

# Grasping God's Word

~ digging deeper ~  
~ understanding more ~

## Lesson #2 – Seeing the Big Picture: An Overview of God's Word



1715 Stringtown Pike  
Cicero, Indiana 46034

## Class Summary:

The schedule below summarizes the topic and summary of each class that will take place over the next eleven weeks. Each class will be a hands-on class that will require interaction and sometimes homework for the week.

<b>Grasping God's Word Class Schedule</b>			
<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Week #1</b>	<b>09-07-11</b>	<b>Preparing Ourselves to Grasp God's Word</b>	This study will help each individual discover how to prepare themselves to study the Word of God to gain maximum understanding.
<b>Week #2</b>	<b>09-14-11</b>	<b>Seeing the Big Picture: Overview of God's Word</b>	This study will introduce each individual to an overview of the Word of God and discover why this is important for each person to understand.
<b>Week #3</b>	<b>09-21-11</b>	<b>Choosing the Right Tools: Establish a Method for Grasping God's Word</b>	This study will introduce each individual to the different methods of studying the Word of God and determine how each student can gain the most knowledge from the Word of God.
<b>Week #4</b>	<b>09-28-11</b>	<b>Digging In: Introduction to the Passage/Book</b>	This study will help each individual understand the first step in studying a passage of Scripture. You will learn how to outline a passage, how to recognize key words and themes, and more.
<b>Week #5</b>	<b>10-07-11</b>	<b>Digging Below the Surface: Historical/Cultural Background</b>	This study will help each individual develop the basic skills to find and examine the historical & cultural background of each passage in order to better understand the original intent of the author of each passage.
<b>Week #6</b>	<b>10-14-11</b>	<b>Examining the Richness of the Soil: Word Studies</b>	This study will help each individual discover the key words, phrases, and themes within the passage in order to discover the deeper meaning of each text.
<b>Week #7</b>	<b>10-21-11</b>	<b>Digging Deeper with Commentary Studies</b>	This study will help each individual discover how to dig deeper within each passage bringing about more clarity and understanding by utilizing the right resources.
<b>Week #8</b>	<b>10-28-11</b>	<b>Examining the Richness of Soil: Theological Analysis</b>	This study will help each individual discover the major theological themes within each passage and how it relates to the rest of the Bible.
<b>Week #9</b>	<b>11-02-11</b>	<b>Discovering the Treasure: Application</b>	This study will help each individual discover how to take the meaning of each passage and apply the text to their lives for today.
<b>Week #10</b>	<b>11-09-11</b>	<b>Sharing the Treasure: Communicate the Word of God to Others</b>	This study will help each individual learn importance as well as techniques to communicate their new knowledge of the Word of God to others.
<b>Week #11</b>	<b>11-16-11</b>	<b>Dealing with Difficulties: Studying the Difficult Passages</b>	This study will help each individual learn how to examine and interpret difficult passages of Scripture that have had a hard time understanding previously.

## **Grasping God's Word: Part #2 – Seeing the Big Picture: An Overview of God's Word**

---

We are facing a crisis in our nation as we survey the face of American Christianity. As we observed in the previous lesson, there is an increasing number of Christians that have a lower view of the Word of God than ever before as well as the fact that fewer Christians each year are actually reading the Word of God. As Christians, we must return to the Word of God with a desperate pursuit for three primary reasons.

### **Three Reasons for Reading the Word of God**

#### **Reason #1 – It is needed for our spiritual growth.**

**Romans 10:17** – So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Christians have been called to grow in their faith so that they can continue to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ while they dwell in this world. The only way that we can be those ambassadors for Christ, being the salt and light to the world around us, is if we know the Word of God.

#### **Why must we read the Word of God to grow spiritually?**

#### **Reason #2 – It is needed to train ourselves up in godliness and give a reason for the hope we have in Jesus Christ.**

**1 Timothy 4:7-8** – Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

**1 Peter 3:15** – but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Christians have also been called to train themselves up in godliness in order to give a defense for their faith in Christ and to inform others of the hope that we have in and through Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

#### **How does studying the Word of God help us prepare ourselves to give a defense for the faith?**

#### **Reason #3 – It brings glory to God and shows our love for Him as we learn to become more obedient through His Word.**

**1 John 5:3** – For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

**John 15:10** – If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Christians have also been commanded to be obedient to the Word of God not out of obligation rather out of love and devotion to our Lord. If we desire to stay in the presence of the Lord then we must learn to be obedient to the Lord and His Word.

