

BIBLE FOR THE
BEWILDERED

and

PRAYER FOR THE
TONGUE-TIED

For those who forgot...
and those who never knew

by

Sandy Sturch

PART ONE

BIBLE FOR THE *BEWILDERED*

INTRODUCTION

This has been written for people who have little or no background in the Bible. It is for those who are new to the Christian faith, for those who have not had access to Bible teaching in their church, or those who simply have not been motivated to spend time studying the Bible on their own until now. For whatever reason, here you are, looking at a book that bewilders you. You know nothing about it and the thought of trying to make any sense out of it is overwhelming. The Bible is unlike any other book you've ever read, and without some basic understanding of what it is and how it is put together, you are not likely to stay with it very long.

This is nothing to be embarrassed about. Statistics tell us you are a part of the great majority of people in the United States who are biblically illiterate. Though studies show that in the United States there is an average of three Bibles per household, those Bibles are rarely opened, and few people have any idea what they say. Furthermore, studies show that while most people in this country claim to be religious, religion has had little impact on the culture. Something is wrong with this picture. Yes, it is time not only to read the Bible, it is time to understand what it says and put it into practice. So you are definitely on the right track, no matter how young or old you are. This is the beginning of a very important endeavor that very well might change your life.

This outline does not teach the Bible; it is about the Bible. It is most elementary – but if you don't know this basic information, it will be hard for you to make sense out of what the Bible says, no matter where you start reading.

The charts at the beginning of the outline (pages 5-8) are transparencies I use when I teach this course. The first chart shows that God preexisted time and space. God has no beginning and no end. The opening sentence of the Bible says, "In the beginning God..." (Gen. 1:1). The Bible makes no attempt to prove God's existence; it is assumed.

God has created time and space. The horizontal flat line represents time – the beginning of time and the end of time. We live somewhere on that line. Above the line are the words Redemption History. This simply means that from the time sin entered the world God's good creation was changed. Humans, who from the time of creation walked in fellowship with God, were separated from him because of sin, bringing death. But God had a plan whereby we could be redeemed, that is, brought back into fellowship with him and have eternal life. The Bible tells the story of that redemptive plan, from beginning to end. The key to that plan is Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Messiah, foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament.

The second chart merely adds a very brief summary of redemption history as it is contained in the Bible, divided into the Old and New Testaments.

The third and fourth charts together show the major blocks of history and events recorded in the Bible. If viewed side by side you will see a very simple timeline of the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments. This timeline will make more sense as you read through the notes. The chart would be too cluttered and confusing if I added dates. It merely gives you an idea of where we have been in biblical history, where we are now, and where we are going. All the books of the Bible will fit somewhere on the timeline.

When you get into Bible study you will be able to fill in a lot of important and fascinating details. These notes are not intended to be scholarly – just basic information for the beginner – something to get you started. Once you get your feet wet you will quickly outgrow these notes. When that happens, just pass them on to someone else who needs them.

So here you are, a beginner. You are about to embark on a new experience that promises to be life changing. It is not the bible that will change you – it is God speaking to you through the Bible that has the power to transform. No matter how long you study the Bible, you will keep finding new treasures. This book is like no other book you have ever read. The point is, you have a wonderful treat in store for you – starting with this very simple overview.

The printing of this book has been made possible by an anonymous donor who shares my love of scripture, and who shares my desire that all praise be given only to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Sandy Sturch, Elder
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San Antonio, Texas
November 2001

PREFACE

I cannot consciously remember when I heard about Jesus Christ for the first time. As a child, going to Sunday school and church was the highlight of my week – probably because that is when I could get dressed up and wear pretty shoes. Church services back then seemed interminably long; nevertheless, church was still my favorite place to be.

The first New Testament I owned had a Gideon symbol on the front, and I proudly scrawled my name on the inside cover in huge letters. Later, when I learned to read it, I discovered that I had filled in my name on the line that said I had received Jesus as my Savior. And by then I probably had. IN my child-like way, I easily accepted that I was a sinner and that Jesus had died on the cross for my sins. And I knew that the Bible was the most important book in the world. In fact, I thought that if I knew everything in the Bible, there probably wasn't much else I needed to know. So when my father gave me my first real leather-bound Bible – the kind with scripture references and notes – on my ninth birthday, I cherished it greatly and read it at night under the covers with the aid of a dresser lamp without the shade – that is, until the hot light bulb burned a hole in my pillowcase and my scheme was discovered.

From those early years I developed an insatiable appetite for the Word of God. Nothing else has given me more pleasure, more fascination, and more instruction for life. While I do not worship the Bible, my life has been undeniably changed and sustained through its study. This has been true through all my adult years.

My most formative years of spiritual growth came through the profound influence of faithful believers at Wheaton Bible Church, Wheaton Illinois. It was there I listened to adults pray aloud every Wednesday night – and from them I learned to pray. IN that loving and strong environment I was given the opportunity to try my wings at teaching when I was only sixteen years old, teaching a Sunday school class of nine-year-old girls. I have been teaching ever since.

In 1960 I took a course in Inductive Bible Study, a study of the Gospel of Mark, from Dr. Mary Peters, at Wheaton College. The inductive method of Bible study opened up the scriptures to me in a new way, and I developed an even greater love of scripture through that kind of in-depth Bible study. The first assignment was to come up with at least twenty-five observations from Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” – not even a complete sentence. What seemed to be an impossible task turned out to be the greatest revelation to me of the amazing depth of meaning hidden in the scripture. Throughout the whole course I never opened a commentary. I simply studied what was there. I dug, scrutinized, meditated – and my life was forever changed.

Most of my adult life I have been a Presbyterian, serving Christ as a layperson at First Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, Texas. While having served in many different capacities – deacon, elder, teaching, writing, speaking – teaching continues to be my strongest and most consistent passion.

I have noted that as the years have passed the church has changed – the culture has changed, the people have changed. No longer can we assume that even regular churchgoers are familiar

with scripture. It has become increasingly apparent that fewer people than ever have a comprehensive understanding of the Bible. No matter what class they plug into in the context of the church, there is a fog that obscures true understanding because of lack of familiarity with the overall message of scripture.

It was through teaching an in-depth study of the Book of Genesis a few years ago that the lights came on for me – that Genesis was the key to understanding the whole story of the rest of scripture. From this, I began to teach the Bible through the people God chose to tell His redemption story, which I am still doing as this book is being printed.

