



Old Testament Survey 3
The Prophets
Teaching Notes

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Lesson 1 – Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Lamentations

Introduction

In Old Testament Survey 1 we looked at the law of God and the way he established his covenant with his people. In Old Testament Survey 2 we looked at the history of the nation of Israel as a whole, and we saw that the writing books provided insight into individuals and the human heart. In this course we will study the last 17 books of the Old Testament - The Prophets. These 17 books can be divided into Major and Minor prophets. The first 5 books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) are known as the major prophets because they are longer than the others. The next 12 books are known as the minor prophets, not because they weren't important but because they had less to say in their books.

The prophets were spokesmen for God to the northern and southern kingdoms of the people of Israel as well as to the nations that surrounded them. While today many people claim to be prophets because of the fame and status they desire, these men were asked to proclaim a difficult message of judgment unless the people repented. They were not popular, and most of them were rejected by the people. They were beaten, put in prison, often ignored, and even killed - but still they faithfully proclaimed the word of the Lord in the midst of their trouble.

In our course on Interpreting the Old Testament, we learned that the basic message of the prophets was three-fold: (1) You have broken the covenant, therefore repent! (2) No repentance, then judgment! (3) However, there is still hope beyond the judgment for a glorious and future restoration. In the midst of the warnings about judgment, God was still merciful to his people as he promised a future hope to them that would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus!!

Part 1 – Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah in many respects is a miniature Bible. Isaiah has 66 chapters; the Bible has 66 books. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah speak of the judgment or wrath of God, while the last 27 chapters speak of the comfort of God and the coming Messiah. Isaiah is also one of the most-quoted Old Testament books in the New Testament.

Isaiah means "Jehovah is Salvation." Isaiah was a major voice demonstrating that God is salvation, not only for His chosen people, but for all nations. In Genesis, God promised Abram that he would bless all nations through him, and Isaiah prophesies of the coming fulfillment of that promise.

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, (4) important theological themes, and (5) the Christ Focus of each book.

(1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Isaiah

Isaiah was the son of Amos. He was highly educated and familiar with the royal court. He is considered the greatest of the writing prophets.

- **When was it written?**

The ministry of Isaiah was from 740 B.C. to about 690 B.C.

The historical background for the period can be found in 2 Kings 15-21. It covers the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh - all of these were kings of Judah.

- **Where was it written?**

Mainly Jerusalem

Isaiah was speaking and writing mainly from Jerusalem, which was the capital of the southern kingdom, Judah.

- **To whom was it written?**

To the nation of Judah

Isaiah's message was generally directed towards the people of Judah and their sinful ways, particularly their leaders, although he also addresses the nation of Israel and the surrounding nations.

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

Isaiah was sent to call the nation of Judah back to God and to tell of God's Salvation.

God would bring condemnation of Israel and Judah through the nations, but He will also one day provide salvation to the nations of the world through Israel and Judah.

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

The message of Isaiah focuses on the holy character of God and his promise to send a Savior for Israel and the world.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Isaiah
When was it written?	740-690 B.C.
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	Nation of Judah
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To call the nation of Israel back to God
What is the most important theological theme?	The character of God and the promise of a Savior

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Isaiah is mainly divided into 2 parts: the Judgment of God and the Comfort of God.¹

- I. The Judgment of God (Chapters 1-39)
 - A. Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem (Chapters 1-12)
 - B. Judgment on the surrounding nations (Chapters 13-27)
 - C. Warnings and Promises (Chapters 28-35)
 - D. Historical (Chapters 36-39)-See 2 Kings 18-20
- II. The Comfort of God (Chapters 40-66)
 - A. Jehovah and Idols (Chapters 40-48)
 - B. The Coming Messiah (Chapters 49-57)
 - C. Final Restoration and promised glory (Chapters 58-66)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Isaiah

Isaiah is quoted over 66 times in the New Testament. We are going to look at 3 noteworthy prophecies in Isaiah to see where they find their fulfillment in the New Testament.

- *The Coming of the Messiah* (9:1-7)
 In this passage Isaiah is prophesying about the coming Messiah. He is speaking of hope that is coming. The people of Israel and Judah would walk through a time of captivity and judgment, but Isaiah tells them that it will not last forever. The people of God would experience captivity, and Isaiah is encouraging them that this captivity would not last forever. He says the “time of darkness and despair will not go on forever.” This is speaking to the nation, telling them that for a period they will be oppressed and in despair, but God

¹ Book outlines in the course are found in Alan B. Strinfellow’s book, *Through the Bible in One Year* (Whitaker House: New Kensington, PA, 2014).

will not leave them there; he will bring them out of that captivity. Isaiah is also speaking of salvation on a higher level - an ultimate salvation that would come through Jesus.

The people of God would experience God's silence for hundreds of years until "to us a child is born to us a son is given." Luke 2:11 uses similar language as that found in Isaiah 9 to announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. In Matthew 4:15-16, the prophesy from Isaiah 9 is quoted as Jesus is beginning his earthy ministry. He is referred to as the great light that comes to the people living in darkness. From this time Jesus preaches repentance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

- *Jesus as the suffering Messiah (Chapter 53)*
Out of the many messianic prophesies found in Isaiah, chapter 53 stands out above the rest. In this chapter there are multiple references to the Messiah. We will look at a couple of the verses. Verse 5 speaks of Jesus, saying, "he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquity." This is fulfilled in John 19:34 where it speaks of the soldier piercing Jesus' side while he was on the cross. In verse 7 of Isaiah 53, we read that "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." This was also fulfilled during the arrest and trial of Jesus. Matthew 27:13-14 says, "Then Pilate said to [Jesus], 'Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed." These and other verses from Isaiah 53 predict very specific details about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins.
- *Jesus reading Isaiah in the synagogue (61:1-2/Luke 4:16-21)*
The first time that Jesus taught publicly in a synagogue was in his hometown of Nazareth. And what passage of Scripture did he choose to read for this special moment? Jesus opened the scroll to Isaiah 61 and began by reading, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." Everyone in Israel knew that these verses in Isaiah were spoken to describe the coming of the Messiah and the Lord's salvation, and on that day Jesus plainly identified himself as the One sent by the Lord to fulfill this prophecy. These are precious verses that tell us about the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth and also about the nature of his mission on earth.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *The character of God and the promise of a Savior.*
One writer has said that "In some respects, Isaiah is *the* theological textbook of the Old Testament." That means that if we want to gain a deep understanding of who God is in truth and how he relates to us as his people, Isaiah is the book to study. God speaks about his infinite holiness in many places, and he also assures Israel of his steadfast love and mercy to those

who repent and turn to him. Combining deep theological truth about the character of God and the promise that God will send a Savior to rescue the faithful produces a message that leads God's people to fear and love God while trusting him completely for their salvation.

(5) Christ Focus in Isaiah

- The book of Isaiah points us to the hope and promise of the Messiah as much as any other book in the Old Testament. Chapter 7 and Chapter 9 announce the birth of the Messiah who will God living among us. Chapter 53 explains clear details of his crucifixion and how God will heal us through the death of the Messiah. Chapter 61 declares that the coming of the Messiah will mean a new day of joy, justice, and hope for all peoples. And many other passages reveal further details. It is difficult to read Isaiah carefully and not notice the large number of messianic prophecies contained in this book.

Part 2 – Jeremiah

(1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Jeremiah

Jeremiah served as God's spokesman for 40 years to Judah, but when he spoke nobody listened. Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet."

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 627-586 B.C

Jeremiah ministered under Judah's last 5 kings. The historical setting can be found in 2 Kings 22-25. It was written just before and during the Babylonian exile

- **Where was it written?**

Judah (the southern kingdom)

- **To whom was it written?**

The nation of Judah

Chapters 1-39 were directed to the people of Judah before the Babylonian captivity. The later chapters were directed to the discouraged people scattered in the land because of the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Jeremiah?**
To urge God's people to turn from their sins and back to God.

Jeremiah's prophecies were a final warning of the coming judgment of the Babylonian captivity.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**
When we ignore sin and refuse to obey, we invite disaster into our lives.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Jeremiah
When was it written?	Approximately 627-586 B.C.
Where was it written?	Judah (the southern kingdom)
To whom was it written?	Nation of Judah
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To urge God's people to turn from their sins and back to God.
What is the most important theological theme?	When we ignore sin and refuse to obey, we invite disaster in our lives.

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Jeremiah does not necessarily follow a topical or chronological order. The reader should concentrate more on the matters that Jeremiah discusses in each chapter. Chapters 1-38 all happen before the fall of Jerusalem.

- I. The Prophet's call (Chapter 1)
- II. Sermon delivered before the fall of Judah (Chapters 2-38)
 - A. Chapters 2-20 are general prophecies and are not given a time of delivery
 - B. Chapters 21-39 are specific and give a time of delivery
- III. Fall of Jerusalem to Babylonia (Chapter 39)
- IV. Messages to Jewish Remnant (Chapters 40-44)
- V. Prophecies against Gentile nations (Chapters 45-51)
- VI. Looking back on the fall of Judah (Chapter 52)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Jeremiah

- *Shepherds after God's own heart* (3:1-18)
Chapter three begins with a strong message of condemnation against God's people. He declares that both Israel and Judah have been unfaithful to their covenant with the Lord, and he asks what husband would ever take back a wife who was so treacherous. But beginning in verse 12, the Lord invites his people to return to him, assuring them that he is merciful and willing to forgive.

Not only that, in verse 15 God promises his people that when they return to him, he will give them shepherds “after my own heart.” That is, God will give the nation leaders who love him and love his people, guiding them toward faithfulness and feeding them with true knowledge of God through his word.

- *The new covenant (31: 31-34)*

These verses might contain the most exciting and hopeful promise found in the entire Old Testament. Through Jeremiah and the other prophets, God had shown that Israel was completely unable to obey the Law and remain faithful to their covenant with the Lord. It was not within their power to follow his ways perfectly. So what hope could there be? Were God’s people destined to live in sin and spiritual adultery forever? The Lord’s solution to this problem was something no one would have ever expected. In verse 31, the Lord says, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.” God’s plan was not condemn his people, but to offer them a whole new covenant! God knew the people were not able to obey the law written in books, so he says that he will write the new law on their hearts. He promises, “I will be their God, and they will be my people” (verse 33). This is the love and goodness of God. He knew his people could not obey and could not find their way back to him, so he promised a new way and a new covenant. God promised he would make a way to forgive his people’s sin and restore their relationship forever.

- *The Lord’s eternal covenant through David’s line (33:14-26)*

In the midst of God’s promises to create a new covenant and hope for forgiveness for God’s people, many may have been wondering how this will happen. Would God forget everything that happened before and start over? Not at all! God did not need to change his plan, because he knew from the beginning what he would do to bring salvation to the world. These verses in chapter 33 simply reveal to the people of Israel the next step in God’s perfect plan. We read in 2 Samuel of the covenant that God had made with King David, and in this chapter God reveals that he will work through that covenant to bring his Messiah and Savior into the world. Because of these verses, we know for certain that God’s Messiah would be born into the family of David.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *When we ignore sin and refuse to obey, we invite disaster into our lives.*

Remember that Jeremiah was writing mostly to the nation of Judah. He was declaring a warning to them to repent of their sins and turn back to God. They had watched Israel (northern kingdom) go into captivity by the Assyrians, and Jeremiah was telling Judah to learn from what happened to them. God was giving them an opportunity to repent, but if they chose not to turn back to God then he would bring judgment on them. The people of Judah did not listen to the warnings that Jeremiah spoke, and eventually God brought judgment and captivity on them by the Babylonians. Yet, even in the judgment God would

use Jeremiah to speak of a hope in Jesus. God would not leave the nation of Judah in captivity forever but would bring them back and give them new hearts to follow God.