## Section #1 – The Need to Review

The Bible is the inspired Word of God and it is the gift God has given mankind to develop a deeper relationship with Him. Every Christian should have a deeper understanding of not only the content of the Word of God but also an overview as to how the Bible is laid out.

### Why is it important for Christians to understand a general overview of the Bible?

**2 Timothy 3:16** – All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...

Through this study will examine a basic overview of the Bible, major facts about the Bible, the origin and formation of the Bible, and break it down into an outline of the Old and New Testaments.

The major sections that we examine in this lesson will give you a deeper understanding of the Word of God and will help you discover its authenticity and inspiration.

<b>Chart #1 – Important Facts about the Word of God</b>	
<b>Fact to Consider</b>	<b>Biblical Reference</b>
The Bible is the Inspired Word of God <b>Origin of the Bible = It came from God as He inspired humans to write down His words.</b>	2 Timothy 3:16 2 Peter 1:20-21
Hearing the Word of God increases Your Faith	Romans 10:17
Obedying the Word Brings Blessing to Your Life	Luke 11:28
The Word of God Brings You to the knowledge of Salvation through Christ alone	1 Peter 1:23
The Word of God is Alive and Active	Hebrews 4:12
The Word of God is the Sword of Truth	Ephesians 6:17
Jesus Christ is the Word of God	Revelation 19:12, John 1:14
Jesus Christ is the Son of God and One with God.	Matthew 3:17, John 10:30
There are 66 books in the Bible.	New Testament = 27 books Old Testament = 39 books
The Bible was written over a 1,500 year time span.	The Bible has 40 different human writers.
The Bible was written on 3 Continents and in 3 different languages.	The Bible is translated in over 2,000 languages.
There are twelve disciples: Simon (Peter), Andrew, James & John sons of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.	Matthew 10:2-4

### Why is it important to know the basic facts about the Word of God? Explain.

**Note:** If you would like to observe a few facts about the reliability of the Word of God then refer to the appendix under the section: **Reliability of the Word of God.**

## Section #3 – A General Overview of the Bible

The Bible has been handcrafted by God and it is sufficient for everything that we would ever need through the course of life when it comes to teachings, lessons, and wisdom on how to deal with the trials and obstacles of this life as well as how to develop a relationship with our Lord and Savior. The Bible is divided into two main sections: (1) Old Testament and (2) New Testament.

Let us begin this section of our study by briefly examining a chart that gives you an overview of the books of the Bible. You also will be provided a bookmark that gives you a general overview of the big picture of the Bible as put together by Bill Cunningham.

Overview of the Bible					
Old Testament – 39 Books			New Testament – 27 Books		
<b>The Law</b>	<b>Poetry</b>	<b>Major Prophets</b>	<b>Gospels</b>	<b>Pauline Epistles</b>	
Genesis	Job	Isaiah	Matthew	1 Timothy	
Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah	Mark	2 Timothy	
Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations	Luke	Titus	
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	John	Philemon	
Deuteronomy	Song of Solomon	Daniel		<b>General Epistles</b>	
<b>History</b>		<b>Minor Prophets</b>	<b>History</b>	Hebrews	
Joshua		Hosea	Acts	James	
Judges		Joel		1 Peter	
Ruth		Amos	<b>Pauline Epistles</b>	2 Peter	
1 Samuel		Obadiah	Romans	1 John	
2 Samuel		Jonah	1 Corinthians	2 John	
1 Kings		Micah	2 Corinthians	3 John	
2 Kings		Nahum	Galatians	Jude	
1 Chronicles		Habakkuk	Ephesians	<b>Prophecy</b>	
2 Chronicles		Zephaniah	Philippians	Revelation	
Ezra		Haggai	Colossians		
Nehemiah		Zechariah	1 Thessalonians		
Esther		Malachi	2 Thessalonians		

**What is the importance of being familiar with this basic overview of the Bible?**

**What is the importance of being familiar with the snapshot of the big picture of the Bible as provided by Bill Cunningham?**

