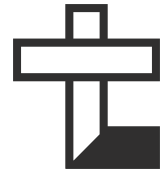


THE BIBLE



or the importance of reading the manual

WEEK TWO // DAY ONE

Some see the Bible as just a book.

In a technical sense, they are right. But, this book is more elaborate and complex than any other book in history.

The Bible we read is an intricate collection writings which are the work of about 40 authors - most who never met one other - recorded over the span of nearly 1,500 years. Some of the writers were businessmen, some were shepherds, others were soldiers, or even doctors. The various authors lived under different governments in contrasting cultures with different beliefs, ideologies, politics, and religions.

The Bible is not confined to one genre. If you were to go to a bookstore (which you probably wouldn't - thanks a lot Amazon) you would look under the "Religion & Spirituality" section. But, the Bible is not *confined* to a genre, it *created* a genre. In fact, you can't define the Bible by the genre, you define the genre by the Bible.

The Bible is comprised of

Narrative

Law

Wisdom

Songs

Prophecy

Gospel

Letters

For fun, here's a breakdown.

[Don't feel the necessity to memorize this, it's just a good thing to know.]

OLD TESTAMENT

PROPHETS

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

LAW

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

POETRY

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon

NEW TESTAMENT

PROPHECY

Revelation

HISTORY

Acts

GOSPELS

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

LETTERS

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude

Through these vastly different genres, we can learn very different qualities of God. We see His facets, characteristics, creativity, and even how He has interacted with people since the beginning of time.

What's amazing about the Bible is it was written on 3 continents, in 3 languages into 66 Books, which break down to 1,189 Chapters and even further to 31,102 Verses.

And every one of those words, phrases, paragraphs, books, oracles, novels, and narratives point to one central theme: **Jesus**. Everything is either foreshadowing or follow up from the life, death, and life of Jesus.

EXPERIMENT: LECTIO DIVINA

Over the next week, we are not going to just *read* the Bible, but we are going to *react* to the Bible. Today, we're going to try an ancient practice called Lectio Divina. Today, we're going to focus on Jesus in an important passage Paul writes about him.

Here's how Lectio Divina (or divine reading) works:

Read the entire passage three times, more slowly each time. You can read it aloud if that helps you focus.

1. The first time you read it, listen to the overall passage.
2. The second time you read it, go a little slower. Begin to listen for a specific word or phrase that jumps out to you.
3. The third time you read it, go slow. Hone in on that word or phrase that jumps out to you.
4. Allow a period of silence to reflect on that word or phrase. Take your time and mark up the verse below as much as you'd like.

Ready?

Here's your passage:

Colossians 1:15-20 (NIV)

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold

together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

JOURNAL

What is the meaning of the word or phrase? What images come to mind when you think of it? What is God saying to you through that word or phrase? How is God calling you to react to what you just read?

THE BIBLE



or the importance of reading the manual

WEEK TWO // DAY TWO

The Bible can often feel like a collection of writings from the *past* that have very little to do with the *present*. When we read, we often don't connect because we fail to recognize that the characters in the stories are real people with real lives seeing real things in real time.

In the Gospels (the narratives of Jesus' life) as well as many of the narratives in the Old Testament, the authors name specific places, dates, and names so that they could be fact-checked.

In fact, look how Luke begins his story about Jesus:

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. [Luke 3:1-2]

Do you see how many dates, names, and locations are given. Luke is begging us to fact-check him on how this all went down. It's a reminder that this really happened with really real people.

Each character is a person, but what's more they often are also a representation. They don't just represent themselves. They represent us. They are an important placeholder for us to put our feet in their sandals and experience the story alongside them.

EXPERIMENT: CHARACTER EXPERIENCE

Today, we're not just going to read the Bible, we're going to react to it. We're going to get something out of it by putting ourselves into it.

Here's how the Character Experience works:

In the character experience method, you picture what is happening in the story from the perspective of one of the characters in the passage.

It works well if you read the passage, then write a journal entry based on what you (the character in the passage) just experienced. How did you feel? What are you seeing? What is your response? What is going through your mind as the events unfold? How is your life impacted? We'll walk through it together.

Here's your passage:

Matthew 14:22-23

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

JOURNAL

Put yourself in the shoes of the different characters. Write from the viewpoint of each participant. What would this experience be like through the eyes of the disciples, Peter, Jesus, a nearby fish, etc.

THE BIBLE



or the importance of reading the manual

WEEK TWO // DAY THREE

When we read the Bible, it is certainly written in specific setting, to and from specific people to specific people, in specific cultures, religions and governments. This is why so many people devote their lives and careers to understanding the context in which the Bible was written.

That being said, the words within the Bible are not written to only give hope to the people of that day. Many of these words are written to remind us, in our day, that God is still with and for us.

God is still alive.

He is still active.

He is still speaking.

"It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it's the parts that I do understand." — Mark Twain

Again, as the Author of Hebrews writes:

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. [Hebrews 4:12]

This verse doesn't necessarily mean "The Word of God" as in The Bible, in the way we read it today. In fact, when this was written The Bible we have today wasn't even compiled. But, the *words* of God are still alive and active. This means God still speaks to us, individually and corporately, through His Words and the greatest compilation of His Words are in the Bible (Hence, you may hear The Bible referred to as "The Word of God".)

EXPERIMENT: PERSONALIZE IT

Today, we're not just going to read the Bible, we're going to react to it. We're going to act as though God's words were being written directly to us.