My adult life has consisted of marriage, children, career of interior design, loss through death of most of my family members, the joy of grandchildren – experiences that are common to most. But over-arching all of life has been my single-minded devotion to Christ and service in His church. Immersion in the scripture has given me my compass, my comfort, my encouragement, and my hope. Therefore, as I share this book with you, it is my prayer that you will choose to embark on a similar journey with Christ, through scripture and prayer.

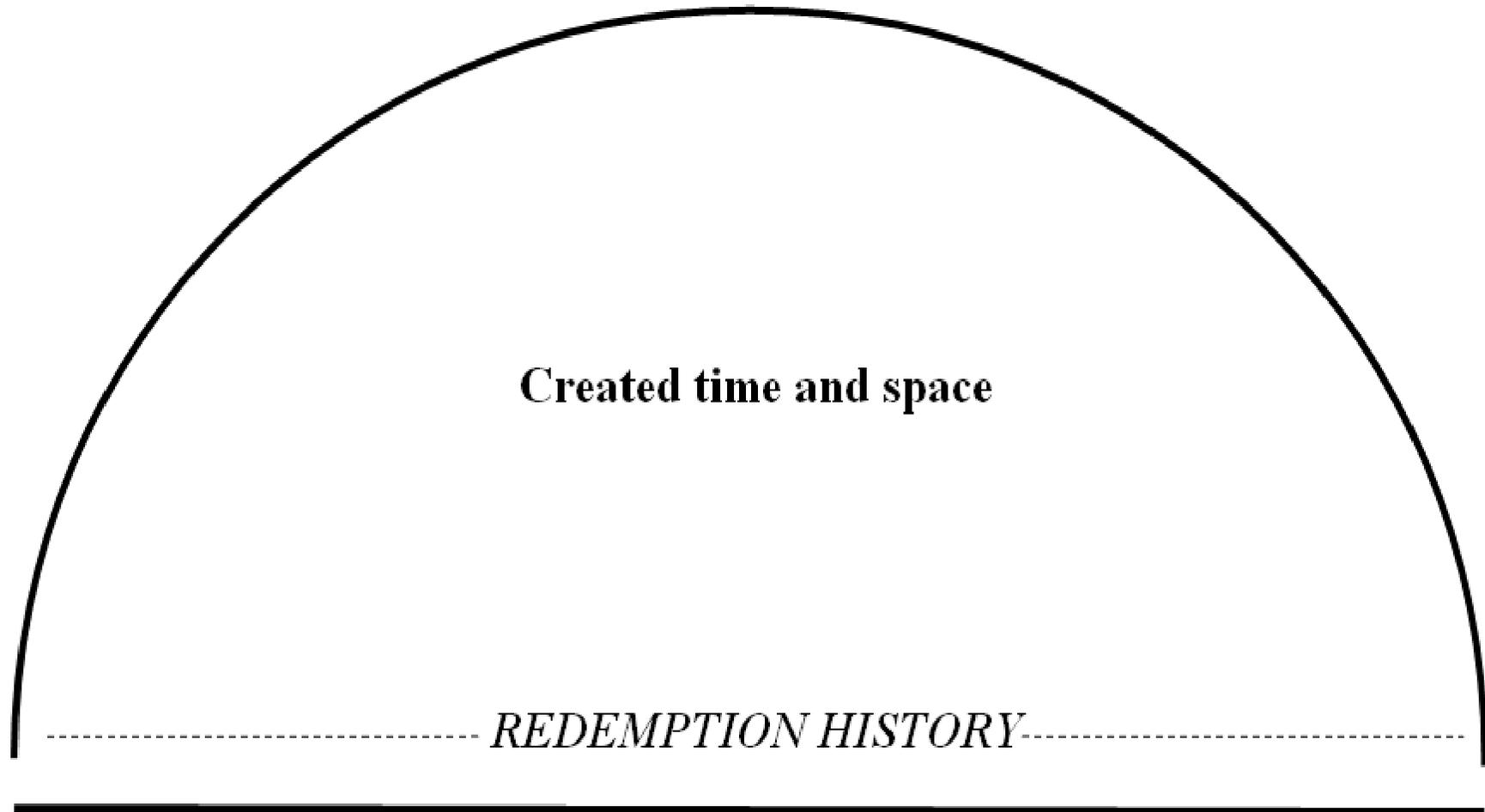
To whatever extent this blesses your life, all praise and thanksgiving goes to my Lord. Without Him I would have nothing to say.

Sandy Sturch

Eternity Past

GOD

Eternity Future



Eternity Past-----*GOD*-----*Eternity Future*

Created time and space

-----**REDEMPTION HISTORY**-----

**Creation
Fall
History of Sin & Failure**

**Jesus Jesus Holy Jesus
is Crucified Spirit Reigns
Born Resurrected &
Ascended Church**

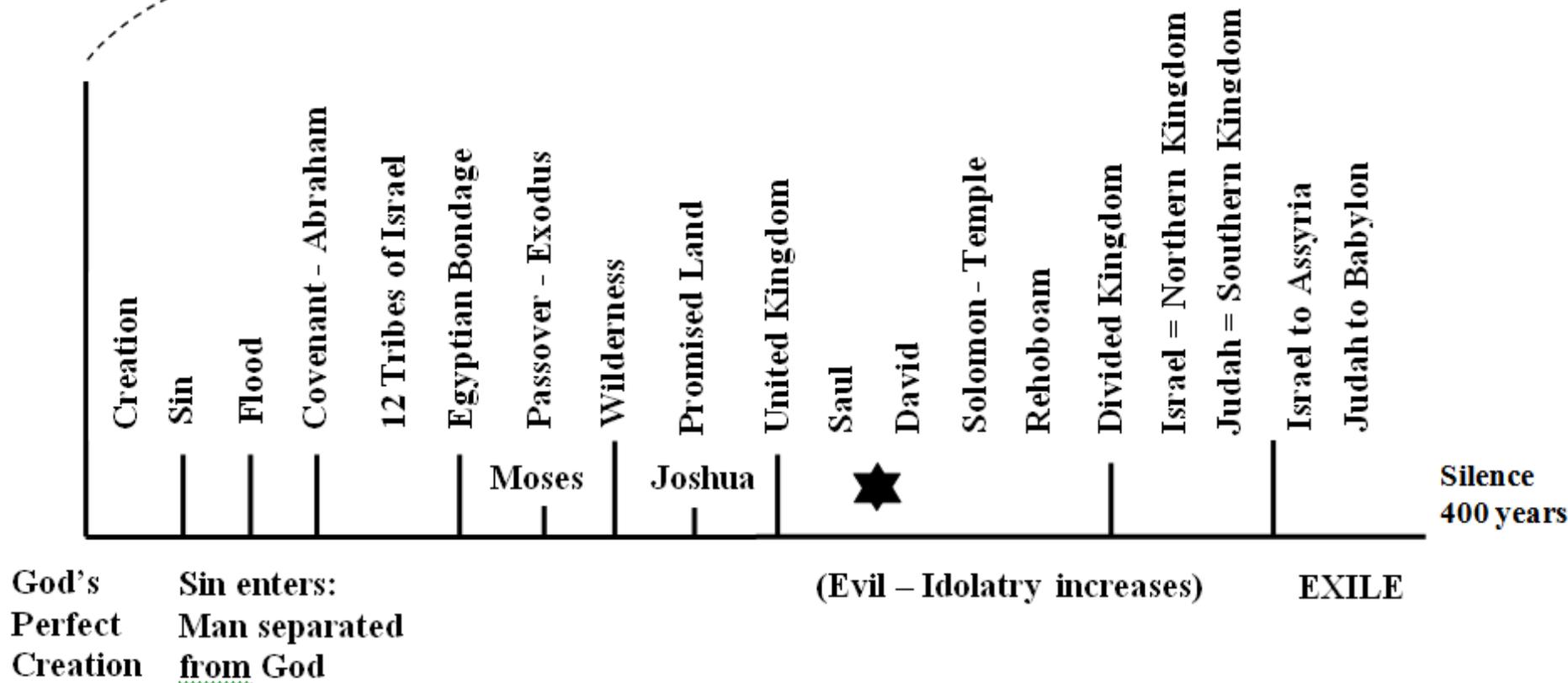
Old Testament (Covenant)