### Old Testament

Let us examine the overview of the Old Testament. Many people believe that the Old Testament has no relevance for the Christian today. The truth is that the Old Testament helps us understand that New Testament with greater clarity. There is a saying that comes to mind expressing this truth: **The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.**

**Description Paragraph of the Old Testament** – The Old Testament chronicles the time period before Christ under the old covenant which required the Jews to keep many moral, civil, and religious laws. If they kept the covenant then they would be blessed but if they did not keep the covenant then they would be cursed. The new covenant was prophesied in the Old Testament and it was fulfilled in Christ who made it possible for us to have direct access to God.

### **What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians today?**

The Old Testament has major themes that help us understand the New Testament in greater detail. It also gives us insight into the attributes of our Heavenly Father who created us. Observe some of these themes.

### **A Sample of Themes found in the Old Testament**

- Creation of the World
- Fall of Mankind
- The Old Covenant
- Wisdom Literature
- Prophecy
- Reality of Evil
- Atonement for Sin
- Holiness and Righteousness
- Judgment

### **What other themes do you observe in the Old Testament?**

### **How do these themes relate to the New Testament?**

### **Overview of the Old Testament Sections**

We gain a better understanding of the layout of the Old Testament by examining the sections that composes this portion of the Bible. This overview gives us a greater understanding of connection between the Old and New Testaments.

#### **Section #1 – The Pentateuch (5 books)**

These books are referred to as the “Books of Moses” or the “Torah.” Torah is translated most commonly as “Law.” These first five books of the Bible introduce us to God as the Creator of all things who also has established the Law for His people to live by in order to be considered blameless and upright in His sight. These books were written around 1400 B.C.

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

#### **Section #2 – History Books (12 books)**

These books give an account of the history of the nation of Israel as God’s chosen people. These books give us a clear picture of the power of God and the love He has for His children shown by His provision and protection for them. The books were written approximately between 1400 and 450 B.C.

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

### Section #3 – Poetry (5 Books)

These books account for some of the most beautiful lines of teaching in the world. We also are given the greatest wisdom in the world as we read these books and the rest of the Bible.

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon

### Section #4 – Major Prophets (5 Books)

A prophet is someone who has been called by God to deliver His message and revelation to individuals, a group of people, a nation, or the entire world. The “Major Prophets” are considered “Major” because these books are longer in length. The “Minor Prophets” are shorter in length creating the main difference. They were written approximately between 750 and 550 B.C.

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

### Section #5 – Minor Prophets (12 Books)

These are the last twelve books in the Old Testament. They were written approximately between 840 and 400 B.C.

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

**What stands out to you about the overview of the Old Testament?**

**Why is it important to have an idea of the general sections of the Old Testament?**

## New Testament

**Description Paragraph of the New Testament** – The New Testament consists of 27 books. The first four are the gospels, which chronicle the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, written by four eyewitnesses of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Acts is an historical account by the disciple Luke about how the church was born and of its early days. Revelation is an account of a vision given by God to the disciple John discussing Christ’s return, how the age will end, and what is to come. The remaining books are letters written by Paul, John, James, Jude, and Peter about doctrinal issues and how to live a life that honors God. The New Testament introduces us to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world. It declares that all people have the opportunity for salvation through Christ if they surrender their life to Him, whether Jew or Gentile.

### A Sample of Themes found in the New Testament

- The Savior Arrives
- Grace Revealed
- The New Covenant
- Faith Abounds
- Salvation for All Mankind
- Gospel is Given
- Forgiveness for Sin
- Holiness and Righteousness
- Judgment

**What other themes do you observe in the New Testament?**

## Overview of New Testament Books

We gain a better understanding of the New Testament by examining the overview of each section. This overview gives us a greater understanding of connection between the Old and New Testaments as well as the message of salvation for all mankind.

### Section #1 – Gospels (4 Books)

The Gospels give the account of the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospels deliver the “Gospel” message for all mankind and introduce us to the Savior of the world.

- Matthew
- Luke
- Mark
- John

### Section #2 – Church History (1 Book)

The book of Acts is Church History 101. It is in this book that we see the beginning and rise of the first church as well as the initial obstacles that they encountered.