Here's how the Personalize It method works:

Insert your name in place of the pronouns or nouns used in the passage as though God were saying it directly to you. Read through the passage several times with your name inserted. Reflect on how God would have you apply the verse to your life.

Here's your passage:

Isaiah 43:1-2 (ORIGINAL PASSAGE)

But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

Isaiah 43:1-2 (PERSONALIZED PASSAGE)

But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, [INSERT YOUR NAME],
he who formed you, [INSERT YOUR NAME]:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, [INSERT YOUR NAME];
I have summoned you *by name*; you, [INSERT YOUR NAME] are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you, [INSERT YOUR NAME];
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you, [INSERT YOUR NAME].
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze, [INSERT YOUR NAME].

THE BIBLE



or the importance of reading the manual

WEEK TWO // DAY FOUR

The Bible is meticulously written. More so than any other work:

Every word is measured.

Every word is metered.

Every word matters.

Even though the words within it are at least two millennia old, they have been painstakingly preserved.

TIME FOR A HISTORY LESSON:

In 1946, teenage Bedouin shepherds were tending sheep and accidentally stumbled into a cave full of ancient scrolls. The scrolls contained the handwritten transcription of almost all of the books of the Old Testament (minus Song of Solomon) written mostly in Hebrew.

The shepherds really didn't know how monumental their findings were. They tried to sell these scrolls to dealers and priests. They even sold a few through classified ads in the Wall Street Journal. But, once archaeologists, both religious and non-religious got a hold of these scrolls they began to date them.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, as they became known, are dated to have been written as early as 200-70 B.C., and were remarkably intact.

What's more than their impeccable physical condition is their accuracy. The Bible we hold today was found to be remarkably accurate to these scrolls written nearly 2,000 years ago. That means scribe to scribe, transcription to transcription, these

writings have maintained greater accuracy than any other ancient literature in history.

So, if nothing else, we know the words we're reading are reliable and right.

The right words were kept in the text, which also means the right words were omitted from the text. Every author knows that there are words need to be used and others that need to be removed. Every movie has deleted scenes on the cutting room floor.

As John, the author of Revelation writes:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone *adds* anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone *takes words* away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. [Revelation 22:18-19]

John is not messing around!

Because Revelation is at the end of the Bible, many people assume he's saying this about the entire Bible; that no one should add to the Bible or take away. He's just writing about this one book. But, what he's writing *is* applicable to the rest of the Bible.

Every word is measured.

Every word is metered.

Every word matters.

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT: OPPOSITES

Today, we're not just going to read the Bible, we're going to react to it. We're going to look at what is written by exploring what *isn't* written.

Here's how Opposites works:

Consider the opposite of what the verse is saying. If these are the words of Jesus, what would the opposite imply? What would it look like we were the opposite of poor in spirit? What would it look like if we're above the meekness? What are the implications?

Here's your passage:

Matthew 5:3-10

Jesus said:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

JOURNAL

This is one of the most important teachings of Jesus in his most famous sermon. If these are the words he chose to say, what are the implications of the opposites? Why do you think he chose these words in these ways? How does this change your actions as a result?

THE BIBLE



or the importance of reading the manual

WEEK TWO // DAY FIVE

You're doing great! Keep it up, this Bible stuff can be heavy, but is incredibly rewarding. Today, we're going to try something a little different.

The Bible was not written for you. It was written for y'all.

In our day and in our culture, we have the luxury to read, study, and reflect on the Bible all by ourselves. We don't have to be with anyone else. We have our own Bibles, phones, computers, etc.

But, much of the Bible was written to be read in community with others. Many of the letters Paul wrote (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Thessalonians) were written to a group of people, not just individuals. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were likely written for groups of people to read.

Many of the people in Jesus' day (and before) were not literate. Usually, government officials and religious leaders were taught how to read and write. So, scribes and Pharisees and priests were highly educated which means when a letter was written, one person would likely stand and read it to the rest of the recipients.

The problem with English is that we don't have a different *you* singular from a *you* plural. Fortunately, we have Texas. And the great ~~country~~ state of Texas has fixed this problem for us. Texans created this contracted word to give us a distinct *you* [singular] from a *you* [plural]. It's simply pronounced:

Y'ALL

Yes. As in, *you* and *all*.

It's the *you* [plural] we've been waiting for!

The Lab.

The majority of the New Testament is written, not just to you, but to *y'all*. And it changes how we read it.

In one of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he writes:

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. [1 Corinthians 3:16-17]

When we read this verse in our singular, individualistic mindset it should sound very empowering. It's very convicting to see yourself as God's temple. He dwells within you. Just you. Don't destroy that body you've been given, because it is God's holy temple. The temptation is to elevate the individual over the community. In our culture we always want to elevate the *you* [singular] over the *you* [plural].

But, let's read it through the Texas translation to find how our *you* [plural] shapes our understanding of this passage.

Don't y'all know that all y'allselfes are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in y'all's midst? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and y'all together are that temple. [1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - KSV (Kevin Stamper Version)]

How does that change the way you read this verse? (Seriously, write a few words about what changes from reading this verse in Texan.)

This isn't a verse about how important you are. It's a verse about how important we are. Together. *We* are, collectively, the temple of God.

The same is true of our understanding of the Bible. We are stronger in our understanding when we read it together.

In Jesus' day it was not uncommon to gather in the Temple and have a priest read the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) read aloud. Then, everyone would hear these words at the same time in the same place from the same person.

