OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Teacher’s Manual

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**Helpful Headings in this Teacher’s Manual**

### OBJECTIVES

### OVERVIEW

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### APPLICATION

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### OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

* be familiar with the background of the thirty-nine books in the Old Testament
* gain insights from the Old Testament for personal application
* be inspired to study, engage, and explore the Old Testament in greater detail

**OVERVIEW**

Session 1: **The Pentateuch**

Session 2: **The History Books I**

Session 3: **The History Books II**

Session 4: **The Wisdom Literature**

Session 5: **The Major Prophets**

Session 6: **The Minor Prophets**

# THINGS TO KNOW

[Important notes for the teacher/s of this course]

*Old Testament Survey* is a two-day course that has a total of six sessions of 60 minutes (maximum) per session.

# In this teacher's manual, students' notes are enclosed in boxes for easy reference. The blanks in the students' manual have been filled in this manual. However, spaces for notes in the students' manual have been removed from this teacher's manual. Also, notes enclosed in brackets in this manual are guidelines or recommendations for teachers.

The general structure to be followed for each session includes: teaching, application (through discussion questions), class processing, and activity (when applicable). Please note that the discussions and activities may be revised based on context and location. More time may be allotted for the activity. Most discussions and activities are done in small groups. Removing the application and activities to give way for a longer teaching session is not recommended. Class processing is done at the end of the application (discussion questions) to gauge individual learnings and possibly answer questions the participants might have. A ten-minute break should be given after every session.

The goal is to be engaging and dynamic by creating variety in content delivery during teaching.

Deviation from teaching notes comes with preparation and mastery. All teachers are encouraged to vary the methods of teaching, but not at the expense of omitting content by adding extra-biblical material. Allow for participants to interact with the material and with the other participants, thus giving way to discussion, activities, and application.

As a teacher, focus your preparation time on communicating the key points of each session and giving examples or illustrations that will inspire and encourage the participants. Not all the provided illustrations from the teacher's notes have to be used, and others may be substituted for more relevant or personal illustrations.

It is highly recommended that Scripture narratives used in explaining points be delivered by storytelling, whereas short verses may simply be read verbatim to support the validity of key thoughts. Please note that the students' manual uses the ESV Bible translation.

Also, a list of logistical needs is provided for some sessions so the teacher and administrative staff or volunteer can adequately prepare all videos, supplies, and materials ahead of time.

Lastly, a simple evaluation form is provided at the end of this course. Please allow for participants to fill this out and submit by the end of the final session. This will help provide feedback for improvement and future implementation of the course.

### SUGGESTED TIME ALLOTMENT PER TOPIC

*[Please allow for flexibility in the time allotment.]*

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| **DAY 1** |
| SESSION 1 | DURATION | TOPIC |
| **The Pentateuch** | 5 minutes | Welcome and Introduction |
| 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 2 |  |  |
| **The History Books I** | 25 minutes | Lecture  |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 3 |  |  |
| **The History Books II** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes  | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 5 minutes | End of Day 1  |
| **DAY 2** |
| SESSION 4 |  |  |
| **The Wisdom Literature** | 10 minutes | Activity (Books of the OT Relay) |
| 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes  | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 5 |  |  |
| **The Major Prophets** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes  | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 6 |  |  |
| **The Minor Prophets** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes  | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 5 minutes | End of Old Testament Survey |

# Session 1 – THE PENTATEUCH

### WELCOME AND introduction (5 MINUTES)

[Welcome the participants to this course. Begin with a time of prayer and invite the Holy Spirit to be with you. Then briefly introduce the course objectives and an overview of each session. Encourage the participants to bring their Bibles during each session.]

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

The Pentateuch is the first five books in the Hebrew Bible. The word *pentateuch* comes from two Greek words *penta* (five) and *teukhos* (scroll).

An Overture is the musical piece at the beginning of a composition that contains all the primary themes and motifs to be developed later in the symphony.

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| **Genesis: The Symphony’s Overture**1. Moses (1) wrote Genesis (and the entire Pentateuch). It is the overture to the rest of Scripture—foreshadowing the dramatic events that follow and introducing the themes to be further developed. It is the foundation of all biblical revelation; everything that comes after rests upon it. To understand the Bible, we must understand Genesis. |

### EXPLANATION

The Pentateuch affirms Moses as its author (Exodus 24:4, 34:27; Numbers 33:2). Other books of the Old Testament affirm Moses as the author (Joshua 8:32; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 6:18). The New Testament affirms Moses as the author (Mark 12:26; John 5:46; Romans 10:5). Modern critical scholars, with their rationalistic and anti-supernatural presuppositions, are nearly unanimous in their rejection of Mosaic authorship.

Moses collected incidents from personal experience, oral tradition, earlier documents, and 80 days in the presence of the Lord to complete Genesis and the Pentateuch.

An editor or scribe obviously added the final words concerning his death (Deuteronomy 34:5, 6, 10-12).

The Exodus occurred around 1450 BC and Moses wrote Genesis sometime between then and his death forty years later.

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| 2. Some of the important themes that are introduced in Genesis are:• Creation (2) out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) (1:1)• God’s absolute sovereignty (3) (1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24)• Total depravity (4) (6:5)• Redemption (5) (3:7,21)• Covenantal (6) blessing and cursing (15:18) |

“Genesis supplies the historical basis for God’s covenant with His people.” **[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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| **Exodus: The Book of Redemption**1. Exodus is divided into three sections.• Section 1 (1:1-18:27) concerns the Exodus (7) from Egypt; it reveals the power of God. |

### EXPLANATION

Exodus opens with the Israelites as slaves in Egypt and no longer honored guests.

“And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.”

But the Israelites cried to the Lord and He raised up a deliverer for them.

*23During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. 24And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.* (Exodus 2:23,24)

God hardened the heart of the Pharaoh so that the deliverance would be an eternal memorial for the Israelites.

The deliverance from Egypt, and especially the parting of the sea, became the determining event in the history of the nation (Joshua 24:6, 7; Nehemiah 9:11; Psalm 78:12,13,53; Psalm 106:9-11; Psalm 114:1,3; Hebrews 11:29). “Something happened, at the frontiers of Egypt, that persuaded the eyewitnesses that God had intervened directly and decisively in their fate. Subsequent generations were convinced that this unique demonstration of God’s mightiness on their behalf was the most remarkable event in the whole history of nations.” **[[2]](#footnote-2)**

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| • Section 2 (19:1-24:18) concerns the giving of the Law (8); it reveals the holiness of God. |

### EXPLANATION

The Law was given to provide a standard of holiness, to identify sin, and to reveal the divine nature.

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| • Section 3 (25:1-40:38) concerns the design of the tabernacle (9); it reveals the wisdom of God. |

 *“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.”* (Exodus 25:8)

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| 2. The book is filled with pictures that foreshadow (10) the redemption we have in Christ. |

### EXPLANATION

Crossing the Red Sea is a type of water baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1,2).

The Passover Lamb is a type of Jesus and His sacrifice for sins (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Egypt is a type of system of this world that attempts to keep God’s people in bondage and tries to seduce them back with memories of garlic and leeks.

