul, became a Christian, and was sent back.
- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Philemon?**
To encourage Philemon to accept his slave back as a brother in Christ and to consider giving him freedom so that he could return to Paul.
- **What is the most important theological theme?**
Love and forgiveness between Christians.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	60
Where was it written?	Prison in Rome
To whom was it written?	Philemon
What was the situation in the church?	Philemon's slave ran away, met Paul, became a Christian, and was sent back.

What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage Philemon to accept his slave back as a brother in Christ and to consider giving him freedom so that he could return to Paul.
What is the most important theological theme?	Love and forgiveness between Christians.

(2) Basic Outline

Paul's letter to Philemon has a total of only 335 words in the original Greek writing. It is short, but it is rich with truth and a practical example of how Christians show love and grace to one another, even when come from very different backgrounds.

- I. Introduction (1:1-7)
- II. Paul Pleads for Onesimus (1:8-20)
 - A. He is Useful to Both Philemon and Paul (1:8-11)
 - B. He Should Be Accepted as a Brother (1:12-16)
 - C. You Can Encourage Me by Sending Him Back (1:17-20)
- III. Conclusion (1:21-25)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Philemon

- *Paul's Example for Making Peace (1:8-20)*
 In just a few verses, Paul communicates a powerful message that all Christians need to hear and understand. Onesimus was a law-breaker when he ran away from the household of Philemon, yet he has been transformed and born again through faith in Jesus Christ. When Paul writes to Philemon, he is not thinking about Onesimus as a mere runaway slave, someone who is lower than either himself or Philemon. He says that Onesimus is his spiritual son, his own heart, and a beloved brother to both of them. Philemon needed to learn in a very practical way the truth that Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28 – "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Today we need to hear that same message. For those of us who are true Christians, we cannot see each other through worldly titles, positions, or status. The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the strong and the weak, the men and the women, we are united as one family of true brothers and sisters in Christ.

(4) Important Theological Theme

Love and forgiveness between Christians.

The book of Colossians teaches an important theological truth that Christ makes peace between all the world and God through his sacrifice on the cross. Philemon shows us that Christians must also practice peacemaking in our lives. We do not reconcile the world to God (Jesus has already done that job), but we do practice making peace between real people with problems in the world today. Especially within the church family, we are called to make sacrifices (giving up our rights or our pride) in order to live in peace with brothers and sisters

who may have sinned against us, but who have been saved and forgiven by the crucified Lord Jesus, just as we have.

Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Philippians 3:8-11. At this point, student should be familiar with the Interpretive Journey and its steps. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 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 Philippians 3:8-11.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes through the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness that depends on faith – that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

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. Refer to information from earlier in this course about Paul, about interpreting the New Testament letters, and about Philippians.

ASK

Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.
Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
Paul
- What is the author’s relationship to the audience before this letter?
Paul had a strong and friendly relationship with the church in Philippi. He counted them as “partners in the gospel,” and they had sent him gifts and support to help in his ongoing ministry.
- Who is being spoken to?
The church in Philippi
- What is the author’s attitude toward the audience?
Paul has a warm attitude toward the Philippians. He considers them friends, and

he writes to encourage them to grow in unity and to urge them keep focused on the most important reasons for following Jesus together.

- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
In this passage, Paul wants the Philippians to truly understand why he is willing to work so hard and suffer for Christ as he does, and he wants the church to adopt the same mindset for themselves as they serve Christ together.

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
Philippians is written near the middle or the end of Paul's missionary ministry as he was in prison.
 - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
The church in Philippi had gladly become partners with Paul, supporting him in gospel ministry. However, in their own city, they were still exposed to persecution, and in their church they were at risk of being divided as different groups or individuals tried to lift themselves above the others.
 - What was the attitude and life 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 Philippians Christians were a mixed group with different backgrounds. We know that they were glad to be Paul's partners and that they were concerned for his well-being while he was in prison. However, they were also likely concerned or confused about growing division within their own church.
 - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
All of the New Testament letters take place after the resurrection and after the Pentecost. These believers were living under the same New Covenant that we live under today.
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the New Testament letters.
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
*The first part of chapter three reveals that some had come into the church who were calling people to separate themselves as more spiritual by outward physical acts. (It is possible these were similar to the Judaizers who caused trouble in the Galatian churches.) Paul declares that if anyone should have reason to boast about their spiritual status by outward signs, he is the one who should be bragging because of his background as a Jew and a Pharisee. Yet he rejects that idea and teaches a deeper truth in the verses we are studying.
*In the verses immediately after our passage, Paul declares that his passion to know Christ and "the power of his resurrection" drives him even**

though he has not achieved that yet. Then he urges the Philippian believers to take this same attitude in their own hearts as well.