This would happen right in the middle of the city where the Temple stood and where someone was able to read the words. In fact, the word *pagan*, which today means "heathen" or "ungodly" actually means "country dweller" stemming from a day where those far from the religious epicenter didn't know the Words of God as well as the community in the city.

Being in community was literally viewed as being closer to God.

After hearing the reading, people would split off to go to homes and discuss the scripture they heard in smaller groups. (Sound familiar?)

None of this was done in isolation. All of this was done in community.

EXPERIMENT: GROUP PROJECT

Here's what we'll do:

Take this passage below. Read it, think about it a bit. Put down some thoughts. Then call, text, email, FaceTime, or just get together with one of your partners in The Lab and compare notes.

Here's your passage:

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen y'all with power through his Spirit in y'all's inner being, so that Christ may dwell in y'all's hearts through faith. And I pray that y'all, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this

love that surpasses knowledge—that y'all may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

JOURNAL

Write down your reflections here. Write down some of the things you learned from your partner about this verse as well. Where were the areas you agreed or disagreed?

THE BIBLE



or the importance of reading the manual

WEEK TWO // DAY SIX

As we've mentioned, the Bible was originally written in three different languages. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew (with a bit of Aramaic). The New Testament was written in Greek.

I don't know if you took a second language in middle school or high school. Likely, you took something like Spanish or French. These languages each have difference from English. Not just in the changing of words. "Yes," "Oui" and "Sì" are different ways of saying the same word, right? (Seriously, is that right?)

But, beyond simply a different *word* to say something, there's a different *way* to say something. In Spanish, instead of saying, "I am John", you would say "Me llamo Juan" which means *I call myself John*, showing the thought behind the language. You *aren't* John. You just *call yourself* John. The name John doesn't define you. You are more than the name you call yourself.

Very similar phrase. Very different meaning.

The Bible is like this in how the Hebrew and Greek have their own nuance and inflection. Sometimes, it can be hard for our modern American English minds to grasp the Middle Eastern, Jewish and at times primitive language used in the Bible.

For instance Jesus talks about God's provision here:

[God] He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. [Matthew 5:45]

This short verse may look as though God causes the sun to rise on both good and evil people. That in our mind sounds like a good thing. We love sunshine. As the famous words we grew up with tell us:

*Sunny day
Sweepin' the Clouds away
On my way to where the air is sweet!
Can you tell me how to get,
How to get to Sesame Street?*

We think sunny days means everything is positive.

Then, God sends rain on both righteous and unrighteous. In our minds, that's a bad thing. We can all relate to Karen Carpenter as she sang:

*Hangin' around
Nothin' to do but frown
Rainy days and Mondays always get me down*

Don't cry. It's okay.

But, put yourself in the shoes of an indigenous culture in the Middle East. The rain would've been what they all wanted. These are sustenance farmers who are raising their own food and livestock.

They didn't want more sun. They had that. The rain would've been a much needed blessing.

Take it a step further.

Think about it. There was no super reliable irrigation, no running water, no reservoir for their crops. Rain was the only way to insure your family had enough food. It was the difference between life and death. And the worst part is - you can't control it.

We have a hard time understanding this concept when we can turn on a faucet at any time, rain or shine, famine or monsoon and still get the same amount of water no matter what.

We can go to a grocery store year round and find produce which went out of season months ago. We can get fresh tomatoes in the dead of winter. We can get imported pineapple in the middle of Wisconsin.

We're out of sync with the weather, with the seasons, even with the earth. But, the culture in Jesus' day (and before) lived in tune with the world and weather around them. Sometimes we think these first century people acted crazy when it came to gods of the rain and the sun, but when we see the importance of weather it kinda makes more sense, right?

So, maybe now that we're in their sandals, how does that change how you read that verse? Does your understanding of that passage shift at all? Can you apply it to your life a little deeper?

Too often, however, we use this difference of language as a crutch. We think we should just stop trying to understand any of it because we don't understand some of it.

The goal of all of the Bible is to understand:

1. What was this saying to its original audience.
2. What is it saying to me today.

Hopefully, if you've learned nothing else from this week of The Lab, you've come to realize the entire point of the Bible is to apply it to our lives. So, let's try to think through what it was saying *to them, then* and what it's saying to *you, now*.

EXPERIMENT: PARAPHRASE IT

Here's what we'll do:

Take this passage below. Read it through. Then, take one paragraph (in the left column) at a time and rewrite it your own words (in the right column), try to understand what it was saying then to its original audience and what it's saying to you now. What does this mean for *you, now*.

THE BIBLE

APPENDIX

LOST IN TRANSLATIONS?

If you've ever tried to buy a Bible or even just read on an app, it can be tricky to decide on which translation of the Bible is best for you. The reason we have different translations is because the Bible was written in Greek, Hebrew, and a bit of Aramaic. These languages are not highly compatible with English because of different phraseology and nuance.

Because of this, there are multiple translations. Some translations have been written to be extremely accurate to original words and phrases. Other translations have been written with simpler words and phrases to make reading easier on the reader. Neither is right or wrong, it simply depends on what you're looking for.

Here's a short overview of different translations and the qualities of each.

MOST POPULAR TRANSLATIONS

ESV (English Standard Version)

Word for Word Translation: Yes

Based on Earliest Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts: Yes

Publication Year: 2001

The ESV is very accurate and often used by Biblical scholars. It is word-for-word which can make it a little difficult to understand at times. But, the ESV is about as literal a translation as we have in English.

NLT (New Living Translation)

Word for Word: No

Based on Earliest Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts: Yes

Publication Year: 1995

The NLT uses very plain language and easy to use phrases for the reader to have a good understanding of the Bible overall. It's not the most accurate translation, but it is easy to read.