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| 3. Exodus shows God’s people that He kept His promise (11) to Abraham and that He is sovereign in history. |

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| **Leviticus: The Book of Holiness**1. Only a small part of Leviticus is a narrative (12). The rest of the book is legal literature. |

### EXPLANATION

The three narrative sections are:

1. The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests to the Lord in chapters 8 and 9.

2. The rebellion of Aaron’s sons in chapter 10.

3. The stoning of the blasphemer in chapter 24.

The legal literature has two primary forms:

1. Absolute commands expressed positively or negatively: “You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God.” (26:1,2)

2. Case laws containing a condition and a consequence: *2“If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the Lord by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security . . . 5 . . . he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it . . .”* (6:2-5)

Leviticus contains an abundance of typology, especially in reference to the three annual feasts of the Lord: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

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| 2. Leviticus is an instruction manual (13) for the priests and the people. It teaches the priests the proper worship of God, and it teaches the people how to relate to God and to each other.3. It also provides instruction on how to live with a holy (14) God. Much of it is concerned with atonement—the covering over of sins through the various sacrifices. |

### EXPLANATION

Only separation from the world and everything that corrupts and makes fellowship with God impossible. The word *holy* is used over a hundred times in Leviticus. *“. . . You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”* (19:2)

The Hebrew word for atonement occurs fifty-two times in Leviticus. The word blood occurs eighty-eight times. *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”*

(Leviticus 17:11)

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| 4. The sacrificial atonements (15) in Leviticus did not actually remove sin—they covered the believing penitent until the Lamb of God would come to take away their sins. |

### EXPLANATION

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

*. . . 18knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* (1 Peter 1:18,19)

*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*. (Hebrews 10:4)

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| **Numbers: Rebellion in the Wilderness**Numbers consists of historical narrative, with liberal doses of law, and instructions for the Levitical priests.1. Numbers chronicles Israel’s thirty-eight (16) years of wandering in the wilderness and documents the transition from the old generation to the new. It begins as the first generation leaves their encampment at Sinai and ends on the plains of Moab as the second generation prepares to enter the land. |

### EXPLANATION

The Hebrew name for this book is: “In the Wilderness.” This term is not only fitting for Israel’s experience, but it is a metaphor as well for the condition of judgment that fell on the people who refused to enter the land of rest.

The book of Numbers may be regarded as “The Memoirs of Moses in the Desert Years.”

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| 2. Although it primarily describes events related to the first (17) generation, its message is for the second generation. The message is to urge obedience to God by reminding them of His judgment upon their parents because of covenant disloyalty, and to encourage them to trust in God’s promises as they follow Him into the Promised Land. |

### EXPLANATION

Numbers serves as an exhortation to believers to not repeat the same mistakes in their Promised Land.

Numbers recounts several events that New Testament authors will later use as examples for the church: The bad report (13:30-33; 14:1,2; Hebrews 3:7-13); The rebellion of Korah (16:1-3,13; Jude 1:11); The judgment of the fiery serpents (21:5-9; 1 Corinthians 10:9-12; John 3:14-15).

Leaders also have the same responsibility to obey. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam all rebelled against the Lord at different times and experienced the consequences of their sin. God does not have a double standard.

The original recipients of the book were the people of Israel in the second generation from the Exodus, awaiting the command of God to cross the Jordan to conquer the land of Canaan. The book describes the affairs of the people of the first generation, but its teaching is for their children who are now mature and are about to enter Canaan.

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| 3. Exodus and Leviticus revealed God’s desire for a relationship (18) with His people; Numbers now reveals that this relationship will require a response of covenantal obedience on the part of the people. |

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| **Deuteronomy: Preparation for the Promise**Deuteronomy was written during the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the departure from Egypt, as the people faced the flooded Jordan River and the walled city of Jericho (1:1-3).It is referred to over eighty times in the New Testament and is quoted more by Jesus than any other book.1. Deuteronomy consists of three sermons Moses gave before the people entered the land, and before he entered eternity. |

### EXPLANATION

The tone is similar to some of Paul’s exhortations in 2 Timothy as he also anticipates his departure from this world.

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| * Sermon 1 (1:1-4:9) is a recapitulation of the important events (19) of the last forty years.
* Sermon 2 (5:1-26:19) is a restating of the laws (20) necessary for their

success in the land.* Sermon 3 (27:1-34:12) is a warning (21) of things to come.

2. Deuteronomy is a fresh statement of God’s covenant purposes (22) to a new generation. Moses addresses the second generation who needed reassurance of God’s covenant promises in light of impending conquest and settlement. He exhorts them to:* Hold fast to the Word (23) (4:5,6,40; 5:32; 6:17; 8:1; 12:32; 29:9)
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*“You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess . . .”* (Deuteronomy 11:8)

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| * Teach their children (24) (4:9; 11:19; 32:46)
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*6“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”* (Deuteronomy 6:6,7)

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| * Remember (25) God’s covenant faithfulness (4:10; 8:18; 32:7)
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*“Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God.”* (Deuteronomy 4:23)

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| * Stay humble (26) (8:11-17; 9:4)
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*“And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.”* (Deuteronomy 8:2)

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| * Do not be afraid (27) (7:17,18; 31:6)
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 *“When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”* (Deuteronomy 20:1)

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| APPLICATION (10 MINUTES)1. Genesis has been described as the overture of the symphony, forecasting several themes that are woven through all of Scripture. Choose one of the themes and briefly describe why this is true.2. Can the book of Leviticus have a meaningful impact on believers today, or was it merely for the people of God whom it was originally written for? How does it affect your relationship with God?3. In your own words, briefly retell the “big picture version” of the story of the Pentateuch. What can we learn from it? What have you learned from it? |

### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

### BREAK (10 MINUTES)

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| **ASSIGNMENT**Read the first eleven chapters of Genesis and look for the themes of creation (*ex nihilo*), God’s absolute sovereignty, eternal judgment, total depravity, redemption, and covenantal blessing and cursing. |

# Session 2 – THE HISTORY BOOKS I

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

**Joshua: The Book of Fulfillment**

The work is anonymous, but tradition credits Joshua, and the textual evidence makes the supposition plausible.

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| 1. The book covers the time period from the beginning of the conquest of Canaan (1) to the death of Joshua. It records the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises to Israel and the failure of Israel to complete the conquest. |

### EXPLANATION

To show the fulfillment of God’s promise, the author divided the book into two main sections. The first section narrates the conquest of significant parts of the land, and the second section narrates the division of the land.

To show the failure of Israel to take the land, the author recorded cities and enclaves that were yet unconquered (15:63, 16:10, 17:12). These tribes eventually seduced Israel and lead them to idolatry. *“. . . they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you.”* (23:13)

There were enclaves of native tribes who were still there when David took the throne over 350 years later.

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| 2. The Exodus was just half (2) of God’s redemptive work. God had promised that He would bring His people out of slavery and bring them into the PromisedLand. Joshua is the literary bridge between Israel’s wilderness experience and the early struggles in possessing the land.3. Canaan was supposed to be the first (3) stage in God’s plan to provide salvation for the whole world. It is the “earnest” or “downpayment” of the promise He made to Abraham that all the nations of the world would be blessed in him. |

The Book of Joshua deals with one very important stage in the fulfillment of God's great plan to provide salvation for the whole world.

The blessing is always given so that we can be a blessing.

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| 4. The book of Joshua was written as a memorial (4) to the Lord’s faithfulness for subsequent generations to read and believe (Joshua 4:21-24). |

*21And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 22then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ 23For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, 24so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”* (Joshua 4:21-24)

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| **Judges: The Book of Apostasy**1. The book covers the time period from the death of Joshua (5) to the death of Samson and the dawn of the monarchy. It chronicles the deterioration of the nation and Israel’s desperate need for moral and spiritual leadership. |

### EXPLANATION

The book of Judges is anonymous, but Jewish tradition attributes it to the prophet Samuel. It was probably written during Saul’s kingship or at the beginning of David’s, somewhere during the last half of the 11th century BC.

Some of the judges ruled the entire nation (Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Samson, Deborah, and Barak), and some only ruled certain tribes or portions of Israel (Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Shamgar, and Abimelech). In all there were fifteen judges, if Barak is considered a co-judge with Deborah and if Eli and Samuel are included.

The number of years listed for the 13 judges totals 410, but the chronology from Joshua to Samson only supports around 300 years. The discrepancy is produced by the overlap of the reign of several of the judges.

There are a number of strong female characters in the book: Deborah, Jael, Sisera’s mother, Jephthat’s daughter, and Samson’s wives.