New Testament (Covenant)

THE BIBLE – GOD’S STORY OF REDEMPTION

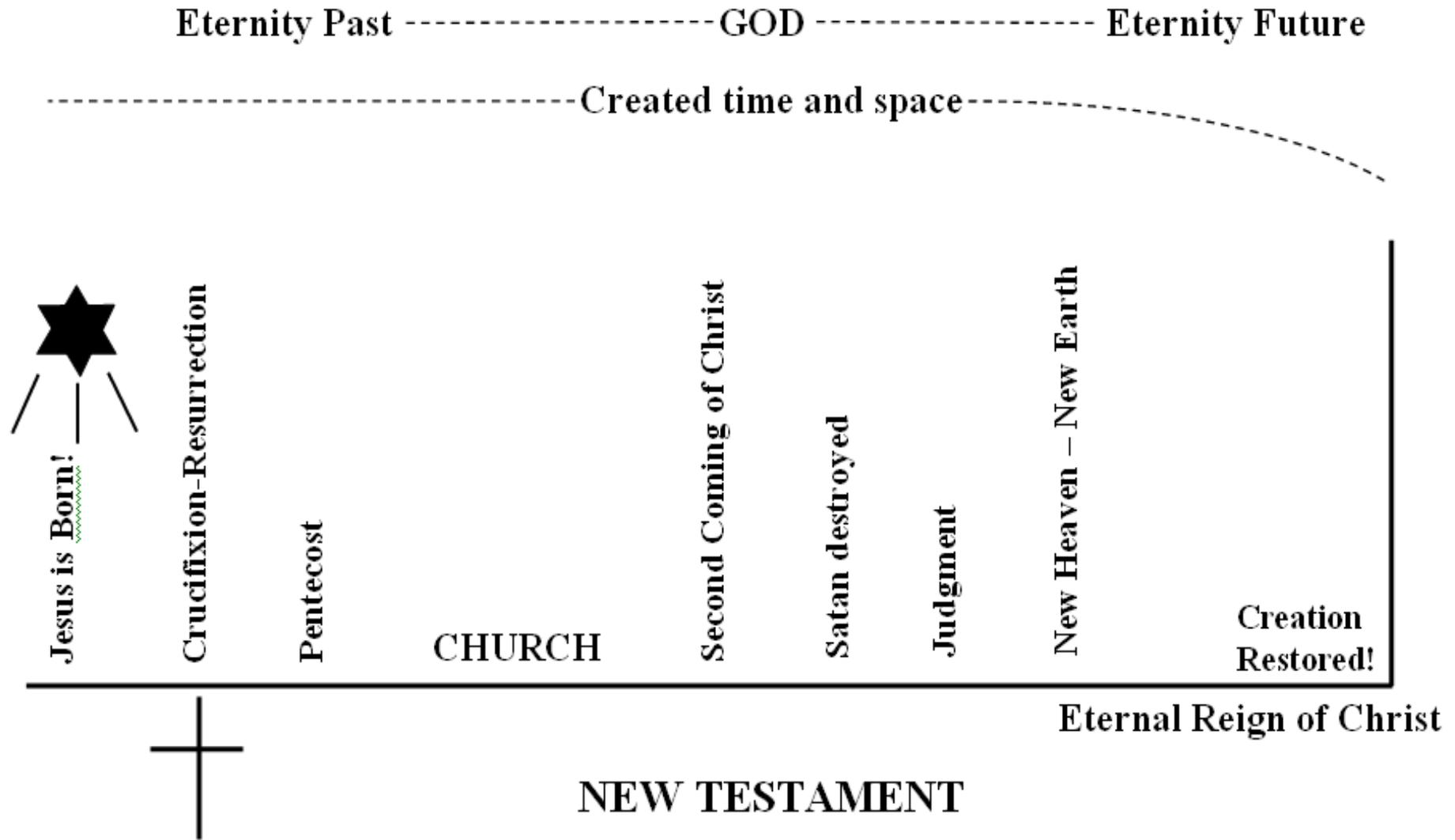
Eternity Past ----- GOD ----- Eternity Future

Creó tiempo y espacio -----



OLD TESTAMENT

THE BIBLE – GOD’S STORY OF REDEMPTION



BIBLE FOR THE *BEWILDERED*

Basics for those just beginning Bible study
and for those who have forgotten

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- It is the revelation of God in written form, through which the Holy Spirit speaks spiritual truth to the heart, imparting spiritual life;
- It is through the Bible that we understand who God is, who we are, and what is God's will for us;
- It is the foundation for our theological structure that is primary and essential to what we believe about God and our relationship to him.

WHAT IS ITS CENTRAL THEME?