(5) Christ Focus in Jeremiah

- Like Isaiah, the book of Jeremiah makes many references to the coming of Jesus. The clearest of these messianic prophecies is found in Jeremiah 23. In this verse, the Lord comforts his people by assuring them that he will judge their wicked rulers and give them shepherds who care for them as the Lord does. Then he announces the coming of the Messiah as the greatest of these shepherds who will care for Israel. In verse 5, Jesus is called the Righteous Branch, and we learn that he will come from the line of David (as the Lord promised). Jesus is given another name in this passage as well: “the Lord is our righteousness.” All of this together explains that Christ will come from the Lord to shepherd his people, and to give to them his own righteousness.

Part 3 – Lamentations

The book of Lamentations, written by Jeremiah, is a book about mourning or grieving. Jeremiah looked back on the same event that he prophesied about in the book of Jeremiah, the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah wept because the people had rejected their God, and he knew their rejection would bring them great suffering and send them into exile. Jeremiah’s tears or lamenting were for the things that also broke God’s heart. This book is a funeral song written for the fallen city of Jerusalem.

(1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Jeremiah
- **When was it written?**
Approximately 586 B.C.

The book was written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem.

- **Where was it written?**
In or near Jerusalem

Jerusalem had been destroyed and her people taken into captivity.

- **To whom was it written?**
The exiled Jewish nation

Their land had just been captured by the Babylonians and their temple had just been burned.

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

It served as an expression of sorrow at the destruction of Jerusalem and a reminder of God’s faithfulness to his word and his people.

Lamentations is a unique mixture of God’s wrath and His mercy. This book shows God’s faithfulness to his word to punish the evil in the nation of Judah, but it also displays his steadfast love and compassion for his people.

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

God is faithful to his promise to punish evil and still show mercy to His people.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Jeremiah
When was it written?	Approximately 586 B.C.
Where was it written?	Near or in Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The exiled Jewish nation
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To weep and mourn over the destruction of Jerusalem
What is the most important theological theme?	God is faithful to his promise to punish evil and still show mercy to his people.

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Lamentations is a set of 5 poems. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 contain the same number of verses (22). Each verse begins with each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. So, verse one would begin with the 1st letter of the Hebrew alphabet and so on. In chapter 3, however, there are 3 verses for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This was written in the rhythm of a funeral song.

- I. The Trouble of Jerusalem (Chapter 1)
- II. God’s anger towards sin (Chapter 2)
- III. The grief and hope of Jeremiah (Chapter 3)
- IV. God’s anger satisfied (Chapter 4)
- V. The prayer for Jerusalem (Chapter 5)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Lamentations

- *God's mercies are new every morning (3:19-26)*
 "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end" (verses 21-22)

Jeremiah and the people of Israel had seen their world collapse. They believed that as long as the temple stood in Jerusalem to remind them of God's favor, they could never be defeated. But they did not repent of their sins, and the Lord allowed them to be humiliated. Jerusalem was destroyed. The temple was destroyed. And for many, it felt as if the world they knew had ended. Where would they find hope? Jeremiah answers that question perfectly exactly in the middle of the book of Lamentations. The hope of God's people is found in remembering the heart of God. His steadfast love and mercy never cease. No matter what circumstances – pain, loss, fear, doubt, even death – God never stops being a merciful Father. Even when he allows discipline and suffering to come to his people, his steadfast love is never removed. And if God's love is turned toward us, then we are never without hope. In the middle of a book that is all about darkness and despair, there is an unfading light of hope that can never be taken away. God himself is the hope that we need.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God is faithful to keep his promise to punish evil but still shows mercy to His people.*

The book of Lamentations is an entire book mourning the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah had warned repeatedly that if the people of Judah would not repent then judgment would come upon them. Judgment came just as God said it would, and now Jeremiah and the people weep over the destruction. During this weeping though there is hope. In chapter 3, Jeremiah recalls God's steadfast love to his people and that his mercies are new every morning, and so he is comforted and assured that hope in the Lord is never lost.

(5) Christ Focus in Lamentations

- In a book of mourning and weeping, it can be difficult to find a clear reference to the Messiah as the coming hope of Israel. Here we need to understand that the book of Lamentations does not declare the Messiah, it BEGS for the Messiah! The words of Lamentations show us a people who have lost hope and know that they need something, or someone, greater than they have known. The deep longing and desire for rescue and hope in Lamentations is not satisfied until their true Savior arrives in the birth of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

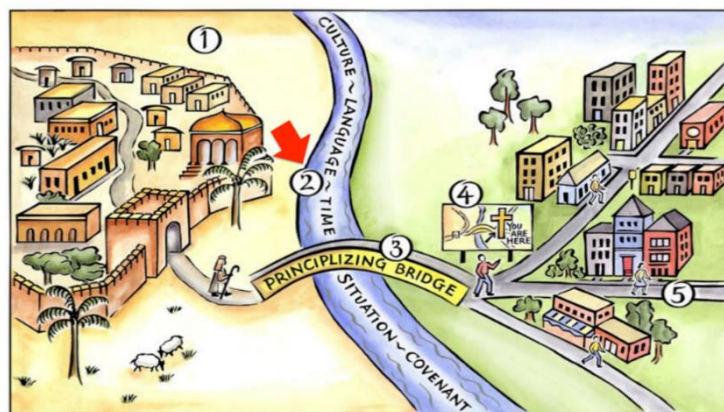
Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

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

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 [Isaiah 66:1-5](#). This is the third course in our Old Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. Try to keep the class moving

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.

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 Isaiah 66:1-5.

Thus says the Lord:

“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would build for me,
and what is the place of my rest?

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be,
declares the Lord.

But this is the one to whom I will look;

he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”

“He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man;

he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck;

he who presents a grain offering, like the one who offer’s pigs blood;

he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense,

like the one who blesses an idol.

They have chosen their own ways,

and their soul delights in their abominations;

I will also choose harsh treatment for them

and bring their fears upon them,

because when I called, no one answered,

when I spoke, they did not listen;

but they did what was evil in my eyes

and chose that in which I do not delight.”

Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word:

“Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name’s sake

have said, ‘Let the Lord be glorified,

that we may see your joy’;

but it is they who will be put to shame.”

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 interpreting the prophets.

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 is this happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Who wrote this book?
- Who is it written to?
- Who is speaking?
- Who is being spoken to?
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
 - Who was the king or ruler?
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
 - When did this passage take place in the history of the Old Testament and Israel? Before the fall of mankind or after? Before the covenant with Abraham or after? Before the Law was given or after? Before the Exile or after?
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
 - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Isaiah 66:1-5, the Lord declares to the people of Israel that he is looking for people who are humble and seeking the Lord in their hearts. Because God has created the whole world, there is not offering or gift that can be given back to him that will cause him to be impressed or to overlook evil the heart.

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 was this book written in originally? 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 people of Israel 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 people of Israel were in?
- Relationship to God – What was Israel's relationship to God in this story? 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: God is seeking people who earnestly desire to honor him in spirit and truth. We cannot hide a sinful heart with religious actions.*

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?

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?

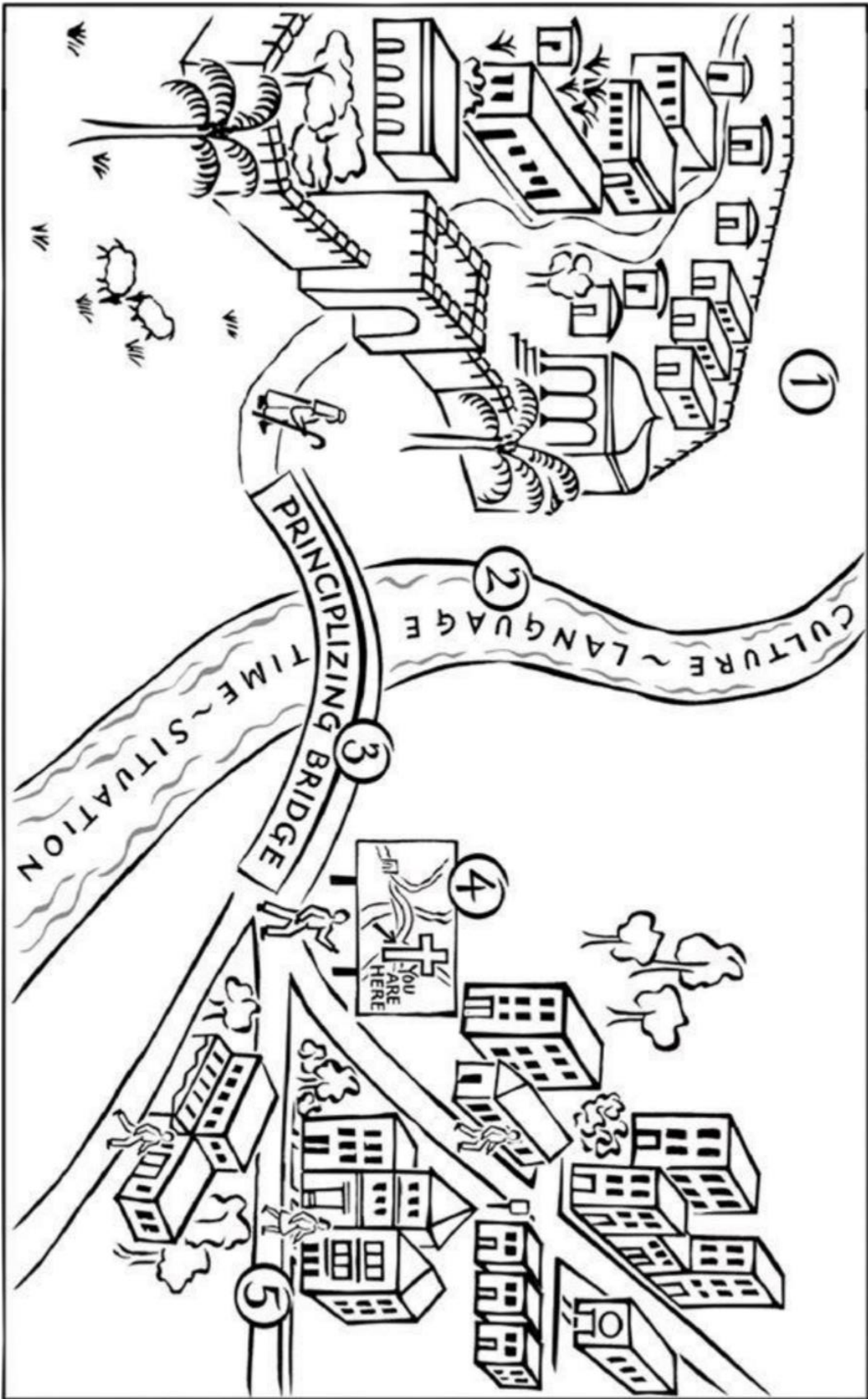
ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

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.



