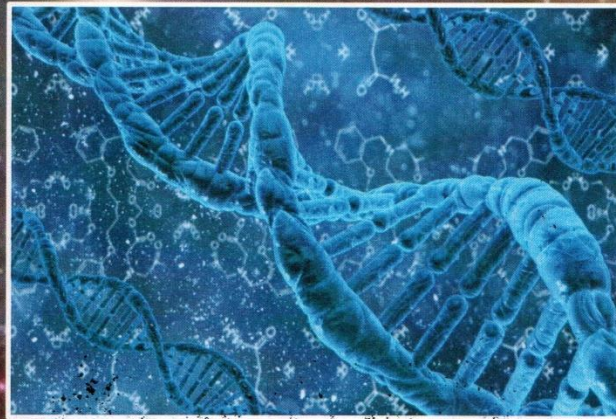


Book 1

Basics about God



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July 2026 edition

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Book 1: Basics about God

A Tool for Using the Bible to Know God

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Guidelines for Using The Basic Training Manuals

Tools for Using the Bible to Grow with God

There is no greater joy or fulfillment in life than living in a personal relationship with our Creator, who understands everything, has all power, and loves us more than we can imagine. Jesus Christ, our Creator who became a human, said that he came to give us life to the fullest. (John 1:1-5 and John 10:10) During the short time Jesus lived here, he trained a group of followers to know God and to experience life to the fullest by living in cooperation with him. The *Basic Training Manuals* are tools to help make this possible.

Based on God's revelation to us

These *Basic Training Manuals* are based on the Bible, which is God's written revelation of himself. The Creator of this world, and of all galaxies in space, inspired the compilation of the Bible's writings, written by weak and limited people over a period of about two thousand years. **(To better understand this, read Appendix 2 in Book 1.)** In the Bible we learn the character, feelings, and thoughts of this amazing Creator. We also learn his guidelines for experiencing the fulfilling life that he created us for.

Created to love

God is love. (1 John 4:16) God not only created us to live, but also to love. Jesus said that the most important aspect of the whole Bible is love. (Matthew 22:37-40) First, we learn the extent of God's love for us (giving his own life to redeem us forever), and then we respond to that love by thanking him, loving him, and then loving people, all of whom are precious to him.

To love someone means both to know them and to experience them. This is God's desire for us in our life with him. He already knows every detail of our lives, and he wants us to know him so we can experience him more and more throughout our lives.

Christ's death and resurrection made it possible for his Spirit to live inside us because of his gift of forgiveness. (Ephesians 1:13-14) When we choose to respond to God's love, and we open ourselves for his Spirit to live in us, the door is open for us to experience oneness and intimacy with God, which means the potential to experience life to the fullest! When his Spirit comes into us, he also makes us new people. (2 Corinthians 5:17) He, by his Spirit, comes to live in us (Romans 8:9-11), and when he does, he gives us his purity, his heart, and his mind. A new identity!

When God's Spirit lives in us, we have all of God and are united with him forever. This becomes our new relationship with God, and we have opportunity to grow in that loving relationship with him as much as we want. We are already pure in Christ, but our growth allows us to mature into the life that God created us for. Our growth benefits us and also blesses the people around us—and brings glory and joy to God.

Growth in this loving relationship happens as we make choices that will help us grow in knowing God and experiencing him. The *Basic Training Manuals* are designed to help you to

both know him and experience him in every aspect of life. The following chart summarizes how this can happen in your life and how you can help others in a similar way.

CHART SUMMARY OF THE BASIC TRAINING MANUALS

Title	Purpose	Focus	Method
Book 1 – Basics about God	A tool to use the Bible to give understanding of who God is and who Jesus is, as the Son of God	WHO the teacher is—God! (Father/Jesus/Holy Spirit)	Looking for what the Bible says about God’s characteristics, salvation, and promises
Book 2 – Basics of God’s Training	A tool to use the Bible to learn and apply basic lessons that Jesus taught his disciples	WHAT the teacher (God) teaches	Looking for what the Bible says about 16 basic lessons that Jesus taught his disciples
Book 3 – Basics of God’s Plan for Relationships	A tool to use the Bible to understand the basic aspects of living life with him	HOW the teacher (God) has designed us to live life	Looking for what the Bible teaches about God’s plan for the basics of life – families, spiritual families (churches), and work

These manuals are tools to help you know God as described in the Bible and to know God’s instruction in the Bible for living life to the fullest. By tools, we mean things like a hammer, saw, or pliers. Tools are things we can use in many situations for the rest of our lives. For example, we will never graduate from using a saw to cut things, yet we *can* become more skillful at using it. In a similar way, the three *Basic Training Manuals* are tools you can use throughout your life to know God more fully in the Bible and to grow in life with him.

These *Basic Training Manuals* are tools to help you and others learn and practice the same things Jesus taught his disciples.

- He helped them understand God more fully – Book 1
- He helped them learn how to live the life that God has planned for our joy– Book 2
- He helped them learn God’s design for living life in relationship with others – Book 3

Jesus is the example for HOW to teach

It was no accident that Jesus focused his three years of public ministry on the personal training of twelve men. He knew his investment in those twelve men would make a greater difference in the world than establishing a large seminary that could train thousands of students or establishing a large synagogue (or church) where he could preach to thousands each week.

Jesus’ strategy was very similar to that of a father and mother who invest years of their lives to train a few children. We know that children who grow up in a healthy home—under the leadership of parents who provide love, encouragement, instruction, and training on a daily basis—are the ones who are best prepared for life. We also know that even the most effective parents cannot provide this kind of personal care and training to 100 or more children living in their home. Jesus invested his life into the lives of a few like a parent would. That is his model and example, and that is the best method and strategy for using these *Basic Training Manuals*.

Practical application

In the accounts of Jesus, we find 71 times that he had conversations with his personal disciples. Jesus asked questions 307 times, and people asked Jesus a question 185 times. In the recorded Gospels, Jesus used personal discussions more often than lectures to help his disciples and others learn. This is the primary way parents teach children, and this is the method for which the *Basic Training Manuals* were designed. They are designed to help people follow Jesus' example of training in the following ways:

