NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

Teacher’s Manual

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### OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

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

**OVERVIEW**

Session 1: **The Writings of the Evangelists**

Session 2: **Paul’s Letters I**

Session 3: **Paul’s Letters II**

Session 4: **Paul’s Letters III**

Session 5: **The General Epistles**

Session 6: **The Writings of John**

# THINGS TO KNOW

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

*New 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 Writings of the Evangelists** | 5 minutes | Welcome and Introduction |
| 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 2 |  |  |
| **Paul’s Letters I** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 3 |  |  |
| **Paul’s Letters II** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 5 minutes | End of Day 1 |
| **DAY 2** | | |
| SESSION 4 |  |  |
| **Paul’s Letters III** | 10 minutes | Activity (Books of the NT Relay) |
| 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 5 |  |  |
| **The General Epistles** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 10 minutes | Break |
| SESSION 6 |  |  |
| **The Writings of John** | 25 minutes | Lecture |
| 10 minutes | Application |
| 5 minutes | Class Processing |
| 5 minutes | End of New Testament Survey |

# Session 1 – THE WRITINGS OF THE EVANGELISTS

### 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)

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| The first three Gospels are similar to one another in structure, content, and wording. They are called the Synoptics, from a Greek word meaning, “to view together.” The Gospel of John differs in approach from the other three. John emphasized Christ’s Judean ministry and His private discourses. The Synoptics emphasized Christ’s Galilean ministry and His public discourses. Each Gospel was written for a different audience and therefore has a different perspective to offer. |

### EXPLANATION

Matthew, written primarily to the Jews, presents Christ as King.

Mark, written primarily to the Romans, presents Christ as Servant.

Luke, written primarily to the Gentiles, presents Christ as the perfect Son of man.

John, written primarily to the whole world, presents Christ as the Son of God.

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| **Matthew: The Evangelist to the Jews**  1. Matthew was a tax collector (1) from Galilee who gave a banquet to introduce his tax-collecting friends to Jesus. |

### EXPLANATION

“The conditions of tax-collecting meant that extortion was practically inseparable from a tax collector’s way of life. Tax collectors might not hold any office of communal responsibility, nor was their testimony admissible in a Jewish law court.”**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Matthew’s calling must have upset some of Jesus’ other disciples. As a tax collector, he must have extorted money from several of the other apostles at one time or another. His Gospel has more references to coins than the other three Gospels including three terms found nowhere else in the New Testament: the *“two-drachma tax”* (17:24), *“a four-drachma coin”* (17:27), and *“talents”* (18:24).

Matthew also went by the name Levi. He was a brother of the apostle James (the less).

Matthew was the most admired and most quoted Gospel by the church fathers during the first three centuries. “The book (of Matthew) is probably the most useful one ever written; it comes first in the New Testament collection and has done more than any other to create the impression of Jesus that the world has obtained.” **[[2]](#footnote-2)**

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| 2. Matthew completed his Gospel between AD 50–65(2). He wrote for a Jewish audience, and his theme was Christ the King and His kingdom. |

### EXPLANATION

The word *kingdom* is used fifty four times (in ESV) in the Gospel of Matthew.

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| *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,* *and all these things will be added to you.”*  Matthew 6:33 |

### EXPLANATION

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* (24:14)

The Gospel has fifty quotations and seventy-five allusions from sixteen Old Testament books. It begins Jesus’ genealogy from Abraham and David. It does not explain Jewish customs.

Christ is presented as first coming to the Jews and then to all of humanity. This is reflected in the inclusion of Persian Magi (2:1-12), the Roman centurion who had greater faith than in all Israel (8:5-13), the Canaanite woman with her great faith (15:22-28), and the commission to “go and make disciples of all nations” (28:19).

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| 3. Matthew’s account contains much information not included (3) in the other Gospels. There are ten parables, two miracles, four events concerning Christ’s infancy, and seven incidents connected with the passion and the resurrection that are not in the other Gospels. |

### EXPLANATION

The Weeds (13:24-30), the Hidden Treasure (13:44), the Net (13:47-50), the Pearl of Great Value (13:45,46), the Unmerciful Servant (18:23-35), the Laborers in the Vineyard (20:1-16), the Two Sons (21:28-31), the Wedding Feast of the King’s Son (22:2-14), the Ten Virgins (25:1-13), the Talents (25:14-26).

The Two Blind Men (9:27-30) and the Coin in the Mouth of the Fish (17:24-27).

The Visit of the Magi (2:1-16), the Massacre of the Infants (2:16-18), the Flight into Egypt (2:13-15), and the Return to Nazareth (2:19-23).

The Bargain and Suicide of Judas (27:3-10), the Dream of Pilate’s Wife (27:19), the Resurrection of the Departed Saints (27:52, 53), the Watch at the Sepulcher (27:62-66), the Story of the Sanhedrim (28:11-15), and the Earthquake on the Resurrection Morning (28:2).

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| 4. Matthew’s account is more thematic (4) than chronological. He is not as concerned with an exact chronology as he is with grouping events and teachings that have a thematic connection. |

### EXPLANATION

Matthew’s account is didactic[[3]](#footnote-3) with one-fourth of the whole concerned with the words and teaching of Jesus. It has seven distinct sections.

Section 1: The birth and youth of Jesus (1-2).

Section 2-6: The words and deeds of Jesus (3-25). Each of these sections contains one narrative subsection and one discourse subsection and ends with the words, “When Jesus had finished…”

Section 7: The death and resurrection of Jesus (26-28).

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| **Mark: The Evangelist to the Romans** |

### EXPLANATION

Mark**[[4]](#footnote-4)** lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary, a wealthy and influential leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:12). He accompanied Paul and his cousin Barnabas on their first missionary journey in AD 47, but left them for unspecified reasons at Perga (Acts 13:13). Two years later, he was at the center of the split between Paul and Barnabas that lead to Silas joining Paul on his second missionary journey and Barnabas taking Mark back to his homeland of Cyprus (Acts 15:36-39). A dozen years later, he was back with Paul in Rome during Paul’s house arrest (Colossians 4:10). In Paul’s last letter to Timothy, written during his second imprisonment in Rome and just before his death, he called for Mark because he was “useful for service” (2 Timothy 4:11).

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| 1. Mark was the interpreter for Peter (5). His Gospel is Peter’s view of the words and deeds of Jesus. He wrote it especially for the Romans around AD 50–65. |

### EXPLANATION

“Mark, who became Peter’s interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been one of His followers, but afterwards, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs of his hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord’s sayings.”**[[5]](#footnote-5)**

Mark explained the Jewish customs in his Gospel. For example, “And the Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered together around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)” (7:1-4)

Mark translated the Aramaic words in his Gospel. For example, “And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, *‘Talitha koum!’* (which translated means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise!’).” (5:41)

Mark removed topics irrelevant to Roman audiences: Christ’s genealogy, the Sermon on the Mount, and Christ’s condemnation of the Jewish religious leaders.

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| 2. Mark is the Gospel of action (6), detail, and candor.[[6]](#footnote-6) |

**ACTION**

Mark constantly affirmed that Jesus taught, but consistently failed to inform us what He taught.