Lesson 2 – Ezekiel & Daniel

Introduction

The book of Ezekiel is one of two forward-looking books of the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel will look forward to the religious restoration of Israel. Ezekiel was taken captive in Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Judah. The city of Jerusalem had not fallen yet, but Ezekiel was preaching about the approaching destruction of this city. The book of Ezekiel chronicles the prophet's life and ministry as he calls the people to turn from their wicked ways and turn back to God.

Part 1 – Ezekiel

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet. He was around 30 years old when he began his prophetic ministry. He would have ministered at a similar time as Jeremiah and Daniel.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 593-570 B.C.

There were 3 major invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. In 605 B.C. Daniel was taken to Babylon. In 597 B.C. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon, And in 586 B.C. the third invasion took place during Zedekiah's reign. Ezekiel was called into his prophetic ministry in 593 B.C.

- **Where was it written?**

Babylon (in exile)

Ezekiel was taken captive to a community south of the city of Babylon. This is where we received his visions and ministered to the Jewish exiles.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Jewish exiles in Babylon

Ezekiel was writing to the Jews in exile who were discouraged but who also had a false sense of hope that there would be an early return to their homeland.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Ezekiel?**
To announce God's judgment on Israel and other nations, to encourage and comfort God's people by revealing God's full plan for restoration, and to foretell of God's salvation for his people.
- **What is the most important theological theme?**
A promise of hope and restoration for God's people

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Ezekiel
When was it written?	Approximately 593-570 B.C.
Where was it written?	Near Babylon
To whom was it written?	Jewish people in exile
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To announce God's judgment on Israel, reveal God's full plan of restoration, and to foretell God's salvation for his people.
What is the most important theological theme?	A promise of hope and restoration for God's people

(2) Basic Outline

- I. The call and commission of Ezekiel (Ch. 1-3)
 - A. Ezekiel's call (Ch. 2)
 - B. Ezekiel's commission as a watchman of Israel (3:16-27)
- II. Judgment on Jerusalem (Ch. 4-24)
 - A. Prophecies of Judgment (Ch. 4-7)
 - B. Reasons for Judgment (Ch. 8-11)
 1. Profaning the temple (Ch. 8)
 2. Picture of judgment (Ch. 9)
 3. Presence of God departs the temple (Ch. 10)
 - 4.
 - C. Symbols and Messages of judgment (Ch. 12-24)
- III. Judgment of the enemies of Judah (Ch. 25-32)
- IV. Israel's restoration (Ch. 33-39)
- V. Israel's new temple (C. 40-48)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Ezekiel

- *Ezekiel as a watchman for Israel (3:16-27).*

The job of a prophet in Israel was simple, honored, and dangerous. No other role was quite like the work of an Old Testament. These men were mouthpieces for God, speaking to his people to warn, guide, and comfort. Most people would consider this a desirable position, but history shows us that people often do not want to hear God's true words. And too many times, it is the messengers who suffer because of their hate. In chapter three, God tells Ezekiel exactly what his role will be: he is a watchman. His job is to wait for God to speak, then to announce exactly what the Lord declared to his people. The Lord said, "Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me" (verse 17). If Ezekiel was faithful to his task, then he would have no responsibility for the continued disobedience of the people. But if Ezekiel held the message in or spoke something other than God's true words, Ezekiel himself would carry the guilt of the people. This was a serious and sober task that the Lord gave to Ezekiel. (Note: Because we live in the time of the New Covenant in Christ and we have the completed Scriptures, the role of the Old Testament prophet no longer exists in our world. See Hebrews 1:1-2.)
- *God will be their Shepherd (34:11-24)*

Ezekiel was called to be a faithful watchman for Israel, but too many of the nation's spiritual leaders were not trustworthy. The first half of chapter 34 is one of the harshest condemnations found in the Bible, and God accuses Israel's shepherds of caring nothing for his people, but only using their positions of leadership to make themselves fat and comfortable. However, beginning in verse 11 God says that it will not always be that way. His people have been mistreated, but the Lord says that he himself will come as the true Shepherd to feed, guide, and protect his people. The words of hope found in these verses are a comfort for the people who feel forgotten by God and a prophetic description of the Messiah. In John 10, Jesus would have had these verses in his mind when he announced that he is the Good Shepherd. He is God in human flesh come to shepherd and save his people.
- *The valley of dry bones (37:1-14)*

No one can bring words of comfort and encouragement better than the way that God speaks to the souls of his people. Consider these verses from this passage: "Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people." God knows the hearts of his people perfectly, and he knew that the people of Israel felt completely hopeless and rejected. And seeing their discouragement, God sends a message that brings both immediate and eternal hope. When God tells his people that he will restore them to himself, he is not only speaking about returning them to their promised city of Jerusalem. God says he will raise up his people from their graves. These

verses are a promise of resurrection to those who have put their trust in the Lord! Our Lord Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, and he has given us hope for eternal life. Just as God did not leave the people of Israel in exile, far away from the land of promise, he will not leave us in the grave and separated from him. God has promised resurrection and eternal life.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *A promise of hope and restoration for God's people*
Ezekiel is well-known for the strange visions and images that he sees and writes about in his book, but for those who will read closely, we can find a powerful and inspiring message of hope. Ezekiel wrote during the time of Exile, and the Lord's people were feeling discouraged and rejected. But in the midst of the bizarre visions and occasional words of strong judgment, a clear word of encouragement can be seen as the strongest message in this book. Three different passages give a summary of Ezekiel's true statement: 28:25-26, 37:25-28, and 39:23-29. Read each of these passages carefully, and you will hear God's true message to Israel. God may have brought punishment and discipline, but this judgment is not forever. God will restore his people and give them a life and a salvation that is greater than any they have imagined before.

(5) Christ Focus in Ezekiel

- Ezekiel has very few plain prophecies about the Messiah, but the messianic hope is woven through the book. One of the clearest places to see this is in the vision of the valley of dry bones in chapter 37 (mentioned above). At the end of this unique vision, God promises to his own Spirit within his people and to resurrect them from the grave after death. These incredible and unexpected promises are only possible because Jesus Christ conquered death for us and sent the Spirit to live in us after he had ascended to heaven. Jesus is the unspoken link between the hope-giving promises of God and their fulfillment in our lives.

Part 2 – Daniel

The book of Daniel is the 2nd of the two prophetic books that are forward-looking during the Babylonian captivity. Daniel looks forward to the restoration of the nation of Israel. Daniel was taken into captivity during the 1st invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, and he served as God's ambassador to the court of the king. The book of Daniel is considered Old Testament apocalyptic writing. The visions that are in the book of Daniel describe all the periods of Gentile world rulership and on to the messianic kingdom.

(1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Daniel

Daniel was young, intelligent, and skilled in wisdom. He was chosen for special service in the king's court.

- **When was it written?**
Approximately 605-530 B.C.

Daniel was taken captive in the 1st invasion of Nebuchadnezzar. He wrote at a similar time as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is estimated that he completed his book around 530 B.C.

- **Where was it written?**
Babylon

Daniel was located in the Babylonian capital and played a highly important political role under several kings.

- **To whom was it written?**
The other captives in Babylon

The book of Daniel served as encouragement to the other exiles that God would restore the kingdom again. In the book you also find some immediate audience to the kings when he interpreted their dreams.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Daniel?**
To give an account of the faithful Jews in captivity and to show that God is in control of heaven and earth.

Daniel would provide encouragement to the Jewish people to withstand the command to worship the king and remain faithful to the Lord. The book also stresses that God is sovereign over the things of this world.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**
The Son of Man will be given an eternal kingdom.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Daniel
When was it written?	Approximately 605-530 B.C.
Where was it written?	Babylon
To whom was it written?	The others living in exile
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To give an account of the faithful Jews in captivity and to show that God is in control of heaven and earth
What is the most important theological theme?	The Son of Man will be given an eternal kingdom.

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Daniel can be read in two sections. The first is the historical section and the second is prophetic. The first part centers around Daniel, his three friends, and king Nebuchadnezzar. The second centers around the visions of Daniel himself.

- I. History (Chapters 1-6)
 - A. The preparation of Daniel and his friends (Ch. 1)
 - B. Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation (Ch. 2)
 - C. The Fiery Furnace (Ch. 3)
 - D. Nebuchadnezzar's second dream and Daniel's interpretation (Ch. 4)
 - E. The Writing on the Wall (Ch. 5)
 - F. The Lion's Den (Ch. 6)
- II. Prophecy/Visions (Chapters 7-12)
 - A. Vision of the four beasts & the Ancient of Days (compare with Ch. 2) (Ch. 7)
 - B. Vision of the 2 kingdoms-Medo-Persia and Greek (Ch. 8)
 - C. Daniel's Prayer and vision of the 70 weeks (Ch. 9)
 - D. Daniel's vision of a messenger (Ch. 10)
 - E. Kings of the South and North (Ch. 11)
 - F. The time of the end (Ch. 12)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Daniel

- *The fiery furnace* (3:1-30)

God's people have always had enemies in this world, and the time of Exile in Babylon was one of the worst of those times. At the beginning of chapter 3, we read about the unbelievable arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar as he built a giant statue of himself and demanded that every person in his kingdom must worship this image. No Jew could ever obey this order and remain true to the Lord, but it appears that many did (probably because they were afraid they would die if they did not). In the midst of this terrible situation, three young Hebrew men come forward as heroes of true faith. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused the king's order and found themselves condemned to be burned alive in a fiery furnace.

Their courage and faithfulness gave us three powerful and inspiring moments. First, when told to bow down or burn, the young men replied with words that demonstrated their unshakeable faith: "We have no need to answer you in this matter... Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (16-18). Second, after they are thrown into the furnace, we learn of God's unexpected and gracious response. Not only does he miraculously save them from the furnace, but he joins them in the midst of the flame (24-25). Just as God joined these three men in the suffering of the

furnace to comfort and rescue them, Jesus later came to dwell among us in the world in which we live. He is truly Immanuel, “God with us,” proving his love by living among us and feeling the pain that we feel. Finally, the king who so arrogantly built a statue of himself at the beginning of the chapter is forced to proclaim honor and blessing upon the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king set out to glorify himself, but in the end he was forced to confess the glory of the True God of Israel.