- ***Spend time with disciples.*** Get to know them. Show compassion for what is happening in every part of their lives and learn what they are experiencing.
- ***Pray frequently for disciples.*** God is the most important teacher for every person. Prayer asks God to work effectively in people's lives. Jesus prayed for people and Paul prayed for people. Many of Paul's prayers are recorded in the New Testament. Learn to follow Jesus's example and Paul's example in praying for people.
- ***Help disciples focus on knowing God more completely.*** Help them understand more about God and what he is doing in every aspect of life. This is the purpose of Book 1.
- ***Help disciples know how to live by God's Word in daily life.*** God is always working every day and, in every circumstance, to help us know him and live life with him. Book 2 is a tool to help us know which parts of the Bible will be helpful in each circumstance we experience in life. As you become familiar with the content of Book 2, it will help you know which places in God's Word will be helpful for you and your friends. You don't need to go through the material in the same order that it is written. Book 2 is especially helpful for a disciple to make progress in character and habits for the rest of his life. You can pray and decide which things will be helpful for the disciple according to the experiences they are going through.
- ***Help disciples focus on relationships.*** God works through relationships, and families are his design for close, strong relationships. God has designed marriage, families, and churches for these close relationships, and jobs are an additional context for growth in relationships. Book 3 is a tool to understand God's design for families and churches so people can develop strong relationships with him and with each other.
- ***Have many personal discussions with each disciple.*** Discuss things they are learning about God. Learn about their progress in living life with Jesus Christ. If possible, include one or two other disciples in the discussions so everyone can learn from each other.
- ***Work together and serve together with disciples.*** Be an example to the disciple and help them learn from your example and experiences.
- ***Follow the instructions for "How to Become a Spiritual Parent."*** (Appendix 1)

Training for new Christians and for pastors

In summary, these manuals cover the basics that Jesus (and his disciples) taught all followers of Jesus Christ.

- The training manuals are good for helping a new Christian and for training mature Christians.
- The manuals can help people become strong parents and strong leaders.
- They have all the basics for someone to become a pastor, and they can help pastors become more effective.

Instructions for Using Book 1

How you will get to know God through *The Basics about God*.

Book 1, “Basics about God,” is a tool to help each person pursue the greatest purpose in life, which is to know God more fully and completely. God wants to be our Father and our Teacher. Book 1 is a guide to use the Bible to know him better. This is what Jesus said eternal life is all about, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3). Paul also explained this was his greatest purpose in life (Philippians 3:7-10). Because of their examples, the purpose of Book 1 is to help people know God more fully and completely by using the Bible.

In all his greatness, our Creator has given us the Bible, which contains a variety of accounts that describe what he did in people’s lives along with many kinds of instructions. As we understand these accounts of what God has done in past history, we learn more of his greatness and the basic truths of who he is and how he works with people. The more you understand who God is, in all his characteristics and in the promises he has given, the more you will love him and want to adjust your life to him. At the same time, your relationships with people will also be transformed more than you’ve experienced before. This transformation happens as you get to know God in every aspect of his greatness. This manual, *Basics about God*, can help you see and understand these aspects of God. It is outlined according to the different ways God has revealed himself. There are four parts:

Basics about God

1. God’s Greatness Shown in History
2. God’s Salvation
3. God’s Characteristics
4. God’s Promises

Instructions

The first section of Book 1 is titled “God’s Greatness Shown in History.” It is a summary of events and people in the Bible. You will see three pages that make a timeline of all the Bible, from the beginning to the end – from the creation of the world to the time that Jesus Christ will return as King.

The rest of Book 1 is a tool to help you know God as you read and study the Bible. On the “Contents” page of Book 1 is an outline of the three categories of things to learn about God. These are:

- God’s Salvation
- God’s Characteristics
- God’s Promises

As you read and study the Bible, you can refer to this page of Contents to help give you ideas of what to look for. Then, when you find something about God in one of the categories, you can

use the Contents page to find the page where you can write your observation. There are blank sections after each item about God in the rest of the manual. These blank spaces are where you can write the references and observations of things you read about God.

For example, when you begin reading the Bible in Genesis 1:1, you read the statement, “God created the heavens and the earth.” This is a statement about God. What do you see about God in this statement? You see that he has the ability to create. Where can you write this observation? You will look in the section “God’s Characteristics” because this observation isn’t directly related to “God’s Salvation” or “God’s Promises.” And when you turn to the section titled “God Characteristics” you will see a list of ten different categories of God’s characteristics listed in the form of questions. The first one listed is “1. The Extent of God’s **Power**.” Choose which of the ten categories describes God in this verse. For Genesis 1:1, we can say that God’s power and God’s knowledge are shown in this verse. Notice that these are the first and the fourth categories. Now turn to the page where you see the category of God’s power and the page for God’s knowledge. On each of these pages you can write your observation about God by recording the reference, Genesis 1:1 with a comment after it, such as “God has the power to create the universe,” and “God has the knowledge to create the universe.”

You will follow this same procedure for all other observations about God that you will make from the Bible. Some of these observations will be about other characteristics of God and some observations will be about “God’s Promises” or about “God’s Salvation.” ***Whenever you read something about God in the Bible, turn to the page where you find a relevant place to write your note.***

In the months ahead, as you find and write different observations of who God is, you will likely be amazed and encouraged! Ask God’s Spirit to teach you each time you read the Bible, and enjoy the changes that happen in your thinking and in your life.

God's Greatness Shown in History



History began at the Creation

History began when God created the world and the whole universe. It is intuitive that the complexities of the massive universe were designed by a highly-intelligent being, far beyond our abilities. And the complexities of small things in this world, such as the DNA of our cells, down to protons, neutrons, and electrons also reveals the work of a highly-intelligent being, beyond our full understanding.

This is how the Bible begins: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

(Genesis 1:1) God has shown his greatness at

both the macro level (a vast universe) and the micro level (tiny molecules) of his creation.



Not only is the complexity of life amazing, but also its beauty and variety in so many different forms. The beauty and variety we see in thousands of species of butterflies around the world is absolutely astounding. And butterflies are only a subset of the millions of insects in many different sizes, shapes, styles, and colors. And insects are only a subset of many other kinds of animals and plants all over the world.

Not only does the beauty and variety of plants and animals make them amazing, but also the extensive variety of sounds they make, the actions they have, the habits they have, and their ways of reproduction.

All this extremely amazing design had to have been made by a designer who has greater intelligence than all the things he designed. This is why the Bible says, "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made." (Romans 1:20)

God shows his love through history

The created world around us shows God's amazing intelligence, power, and creative ability, but it doesn't show his character of love, justice, compassion, grace, and mercy. To show his character, God became a human being, like all of us. The name of this person is Jesus Christ, and these are some of the ways the Bible describes this man.

- Colossians 1:15, "He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."
- Colossians 2:9, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ..."
- Hebrews 1:3, "The Son (Jesus Christ) is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, ..."
- John 1:14, Jesus said about himself to his disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (God)."

All of history is focused around God revealing himself through Jesus Christ. For thousands of years before Jesus was born as a human, God communicated information to prepare people for the coming of this special person. Then, after his death and resurrection, God communicated information explaining what Jesus Christ will do in the future, especially in his relationship with people. Jesus is the focus of the Bible, from the beginning to the end of history as we know it on this planet.

The more we understand who Jesus Christ is, including what he did in the past, what he is doing today, and what he will do in the future, the more we will understand the character and heart of God. And God not only wants us to have intellectual understanding, but also experiential understanding. He has created people to share in life with him in every aspect of how he made us; intellectually, emotionally, relationally, spiritually, and physically.