- Acts

### Section #3 – Pauline Epistles (13 Books)

The term “epistle” means “letter.” These are letters that have been written to individuals, groups of people, or to believers in general that instruct them in living for heavenly Father and learning to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. These letters were written by the Apostle Paul.

- Romans
- 1 Thessalonians
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 2 Corinthians
- 1 Timothy
- Galatians
- 2 Timothy
- Ephesians
- Titus
- Philippians
- Philemon
- Colossians

### Section #4 – General Epistles (8 Books)

Once again, the term “epistle” means “letter.” These are also letters that have been written to individuals, groups of people, or to believers in general that instruct them in living for heavenly Father and learning to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

- Hebrews
- 2 Peter
- 3 John
- James
- 1 John
- Jude
- 1 Peter
- 2 John

### Section #5 – Prophecy (1 Book)

- Revelation

**How can the overview of the New Testament strengthen our faith as Christians?**

**Why is it important to have an idea of the general sections of the Old Testament?**

## Section #4 – The Formation of the Bible

The final section that we examine deals with the formation of the Bible as well as its authenticity. The Bible is handcrafted by an infallible God which helps us understand that it is both inspired by God and inerrant. Many times Christians are challenged as to formation of the Bible.

### Where does the Bible come from?

#### Can God use infallible men to record His infallible Word?

Examine these passages of Scripture to understand the origin of the Bible from a Biblical perspective.

**2 Timothy 3:16** – All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...

#### How much of Scripture is inspired by God?

#### What does it mean for Scripture to be inspired by God?

- The Greek term for *inspired* means “breathed out by God, God-breathed.”
- **Jeremiah 1:9** – Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.”

**2 Peter 1:20-21** – <sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- The Greek term for “*prophecy*” means: a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God.
- The Greek term for “*a matter of*” means: comes into being, originates, or arises.
- The Greek understanding for the word *interpretation* does not mean “how you understand Scripture” but refers to the “origin of Scripture.”

#### What do these passages declare about the origin of the Bible?

We understand from the Word of God that the Bible was given to mankind from God. God inspired men to write the Word of God in a language that mankind could understand thus utilizing mankind as the instrument to deliver the Word of God to the world. Consider these facts about the formation of the Bible.

### Old Testament

It is accepted by scholars from all backgrounds that the Old Testament is the collected writings by men that were inspired by God. The Old Testament is considered to be divinely inspired by the religious Jewish culture and Christians. It has been considered to be reliable and authoritative for centuries.

## The Old Testament Canon

Throughout the remainder of our study we will refer to the Old and New Testament canons. A “canon” is a list of books that are considered to be authoritative, reliable, and accepted as scripture. The Old and New Testament canons are considered to be closed canons reflecting a belief that public revelation has ended therefore the inspired texts may be gathered into a complete and authoritative collection.

- **How does the idea of a “closed canon” point out the reliability of the Scriptures?**

The Hebrew Bible makes up what we consider as our Old Testament. The original Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections. These twenty-four books correspond exactly to the 39 books of the Old Testament that we recognize today.

<b>The Law</b>	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
<b>The Prophets</b>	Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve.
<b>The Writings</b>	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

- **How could the 24 book of the Hebrew Bible be the same as the 39 books of the Christian Old Testament?**

**Consider:** Some of the changes made from the Hebrew Bible to the Christian Old Testament has to deal with dividing “Chronicles” into “1 and 2 Chronicles”, “Kings” into “1 and 2 Kings”, “Samuel” into “1 and 2 Samuel”.

## Formation of the Old Testament

One of the most common questions asked when dealing with the collected writings of the Bible is this:

### **How was it decided which books would be included in the Bible?**

The answer to this question can be found by looking at how the Old and New Testaments were compiled together in order to form the content of the Bible. There were four basic criteria utilized in confirming that the books forming the Old Testament were the inspired writings from God.

### **Criteria #1 – Spiritual authority of the books themselves**

The spiritual authority of the Old Testament books had already been established through eyewitness accounts of events, oral tradition and teachings, as well as historical evidence that events and people that were recorded in the Old Testament actually took place and lived upon the earth.