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| 2. The book portrays human sin (6) and disintegration through the four-fold cycle of sin, subjugation, supplication, and salvation. |

### EXPLANATION

The cycle begins with the Spirit-anointed Othniel and ends with the sexually-addicted Samson. The book then concludes with two of the darkest tales in Israel’s long and sordid history.

(2:11-19)

Chapters 17-21 form a double appendix. In the final section of the book, Israel is in disarray religiously (17:1-13), politically (18:1-31), morally (19:1-30), and socially (20:1-21:25). The Judges brought limited relief but achieved no permanent solution.

A nation that before Joshua solemnly swore to obey God quickly intermarried with pagans and turned to other gods. The book begins with the tribes united in conquest and ends with them at war with each other.

One of the themes of Judges is “the Canaanization of Israel.” The people of God self-destruct when they exchange obedience to him for the values of their pagan neighbors.

“The Israelites experience ‘Egyptian’ oppression all over again, only this time on their own soil.”

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| 3. The book was a warning against idolatry (7) and tribal factions. The final verse is the book’s thesis statement.*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*JUDGES 21:25 |

### EXPLANATION

However, in the later books that chronicle the history of the Monarchy, the narratives will thoroughly counter that premise: A king not only fails to give Israel what they need, he actually makes matters worse.

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| **Ruth: The Book of Covenant Loyalty**Although the book of Ruth is anonymous, an early rabbinic tradition attributes it to Samuel. The primary purpose of the book of Ruth is to record an important event in the lineage of David, Israel’s greatest king.1. The events in Ruth took place during the dark days of the judges (8). In the midst of such darkness, the story of Ruth shines even more brightly. |

### EXPLANATION

“The Book of Ruth gleams like a beautiful pearl against a jet-black background.”[[3]](#footnote-3)1

The general outline of the story is as follows.

Elimelech, a man from Bethlehem, moved to Moab with his wife Naomi and their sons Mahlon and Kilion, to escape a famine.

Elimelech and his sons died in Moab, leaving Naomi alone with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

Naomi returned to Bethlehem and Ruth forsook her own people and followed Naomi.

Naomi’s wealthy relative Boaz negotiated with another relative for the right to redeem Naomi and marry Ruth.

A son (Obed) was born to Ruth who became the grandfather of David, the greatest king in Israel.

In the Hebrew canon, Ruth is placed immediately after Proverbs and before the Song of Solomon, associating it with the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31.

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| 2. Ruth was a pagan from Moab (9), a worshiper of Chemosh and excluded from the commonwealth of Israel. But God providentially chose her for salvation as a picture of His love and desire for all the nations. |

### EXPLANATION

“Ruth the Moabitess, grafted into the root and richness of the olive tree of the Abrahamic promise, was anticipating the greater fulfillment of the patriarchal promise, that in the Abrahamic Seed all the nations would find blessing.” It is significant that Ruth is in David’s lineage. It is a picture of the Greater David’s command to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

To this day, Ruth is read during the Feast of Pentecost—the feast that celebrated the first fruits of the harvest. Ruth was the first fruits of a world-wide harvest of souls.

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| 3. The book of Ruth is about covenant loyalty (10). Ruth chose to leave her home with no promise of reward because of her love for Naomi.*16But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”*RUTH 1:16,17 |

### EXPLANATION

The word *covenant* is never used in the book but it underlies the entire narrative.

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| **Samuel: Triumph and Tragedy** |

### EXPLANATION

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel were one book in the original Hebrew. They were named after the prophet Samuel because of his prominent role in them.

Tradition ascribes the work to Samuel and the prophets Nathan and Gad.

*Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the Chronicles of Samuel the seer, and in the Chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and in the Chronicles of Gad the seer . . .*

(1 Chronicles 29:29)

The book of Samuel opens with the birth of Samuel and closes with David preparing for his son Solomon to accede to the throne–a period covering approximately 150 years.

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| 1. The book of Samuel tells the story of the establishment of the monarchy (11)  through the lives of Samuel, Saul, and David.

2. Samuel was the first of the major prophets (12). He defined the role the future prophets would have as guardians of the theocracy. |

### EXPLANATION

The office of the prophet arose before the office of king. The prophet was above the king because he represented God and his covenant. David is idealized as the model king because he always submitted to the office of the prophet. Yahweh was the true king, and David was merely his vice-regent.

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| 3. Saul was the first king of the united monarchy (13) of Israel. He reigned forty years. |

### EXPLANATION

He began his reign as the Lord’s anointed and ended it consulting a witch for direction because the Lord had departed from him.

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| 4. David was the second king of the united monarchy of Israel. He reigned eight years in Hebron and thirty-two years in Jerusalem. |

### EXPLANATION

He began his reign as the Lord’s chosen and ended it in betrayal, intrigue, and sorrow after his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah.

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| 5. Hannah’s prayer becomes an overture of the theme (14) presented throughout the book: the reversal of fortune as an indicator of divine sovereignty. God rules over the affairs of history, and He elects and foreordains the course of persons and nations. |

### EXPLANATION

*6The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. 7The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. 8He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world.* (2:6-8)

Reversal of Fortune: A formerly barren woman becomes the mother of six children; men of privilege, Eli's sons, die in shame.

Nothing can prevent David’s ascent to the kingdom. “The narrator summarizes the story aptly: ‘And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand’ (23:14).” No matter what schemes Saul threw at David, he could not snuff out David’s life. Ultimately, Saul could not and would not triumph over David, for the Lord’s rule cannot be overturned.

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| APPLICATION (10 MINUTES)[The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]1. What can we learn from the book of Joshua? Is it hard to understand the violence between Israel and their neighbors during this era of their history? How does that translate into our lives today?
2. Why is Ruth an important aspect in the overall story of the people of Israel and their relationship with the Gentiles? Is there a relationship in your life that resembles Ruth’s relationship with Naomi?
3. Did God want Israel to have a king? What were the main differences between Saul and David?
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### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

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| assignmentRead the book of Ruth and look for New Testament principles and themes. |

# Session 3 – THE HISTORY BOOKS II

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

**Kings: The Consequences of Sin**

The Jewish Talmud attributes the work to Jeremiah.

First and second Kings were originally just one book, but were separated during the Septuagint translation in the 3rd century BC.

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| 1. Kings was written for the Jews during the Babylonian (1) captivity to explain the reasons for their plight. It covers three periods: the united monarchy, the divided monarchy, and the surviving kingdom.
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### EXPLANATION

Kings covers the period from the accession of Solomon (971 BC) to the deportation of the southern kingdom to Babylon (586).

Through David’s leadership the twelve tribes became a united kingdom, and through Solomon’s leadership the kingdom increased in wealth and territory (1 Kings 4:21). However, after Solomon’s death, his son Rehoboam’s despotic leadership split the kingdom in two (1 Kings 12:1-19). The leader of the rebellious northern kingdom of Israel was the gifted Jeroboam, Solomon’s former overseer of the fortifications at Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:26-40).

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| 1. The divided monarchy consisted of Judah (2), the southern kingdom with its capital at Jerusalem, and Israel, the northern kingdom with its capital at Shechem. Judah had nineteen kings over 350 years. Israel had twenty kings over a period of over 200 years.
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### EXPLANATION

Judah had occasional revivals, eight righteous kings (or, semi-righteous), and eleven unrighteous kings. Israel had no revivals and no righteous kings; eight of them either were killed or committed suicide.

In 722 BC, Assyria attacked Israel, deported the people, and resettled the land with its own people. In 605 and 597, Babylon attacked Judah, finally conquering Jerusalem in 586, carrying away most of the people into captivity.