This manual, *Basics about God*, gives you an overview of history, as recorded in the Bible, to help you understand and appreciate the most unique human who has ever walked on this planet, Jesus Christ. And the more you know him and open your heart to him, the more you will be transformed to share in life with your Creator in a deeper, more intimate way than is possible with any other person.

God's desire is for people to fully know him in love

God has always wanted people to know him. A common phrase in the Bible before Jesus Christ came in person is, "... so that *you* will know I am the Lord," or "... so that *they* will know I am the Lord." The book of Ezekiel records this phrase about sixty times! Jesus Christ, himself, said that eternal life is all about knowing God (John 17:3), and the apostle Paul said his primary purpose in life was to know Jesus Christ more fully (Philippians 3:7-10).

Knowing God has a much deeper meaning than simply knowing someone intellectually. In the Bible, the word "to know" has a holistic meaning that includes all of life, even the most intimate and private aspect. In some places in the Bible we read that a husband knew his wife, meaning they experienced intimacy in a sexual relationship. This helps us understand how fully God wants people to know him.

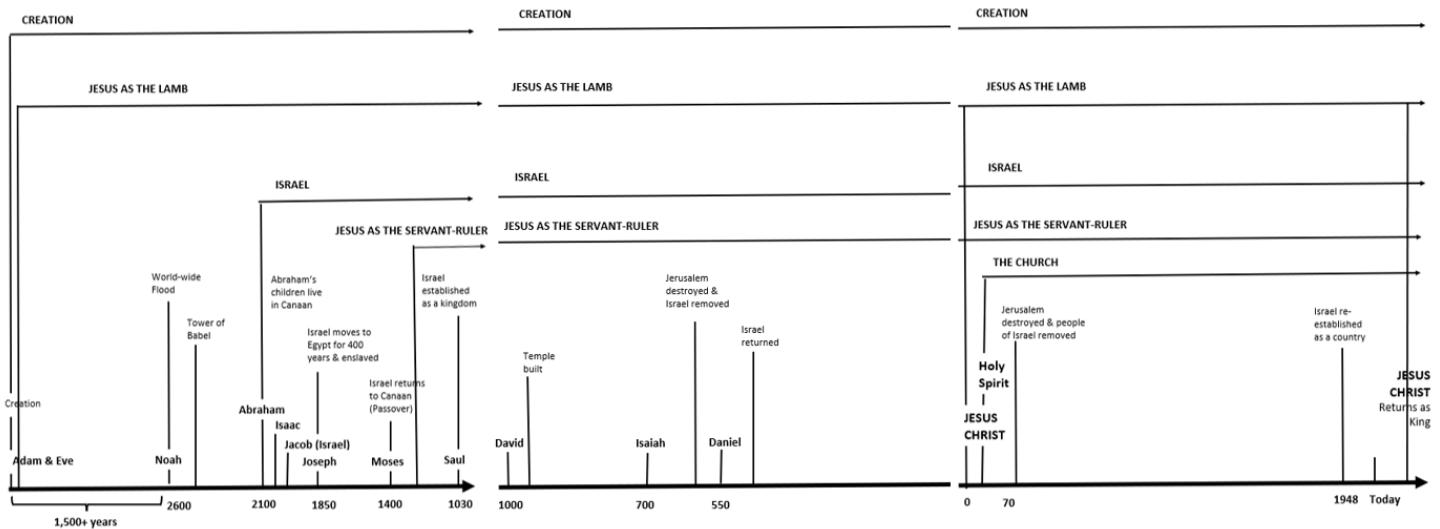
Following is an outline that shows five primary ways God has been helping people fully know him in love. These five ways are outlined as plans that God has been using throughout history to help people fully know him in love. These plans are outlined in the Bible, where we read how God has been carrying them out in the past and how he will be fulfilling them in the future.

God's plans for people to fully know him in love

1. CREATION – the context for people to fully know God in love
2. JESUS AS THE LAMB – the sacrifice made to fully know God in love
3. ISRAEL – the nation God used for everyone to fully know God in love
4. JESUS AS THE SERVANT-RULER – the king we need for fully knowing God in love
5. THE CHURCH – the bride beginning to fully know God in love

This outline is included in the timeline shown below (which is a small-scale image of a three-page timeline given on the pages following this section). Each of the five plans God has been working throughout history, as listed above, are represented on the timeline by a horizontal line.

God's plan for people is to fully know him in love



Following is a summary of the plans God has been working through history to help people fully know him in love. You can find a more detailed explanation of each of these five in **Appendix 3 at the back of this manual, Book 1.**

1. CREATION – the context for people to fully know God in love

God is spirit, so we cannot see him with our physical eyes, but he has shown himself to us in many physical ways. The Bible says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men (people) are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20) Anyone in the whole world can begin to know about God from what has been revealed about him through the natural world around us and through the whole universe.

The creation also helps us to know and appreciate Jesus Christ as we read what the Bible explains in such places as Colossians 1:16-17, “By him (Jesus Christ) all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

2. JESUS AS THE LAMB – the sacrifice made to fully know God in love

Jesus is the only hope to stop the cycle of death that now enslaves all life on this planet. The Bible says in Col. 1:19-20, “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Jesus Christ),

and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

Ever since death came to this planet, after the first man and woman disobeyed the instruction of their loving Creator, God began communicating his plan of reconciliation and restoration. God’s first action to help Adam and Eve after their fall was to kill an animal to cover their nakedness caused by their sin. (Genesis 3) This symbolically pictured what God would need to do to cover the consequences of sin for all the millions of future people to live on this earth. This plan was later symbolized by the Passover lamb, instituted by Moses. Then when Jesus came, John the Baptist clearly stated before baptizing Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29) God was implementing his plan for his Son to be the sacrificial lamb that would meet the requirements of God’s justice, providing a door for people to be restored back into eternal relationship with him. In this way, God would uphold justice and act in love at the same time. Finally, at the climax of history, depicted in the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ is called the Lamb thirty-one times!

The more we understand about the sacrificial Lamb of God, the more amazed we are at the fullness of God’s sacrificial love—his compassion, grace, and mercy. Jesus, himself, said, just before he willingly gave up his life as a sacrifice for every person in all history, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

You can learn more about how God is making himself known through Jesus as the Lamb by reading Appendix 3 at the back of this manual, Book 1.

3. ISRAEL – the nation God used for everyone to fully know God in love

If a football coach announced that he would win the world championship by working with a small group of high school students, most people would think of that as an impossible dream. That’s similar to God’s announcement early in history, recorded at the beginning of the Bible, that he would make the descendants of one man, Abraham, to be a blessing to the whole world. God later went on to say that the eternal king of the world would come from the descendants of that same family. And not only would the eternal king come from this group, but he would be called the Lamb who would be the Savior of the world!