NKJV (New King James Version)

Word for Word: Yes

Based on Earliest Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts: No

Publication Year: 1963

The NKJV is an updated version of the KJV (below). It's not super accurate, but the KJV was the first English translation of the Bible, so many still use it. The NKJV is considerably easier to read than the KJV, but still not the easiest to read, nor is it the most accurate.

NIV (New International Version)

Word for Word: No

Based on Earliest Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts: Yes

Publication Year: 1978

The NIV is the most widely used translation of the Bible. It is not the most accurate, but toes the line between accuracy and readability pretty well.

KJV (King James Version)

Word for Word: Yes

Based on Earliest Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts: No

Publication Year: 1611 (with many revisions over the next two centuries)

The KJV was the first wide-spread translation of the Bible into English. Therefore, many religious people hold tightly to the KJV. The KJV, however is very difficult to read because of its publication year and is not actually terribly accurate.

MSG (The Message)

Word for Word: No

Based on Earliest Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts: No

Publication Year: 1993

The Message is what is called a paraphrase. It was authored to simply take the Bible and make it as plain as possible for the reader. It's beautifully written for understanding, but is not written for accuracy. It is a great companion to a more accurate Bible, but shouldn't be read as your only Biblical source.

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

APPENDIX INFO

The Old Testament (which Jews call the Tanakh) is the first 39 books in most Christian Bibles. The name stands for the original promise with God (to the descendants of Abraham in particular) prior to the coming of Jesus Christ in the New Testament (or the new promise). The Old Testament contains the creation of the universe, the history of the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, the formation of Israel as a nation, the subsequent decline and fall of the nation, the Prophets (who spoke for God), and the Wisdom Books.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

Author: Probably Moses

Date: Partly oral tradition, recorded circa 1500 B.C.

Literary Style: While the first few chapters are written in poetry (or hymnic), and poetry can be found woven in other parts of the story. But, the majority of the book is authored in a historical narrative form. These first five books of the Bible are called the "Pentateuch" which means "five books" or "five scrolls". These would become the foundation for the Jewish faith into which Jesus was born.

Genesis means "origin or formation of something". This book (believed to have been later recorded by Moses) speaks to the origin of mankind and the formation of mankind and its relationship with God, one another, and creation. This first book is foundational to the rest of the Bible. From Abraham, the initial father of the faith, to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the lineage and legacy established in Genesis begins a thread that will weave throughout the rest of the Bible.

Exodus

Author: Probably Moses

Date: Circa 1500 B.C.

Literary Style: Exodus is first Historical Narrative and later, Law. It is included in the Pentateuch, which would be memorized word for word by Rabbi's in Jesus' day.

Exodus means "a mass departure of people" and that is exactly what it's about. Exodus chronicles the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt after slavery. In Exodus we see God establishing the patterns and community of His people. The book lays a foundational understanding of God. In it, He reveals his name, his character, his restorative plan, and he establishes a binding covenant between Himself and His people.

Leviticus

Author: Probably Moses

Date: Circa 1500 B.C.

Literary Style: Leviticus is a book of Law. It is the third book of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is known as The Law in the New Testament. Leviticus has many laws, but tells them in in a narrative form.

Leviticus receives its name from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and means "concerning the Levites" (the Levites were a tribe in Genesis who became the priests of Israel). Leviticus can be a very tricky book to read in our current language and culture, but Leviticus is essentially a manifesto of how God's new people and His Kingdom should operate with God as their King.

Numbers

Author: Probably Moses

Date: 1500 B.C.

Literary Style: Numbers is a book of both historical narrative and Law.

Numbers furthers the story of Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab on the border of Canaan. This book shows the insatiability of the human condition and details the rebellion of God's people.

Deuteronomy

Author: Probably Moses

Date: Circa 1500 B.C.

Literary Style: Deuteronomy is a book primarily built on Law.

Deuteronomy means "repetition of the Law" which serves as a reminder to God's people about His covenant. God reestablishes His covenant with Israel whom He brought out of slavery. He reminds them of how they are to interact with Him and each other.

Joshua

Author: Joshua [Spoiler Alert] Joshua's death and funeral were written by Eleazar

Date: 1350 B.C., Compiled around 800 B.C.

Literary Style: Joshua is a book of historical narrative.

Joshua is a story of a guy named... You guessed it: Joshua! He's one of Israel's own. Joshua is the first to overtake a city and a land for his people. This land was called the "Promised Land" because God had promised it to Israel. After 40 years of wandering around the desert, the Israelites have a place of their own.

Judges

Author: Possibly Samuel

Date: Circa 1000 B. C.

Literary Style: Judges is also historical narrative.

The book of Judges details the life of Israel now that they are in the Promised Land. After the death of Joshua, there becomes a need for a leader. Judges tells of twelve different leaders who are chosen by God to lead in specific situations. God uses the Judges to defeat foreign oppressors and restore the land to peace.

Ruth

Author: Unknown

Date: Possibly as late as 400 B.C.

Literary Style: Ruth is historical narrative.

The book of Ruth is one of the best short narratives ever written. This quick read represents a handful of those who are remaining faithful to God in the period of the judges. It tells of the fall and restoration of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth (an ancestor of King David and Jesus).

1 Samuel

Author: Unknown

Date: Circa 1000 B.C.

Literary Style: 1 Samuel is a historical narrative.

