

A Bible Study Course: *Understanding the Scriptures*

Course Description

This course provides a general introduction to the story and significance of the Bible, the foundational book of the Christian faith and one of the world's greatest works of literature. Students will examine the Bible's nature, purpose, and authority; its historical narrative, cultural background, literary structure, and main theological concepts. Major emphasis is placed on understanding the overall storyline of the Bible as one grand narrative of redemption. It is intended as a foundation level course, suitable for those who have no previous knowledge of the Bible or Christian thought.

Course Objectives or Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Summarize and creatively present the meta-narrative of the Bible as one unified Story of Redemption, including key figures, events, and themes
2. Describe the role, authority, and literary structure of the Bible
3. Explain primary theological themes such as
 - a. The relationship between God and humanity
 - b. The need for and means of redemption
 - c. The person and work of Jesus Christ in salvation history
4. Identify and describe basic elements of ancient Israelite and Christian culture
5. Apply biblical principles to one's life, relationships, and social world

Recommended Texts and Materials:

Zondervan new international version study Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. There are many editions of this classic Study Bible. If you do not have a good study Bible, the NIV is highly recommended. The "large print" edition is suggested, as the regular print edition has small text.

Bartholomew, C.G., & Goheen, M. W. (2004). *The drama of Scripture: Finding our place in the Biblical story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. This book is excellent for understanding the Bible as one unified story

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Course Overview and Structure

1. Our study of the Bible will consider the seven main periods of Redemption History as: Creation, Crisis, Covenant, Conquest, Kingdom, Christ, Church, Consummation.
2. In order to abide by the time restraints of 6:45 pm to 7:45 pm, we will divide the study into six major sections with multiple sessions in each section.
3. Each Section will focus on the respective Act in the *Drama of Scripture*
4. There will be occasional ungraded quizzes to test your retention of the biblical account. These will allow for a type of summary of key facts and events in each Section.
5. We hope to be able to record the sessions so that members can listen to any missed sessions.

Instructor

The Bible Study will be taught by Dr. Larry Reinertsen who taught Bible and Theology courses at the Campolo College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Eastern University at their Harrisburg campus. Our study is fashioned after those college courses.

Section 1

Session Topic(s):

1. Introduction to the Bible
2. The Biblical Story, Act 1: God Establishes His Kingdom: Creation
3. The Biblical Story, Act 2: Rebellion in the Kingdom: Fall

Learning Objective(s): By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of “story” and “metanarrative” for understanding the Bible as one unified account of redemption
2. Describe the Bible’s nature, purpose, and claims of authority for itself and the implications for life
3. Describe the organization and structure of the biblical text
4. Demonstrate understanding of the background of the Old Testament
5. Summarize the opening acts of the biblical story and the implications for today

Section 2

Session Topic(s):

1. The Biblical Story, Act 3: The King Chooses Israel: Redemption Initiated

Learning Objective(s): By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Begin to describe the narrative, literature, geography, culture, and timeline of the Old Testament
2. Identify and explain biblical genres and how genre affects biblical interpretation
3. Explain the theme of redemption and how it is developed in the Old Testament portion of the story
4. Explain the nature of the Bible as *story* and why this is significant
5. Summarize the biblical story from Abraham to King Saul

Section 3

Session Topic(s):

1. The Biblical Story, Act 3: The King Chooses Israel: Redemption Initiated (continued)
2. The Biblical Story, Interlude: The Intertestamental Period

Learning Objective(s): By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Summarize the biblical story from King David through the close of the Old Testament
2. Understand and articulate the biblical view of personal and social justice, as expressed in the prophets
3. Describe the key historical events and figures of the intertestamental period and their connection to the New Testament
4. Begin to appropriate the biblical message for one’s self

Section 4

Session Topic(s):

1. The Biblical Story, Act 4: The Coming of the King

Learning Objective(s): By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Begin to understand and articulate the narrative and literature of the New Testament, particularly the story and message of Jesus
2. Understand and articulate how Christians have viewed the person, nature, and role of Jesus Christ
3. Summarize the portion of the biblical storyline related to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its relation to the theme of redemption
4. Continue to appropriate the biblical message for one's self

Section 5

Session Topic(s):

1. The Biblical Story, Act 5: Spreading the News of the King

Learning Objective(s): By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the narrative and literature of the New Testament, particularly the epistles
2. Describe the purpose, character, and forms of the Church and its role for today
3. Summarize the biblical storyline related to the Church and its relation to the theme of redemption
4. Continue to appropriate the biblical message for one's self

Section 6

Session Topic(s):

1. The Biblical Story, Act 5: Spreading the News of the King, continued
2. The Biblical Story, Act 6: The Return of the King: Redemption Completed

Learning Objective(s): By the end of this session, students should be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the nature of apocalyptic literature, particularly in the New Testament.
2. Anticipate the hope of the completion of our redemption.
3. Summarize the biblical storyline related to the coming of Christ and its relation to the theme of redemption
4. Demonstrate competence and creativity in presenting the biblical storyline.