- *The lion’s den* (Ch. 6)

Daniel experienced a trial of his faith similar to the one given to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In chapter 6, a new king, Darius, is convinced to issue a law declaring that no one in his kingdom may pray except to him. Yet Daniel was already a man of faith who was committed to pray and seek the Lord three times each day. This law did not change him, and he was soon arrested and brought before the king. Even though the king cared for Daniel, he enforced his new law and sentenced Daniel to be cast into the den of lions to be destroyed. However, just as the Lord saved the three young men in the midst of the fire, he again sends his angel to join Daniel and shut the mouth of the lion. And just as Nebuchadnezzar was forced to confess the power and glory of God, Darius also is moved to bless and glorify the Lord in response to Daniel’s steadfast faith and the Lord’s perfect salvation.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *The Son of Man will be given an eternal kingdom.*

In a book filled with vivid dreams, apocalyptic visions, and powerful examples of faithfulness in the face of evil, it is difficult to select only one theological theme to emphasize. But in the book of Daniel, it is impossible to ignore the introduction of the title, “Son of Man.” During his ministry on earth, this became Jesus’ favorite title to use for himself. Many people believe that he called himself Son of Man simply to show that he was only a man, but we must understand there is much more in this title. Daniel’s vision in chapter 7 describes one like a son of man, and it is obvious in this vision that the one who is “like” a son of man is much more than an average person. We read:

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

Without a doubt, this is not a description of an average man. The “Son of Man” comes from heaven and receives a kingdom filled with all the peoples of the earth, and his kingdom will never fade. This “Son of Man” is nothing less than the Son of God, the King of Heaven, and the Savior of the World. When

Jesus calls himself, “Son of Man,” he is boldly claiming to be the Eternal King foretold in Daniel chapter 7.

(5) Christ Focus in Daniel

- Of all the dynamic visions contained in Daniel, none is as compelling and exciting as the vision of the Son of Man in Daniel 7 that is described in the Theological Theme section above. Daniel shares a detailed vision of the Son of Man coming in glory and receiving a kingdom of all nations that will never fade and never be taken away. Of course this vision was not realized completely in the first coming of Christ. He came as a humble servant once, dying as a sacrifice to save all who will believe. But when he returns, he will be the Triumphant King, the heavenly Son of Man who will reign with justice and righteousness forever!

Part 3 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Ezekiel 39:23-29. This is the third course in our Old Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. 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 Ezekiel 39:23-29.

And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hands of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall forget the shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour

out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.

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 interpreting the prophets.

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 is this happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Who wrote this book?
- Who is it written to?
- Who is speaking?
- Who is being spoken to?
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
 - Who was the king or ruler?
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
 - When did this passage take place in the history of the Old Testament and Israel? Before the fall of mankind or after? Before the covenant with Abraham or after? Before the Law was given or after? Before the Exile or after?
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
 - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the

middle? Is it a summary at the end?

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Ezekiel 39:23-29, God promises to restore Israel to the land of promise in order to prove to them and to all the nations that he is the true God who both disciplines and redeems his people. He promises that they will all return to their land and that he will give them the gift of his Holy Spirit when the day of restoration comes.

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 was this book written in originally? 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 people of Israel 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 people of Israel were in?
- Relationship to God – What was Israel’s relationship to God in this story? 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: God works to bring both discipline and redemption into the lives of his people, and all of his actions are done to prove to us that he is our only true hope.*

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?

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.

Lesson 3 – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah

Introduction

We have finished with the 5 major prophets and now will be looking at the 12 minor prophets. These 12 books are called minor not because their messages were less important, but because their books are simply shorter than the major prophets.

Part 1 – Hosea

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Hosea

Hosea was a citizen of the northern kingdom of Israel and the son of Beeri.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 760-710 B.C.

The book would have been finished between 715-710 B.C. but covers the events from about 760-710 B.C.

- **Where was it written?**

Israel (the northern kingdom)

Israel was the northern division of the tribes that split after Solomon's reign. It consisted of 10 tribes.

- **To whom was it written?**

The northern 10 tribes of Israel

These 10 tribes are sometimes referred to as "Ephraim."

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

To show God's faithful love for a sinful people.

Hosea's relationship with an unfaithful wife would show the relationship that God had with his unfaithful people.

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

God's faithful, redeeming love.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Hosea
When was it written?	Approximately 760-710 B.C.
Where was it written?	Israel
To whom was it written?	The northern 10 tribes
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To show God's faithful love for a sinful people.
What is the most important theological theme?	God's never-failing love.

(2) Basic Outline

- I. Hosea --- His marriage ----Compared to God and Israel (Chapters 1-3)
 - A. Hosea's marriage displayed Israel's sin against God (Ch. 1)
 - B. Israel's unfaithfulness punished (Ch. 2)
 - C. The latter days of Israel-redemption (Ch. 3)
- II. Sin, judgment, and ultimate Blessing of Israel (Ch. 4-14)
 - A. There was a lack of knowledge of God (4:1,6)
 - B. There were false prophets (4:5,9)
 - C. There was immorality (4:13-14,16-17; 7:4;8:9)
 - D. Judgment and punishment of Israel (9:9;13:12)
 - E. The ultimate Blessing of Israel (Ch. 14)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Hosea

- *Return to the Lord (6:1-11).*
 After 5 chapters of accusing Israel and describing in awful detail how unfaithful and wicked they had been, Hosea's message turns to an invitation to repentance in chapter 6. "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up." This enormous difference between Israel's complete faithlessness and God's relentless invitation to grace is the clearest message in the book of Hosea. No matter how evil or depraved God's people have become, they cannot escape his compassion and care. One additional part of this passage is worth noticing as well. Hosea 6:2 reads, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." Christians have understood this is a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day. Isaiah 53 agrees with verse 1 that Christ was torn for us so that we may be healed. And 1 Corinthians 15:4 says that Christ was "raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures." Hosea 6:2 is the Scripture which predicted the third day resurrection of Christ.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God's never-failing love.*
In the book of Hosea, God speaks plainly about the complete sinfulness and idolatry of the people of Israel even from the very beginning. In Hosea 1:2, he says, "the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord." Unfortunately, things only get worse from that point, as the Lord tells in dark detail how Israel has forsaken the Lord and broken their covenant with him by sacrificing to idols and chasing false gods. But even though Israel had become corrupt to the deepest parts of their souls, the Lord also announces his commitment to loving them and redeeming just as strongly. One of the most moving verses is found in 2:23: "I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people;' and he shall say, 'You are my God.' If anyone doubts God's willingness to forgive and restore his people when we have fallen into sin, the book of Hosea is an emphatic statement that God always stands ready to show his love to us.

(5) Christ Focus in Hosea

- The clearest messianic prophecy in the book of Hosea is 11:1, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." This verse is quoted in Matthew 2:15 to explain the reason for sending Mary and Joseph to temporary exile in Egypt when Jesus was a boy. Jesus returning to Israel from Egypt is a fulfillment of this prophecy. In addition to this, we also see that the prophet Hosea himself is a foreshadow of Christ. God commanded Hosea to marry a woman who was unfaithful to their marriage, yet Hosea is told to receive her back over and over. In the same way, Jesus is called the bridegroom of the Church, and we find that he has unending love and grace for him every time we repent of our sin.

Part 2 – Joel

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Joel
- **When was it written?**
Approximately 830-796 B.C.

This book was mostly likely during the time that Joel most likely prophesied.

- **Where was it written?**
Jerusalem and Judah in the southern kingdom

- **To whom was it written?**
Directed toward the people in Jerusalem where the temple and priests were located.
- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Joel?**
To warn Judah of God’s coming judgment because of its sin and to urge the people to turn back to the Lord.
- **What is the most important theological theme?**
God will bring judgment on sin, but he holds out a promise of future blessing to the faithful ones.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Joel
When was it written?	Approximately 830-796 B.C.
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The people of Jerusalem
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To warn Judah of God’s coming judgment because of their sin and to urge the people to turn back to the Lord.
What is the most important theological theme?	God will bring judgment on sin, but he holds out a promise of a future blessing to the faithful ones.

(2) Basic Outline

- I. God’s judgment on Judah (1:1-2:27)
- II. The promise of the Spirit (2:28-3:1)
- III. God’s judgment on the nations (3:1-17)
- IV. The restoration of Judah (3:18-21)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Joel

- *The pouring out of the Spirit (2:28-32)*
This is the famous passage from the book of Joel that is quoted by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Many people are interested by the promises of prophecies, dreams, and visions, but this is actually the part of Joel’s message that is emphasized the least. Instead, Peter used these verses to explain two incredible things that were happening that day. First, he adjusted the wording slightly in verse 28. In the Old Testament, Joel says, “And it shall come to pass afterward.” But Peter (who was inspired by the Holy Spirit as he was speaking, said, “And it shall come to pass in the last days.” This makes sense because according to the rest of the New Testament, the coming of the Holy Spirit marks the beginning of the “last

days.” The Bible teaches that everything from the day of Pentecost to the return of Christ is the period of time known as the last days, and all prophecies that speak about the last days apply (even today!). Second, Peter emphasized that the Holy Spirit of God would be poured out “on all flesh,” and, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” This was an almost unbelievable thing for Joel or Peter to say. The people of Israel had long believed that God’s promises and salvation were only for them. But this passage in Joel predicts – and Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 confirms – that God’s plan is to work salvation for everyone who will believe, no matter what nation they are from. This is one of the most powerful truths about salvation found in the Old Testament.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God judges sin, but he holds out a promise of a future blessing to the faithful ones.*

Each Old Testament prophet has a unique perspective in their ministry, but all of them share essentially the same message. God will not tolerate unrepentant sin, and he is always calling his people back to faithfulness in their covenant with him. At the same time, however, he promises life, salvation, and a future to all who will listen to his voice. Joel’s message is strong and clear to anyone who is willing, God will destroy the wicked and those who refuse to repent, but “all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

(5) Christ Focus in Joel

- Joel preached a message that God’s judgment was coming on the people of Israel because of their unrepentant sin. Even in the time they were living, Joel explained that the droughts and the locust plagues they were experiencing were God’s judgments in action, and that they must repent. God’s judgment of sin is a fact of this world. As a righteous Judge, he must bring just punishment against those who have done evil. As Christians, we know that even our sin must receive a just punishment, but God has promised grace and mercy to us when we repent in faith (Joel 2:12-13). So how can God punish sin and give grace? The answer is found by looking at the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not stop God’s judgment against our sin, he took the judgment and suffering on himself. Jesus received God’s just judgment against our sin; we receive grace that we do not deserve.

Part 3 – Amos

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Amos

He was shepherd from Tekoa, which was near Bethlehem. Amos was from Judah in the southern kingdom.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 760-750 B.C.

Amos' ministry was during the later part of the reign of Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 14).

- **Where was it written?**

In the northern kingdom

- **To whom was it written?**

The northern 10 tribes, who were wicked but prospering

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

To pronounce God's judgment upon Israel and call them to repentance.

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

God hates sin and is jealous for his people and His law.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Amos
When was it written?	Approximately 760-750 B.C.
Where was it written?	Northern kingdom
To whom was it written?	Northern 10 tribes
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To pronounce God's judgment upon Israel and call them to repentance.
What is the most important theological theme?	God hates sin and is jealous for his people and his law.

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Amos begins with judgment on the surrounding nations, which the people of Israel would have agreed with but then he turns his judgment to Judah and then to Israel itself.

- I. Judgment of surrounding nations (1:1-2:3)
- II. Judgment on Judah and Israel (2:4-6:14)
- III. Visions of judgment and restoration (7:1-9:15)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Amos

- *Let justice roll like waters (5:18-27)*

Amos is known for using some of the strongest and most direct language among the minor prophets. When we know what was happening in Israel, we can understand why. The northern kingdom was enjoying a time of worldly prosperity, but spiritually they empty and corrupt. They sacrificed to false gods and treated the poor among them with contempt, but they continued celebrate the Lord's festivals and offer sacrifices to him. They believed that their prosperity was evidence that God was pleased with them, and they even talked about how they were looking forward to the day of the Lord when God would destroy their enemies.