- What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?

The main theme of Philippians is living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

- 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 in the middle of the letter, but nearer to the end. It is part of Paul's plea for the believers to protect unity in their church by setting their hopes on knowing Christ and living for him, not boasting about their own goodness in front of others.

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.

Example: In Philippians 3:8-11, Paul is persuading the Philippian believers that the greatest goal any believer can have is simply to know Christ and to gain a share in his resurrection power. He does this by declaring that all of his spiritual and legalistic good works are "rubbish" and worthless to him compared to the eternal value of knowing Jesus.

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 did Paul 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?
- 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 Galatians? 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: 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 for this step.

- 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?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

Example: “Christians must abandon any confidence or boasting we have in our own good works or spiritual strength. Our greatest and truest hope is that we can know Jesus, can be covered in his righteousness, and can even share in his suffering and resurrection.

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 17:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 13:12-14

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?

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 Six – Review

1. Why is it important to know that the New Testament letters are written to entire congregations?
We need to remember that the teaching and instructions are not intended for private individuals or even for the leaders of the church. This truth is intended to be heard, believed, and obeyed by the entire church family.
2. To whom was the book of Galatians written?
Galatians was written to a group of churches in the south part of the province of Galatia (modern day Turkey).
3. What was the situation that caused Paul to write his letters to the Thessalonians?
The churches were dealing with persecution and confusion over the end times.
4. What was the situation that caused Paul to write the letter of 1 Corinthians?
Paul had heard reports of problems in the church and received a letter from them with specific questions.
5. When was the book of 2 Corinthians written?
AD 54 or 55
6. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Romans?
The gospel reveals God's power for salvation and his righteousness.
7. Which one of the four prison letters was written first?
Philippians
8. According to Ephesians 2, what is the spiritual condition of every person before they are saved?
Verses 1-3 describe the life of every person before they were saved as "dead in trespasses" and "following the prince of the power of the air (Satan)." Paul says that "we all once lived in the passions of our flesh" before believing in Christ. These verses make it clear that no one is born as a Christian.
9. What is the most important theological theme of the book of Colossians?
Christ is complete in every way, and Christians are made complete in Christ.
10. Why are Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon called the "prison letters?"
Because Paul wrote them while he was in prison in Rome.

Lesson 5 – The Pastoral Letters

Introduction

The last of Paul's letters are known as the Pastoral Epistles, or Pastoral Letters. These three letters – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus – are the last known letters that we have from the Apostle Paul. Paul knew that he was nearing the end of his life and ministry, and he was concerned to see the churches he had started continue to follow Jesus faithfully and to believe the true gospel, even when he and the other apostles were no longer here to guide them. He wrote to Timothy and Titus to give them both instructions and encouragement as they led the ministry in two important churches, helping those churches become strong to continue in faith for future generations.

In this lesson, we will study the historical facts, important passages, and theological theme of all three letters in one section together because the letters are so similar in tone and focus. In the second section, we will practice using the steps of the Interpretive Journey to study and faithfully interpret the meaning of a passage from one of the Pastoral Letters. Finally, the last section of this lesson includes a study guide to help students prepare for the final exam.

Part One – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Paul

- **When was it written?**
Early to mid-60s

The letters to Timothy and Titus are the last known letters that we have from the Apostle Paul. At the end of 2 Timothy, Paul indicates that he knows he is nearing the end of his life and ministry.

- **Where was it written?**
Macedonia (1 Timothy); Rome (2 Timothy); Unknown (Titus)

Paul most likely wrote 1 Timothy, and possibly Titus, from the region of Macedonia after he had been released from prison in Rome for the first time. He wrote 2 Timothy a few years later when he was in prison in Rome for the second and final time.

- **To whom was it written?**
Timothy in Ephesus (1 and 2 Timothy); Titus in Crete (Titus)

Both Timothy and Titus had been younger ministry partners who traveled with Paul and were trained by him during his missionary journeys. Now Timothy has been assigned to serve the church in Ephesus while Titus has been sent to the island of

Crete.

- **What was the situation that caused Paul to write these letters?**

Paul is sending guidance to young pastors to help them lead churches and deal with different problems in the churches.

Timothy has battling with a group of false teachers who were troubling the church the church in Ephesus. Even though he was young, he was responsible for teaching true doctrine and helping the church establish godly leadership. Titus had similar problems and need for help on Crete.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing the Pastoral Letters?**

To instruct Timothy and Titus how to teach and lead the churches.