- The central theme of scripture is redemption through Jesus Christ;
- Jesus is foreshadowed in the Old Testament; fulfilled in the New Testament;
- It is the story of repeated sin and failure of humankind in juxtaposition with God's love, mercy, and forgiveness, wooing humankind back to himself so that humans can become the full potential of God's intention, walking in fellowship with him;
- It is the story of contrasts – of living life independent of God or living life dependent on God, obeying his commands, fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

IT IS ONE BOOK, CONTAINING 66 SEPARATE BOOKS, IN TWO PARTS:

- Old Testament = 39 books.
- New Testament = 27 books.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

- Forty authors, over a period of about 1600 years, recorded God's message;
- The message was received from God, through the Holy Spirit:

II Pet. 1:20, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy (message) of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

II Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is inspired (God-breathed) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

- Prophecy in this context refers to **speaking forth the mind and counsel of God**;
- Old Testament prophecy was sometimes, but not necessarily, predictive. It was **forth-telling of the will of God**, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

WHAT TIME FRAME DOES THE BIBLE COVER?

- All of created time and space, from the creation of the world to the end of time on this earth as we know it;

OLD TESTAMENT (Old Covenant):

Creation:

- **God created the world** – all that exists – heaven, earth, living creatures, male/female: Genesis 1-2

The Fall:

- Sin entered the world – Adam/Eve's declaration of independence from God: Genesis 3.

Noah and the Flood:

- **God's judgment** on exceeding sinfulness of mankind and his mercy demonstrated by saving Noah and family, and pairs of living creatures: Genesis 6.

Call of Abraham:

- Abraham was the recipient of the **Abrahamic Covenant**, which was God's promise to form a nation, Israel, through whom all the world would be blessed (approx. 2250 BC) – Genesis 12;
- **Ishmael** was Abraham's firstborn son, born of Hagar, his wife's servant; who became father of Arab nations;
- **Isaac**, born of **Sarah**, was the son to whom the covenant promises were given, through whom the **Israelites** would come;
- Isaac married Rebecca, who bore **Jacob** (recipient of the Abrahamic Covenant) and **Esau** (father of Edomites);
- Jacob and his wives bore **twelve sons, who formed the nation Israel**;
- **Joseph** – one of the twelve sons of Jacob, was sold into slavery by his brothers and **taken to Egypt**, where God-given wisdom provided food in severe famine, and who brought his father and brothers from land promised to Abraham to Egypt to survive drought, **during which time the nation Israel was formed**;
- These men are referred to as the **patriarchs of Israel**.

Moses:

- A Jew, who was raised as an Egyptian by Pharaoh's daughter, was **called by God to deliver the Israelites from bondage**, in what is referred to as the **Passover** and the **Exodus**, through the miraculous crossing of the **Red Sea (1446 BC)**, followed by **40** years wandering in the wilderness before entering Canaan, referred to as the Promised Land. Recipient of the **Commandments**; author of the first five books of the Bible, called the **Pentateuch**.

Period of the Judges – (1375-1050 BC)

- Time between the leadership of Joshua, who led the people into the Promised Land after Moses' death, and period of the kings;
- The meaning of the word is not strictly judicial, as we think of judges today;
- They were **governors of Israel**, who presided over affairs of Israel;
- They acted as **representatives of God**, their sovereign but invisible King;
- God spoke to them, and they, in turn, spoke God's message to the people;
- The judges were **not successful in keeping Israel from idol worship** (Judges 2:16-19)

United Kingdom – (1050 BC – 913 BC)

- **Saul** - anointed by the **prophet Samuel** to be the first king of Israel (1050-1010 BC);
- **David** – from the tribe of Judah, from whose line **Jesus Christ**, the Messiah would come (1010-970 BC);
- **Solomon** – son of David and Bathsheba, under whose reign the Temple was built in Jerusalem (970-930 BC);
- **Rehoboam** – son of Solomon, under whose rule the **kingdom was divided into northern and southern Israel** (930 BC)

Divided Kingdom – (930 BC)

- **Northern kingdom was called Israel:**
- Place of worship was **Shechem**;
- All kings were evil.

- **Southern kingdom was called Judah:**
- Place of worship was **Jerusalem** (also referred to as Mt. Zion);
- All kings were evil except for Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

EXILE:

- Israel fell to **Assyria in 722 BC**; Jews dispersed, never to return;
- Judah fell to **Babylon, the Temple destroyed, in 586 BC** Jews blended into culture but a remnant later returned to Jerusalem.

RESTORATION:

- First group returned to **rebuild the temple in Jerusalem**, under leadership of **Zerubbabal**, head of the tribe of Judah (538 BC);
- Second group returned under leadership of **Ezra, a priest**, who also wrote book bearing his name (485 BC);
- Last group returned under leadership of **Nehemiah**, who had apparently accompanied Ezra with the second group for a time (432 BC).

TIME BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS – (432 – 5 BC.)

- Jewish people produced sizable body of literature, including:
- **The Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Old Testament, that became Bible of the Jews outside Palestine who no longer spoke Hebrew, making it available to the entire Greek-speaking world. Later it became the Bible of the early church.
- **The Apocrypha:** A collection of books written during this period, but not accepted by rabbis of the time nor by the historian Josephus as belonging to the Jewish Scriptures. They are considered by the Roman Catholic Church as authoritative, but not by Protestants.
- **Dead Sea Scrolls:** Discovered in **1947** near the Dead Sea, considered to be the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times. Documents include Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah (a scroll 24ft. long), and some books of the Apocrypha. They provide copies 1,000 years closer to the originals than were previously known (see NIV Study Bible notes, p.1432)

NEW TESTAMENT (New Covenant):

- Birth of **Jesus Christ**;
- Jesus' **public ministry** began when Jesus was 30 years old, lasting for three years;
- Jesus' **crucifixion, death, resurrection**;
- **Ascension** of Jesus into heaven;
- Coming of **Holy Spirit** at Pentecost;
- Establishment of the **Church**;
- End times: Second coming of Christ; destruction of Satan; judgment of believers and unbelievers; new heaven and earth, and eternal reign of Christ.

HOW DID GOD SPEAK BEFORE THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN?

Through **prophets**, who were messengers appointed by God to speak God's message:

- The first prophet was Moses, to whom God gave the law;
- Prophets were **governors of the people**, appointed by God to speak God's instructions to his people;
- Prophecy was a message from God, which **included, but was not limited to, the telling of future events**;
- God spoke to the prophets through **dreams, visions, and direct communication**.

After Christ was born, **God spoke through Jesus Christ**: Heb. 1:1-2, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..."