### **Criteria #2 – Recognition in the Temple as sacred**

The Jewish religious leaders only taught in the temple what was sacred, holy, and inspired by God. They understood and recognized that many of the books of the Old Testament came from Moses or one of the other acknowledged prophets thus declaring it to be inspired by God and sacred.

### **Criteria #3 – Conviction of leaders and people**

The religious leaders and people of Israel had to be convinced beyond a shadow of doubt that a book was inspired by God before it would be considered for the Old Testament. The books had to be accepted as sacred and holy by both the religious leaders and the nation of Israel before they could be added to the Old Testament canon.

### **Criteria #4 – Jesus and the Apostles**

Jesus and the apostles quoted and referred to books of the Old Testament showing that they believed in the authority, authenticity, and reliability of these Old Testament books.

**How would utilizing this criteria ensure the inspiration of the Old Testament?**

**Why would some books be left out of the Old Testament?**

### **Formation of the New Testament**

The formation of the New Testament came about in a similar fashion. It also utilized criteria to ensure that the collected books forming the New Testament were inspired by God. The church fathers confirmed the divine inspiration of the New Testament by using the following threefold criterion for evaluation.

#### **Criteria #1– Apostolicity**

The first criteria is the standard of apostolicity which means that each New Testament book must have been written by an apostle or approved by one. The church fathers wanted to ensure that each book was written by an eyewitness account or teachings from eyewitnesses.

**Why is this a critical standard for the authenticity of the Bible?**

#### **Criteria #2 – Conformity to the Rule of Faith**

The second criteria is defined as the standard of faith that is established through the Word of God. Each book of the New Testament had to have met two basic qualifications in this area.

**Qualification #1** – Each New Testament book had to have teachings consistent with the Old Testament prophets, which were already considered to be inspired by God.

**Qualification #2** – Each New Testament book had to have teachings consistent with the New Testament Apostles which were eyewitnesses of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Why is this a critical standard for the authenticity of the Bible?**

#### **Criteria #3 – Widespread and Continuous Acceptance**

The third criteria carefully determines the authenticity of each book. Each New Testament book had to be universally accepted by the practicing Christians and churches at the time. This would help determine if there was any hidden deception found in the books that were being circulated at the time.

**Why is this a critical standard for the authenticity of the Bible?**

## Application of this Lesson

This week take the challenge of going through and memorizing the books and sections of the Bible. Practice giving a general overview of the Bible so that you can help individuals better understand the continuity, authority, and inerrancy of the Word of God. Record what you discover in a journal. How is God opening your heart and mind to a deeper understanding of His Word?

### Memory Verse

**2 Peter 1:20-21** – <sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

## Appendix

### Reliability of the Word of God

While it is true that we do not have the original manuscripts of the New and Old Testaments, the Bible has been proven to be the most reliable literary resource known to mankind. Dr. D. James Kennedy writes on this subject in the book “**Skeptics Answered**”<sup>1</sup>. He makes the following observations.

#### Reliability through Manuscript Copies

- Even though we only have copies of the original manuscripts of the Bible. It is important to note that we only have copies of other great ancient texts from Plato, Aristotle, and Caesar. At best, of these great literary works, we only have 1 – 10 copies. Compare this to the Bible.
- We have 5,750 copies of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.
- We have over 25,000 copies in other translations.
- Caesar and his *Gaelic Wars*: The earliest manuscript of the Gaelic Wars is considered to have been written 1000 years after Caesar lived and yet this is a reliable document from a literary perspective.
- Plato, the great philosopher: The earliest manuscripts of his writings were found to have been written 1300 years after the original manuscripts.
- Herodotus: The earliest manuscripts of his writings were found to have been written 1300 years after the original manuscripts.
- The Greek dramatists: The earliest manuscripts of his writings were found to have been written 1400 years after the original manuscripts.
- Homer and his classic *The Odyssey*: The earliest manuscripts of his writings were found to have been written 2200 years after the original manuscripts.
- Compare these “reliable” pieces of literature to the facts that we know about the Bible. John wrote his Gospel about 90 A.D. – We have a portion of the Gospel of John that dates back to 117 to 138 A.D. Most scholars believe that this copy was written only 30 years after the original manuscript.

<sup>1</sup> Skeptics Answered. D. James Kennedy. Multnomah Books, 1997.