*. . . And he went about among the villages teaching.* (6:6)

*. . . and as was His custom, he taught them.* (10:1)

His style is direct, simple, and concise. He uses the word “immediately” forty times, ten times in the first chapter. Mark 1:10-43: *And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening . . . And immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And they immediately left the nets and followed Him. And immediately He called them . . .and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. And immediately the news about Him went out everywhere . . . And immediately they came into the house of Simon and Andrew . . . and immediately they spoke to Him about her. And immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And He . . . immediately sent him away . . .*

**DETAIL**

Mark added the vivid and striking details of an eyewitness.

*Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.* (6:39) [Mark added the detail of the color of the grass.]

*So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.* (5:13) [Mark added the detail of how many swine rushed down into the sea.]

**CANDOR**

Mark vividly portrayed the failings of the disciples.

*And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?”* (8:17)

*But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.* (9:32)

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| 3. Mark wrote his Gospel to provide a narrative of the important events (7) in the life of Christ for evangelistic purposes and to strengthen believers facing persecution. |

### EXPLANATION

Mark probably wrote around the time of the Neronic persecutions in Rome.[[7]](#footnote-7)

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| **Luke: The Evangelist to the Gentiles**  1. Luke was a Gentile(8) (the only one with an entry in the New Testament), and he wrote for the Gentile world. |

### EXPLANATION

Luke was the most prolific writer in the New Testament. His two volumes total 27 percent of the entire New Testament. This is slightly more than Paul’s total of 26 percent.

Luke was the “beloved physician,” and his writings display his medical training. For example, when Luke’s treatment of the woman with the twelve-year hemorrhage is contrasted with Mark’s account, it is clear that Luke reflects a doctor’s viewpoint.

*25And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse.* (Mark 5:25,26)

*And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.* (Luke 8:43)

He was a close friend and companion of Paul.

Luke first met Paul at Troas in AD 49 on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10). He accompanied him to Philippi and remained there when Paul left. In the early part of AD 57, Luke rejoined Paul when he passed through Philippi and presumably is with him through the rest of the Acts narrative. He is still with Paul in a Roman jail (AD 65) when everyone else has left him (2 Timothy 1:15; 4:9-11). Luke’s writings were considered canonical by the early church because of his relationship with the Apostle Paul.

Luke wrote his Gospel in the late 50s or early 60s. It is very possible that during Paul’s two-year imprisonment in Caesarea (AD 57-59), Luke spent his time researching (Luke 1:3) and writing his Gospel.

He frequently explains Jewish localities (4:31; 8:26; 21:37; 23:51; 24:13).

He traces Jesus’ genealogy (3:23-38) beyond Abraham to Adam.[[8]](#footnote-8)

He references important dates to Roman emperors—the only New Testament author to even name one of the emperors.[[9]](#footnote-9)

He addressed his Gospel to the “most excellent Theophilus,” who very likely was a Roman official of some rank—possibly a pa­tron, an inquirer, or a new believer. (The title, “most excellent” is the same title by which Paul addresses Felix and Festus, the Roman governors of Judea.)[[10]](#footnote-10)

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| 2. Luke’s Gospel, written in AD 50-60 (late 50s or early 60s), is  a carefully-researched document (Luke 1:1-3). He exceeded the other evangelists in literary skill, composition, culture, and vocabulary. |

### EXPLANATION

“Luke is a historian of the first rank . . . (who) should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.” **[[11]](#footnote-11)**

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.”

He uses over 700 words which occur nowhere else in the New Testament.

“The Gospel of Luke is the most literary of the Gospels. He displays a genuine skill in composition. His book is a beautiful narrative, well contrived, at once Hebraic and Hellenic, uniting the emotion of the drama with the serenity of the idyll.”**[[12]](#footnote-12)**

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| 3. Luke’s theme is the universality(9) of the gospel. His account is stripped off of cultural and national exclusivity and is shown as available to all people (even women and children). |

### EXPLANATION

For example: Luke recorded Jesus’ enrollment as a participant in the Roman Empire (2:1-5), the mission of Elijah to the heathen widow (4:25), the Gentile Naaman’s cleansing by Elisha (4:27), and the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30-37).

Luke emphasized the role of women beyond their accepted role in the first century.

For example: The song of Mary (1:46-55); the testimony of Anna (2:36-38); the financial support of Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Susanna, Mary and Martha, and others (8:2, 3); the daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound (13:10-16); the mourning mother at Nain (7:11-15); the woman who touched the hem of His garment (8:43-48); and the weeping daughters of Jerusalem on the road to Calvary (23:27, 28).

Luke’s second theme is worship and prayer. Luke recorded the prayer life of Jesus more than any other Gospel writer (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 29; 11:1; 22:41).

Luke recorded more worship than any other Gospel writer. For example:

* The *Benedictus*, the song of Zacharias (1:68-79)
* The *Magnificat*, the song of Mary (1:46-55)
* The *Nunc Dimittis*, the song of Simeon (2:28-32)
* The Gloria in Excelsis Deo, the song of the angels (2:13, 14)
* The shepherds praised and glorified God (2:20)
* The people of Nain glorified God (7:16)
* Jesus praised His Father (10:21)
* The people of Jericho who witnessed the blind man’s healing gave glory and praise to God (18:43)
* The whole multitude of Jesus’ disciples rejoiced and praised God as Jesus entered Jerusalem (19:37-38)
* The apostles were continually in the temple praising God after Christ’s ascension

(24:51-53)

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| **Acts: The First History of the Church** |

### EXPLANATION

Luke and Acts form a single continuous work that was originally published together, but then later separated when the Gospels were collected and published together. **[[13]](#footnote-13)**

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| 1. Acts was written around AD 62 (10), before Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment. |

### EXPLANATION

Luke used many different sources to compile his work. Some of his sources were personal experiences, Paul’s firsthand accounts, and the elders and leaders in Jerusalem

An interesting feature of Acts is the “progress reports” **[[14]](#footnote-14)** Luke provided at various intervals throughout his account. *“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”* (Acts 2:47) *“And the word of God kept on spreading.”* (Acts 6:7) *“But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.”* (Acts 12:24) *“So the churches were increasing in number daily.”* (Acts 16:5) *“So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.”* (Acts 19:20)

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| 2. Luke wrote Acts to chronicle the growth (11) of the church from the isolated city of Jerusalem to the great metropolis of Rome. He demonstrated the church’s expansion as the result of the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit.  *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*  ACTS 1:8 |

### EXPLANATION

Acts does not directly focus on the biographies of the apostles, church structure and organization, or the general expansion of the church.

“Luke’s great aim was to show the expansion of Christianity, to show how that religion which began in a little corner of Palestine had in a little more than 30 years reached Rome.” **[[15]](#footnote-15)**

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| 3. Acts provides an experiential framework (12) for much of the theology of the New Testament that is expressed in the Pauline and General epistles. |

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| APPLICATION (10 MINUTES) 1. Which of the four Gospels has made the greatest impact on you? Why?  2. Why is it important to understand the background story of a particular book of the Bible?  3. Even though Peter was a man of high reputation in the early church, he allowed (and encouraged) Mark to write an account of the apostles (and himself) that was not always flattering. What does that say to you about the attitude Christian leaders should have? What does that say about the attitude you should have? |

### 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 opening chapter of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Compare and contrast each author’s opening based on their unique purpose for writing their Gospels. (Matthew wrote his Gospel especially for the Jews, Mark wrote especially for the Romans, and Luke wrote especially for the Gentiles.) |

# Session 2 – PAUL’S LETTERS I

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

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| **Galatians: The Freedom Letter** |

### EXPLANATION

Paul’s thirteen epistles are covered in chronological order.