Paul knew that Timothy and Titus were facing serious challenges in their churches and needed clear guidance so that the churches would be strong and healthy in Christ even when the apostles were no longer living and giving personal instructions. In these letters, Paul wrote to urge these young pastors to preach and insist that the churches hold to the true gospel and gospel, to rebuke the false teachers who were leading many astray, and to give direction for organizing the churches and finding godly leaders to help the churches remain faithful to Christ.

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

Churches must be taught the truth and led in the ways which God commands.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Paul
When was it written?	Early to mid-60s
Where was it written?	Macedonia (1 Timothy); Rome (2 Timothy); Unknown (Titus)
To whom was it written?	Timothy in Ephesus; Titus in Crete
What was the situation in the church?	Paul is sending guidance to young pastors to help them lead churches and deal with different problems in the churches.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To instruct Timothy and Titus how to teach and lead the churches.
What is the most important theological theme?	Churches must be taught the truth and led in the ways which God commands.

(2) Basic Outline

The pastoral epistles do not follow the simple pattern that we see in many of Paul's other letters. This is partly because the letters are very personal, written to individuals who Paul cared for and knew very well. A few important themes stand out in each of these letters, though. Paul insists that these young leaders hold onto true doctrine and preach the gospel, that they reject all false teachers, and that they help the churches organize themselves to remain faithful after the apostles are gone.

- I. 1 Timothy
 - A. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - B. Personal Instructions to Timothy (1:3-20)
 - 1. The Challenge of False Teachers (1:3-11)
 - 2. Paul's Testimony and Encouragement (1:12-20)
 - C. Instructions for Churches (2:1-3:16)
 - 1. Praying in Worship (2:1-8)
 - 2. The Role of Women (2:9-15)
 - 3. Requirements for Leaders (3:1-13)
 - a. Elders or Pastors (3:1-7)
 - b. Deacons (3:8-13)
 - 4. Purpose of the Letter (3:14-16)
 - D. More Instructions (4:1-6:2)
 - 1. About Falling Away from Faith (4:1-5)
 - 2. About Being a Good Servant of Christ (4:6-16)
 - 3. About Relationships within the Church (5:1-6:2)
 - a. Relationships between Older and Younger Generations (5:1-2)
 - b. Ministry to Widows (5:3-16)
 - c. Relationships with Elders (5:17-25)
 - d. Instructions for Slaves (6:1-2)
 - E. Conclusion (6:2-21)
- II. 2 Timothy
 - A. Introduction and Encouragement (1:1-18)
 - B. Pictures of Ministry and Instructions (2:1-3:17)
 - 1. Three Ministry Pictures: Soldier, Athlete, Farmer (2:1-7)
 - 2. Paul's Gospel (2:8-13)
 - 3. Other Ministry Pictures: Workmen, Instrument, Servant (2:14-26)
 - 4. About Falling Away from Faith (3:1-9)
 - 5. Continue in What You Have Learned (3:10-17)
 - C. Preach the Word (4:1-8)
 - D. Conclusion (4:9-22)
- III. Titus
 - A. Introduction (1:1-4)
 - B. Reasons for Writing (1:5-16)
 - 1. The Need to Appoint Elders (1:5-9)
 - 2. Opponents in Crete (1:10-16)
 - C. Instructions for Groups within the Church (2:1-15)
 - D. Instructions for Doing Good to Others (3:1-11)
 - E. Conclusion (3:12-15)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in the Pastoral Letters

- *Expectations for Men and Women in Worship (1 Timothy 2:8-15)*
 Many people are asking what the Bible teaches about the roles of men and women in the church today. Some believe that in a world committed to women's right and gender equality there should be no differences at all in the church. We know that when it comes to our salvation and our true worth as humans, men and women are completely equal (see Genesis 1:26-27 and Galatians 3:28) However, being equal in value before God does not mean that we have the same roles and responsibilities. In

Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, Paul teaches that husbands and wives work together in different roles within a marriage and a family. When both spouses are committed to honoring the Lord and loving each other, the home is made stronger and reflects the love of Christ to the world.

In the same way, this passage in 1 Timothy 2 explains that men and women are given different roles to serve and glorify God within the church. Notice that this chapter speaks specifically about what is happening when the church is gathered for worship. First, verses 1-7 show us that God wants his churches to be committed to all kinds of prayer for all people. Paul emphasizes the good news that God desires all people to be saved, and that salvation is possible because Jesus is the mediator and ransom who makes peace between us and God. Verse 8 teaches that men should lead in holiness as the church gathers to worship and pray. They should be known for their holiness and peace among themselves. The opposite of this would be men who are passive, prayerless, unconcerned about holy living, or constantly angry and fighting with one another.