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| 1. Kings features five influential men.
* Solomon’s (3) reign was characterized by the choice he made early in his career for wisdom over wealth (1 Kings 3:5-14). However, his wisdom failed him in domestic affairs (1 Kings 11:1-11).
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*“The Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’ Solomon answered, ‘Give your servant a discerning heart to govern Your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.’ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, ‘Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for — both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.’”* (1 Kings 3:5-14)

*“King Solomon loved many foreign women. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.’ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Since you have not kept my covenant and My decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.’*” (1 Kings 11:1-11)

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| • Elijah (4) is the most colorful of the prophets and the one most referred to in the New Testament (twenty-nine times). |

### EXPLANATION

Elijah is noted for stopping the rain for three years (1 Kings 17:1), challenging the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:18-40), and translating to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-12).

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| • Elisha’s (5) ministry lasted fifty to sixty years during the reign of four kings. |

He was discipled for four and a half years by Elijah. He is known for the “double portion” anointing, and the many miracles he performed.

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| • Hezekiah’s (6) reign of twenty-nine years was a time of great national revival for Judah. |

### EXPLANATION

He abolished idolatry, destroyed the “brazen serpent,” reopened the Temple, and reinstated the tithe. Hezekiah was a disciple of Isaiah and the greatest king the southern kingdom ever had (2 Kings 18:5,6). But he failed to disciple his own son Manasseh, who became one of the most abominable kings in Judah’s history. *“Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites.”* (2 Kings 21:9)

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| • Josiah (7) came to the throne at eight and began to seek the Lord at sixteen. At twenty, he purged the temple from the idolatry that had plagued Judah for seventy years. |

### EXPLANATION

At twenty-four, he discovered the book of the law in the temple ruins and made a solemn vow of obedience to the Lord in the presence of all the people.

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| **Chronicles: The Book of Destiny** |

### EXPLANATION

The traditional author is assumed to be Ezra. The last verses of Chronicles are repeated in the first verses of Ezra, indicating continuity between the writings. The two books also share many theological, historical, and linguistic similarities that imply the same person authored them.

Chronicles was written sometime in the fifth century BC, after the return from Babylon. If Ezra was the author, then it was written after he returned to Jerusalem in 458 BC.

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| 1. Chronicles was written to the Jewish remnant (8) who, after returning from Babylon, found the work of rebuilding slow and the obstacles numerous. |

### EXPLANATION

Chronicles is a book of hope, written to urge the remnant to complete the work they had started.

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| 2. Chronicles covers the same period as Kings (9), but the purpose of the two works is very different. Kings emphasizes the sins of the nation; Chronicles emphasizes the glory of the nation—especially the four revivals under Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. |

### EXPLANATION

Asa (reigned 911-870 BC) was the third king of Judah. He reigned 41 years. He put away the male prostitutes, removed idols from the holy places, broke down altars, and deposed the “queen mother” because of her idolatry. He sacrificed 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep and led his people into a national covenant to seek God. However, in his 36th year, when Baasha, the king of the Northern Kingdom, attacked him, he enlisted the aid of the Syrian king instead of trusting the Lord. When the prophet Hanani rebuked him for his compromise, he had the prophet thrown in jail. Three years later, Asa contracted a severe disease in his feet. He did not seek the Lord and he died.

Jehoshaphat (reigned 873-848 BC) was Asa’s son. In his early years, he sought God and removed the high places and the Asherah from Judah. When Moab and Ammon made war against him, he inquired of the Lord and proclaimed a fast for all of Judah. But in his later years, he married his son Jehoram to Jezebel’s daughter, a decision that eventually led to the introduction of Baal worship in the Southern Kingdom.

Hezekiah (reigned 715-686 BC) acceded to the throne at a one of the lowest points in Judah’s history. He immediately reopened and cleansed the Temple that his father Ahaz had left closed and desecrated. He then reorganized its liturgical and choral service. After a monumental Passover celebration, the people were moved to destroy all their idols. Unfortunately, Hezekiah did not raise his son Manasseh in the ways of the Lord, and so he became one of the most wicked kings in Judah’s history. He sacrificed his sons in the fire, practiced witchcraft, and consulted mediums. He named his son Amon after the principal Egyptian deity.

Josiah (reigned 640-609 BC) had no spiritual training at home (his father was Amon and his grandfather was Manasseh). Yet he began to seek the Lord when he was sixteen. He purged Judah of idolatry, destroyed the altars of Baal, and burned the bones of the false priests.

Chronicles omits David’s conflict with Saul, his sin with Bathsheba, his problems with Absalom, the sins of Solomon, and almost the entire history of the Northern Kingdom.

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| **Ezra: The Faithful Scribe**1. Ezra led the second (10) wave of exiles from Babylon, codified Israel’s laws, and probably collected and edited the Old Testament canon.*For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*EZRA 7:10 |

### EXPLANATION

Ezra first devoted himself to study God’s Word. That is phase one of discipleship: learning the Word of God. Then Ezra did what he learned. That is phase two of discipleship: obeying the Word of God. Finally, Ezra taught the Word. That is phase three of discipleship: teaching the Word of God.

This book was probably written sometime between Ezra’s return to Jerusalem in 458 BC and Nehemiah’s return in 444 BC. Ezra was written to the remnant of Jews who, after returning to their land from the Babylonian captivity, found the work of rebuilding slow and the obstacles numerous.

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| 2. In 539 BC, the Persian king Cyrus (11) allowed the Jews to return to their land. Zerubbabel led the first wave of around 50,000 Jews, and began to rebuild the temple. Difficulties delayed the completion of the temple until the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah. The temple was completed in 515 BC. |

### EXPLANATION

Cyrus the Great (600-530 BC) was the king of Persia from 550-530 BC. Isaiah prophesied concerning him 150 years before his reign: *28“who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose’ . . . 45Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed . . . 3I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. 5I am the Lord, and there is no other . . . 6that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides*

*me . . .”* (Isaiah 44:28-45:6)

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| 3. Fifty-seven (12) years later, Ezra led a small remnant from Babylon with the support of King Artaxerxes. |

There is a gap of 57 years between chapter 6 and chapter 7.

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| 4. Ezra was written to show that God is the sovereign (13) Lord of history and will use pagan rulers (Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes) to accomplish His purpose. |

### EXPLANATION

Even though God was faithful to return the people to their land, they were unfaithful to Him and took foreign wives for themselves. Ezra interceded for the people *“praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before God.”* When the people heard, they wept bitterly, repented, and put away their foreign wives. (Ezra 10:1-3)

Strong, confident leadership is required to lead the people of God forward. (5:2)

*“Then Zerubbabel and Jeshua set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.”* (Ezra 5:2)

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| **Nehemiah: Building and Battling** |

### EXPLANATION

Nehemiah wrote all the ‘first person’ sections of the book, but Ezra probably compiled and edited the finished work. It was probably written around 430-420 BC.

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| 1. Nehemiah was the trusted cupbearer to King Artaxerxes (14). When he heard a report of the state of Jerusalem, he petitioned the king to allow him to return and rebuild the city. |

### EXPLANATION

He served two terms as governor of the Judean province, executing political and religious reform. He rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem while battling the enemies of the Lord that tried to stop him.

The book of Nehemiah records the last historical events of the Old Testament.

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| 2. The theme of Nehemiah is the power of one person to change (15) a nation. It is the story of decisive leadership coupled with significant management skills. These are reflected in the rebuilding of the walls, a feat he completed in fifty-two days. |

### EXPLANATION

Nehemiah was a man of prayer. He prayed when he heard the state of his homeland (1:6-11). He prayed when the king wanted to know his request (2:4). He prayed when his enemies assailed the walls (4:9).

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| **Esther: The Woman of Destiny** |

### EXPLANATION

Tradition attributes this book to Esther or Mordecai. It was probably written shortly after the death of Xerxes (465 BC), in the reign of his son Artaxerxes I.