“The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine.” **[[16]](#footnote-16)1**  (Luther was referring to his wife, the former nun Katarina von Bora.)

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| 1. Galatians was Paul’s first (1) letter. He wrote it around AD 48 sometime between his first missionary journey and the Jerusalem Council. |

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** There is another view on the date of the Galatian letter. Some commentators believe that Paul wrote it after the Jerusalem Council. F.F. Bruce addresses this issue thoroughly in his book *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*.[[17]](#footnote-17)2

Paul and Barnabas established churches in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia on their first missionary journey.

Galatians was a circular letter to the congregations in Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and other cities not mentioned in Acts.

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| 2. False teachers known as “Judaizers” (2) had visited the Galatian churches and presented a “different gospel.” The Judaizers believed that salvation came through faith in Christ and keeping the Mosaic Law—including circumcision. But Paul understood that the real issue was not circumcision, but the essence of the gospel.  *6I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—7not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*  GALATIANS 1:6,7 |

### EXPLANATION

Paul’s reply to the Judaizers was:

*Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”* (3:11)

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.* (5:6)

The Judaizers believed that Paul’s authority was invalid because he was not sent from the Jerusalem church.

Paul’s reply to the Judaizers was:

*11For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* (1:11,12)

Paul defended his apostolic authority with his personal testimony. His message was valid not because it comes from Jerusalem, but because it comes from the ultimate source of authority: the Lord Jesus Himself.

Galatians was written to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God that is received by faith alone. (2:16)

*. . . yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.* (2:16)

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| 3. Paul’s style is passionate and bold (3) because he was deeply troubled over his converts and fearful that his labor might have been in vain (Galatians 4:11). |

### EXPLANATION

Galatians is filled with some of Paul’s most pointed and biting language.

Paul skips his usual opening expression of thanksgiving for the church and plunges at once into his argument. Even the Corinthians with all their immoral behavior received a warm greeting from Paul. But Paul knew that the very Gospel was at stake and he had no time for pleasantries!

*I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.* (4:11, ESV)

*I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.* (4:11, NIV)

Galatians is one of Paul’s most personal and autobiographical letters. In it he reveals details about two of his trips to Jerusalem, and his confrontation with Peter.

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| **1 Thessalonians: Persecution and Christ’s Return**  1. Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth around AD 50 (4). |

### EXPLANATION

The city of Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was large and prosperous because of its ideal harbor, and its location on one of Rome’s main highways. Paul was strategic in his evangelism; he understood that the prominence of Thessalonica would make it an ideal base to spread the gospel throughout the province of Macedonia and the entire Roman Empire.

*For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.* (1:8)

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| 2. Paul, Silas, and Timothy came to Thessalonica directly from their harsh treatment at Philippi. They preached in the Thessalonian synagogue for three weeks with significant results before they were removed. Paul left Thessalonica and went first to Berea and then to Athens. He tried to return to Thessalonica, but when he was thwarted, he sent Timothy instead (2:18). Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth with good news of the church in Thessalonica (3:6). Paul then dispatched 1 Thessalonians. |

### EXPLANATION

*But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.* (2:2)

*2And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” 4And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.* (Acts 17:2-4)The loss of influential (and wealthy) Greek members of the synagogue enraged the Jews and spurred them to take drastic action.

*. . . because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us.* (2:18)

Paul received two offerings from Philippi during his stay in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16), but he supported himself by tent making to avoid any charges of fraud. *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* (2:9)

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| 3. Paul wrote this letter for several reasons:  • Men were maligning his character (5) and motives (2:10). |

### EXPLANATION

Paul determined that it was necessary to defend his character, not for his own validation, but for the sake of the believers in Thessalonica.

*You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.* (1 Thessalonians 2:10)

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| • There was confusion about the return (6) of Christ (4:13,14). |

### EXPLANATION

*13But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*

(1 Thessalonians 4:13,14)

This letter has more eschatological references than any other letter of Paul’s. Every chapter ends with an exhortation concerning the return of the Lord (1:9,10,2:19,3:13,4:17, and 5:23).

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| • Some of the former pagan practices (7) of the new disciples were leading them into sin (4:3-5). |

*3For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God . . .* (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

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| **2 Thessalonians: Get to Work**  1. After Paul sent the first letter to Thessalonica, news came to him that persecution was continuing and that the confusion concerning Christ’s return had grown worse. |

### EXPLANATION

A counterfeit letter came to Thessalonica from an unknown source purporting to be from Paul and declaring that the day of the Lord had already come. Because of the possibility of counterfeit, Paul emphasized his “trademark” signature.

*I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.* (3:17)

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| 2. Paul wrote this letter for several reasons:  • He wanted to assure the church they had not missed (8) the Second Coming (2:1,2). |

*1Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 2not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.* (2:1,2)

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| • He wanted to encourage the church to continue (9) in the midst of persecutions (3:3,5). |

*3But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. . . .*

*5May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.*

(2 Thessalonians 3:3,5)

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| • He wanted to warn people about wrong (10) responses to Christ’s return, and to urge them to get back to work (3:10). |

### EXPLANATION

Some Thessalonian believers, anticipating the imminent return of Christ, had quit their jobs and were living off others. *For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.* (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

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| **1 Corinthians: Problems and Questions**  1. Paul wrote to the Corinthians from Ephesus (11) sometime between Passover and Pentecost in AD 54.  2. The ancient city of Corinth was one of the wealthiest and most sinful (12) in the entire Roman Empire. It was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire and the most important city in Greece. |

### EXPLANATION

Corinth’s location on the isthmus between the Aegean and Ionian seas made it a great commercial center. As a result, it had all the problems of a large port city. One of the main tourist attractions in Corinth was the Temple to Aphrodite with its 1,000 cult prostitutes. The Athenian playwright Aristophanes coined the verb “to corinthianize,” a slang term for fornication, because of the sensuality of the city.

Corinth was also the site of the Isthmian Games held every two years in honor of the sea god Poseidon. This explains Paul’s use of athletic metaphors in his correspondence with the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

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| 3. The themes of 1 Corinthians center on two things: problems in  the church, and questions from the church. Some of the problems in the church were as follows:  • Division (13) (1:12) |

*What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.”* (1:12)

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| • Immorality (14) (5:1) |

1 Corinthians 5:1

*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.*

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

*18Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 19Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

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| 4. Some of the questions from the church were as follows:  • Questions about marriage (15) (7:1) |

*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”* (7:1)

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| • Questions about spiritual gifts (16) (12:1) |

*Now concerning* *spiritual gifts,* *brothers,* *I do not want you to be uninformed.* (12:1)

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| • Questions about the resurrection (17) (15:1) |

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand . . .* (15:1)

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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. Circumcision is one of the central issues in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. However, circumcision is not a big issue in the twenty-first century. Why is the message of Galatians still vital today?  2. In Thessalonica, some believers misunderstood the doctrine of the Second Coming and, as a result, responded wrongly to it. What are some of the wrong responses people have today to the return of Christ? What do you think is the proper response? |