The role of women within the church is different. Verses 9-12 describe the behaviors and characteristics that should mark women in worship. God's Word says that women should not present themselves in a way that is intended to bring attention or admiration from others. Instead, they should be known for gentle and quiet spirits with good works of service to others. Keep in mind that the phrase "Let a woman learn quietly" does not mean that women can never speak in church. This is a description of someone who has willingly come to worship and hear God's Word with a humble spirit, not to lead or challenge those who are teaching. Verse 12 states plainly that the roles of teaching and leading with spiritual authority are the responsibility of men. (This is not for any man, but only qualified men as described in chapter 3.) Here is an important explanation. Paul does not say that women cannot be authoritative leaders (that is to say, pastors) of the church because they are in any way less important or less capable than men. Women are equally valuable and important in God's Kingdom. But verses 13 and 14 show that men are given the responsibility to lead by God because of God's chosen order of creation, Adam first and then Eve. This has been God's design. Adam was accountable to God for his family and his care over creation. Husbands are responsible to God for their wives and families. Pastors must give account to God for the spiritual health of their entire churches (Hebrews 13:17). Leadership among God's people is assigned as a solemn responsibility, not a status or privilege. When holy men lead in strength and care for the church, and when holy women come alongside to support the body of Christ with a gentleness, grace, and service of their own, then Jesus is truly glorified and together the church displays the true nature of God's love and wisdom to the world.

- *Requirements for Pastors and Deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13)*
Chapter 3 of 1 Timothy (and chapter 1 of Titus) describe the requirements that God has revealed for any man who would desire to take responsibility for the leadership and care of Christ's church by serving as a pastor or deacon. We need to understand a few very important things when we read these verses.

First, the requirements listed for both pastors and deacons are primarily a description of the character that God demands in his leaders. For example, in the requirements for pastors or elders (verses 2-7), Paul lists 10 character traits that must be seen in a man's life and only two skills or abilities (able to teach and able to manage the church). Together, these characteristics paint a picture of the kind of man who is fit to lead God's church, and the standard is very high.

Second, read verse 2 very closely and notice an important word. It says, "Therefore, an overseer (or pastor or elder, these are the same) **must** be above reproach..." The key word in this verse is "must." This is teaching that any man who would be a pastor or elder is required by God to meet all of the standards listed in the following verses. These are not merely good suggestions, and it is not enough if a man fits some of the descriptions and not others. A man who would shepherd God's people is required to live according to this description. If he does not, he is not qualified to serve as a pastor.

Third, verse 2 also says that pastors must be "the husband of one wife." This is important because we live in a culture where it is very common for men to be unfaithful in their marriages. We can understand this phrase to mean that a pastor should be a "one woman man." That is, it means more than that he should only have one wife. He must be absolutely faithful to that one wife, just as Christ is faithful to his bride, the Church. Because of this, a man with more than one wife cannot be the pastor of a church. Also, a man who is unfaithful to his wife cannot be the pastor of a church. This is a requirement that a pastor have a truly faithful character, and his faithfulness is most clearly seen in his marriage relationship. (Note: A single man can serve as a pastor, but he also must show a character of true faithfulness and sexual purity.)

Finally, notice that there is one particular trait missing in the requirements for deacons. While a pastor is required to be "able to teach," nothing like this is said about deacons. This is because pastors are the shepherds and the teachers of the church who are responsible to see that God's Word is taught faithfully. Deacons serve the church by caring for other important needs so that the pastors can give most of their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4). Deacons are required to have the same holy character and the same deep understanding of the gospel as pastors, but they are responsible for a different role that allows pastors to lead healthy and united churches.

- *Preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-8)*

At the end of 2 Timothy, Paul is leaving his final instructions and encouragement for the young pastor Timothy. Many times we find that the last words a person speaks are deep and meaningful, and this is a great example of that truth. Paul is expecting that one day soon his race on earth will be finished and he will stand before the Lord Jesus to receive the reward for his faithfulness. With the glory of God and the seriousness of judgment on his mind, he gives Timothy a final charge: Preach the Word. We should

still feel the power of that charge in our own souls today, especially those who are called to be pastors. Preach the Word. Feed God's people with all that God has supplied. Teach all of the truth that is contained in God's Word, and do not compromise any of it. Refuse to keep it back from God people. Refuse to change it to suit your own desires. Refuse to change it to make it more popular with the people who are listening. We are not called to tell the people what they want to hear and let them do what they want to do. We are called to Preach the Word. Let them hear God's Word, and trust the Holy Spirit to save and sanctify everyone that He is drawing to Jesus. Preach the Word today, and continue preaching the Word until you can say as Paul said, "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness..."