God’s greatness became all the more amazing when the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (later called Israel), became rebellious and self-centered. It’s clear in the Bible that God did not choose the people of Israel to carry out his plan because they were any better than other people. But he knew he could show more of his greatness and his character by working with a group that would have many problems and limitations. His faithfulness to keep his promises to this group of people, and his care for them throughout history demonstrate a love that is deeper and stronger than any of us have ever seen or experienced in any other relationship. God used the nation of Israel for demonstrating attributes of faithfulness, grace, and love to the whole world.

The same intense love, grace, and faithfulness is also seen by the way God worked in and through another group of people with many problems and limitations, which is his church.

You can learn more about how God is making himself known through Israel by reading Appendix 3 at the back of this manual, Book 1.

4. JESUS AS THE SERVANT-RULER – the king we need for fully knowing God in love

When God first made people, his plan was for them to be benevolent rulers over his creation (Genesis 1:26-28). God wanted people to share in his creation and at the same time enjoy friendship with him. But the friendship was broken when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's instruction. When this happened, God continued communication and implemented a plan to restore people back to his original plan of joining him to rule his creation.

Part of this plan was that God himself would become a ruler with them, first becoming a sacrifice to take the judicial penalty they deserved for their sin, and then becoming the model ruler of God's creation, having the heart of a servant.

When Jesus lived on earth as a man, he worked hard to change a misconception of what a ruler is. On at least three different occasions he explained to his close disciples that a ruler is primarily to be a servant. (Matthew 20:25-28, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:24-27) Jesus taught this, and he was also the ideal model of a servant leader, as he summarized in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus also exemplified servant leadership when he washed his disciples' feet at the last supper.

Finally, at the end of the Bible, in Revelation, we see Jesus as Lord and ruler, and all his people united with him to rule in his new creation (Revelation 19:4). His original plan will be restored.

You can learn more about how God is making himself known through Jesus as the Servant-Ruler by reading Appendix 3 at the back of this manual, Book 1.

5. THE CHURCH – the bride beginning to fully know God in love

God worked through the physical descendants of Israel to help everyone in the world to know him, and now he is working through a spiritual group of people to help everyone know him more fully. Jesus Christ is still the focus. In fact, Colossians 1:18 says, "He (Jesus Christ) is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

God describes the members of his church as his bride. This is because of his desire for the deepest and closest relationship possible with them. Revelation describes the culmination of this relationship as the marriage of the church with the Lamb, who is also the King (Revelation 19:1-9).

Jesus said that by his death and resurrection he made it possible for his Spirit to live in each person who puts their faith in him. These are the ones who are spiritually born into God's eternal family. They are the people who now make up the group of believers called the church. Jesus personally trained the first leaders of this group of people, and today, members of God's family live all over the world.

Members of the spiritual body of Christ are not perfect in practice, but God has given them a righteous standing before him, so they can participate with him in accomplishing his plans in the world. God's Spirit is working through the members of his church to carry out his purpose in the world, which is to make himself fully known in love.

You can learn more about how God is making himself known through the Church by reading Appendix 3 at the back of this manual, Book 1.

Opposition helps us know God

When an athlete or a sports team comes against strong opposition and wins, people are more amazed at their ability. In a similar way, all the opposition throughout history has only made God and all that he does more amazing! Throughout history God has been allowing the strongest forces of this world to come against him. Jesus had intense opposition when he lived here, both spiritually, religiously, socially, and politically.

In the Bible you can see how God has worked in the past centuries to help people know him more fully. Today, when we read God's plans for the future, we can have confidence in his sovereign ability to know the future and coordinate events beyond our full comprehension. No matter what the opposition is, God will continue to show his awesomeness in every aspect. We can confidently look forward to knowing him more fully in love!

You can learn more about how God is making himself known by reading Appendix 3 at the back of this manual, Book 1.

Introduction to the full timeline on the following three pages

When we see God's plans carried out over thousands of years, we see his greatness on a macro level. God's greatness is also shown on a ***micro level*** in the Bible. The micro aspect of God's work is all through the Bible and is shown on the timeline as:

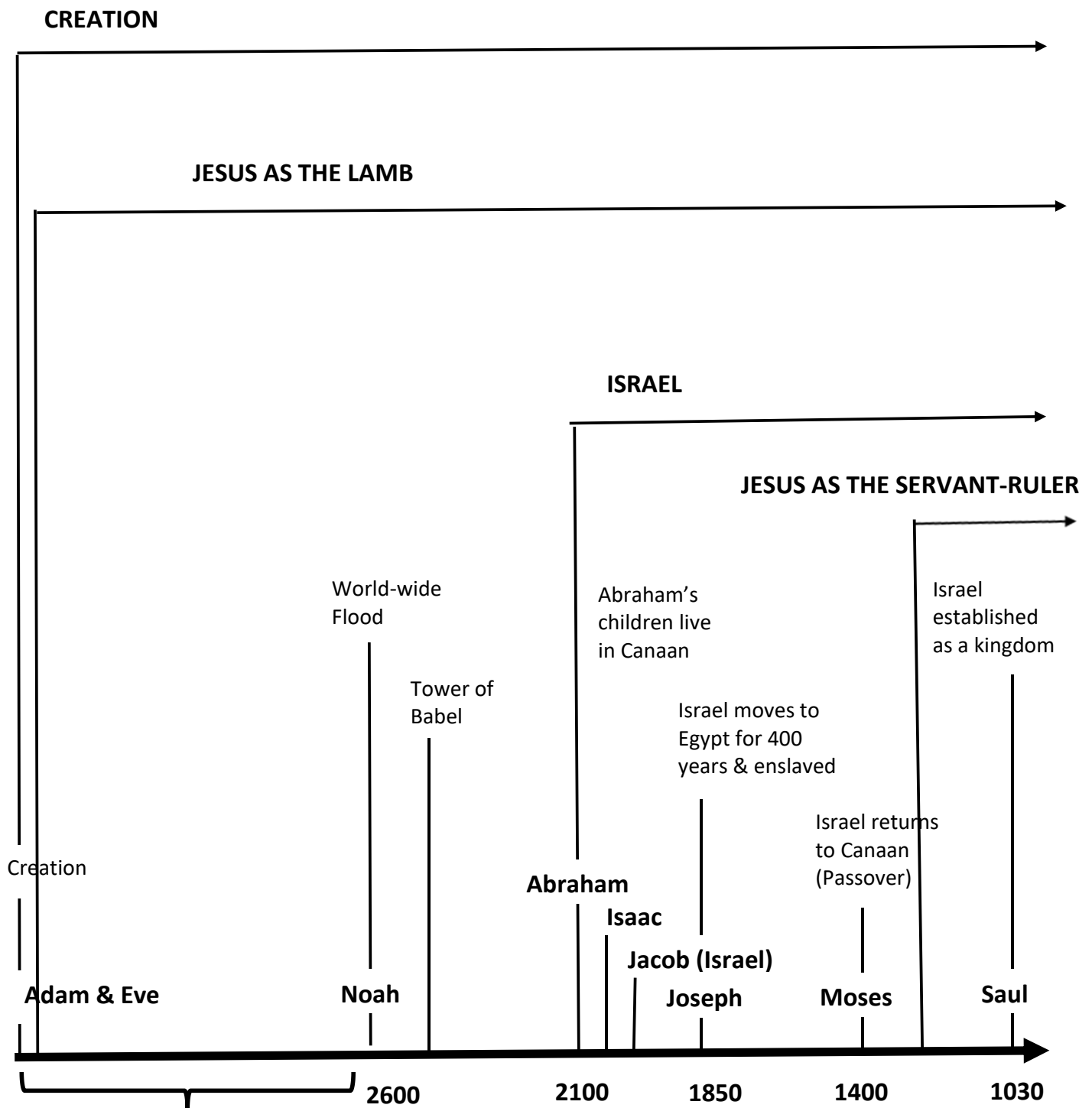
- The names of **individuals**
- The names of **specific events**