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| 1. When Cyrus conquered Babylon (16), he provided for the Jews to return to their land. However, the vast majority did not go. |

### EXPLANATION

The people disobeyed the prophetic warnings of Isaiah (Isaiah 48:20) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 51:6) primarily because they had prospered significantly in Babylon, and they did not want to leave their comfortable lives.

The story takes place in the half-century interval between Ezra 6 and 7 during the reign of the Persian king Xerxes**[[4]](#footnote-4)**  (486-465).

There is no mention of God, the Law, or sacrifices and offerings in Esther. None of the New Testament authors ever quotes from it and no copies of it were found with the Dead Sea scrolls. It is not a theological work but an entertaining historical narrative.

NOTE TO TEACHER: You may want to present the essential elements of the story at this point.

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| 2. The book of Esther was written to encourage the Jews that God was sovereign in the nations and that He would protect His people—though they were disobedient in not returning to their homeland. |

### EXPLANATION

Esther also provides an explanation for the origin of Purim, one the Jews most festive holidays. The word *Purim* means *lot* and it refers to Haman casting lots to decide which day to destroy the Jews.

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| 3. Esther presents a clear picture of God’s providence (17). |

### EXPLANATION

It is seen in Vashti’s removal, Esther’s promotion, Xerxes’ restless night, and the miraculous deliverance of the Jews.

God used an orphaned foreign woman to rescue an entire nation from destruction.

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| *“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise from the Jews from another place, but you* *and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*ESTHER 4:14 |

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| application (10 minutes)[The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]1. What are the major differences between Kings and Chronicles? How do they complement each other?
2. What was the major contribution that the prophet Ezra made? What miraculous milestone did God use Nehemiah to accomplish? What did you learn from these two and how will it change how you live?
3. Esther is one of the Bible’s greatest heroines. How did she serve as an example for all followers of Christ? What does she teach women specifically?
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### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

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| ASSIGNMENTRead the book of Nehemiah and look for leadership principles and themes. |

### end of day 1

# Session 4 – THE WISDOM LITERATURE

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

### bags that contain the names of the books of the Old Testament written on individual cards for the pre-session activity

### PRE-SESSION ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

### Books of the Old Testament Relay

**Mechanics**

1. Divide class into teams (smaller teams are better so students get to participate at a deeper level).

2. Give each team a bag that contains the names of the books of the Old Testament.

3. One at a time, have a team member draw a card out of the bag and race to the wall to post. (Provide masking tape or sticky tack.)

4. As soon as a student posts a card, he or she must race back and tag the next team member to do the same. Continue this process until all cards are drawn.

5. Once all the cards are posted, the team members will race down to the wall and make any corrections needed.

6. When they are confident their cards are in order, they all sit down and you can check for accuracy.

7. The team that finished first and has the correct order of the OT books is the winner.

Note: If your class is very small or you don't have space for a relay, just give teams a bag and have them arrange the book names in order in the space that works best.

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

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| **Job: The Book of Mystery** |

### EXPLANATION

The mysteries surrounding the book of Job begin with its author: no one knows for sure who it is. The Talmud ascribes Moses as the author, but other suggestions include Job, Elihu, Solomon, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Ezra, or Baruch.

Job was a contemporary of Abraham (1900–2100 BC). If Job or a contemporary was the author, then this was the first book of the Bible written down.

Wisdom literature is a genre that deals with practical human experiences through proverbs, poetry, or drama.

Job is considered by many to be one of the most profound and elegant pieces of literature in the world.

“There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.” **[[5]](#footnote-5)1**

“. . . the greatest poem of ancient or modern times.”[[6]](#footnote-6)2

The book of Job has a rich vocabulary with dozens of words found nowhere else in the Bible. For example: Five different words are used for lions, six synonyms are used for traps, and six for darkness.

The book of Job has a very clear structure of “cycles of three.” It begins with a prologue and Job’s lament, and then proceeds to three cycles of dialogue between Job and his three friends. It concludes with three monologues and an epilogue.

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| 1. The main theme of Job is the sovereignty (1) of God over every situation of life. Job’s sufferings were never explained to him; he was expected to trust God implicitly and submit to His dealings. In the end, Job passed the test, renounced self- righteousness, and willingly submitted to the Lord.*5“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now* *my eye sees you; 6therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*JOB 42:5,6 |

### EXPLANATION

Our relationship with God is always on His terms. He reveals himself to us and draws us into a relationship with Him, but there is always limited knowledge of the divine process. This requires faith and trust.

God's monologue presents the divine perspective. Job is not condemned as one who is being punished for sin, but neither is he given a logical or legal reason for his suffering.

The book of Job points to Jesus Christ, the only true innocent sufferer and the only one without sin.

“That the Lord himself has embraced and absorbed the undeserved consequences of evil is the final answer to Job and all the Jobs of humanity.”

The early Christian community saw the connection between Job and Jesus and so it was tradition to read the book of Job during Passion Week.

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| 2. The result of his submission was abundant blessing (2).*And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job . . . And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*JOB 42:10 |

*Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.* (James 5:11)

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| **Psalms: The Book of Praise**1. The book of Psalms is a collection of poems (3) put to music. They appeal primarily to our emotions and help us express ourselves honestly to God. |

### EXPLANATION

Most of Scripture is God speaking to man, but in the Psalms the relation is reversed—most of it is man speaking to God.

The Psalms affect our whole being for there is not an emotion which is not covered in them. From grief and sorrows, to fear and doubt, to praise and exaltation—every emotion is represented.

David is credited with seventy-three, Asaph twelve, the sons of Korah twelve, Solomon two, Jeduthun four, Heman the Ezrahite one, Ethan the Ezrahite one, and Moses one. The remaining psalms are anonymous.

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| 2. One hundred and sixteen of the psalms have titles(4). They include: technical names designating the type of psalm, historical background information, and musical terms or instructions. |

### EXPLANATION

There is no textual evidence that the Psalms ever lacked superscriptions. The superscriptions are written in the third person.

It is unknown when the Psalms were compiled in their current form, but it was probably after the return from captivity. The earliest psalm is probably Psalm 90, the prayer of Moses; and the latest psalm is probably 137, the song of the Babylonian captivity.

Moses’ psalm was written during the wandering in the wilderness between 1450–1410 BC. The song of the Babylonian captivity was written sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC and before the Persian invasion of Babylon in 539 BC when the prophesy of verses 8 and 9 was fulfilled. That is an interval of over 900 years.

The psalms were gathered in separate collections and eventually brought together under one heading and divided into five books of unequal length: Book I: Psalms 1-41; Book II: Psalms 42-72; Book III: Psalms 73-89; Book IV: Psalms 90-106; Book V: Psalms 107-150.

Perhaps the five books of the Psalter are meant to mirror the five books of the Pentateuch, as many Jewish interpreters have argued.

Each division ends with a doxological refrain (cf. 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48; 150).

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| 3. Biblical poetry is not based on rhyme (5), but on parallelism—the relationship of lines to one another. |

### EXPLANATION

Sometimes the lines are synonymous.

Psalm 59:1

*Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;*

*protect me from those who rise up against me . . .*

Sometimes the lines are opposites.

Psalm 1:6

*. . . for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,*

*but the way of the wicked will perish.*

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| 4. There are many different types (genres) of psalms.* Hymn (6) or praise psalms honor God with exuberant praise for His greatness and goodness.
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Psalm 100:4,5

*4Enter his gates with thanksgiving,*

*and his courts with praise!*

*Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

*5For the Lord is good;*

*his steadfast love endures forever,*

*and his faithfulness to all generations.*

### EXPLANATION

This is the characteristic genre of the psalms.

Praise psalms are the nearest to pure worship of any biblical poetry. They are not the product of sorrow or need but directly celebrate the joy of worshiping God.

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| * Lament (7) psalms express sorrow, suffering, or disappointment. They are cries for help in times of trouble.
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Psalm 42:3,5

*3My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” . . . 5Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? . . .*

### EXPLANATION

The “trouble” comes from three sources. The trouble may come from the enemy. The trouble may come from the psalmist and his sinful choices. The trouble may come from God who has seemingly abandoned him. Most laments turn to praise at the end.