- *Rebuke Divisive People and False Teachers (Titus 1:10-16; 3:8-11)*

In his letter to Titus, Paul gives some very helpful instruction for a problem that all churches face. What do we do with people are causing trouble and division in the church. Sometimes we find people gossiping and dividing a church because they are not happy with the way the Bible is being taught. Sometimes we see this happen because a person wants to gain power or a position in the church. Whatever the reason may be, a divisive person is poison to a church, and a divided church is weak in its witness to the world. This is why Paul tells Titus that he must "rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:13) whenever someone in the church starts spreading false ideas and teaching that will hurt the congregation. He also says that if someone in the church continues to cause problems by spreading false ideas or trying to argue and start fights over things that are not central to the gospel and true doctrine, that person must be confronted directly. Paul writes, "As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11). Many pastors do not want to confront someone who is causing trouble, and even more pastors do want to chase someone from the church, even if they are being divisive. This is even more difficult if that person is wealthy or influential in the congregation. But part of a shepherd's job is to protect the flock from wolves, and a person who is causing division in a church is a wolf. Pastors must be faithful to the Lord first. If you are facing a wolf, a divisive person in your church, follow these instructions from the Lord. Do what is needed to protect God's people, and trust the Lord to take care of you and your church.

(4) Important Theological Theme

Churches must be taught the truth and led in the ways which God commands.

By now it should be clear to us that God cares deeply about the health and care of his churches. It is not enough to say that we believe in Jesus and we pray "in Jesus's name." God expects his churches to teach the truth, to obey all of his instructions, to pray for all people, to work together in the roles God has given each of us, to care for and help one another, and to live together in unity at all times. He expects his pastors and deacons to live holy lives and to

work together to keep the church focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ and to care for their needs. The Pastoral Letters give us valuable instructions to learn how a true church should worship, how it should be led, and how they should live together as a people who belong to the Lord Jesus who bought them with his blood on the cross.

Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of 2 Timothy 3:14-17. At this point, student should be familiar with the Interpretive Journey and its steps. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 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 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

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. Refer to information from earlier in this course about Paul, about interpreting the New Testament letters, and about 2 Corinthians.

ASK

Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.
Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
Paul
- What is the author’s relationship to the audience before this letter?
Paul is writing to Timothy, his so in the faith. Timothy traveled with Paul often during his missionary journeys, and Paul has trained him personally for gospel ministry.
- Who is being spoken to?
Timothy, who is serving the church at Ephesus

- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
Paul has a deep love for both Timothy and for the church in Ephesus.
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?
In this book, Paul is giving instructions and encouragement to help Timothy as he leads the church in Ephesus. In this passage, Paul wants Timothy to commit himself completely to the Word of God as his source for faith and all that he needs to teach the church.

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
2 Timothy is the last book written by Paul in the New Testament, written shortly before his death.
 - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
Timothy has been assigned to the church in Ephesus, a church with influence over a wide area but who were being troubled by false teachers who were confusing the congregation and challenging Timothy.
 - What was the attitude and life 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?
Timothy is a younger pastor, but one who was a partner with Paul and a witness to his teaching and his suffering for the gospel. He may have been discouraged by some of the problems in his church, and Paul is writing to help him and give him encouragement.
 - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
All of the New Testament letters take place after the resurrection and after the Pentecost. These believers were living under the same New Covenant that we live under today.
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
This passage comes from the New Testament letters.
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
Earlier in this same paragraph, Paul reminds Timothy of the example that he has set for the young pastor in his teaching, his life, his love, his attitude, and his faithfulness even in suffering. He tells Timothy that everyone who desires to be faithful will suffer in some way and warns him that enemies of Jesus will continue to spread lies and try to mislead true believers. But Timothy is to remain committed to the Word of God as the center of his ministry. The following paragraph is the start of the conclusion of this letter, and Paul gives Timothy as strong charge to preach the Word faithfully and without compromise.
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
The most important theological theme of the Pastoral Letters is that

churches must be taught the truth and led in the ways which God commands.

- 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 comes immediately before the conclusion of 2 Timothy.

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Paul urges the young pastor, Timothy, to re-commit himself to believing God's Word as the source of wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus. Paul explains that all of Scripture comes from God himself and that Scripture is sufficient for everything needed to strengthen and equip a man to serve God faithfully.

