

## Seminar 1 – Understanding God’s Word

This seminar is designed to provide emerging leaders with skills for a lifetime of biblical study and ministry. By offering principles for biblical study, as well as highlighting the flow of Old Testament history, each student will see how the Old Testament story blends into the New Testament and its message. The three seminar sessions include 1) How to Read the Bible, 2) How the Old Testament Fits Together and 3) It’s All About Jesus.

1. Establish nine (9) biblical ideas for understanding the meaning and purpose of Scripture.
2. Emphasize the background and storyline of the Old Testament for our study of Scripture.
3. Explain God’s purpose of covenants and leaders in preparation for the coming of Jesus.
4. Encourage application of biblical truths in our lives.
5. Provide summary descriptions of each Old Testament book.

### Session #1 – How to Read the Bible

**Introduction question to Session One:** What are the biggest challenges you have when it comes to studying, teaching, and preaching God’s Word?

#### IDEAS FOR STUDYING THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

*The Bible is ONE book presented in TWO Testaments (collections of books) numbering a total of 66 books. Written over the span of 1,500 years and inspired by the Holy Spirit, more than 40 authors wrote what God wanted to communicate to people through the ages. Though the Bible was written years ago, one needs to study it in order to understand and apply its message for today. The following ideas are important guidelines for our study of God’s Word. Watch <https://youtu.be/JO-Ap406KJw> - Session 1 - Biblical Interpretation Principles and review the themes by doing the assignments under each one listed below.*

#### 1. Discover Scripture’s intended meaning by asking these questions:

What does the text reveal about God? (Scripture tells of the nature and character of God)

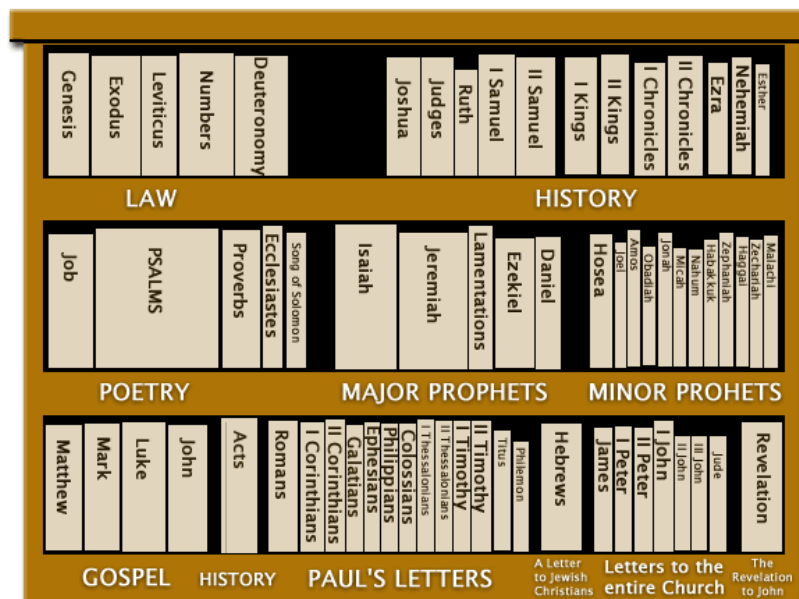
What does the text communicate about humanity? What is the basic nature and need of all individuals?

What does Scripture tell us to do? (For a summary see Deuteronomy 6:4,5 and Mark 12:28-33)

**Assignment 1** – Study Isaiah 53 by asking these questions.

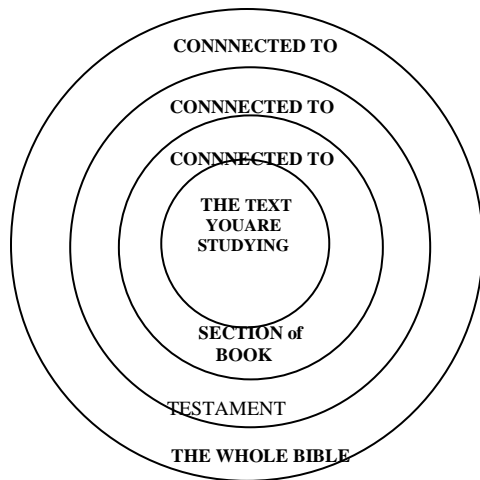
**Assignment 2** – Study Romans 1:1-31 by asking these questions

#### 2. Identify the type of book/passage that you are studying. The 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament fall into these library categories.



- 3. Read Scripture with understanding – Make sure all CONNECTIONS are considered.**  
 Without understanding how a passage of Scripture **relates to and is connected to what comes before and after**, one is tempted to interpret the passage by feelings or by one’s experience. God’s Word is connected to the entire Scripture and it cannot mean something that it would never mean when it was written. Understanding the connections of each passage is essential for knowing its meaning.