### 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 letter to the Galatians, noting all the references to righteousness and justification by faith. |

# Session 3 – PAUL’S LETTERS II

### LECTURE (25 MINUTES)

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| **2 Corinthians: Paul’s Apostolic Defense**  1. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia (1) sometime in AD 55 or 56. It is the most personal of all his letters. |

### EXPLANATION

“No letter of Paul’s is more personal and intimate in nature than 2 Corinthians. In it he bared his soul and professed his abiding love for the Corinthians despite the apparent fickleness of their affection for him.”[[18]](#footnote-18)1

“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.” (6:11-13)

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| 2. Most of the Corinthians responded well to Paul’s previous (2) letter, but a faction in the church still opposed his authority. Paul was forced to defend his apostolic calling and credentials to these “false apostles” (11:23-28). |

### EXPLANATION

Paul’s apostolic credentials are not what might be expected.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28

*23Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.*

These “false apostles” also charged Paul with financial indiscretion. Paul responded, *7Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? 8I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.* (2 Corinthians 11:7-9)

This faction consisted of people who followed certain Jews from Palestine who claimed to be apostles. *22Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. 5Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. 13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.* (2 Corinthians 11:22,5,13)

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| 3. Paul wrote this letter to urge the church to personal holiness (3) (7:1). |

### EXPLANATION

*Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body* *and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.* (2 Corinthians 7:1)

“It was clearly no easy matter even for regenerate Christians to break free from the besetting sin of their city, especially when “enlightened” members of their community kept assuring them it was really not a sin at all.”[[19]](#footnote-19)2

Paul also wrote this letter to encourage the church to share in the offering for the Jerusalem saints. *But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.* (2 Corinthians 8:7)

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| **Romans: Paul’s Magnum Opus** |

### EXPLANATION

Romans is Paul’s magnum opus—his great work. Lawrence Richards calls it, “the theological cornerstone of the New Testament, the greatest of Paul’s epistles.”[[20]](#footnote-20)3 F.F. Bruce said about it, “Time and time again in the course of Christian history it has liberated the minds of men, brought them back to an understanding of the essential Gospel of Christ, and started spiritual revolutions.”[[21]](#footnote-21)4 Frederick Godet said, “The probability is that every great spiritual revival in the Church will be connected as cause and effect with a deeper understanding of this book.”**[[22]](#footnote-22)5** John MacKay: “It may be because Romans is the greatest treatise on God that has ever been written that the letter has figured prominently in every significant evangelical renaissance in history.”[[23]](#footnote-23)6 Martin Luther called Romans “The chief part of the New Testament and the perfect Gospel. If a tyrant should destroy the Scriptures and only a single copy of Romans escape him, Christianity would be saved.”

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| 1. Paul wrote Romans in late AD 56 or early AD 57 during a three-month (4) visit to Corinth (Acts 20:2,3). Paul did not start the church in Rome, and he had never been there when he wrote this letter. But Rome was the center of the world, and the church there could have a significant influence on world events. |

### EXPLANATION

Paul was in Corinth on the last leg of his mission to raise a contribution for the saints in Jerusalem. He planned to be in Jerusalem by early summer, AD 57 (Acts 20:15). There is evidence that he was not sure he would survive the trip. At Miletus, he told the Ephesian elders he would no longer see their faces. At Caesarea, in the home of Philip, Agabus prophesied to Paul that the Jews would bind him and deliver him to the Gentiles. He responded, *“What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”* It is obvious he had already contemplated the possibility of martyrdom. This thought probably inspired him to record for posterity a clear and systematic presentation of his gospel message in his letter to the Romans.

The sensual city of Corinth provided a fitting background for Paul’s letter that so vividly condemned the sin of the Gentiles (1:28-32).

The founding of the church at Rome is shrouded in mystery but a few possibilities might explain its origin. On the day of Pentecost, visitors from Rome heard the preaching of Peter. If some of them were converted, upon their return to Rome they would start meeting together according to the example of the Jerusalem church.

Rome could also become a base for evangelism in the western part of the Empire—Spain in particular. The Gospel had not yet reached Spain, and Paul aspiring to preach where Christ had not been named, desired to go there. Did Paul ever reach his goal? We do not know for certain but there is evidence in Clement’s letter to the Corinthians (AD 96) that he did.

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| 2. Paul wrote this letter to provide a systematic (5) and thorough presentation of the gospel. |

### EXPLANATION

Romans is unique among Paul’s letters because it was not occasioned by a church problem. It is instead a systematic and logical presentation of the gospel.

“Of all the letters of Paul, Romans comes nearest to a theological treatise.”[[24]](#footnote-24)7

The gospel message is presented in a logical progression: Man is a sinner; Christ paid the price for man’s sin; Christ’s gift is received by faith alone.

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| *16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”*  ROMANS 1:16,17 |

### EXPLANATION

This theme is developed in chapters 1–8.

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| **Ephesians: The Queen of the Epistles**  1. Paul wrote Ephesians during his first imprisonment at Rome (6), between AD 60-62. It was probably written as a circular letter to the capital city of Ephesus, and then distributed to the churches of Asia Minor. |

### EXPLANATION

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are called the “prison Epistles” because they were written while Paul was under Roman house arrest.

If Romans is Paul’s greatest work concerning the gospel, then Ephesians is Paul’s greatest work concerning the church and God’s eternal purposes. It has been called by many “the queen of the Epistles.”

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| 2. There are several great themes in this letter.  • The exalted Christ and his work of redemption (7) |

### EXPLANATION

That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. (1:19-23)

*In him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.* (1:7)

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| • The glorious church (8) (2:19-22) |

*19So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* (2:19-22)

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| • God’s eternal plan (9) (1:4,9,10) |

*4. . . even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. 9. . . making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ . . . 10. . . as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.* (1:4; 9,10)

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| • The believer’s position (10) in Christ (1:3) |

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places . . .* (1:3)

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| **Colossians: The Preeminent Christ**  1. Paul wrote Colossians during his first imprisonment in Rome between AD 60-62. He had never visited Colossae at the time of his letter (2:1). |

### EXPLANATION

Colossae was part of a tri-city area that included Hierapolis and Laodicea. It was about 100 miles from Ephesus. It was located on the main road from Ephesus to the Euphrates, and was once rich in prosperity and influence. However, by the time of Paul’s letter, it was declining in both.

Epaphras, a Colossian native who was saved in Ephesus, started the church in Colossae during Paul’s lengthy Ephesian ministry.

When Paul wrote Colossians, Epaphras was with him in jail. *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.* (4:12)

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| 2. The false teaching (11) in Colossae was a blend of Christianity, Jewish ritualism, Greek philosophy, and pagan mysticism. These false teachers believed that salvation came through secret knowledge known only to the initiated. |

### EXPLANATION

Many mystery cults were growing in popularity during the first century. A mystery cult is a religion whose beliefs, practices, and true nature are revealed only to those who have been initiated into its secrets.

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| 3. Paul responded by declaring that the mystery (12) was Christ, and that salvation was open and available to all who believe (1:26, 27). |

### EXPLANATION

*26. . . the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* (1:26,27)

These false teachers believed that morality was based on the strict observance of ritual and the severe treatment of the flesh.