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 did Paul 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?
- 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 Galatians? 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: 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 for this step.

- 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?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

Example: “Christians believe in God’s Word as a treasure which leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus alone. We believe that the Bible is spoken directly by God himself and gives us all that we need to live faithfully and serve the Lord.

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: 1 Timothy 4:11-16; Hebrews 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?

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 Five – 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 need to remember the important details of Paul's life and conversion, as well as the guidelines for reading and understanding letters in the New Testament. They should know all of the historical facts (see the informational tables in this section of each lesson) for all of Paul's letters. They should be familiar with the important theological themes from all 13 books. 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:

- No Other Gospel (Galatians 1:6-10)
- My grace is sufficient for you. (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)
- Never separated from the love of Christ (Romans 8:31-39)
- Christ is Supreme (Colossians 1:15-20)
- Requirements for pastors and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

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 2

Final Exam

1. What was the name of the Pharisee who taught Paul in Jerusalem?
 - a. Peter
 - b. Gamaliel
 - c. Caiaphas
 - d. Pilate

2. Where was Paul traveling when he was blinded by a vision of Jesus?
 - a. Jerusalem
 - b. Antioch
 - c. Rome
 - d. Damascus

3. Which of the following is NOT one of the guidelines to remember when studying letters in the New Testament?
 - a. Most of the letters were written to specific individuals or churches.
 - b. Each letter addresses a specific problem or situation the recipient was facing.
 - c. These letters were intended to be read aloud to the entire congregation.
 - d. Paul's letters contain special spiritual power to give people success in life.

4. When was the book of Galatians written?
 - a. AD 48 or 49
 - b. Early to mid-60s
 - c. AD 325
 - d. 1964

5. What is the main theological theme of the book of Galatians?
 - a. The Old Testament Law is worthless.
 - b. Jews are the enemies of Christians.
 - c. We are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness.
 - d. The fruit of the Spirit.

6. When were the letters to the Thessalonians written?
 - a. AD 50
 - b. AD 75
 - c. AD 33
 - d. 450 BC

7. What was the situation that caused Paul to write his letters to the Thessalonians?
 - a. False teaching
 - b. Persecution and confusion about the end times
 - c. Celebration of the church's anniversary
 - d. Giving thanks for a special gift they had sent him

8. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Corinthians?
 - a. Antioch
 - b. Babylon
 - c. Ephesus
 - d. Lusaka

9. What is the main theological theme of 1 Corinthians?
 - a. The message of the cross unites Christians in holiness and love.
 - b. Love conquers all.
 - c. Jesus is supreme.
 - d. Jesus is the Son of God.

10. What was the situation that caused Paul to write 1 Corinthians?
 - a. He needed their help for his missions work.
 - b. He had not heard anything from them for a long time.
 - c. Paul had heard reports about problems and received a letter from the church.
 - d. Paul wanted them to send him some men to work on his team.

11. What other New Testament book was written to the church in Rome at about the same time that Paul sent his letter to Rome?
 - a. Mark
 - b. Acts
 - c. Philippians
 - d. Revelation

12. Where was Paul when he wrote the book of Romans?
 - a. Prison
 - b. Jerusalem
 - c. New York City
 - d. Corinth

13. Which verse states the main theological theme of the book of Romans?
 - a. 1:1
 - b. 1:16
 - c. 3:23
 - d. 8:38-39

14. According to Romans 8:38-39, what can separate you from the love of God if you are in Christ Jesus?
- NOTHING
 - Satan
 - Your sin
 - A demon
15. Which one of the four Prison Letters was written first?
- Philippians
 - Ephesians
 - Colossians
 - Philemon
16. What is the most important theological theme of the book of Colossians?
- Joy in Christ
 - Christ is complete in every way, and Christians are made complete in Christ.
 - Anyone who preaches a false gospel is cursed by God.
 - Christians have the hope of resurrection at the end of the world.
17. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Philemon?
- Joy in Christ
 - Jesus forgives all of our sin.
 - Love and forgiveness between Christians
 - The gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.
18. Why are Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon called the “Prison Letters”?
- Because Paul wrote all of them while he was in prison in Rome.
 - Because all of the believers from these churches were in prison.
 - Because Paul was celebrating his freedom and release from prison.
 - No one knows.
19. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy?
- Antioch
 - Heaven
 - Nairobi
 - Macedonia

20. What is the most important theological theme in the Pastoral Letters?
- a. Churches must be taught the truth and led in the ways which God commands.
 - b. Do not let others look down on you because of your youth.
 - c. Chase false teachers out of the church.
 - d. The Bible is God's Word.