In response to their ignorance and evil, the Lord spoke a thundering message through Amos to wake up Israel and call them to repentance. "Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light" (18). God announced, "I hate, I despise your feasts," and he said he would accept no offerings or sacrifices from the people. Instead, he commanded the corrupt people of Israel, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." As we read in many places in the prophets, God will not accept religious activity and offerings as a substitute for true faithfulness and righteous living.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God hates sin and is jealous for his people and his law.*

In this course, we have been careful to explain the depth of God's mercy and his willingness to forgive and restore sinner who repent and turn to him again. This should never be forgotten or diminished. But there is an equally strong message for those who will not repent, and the book of Amos speaks this message as strongly as any other prophet. God will not be mocked, and he will not leave sin unpunished. Those who do not repent and turn to him for mercy should expect God's judgment to come upon them. Amos 9:9-10 reminds the people of Israel of this warning one final time: "For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake us or meet us.'"

(5) Christ Focus in Amos

- One of the biggest complaints that the Lord has against the people of Israel in the book of Amos is that they are busy doing religious activities, but their daily lives show no evidence that they love God at all. God rejects sacrifices and offerings when the people are living sinful lives and mistreating others the rest of the time. This is because God always connects actions to words. He demands that his people live in a way that matches what we say we believe, and he also works in ways that match his words. We see many places in the prophets – including Amos – when God promises to forgive and restore his people. All of those promises were proven when he sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to rescue us from sin and death. Jesus coming to live among us, die on the cross for us, and rise victoriously from the dead is the active work of God proving his love and his plan to bring us salvation.

Part 4 – Obadiah

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Obadiah

Very little is known about Obadiah, whose name means servant of the Lord. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

- **When was it written?**

Unknown

The best information available suggests that Obadiah was written during the time of Jehoram's reign in Judah, 855-840 B.C.

- **Where was it written?**

Jerusalem

- **To whom was it written?**

Addressed to the people of Judah

The book of Obadiah was a prophecy about the doom of Edom but was a comfort to the people of Judah, which had suffered at the evil hands of Edom.

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

To pronounce judgment of Edom, an enemy of God's people.

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

God's justice.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Obadiah
When was it written?	Unknown (possibly 855-840 B.C.)
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	Addressed to Judah but about Edom
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To pronounce judgment on Edom, an enemy of God's people.
What is the most important theological theme?	God's justice

(2) Basic Outline

- I. The destruction of Edom (verses 1-16)
 - A. Edom's arrogance
 - B. Edom's coming humiliation
 - C. Edom's violence against Judah
- II. The restoration of Israel (verses 17-21)
 - A. Day of the Lord would bring judgment and salvation
 - B. Edom would drink the cup of God's wrath
 - C. God would restore his people

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Obadiah

- *Pride comes before the fall. (1-4)*
 From the very first verses of Obadiah, God condemns the nation of Edom for their pride. They believed that they could never fall under judgment, despite their wickedness and oppression of God's people. God speaks plainly without wasting any words: there will be justice, and Edom will not be spared. Even today, God's people are comforted to know that the enemies of the Lord will soon receive their just judgment from the King of Heaven.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God's justice.*
 Obadiah's message is short and powerful. The nation of Edom had oppressed and abused God's people, even boasting that the Lord could not reach them. God spoke through Obadiah to assure them that Edom would feel the weight of divine justice. In verse 4 the Lord declares to Edom, "I will bring you down." Verse 15 continues, "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, is shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head." No one who does evil escapes the Lord's justice, but all who turn to

him for mercy will find it.

(5) Christ Focus in Obadiah

- Even though Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, it also carries a light of hope pointing to the coming of Christ. After condemning Edom for its pride and mistreatment of God's people, the final verse of this book causes us to start looking forward to Jesus. It says, "Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion (Jerusalem)... and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." In the coming centuries, many heroic leaders or saviors helped Jerusalem at different times, but only One Savior established the kingdom of the Lord beginning in Jerusalem. Jesus is the One who brings the fulfillment of God's promises for his people.

Part 5 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Joel 2:12-14. This is the third course in our Old Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. 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 Joel 2:12-14.

"Yet even now," declares the Lord,
"return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
and rend your hearts and not your garments."
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.
Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the Lord your God?

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 interpreting the prophets.

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 is this happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Who wrote this book?
- Who is it written to?
- Who is speaking?
- Who is being spoken to?
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
 - Who was the king or ruler?
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
 - When did this passage take place in the history of the Old Testament and Israel? Before the fall of mankind or after? Before the covenant with Abraham or after? Before the Law was given or after? Before the Exile or after?
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
 - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Joel 2:12-14, the Lord calls the people of Israel to genuine, heart-felt repentance from their sin and rebellion, assuring them that it is in

his nature to forgive and show mercy. This is spoken as an invitation to avoid the coming judgment and destruction that have been prophesied in the preceding verses.

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 was this book written in originally? 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 people of Israel 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 people of Israel were in?
- Relationship to God – What was Israel’s relationship to God in this story? 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: The Lord is always ready to receive those whose repentance is genuine from the heart; it is in his nature to give mercy. God’s people are*

always invited to seek grace rather than waiting for judgment to fall.

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?

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.

Lesson 4 – Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk

Part 1 – Jonah

One of the best-known stories from the Old Testament prophets, the book of Jonah is different from the other prophets in one very noticeable way. The message of the book of Jonah is told as a story, while all of the other prophets' books are records of the messages those prophets preached. In Jonah, we find that the story about the prophet himself is the main message of the book, but it is a clear and powerful message that blesses us.

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Jonah

He was a prophet from Galilee in the northern kingdom. He preached repentance, but he desired to see doom on Israel's enemy in Nineveh.

- **When was it written?**

780-760 B.C.

He ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Kings 14).

- **Where was it written?**

Most likely in Israel (the northern kingdom)

- **To whom was it written?**

Jonah wrote to his fellow countrymen in Israel

While Jonah wrote about Nineveh it was directed toward the northern tribe of Israel.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing John's letters?**

To show the extent of God's grace - that the message of salvation is for all people.

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

God's salvation is for all nations.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Jonah
When was it written?	780-760 B.C.
Where was it written?	Most likely Israel
To whom was it written?	To his fellow countrymen in Israel
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To show the extent of God's grace and that the message of salvation is for all people.
What is the most important theological theme?	God's salvation is for all nations.

(2) Basic Outline

Jonah was called by God to go to the city of Nineveh and proclaim judgment unless they repented. The people of Nineveh were enemies of Israel and were the very one oppressing God's people and yet Jonah was still called to go preach repentance to these Gentile people.

- I. Jonah Flees (Ch. 1)
- II. Jonah Prays (Ch. 2)
- III. Jonah Preaches (Ch. 3)
- IV. Jonah Learns (Ch. 4)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Jonah

- *The mercy of God (1:7-17)*
Sometimes God's people make mistakes and fall into sin. And other times we sin boldly and intentionally, rejecting what we know God has told us to be right and true. Jonah was one of those people who sinned boldly. When God commanded him to preach a message of repentance and mercy to the hated enemies of Israel, Jonah ran away, getting on a ship and sailing in the opposite direction as far as he could. Yet we find that God's mercies extend to all people. Not only did God plan to send his message of salvation to the enemies of Israel in Nineveh, God also acted to show mercy on his own rebellious servant Jonah. From the beginning of this story, we can learn two short but important lessons. First, God has mercy for those who are far from him and for those who are near (and should know better than to rebel!). Second, we see that Jonah's hard heart and rebellion could not stop God's plan to show mercy to others. God's message made it to Nineveh, and the people believed and repented. This is good news and a comfort for us. We know that God has mercy for us in our time of need, and we also rejoice that even in our darkest hour we cannot stop God's gospel and grace from spreading where he desires.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God's salvation is for all nations.*
At the end of chapter 4, God explains his reasons for sending Jonah to preach a message of repentance to a people who were enemies to Israel. He tells Jonah, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow... And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" Jonah could not conceive that God might extend his grace to a nation that had troubled Israel in so many ways, but God's plan for the world is much bigger than the nation of Israel. God loves all the nations of the earth, and his plan has always been to bring salvation and blessing to all who believe in every nation (see Genesis 12:3 and Revelation 7:9).

(5) Christ Focus in Jonah

- The book of Jonah reveals God's tender heart for one nation that was far from God. But when Jesus came, he taught that God's desire is to redeem people from all nations to be part of his kingdom. In the final words of Matthew's gospel, Jesus speaks a command that we now call the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples *of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20). The message of God's great salvation is found in a seed in the book of Jonah, but it is revealed in full from when Jesus comes into our world.

Part 2 – Micah

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Micah

Micah was from Moresheth near Gath. He wrote at a similar time as Hosea and Isaiah. Micah was a man of the fields.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 735-700 B.C.

Micah would have ministered during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (kings of Judah). The history of his ministry can be found in 2 Kings 15-20.

- **Where was it written?**
Southern kingdom-Judah

While Micah refers to cities in the northern kingdom and southern kingdom he would have most likely lived in the southern kingdom.

- **To whom was it written?**
Primary Judah

Micah was about both the Israel (capitol: Samaria) and Judah (capitol: Jerusalem) he was primarily about Judah as only the kings of the south are mentioned.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Micah?**
To warn God's people that judgment was coming and to offer pardon to those who repent.
- **What is the most important theological theme?**
Seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Micah
When was it written?	Approximately 735-700 B.C.
Where was it written?	Southern kingdom
To whom was it written?	Primarily to Judah
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To warn God's people that judgment was coming and to offer pardon for those who repent.
What is the most important theological theme?	Seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

(2) Basic Outline

Micah would have written during a similar time as Isaiah and is somewhat like a miniature version of Isaiah. Micah also spoke of God's salvation through Christ. Micah is most quoted for prophesying about the city of Christ's birth.

- I. Judgment Declared (Chapters 1-3)
- II. Blessing Promised (Chapters 4-5)
 - A. Future Kingdom (Ch. 4)
 - B. Future King (Ch. 5)
- III. Urge to repentance (Ch. 6-7)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Micah

- *The mountain of the Lord (4:1-5)*

Like most of the other prophets, Micah has a strong message of warning and judgment against those who in Israel who are unfaithful to their covenant with the Lord. But Micah 4 gives a look ahead to a greater future that God is promising will happen in Jerusalem. The mountain of the Lord refers to Jerusalem, the place where God's glory dwelled in the midst of the people of Israel. God declares that in the final days Jerusalem will be the greatest of all cities, a place where people from all nations (not only Israel) will gather to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. God says that he will be the ruler in Jerusalem who judges in righteousness, teaches his people truth, and allows all to live in peace without fear. This is very similar to the vision seen by the apostle John in chapters 21 and 22 of the book of Revelation. In the end, God will dwell on earth with us, reigning as the unchallenged Righteous King – and all of his people will live in perfect peace. Because we have this certain hope and expectation of that great day, we can joyfully take the words of Micah 4:5 for ourselves today: “For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.”