Each of God's plans includes the lives of many people and events. The more we understand what God did in the lives of each of these people and events, the more amazed we are at God's greatness in every way. Each of the people and events are all micro parts of God's plans, which are part of God's purpose.

As you read the Biblical accounts of how God has revealed himself in history, record your observations about God on the pages in the appropriate sections. These sections are described in the earlier part of this document titled "Instructions for Using Book 1." By writing down observations and asking God to help you remember, your mind will be impressed with many aspects of his greatness.

A full timeline is on the following three pages.

God's plan for people is to fully know him in love

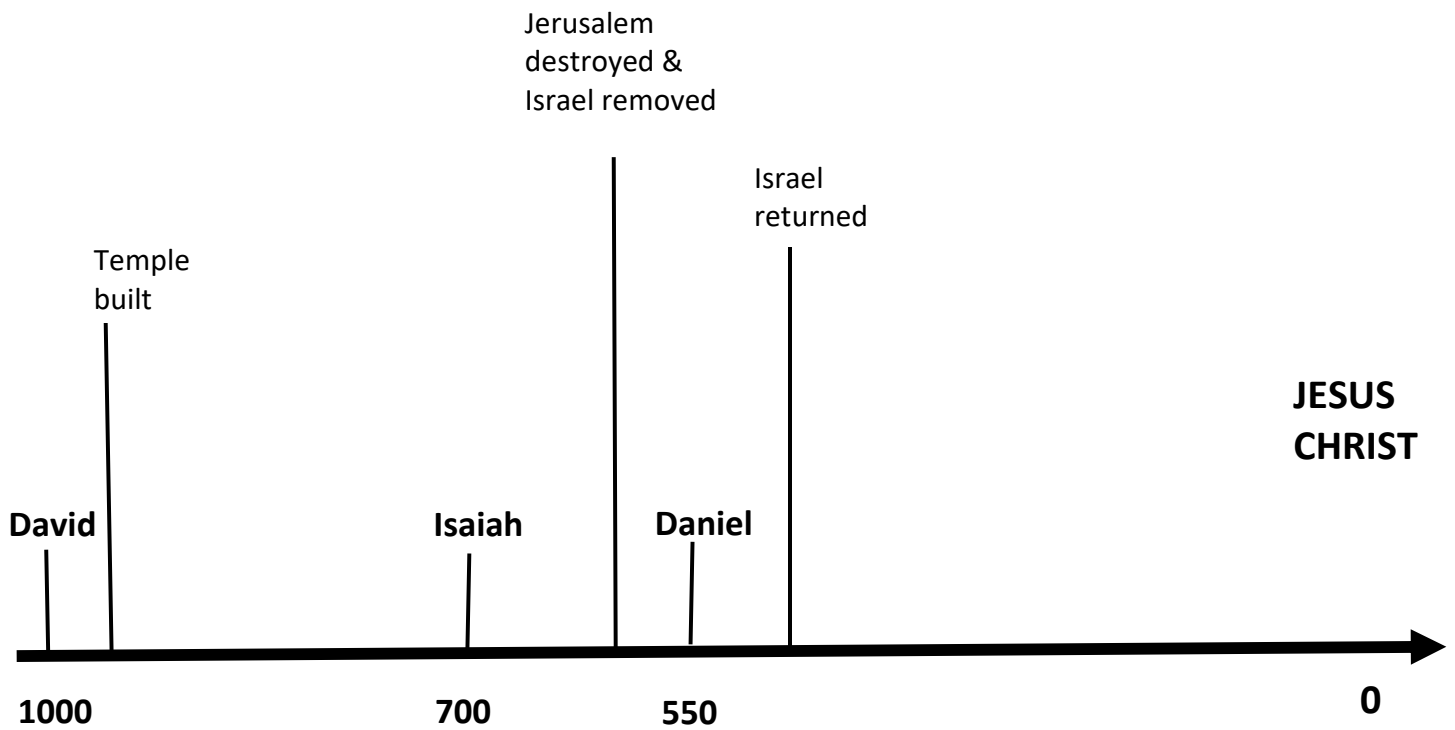


CREATION

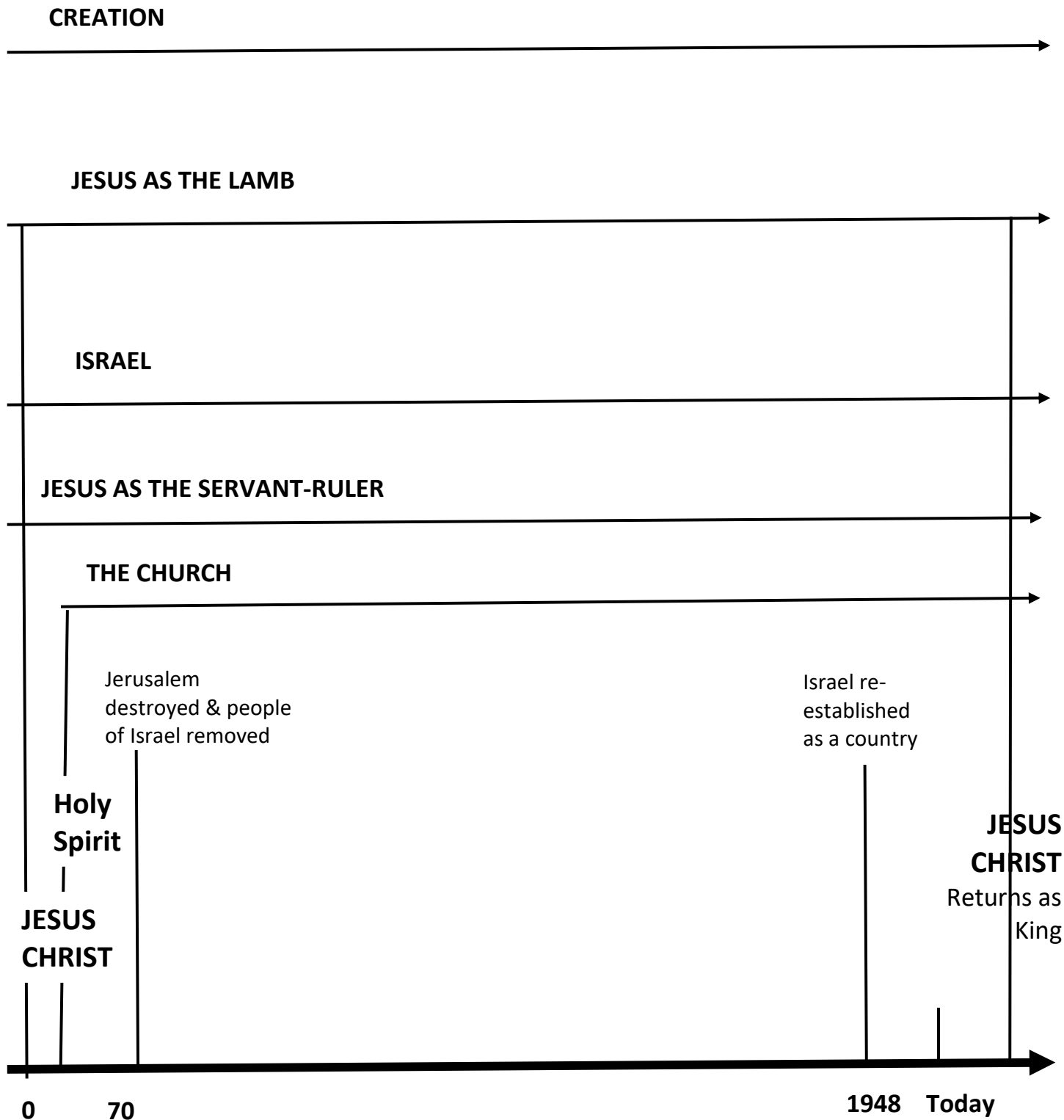
JESUS AS THE LAMB

ISRAEL

JESUS AS THE SERVANT-RULER



God's plan for people is to fully know him in love



Time Periods of History

The previous outline showed five primary plans that God has been using to help people fully know him in love (Creation, the Lamb, Israel, Jesus as the Servant Ruler, and the Church). These five plans have been happening and are happening in six periods of time, which make up all history.

Time Periods of History

1. Creation

- Creation of the material world and the universe
- Creation of people

2. Catastrophe

- The fall of the first man and woman
- Judgment of the world with the flood
- Judgment of people with different languages

3. Covenants (Promises)

- Covenant (Promises) to Abraham and his descendants
- Covenants (Promises) with the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel
- Covenants (Promises) with kings of Israel
- Covenants (Promises) through prophets of Israel

4. Christ

- The Way, the Truth, and the Life

5. Commission/Church

- The Spirit of Jesus Christ living in his people
- His people represent Jesus Christ to the world

6. Consummation

- The return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords
- The new creation

It is helpful to remember that some of God's plans (Creation, the Lamb, Israel, Jesus as the Servant Ruler, and the Church) to help people know him have been continuing through some, or all, of the six time periods. For example, Creation is in every period of time, and the theme of the Lamb goes from the Covenant period to the Consummation.

Following is a list of the six time periods with events included that were shown on the previous timeline. Bible references are given with each of the events.

Bible Verses for the Timeline Events

Creation

1. Creation – Genesis 1:1-31
2. Adam and Eve – Genesis 2:8-25

Catastrophe (Fall)

1. The Fall – Genesis 3:1-24
2. Noah and the Flood – Genesis 6:5 – 8:22
3. Tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-9

Covenants (Promises)

1. God enters a covenant with Abraham, promises to bless him, and that through him and his descendants he would bless all the nations of the world. (Gen 12:1-3)