It is the largest group of psalms (more than 60). There are individual Laments and corporate Laments.

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| • Thanksgiving (8) psalms express joy over good circumstances and God’s blessings. It is related to the hymn but focuses more on deliverance from distress. |

Psalm 18:6,49

*6In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. 49For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing to your name.*

### EXPLANATION

There are individual thanksgiving psalms and group thanksgiving psalms.

More specific than praise songs, thanksgiving hymns thank God for his answers to specific prayers. Along with Lament they form the “before” and “after” of faith, with the lament placing the problem before God and the thanksgiving praising Him for His response.

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| **Proverbs: The Book of Godly Wisdom**1. Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings with the common theme (9) of an educational setting in the home or elsewhere. |

### EXPLANATION

The original plan was to give wise guidance to young men as they began their way in the world.

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| 2. A proverb is a brief (10) expression of truth written in a form to aid the memory. |

For example: *Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.* (26:11)

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| 3. The purpose of Proverbs is stated in the opening verses:*2To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, 3to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; 4to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth . . .*PROVERBS 1:2-4 |

### EXPLANATION

Proverbs covers everything from wisdom, folly, sin, goodness, wealth, poverty, the tongue, pride, liberality, domestic faithfulness, honesty, falsehood, humility, justice, vengeance, paying bills, saving money, managing time, planning, goal setting, moderation, courtesy, strife, gluttony, relationships, work, child rearing, love, lust, laziness, friends, the family, life, and death.

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| **Ecclesiastes: The Book of Worldly Wisdom**1. Ecclesiastes is the most unique (11) book in the Bible because it records the thoughts of a man who has fallen from a personal faith in God and is trying to explain life from the framework of observation and human reason.The beginning of Solomon’s thought is: *Vanity of vanities . . .* (Ecclesiastes 1:2) and the end is: *All is vanity!* He has no answer to the meaning of life. |

### EXPLANATION

“Ecclesiastes is not a word from God, but a word from one of history’s wisest men. His conclusions are eminently reasonable, but are frequently wrong! If we read this book as an accurate portrayal of the best reasoning of which man is capable, we will sense the emptiness in human beings.”

Observation is reflected in the expression, *“under the sun,”* a phrase used 29 times in Ecclesiastes. Human reasoning is reflected in the expression, *“I thought in my heart,”* which is used 7 times.

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| 2. The narrator (12) added the conclusion to Solomon’s words.*13The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*ECCLESIASTES 12:13,143. The theme of Ecclesiastes is explicit throughout the entire work: Life is meaningless if it is lived outside of the context of a relationship with God. |

### EXPLANATION

The theme of the book appears in the prologue: *Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.* The general conclusion comes in the epilogue, which speaks of fearing God and keeping his commandments because we must one day give account to him. The meaning and purpose of the book must be discovered within this framework. Life in the world is subject to frustration; but man can still accept his circumstances, even enjoy them, and find strength to live life as it comes.

“In this book, God reveals to us exactly what life is when God does not reveal to us what

life is.”[[7]](#footnote-7)3

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| **Song of Solomon: The Book of Romantic Love** |

### EXPLANATION

Authorship is attributed to Solomon in the text (1:5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11,12), in rabbinical tradition, and in everything that is known about Solomon and his career. He probably wrote it near the beginning of his reign.

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| 1. The Song of Solomon is a unique work of dramatic poetry (13) never quoted in the Old or New Testament, and which never mentioned the name of God. |

### EXPLANATION

Its use of metaphor, vivid imagery, and rapid changes of setting, speaker, and subject matter, has provoked much debate about its proper interpretation.

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| 2. The safest and best interpretation of the Song of Solomon is the literal (14) one that sees the book as a divine sanction and celebration of the physical union in marriage. It becomes a protection against the two extremes of asceticism and lust. |

### EXPLANATION

The purpose of this book is to vindicate and extol marriage and the physical union as something good in itself and not simply a means to an end (i.e., procreation).

Although the Song of Songs is primarily a celebration of the marriage union, it does have an analogical connection to the love between Jesus and His Bride.

The use of the marriage metaphor to describe the relationship of God to his people is almost universal in Scripture. Earthly marriage, as it is now lived, is “a bad copy of a good original.”

“It is not inappropriate to read the Song of Songs as a poem reflecting on the relationship between God and his people. As long as the primary reference to human sexuality is not repressed.”

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| APPLICATION (10 minutes)1. Choose your favorite psalm, identify which kind of psalm it is, and explain how it has affected your life and relationship with God.
2. Give an example of a proverb that has changed the way that you live in a practical, daily manner.
3. Why do you think God included Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon in the Bible? How do they strengthen our relationship with God?
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### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

**ASSIGNMENT**

Find three verses from Proverbs on each of the following themes: wealth, the tongue, humility, strife, and laziness.

# Session 5 – THE MAJOR PROPHETS

### lecture (25 minutes)

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| **Isaiah: The Bible in Miniature**1. Isaiah ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah (1) from the end of Uzziah’s reign in 741 BC through the death of Sennacherib in 681 BC—a period of sixty years. |

### EXPLANATION

He ministered during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and part of Mannasseh’s. These were tumultous times for the Divided Kingdom.

There are two distinct sections in Isaiah. Chapters 1­–39 are very different from chapters 40–66. The reason for this is Isaiah clearly had two different audiences in mind. The first section warns of impending judgment and was addressed primarily to the people of his day. The second section proclaims comfort and encouragement and was addressed prophetically to the exiles who will return from Babylon (in about 150 years).

Isaiah is often called the “Bible in miniature.”

There are 66 chapters in Isaiah and 66 books in the Bible. The first section of Isaiah contains 39 chapters and emphasizes judgment and the Law. The first section of the Bible (the OT) contains 39 books and emphasizes judgment and the Law. The second section of Isaiah contains 27 chapters and emphasizes comfort and grace. The second section of the Bible (the NT) contains 27 books and emphasizes comfort and grace.

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| 2. Isaiah gave many Messianic (2) prophecies. OnlyPsalms has more messianic prophecies than Isaiah:• The birth of the Messiah (7:14)• The anointing of the Messiah (61:1-3)• The ministry of the Messiah (42:1-4)• The rejection of the Messiah (53:3)• The sufferings of the Messiah (53:4,5,7)• The vicarious death of the Messiah (53:10,11) |

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| **Jeremiah: The Weeping Prophet** |

### EXPLANATION

Jeremiah was the primary author, aided by the scribe Baruch. *Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord that he had spoken to him.* (Jeremiah 36:4)

Jeremiah began his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah (627 BC), prophesying through the destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC). He continued to prophesy to the rebellious Jews who went to Egypt after the deportation to Babylon.

The historical context surrounding Jeremiah’s ministry was complex.

In 612 BC, Babylon defeated the Assyrians. Judah enjoyed a brief period of independence (612-609 BC).

In 609 BC, Egypt joined the conflict on the side of Assyria. Josiah went to war against Egypt, and was killed.

In 606 BC, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt, invaded Judah, and took hostages to Babylon (including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego).

In 588 BC, Judah rebelled against Babylon. In 586 BC, Jerusalem was overrun and the temple destroyed.

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| 1. Jeremiah is the most personal, biographical, and intense (3) of all the prophets. He rarely hides his true feelings. His life was one long story of martyrdom. |

### EXPLANATION

*7O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived . . . I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. 8 . . . For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. 9If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.* (Jeremiah 20:7-9)

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| 1. God often called upon him to proclaim a message in dramatic (4) ways

(13:1-8; 51:60-64). |

### EXPLANATION

In chapter 13, Jeremiah was instructed to buy a linen waistband, put it around his waist, but not to put it in water. He was then commanded to take the waistband to the Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock. After a period of time, he went back to the Euphrates and found the waistband ruined and worthless. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Just so will I destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. Let them be just like this waistband, which is totally worthless.”