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

21. Galatians 1:6-10 | No Other Gospel

22. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 | My grace is sufficient for you.

23. Romans 8:31-39 | Never separated from the love of Christ.

24. Colossians 1:15-20 | Christ is Supreme

25. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 | Requirements for pastors and deacons.

New Testament Survey 2

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. What was the name of the Pharisee who taught Paul in Jerusalem?
 - a. Peter
 - b. Gamaliel**
 - c. Caiaphas
 - d. Pilate

2. Where was Paul traveling when he was blinded by a vision of Jesus?
 - a. Jerusalem
 - b. Antioch
 - c. Rome
 - d. Damascus**

3. Which of the following is NOT one of the guidelines to remember when studying letters in the New Testament?
 - a. Most of the letters were written to specific individuals or churches.
 - b. Each letter addresses a specific problem or situation the recipient was facing.
 - c. These letters were intended to be read aloud to the entire congregation.
 - d. Paul's letters contain special spiritual power to give people success in life.**

4. When was the book of Galatians written?
 - a. AD 48 or 49**
 - b. Early to mid-60s
 - c. AD 325
 - d. 1964

5. What is the main theological theme of the book of Galatians?
 - a. The Old Testament Law is worthless.
 - b. Jews are the enemies of Christians.
 - c. We are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness.**
 - d. The fruit of the Spirit.

6. When were the letters to the Thessalonians written?
 - a. AD 50**
 - b. AD 75
 - c. AD 33
 - d. 450 BC

7. What was the situation that caused Paul to write his letters to the Thessalonians?
- False teaching
 - Persecution and confusion about the end times**
 - Celebration of the church's anniversary
 - Giving thanks for a special gift they had sent him
8. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Corinthians?
- Antioch
 - Babylon
 - Ephesus**
 - Lusaka
9. What is the main theological theme of 1 Corinthians?
- The message of the cross unites Christians in holiness and love.**
 - Love conquers all.
 - Jesus is supreme.
 - Jesus is the Son of God.
10. What was the situation that caused Paul to write 1 Corinthians?
- He needed their help for his missions work.
 - He had not heard anything from them for a long time.
 - Paul had heard reports about problems and received a letter from the church.**
 - Paul wanted them to send him some men to work on his team.
11. What other New Testament book was written to the church in Rome at about the same time that Paul sent his letter to Rome?
- Mark**
 - Acts
 - Philippians
 - Revelation
12. Where was Paul when he wrote the book of Romans?
- Prison
 - Jerusalem
 - New York City
 - Corinth**
13. Which verse states the main theological theme of the book of Romans?
- 1:1
 - 1:16**

- c. 3:23
- d. 8:38-39

14. According to Romans 8:38-39, what can separate you from the love of God if you are in Christ Jesus?

- a. **NOTHING**
- b. Satan
- c. Your sin
- d. A demon

15. Which one of the four Prison Letters was written first?

- a. **Philippians**
- b. Ephesians
- c. Colossians
- d. Philemon

16. What is the most important theological theme of the book of Colossians?

- a. Joy in Christ
- b. **Christ is complete in every way, and Christians are made complete in Christ.**
- c. Anyone who preaches a false gospel is cursed by God.
- d. Christians have the hope of resurrection at the end of the world.

17. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Philemon?

- a. Joy in Christ
- b. Jesus forgives all of our sin.
- c. **Love and forgiveness between Christians**
- d. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

18. Why are Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon called the “Prison Letters”?

- a. **Because Paul wrote all of them while he was in prison in Rome.**
- b. Because all of the believers from these churches were in prison.
- c. Because Paul was celebrating his freedom and release from prison.
- d. No one knows.

19. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Timothy?

- a. Antioch
- b. Heaven
- c. Nairobi
- d. **Macedonia**

20. What is the most important theological theme in the Pastoral Letters?
- Churches must be taught the truth and led in the ways which God commands.**
 - Do not let others look down on you because of your youth.
 - Chase false teachers out of the church.
 - The Bible is God's Word.

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

21. Galatians 1:6-10 | No Other Gospel

Paul was shocked when he heard the news that some believers in the Galatian churches had gone back to following the Old Testament laws. He told them that “another gospel” was really no gospel at all. The word “gospel” means good news, and believing that you are saved by perfectly obeying the Law is not good news in any way. No one is able to obey the Law completely, so if we try to earn our salvation by doing good, we are left truly hopeless. Paul wanted to be completely clear in what he said to the Galatian Christians, so he repeated his point to make sure they heard him. He said that if anyone – even an angel from heaven – brought them a message of salvation by anything other than faith in Jesus Christ, that person should be cursed.