2. God confirmed the promises he made to Abraham with his son, Isaac (Genesis 26:24) and Isaac's son, Jacob (Genesis 35:9-12). He promised to bless them in many ways including giving them the land of Abraham forever (Genesis 17:8, 26:3, 28:13), but the goal of it all was that through them he would bring restoration and reconciliation to all the nations of the world. Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28), and through his 12 sons as his descendants multiplied, they became the nation of Israel. Israel's mission was to be a kingdom of priests to the world so that through them the nations could be brought back to God (Exodus 19:5-6).
3. Joseph – his life story explains how Israel ended up in Egypt – Genesis 37:1-36, 41:41-49, 45:1-11
4. Israel moves to Egypt for 400 years. All of Jacob's descendants, 70 people in all, left Canaan to go to Egypt, where Joseph was. Genesis 46:26-27
5. Moses, plagues and the Passover (a lamb was the substitute sacrifice so a person would not die) – Exodus 11:1 – 12:17, and 12:29-33
6. All people of Israel left Egypt to return to Canaan (600,000 men + women and children) – Exodus 12:37
7. The Ten Commands – Exodus 20:1-21
8. Tabernacle – designed by God to meet with him. Lambs were the primary animals sacrificed, Numbers 28-29, – Exodus 25:8-9, 29:38-46
9. David – 1 Samuel 17:1-58
10. David made king of Israel – 2 Samuel 5:1-5. David loved God and wrote many Psalms. Psalm 23 is a good example.
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – God said the descendants of David would sit on his throne forever – Jeremiah 33:14-26
11. Temple built - Solomon was king at the height of Israel's power and built a temple to replace the tabernacle as the place to worship God. – 1 Kings 4:20 – 34
12. Israel was removed from Canaan by Assyria. Later Judah was the last tribe of Israel to be taken by Babylon – Jeremiah 39 - 44

13. Daniel – was captured by enemies and used by God to influence many in the world – Daniel 1-12
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – Daniel 7:13-14 (Jesus quoted this passage and said he would fulfill it.)
14. Isaiah and Predictions of the Messiah - Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 53:1-12, Micah 5:2
 - God made predictions about his plan for the world through Israel – God said that one of David’s descendants would be king (Messiah), God, born in Bethlehem
15. Israelites (Jews) returned to rebuild Jerusalem and Israel (Judah) - Nehemiah

Christ

1. John the Baptist lived at the same time as Jesus, but began his ministry before Jesus did. (In John 1:29-31, John told the people that the Lamb of God had come.)
2. Jesus Christ – Claimed to be God (John 10:22-33), and said his purpose was to pay for sin - Mark 10:45. At the last Passover Jesus said the cup represents his blood instead of previously representing the lamb’s blood – Luke 22:20.
3. Jesus Christ was crucified – Luke 23:20-56 (at the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed!)
4. Jesus Christ resurrected from death – Luke 24:1-12, 36-53.
5. Jesus Christ commissioned his followers to go into all the world and proclaim his salvation – Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8.
6. Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and was enthroned as Lord of heaven and earth. He promised that he will return – Acts 1:1-14.