This first installment of the Book of Samuel tells us of God's establishment of a political system in Israel headed by a human king. God is reluctant to have man ruled by man instead of by God Himself. Through Samuel's eyes, we see the rise of the monarchy and the tragic fall of its first king, Saul.

2 Samuel

Author: Probably Samuel

Date: Circa 900 B.C.

Literary Style: 2 Samuel is also a historical narrative.

After the tragic failure of Saul, the sequel to the book of Samuel shows a new character who will assume the throne. 2 Samuel depicts David as a true (though imperfect) representative of the ideal king. Under David's reign the Lord blessed the nation to prosper, to defeat its enemies, and to realize the fulfillment of His promises.

1 Kings

Author: Jeremiah may have compiled this work.

Date: Circa 600 B.C.

Literary Style: 1 Kings is a historical narrative.

1 Kings continues to follow the activity of the Israel's monarchy and God's interaction with his people. This book documents the activity of King David, his son, Solomon, and each subsequent King of the increasingly divided kingdom of Israel. Solomon's sons divide the Kingdom into two, Judah and Israel.

2 Kings

Author: Jeremiah may have compiled this work.

Date: Circa 600 B.C.

Literary Style: 1 Kings is a historical narrative.

2 Kings pushes the narrative of the divided kingdom forward. Judah and Israel and their kings are judged in light of their obedience and disobedience to the covenant with God. Ultimately, the people of both nations are exiled for disobedience.

1 Chronicles

Author: Likely Ezra later compiled this history.

Date: Circa 450 B.C.

Literary Style: 1 Chronicles is a historical narrative.

1 Chronicles is organized similarly to 1 and 2 Samuel. Chronicles shares a simultaneous historical account, in some areas, as 1 and 2 Samuel. This history is compiled to give hope to the new restored community after the exile.

2 Chronicles

Author: Likely Ezra later compiled this history.

Date: Circa 450 B.C.

Literary Style: 2 Chronicles is a historical narrative.

2 Chronicles literally *chronicles* the account of Israel's history with an eye for restoration of those who had returned from exile.

Ezra

Author: Likely Ezra later compiled this history.

Date: Circa 450 B.C.

Literary Style: Ezra is a historical narrative.

Ezra's book explains how God's chosen people were restored from Babylonian exile to their homeland. The people began to rebuild their community as the kingdom of God even while continuing under foreign rule.

Nehemiah

Author: Likely Nehemiah.

Date: Circa 400 B.C.

Literary Style: Nehemiah is a historical narrative.

Nehemiah is a super close cousin to the book of Ezra. Nehemiah narrates the challenges of the Israelites restoring their homeland physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Esther

Author: Likely Mordecai (Esther's cousin).

Date: Circa 450 B.C.

Literary Style: Esther is a historical narrative.

Esther is a unique book to the Bible. This story is an interesting story of one young lady's influence. Esther records the story of a Jewish girl who becomes the queen of Persia in order to save her people from being destroyed. Esther was the only Old Testament book to not have been retrieved with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Job

Author: Unknown (There are some clues to know it is a Jewish author).

Date: Either circa 1400 B.C. or circa 600 B. C. (There's nothing in the book to give us context clues of timeline.)

Literary Style: Job is written as poetry.

The story of Job is told almost as a folktale with plenty of truths laced throughout it. Job is a compelling and relatable character who, through a series of monologues, shares incredible honesty with his friends and God in the midst of enormous suffering. It's a story with profound insights on tragedy, heartbreak, and pain. The book is brilliantly written in its use of literary structures, storytelling and quality of rhetoric. We can learn a lot from Job and his conversations with God.

Psalms

Author: Mostly by or about King David. (There are many composers.)

Date: Circa 900 B.C. - 500 B.C.

Literary Style: The Psalms are songs or poems.

The Psalms are a collection of songs and poems which represent the life of David as well as the culture of Israel. These songs include songs of joy, songs of sadness,

songs of anger, songs of fear, and songs of reflection. It's like we're looking at a diary of the people of Israel. The Psalms were so well written and remembered many would've been sung nearly 300 years before they were actually written down. Generation to generation passed them down through song for centuries before someone actually put pen-to-scroll to write them down.

Proverbs

Author: The Proverbs were compiled by King Solomon. (Edited later by Hezekiah.)

Date: Circa 950 B.C.

Literary Style: The Proverbs are written in prose more than poetry.

God offers to give Solomon anything he desires. Solomon chooses to ask God to give him wisdom. Proverbs is Solomon's manifesto as he sees the world through his wise perspective. Here we see some of the most practical teaching in the Old Testament about the wisest way to live our lives.

Ecclesiastes

Author: Ecclesiastes was likely compiled by King Solomon.

Date: Circa 920 B.C.

Literary Style: Ecclesiastes is written in prose.

As Solomon gets sees the end of his life approaching, he writes this final work of wisdom. Ecclesiastes is a deep dive into the human experience, albeit a depressing one. The word "ecclesiastes" means something similar to "teacher" or "preacher" as this is Solomon's last effort to teach his descendants from his own experience.

Song of Songs

Author: Most likely Solomon (maybe various authors).

Date: Circa 950 B.C.

Literary Style: Song of Songs is a work of Hebrew poetry.

Song of Songs, aka Song of Solomon, is a collection of passionate love stories told between two lovers in fairly explicit terms. There is an obvious allusion to the relationship between God and man. Warning: This book gets racy!

Isaiah

Author: Mostly Isaiah. There is a potential second contributor.

Date: Circa 700 B.C.