22. 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 | My grace is sufficient for you.

Paul was the opposite of the proud and boastful “super apostles.” If he was forced to boast about his qualifications as an apostle, he chose to boast in his weakness (12:5). Just as Jesus came to earth humble and obedient, Paul was always aware of his weakness before God. This weakness included a “thorn in the flesh,” to “keep me from becoming conceited” (12:7). This is where we learn a beautiful and important truth about how God sees our weakness. When Paul begged God to remove his suffering, God refused. Instead, he told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (12:9). Perhaps God allows us to suffer today for the same reason. As long as we are strong and successful, we can be tempted to lean on our own wisdom and power. But when we are weak, only the power of God shines through, and that is when He is most glorified in us.

23. Romans 8:31-39 | Never separated from the love of Christ.

The end of chapter 8 includes some of the most encouraging and inspiring verses in the entire Bible. According to these verses, the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in us from the moment that we believe in Jesus gives us complete confidence that the love God has shown us can never be taken away from us. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (verse 31) “Who shall separate us from the love of God?” (verse 35) The answers to these questions are greater than we can possibly describe. Because God gave his Son to rescue us and redeem, no one can

ever condemn us before God again. Because Christ is raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father, He is praying and interceding for us in heaven even today! And the greatest statement is at the end of this chapter: “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verses 38-39). If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose from the dead to give us eternal life, then your life is secure. There is no power anywhere in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, which is able to take you away from the God who loves you.

24. Colossians 1:15-20 | Christ is Supreme

These verses include some of the highest and richest language used to describe Jesus in the entire Bible. Paul makes it clear that Jesus is no ordinary man. Just as Jesus told Phillip, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:8), Paul now explains that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God.” In other words, if you want to know what God is like in truth, you only have to look at Jesus to know. These verses go on to declare that Jesus is greater than things in existence, including both the physical and spiritual realm, and that everything that exists is held together by his own power. God the Father has set Christ over all of creation, so that “in everything he might be preeminent” (verse 18) and that through his death he might establish peace between God and all of creation again.

25. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 | Requirements for pastors and deacons.

Chapter 3 of 1 Timothy (and chapter 1 of Titus) describe the requirements that God has revealed for any man who would desire to take responsibility for the leadership and care of Christ’s church by serving as a pastor or deacon. We need to understand a few very important things when we read these verses.

First, the requirements listed for both pastors and deacons are primarily a description of the character that God demands in his leaders. Paul lists 10 character traits that must be seen in a man’s life and only two skills or abilities (able to teach and able to manage the church). Together, these characteristics paint a picture of the kind of man who is fit to lead God’s church, and the standard is very high.

Second, read verse 2 very closely and notice an important word. It says, “Therefore, an overseer (or pastor or elder, these are the same) must be above reproach...” The key word in this verse is “must.” This is teaching that any man who would be a pastor or elder is required by God to meet all of the standards listed in the following verses. A man who would shepherd God’s people is required to live according to this description. If he does not, he is not qualified to serve as a pastor.

Third, verse 2 also says that pastors must be “the husband of one wife.” This is important because we live in a culture where it is very common for men to be unfaithful in their marriages. We can understand this phrase to mean that a pastor should be a “one woman man.” That is, it means more than that he should

only have one wife. He must be absolutely faithful to that one wife, just as Christ is faithful to his bride, the Church. Because of this, a man with more than one wife cannot be the pastor of a church. Also, a man who is unfaithful to his wife cannot be the pastor of a church. This is a requirement that a pastor have a truly faithful character, and his faithfulness is most clearly seen in his marriage relationship. (Note: A single man can serve as a pastor, but he also must show a character of true faithfulness and sexual purity.)

Finally, notice that there is one particular trait missing in the requirements for deacons. While a pastor is required to be “able to teach,” nothing like this is said about deacons. This is because pastors are the shepherds and the teachers of the church who are responsible to see that God’s Word is taught faithfully. Deacons serve the church by caring for other important needs so that the pastors can give most of their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4). Deacons are required to have the same holy character and the same deep understanding of the gospel as pastors, but they are responsible for a different role that allows pastors to lead healthy and united churches.

New Testament Survey 2

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:

- A Living Sacrifice – Romans 12:1-2
- One in Christ – Ephesians 2:13-22
- Being Content in Truth – 1 Timothy 6:3-10

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.