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *Seek justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.*

Micah brings the same message of restoration and call for repentance that we have seen in many other prophets. Yet the people of Israel could not understand that their worship, offerings, sacrifices, and prayers were powerless and meant nothing at all if they were not living righteous lives before the Lord every day. This is why a popular verse from Micah is written in 6:8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” God declares that our repentance is true if it results in lives that are changed, if we live righteously and treat others with justice and mercy, even as we desire God to do the same for us.

(5) Christ Focus in Micah

- Micah 5:1-5 is a clear and detailed prophecy of Jesus the Messiah. From these verses we learn that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem (verse 2). We learn that the Messiah will be no ordinary human, but the eternal God taking on a human body (verse 2). We learn that the Messiah will be struck and tortured (verse 1). We also learn that the promised Messiah will be the final and true Shepherd for God's people. Under his care, we live securely and at peace, not afraid of this world and certain that he is strong enough to keep us to dwell with him forever (verse 4-5).

Part 3 – Nahum

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Nahum
- **When was it written?**
Approximately 650-620 B.C.

Nahum would minister during the reign of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah-kings of Judah (2 Kings 21)

- **Where was it written?**
Mostly in Judah
- **To whom was it written?**
Kingdom of Judah

The book would have been written to the kingdom of Judah, but it concerned the fall of Nineveh, the very city Jonah would have preached to 150 years earlier.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Nahum?**
To pronounce judgment on Nineveh and bring comfort to Judah with that truth.
- **What is the most important theological theme?**
The justice of God against sin and the goodness of God for the righteous.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Nahum
When was it written?	Approximately 650-620 B.C.
Where was it written?	Judah
To whom was it written?	Kingdom of Judah
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To pronounce judgment on Nineveh and bring comfort to Judah with that truth.
What is the most important theological theme?	The justice of God against sin and the goodness of God for the righteous.

(2) Basic Outline

The book of Nahum preaches judgment to the city of Nineveh like Jonah had 150 years earlier. After Jonah preached the city repented and God stayed his hand of judgment but once again the people of Nineveh were deeper in sin and their “cup of iniquity” was full.

- I. The certainty of Nineveh’s doom (Ch. 1)
- II. The siege and capture of Nineveh (Ch. 2)
- III. Reasons for judgment (Ch. 3)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Nahum

- *A message of hope for those who take refuge in the Lord (1:14-15)*
The book of Jonah contains a message of hope and repentance for the people of Nineveh, but Nahum has nothing like that. Nineveh had abused and oppressed God’s people for many years, and the people of Israel were suffering and afraid. In the midst of this situation, God sends a message through his prophet Nahum to strengthen and reassure his people. God says that he will cut off the name of Nineveh and send them to the grave. But to Judah he says, “Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!” (1:15). For those in Judah who are afraid and holding onto hope that God might save them, Nahum announces that good news is coming. The Lord does not forget his people.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *Justice of God against sin and goodness of God for the righteous.*
Nineveh had oppressed God’s people for too long, and now the Lord is declaring that their destruction is coming without fail. At the same time, God brings comfort and hope to his suffering people: “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him” (1:7). The message of Nahum is that God’s just works for those who hide in him and against those who would harm his people.

(5) Christ Focus in Nahum

- “Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!” Nahum 1:15 is quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15, and Paul says the good news that Nahum mentions is the actual Good News, the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Nahum probably only understood that he was preaching a message of good news that included the defeat of Nineveh and peace for the people who had been living in war. But the New Testament helps us to understand that God had something much bigger in mind. The message of peace God was announcing was that he would send his Son to secure peace and to bring rest to his people forever.

Part 4 – Habakkuk

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Habakkuk

He was of Levitical (priestly) background.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 612-589 B.C.

Habakkuk wrote during a similar time of Jeremiah and lived during the reign of Josiah, Jehoahaz, and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 22-24). This was after the fall of Nineveh to the Babylonians but before they had invaded Judah, although that was coming soon.

- **Where was it written?**

Judah

- **To whom was it written?**

People of Judah

Babylon was becoming a world power and Judah would soon feel its destructive force. Habakkuk speaks to God about the things he was seeing in the world and why it seemed that evil was triumphing, and God was not stepping in.

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

To show that God was still in control even if it seemed that evil was winning.

The Babylonian empire (a wicked kingdom) was increasing in power, and it seemed that they were getting ready to take over Judah. There were religious leaders that were oppressing the people and Habakkuk is asking how long the Lord was going to stay silent. So, God answers Habakkuk to say that He was working even when it didn't look like it.

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

God is working out his plan even when we cannot see or understand what He is doing.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Habakkuk
When was it written?	Approximately 612-589 B.C.
Where was it written?	Judah
To whom was it written?	People of Judah
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To show that God was still in control even if it seemed that evil was winning.
What is the most important theological theme?	God is working out his plan even when we cannot see or understand what he is doing.

(2) Basic Outline

Habakkuk brings two complaints to God of all the injustice that is taking place, but it seems that God is being silent. God answers Habakkuk to tell him that he is going to use a nation that is more wicked to bring judgment on Judah. While Habakkuk did not understand all of what God was doing, he knew of God's absolute faithfulness in the past, and so he knew that he could trust God in his present purposes.

- I. The Burden (Ch. 1)
- II. The Vision (Ch. 2)
- III. A Prayer (Ch. 3)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Habakkuk

- *Rejoicing in the Lord (3:17-19)*
Habakkuk's message is different from many of the prophets. While most of the prophets spoke to a people who were in sinful rebellion, Habakkuk spoke as part of a people who were suffering and longing for God to come and help them. He turns his complaints into prayers, and in response the Lord speaks words of encouragement, hope, and reassurance. Finally, after hearing the Lord's response to his desperate pleas, Habakkuk settles into a content faith that trusts God in spite of the evil around him: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food... yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk's journey from fear to faith is an example that can help and inspire Christians today to trust the Lord when they are surrounded by uncertainty.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God is working out his plan even when we cannot see or understand what he is doing.*
We can never see everything that God is doing, and he does not tell us every detail of his plans. For Habakkuk and many living around him, this caused a crisis in their faith. Their world appeared to be in chaos, with violence and injustice all around them. Yet they could not see God doing anything about it,

and it caused them to despair. The message of Habakkuk is that God has assured his people that he will bring justice in his time, but he often works in ways that people would never guess. “For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told” (1:5). This verse is not a promise of blessing, it is a warning of coming doom and judgment on a people who had forgotten God. God says again and again that he will do what is right to save those who trust in him and punish the wicked. God’s people are called to wait patiently and faithfully to see what the Lord will do: “If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay” (2:3). Even today, it is often difficult to wait on the Lord as we see our world falling down around us. This is why the Lord gave us a simple explanation of what he desires of us, “The righteous shall live by his faith” (2:4). Paul repeated these words in Romans 1 to help us understand the mystery of our salvation. God knows we are weak and imperfect. He only asks us to trust him. We will see the Lord’s salvation, but we do not know when.

(5) Christ Focus in Habakkuk

- Habakkuk’s message is about a faithful man who is troubled by the sin, suffering, and injustice surrounding him. Where is God? What is God’s plan? How will he make this right? Habakkuk’s complaints sound similar to the pleas that we find often in the Psalms, “How long, O Lord?” God’s faithful people have always had this question and longing deep in their souls. We want to see God act to bring salvation and judgment. We want to see wrongs made right. We want our faith to become sight. For all those who long to see God act in the world, Jesus is the solution and the hope that we desire. Habakkuk wanted to know what God would do about the problems around him, but he had no idea that God’s true plan was send his Son into the world to suffer in the place of sinners. Habakkuk wanted to see evil punished, but he would have never imagined that God’s plan was to punish his own Son so that sinners and evildoers in all nations could be redeemed and made new in the kingdom of God.

Part 5 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Micah 7:7-10. This is the third course in our Old Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. 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 Micah 7:7-10.

But as for me, I will look to the Lord;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.

Rejoice not over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be a light to me.

I will bear the indignation of the Lord
because I have sinned against him,
until he pleads my cause
and executes judgment for me.

He will bring me out to the light;
I shall look upon his vindication.

Then my enemy will see,
and shame will cover her who said to me,
“Where is the Lord your God?”

My eyes will look upon her;
now she will be trampled down
like the mire of the streets.

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 interpreting the prophets.

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 is this happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Who wrote this book?
- Who is it written to?
- Who is speaking?
- Who is being spoken to?
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
 - Who was the king or ruler?
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
 - When did this passage take place in the history of the Old Testament and Israel? Before the fall of mankind or after? Before the covenant with Abraham or after? Before the Law was given or after? Before the Exile or after?
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
 - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Micah 7:7-10, the prophet speaks a word of confession and unflinching hope as he considers his own sin and the sin of all Israel. He is committed to endure times of difficulty and discipline, because he is certain that the Lord is faithful to bring them out of darkness and back into the light.

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 was this book written in originally? 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 people of Israel 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 people of Israel were in?

- Relationship to God – What was Israel’s relationship to God in this story? 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: The righteous response to sin in our lives or community is to confess our sin to God and wait patiently for him to restore us – even if this means we must endure a time of discipline and pain.*

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?

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.

Lesson 5 – Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Part 1 – Zephaniah

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Zephaniah

He was the son of Cushi and the great grandson of king Hezekiah.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately 640-621 B.C.

The book was most likely written at the end of his ministry when King Josiah's great reform began. He wrote at similar time as Jeremiah and Habakkuk.

- **Where was it written?**

Jerusalem

- **To whom was it written?**

The people of Judah and Jerusalem

Zephaniah was addressing his message to the people of Judah whose moral and religious interest had been dulled by the influence of the previous wicked kings of Judah.

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

To warn the people of Judah of the coming judgement and to call them to repentance.

Zephaniah teaches that God shows his holiness in justly bringing about judgement on the world. God will also be faithful to his promise to restore Israel.

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

.Judgment begins in the house of God.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Zephaniah
When was it written?	Approximately 640-621 B.C.
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The people of Judah and Jerusalem
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To warn the people of Judah of the coming judgement and call them to repentance.

What is the most important theological theme?	Judgment begins in the house of God.
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(2) Basic Outline

- I. Wrath coming to Judah (1:1-2:3)
- II. Wrath on other nations (2:4-3:8)
 - A. Looks to the nations of the west
 - B. Looks to the nations of the east
 - C. Looks to the nations of the south
 - D. Looks to the nations of the north
 - E. Looks at Jerusalem and Judah
- III. Wrath to Healing (3:9-20)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Zephaniah

- *The Day of the Lord is near (1:7-2:3)*

Zephaniah's warning to the people of Judah sounds very similar to the message of Amos. In those days, the people of Judah and Jerusalem with speak with great anticipation of the coming day of the Lord because they believe that God would rescue them and hold them up as an honored people in the sight of the nations. But God's message through Zephaniah is exactly the opposite of what they were expecting. In 1:8-9, God describes a banquet where the guests believed they were coming to be honored, but they were punished instead. God also condemns the people who have become spiritually lazy and apathetic. In 1:12, the Lord says, "At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill." Even today, we must guard against allowing this dark attitude to enter our own hearts. As we wait for the day of the Lord's return, we must be careful to continue in prayer and worship and in righteous living before the Lord. The people of Judah were surprised when Zephaniah was coming to punish them rather than bless them. Let us be diligent and committed to serving the Lord faithfully so that we do not find the same surprise.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *Judgment begins in the house of God.*

God's grace and favor to those of us who believe in Christ is not a reason for us to become too relaxed in our service to the Lord. It should motivate us and push us forward to greater worship and holy living. We are comforted and encouraged to know that our life is secure because Christ has paid the full cost of our sin and taken our punishment on himself. So we do not obey the Lord because we fear that we might lose our salvation (He has promised us that will not happen because our life is hidden with Christ in God). But we also

hear the message of Zephaniah clearly. God is serious about the holiness of his people, and he will not stand by and watch if we become spiritually lazy and caught in sin.