**Assignment 3** – Read Joshua 1:1-9 and identify the important words in the passage. Why does Joshua need to be strong and courageous? What does the book of Joshua tell us about Israel? How is this moment connected to Israel’s story told in Exodus and Deuteronomy? What do verses 6- 9 tell us about the future of Israel and the reasons for their captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians? How is Joshua a picture of Jesus? Why should we be courageous and strong as God’s people today?



**Assignment 4** - Study John 3 :16 - What is the meaning of the verse? How do the previous 15 verses help you understand its meaning? How does Jesus use nature and Old Testament pictures to explain salvation in Christ? How is the verse related to the gospel message in the rest of the New Testament? In what ways can this verse summarize the entire Bible?

- 4. Consider the historical/cultural background of the Scripture passage you are studying.**  
 How is the historical situation described? Where does the biblical book appear in the storyline of the Bible?  
 What nations, important people, and events are mentioned?  
 What is the main message communicated to those who would first read the text?

**Remember to interpret the text using the three thematic levels found in Old Testament Study:**

- Higher Level – The Triune God is the authority and central figure of the story
- Middle Level – The nation of Israel and the church are connected to God’s work in the world
- Lower Level – Individuals are identified and illustrate how lives are related to God and his purposes

**Assignment 5** – Study Nehemiah chapter 1 by asking the above questions and identifying the three themes.

**Assignment 6** – Study Mark 11:1-11 by asking the above questions and identifying the three themes.

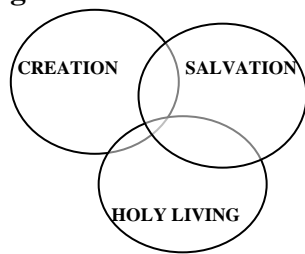
- 5. Consider the grammar and structure of the Scripture passage you are studying.**  
 Consider how words are used and how they are ordered in sentences.  
 What verbs are used and are they in past, present or future tense?  
 What types of punctuation is used and how does it impact the sentence’s meaning?  
 What connectors are used that link ideas together – (therefore, but, and, etc.)

**Assignment 7** – Study Psalm 1 and compare the words that describe the righteous and wicked person. What does the Psalmist mean when he uses the word “therefore”?

**Assignment 8** – Study Matthew 11:28-30 and explain what Jesus means by “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Identify the verb tenses of Jesus actions and the responsibility of those who come to him by faith.

## 6. Seek the full counsel of God found in Scripture

A description of Scripture’s main themes often includes God’s good creation of all things, man’s fall into sin, God’s redemptive work through Jesus Christ, and the final restoration of all things in the new heavens and new earth. Ultimately, God’s purposeful work is to restore the world and its people into proper relationship with Him. The diagram below illustrates how we should live out God’s purposes. Human beings created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-28) have purpose. Because of Adam’s sin and our sinful attitudes and actions, we cannot come be in relationship with a holy God. We need a Savior and the benefits of God’s saving work is about our forgiving our sins and transforming us into the likeness of Christ. Our call is to live redeemed lives to the glory of God. **Read the following sections of Scripture and describe how the three themes are highlighted in them.**



- **Isaiah 40 1-31**
- **Colossians 1:15-23**

**Why is it important to remember that these three themes are united as we read the Scripture?**

## 7. Discover how the Scripture passage presents Christ.

Jesus Christ is the center of Scripture. He is the one that holds all things together and explains the essentials of life and salvation. Because Jesus Christ is God and the entire Scripture seeks to reveal the very nature of God, both Old and New Testaments are considered to be “Christo-centric.” As you study God’s Word, ask good questions of the text and examine how each section seeks to point us to Jesus.

**Assignment 9** – In Luke 24:13 – 49, Jesus explains that Old Testament Scripture is about him. Share how these encounters on the Emmaus Road and with the disciples clarifies this Christo-centric idea.

## 8. Interpret our experiences in light of Scripture

One is often tempted to read Scripture through our personal experience. While Scripture speaks to all aspects of life, God’s Word is never subject to how the reader thinks the Lord should act. He is sovereign and instead of standing in judgment of Scripture, Scripture reveals our hearts and instructs us in God’s ways. Fight the temptation to use your experiences as the standard for understanding God’s Word.

**Assignment 10** – Read Proverbs 3:5,6 and reflect on the times you did not “feel” God’s presence in your life. Does that mean the truths of these verses are not correct? How do the surrounding verses help correct our “feelings” with a bigger point of view?

## **9. Be humble in your approach to God's Word.**

Interpreting Scripture demands knowing that God is its ultimate author. Though written by many different individuals, we are the recipients of His Word. Coming to God's Word is like approaching a mirror (James 1:22-25). Scripture helps us see ourselves for who we really are. God speaks and we listen, so we humble ourselves and trust that Jesus' words ring true- "He that has ears let him hear."

### **Wrap-up Questions**

- 1) Which one of these nine ideas is more challenging for you to put into practice? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What are some reasons we need to interpret God's Word properly?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Read 2 Timothy 2:15 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17. As a student of Scripture, how should they apply to your life today.

**Write a Prayer of Commitment** – Write a short prayer of commitment, asking the Lord to confirm His Word in your heart and mind through proper biblical study.