Paul responded by declaring that the severe treatment of the flesh only gave the appearance of morality. *20If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—21“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” 22(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? 23These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.* (2:20-23)

Paul’s purpose was to expose the false teachers and liberate those who had fallen under their spell. (2:4,8)

*4I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. 8See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.* (2:4,8)

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| 4. The letter’s primary theme is the supremacy (13) and all-sufficiency of Christ.  *17And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*  COLOSSIANS 1:17,18 |

### EXPLANATION

*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* (2:15)

The second theme of Colossians is the believers’ union with Christ. *3For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* (3:3,4)

The third theme of Colossians is the personal holiness and spiritual discipline that results because of our union with Christ. *8But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* (3:8-10)

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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. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians 11:23-28 is a list of Paul’s “apostolic credentials.” Why are these credentials startling? What would the tendency of most people be when forced to give a list of their credentials?  2. Explain Paul’s use of the metaphor of marriage in the light of the predominant themes in this letter (Ephesians 5:22-32).  3. Read Colossians 2:4-8. How does Paul’s warning apply to us today? |

### 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.]

### end of day 1

# Session 4 – PAUL’S LETTERS III

### LOGISTICAL NEEDS

### Bags that contain the names of the books of the New Testament written on individual cards for the pre-session activity part

### PRE-SESSION ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

### Books of the New 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 New 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 finishes first and has the correct order of the NT 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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| **Philemon: Paul’s Personal Letter**  1. Paul wrote to Philemon during his first imprisonment in Rome (AD 60-62). |

### EXPLANATION

Philemon was an affluent leader of one of the house churches in Colossae, well known for his hospitality. According to tradition, he eventually became the leader of the church in Colossae and was stoned to death in the days of Nero.

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| 2. Onesimus (1), Philemon’s slave, escaped with stolen money, ended up in Rome, and was led to Christ by Paul (1:10). Paul decided that even though Onesimus was useful for ministry, he belonged to Philemon and must be sent back to him (1:12-14). |

### EXPLANATION

Paul referred to him as *my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.* (1:10)

*12I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. 13I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, 14but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.* (1:12-14)

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| 3. The main theme in Philemon is the proper use of spiritual authority (2). |

### EXPLANATION

Paul’s apostolic office gave him the authority to command Philemon’s obedience in this matter, but he chose instead to appeal to him.

*8Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, 9yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you . . .* (1:8,9)

Paul could appeal to Philemon because of the depth of their relationship and because of his confidence in Philemon’s loyalty. *Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.* (1:21)

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| **Philippians: Paul’s Joy and Crown**  1. Paul wrote Philippians during his first imprisonment in Rome (AD 60-62). |

### EXPLANATION

Around 50 AD, on his second missionary journey, Paul planted his first church in Europe after receiving a vision in the night from a man from Macedonian. On his third missionary journey, Paul visited Philippi on the way to Corinth, and then on his return trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1-6).

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| 2. The Philippians raised a contribution for Paul and sent it with Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus became deadly sick after delivering the offering. When he recovered, Paul sent him back to Philippi to encourage the church and to deliver this letter. |

### EXPLANATION

The Philippians supported Paul financially more than any other church in the New Testament. The following are some examples of their generosity.

*15And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.* (4:15,16)

*For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.* (Romans 15:26)

*1We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—5and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*

(2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

*And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.* (2 Corinthians 11:9)

Paul wrote this letter to thank them for their financial gift. If Romans is a support letter, then Philippians is a thank-you-for-your-support letter!

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| 3. Paul wrote this letter to explain his attitude (3) towards potential martyrdom (1:21-26). He also wrote to warn against false teachers (3:2), and to avoid any possible strife in the church (2:3). |

*21For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.* (1:21-26)

*Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.* (3:2)

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves*. (2:3)

### EXPLANATION

Apart from a brief exhortation at the beginning of chapter four, there is no remonstrance against any sin, schism, or heresy at Philippi. The Philippians truly were Paul’s joy and crown.

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| 4. The two most prominent themes in Philippians are: Joy (4) (3:1) and the person of Jesus Christ (2:5-8). |

### EXPLANATION

The word joy is used in some form 19 times in four short chapters. *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.* (3:1)

*5Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* (2:5-8)

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| **1 Timothy: The Pastor’s Handbook**  1. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy sometime between his first and second Roman imprisonment. |

### EXPLANATION

Paul probably led Timothy to Christ in Lystra on his first missionary journey. When Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, he took Timothy with him. (Acts 16:1,3)

Timothy was probably between the ages of 14 and 16 when he began traveling with Paul. He was with Paul from this point on throughout most of the apostle’s journeys.

None of Paul’s other companions were as dear to him or as close to his heart. *19I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon . . . 20For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. . . . 22 . . . you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.* (Philippians 2:19-22)

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| 2. Sometime after Paul’s acquittal before Caesar in AD 65 (5), he traveled to Ephesus with Timothy and Luke. Paul stayed in Ephesus a while, and then left Timothy in charge (1:3). Paul then wrote to Timothy from Macedonia to instruct him how to lead the church in his absence. |

*14I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.* (3:14,15)

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| 3. Paul’s primary theme was the proper ordering (6) of the local church. Some of the topics he covered were:  • The order and content of worship (7) (4:13) |

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.* (4:13)

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| • The qualifications (8) of elders and deacons (3:1-13) |

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. (*3:1)

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| • Money and giving (6:17,18) |

*17As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share . . .* (6:17,18)

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| **Titus: Good Deeds and Sound Doctrine**  1. Paul wrote to Titus after 1 Timothy and before 2 Timothy. |

### EXPLANATION

Titus was a Greek believer (Galatians 2:3) who accompanied Paul on one of his five trips to Jerusalem. He is mentioned thirteen times in the New Testament, but never in Acts.

Titus was a vital member of Paul’s apostolic team who functioned in several different roles. He successfully mediated the conflict between Paul and factions in the Corinthian church. (2 Corinthians 7:13-15) He delivered Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth. (2 Corinthians 8:17) He represented Paul in an apostolic role to the churches on the island of Crete. (1:5) (Crete is the largest and most populous of the Greek islands, the fifth-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea.)

In the ancient world, Crete had been the site of a great civilization. But by the first century, it had greatly deteriorated and Cretans had developed a reputation for indolence and prevarication. The term, “to Cretanize” was a slang term for lying. Even one of their own prophets has said, *“Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”* (1:12) Paul’s response to this allegation was: *This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith . . .* (1:13)

The origin of the church in Crete is unknown, but it may have started when visiting Cretans, converted through the preaching of Peter at Pentecost, returned home.

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| 2. The church at Crete (9) was in need of order and discipline. False teachers were teaching erroneous doctrine (1:10,11) and disobedient Christians were abusing the grace of God and living unruly lives (2:11,12). |

*10For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.* *11They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. (*1:10,11)

*11For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age . . .* (2:11,12)

### EXPLANATION

Paul gave Titus instructions concerning the qualifications for elders, the proper behavior for different groups in the church, and the doctrine needed to confront the false teachers.

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| 3. Paul emphasized good deeds (10) and sound doctrine (11) in this letter. |

### EXPLANATION

The emphasis on good deeds in Titus is one reason liberal scholars claim it was not written by Paul. They insist that Paul’s message was grace and not good deeds. But they do not understand grace. Paul insisted that grace produces the fruit of good deeds. Any message of grace that does not produce external moral behavior is antinomian.