Commission/Church

1. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his followers on the Day of Pentecost, as he promised. John 14:17; Acts 1:4-6.
2. The Holy Spirit lives in God’s people and empowers them to spread the gospel and to form communities of believers we call “churches.”
3. Paul – lived at the same time as Jesus Christ and received the highest education possible for his time. He wrote many of the books in the New Testament. In Acts 13:16-41, one of Paul’s speeches is recorded. It summarizes the history of the Bible and explains that Jesus is the one who has provided forgiveness for sins. (Acts 13:38-39 are key verses)
4. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman government in 70 AD. They killed or carried away (into slavery) almost all the Jews who lived in Israel. The area was no longer called Israel and ceased to exist as a nation, but its purpose to be the light of the world was now carried forward by the remnant of believing Jews (the apostles and their disciples) who took the gospel to the nations.
5. The work of the Great Commission to reach every person, every tribe, every people group, and every nation continues to this day.
6. Israel was restored by the United Nations as a nation in 1948, right after World War 2. The Arabs attempted to destroy the new nation on the first day it was born, but it miraculously survived. It was another story similar to David and Goliath.

Consummation

1. Jesus Christ will return as King. Revelation 19:11-16
2. The Marriage feast of the Lamb (the King) and the Bride (the church) will take place.
Revelation 19:6-9
3. The final judgement of all people will take place. Revelation 20:11-15 Those people written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27) will live forever.
4. There will be a new heaven and earth with Jesus Christ as King. He is also described as the Lamb. – Revelation 21:1-27
5. God / Jesus Christ will be united with his people forever. Revelation 22:1-5

Details of Bible Events and People

The Bible is God's story throughout history. It gives many details of how God has worked in many situations with many different people. God's purpose in all that he does is to help people know him more completely and live with him more fully.

The following section gives Bible passages describing important events and people in the Bible. Questions are also given for you to think about and discuss. As you read the Biblical accounts of how God has revealed himself in history, record your observations about God on the pages in the appropriate sections of this manual, as outlined in the instructions already given earlier in this document. By writing down observations like this and asking God to help you remember, your mind will be impressed with many aspects of his awesomeness.

Creation

Read Genesis 1-2

- God is creator of the whole universe, the world, and everything in it.
- What would you say about God's **power** when you read that he is the one who has created everything? Record your observations in the section "Basics about God – his Characteristics: How much **power** does God have?"
- Creation demonstrates that God has knowledge about everything in existence. From this account, describe the extent of God's **knowledge**. Record your observations in the section "Basics about God – his Characteristics: How much does God **know**?"
- What other things do you observe about God in these first two chapters of Genesis? (Write your observations in the section, "God's Characteristics.")
- For thought or discussion – God created people in his own image (1:26-27). What does this mean?
- For thought or discussion – God created people to care for his creation (1:26). What should we do because of this truth?

Adam and Eve

Read Genesis 2:15 - 3:24

- God gave Adam and Eve instructions, also telling them that if they would disobey, they would die (2:17).
- God created men and women for close partnership (marriage). (2:18, 23-24)
- God created people for relationship with himself (2:8-9)
- God is so pure that no sin can be in his presence. Separation from God also means spiritual death.
- God is also so merciful that he allows people to continue living, even after they disobey him (although Adam and Eve became spiritually dead as soon as they sinned)! With God's standard of holiness, it's amazing that he puts up with people so long and that he still wants us to be restored to a close relationship with him!
- What other things do you observe about God in these first two chapters of Genesis? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Noah

Read Genesis 6 - 9

God loves people and wants a loving relationship with them, but he will not force people to love him. He will not force people to live with him. This is demonstrated when God judged the world with a world-wide flood.

- God's heart was full of pain – pain beyond our imagination! His heart was full of pain because of the selfishness of people. (Genesis 6:6)
- Sin requires death, as God stated when he first created people. (Genesis 2:17)
- God judged the people, but his mercy must be kept in mind. Because of his mercy he allowed many people, for many years, to enjoy his care and provision, in spite of their self-centeredness, violence against each other, and rejection of God.
- We can be sure that everyone hated the flood, but God did not rescue them because they also did not want God. They wanted good things God gave them, but they did not want God, himself.
- What other things do you observe about God in these chapters of Noah and the flood? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Tower of Babel

Read Genesis 11:1-9

- People united together to build a huge tower to heaven. God, in his love for people, broke apart their united desire to make themselves great. He did this by giving them different languages, which caused them to move apart to other locations, eventually throughout the world. As always, God's actions are for the purpose of helping people see their need for him and perhaps reach out and find him. (Acts 17:26-27)
- What other things do you observe about God in this passage? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Abraham and Sarah

Read Genesis 11:27 – 25:11

- God asked Abram (later called Abraham) to move from Haran (present day northern Syria) to Canaan (present day Israel). (Genesis 11:31 -12:1) This was the land God promised to give Abraham's descendants for the remainder of history.
- Abraham was humble before Lot and let him choose the best land if he wanted it, which he did. Genesis 13:5-18. Abraham was confident God would take care of him.
- Sarah and Abraham came up with the idea of Abraham having a child through one of their servants, Hagar. They did this, but God said this could not be the child he would fulfill his promises through. (Genesis 16) Hagar's child was named Ishmael and became the father of the Arab people.
- Abraham and Sarah were childless until Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 (Genesis 17:17). Isaac was the name of their only child. (Genesis 21:1-7)
- God asked Abraham to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to him. (Genesis 22:1-19) This seemed to be a contradiction of God's promise, but Abraham had a strong

confidence that God would do something special to fulfill his promise (Hebrews 11:17-19). God intervened and provided a ram for the sacrifice, in place of Isaac.

- God asked Abraham to travel three days to the special location where he should offer his son. This was on one of the mountains of Moriah. (Genesis 22:2) This is the same location where Jerusalem was built and where Jesus was later sacrificed as God's only son. (2 Chronicles 3:1)
- Faith, not works, was the basis of Abraham's righteousness (Genesis 15:6). His faith is also referenced in Romans 4:1-5 and Galatians 3:5-8. Works (obedience) were the result of faith.
- What other things do you observe about God in these chapters of Genesis? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Jacob and Joseph

Read Genesis 28 – 32 and Genesis 37 – 50

Abraham and Sarah had only one son together in their marriage, whom they named Isaac.

Isaac then married Rebekah, as an answer to prayer (Genesis 24). They had two sons, Esau and Jacob. God's plan was to work through the descendants of Jacob (later named Israel), to show his greatness.