Literary Style: Isaiah is a work of prophesy.

After King Solomon's death, his sons split the Kingdom. Israel is the northern side and Judah is the southern (Jerusalem remains within Judah's border). Israel is later crushed by the Assyrians. Judah is then captured by the Babylonians. The people who were once a proud, united country are taken into exile by their new rulers.

Many of the prophets, including Isaiah, chronicle and prophesy over these catastrophic events. Isaiah is located in Judah. He writes two distinct sections beginning with Isaiah calling out the people for the first 39 chapters as he levies God's charges against the unfaithful people of God.

It's possible another author chimes in because Chapters 40 - 66 have a very different tone. Judah is now overtaken its citizens are under Babylonian rule. Isaiah's tone becomes one of consolation and hope.

Isaiah is a beautiful and complex oracle. Ultimately, its foreshadowing of Jesus is undeniable. Isaiah contains many specific prophecies which precede Jesus.

Jeremiah

Author: Jeremiah.

Date: Circa 600 B.C.

Literary Style: Jeremiah is a work of prophesy.

Jeremiah is also a Judaeen prophet whose heart is broken for his people who are now living in exile from their homeland. Displaced and discouraged, Jeremiah is a voice of pain and hope for his people. Jeremiah recounts much of the 40 years which led to the destruction of Jerusalem to explain what happened and reflect on the events before the exile.

Lamentations

Author: Traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah.

Date: Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Literary Style: Lamentations is a work of prophesy.

Lamentations is a series of beautifully written laments after the once-powerful city of Jerusalem was laid to ruins by the Babylonians. Jerusalem was the capital of Israel when it was united under King David. It was also the site of the temple which was sacred to the Jews who were now living under foreign rule in a foreign land.

Ezekiel

Author: Mostly Ezekiel. There is the potential of multiple authors.

Date: Circa 580 B.C.

Literary Style: Ezekiel is a work of poetic prophesy.

Ezekiel is a prophet who uses vivid imagery to remind his people of God's holiness and control. This work points to the coming of a new kingdom and restoration of God's people both in the near future and in the distant future.

Daniel

Author: Written by Daniel.

Date: Circa 590 B.C.

Literary Style: Daniel is a work of both narrative and prophecy.

The book of Daniel follows the adventures of Daniel who is a young man captured by the Babylonians. In this book, we see Daniel's adherence to God's way of living, even in the context of a nation who didn't understand. Daniel holds some of the most famous stories the Bible has to offer. The story is interlaced with prophecy and foreshadowing as Daniel tries to tell the Babylonians of the coming kings and kingdoms. Though the prophecy can be difficult to understand, this story is easy to see ourselves in and identify with.

Hosea

Author: Written by Hosea.

Date: Circa 770 B.C.

Literary Style: Hosea is primarily a work of prophecy.

Hosea is a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel. His story is one of the most beautiful in the Bible. This book acts as a self-contained account of devotion. God calls Hosea to be faithful to his wife even though she prostitutes herself to others. In his humiliation and humility we see the love of God toward his bride Israel who has prostituted herself with false gods.

Joel

Author: Written by Joel.

Date: Likely around 550 B.C.

Literary Style: Joel is primarily a book of prophesy.

The prophetic books are not arranged chronologically. They are in order of length and significance. Joel is a prophet from Judah who warns about the *coming* invasion (this is before Judah is invaded). Joel also offers hope for the post-exhale period.

Amos

Author: Written by Amos. (Not the Famous one with the cookies.)

Date: Circa 750 B.C.

Literary Style: Amos is a work of prophesy.

We know Amos prophesied while Judah was ruled by Uzziah and Israel was ruled by Jeroboam II. Amos was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. He lived in Judah yet did most of his work in Israel.

Obadiah

Author: Written by Obadiah.

Date: Probably around 845 B.C.

Literary Style: Obadiah is a book of prophesy.

Obadiah was a prophet who tried to warn the people of Edom, which was a kingdom located south of Judah, about their coming destruction as well. Edom had

a reputation of incredible pride which led to their downfall.

Jonah

Author: Likely written by Jonah.

Date: Likely written around 760 B. C.

Literary Style: Jonah is a narrative about prophesy.

Jonah is an unusual prophetic book because it details more about the prophet himself than the prophet's words. Jonah is infamously called by God to go to Nineveh, a dangerous and vile city. In this cautionary tale, Jonah runs from God and is swallowed by a fish who later spits him ashore once Jonah repents. Jonah's actions change, but his heart doesn't. In a groundbreaking move, we see a nation repent find salvation without ritual or sacrifice. Sadly, even though Nineveh repents yet this "good news" embitters Jonah.

Micah

Author: Likely written by Micah of Moresheth (a town in Judah).

Date: Likely written between 750-700 B. C.

Literary Style: Micah is a book narrative about prophesy.

Micah directed the majority of his words toward Jerusalem and Samaria (the capital cities of Judah and Israel, though he was from outside the boundaries of any major city. His message was to the powerful and the elite in the capitals. Micah gives some of the most vivid pictures of the new kingdom yet to come under Jesus.

Nahum

Author: Written by Nahum, who we know little about.

Date: Likely written around 612 B. C. (the fall of Nineveh).

Literary Style: Nahum is a book of prophesy.

Nahum's book contains the "vision of Nahum," The focal point of the book is the Lord's judgment on Nineveh for her oppression, cruelty, idolatry, and wickedness.

Habakkuk

Author: Written by Habakkuk, who we know little about.

Date: Circa 600 B.C.