In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds. (2:7,14)

These good deeds manifest in a lifestyle of obedience and self-control. (3:1)

*Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work . . .* (3:1)

*2Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled . . . 3Older women likewise . . . 5to be self-controlled . . . 6Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.* (2:2-6)

*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.* (2:1)

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| **2 Timothy: Paul’s Final Goodbye**  1. Paul wrote this letter sometime around AD 65 or 66. This is the last of Paul’s letters, written from a Roman prison as he awaited his execution.  *6For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*  2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8 |

### EXPLANATION

Sometime after penning this letter, Paul was beheaded outside of Rome.

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| 2. Paul’s primary reason for writing was to urge Timothy to visit (12) him quickly before he was executed (1:4; 4:9). Knowing Timothy might arrive too late, Paul wrote some of the things that were the most important to him before his departure. |

*As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. (1:4)*

*Do your best to come to me soon.* (4:9)

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| 3. Paul gave at least three main exhortations to Timothy:  • Hold fast to the truth (13) (1:13,14). |

*13Follow the pattern of the sound* *words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* (1:13,14)

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| • Transfer (14) what you have received (2:2). |

*. . . and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men* *who will be able to teach others also.* (2:2)

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| • Endure suffering (15) (2:3). |

*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.* (2:3)

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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. Paul wrote Philippians after four and a half years of imprisonment, and yet one of his prominent themes is joy. What does that say about Paul’s view of difficult circumstances, and how does that relate to your life?  2. Read the description for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. What characteristic stands out the most to you? Why do you think it is important for people in a leadership role to have that characteristic? What happens when leaders do not have that characteristic?  3. Paul tells Titus to *renounce ungodliness and worldly passions* (Titus 2:12). Discuss Paul’s view of grace expressed in this passage, and the effect it should have on our lives. |

### 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 1 Timothy (the pastor’s handbook) and look for five important exhortations for pastors and young leaders. |

# Session 5 – THE GENERAL EPISTLES

### lecture (25 minutes)

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| **Hebrews: The Book of Better Things**  1. The authorship and date of Hebrews is one of the great mysteries (1) of the New Testament. |

### EXPLANATION

Origen claimed the thoughts were Paul’s, but the words were Luke’s or Clement’s. Clement of Alexandria thought that Paul wrote it in Hebrew and that Luke translated it into Greek. Eusebius thought it was translated from the original Hebrew by Clement, but was unsure who the original author was. Luther thought Apollos wrote it. Others have suggested Barnabas, Philip, Silas, Stephen, Mark, and even Priscilla and Aquila. But Origen probably said it best, “Only God knows with certainty who wrote Hebrews.”

The date of Hebrews is a mystery, but it was probably written before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70.

If the temple was no longer, the author certainly would have used that historical fact as the irrefutable proof that the sacrificial system was obsolete—one of the main themes of the letter. But all of the evidence of the text indicates the temple is still in operation.

To whom the letter of Hebrews was first sent is another mystery. However, the internal evidence suggests that it was written to a local congregation of Jewish Christians.

All that is known about the background of Hebrews is what can be pieced together from the textual evidence.

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| 2. Hebrews is more like a sermon (2) than a letter. It is filled with quotations from the Old Testament, and is organized in a logical order that consists of five major theological sections interspersed with five exhortations. |

### EXPLANATION

The traditional letter form is absent from the introduction. (However, it is present at the conclusion.) The author refers to it as an exhortation that has been written down. *I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.* (13:22)

There are 29 direct quotations from the Old Testament and 53 allusions to other passages.

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| Theological section #1 | 1:1-14 God’s final revelation in Christ is better than His first revelation given through angels. |
| Exhortation #1 | 2:1-4 Be careful not to drift away through neglect­ing so great a salvation. |
| Theological section #2 | 2:5-3:6 Christ in His incarnation is superior to the angelic beings and better than Moses. |
| Exhortation #2 | 3:7-4:16 Be careful not to harden your heart through disobedience and unbelief. |
| Theological section #3 | 5:1-10 Christ is a better high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. |
| Exhortation #3 | 5:11-6:12 Be careful not to receive the Word and then turn away from it. |
| Theological section #4 | 6:13-10:18 Christ is the mediator of a better cove­nant in the eternal sanctuary. |
| Exhortation #4 | 10:19-39 Be careful not to throw away your confi­dence and shrink back. |
| Theological section #5 | 11:1-40 Faith is the prerequisite to pleasing God and obtaining a good testimony. |
| Exhortation #5 | 12:1-13:24 Be careful not to reject the discipline of the Lord and come short of His grace. |

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| 3. The congregation had faced persecution(3) in the past and were facing it again (10:32). But this time they were in danger of drifting away from faith in Christ (2:1). |

*But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings . . .* (10:32)

*Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*

(2:1)

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| 4. The author motivated them to remain faithful through opposition and persecution with three exhortations:  • Hold fast to your confession (4) (4:14). |

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

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| • Endure your circumstances (5) (12:1). |

. . . *let us run* *with endurance the race that is* *set before us . . .*

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| • Look to your reward (6) (12:2). |

. . . *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

We have a better mediator (1:4), a better hope (7:19), a better covenant with better promises (8:6), a better sacrifice (9:23), and a better provision (11:40).

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| **James: The Gospel of True Religion**  1. James was the half-brother of Jesus. He wrote this letter in the late 40s(7), making it one of the earliest New Testament documents. |

### EXPLANATION

James was not a believer during the earthly ministry of Jesus (John 7:5), but was converted by a post-resurrection visitation from the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:7). He later became an apostle in the early church (Galatians 1:19).

James quickly rose to a position of prominence and was probably the senior leader of the Jerusalem church within a dozen years of the resurrection (Acts 12:17). He presided over the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:13) and probably penned the letter sent to the churches regarding the results of the conference. His personal piety and strict adherence to the Judaic traditions earned him the nickname “James the Just,” and a position of influence among the Jews of his day. The Jewish historian Josephus records that he was brought before the Sanhedrin in AD 62 and stoned as a transgressor of the Law.

The book of James is a circular letter written to Jewish believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire (1:1).

One issue that has dogged the epistle of James throughout history is the question concerning its teaching on justification by faith. Liberal scholars see a radical division between James and Paul over the doctrine of justification. Paul, they say, taught a justification by faith, and James taught a justification by works.

Paul: *For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.* (Romans 3:28)

James: *You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.* (James 2:24)

But Paul and James do not contradict one another—they complement one another.

Paul denounced works that are done as the means of salvation. Romans 3:20: *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

James denounced faith that is mere mental assent. James 2:19: *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!*

Paul advocated the kind of works that James advocated. Romans 2:13: *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*

James advocated the kind of faith that Paul advocated. James 1:6-8: *6But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Paul and James together present the full dimension of salvation.

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| 2. James’ writing is authoritative (8), concrete, and eloquent. |

AUTHORITATIVE:

The tone of the Epistle is the most authoritative in the New Testament with 54 imperatives in 108 verses. James has been called the “Amos of the New Testament” because of his censure of the idle rich, his prophetic fervor, and his vivid metaphors from nature.

CONCRETE:

James avoids abstractions or mystical meanings and presents plain, every day concerns in a straightforward manner.