(5) Christ Focus in Zephaniah

- After an extended message of warning and judgment against the people of Judah, the book of Zephaniah closes with a word of hope, restoration, and salvation (3:9-20). God says that when he comes to redeem his people, he will unite the languages of the world, remove injustice from his people, and put an end to all fears. In the middle of this beautiful picture of our day of salvation, we find language that reminds of our Good Shepherd, Jesus. Zephaniah 3:13 says, “For [those who are left] shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” Then in verse 17 we read, “The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” In these verses Zephaniah pictures the Lord as a shepherd who saves his people and gives them peace as he dwells among them. This is a perfect picture of Christ, the Great Shepherd of our souls.

Introduction – Post-Exile Prophets

The last 3 prophets of the Old Testament are known as the post-exilic prophets. These three prophets spoke to encourage the spiritual and moral reconstruction of the remnant who returned to Israel after the exile. Haggai and Zechariah were encouraging the people to finish building the temple which had been discontinued. Malachi spoke of the moral and social needs that centered around the rebuilding the nation itself.

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied at the same time. Haggai encouraged the people to build the temple of the present while Zechariah encouraged them to behold the temple of the future. Haggai was practical and spoke about the earthly temple. Zechariah was a visionary and spoke about the future temple. Together they encouraged the remnant to restore the spiritual life of the nation.

Part 2- Haggai

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Haggai

He was among the first group of returned exiles with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. He was probably born during the Babylonian captivity.

- **When was it written?**

520 B.C.

Haggai's prophecies are the most precisely dated writings in the Old Testament.

- **Where was it written?**

Jerusalem

King Cyrus had decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem. Over 50,000 of them took this opportunity and settled in and around Jerusalem.

- **To whom was it written?**

The Jewish remnant

The remnant had returned about 538 B.C. and began working on the temple two years later, around 536 B.C.

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

To encourage the remnant to continue in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

The Jewish people had returned to Jerusalem and started the rebuilding of the temple but soon discouragement and indifference set in, and they stopped the building process. So, Haggai was writing to a people that had neglected the very reason they had returned to Jerusalem.

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

God is worthy of our greatest worship.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Haggai
When was it written?	520 B.C.
Where was it written?	In and around Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The Jewish remnant
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage the remnant to continue in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.
What is the most important theological theme?	God is worthy of our greatest worship.

(2) Basic Outline

Haggai is basically broken down into four sermons. These sermons are given from September to December.

- I. First Sermon - Reproof (Ch. 1)
- II. Second Sermon - Encouragement (2:1-9)
- III. Third Sermon - Blessing (2:10-19)
- IV. Fourth Sermon - Promise (2:20-23)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Haggai

- *Zerubbabel as a symbol of the Messiah (2:20-23).*

The primary focus of Haggai's message is to encourage the returned remnant of Israel to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, but his message ends with an interesting statement. The Lord declares that even though the world will be shaken again, God is placing a living symbol in their midst to remind his people that he has set his love and favor on them. Zerubbabel – the high priest and governor of Judah – will be “like a signet ring” among the Jewish people as they resume worship in the temple. A signet ring is a symbol of a king's authority on the hand of the one wearing it. Zerubbabel was not Israel's savior, and he did not have any power in himself. But the Lord established him as Jerusalem and the temple were being rebuilt to remind his people that he was sending One – a Messiah chosen by God himself – to save them completely.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *.God is worthy of our greatest worship.*

Some Christians have wondered how the message of Haggai might apply to Christians today. We are not building a temple, and we are not returning from exile in a foreign land. But we can understand the timeless truth in this message when we understand the reasons why God was urging his people to work diligently to restore the temple. For the people of Israel, temple worship was the highest form of worship that God had directed them to bring him. Rebuilding the temple was a way for the Jews to re-commit themselves to bringing their greatest worship to the Lord. Today we do not build temples like they did in Haggai's day, but we are equally called to give our highest and best worship to the Lord. He is worthy of our greatest efforts to honor him!

(5) Christ Focus in Haggai

- Zerubbabel is a leader who is not well-known in Israel's history, but he plays an important role in the book of Haggai. In 1:12, we learn that he is the high priest of Israel. Then in 1:14, we discover that he is also the governor (or ruler) in Jerusalem. Finally, at the end of the book, the Lord tells Israel that Zerubbabel the priest-king has been set in place by God as a signet ring – a symbol – of a greater and final leader to come. Jesus is the High Priest and King of Heaven who saves his people forever. Zerubbabel was put in place for a short time in Haggai's day to remind Israel that a much greater day of

salvation was yet to come for them.

Part 3 – Zechariah

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Zechariah

Zechariah was both priest and prophet. He was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo, the priest who led the Levites.

- **When was it written?**
Chapters 1-8 were written in 518 B.C. and chapters 9-14 in 480 B.C.
- **Where was it written?**
In or around Jerusalem
- **To whom was it written?**
The remnant of the Jewish people

Zechariah tried to encourage the people by pointing out that this small temple would begin to show the promise of greater things to come.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Zechariah?**
To give hope to God's people by revealing God's future deliverance through the Messiah.
- **What is the most important theological theme?**
God has prepared a final salvation for his faithful people.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Zechariah
When was it written?	Chapters 1-8 written in 518 B.C. Chapters 9-14 written in 480 B.C.
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The remnant of the Jewish people
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To give hope to God's people by revealing God's future deliverance through the Messiah.
What is the most important theological theme?	God has prepared a final salvation for his people.

(2) Basic Outline

- I. Call for a return to the Lord (1:1-6)
- II. Night Visions (1:7-6:8)
 - A. The rider on the red horse
 - B. The Four Horns and the four craftsmen
 - C. The man with the measuring line
 - D. Joshua has the high priest
 - E. The Golden candlestick and 2 olive trees
 - F. The flying scroll
 - G. The Ephah
 - H. The 4 chariots
 - I. The Crowning of Joshua
- III. Four Messages (Ch. 7-8)
- IV. The Prophetic Burdens (Ch. 9-14)
 - A. The first coming of Christ
 - B. The Second coming of Christ

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Zechariah

- *The Lord our Savior (9:14-17)*

This passage speaks a clear, powerful, and inspiring message to those who are waiting and hoping for the day of the Lord's salvation to come. In only a few short verses, God describes himself using several different pictures that remind his people of his greatness and his power to save them. He is Yahweh – the eternal King of Heaven – whose arrows “will go forth like lightning” (9:14) on that day. He is the Lord of hosts – some Bibles translate this as the “God of armies,” who protects his people and destroys his enemies (9:15). He is also the Shepherd King who “will save them as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land” (9:16). With a message that proclaims God's glory like this, we can only add our voices to the conclusion of this passage in verse 17: “For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!” This is the God who saves us.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God has prepared a final salvation for his people.*

The remnant of Jews returning to Israel after the exile were probably nervous about their new lives in the old Promised Land. Many of them had never seen Jerusalem before, and they might have been very discouraged when they saw it completely destroyed. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to ease the fears and build the faith of those people. Haggai encouraged them to build a new temple for worship here on earth. Zechariah's message pointed to a greater and eternal place of rest and worship. To a people with worries and questions about their new lives and their relationship with the Lord, Zechariah

brings several strong messages of assurance and hope. Through Zechariah, we read some of the boldest and most inspiring promises of guaranteed salvation for God's people found anywhere in the Bible (see 9:14-17; 10:6-12; 12:1-10; 13:7-10; 14:1-21).

(5) Christ Focus in Zechariah

- The book of Zechariah is quoted more than 70 times in the New Testament – even more than Isaiah! When we look for Christ in Zechariah, we find that Zechariah 12 includes one of the most striking prophecies of the Messiah found anywhere in the Old Testament. After declaring that he would bring salvation “to the tents of Judah first” (12:7), the Lord refers to himself as “the one whom they have pierced” (12:10). This is an obvious prediction of the Jesus’ death by crucifixion, and it connects the death of Jesus with the salvation of God’s people.

Part 4 – Malachi

(1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**
Malachi

He prophesied some 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah in a time of moral and social decline and he spoke forcefully while still placing his hope in the expectation of the Messiah. Malachi’s name means “My messenger.”

- **When was it written?**
430-420 B.C.

It probably took place during a time of Persian rule and when Nehemiah was still in Babylon.

- **Where was it written?**
Jerusalem

- **To whom was it written?**
Remnant a few generations after the temple had been built.

The people had lost the spiritual zeal of their forefathers and both priests and people had backslidden. It was a moral and social decline.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Malachi?**
To confront the people with their sins and restore their relationship with God.

Malachi strikes home to several areas of the life of the backslidden remnant.

He speaks of their religious decline, social debasement, and robbing from God.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**
God's love is supreme.

Key Historical Facts	
Who is the author?	Malachi
When was it written?	430-420 B.C.
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	The remnant a few generations after the temple had been built.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To confront the people with their sins and restore their relationship with God.
What is the most important theological theme?	God's love is supreme.

(2) Basic Outline

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. He serves as the “bridge” between the Old and New Testament. Four hundred plus years is between the voice of Malachi and the “*voice of the one crying in the wilderness.*”

- I. The Love of God stated (1:1-5)
- II. God's honor among his people (1:6-2:9)
- III. God's Concerns (2:10-3:12)
- IV. God's love for the remnant (3:13-18)
- V. Conclusion (Ch. 4)

(3) Noteworthy Passages in Malachi

- *The Priests' polluted offerings (1:6-16)*
The book of Malachi begins with the voice of the people challenging the Lord, “How have you loved us?” (1:2). But the Lord immediately turns this question back on the leaders of Israel. He makes a case that Israel's leaders have shown him less honor than a son shows to his human father. The priests who stand before the Lord to represent the entire nation are accused of bringing polluted and blemished sacrifices to offer to the Lord in worship. They knew well the sacrificial laws from Leviticus that every offering must be without flaw, the best animals that they had to please the Lord. But Israel had become cold and heartless toward the Lord, and their careless offerings reflected their careless faith. But God will not tolerate a people who take his name lightly, and he proclaims “my name will be great among the nations!” (verse 11). The people of Israel are intended to be a living testimony to the nations of the

earth, declaring the glory of God to all who see them. But their cold worship was a shameful reflection of their hearts, and God sends a message that he must be glorified in all the earth.