In chapter 51, Jeremiah was instructed to write in a single scroll the entire calamity which would come upon Babylon, and then to read the words aloud. When he finished reading this scroll, he was commanded to tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates and say, “Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again, because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her; and they will become exhausted.”

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| 3. Jeremiah is about the inescapable judgment (5) that comes when God’s covenant is violated. But Jeremiah is also about restoration.*“‘The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth, for the Lord has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the wicked he will put to the sword . . . ‘”*JEREMIAH 25:31*31“Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when**I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . . 34. . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more.”*JEREMIAH 31:31,34 |

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| **Lamentations: The Funeral Dirge** |

### EXPLANATION

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations after the destruction of Jerusalem.

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| 1. During Nebuchadnezzar’s two-year siege, the conditions in Jerusalem (6) deteriorated to the point of cannibalism. |

With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed. (4:10)

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| 2. After Babylon breached Jerusalem’s walls, they plundered everything of value, and then burned the city. Jeremiah was witness to all these events and recorded his feelings in the five dirges of Lamentations. |

### EXPLANATION

Chapters 1, 2, and 4 are acrostic poems with each verse corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In chapter 3, each letter of the alphabet has three consecutive verses making a total of sixty-six. Chapter 5 is also a twenty-two verse poem, but is not an acrostic. Chapters 1-4 use a “limping meter” where the first part of the verse has one more beat than the second half. This produces a mournful intensity used in funeral dirges.

Lamentations is an existential plunge into despair that disobedience to God will bring.

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| 3. In the midst of the most sorrowful book in the entire Bible, these great words of comfort ring out:*21But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:* *22The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; 23they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*LAMENTATIONS 3:21-23 |

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| **Ezekiel: The Prophet and Priest**1. Ezekiel spent his early years in Jerusalem(7), where he experienced the end of Josiah’s revival and Judah’s slide to judgment. He was then deported to Babylon where he spent the rest of his life and ministry. |

### EXPLANATION

At the age of 25, Ezekiel was taken to Babylon during the second deportation in 597 BC. Five years later, he began his prophetic ministry. He lived the rest of his life in Babylon. Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel. He was a priest, and that explains his repeated emphasis upon the temple, the glory of the Lord, the behavior of the priests, and the future temple of the Lord.

Ezekiel is the only major prophet to provide such a consistent and definite chronological background for his prophecies. His prophecies are dated in connection with the year of his exile: 597 BC.

Ezekiel is the easiest of the prophets to date because of his many chronological references. His first recorded prophecy came in July of 593 BC, and his last recorded prophecy came in April of 571 BC, a ministry spanning twenty-two years.

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| 2. Ezekiel provided a constant reminder to the exiles that their sin (8) had produced their plight, and that they must repent. He tried to bolster the faith of the exiles by telling them of God’s plans for their nation.3. The twin themes of judgment and restoration (9) are seen throughout the entire work. |

### EXPLANATION

The emphasis of the first section is on judgment and the emphasis of the second section is on restoration. *“Now the end is upon you, and I will send my anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations.”* (Ezekiel 7:3) *“Therefore thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name.”* (Ezekiel 39:25)

*1Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. 2And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. 3And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he*[*1*](http://www.esvbible.org/Ezekiel%2043%3A1-5/#f1-1)*came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. 4As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, 5the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.* (43:1-5)

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| **Daniel: The Sovereignty of God**1. Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first (10) deportation (605 BC) while he was still a youth. |

### EXPLANATION

The Babylonians habitually captured the best and the brightest from the royal families in the nations they conquered to indoctrinate them and train them for civil service.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. (1:3,4)

The first six chapters of Daniel are historical narrative, but the last six chapters are apocalyptic. Apocalypse is a genre that concerns the end of the world and the salvation of the righteous. It contains many symbols and visions.

Daniel is unique in that it was written in two different languages. Chapters 1:1 through 2:4 and chapters 8-12 were written in Hebrew. The middle section from 2:4b through 7:28 was written in Aramaic, the international language of the day.

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| 2. The main theme of the book is the sovereignty (11) of God over the nations. Jehovah is portrayed as the great shaper of the events of history, putting one leader forward and removing another at His will:• Daniel 1: God’s promotion of Nebuchadnezzar• Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s interpretation• Daniel 3: The elevation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to positions of prominence• Daniel 4: The dementia and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar• Daniel 5: The judgment of Belshazzar• Daniel 6: The decree of Darius |

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| application (10 minutes)[The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]1. What does Isaiah tell us about the Messiah? How does Isaiah contrast the image of the Messiah as King and yet also a suffering Servant?
2. Jeremiah and Lamentations both depict the tension between the suffering that comes from disobedience and separation from God, and the hopeful expectation of redemption and reconciliation. Where do you see this tension in your life? In your workplace? In your neighborhood or city?
3. Ezekiel and Daniel both use wild prophetic imagery in their narrative. How can we understand these passages? How would their original audience have understood them?
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### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

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| **ASSIGNMENT**Read the first six chapters of Daniel and look for the theme that shows God’s sovereignty over the nations. |

### BREAK (10 MINUTES)

# Session 6 – THE MINOR PROPHETS

### lecture (25 minutes)

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| **Hosea: God’s Steadfast Love for His People**1. Hosea prophesied to the northern kingdom until it fell in 722 (1) BC, and then he continued his ministry in the southern kingdom. His ministry began sometime around 753 BC and ended around 715 BC. |

### EXPLANATION

Hosea has been called the “death-bed prophet of Israel” because he was the last to prophesy before the northern kingdom fell to Assyria.

Hosea's principal significance lies in his sounding the call for Israel to repent. Other prophets—Elijah and Elisha during the reign of Omri, and Amos early in that of Jeroboam II—had given earlier warnings. But Hosea's warning was the last one. The people would have to hear him or else suffer crushing punishment.

In Hosea, the Northern Kingdom is often referred to as “Ephraim” after the largest tribe.

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| 2. The theme of the book is God’s steadfast love (2) for His people despite their continual unfaithfulness. This is typified in Hosea’s marriage to an unfaithful woman. |

### EXPLANATION

The Lord said to him, *“Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.”* (1:2)

When his wife’s wanton ways led her to slavery, Hosea redeemed her as a type of God’s redeeming love for His people. *1And the Lord said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.” 2So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. 3And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.” 4For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. 5Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.* (Hosea 3:1-5)

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| **Joel: A Foreshadow of Coming Judgment**Joel’s message is set against the background (3) of three calamities: locusts, drought, and famine. He uses the immediate calamities to point to a coming “Day of the Lord” when a literal army of Gentiles will attack Jerusalem. |

*“What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers; grieve for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field is destroyed. Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured the open pastures.”* (Joel 1:4,11,20)

### EXPLANATION

Joel prophesied to the leaders to call the people to repentance in order to stop the current judgment and avert the future judgment.

The phrase “Day of the Lord” refers to several things:

God’s swift and decisive victory over His enemies.

God’s manifestation of power or judgment.

God’s final consummation of His Kingdom.

The “Day of the Lord” may refer to current events, future events, and ultimate events – all at the same time. For example, the “Day of the Lord” in Joel refers to the plague of locusts (current event), the future invasion of Gentile armies (future event), and the conclusion of God’s purposes in the world (ultimate event).

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| **Amos: The Prophet Against Social Injustice**Amos was a businessman and not a professional minister (4). He is best known for his sermons against social injustice. |

### EXPLANATION

He managed large herds of sheep and goats near his home town of Tekoa, and operated a sycamore fig farm in another location. *14“I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. 15But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”* (Amos 7:14,15)

This is what the Lord says: *“For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back. They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.”* (Amos 2:6,7 NASB) Amos is the prototypical social reformer. He was the first of many prophets throughout Scripture and history that would speak against injustice and oppression.