After Christ ascended into heaven, God spoke through the **apostles (eye-witnesses)** of the resurrected Christ (Acts 2:4), empowered by the Holy Spirit, who claimed their authority from Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:2; II Thess. 3:6, 12);

By the time of Jesus, the Old Testament writings were considered to be the law, the prophets, and the writings, the first book of which was the Psalms (Luke 24:44); these formed the **Old Testament canon**;

The first undisputed decision of the council on the **New Testament canon** seems to be from **Carthage in 397**, which decreed that nothing should be read in the church under the name of the divine Scriptures except the canonical writings, which were, by consensus, the 27 books of the New Testament. (Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Elwell, p.141).

IN WHAT LANGUAGE WAS THE ORIGINAL TEXT WRITTEN?

Old Testament was written mostly in **Hebrew** (some writings during the Exile were written in Aramaic, a related Semitic dialect, which gradually took the place of Hebrew as the common language of the Jews);

New Testament was written in **Greek** (with some Aramaic).

HOW IS THE BIBLE ARRANGED?

Old Testament

- **Law – 5**
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Called the **Pentateuch** or **Torah**, written by Moses, but incorporates much earlier material;
- **History - 12**
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther;
- **Poetry - 5**
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs;
Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes also called wisdom literature;
Book of Psalms is Israel's hymnal, which contains wisdom literature, history, and some prophecy;
- **Prophecy - 17**
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel = called Major Prophets;

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; plus Lamentations and Daniel = called Minor Prophets.

New Testament

- **Gospels - 4**
Matthew, Mark, Luke, John (life and ministry of Jesus);
- **History – 1**
Acts (history of the Church);
- **Epistles – 21**
Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, I, II, II John, Jude (letters of instruction in doctrine and holy living);

- **Prophecy - 1**

Book of **Revelation** (vision of end times).

Note that the name is **singular, not plural** – one revelation, not many.

IS IT NECESSARY TO STUDY BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS?

- **Yes.** Remember, the Bible is **one unified book**;
- It is not possible to adequately understand and appreciate the message of the New Testament if there is not some understanding of the Old Testament;
- The **Old Testament is often quoted in the New Testament**, pointing to its **authority and importance**:
 - Jesus quotes from **22 Old Testament books**;
 - The book of **Hebrews** quotes the Old Testament (quotations or allusions) **85 times**.
 - Revelation quotes the Old Testament **245 times**.

IS THE BIBLE PUT TOGETHER CHRONOLOGICALLY?

- **No.** For instance, the prophets preached at **all times of Israel's history**, yet the books of prophecy are found at the end of the Old Testament, not mixed in with the historical books to make them fit chronologically;
- Some prophets preached to the northern kingdom, some to southern kingdom, and some to both, further complicating a chronological arrangement;
- Psalms were written and used during **all periods of Israel's history**;
- In reading the Bible, we must consider **when** a book was written, to whom, and for what **purpose**, trying to **see it as part of the whole** of scripture;
- Remember that the **major theme** of the Bible is **redemption**. Every book is in some way a part of that theme.

WHY SHOULD I STUDY THE BIBLE?

- It is the **primary and essential source** of understanding what we are to believe about God and why;
- It explains our **purpose for being create**;
- Psalm 1 tells us that the way to find **fulfillment** in life is the **meditate on God's Word day and night**;
- It explains the **nature of sin and why we must be saved**;
- It clearly explains the way of **salvation through Jesus Christ**;
- It is our daily nurture in the Christian faith, our **means of transformation** (becoming like Christ);
- Through scripture we **understand our responsibilities to God and each other**;
- The Bible provides for us our moral compass;
- Bible study is the path to spiritual maturity;
- As we learn what God has said through the scripture, we are enabled to **glorify** God in everything, which is our **primary responsibility** as God's creation;
- As we mature spiritually, we become **prepared to enjoy God's presence for eternity**.

- II Tim. 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

HOW SHOULD I STUDY THE BIBLE? WHERE DO I START?

Choosing a Bible:

- For accuracy, a translation is necessary, such as the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV), etc.
- For casual reading of the scripture, a paraphrase, such as the Living Bible, is helpful for getting the general meaning, but it should be used along with a translation and not instead of it;

What kind of Bibles are available?

- Study Bibles have notes on passages, concordance, charts, index, maps, etc.;
 - The Amplified Bible features synonyms in brackets following important words;
 - The Daily Bible In Chronological Order – 365 Daily Readings, (NIV) is put together chronologically for easier understanding and memory; it includes some explanation of passages;
 - Paraphrases are written in modern language, giving meaning in words easy to understand, but they are not as accurate as a translation and should not be used for serious Bible study.
- Helpful study aids: Bible dictionary; atlas; concordance; Bible encyclopedia; all available on Bible software, if you want everything at your fingertips – and are computer literate!
 - About commentaries: Start your study time with your Bible only. Do your own observation of what the scripture is saying before you read a commentary. Commentaries give helpful background information, explain original meanings of words, provide historical or cultural context, and often give reflections and applications. But only the Holy Spirit can apply a biblical truth to your own personal situation. Do not be afraid to pay attention to the thoughts that come into your mind when studying scripture. You will learn to recognize the nudging of the Spirit. Listen. Pray for guidance.

NOW THAT I HAVE A BIBLE, WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

- Decide on a time and place for your daily time of meditation;
- Start with prayer – end with prayer – ask the Lord to speak to you;
- Select a book of the Bible to study, starting with chapter one.
- Read directly from the Bible, rather than books about the Bible. Read systematically. Do not jump around from one day to the next. Read a section or a chapter, until you find a verse or a thought from the passage that feeds your soul and causes you to want to stop and think.
- Inductive Bible study is observation: Look for who, what, when, where, and why? And then always answer these three questions: What does it say? What does it mean? What does it mean to me?

- Take notes – even if you never look at them again. Study with notebook, pen, ruler to underline. Don't be afraid to mark your Bible!
- Get into the habit of reading a psalm along with your regular reading, because Psalms is the only book of the Bible that is conversation directed by man to God, and to others about God. It connects with our emotions; it is an aid to praise and thanksgiving. You might choose to do your in-depth study in the morning and read a Psalm at night before you go to bed. (You do not have to read Psalms in any particular order.) It's a great way to start or end the day!
- As you get into the swing of things, make a prayer list. It helps keep you focused as you pray and also helps you to notice answered prayer and be thankful! Prayer changes things, and in prayer we ourselves are changed.
- Share insights from your Bible study with a friend or in a group. Verbalizing what you have discovered helps cement it in your mind. Repetition and discussion help you to remember what you have learned.
- Each day, focus on one thought from scripture to carry with you.