ELOQUENT:

James’ Greek is better than most all the other New Testament writers. He uses striking and visual metaphors to convey his thoughts (1:6,11; 3:3,11; 4:14; 5:7).

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| 3. The primary theme of James is true (9) religion. This is displayed by genuine faith (1:2,3,22; 2:17) and genuine holiness (1:21,27; 2:10; 3:2,14; 4:4,17; 5:16). |

### EXPLANATION

James is concerned with upholding the scriptural standards of holiness in a pagan environment hostile to the truth.

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| **Jude: A Defense of the Faith**  1. Jude was the half-brother of Jesus and the brother of James. He wrote his letter between AD 65 and 80, making it one of the last documents of the New Testament canon. |

### EXPLANATION

According to tradition, Jude became the leader of the Jerusalem church after James was executed around AD 62.

It was written to a predominantly Jewish-Christian congregation in Asia Minor.

There are many similarities between Jude and 2 Peter.

*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.* (2 Peter 2:1)

*For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* (Jude 1:4)

*. . .knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.* (2 Peter 3:3)

*17But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. 18They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.”* (Jude 1:17,18)

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| 2. The false teachers that Jude confronted were distorting (10) the true message of God’s grace. The heretics denied the Lordship and deity of Christ (1:4), rejected authority (1:8), and caused divisions (1:19).  *For certain people have crept in unnoticed . . . ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*  JUDE 4 |

### EXPLANATION

Jude stated plainly his purpose for writing this letter. *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.* (1:3)

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| 3. Jude’s letter is a forceful argument against heresy (11) and an exhortation to join the battle against such men and ideas. |

### EXPLANATION

Jude’s prescription for avoiding the influences of these false ideas is pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourself in the love of God, and anxiously anticipate eternal life (1:20,21).

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| **1 Peter: The Enemy Without** |

### EXPLANATION

Peter probably used Silvanus (Silas) as his amanuensis (5:12) when he wrote this letter because the Greek is very eloquent—better than a fisherman from Galilee would be expected to use!

Peter says he wrote the letter from Babylon, but whether he was referring to the actual city in Mesopotamia or using figurative language for Rome is unclear.

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| 1. This letter was probably written shortly after the Neronic (12) persecutions began and before Peter was martyred, between AD 64–66. |

### EXPLANATION

1 Peter was written to Christians in five Roman provinces of Asia Minor who were experiencing various forms of persecution. *12Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* (4:12,13)

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| 2. Peter wrote his letter to encourage believers who were experiencing persecution and suffering from the “Enemy Without.”  *6In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*  1 PETER 1:6,7  3. Three themes emerge from Peter’s encouragement to those experiencing persecution: hope (1:3,13,21; 3:15), holiness (1:14-19, 22; 2:1,11; 4:3), and vigilance (5:8). |

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| **2 Peter: The Enemy Within**  1. Second Peter was written shortly after 1 Peter—around AD 65 or 66. The primary theme of the letter is *destructive heresies* (2:17-19). |

*17These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. 18For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. 19They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.*

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| 2. Peter was concerned that persecution (13) might lead the people to compromise with sin and succumb to heresy, or the “Enemy Within.”  *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.*  2 PETER 2:1  3. In the light of destructive heresies currently present and those to come, Peter constantly exhorts the people on the importance of the true knowledge of God (1:2,3,8; 2:20; 3:18). |

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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. Discuss the following passage in the light of the Hebrews’ situation. What did it mean to the original hearers, and how is that relevant in your life?   *35Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” 39But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*  HEBREWS 10:35-39   1. Compare the following two verses. Do they contradict one another? If not, how can they both be true?   *For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from* *works of the law.*  ROMANS 3:28  *You see that a person is justified by works and not* *by faith alone.*  JAMES 2:24   1. Why are the three themes in Peter’s first letter (hope, holiness, and vigilance) so important to someone experiencing persecution? How do those themes relate to the things you are experiencing in your life right now? |

### CLASS PROCESSING (5 MINUTES)

### [At this point, the teacher will ask two to three participants to share what they did during the application.]

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| **ASSIGNMENT**  There are eighty-two direct quotes or allusions to the Old Testament in Hebrews. Read any chapter and see how many you can find. |

Session 6 – THE WRITINGS OF JOHN

### lecture (25 minutes)

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| **John: The Gospel of Love** |

### EXPLANATION

John was a native of Galilee, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. His father was a prosperous fisherman named Zebedee. His mother was Salome, who ministered to Jesus from her own means (Matthew 27:55, 56), saw him crucified (Mark 15:40), and was among the first to visit the empty tomb (Mark 16:1).

John stood by the cross with the mother of Jesus, and received her into his care (19:25-27). He ran with Peter into the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection and upon entering, he saw and believed (20:2-8).

John was one of the three admitted to the death chamber of the ruler’s daughter (Mark 5:37), the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28), and the agony in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33).

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| 1. John wrote his Gospel in the last decade(1) of the first century. He emphasized the feasts of the Jewish nation, Jesus’ private conversations with individuals, and Jesus’ private teaching ministry to His disciples. |

### EXPLANATION

John took for granted that his audience was familiar with the content of the other Gospels. He constantly assumed certain facts were already known to his readers. For example, he did not include Jesus’ genealogy, birth, baptism, temptation, casting out of demons, parables, transfiguration, the Lord’s Supper, Gethsemane, or His Ascension. John wanted to fill in the gaps that were missing from the Synoptic accounts—especially Jesus’ ministry in Judea and Jerusalem. Of the seven ‘signs’ in John, only two of them (feeding the five thousand, walking on water) are found in the Synoptics. Ninety-two percent of John’s material is unique to his work.

John wrote his Gospel to the Jews and Gentile proselytes in the synagogues of Asia Minor.

FEASTS:

He recorded at least three Passovers (5:1 may refer to another Passover). The Synoptics only record one. Without John’s account, we would not know the length of Jesus’ ministry.

PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS:

For example, His conversation with: Nicodemus (3:1-21), the Samaritan woman (1:1-42), the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-15), the blind man (9:1-41), and Pilate (18:29-19:16).

John’s structure is more systematic than the Synoptics. There is a Prologue (1:1–1:18), a Body (1:19–20:31), and an Epilogue (21:1 – 21:25). He grouped much of Jesus’ ministry around seven “signs”—miracles that reveal a deeper spiritual meaning. The seven signs are: changing water into wine (2:1-11), healing the nobleman’s son (4:46-54), healing the paralytic (5:1-9), feeding the 5,000 (6:1-14), walking on water (6:16-21), healing the blind man (9:1-7), and raising Lazarus (11:38-45).

John made it plain why he wrote his Gospel.

. . . *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* (20:31)

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| 2. The first theme is the rejection(2) of Jesus by His own people (and the acceptance of Jesus by those who believed.) |

### EXPLANATION

The word “belief” (or some version of the word) occurs 98 times in John’s Gospel.

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| *11He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children*  *of God . . .*  JOHN 1:11,12 |

### EXPLANATION

Some did not believe because they loved the darkness rather than the light. (3:19) *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*

*42Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; 43for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.* (12:42,43)

Some did not believe because they were not His sheep.