(4) Important Theological Theme

- *God's love is supreme.*

Israel's love may have grown cold, but God's love is constant and perfect. In Malachi 1 the Lord says, "Jacob (or Israel) I have loved, but Esau (the nations around them) I have hated." These words have troubled many people as they struggle with the idea that a God of love could hate anyone, especially entire nations. To understand this statement, we need a little background information. In ancient Israel, the phrase – "I have loved this one, and I have hated that one" – was a common expression used in legal documents, especially in wills that divided an inheritance between brother. The words love and hate do not speak about emotions; they indicate a choice or a preference for priority. When God says he has loved Israel, he is saying that he has chosen them and raised them up above others. The dishonoring worship of the priests makes it clear that God's love was not based upon Israel's righteousness or holiness being greater than other nations. God's love and favor are given to his people simply because he is a gracious and loving God. Israel did nothing to deserve to be loved in this way, and Christians today are also chosen and loved simply because God has set his heart on us. This guards our hearts from becoming proud of ourselves. Instead, we lift up our hearts to worship in gratitude, knowing that our life and salvation are gifts of God's kindness to us.

(5) Christ Focus in Malachi

- The final words of the Old Testament predict the coming of Christ and John the Baptist at the beginning of the New Testament. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of father to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (4:5-6). Many years later, Jesus explains that John the Baptist fulfilled this promise of Elijah coming to prepare the way of the Lord (Matthew 11:14). This prophecy is the final word of the Old Testament. Then, 400 years of silence after the end of Malachi's message, Israel finally heard the voice of another prophet. It was John the Baptist declaring, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2). With those words, Israel learned that their long-awaited Messiah had finally come, and the day of the Lord's salvation had arrived.

Part 5 – Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Zechariah 10:3-6. This is the third course in our Old Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. 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 Zechariah 10:3-6.

“My anger is hot against the shepherds,
and I will punish their leaders;
for the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah,
and will make them like his majestic steed in battle.
From him shall come the cornerstone,
from him the tent peg,
from him the battle bow,
from him every ruler – all of them together.
They shall be like mighty men in battle,
trampling the foe in the mud of the streets;
they shall fight because the Lord is with them,
and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.”

“I will strengthen the house of Judah,
and I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back because I have compassion on them,
and they shall be as though I had not rejected them,
for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.”

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 interpreting the prophets.

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 is this happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Who wrote this book?
- Who is it written to?
- Who is speaking?
- Who is being spoken to?
- Exactly what is being said or taught? Be specific and note details and important words.
- Is there any response from the audience? If so, what is it?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

Observing the Context

- Historical Context
 - What country or kingdom did this take place in?
 - Who was the king or ruler?
 - What was the situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
 - When did this passage take place in the history of the Old Testament and Israel? Before the fall of mankind or after? Before the covenant with Abraham or after? Before the Law was given or after? Before the Exile or after?
- Literary Context
 - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
 - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
 - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
 - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.
Example: In Zechariah 10:3-6, the Lord declares that he is a greater and more faithful shepherd than the leaders of Israel, and he promises that he will restore his people and raise them up again when they call out to him because he is a compassionate God and a caring Shepherd.

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 was this book written in originally? 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 people of Israel 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 people of Israel were in?
- Relationship to God – What was Israel’s relationship to God in this story? 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: God’s compassion for his people never fails, and we can trust that he will forgive us and restore us when we call out to him for mercy.*

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?

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 6 – 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 20 questions worth 2 points each. A score of 50% is needed to pass.

For this exam, students should carefully review all the notes that have been covered throughout this course. They should know all of the historical facts (see the informational tables in this section of each lesson) for all the books of the Prophets. They should be familiar with the important theological themes and Christ Focus from all 17 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:

- Jesus as the Suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53)
- The Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14)
- Return to the Lord (Hosea 6:1-11)
- Rejoicing in the Lord (Habakkuk 3:17-19)
- Zerubbabel as a Symbol of the Messiah (Haggai 2:20-23).

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 Prophets 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.

Old Testament Survey 3

Final Exam

1. To whom is the book of Isaiah written?
 - a. The Levites
 - b. The people of Judah
 - c. Christians
 - d. The Philistines

2. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Jeremiah?
 - a. God's love overcomes our fears.
 - b. God will not destroy the enemies of Israel if they repent.
 - c. When we ignore sin and refuse to obey, we invite disaster in our lives.
 - d. God's grace is greater than our sin.

3. Who is the author of the book of Lamentations?
 - a. Isaiah
 - b. Jeremiah
 - c. Ezekiel
 - d. Moses

4. Which of the following was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Ezekiel?
 - a. To call the people of Israel to repent of their idolatry.
 - b. To promise salvation through the Messiah.
 - c. To announce the defeat of Babylon.
 - d. To announce God's judgment on Israel, reveal God's full plan of restoration, and to foretell God's salvation for his people

5. Which book of the prophets features a vision of the Son of Man as an important part of its Christ Focus?
 - a. Jeremiah
 - b. Ezekiel
 - c. Daniel
 - d. Obadiah

6. To whom was the book of Hosea written?
 - a. The kingdom of Judah
 - b. The northern 10 tribes of Israel
 - c. The Romans
 - d. Christians

7. Which of the following was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Joel?
- To warn Judah of God's coming judgment because of their sin and to urge the people to turn back to the Lord.
 - To promise Judah that God will forgive them for their sin.
 - To warn the enemies of Israel that God will destroy them.
 - Unknown
8. Which prophet wrote the well-known line, "let justice roll down like waters?"
- Jonah
 - Micah
 - Nahum
 - Amos
9. What is the most important theological theme of the book of Jonah?
- God is the Lord of the earth and the sea.
 - God loves the prophets.
 - God's salvation is for all nations.
 - God promises resurrection from the dead.
10. Which book includes a prophecy that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem as part of its Christ Focus?
- Jeremiah
 - Micah
 - Zephaniah
 - Malachi
11. To whom was the book of Nahum written?
- The northern kingdom of Israel
 - The southern kingdom of Judah
 - The Babylonian king
 - Unknown
12. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Habakkuk?
- God is working out his plan even when we cannot see or understand what he is doing.
 - God is waiting to forgive sinners who repent.
 - God rejects unclean sacrifices from priests.
 - God is announcing judgment on all peoples who will not worship him.

13. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Zephaniah?
- a. God is victorious over all of his enemies.
 - b. God's love is supreme.
 - c. God invites all who will believe in him to find salvation through faith.
 - d. Judgment begins in the house of God.
14. What are the three post-exilic books of the Prophets in the Old Testament?
(Circle all three correct answers.)
- a. Obadiah
 - b. Haggai
 - c. Zechariah
 - d. Malachi
15. Who is the New Testament prophet whose coming is predicted in the last verses of the book of Malachi?
- a. Simeon
 - b. John the Baptist
 - c. Paul
 - d. Pilate

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

16. Isaiah 53 | Jesus as the Suffering Messiah

17. Ezekiel 37:1-14 | The Valley of Dry Bones

18. Hosea 6:1-11 | Return to the Lord

19. Habakkuk 3:17-19 | Rejoicing in the Lord

20. Haggai 2:20-23 | Zerubbabel as a Symbol of the Messiah

Old Testament Survey 3

Final Exam – MASTER COPY

*Correct answers are in **bold letters**. Each correct answer is worth two points. This exam is worth a total of 40 points.*

1. To whom is the book of Isaiah written?
 - a. The Levites
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 - c. Christians
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15. Who is the New Testament prophet whose coming is predicted in the last verses of the book of Malachi?
- Simeon
 - John the Baptist**
 - Paul
 - Pilate

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

16. Isaiah 53 | Jesus as the Suffering Messiah

Out of the many messianic prophecies found in Isaiah, chapter 53 stands out above the rest. In this chapter there are multiple references to the Messiah. We will look at a couple of the verses. Verse 5 speaks of Jesus, saying, "he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquity." This is fulfilled in John 19:34 where it speaks of the soldier piercing Jesus' side while he was on the cross. In verse 7 of Isaiah 53, we read that "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." This was also fulfilled during the arrest and trial of Jesus. Matthew 27:13-14 says, "Then Pilate said to [Jesus], 'Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed." These and other verses from Isaiah 53 predict very specific details about the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins.

17. Ezekiel 37:1-14 | The Valley of Dry Bones

No one can bring words of comfort and encouragement better than the way that God speaks to the souls of his people. Consider these verses from this passage: "Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people." God knows the hearts of his people perfectly, and he knew that the

people of Israel felt completely hopeless and rejected. And seeing their discouragement, God sends a message that brings both immediate and eternal hope. When God tells his people that he will restore them to himself, he is not only speaking about returning them to their promised city of Jerusalem. God says he will raise up his people from their graves. These verses are a promise of resurrection to those who have put their trust in the Lord! Our Lord Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, and he has given us hope for eternal life. Just as God did not leave the people of Israel in exile, far away from the land of promise, he will not leave us in the grave and separated from him. God has promised resurrection and eternal life.

18. Hosea 6:1-11 | Return to the Lord

After 5 chapters of accusing Israel and describing in awful detail how unfaithful and wicked they had been, Hosea's message turns to an invitation to repentance in chapter 6. "Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up." This enormous difference between Israel's complete faithlessness and God's relentless invitation to grace is the clearest message in the book of Hosea. No matter how evil or depraved God's people have become, they cannot escape his compassion and care. One additional part of this passage is worth noticing as well. Hosea 6:2 reads, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." Christians have understood this is a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day. Isaiah 53 agrees with verse 1 that Christ was torn for us so that we may be healed. And 1 Corinthians 15:4 says that Christ was "raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures." Hosea 6:2 is the Scripture which predicted the third day resurrection of Christ.

19. Habakkuk 3:17-19 | Rejoicing in the Lord

Habakkuk's message is different from many of the prophets. While most of the prophets spoke to a people who were in sinful rebellion, Habakkuk spoke as part of a people who were suffering and longing for God to come and help them. He turns his complaints into prayers, and in response the Lord speaks words of encouragement, hope, and reassurance. Finally, after hearing the Lord's response to his desperate pleas, Habakkuk settles into a content faith that trusts God in spite of the evil around him: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food... yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk's journey from fear to faith is an example that can help and inspire Christians today to trust the Lord when they are surrounded by uncertainty.

20. Haggai 2:20-23 | Zerubbabel as a Symbol of the Messiah

The primary focus of Haggai's message is to encourage the returned remnant of Israel to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, but his message ends with an interesting statement. The Lord declares that even though the world will be shaken again, God is placing a living symbol in their midst to remind his people that he has set his love and favor on them. Zerubbabel – the high priest and governor of Judah – will be "like a signet ring" among the Jewish people as they resume worship in the temple. A signet ring is a symbol of a king's authority on the hand of the one wearing it. Zerubbabel was not Israel's savior, and he did not have any power in himself. But the Lord established him as Jerusalem and the temple were being rebuilt to remind his people that he was sending One – a Messiah chosen by God himself – to save them completely.

Old Testament Survey 3

Group Project

For this part of the final exam students must work as a group to study a passage from the Old Testament Prophets 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:

- Israel's Only Savior – Isaiah 43:1-7
- The Lord is my Portion – Lamentations 3:19-24
- Seek Me and Live – Amos 5:4-9

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.