WHAT CONDITIONS ARE CONDUCTIVE TO BIBLE STUDY?

- Seclusion: quiet place – same place – it becomes your special place;
- Pre-determined, uninterrupted time – same time each day;
- Enough time – not pressured by the clock, if possible; start with 15 minutes, for time of meditation, then increase as Bible study skills develop;
- Inner silence – ISA. 30:15, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.” Breathe deeply, assume a relaxed position, empty your mind of distracting thoughts.

WHAT CONDITIONS ARE DESTRUCTIVE TO BIBLE STUDY?

- Feeling of being rushed – By scheduling a regular time, early enough, you need not be concerned about the time;
- Phone interruptions – turn off the ringer; let the answering machine take the call;
- Children interrupting – arise before they do in the morning, or wait until they are safely occupied elsewhere, nap time, or stay up after they are asleep;
- Fatigue – choose your time when you are rested;
- Background noise of any kind (music, TV, barking dogs) – choose a quiet, private place;
- Physical discomfort – uncomfortable chair, poor light, too hot or too cold. Fix it before you begin;
- Mental distractions – keep a notebook beside you to jot down reminders of things you must do so that you can dismiss the thought until later;
- Falling asleep – You probably have not chosen the right time of day. But if there is no remedy, do the best you can – and thank the Lord for the ability to sleep when your body needs it. (Older adults have the knack of sleeping almost anytime, anywhere, and usually can't do a thing about it!)

WHERE SHALL I LOOK FOR BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS?

- Christian book stores;
- Internet resources such as Christian Book Distributors (CBD), online at www.Christianbook.com, or phone 1-978-977-5000; Amazon Books, online at www.Amazon.com, (look for category, “Christian Books”);
- Church library – resource for books, commentaries, videos, tapes.
- About commentaries: Consider buying them individually rather than a set, unless you can afford to do both, so you can get the best commentary on a particular book (ask the advice of a knowledgeable friend or minister);
- *What the Bible Is All About*, by Henrietta Mears, is an excellent beginner’s resource, giving the basics about each book of the Bible.

IF I AM GETTING A LATE START, HOW CAN I MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME?

- Memorize the order of the books of the bible in the Table of Contents – helps you find books in the Bible much faster. (Or buy a Bible with a thumb index!)
- If you can’t memorize easily any more, make a card for each book of the Bible (like flash cards) and practice putting them in order (make a game of this with your children or grandchildren);
- Underscore or highlight, and memorize favorite verses;
- Read from a good children’s Bible story book – it might help you to understand the basics until you become familiar with the Bible;
- Teach your children and grandchildren, as you are learning;
- Attend Sunday school regularly! Request a class for beginners. Remember, Sunday school is not just for children!
- Join a weekly Bible study where you have opportunity to discuss;
- But when all is said and done, absolutely nothing will help you like your own daily reading and studying of the bible! Jealously guard your time with the Lord – it is life-changing. It is an investment you will take with you into eternity.

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE BIBLE STUDY IN OUR CHURCH?

- Emphasize the importance of Sunday School classes for adults as well as children;
- Be sure basic Bible studies are offered regularly, being careful to always offer a class for those with no background so environment is non-threatening.
- Encourage scripture memory from pre-school on up;
 - Offer incentives to children to memorize by giving a free week at camp, for instance, for the one who memorizes the greatest number of verses;
 - Let non-family members listen to the reciting of verses someone has been working on;
 - Encourage families to memorize together, and discuss the meaning of what they are memorizing.
- Urge everyone to bring their own Bible to church – and then use it, looking up scripture passages that are read aloud in worship services or classes;
- Offer a weekday Bible study and also an evening study for those who work.
- Be looking for church members with the gift of teaching, and offer them opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills.

PART TWO

PRAYER FOR THE TONGUE-TIED

INTRODUCTION

Prayer is mysterious for a lot of people. The thought of actually talking to God is rather awesome, especially if you suspect you are not on very good terms with him. Yet most people pray instinctively when in a serious crisis. People who haven't said a word to him all their lives suddenly cry out to God for help and expect an immediate answer. And if God doesn't answer, that's the end of it – maybe forever. If he does answer, it still might be the end of it – because the crisis is over.

The really frightening part comes if we are ever asked to pray publicly, like at a meeting or asking the blessing before a meal if that is not our custom. The we know the words have to sound good to whoever is listening. That's the important thing – forget about what God thinks. This can actually send some people into a panic.

Most people don't give prayer much thought if things are going well. We might believe there is a God looking down on us and somehow watching over us. But most people believe that God helps those who help themselves, so we are quite content to let God do his own thing, and we'll do ours, thank you.

Reading the Bible, however, raises new questions about prayer. We find we can't ignore the subject forever. What is prayer? Do I have to do it? How do I do it? What do I say? Is God really listening? Do I get special favors if I pray? What if I don't pray – does it make any difference? Is God angry if I don't pray? How do I begin?

These notes on prayer are very basic, easy to understand, and you will find that praying is no hard to do – if you are willing to take the first step. Open your mouth – say something – that's how you start.

Read through these notes; then read the scriptures on prayer. You will find a prayer commitment form near the end of the notes. If you will commit to pray every day, morning and evening (very briefly) for thirty days, the habit will be formed, and you will probably discover you have become dependent on that time with God. Eventually, instead of working at it, it will become easy, comfortable, and enjoyable. You will learn to listen to God speak to you – it's not just a one-way street. Like with Bible study, life will begin to take on a new perspective. Prayer will make a difference.

There is a prayer list for you to use. Simple. Just write the names of those people you want to pray for and a brief request; write the requests you have for yourself as well. Make a notation when those prayers have been answered. You will be amazed!

Nothing more really needs to be said. Sometime you might be brave enough to pray with some friends in a group – that is a great way to learn to pray – just listen to others who are experienced in prayer. But when all is said and done, there is nothing to do but PRAY. God is waiting...so let me not detain you any longer

PRAYER FOR THE TONGUE-TIED

*For those who don't know how and wish they did—
And for those who don't want to but know they should*

WHAT IS PRAYER?

- Prayer is conversing with God;
- It is by prayer that we make contact with God;
- It is through prayer that God communicates with us.

WHEN DID PRAYER BEGIN?