*. . . but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep*. (John 10:26)

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| 3. The second theme is the deity (3) of Christ (1:1). Christ’s deity is proclaimed in the seven “I AM” statements of John’s Gospel (6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). |

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (1:1)

*This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.* (5:18)

I AM the *bread of life*. (6:35)

I AM the *light of the world.* (8:12)

I AM the *door of the sheep.* (10:7)

I AM the *good shepherd.* (10:11)

I AM the *resurrection and the life.* (11:25)

I AM the *way, the truth, and the life.* (14:6)

I AM the *true vine*. (15:1)

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| **1 John: The Last Letters to the Church**  1. John wrote this letter sometime between AD 85-95 (4). He wrote it to a church infiltrated by false teachers (4:1). |

### EXPLANATION

Dating 1 John is very difficult because, unlike any other New Testament work, it does not contain a single proper name or any definite personal, historical, or geographical information. There are no clues to the identity or location of the original recipients.

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* (4:1)

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| 2. John stated five reasons (5) for writing the letter: fellowship (1:3), joy (1:4), holiness (2:1), truth (2:26), and assurance (5:13). |

*. . . that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (*1:3)

*And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.* (1:4)

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. . .* (2:1)

*I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.* (2:26)

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.* (15:13)

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| 3. His primary themes are: love (3:11,14,16,17,18; 4:7,10; 5:2), truth (1:6; 2:4,21; 4:6), and obedience (2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3). |

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| **2 John: The Last Letters to the Church**  This letter was written around the same time as 1 John as a warning against false teachers. It was addressed to *the chosen lady and her children*. |

### EXPLANATION

There was a debate in the early church that is still unresolved today whether the lady was an actual person or a symbol for a congregation. The tone assumes a private letter to an individual, but the subject matter seems to fit a public letter to a church congregation.

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| *7For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.*  *8Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. 9Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*  2 JOHN 1:7-9 |

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| **3 John: The Last Letters to the Church** |

### EXPLANATION

This letter was written around the same time as 1 John: 85-95 AD. It is the shortest book in the New Testament, consisting of 219 words.

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| 1. This letter was addressed to Gaius (6) who was probably John’s convert. Four times John refers to him as *beloved*. John sent a group of ministers to the church where Gaius was, but the domineering leader Diotrephes did not receive them.  *I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.*  3 JOHN 1:9 |

### EXPLANATION

Gaius showed hospitality to them in spite of the excommunication threats of Diotrephes. When the ministers returned to Ephesus, they reported Gaius’ hospitality to John.

A second group, led by Demetrius, the bearer of the letter, was then sent from John with a request to Gaius for hospitality. John planned a visit to deal with the factious Diotrephes.

*So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us.* (1:10)

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.* (1:4)

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| 2. This letter presents a glimpse into the intricate relationships (7) between apostolic leaders and local church leaders. |

### EXPLANATION

This letter goes beyond the theory of how these relationships should work and shows how sometimes—unfortunately—they do work.

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| **Revelation: The Book of Last Things**  1. John wrote Revelation from Patmos during a time of persecution (8) (1:9). |

*I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* (Revelation 1:9)

### EXPLANATION

Revelation was obviously written during a time of persecution. But which persecution? There are two primary choices: the Neronic persecution of the mid 60s, or the Domitianic persecution of the 90s. How Revelation is interpreted is based on which date is used.

Revelation was addressed to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia Minor. (Revelation 1:11)

*“Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches . . .”* (Revelation 1:11)

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| 2. No book in the New Testament poses as many interpretive challenges (9) as Revelation. There are four ways to interpret the prophecy of Revelation. |

### EXPLANATION

“The Revelation . . . is by common consent one of the most difficult of all the books of

the Bible.”[[25]](#footnote-25)1

“No portion of the Holy Scriptures has been the subject of so much controversy and of so many varying interpretations as the Apocalypse of John.”[[26]](#footnote-26)2

“No other book has so perplexed biblical students throughout the Christian centuries down to our own time.”[[27]](#footnote-27)3

The exposition centers around two problems: how the prophecy of Revelation is interpreted, and what the meaning of the Millennium is.

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| Preterist | Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. |
| Historical | Revelation is an overview of church and world history. |
| Futurist | Revelation is for the last days and is largely yet unfulfilled. |
| Spiritual | Revelation is a picture of the eternal struggle between good and evil. |

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| 3. Revelation was written to encourage the seven (10) churches of Asia Minor to endure the persecution they were experiencing. This encouragement came in the form of a vision of the glorious church and her victorious Lord. |

### EXPLANATION

“Revelation was designed to steel the first century Church against the gathering storm of persecution, which was reaching an unnerving crescendo of theretofore unknown proportions and intensity.”[[28]](#footnote-28)4

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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. Read the story of Jesus’ private conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-30. Why do you think John included this story in his account (while the other writers did not)? How does it relate to John’s themes in his Gospel? How does it relate to your life?  2. Why are 1 John’s three themes of love, truth, and obedience so important for a church infiltrated by false teachers? Why are those three themes important if we want to keep our life free from error and wrong teaching?  3. John offers a blessing for anyone who reads, hears, and takes to heart the words of Revelation (Revelation 1:3). Why is that? What is unique about Revelation that would warrant this blessing? What does the blessing come from? |

### 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.]

1. F.F. Bruce, New Testament History, p 182 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quoted in, The Believer’s Study Bible, Introduction to Matthew [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. He was also known as John Mark. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quoted in, Eusebius, The History of the Church [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. candor = honesty, frankness, straightforwardness, directness [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For more info on Nero’s persecution of Christians see > http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/christians.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Matthew and Luke actually give two different genealogies. Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, the legal, though not the physical father of Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, gives the ancestry of Jesus through Mary from whom Jesus was descended physically as to his humanity. This is a beautiful fulfillment of prophecy and actually testifies to the accuracy of the Bible. Through Joseph, Jesus became the legal heir to the throne while at the same time bypassed the curse of Coniah as prophesied in Jeremiah 22:24-30. Both, of course, were in the line of David so that Jesus had a legal right to the throne as the adopted son of Joseph and was at the same time a physical (biological) descendent of David through Mary. < https://bible.org/question/why-do-matthew-and-lukes-genealogies-contradict-one-another> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Augustus: Luke 2:1 / Tiberius: Luke 3:1 / Claudius: Acts 11:28; 18:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. F.F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents, p. 80 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. W.M. Ramsay, The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, p. 222 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Joseph Renan, Quoted in Vincent’s Word Studies, vol. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. F.F Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Stanley D. Toussaint, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Acts [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. William Barclay, The Acts of the Apostles, p. xvii [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 1 Quoted in, Martin Luther’s Commentary on Galatians [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 2 F.F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, pp. 178-187 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 1 D. K. Lowery, The Bible Knowledge Commentary [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 2 F.F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, p. 262 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 3 Lawrence O. Richards, The Bible Reader’s Companion [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 4 F.F. Bruce, Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol 5, p. 161 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 5 Frederick Godet, Commentary on Romans, p. 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 6 John MacKay, The Theme of Romans, p. 263 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 7 Dale Moody, Broadman Bible Commentary, vol 10, p. 157 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. 1 Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John, p.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 2 Milton Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p.466 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 3 Isbon Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John, p.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. 4 Kenneth Gentry, Before Jerusalem Fell, p.15 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)