Israel’s prosperity had lead to oppression of the poor. *“Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who oppress the poor and who crush the needy . . .”* (Amos 4:1)

Amos condemned injustice and called Israel to repentance. *“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”* (Amos 5:24)

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| **Obadiah: The Prophet Against The Edomites** |

### EXPLANATION

No information is given about Obadiah, the author of the shortest book in the Old Testament.

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| The single purpose of Obadiah was to pronounce judgment upon Edom (5) for their participation in the destruction of Jerusalem. |

### EXPLANATION

The Edomites (sometimes referred to as Mt. Seir) were the descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau. Israel had constant trouble throughout her history with the Edomites.

*3The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, “Who will bring me down to the ground?” 4Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down,*

*declares the Lord.* (Obadiah 1:3,4)

Edom is judged more times in the Old Testament than against any other nation.

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| **Jonah: The Disobedient Prophet** |

### EXPLANATION

Jonah preached to the Assyrians, but wrote to Israel. Like the Assyrians, they could expect judgment if they did not repent­—and blessing if they did.

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| Jonah was called to prophesy against Nineveh (6). Frightened that they would repent and that God would then relent from judgment, Jonah fled to Tarshish. The book was written to provoke Israel to repent through an example of God’s mercy to a pagan nation without a covenant. |

### EXPLANATION

*And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”* (Jonah 4:2)

Tarshish corresponds to modern day Spain—as far from Nineveh as Jonah could go!

Jonah’s aversion of the Assyrians was well grounded. They were known for their fierce barbarity: skinning their enemies alive or impaling them on sharp poles and leaving them to rot in the desert sun.

It was also written to remind the nation of their missionary calling to the world. God demonstrated His love for the world by bringing repentance to a nation through the preaching of a man who did not care for them and did not even want to be there!

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| **Micah: The Messianic Prophet**Micah’s message of judgment was directed against idolatry (7) and social injustice, but it was seasoned with hopeful references to a “remnant” that would return. He is best known for his prophecy concerning the Messiah.*“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”*MICAH 5:2 |

### EXPLANATION

I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men. (Micah 2:12)

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| **Nahum: God’s Consolation** |

### EXPLANATION

Nahum’s name means “consolation,” appropriate for the prophet sent to bring consolation to Judah.

The book of Nahum is about the destruction of the Assyrians. The Assyrians had their chance to repent under the preaching of Jonah over one hundred years prior. Judgment was now inevitable. *Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal.* (Nahum 3:19)

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| Nahum was written to encourage beleaguered Judah (8) that their time of fear and anxiety concerning Assyria was over. The theme of Nahum shows that there is justice in this world. Oppression does not go on forever. A sovereign God rules in heaven and on earth. |

*Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!*

*Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.* (Nahum 1:15)

### EXPLANATION

Nahum’s prophecy is a vivid lyric poem. “His language is strong and brilliant; his rhythm rumbles and rolls, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots he describes.”[[8]](#footnote-8)1

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| **Habakkuk: The Triumph of Faith**Habakkuk was a prophet connected with the temple (9) in a liturgical singing role. The theme of the book is the triumph of faith. |

### EXPLANATION

Habakkuk’s writing is not a prophecy to Judah but a prayer to God. *God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.* (Habakkuk 3:19)

Habakkuk asks two questions. His first is: Why does God not stop the sin that is rampant in the nation? (1:2,3) God replies by telling him that Babylon is coming to execute judgment against unrighteousness. (1:5,6)

Habakkuk’s second question is: Why would God allow a wicked nation to destroy His people? God replies by telling him He will also judge Babylon. (2:8)

Habakkuk begins in perplexity and progresses to certainty.

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| *“. . . the righteous shall live by his faith.”*HABAKKUK 2:4 |

### EXPLANATION

Habakkuk demonstrates the triumph of faith in his own spiritual journey. He first brings his confusion to God in honest prayer (1:2). He then takes the time to meditate and listen to God (2:1). He stays open to correction (2:1b). He reflects on God’s faithfulness in history (3:2). He gives praise to God in the middle of very difficult circumstances. *17Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.* (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

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| **Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord** |

### EXPLANATION

Zephaniah’s great-great grandfather was King Hezekiah–making him nobility and a distant relation of the current king, Josiah.

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| Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah(10)—Judah’s last righteous king. The “Day of the Lord” is referred to more in this book than in any other (1:7,14; 2:3). |

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| **Haggai: The First Post-Exilic Prophet** |

### EXPLANATION

Haggai is the first of the three post-exilic prophets. Zechariah and Malachi were the other two. Almost 50,000 Jews had returned to Israel in 538 BC. They rebuilt the altar and resumed the sacrifices (536 BC), but discontinued the temple construction after a few months. Nothing was done for sixteen years until the prophet Haggai began to speak.

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| Haggai’s ministry consisted of four separate sermons (11) given during a four-month period in the year 520 BC. His primary goal was to encourage the remnant community to rise up and build the temple. |

### EXPLANATION

Sermon #1: The prophet reproved the people for tending to their own homes and neglecting God’s house.

*2“Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.” 3Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet,4“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? 5Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways.”* (Haggai 1:2-5) Within twenty-four days, the people begin to rebuild the temple!

Sermon #2: The prophet encouraged the people who thought things would never be like the glory days.

*3“‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? . . . 6For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. 7And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. 8The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. 9The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.’”* (Haggai 2:3,6-9)

Sermon #3: The prophet challenged the people to mark the day they put God’s kingdom first.

*18“Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: 19Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.”* (Haggai 2:18,19)

Sermon #4: The prophet stirred the people with a message for both then and the future.

*21“Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, 22and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.”* (Haggai 2:21-23)

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| **Zechariah: The Lord Remembers** |

### EXPLANATION

The name Zechariah means “the Lord remembers”–an appropriate name for a people who feel forgotten. Zechariah is often called the “prophet of hope.”

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| Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai(12). He joined with the older prophet to urge the people to rebuild the temple. |

*“‘. . . My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.’”* (Zechariah 1:17)

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| **Malachi: The Last Word**Malachi ministered during Nehemiah’s (13) governorship. He attempted to provoke the people to righteousness and to return to the covenant of God with their whole heart. |

### EXPLANATION

The one hundred plus years since the remnant had returned to the land was marked by cycles of enthusiasm and revival, and then declension and backsliding.

Malachi is unique among the prophets in his use of the debating style of question and answer. First he makes a statement, and then he responds with an imagined objection raised in the form of a question. Finally, he refutes their objection (2:17).

He records the last words of the Old Testament. *5“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. 6And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”* (Malachi 4:5,6)

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| application (10 minutes)[The teacher may choose just one question and ask the participants to answer it by discussing within their groups. Class processing will be done after their discussion.]1. What common themes emerge when we view the various minor prophets as a single continuous narrative?
2. How does Hosea affect your understanding of how God loves you? How does it move you to respond?
3. How do Amos and Nahum practically challenge you to care about injustice? What will you do to make a difference?
4. Where do Jonah’s bad attitudes (“They won’t change,” “They don’t deserve another chance,” etc.) show up in your view towards unbelievers?
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### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they have discussed in the group discussion during the application.]

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| ASSIGNMENTPick any of the minor prophets and read the entire book. |

1. Allen P. Ross, The Bible Knowledge Commentary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Paul Johnson, The History of the Jews, p. 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1 John W. Reed, The Bible Knowledge Commentary [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Xerxes is called Ahasuerus in the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 1 Thomas Carlyle, Our Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, p. 56 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 2 Alfred Lord Tennyson, Quoted by Victor E. Reichert, Job, p. xiii [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 3 ibid. p.23 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 1 G.A. Smith, Quoted in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [↑](#footnote-ref-8)