- In Genesis 1, the story of creation and the Fall, God speaks to the man and woman he had created;
- In Genesis 3, there is conversation between God and them;
- The first prayer of intercession is recorded in Genesis 18, when Abraham pleads with God to save the righteous of Sodom;
- From the beginning of time, God has desired to have conversation with his children – we call that prayer;
- Prayer has continued throughout all the ages, and there is indication of prayer continuing beyond this earthly existence (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4)

WHY IS PRAYER IMPORTANT??

- Prayer is basic to our spiritual nurture;
- John Calvin referred to prayer as the “soul of faith”;
- Without prayer, our theology becomes lifeless;
- It is through prayer that we learn the mind of God;
- We are told in both the Old and New Testaments to pray (see illustrations on separate pages);
- Prayer was a part of the lives of all God’s servants, both Old and New Testaments – it was as natural and assumed as breathing;
- Many consequences are enumerated in scripture for failing to pray.

WHEN SHOULD I PRAY?

- I Thess. 5:17, we are told to pray without ceasing – continuous conversation with God throughout the day;
- Daniel had set times to pray, morning, noon, and evening (Dan. 6:10);
- David experienced prayer in the middle of the night – hearing the Lord and speaking to the Lord;
- Jesus got up early, before daylight, to go to a solitary place to pray;
- Jesus prayed before partaking of meals;
- The apostles prayed whenever they were confronted with a need;

- In the early Church, believers prayed when gathered together for worship;
- Special prayer meetings were held in times of crisis, as when Peter was in prison;
- (See scripture references on pages 27-30 to illustrate when to pray.)

WHERE SHOULD I PRAY?

- Because prayer is both private and corporate, audible and silent, prayer should be going on continuously in our lives;
- Therefore, any place is an appropriate place for prayer – but circumstances may dictate whether your prayer is silent or audible;
- Jesus said not to pray in public to be seen of men, but to go into your closet and shut the door (Matt. 6:5-6):
 - Note, Jesus did not say not to pray in public, for he did throughout his life;
 - For instance, he always blessed the food before partaking of it;
 - But he does speak to the prideful motives of the Pharisees who loved to exercise spiritual disciplines of prayer and giving in public, for the purpose of being seen;
- Jesus; practice was to arise before dawn and go to a private place to pray;
- Jesus loved to go to a mountainside to pray and spend the night there;
- Prayer was a part of public worship in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament (I Cor. 14:14-15), indicating that the church (Wherever God's people are gathered) is an appropriate place for prayer;
- James 5:13-15, instructs those who are sick to call for the elders of the church to pray over them, indicating that prayer meetings will on occasion be held in the home.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN A CERTAIN POSTURE TO PRAY?

- There are various postures for prayer in the scripture:
 - Kneeling – Ps. 95:6, Daniel (Dan. 6:10); Jesus (Lk. 22:41); Paul, elders, disciples, wives, children (Acts 20:36; 21:5)
 - Hands lifted up – Ps. 63:4; I Tim. 2:8;
 - Prostrate, on one's face – Moses (Deut. 9:18);
 - Standing – Gen. 24:12-14;
- While no commands are given, examples abound, all indicating a position of humility and submission before God;
- There is no example in scripture of eyes being closed during prayer.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

- Speak to God **conversationally**, as you would talk to an intimate friend;
- The Psalms indicate that prayer is the hear crying out o God in praise or need, with no set format required;
- In the psalms, **corporate prayer** often had this format:
 - **Praise** for God's nature, attributes;
 - Praise for his mighty acts;
 - **Remembering** events of the past, of how God demonstrated his faithfulness and power;
 - **Confession of sin**;
 - **Plea for help** concerning the current situation;
 - Repetition of **praise**;
 - **Private prayer** often had no format, but as offered for a specific purpose, such as confession of sin (Ps. 51);
- Jesus gave us a model for prayer, **The Lord's Prayer** (Matt. 6:9-13);
 - The prayer is **addressed to God – Our Father**;
 - **Praise** – Hallowed be your name;
 - Prayer for the consummation of **God's kingdom** – His will to be don on earth;
 - Prayer for **daily bread** – necessities of life, indicating total dependence on God for our daily sustenance;
 - **Confession of sin**;
 - Prayer for **protection from evil**.
- A model for prayer that is easy to remember is **A-C-T-S**:
 - **A** = adoration;
 - **C** = confession;
 - **T** = thanksgiving;
 - **S** = supplication.
- However, not every prayer must have all these components because prayer may be continuous, or sometimes an emergency cry for help;
- The point is to **PRAY**, not worry about the format.

HOW SHALL I BEGIN?

- **Start your day with prayer**, at the beginning and end of your quiet time:
 - **Praise** God for who he is;
 - **Thank** him for what he has done;
 - **Ask** him to direct your thoughts as you read scripture;
 - Then pray about what has come to mind as you spent time in scripture:
 - **Confession** of sins and omissions;
 - **Direction** concerning your life;
 - **Questions** that came to mind;
 - **Instructions** to follow.
 - Pray about the events on your **day's agenda**, and **ongoing needs**;

- **Intercede** for your family, friends, church;
- **Thank** the Lord for his protection over your life as you face your day.
- **Pray throughout the day** as you go about your activities;
- **End your day with prayer**, just before going to sleep;
 - Give thanks, reviewing what has happened during the day;
 - Confess sins that come to mind;
 - Ask for the Lord's protection as you sleep.
- **Do not set unrealistic expectations** for yourself, such as going from zero time spent with the Lord to an hour or more – start small and increase slowly – it is better to spend 15 minutes regularly than one hour on occasion;
- **Work at spiritual disciplines** in the beginning, but after a while these disciplines will become treasure times on which you depend.

HOW CAN I REMEMBER WHAT TO PRAY FOR?

- Keep a prayer **journal** – write your prayers;
- Keep a **prayer list**:
 - A 3x5 card file, a card for each person;
 - A list – by days of the week;
 - List – by categories: family, friends, church, missionaries; government – city, state national international;
- Pray through the morning **newspaper**;
- Using a **world globe**, put your hand on countries as your pray;
- Pray through the **church newsletter**;
- Pray as you listen to the **news on television or internet**;
- Ask the Lord to give you a burden for specific people or ministries you are to pray for – you cannot pray for every need you hear about (unless you are called to a fulltime prayer ministry!).

ARE THERE HINDRANCES TO ANSWERED PRAYER?