Literary Style: Habakkuk is a book of prophesy.

Little is known about Habakkuk except that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah and a man with unwavering faith. The book with his name on it contains a dialogue between the prophet and God concerning injustice and suffering.

Zephaniah

Author: Written by Zephaniah, who we know little about.

Date: Circa 600 B.C.

Literary Style: Zephaniah is a book of prophesy.

We know Zephaniah was a person with significant social standing in Judah and was probably related to the royal line. The intent of the author was to announce to Judah God's approaching judgment.

Haggai

Author: Written by Haggai.

Date: Circa 520 B.C.

Literary Style: Haggai is a book of prophesy.

Haggai was a prophet who, like Zechariah, encouraged the returned exiles to rebuild the temple. His prophecies clearly show the consequences of disobedience. When the people give priority to God and his house, they are blessed.

Zechariah

Author: Written by Zechariah.

Date: Circa 520 B.C.

Literary Style: Zechariah is a book of prophesy.

Similar to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was not only a prophet, but also a member of a priestly family. The chief purpose of Zechariah (and Haggai) was to rebuke the people of Judah and to encourage and motivate them to complete the rebuilding of the temple.

Malachi

Author: Written by Malachi.

Date: Circa 520 B.C.

Literary Style: Malachi is a book of prophesy.

Malachi, whose name means "my messenger," spoke to the Israelites after their return from exile. The theological message of the book can be summed up in one sentence: The Great King will come not only to judge his people, but also to bless and restore them.

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

Author: Matthew, a disciple of Jesus.

Date: Recorded circa 80 A.D.

Literary Style: Narrative (Gospel) about the life of Jesus.

Matthew was a tax collector. He was also likely a Jew. Matthew writes to a Jewish audience to explain that Jesus was in fact the one the Jews had been waiting for. Right from the start, Matthew explains that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Matthew's Gospel serves as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New.

Mark

Author: No name is found in the book, but John Mark has been credited with the authorship.

Date: Recorded circa 70 A.D.

Literary Style: Narrative (Gospel) about the life of Jesus.

The book of Mark is a Gospel that contains a narrative account of Jesus' life, sermons, and parables. This Gospel action packed. Mark is the shortest of the synoptic gospels and moves quickly from scene to scene.

Luke

Author: Luke

Date: Recorded between 60-70 A.D.

Literary Style: Narrative (Gospel) about the life of Jesus.

Luke was a doctor who meticulously compiles eye-witness accounts of the life of Jesus into one cohesive work. The structure of Luke's Gospel shares similarities to Mark's account. Luke puts more meat on the skeleton that Mark created. Luke is a great storyteller who shares many of Jesus' parables and stories more than the other authors. Luke writes to a person he names "Theophilus" which simply means "lover of God". This could be an individual or a group of people. What we know is that Luke is primarily interested in writing for gentile readers to include them into the life and Gospel of Jesus.

John

Author: John, who refers to himself as "The Disciple Who Jesus Loved".

Date: Recorded between 80-90 A.D.

Literary Style: Narrative (Gospel) about the life of Jesus.

John was one of Jesus' first followers and was one of Jesus' closest personal friends. He was present at many of the most important moments in Jesus' life. The Gospel of John is unique in its explanation of Jesus and his story. Many of the stories in

John are only found in John's account and in no other. Because John's account was written later than the others, he wrote to affirm and encourage followers of Jesus.

Acts

Author: Luke

Date: Recorded circa 90 A.D.

Literary Style: Narrative about the beginnings of the church.

Acts is the second installment of Luke's writings. Luke, again, meticulously details the spread of the Gospel from Jesus' Great Commission to the fulfillment of it. Acts introduces the Holy Spirit, the origins of Jesus gatherings, and an important character named Paul who would go on to write 13 of the 27 New Testament books.

Romans

Author: Paul

Date: Written during the winter of 57-58 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Rome.

Romans is a letter from Paul (in Corinth at the time) to the followers of Jesus in Rome. It's the longest letter in the New Testament and in it Paul addresses his fellow Jews to explain their justification through Jesus, no longer through their Law.

1 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Date: Written about 55 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Corinth.

The first of the two letters to Corinth is from Paul to unify a church in crisis. The Corinthian church was young and new to this whole thing. Paul writes to them to give some constructive criticism of their behavior.

2 Corinthians

Author: Paul

Date: Written later in 55 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Corinth.

After Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, they clean up their act. Paul writes the church in Corinth again to encourage them as they make course corrections.

Galatians

Author: Paul

Date: Written around 49 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to an area called Galatia.

Paul writes to a group of churches in a region called Galatia. These churches were radical and exciting, but had now lost their way. They've been misled by teachers who have pressured them to follow the Law instead of the grace of God. Paul writes to tell them that they have a new life in Christ and they are no longer bound by their old lives and traditions. When the Bible was *canonized* (compiled and verified) the letters of Paul were put in order of length, not in chronological order. Galatians is probably the one of the first *epistle* (or letter) Paul ever wrote.

Ephesians

Author: Paul

Date: Written around 60-61 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Ephesus.

Paul has been to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-28) to meet them with Priscilla and Aquila as well as Apollos who were great teachers in alongside Paul and Peter. In Ephesus many people were beginning to follow The Way of Jesus, but they needed some guidance. Paul gives them a very clear picture of what The Way looks like.

Philippians

Author: Paul

Date: Written circa 62 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Philippi.

About 10 years before writing this letter, Paul first visited Philippi. Since that time, things had become very difficult in Philippi and followers of The Way were getting discouraged. Paul writes one of his most encouraging letters giving them hope to endure and press on.

Colossians

Author: Paul

Date: Written around 62 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Colossae.

Paul had never visited the church in Colossae, but he'd heard the good news of a thriving gathering in the area. Because other young churches had been misled before, Paul writes Colossae to give them a clear picture of who Jesus is and how Jesus calls us to live.

1 Thessalonians

Author: Paul

Date: Written in 52 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Thessalonica.

Paul and his protégé Timothy started a church in Thessalonica and the church was doing very well. Paul writes this uplifting letter to remind them of a couple things, but also to ask them to set the example for other churches as well as for us today.

2 Thessalonians

Author: Paul

Date: Written in 54 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Thessalonica.

Paul follows up with the church in Thessalonica giving instruction and encouragement to the church he cared much about.

1 Timothy

Author: Paul

Date: Likely written between 64-66 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Timothy.

Timothy was Paul's "child in the faith". He has a very close relationship with the younger Timothy. In this letter, Paul gives Timothy a manifesto of how to live, think, act, and lead. Paul's tone is quite different in this letter than in his others because he's writing to his colleague and confidant.

2 Timothy

Author: Likely Paul (possibly with the help of Luke)

Date: Likely written shortly before Paul's death in around 68 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Timothy.

This second letter serves as Paul's final words to his closest friend. Paul's words are personal and immanent as he faces the end of his life. This epistle is a charge to the younger missionary to be faithful in his future ministry.

Titus

Author: Paul

Date: Written in 66 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Titus.

Titus was a Greek leader who established churches on the island of Crete. Paul writes to Titus to give him instructions on how to set up the leadership structure of the church. He gives Titus very simple ways to create a counter culture within the Cretan culture.

Philemon

Author: Paul

Date: Written circa 61 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter to Philemon.

Philemon is one of a few letters (along with Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians) written while Paul was in prison. Philemon is a church leader near Colossae who had owned a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus escaped and came to Paul, so Paul did something a little unorthodox. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with this letter asking Philemon to see his slave as his brother and see him as his brother.

Hebrews

Author: Unknown (Could be Apollos, Priscilla, Clement or Barnabas)

Date: Probably written around 68-69 A.D.

Literary Style: This is written as a letter to a group of people.

Hebrews is a mystery. Though rich with content there is very little context. Likely, the letter was written to a group of Jews, but the precise location is unknown. This letter contains brilliantly composed theology on Jesus' life and death and the new priesthood of Jesus over the Jews. Hebrews correlates the Old and New Testaments as it threads the two together.

James

Author: James

Date: Likely written between 40-50 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from James.

James' letter is possibly the oldest book in the New Testament. James is the brother of Jesus, also born to Mary. James was not always a believer of Jesus as the Messiah, but this book serves as his statement not only of faith, but of action. James doesn't mince words. If we believe in Jesus we show our belief through our actions.

1 Peter

Author: Peter

Date: Likely written around 63-64 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from Peter.

Peter is writing to explain to followers of The Way that they are different. Peter, as well as Paul, had planted many churches. In this letter, he's writing to remind them they are called to be different than the world. Peter refers to Jesus' people as aliens and strangers of the earth.

2 Peter

Author: Peter

Date: Likely written between 65-68 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from Peter.

This is Peter's final letter before being martyred by Nero in 68 A.D. Peter has become alarmed by the amount of false teachers who have infiltrated the churches and so he calls the churches back to the truths Jesus taught and the life Jesus called us to live.

1 John

Author: John (believed to be the same John who wrote the Gospel)

Date: Likely written between 90-95 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from John.

John is probably not writing to one specific church, but to all followers of Jesus. In this letter, there is a clear call to believe in Jesus, follow his commandments, specifically we must love one another.

2 John

Author: John (believed to be the same John who wrote the Gospel)

Date: Likely written between 90-95 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from John.

The second installment of John's letters was probably written on the heels of the first letter. In this, John dives into three major themes: love, truth, and obedience.

3 John

Author: John (believed to be the same John who wrote the Gospel)

Date: Likely written between 90-95 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from John.

This is the shortest book in the Bible, because John writes this letter to address specific skirmish. A man named Gaius had been incredibly generous to Paul and his hospitable reputation had spread. But, Gaius' church was under duress because of a man named Diotrophes, who had rejected the apostles' teaching and John's last

letter. This letter praises Gaius' actions while warning them about people like Diotrefes.

Jude

Author: Jude

Date: Likely written around 65 A.D.

Literary Style: Letter from Jude.

Jude is the brother of James and Jesus (apparently Mary and Joseph really liked "J" names). Jude also had his doubts about his brother, Jesus, until after the resurrection. Jude relies on the Old Testament and points to early fathers of the faith while building up this new life that Jesus ushered in. Just as Abraham, Moses, and other heroes of the Jewish tradition had to fight for their faith, Jude encourages these new followers to do the same.

Revelation

Author: John (perhaps a different John, perhaps the same)

Date: Likely written around 95-96 A.D.

Literary Style: Revelation is a prophetic work.

Revelation was written to give hope to the early followers of The Way of Jesus. Many were beginning to lose hope, believing that Jesus should have already returned. Oppression of Christ-Followers had become almost too much to bear. The Revelator, John, writes in a style similar to the mythology of the day to give a vision of what the return of Jesus will look like. The goal is to remind Christians that God is the one in charge, not Rome, not Satan. God alone sets the course of history and Jesus will prevail.