- **Lack of forgiveness**:
 - **Mark 11:25**, “And when you stand praying, **if you hold anything against any one, forgive him**, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”
- **Unbelief**:
 - **Heb. 11:6** “**And without faith it is impossible to please God**, because any one who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”
 - **James 1:5-8**, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, **he must believe and not doubt**, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double – minded man, unstable in all he does.”

- **Unconfessed sin:**
 - **PS 66:18-20**, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me~!”
 - **Isa. 59:2**, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”
- **Lack of regard for God’s commands:**
 - **Prov. 28:9**, “If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.”

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO GAIN BY TIME ALONE WITH GOD?

- **Changed perspective** – about ourselves, others our work;
- **Pressures of life begin to dissipate;**
- **Peace** in place of anxiety, stress;
- **Positive attitude** toward life in general;
- Greater **emotional stability;**
- **Purity** – Christ exposes that in us which is impure and gives us a new heart;
- **Desire to obey** Christ;
- **Re-ordering of priorities;**
- **Guidance** in making decisions;
- **Power** – for service in Christ’s kingdom;
- **Familiarity with scripture** that makes it a useful companion in daily activities;
- **Strength to face crises**, endure suffering;
- **Confidence** in facing death.

HOW CAN WE LEARN TO PRAY AS A CHURCH?

- Create **small prayer groups** that meet regularly – for breakfast, briefly before or after church; a regular Wednesday evening prayer meeting;
- Elders and deacons can benefit in having **prayer partners** to pray before Session meetings and meetings of the Diaconate;
- Circles can have **prayer partners;**
- Church members can take a moment to **pray for the ministers before a service begins** (done by signing up for a given date on the calendar);
- Elders can be available to pray with people in need at the end of a service;
- Designate a place for prayer in the church that is always available;
- Pray on the phone when a need is presented;
- Pray in the company of children so they can learn to pray by listening;
- Allow time for prayer! Session meetings and committee meetings might be shorter if more time was spent at the front end in prayer.

WHAT CHANGES MIGHT COME ABOUT IN OUR CHURCH THROUGH PRAYER?

- It will become a more unified and loving congregation;
- The presence and power of the Holy Spirit will be experienced in services and activities;
- Evangelism will happen – people will be drawn to Christ;
- Growth in spiritual strength and numbers;
- Spiritual maturity – stronger faith, and able to carry greater responsibilities more effectively;
- Children and young people will become stronger in a praying environment;
- Ministers and staff will be encouraged;
- The church will have a positive witness in the city;
- Missionaries can become a vital part of the life of the congregation through prayer;
- A praying church can strengthen our denomination;
- The Lord will bless us in surprising and powerful ways beyond our imagination:

Eph. 3:20-21

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, forever and ever! Amen.

SCRIPTURES ABOUT PRAYER

WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

Deut. 4:7

“What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we **pray** to him?”

I Sam. 12:23

“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to **pray** for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.”

2 Chr. 7:14

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and **pray** and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Ps. 32:6

“Therefore let everyone who is godly **pray** to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.”

Jer. 29:7

“Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. **Pray** to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

Jer. 29:11-12

“...For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and **pray** to me, and I will listen to you.”

Matt. 6:6

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and **pray** to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Mark 14:38

“Watch and **pray** so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Luke 6:28

“Bless those who curse you, **pray** for those who mistreat you.”

Luke 22:40

“On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘**Pray** that you will not fall into temptation.’”

Eph. 6:18

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of **prayers** and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on **praying** for all the saints.”

I Thess. 5:17

“**Pray** without ceasing.”

James 5:13-16

“Is any one of you in trouble? He should **pray**. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to **pray** over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And their **prayer** offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and **pray** for each other so that you may be healed. The **prayer** of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

WHEN SHOULD I PRAY?

Ps. 1:2

“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates **day and night**.”

Ps. 16:7

“I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at **night** my heart instructs me.”

Ps. 17:3

“Though you probe my heart and examine me at **night**, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.”

Ps. 22:2

“O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by **night** and am not silent.”

Ps. 42:8

“By day the LORD directs his love, at **night** his song is with me – a prayer to the God of my life.”

Ps. 77:2

“When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at **night**, I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted.”

Ps. 88:1

“O LORD, the God who saves me, **day and night**, I cry out before you.”

Ps. 119:55

“In the **night** I remember your name, O LORD, and I will keep your law.”

Luke 6:12

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and **spent the night praying** to God.”

HOW SHOULD I PRAY?

Matt. 6:9-13

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’”

Rom. 8:26-27

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

Eph. 6:18

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

I Tim. 2:1-2

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

I Pet. 3:7

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

HOW CAN I KNOW GOD WILL ANSWER?

Ps. 37:4

“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will **give you the desires of your heart.**”

Jer. 33:3

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Matt. 7:7-11

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ‘Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!’”

I John 5:14-15

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of him.”

Phil. 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Mark 11:23-24

“I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

TEACH ME TO PRAY

Luke 11:1-13

- I. Pattern** for prayer: vv. 1-4
- II. Persistence** in prayer: vv. 5-8
- III. Promises** of prayer: vv. 9-13

A PRAYER PATTERN

MORNING	EVENING
Be still	Review the day
Adoration	Give thanks
Thanksgiving	Confession – where you have failed
Dedication	Commitment of life to the Lord for the night
Guidance	
Intercession	
Petition	
Listen	

PERSONS FOR WHOM YOU PRAY

Family:

Neighbor:

Fellow Worker:

“God sends”:

I commit myself to spend time with God each morning and evening for the next 30 days.

Signature

from Ben C. Johnson
An Adventure in Prayer

A FEW HELPFUL BOOKS ON PRAYER

Becoming a Woman Of Prayer, Cynthia Heral, Navpress.

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster, Harper & Row.

Christian Meditation: The better Way, Doris Moffatt, Christian Herald Books.

Contemplative Prayer, Thomas Merton, Image Books.

The Lord and His Prayer, N.T. Wright, Edermans.

Meditation: A Practical Guide to a Spiritual Discipline, McCormick, Thomas and Fish, Sharon, Intervarsity Press.

Practicing His Presence, Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach, Christian Books.

Prayer, Richard Foster, Harper Collins.

Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home, Richard Foster, Harper

Prayers from the HEArt, Richard Foster, Harper, San Francisco.

Prayers that Avail Much, three0volume set, Harrison House.

Search for Silence, Elizabeth O'Connnor, Word Books.

Too Busy Not to Pray, Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, InterVarsity.

What God Does When Women Pray, Evelyn Christenson, Word.

With Christ in the School of Prayer, Andrew Murray, Revell.



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