- Jacob had 12 sons through two wives. These sons became the origin of the twelve tribes of Israel, which formed the basis for the nation of Israel.
- Jacob had an unusual experience of wrestling with a man who represented God. (Genesis 32:22-32) After wrestling, the message was given that God would change his name from Jacob (means "he grabs the heel" or "deceives") to Israel (means "struggles with God").
- Jacob's life was saved by the apparent death of his son, Joseph. This resulted in a blessing for the whole family, which is a picture of what God has done through his son, Jesus, for all people.
- Evil seemed to prevail more than one time in Joseph's life, but it became clear God was in control of all of it, using evil events to bring about a large blessing for all of Jacob's family.
- God was caring for Jacob and his family the whole time, even when they were acting selfishly and even when it seemed everything was going wrong (Genesis 42:36, "Everything is against me!")
- Joseph was confident that God would be faithful to his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so he asked his descendants to take his bones back to the land promised to them by God (Gen. 50:24-26)
- What other things do you observe about God in these chapters about Jacob and Joseph? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Moses

Read Exodus 1 – 20, 32-36, 40

Read Numbers 10:11 – 14:45, chapter 21

Read Deuteronomy 27 – 28, 31:1-8, 32:48-52, 34:1-12.

- The birth of Moses and God's call of Moses - Exodus 1 – 4.

- God told Moses he had not forgotten his plan, and that he would bring the descendants of Israel back to the land he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel).
- God judged the Egyptians for their treatment of the Israelites and for refusing to let them worship God. He judged them with 10 plagues, the last of which was death of the firstborn son (Exodus 7 – 11). But if the blood of a lamb was put above the door, the angel of death passed over the family. At this time God instituted the Passover in memory of this event and as a picture of what he would do in the future so all people in the world could escape the judgement of death. – Exodus 11:1 – 12:17, and 12:29-33, John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 5:7, Revelation 5:12-13. **Note – record the things you see about God’s Salvation when you read about the Passover and Jesus being the lamb.** Record your observations in the section of this book titled “God’s Salvation.”
- God gave complete freedom from the Egyptians at the sea (Red Sea) – Exodus 13:17 – 14:31. This was a miracle that is still remembered and discussed today.
- God provided daily food for more than a million people in the desert – Exodus 16:1-36.
- God gave the Ten Commands to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19). The Ten Commands are listed in Exodus 20:1-21. These are a summary of how God has designed people to live. The first four are for our relationship with God. The next six are for our relationship with people.
- The tabernacle – Exodus 36-38. It was designed by God to meet with his people (originally it was the Tent of Meeting in Exodus 25:8-9, 33:7-11). The design shows what is necessary for sinful people to meet with God (sacrifices and washing were necessary).
- The many laws and penalties demonstrated the seriousness of sin and the purity of God. Sheep and animals were sacrificed because of sin – Exodus 29:38-46. They were given as analogies of eternal realities (Hebrews 8:1-5). **Record your observation about God’s Salvation on the pages of this manual.**
- Moses sent 12 spies into Canaan, most of whom gave a negative report about the difficult challenges – Numbers 13. What was the result when the people focused on the problem and forgot God’s promise – Numbers 14?
- Entering the land promised to Abraham and Israel – God used the Israelites to bring judgment on people who opposed God, followed after evil spirits, and offered children as sacrifices (Lev. 20:1-24). God also told the people of Israel that he would bring judgement on the Israelites in a worse way if they did not live in cooperation with him. (Lev. 26:14-39, Joshua 23:9-16)
- The Bible says Moses was the most humble man on earth (Numbers 12:3). Read what Jesus said about humility (Matthew 18:1-4 and 20:20-28) and compare this to Moses.
- What other things do you observe about God in the accounts of Moses? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)
- Joshua was the one who took Moses’ place of leadership and then led the people in conquest of the land God had promised to them. Joshua 1:1-18

Ruth

Read Ruth 1-4

- Ruth was not an Israelite. Though she was from another country, God did special things in her life when she made choices to be with God’s people. (Ruth 1)
- God is eager to help people when they are humble and seek him.

- God included Ruth in his plan to bring the Messiah who would rescue people. (Ruth 4:16-22, compared to Matthew 1 genealogy)
- What things do you see that relate to the way that God has brought us as foreigners into a marriage with himself? Write these observations in the section of this manual titled “God’s Salvation.”
- What other things do you observe about God in the story of Ruth and Boaz? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

David

Read 1 Samuel, chapters 16 – 31

Read 2 Samuel, chapters 1 – 24

Read 1 Kings, chapters 1 – 2

David was an Israelite who trusted God from his youth through his whole life, even as king of Israel.

- David believed God’s promise about bringing Abraham’s descendants into the land, so he was willing to oppose a giant who opposed the Israelites from living in the land. (1 Samuel 17)
- King Saul became jealous of David’s success. As a result, Saul repeatedly tried to kill David until Saul was killed in a battle with the Philistines. (1 Samuel 18-31)
- David trusted God while running from King Saul (at least eight years). A good example is the event in the cave. (1 Samuel 24:1-22)
- David became king of Israel and promoted worship of God. (2 Samuel 5:1-5)
- God promised that one of David’s descendants would be ruler of Israel forever. This future king was called the “Messiah” (I.e. “Christ” in the Greek language) by the Israelites. (2 Samuel 7:11-16)
- David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband is probably the best known fault of David. (2 Samuel 11-12) David wrote Psalm 51 in confession of this sin.
- One of David’s sons, Absalom, temporarily took over the kingdom from his father which was a great trial for David. (2 Samuel 15-18)
- The Bible includes a lot of David’s poetry which he wrote to express his varied feelings toward God. 2 Samuel 22 is one example, and many of the Psalms were written by him.
- God blessed Israel in many ways because David led them to trust and obey God.
- Read Psalm 145, which was written by David. What things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the section, ‘Basics about God’ – His Characteristics.)
- Do the same with Psalm 27.
- What other things do you observe about God in the accounts about David? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

Solomon

Read 1 Kings, chapters 1 – 11

David’s son, Solomon, the first heir to David’s throne, was blessed by God and led Israel to its peak of greatness.

- Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba, the woman who David committed adultery with. 1 Kings 1:11-35
- Solomon had more knowledge and wealth than anyone in history. 1 Kings 10:1-29
- Solomon's rule was the peak of power for Israel in all history.
- Solomon did not cooperate with God, and so began the downfall of the nation of Israel. 1 Kings 11:1-26
- At the end of Solomon's life two other men took control of Israel (Jeroboam and Rehoboam in 1 Kings 11:26 – 12:33). Rehoboam only ruled the two southern tribes of Judah and Ephraim, which also included Jerusalem. Jeroboam ruled the ten tribes which made up the northern part of Israel. This was the beginning of much turmoil for the people of Israel. There were many kings ruling the two sections known as Israel (the northern tribes) and Judah (southern two tribes including Jerusalem). It was this way until the nation of Assyria carried the people of Israel into captivity (722 BC) and Babylon carried the people of Judah into captivity (587 BC).
- What other things do you observe about God in the account of Solomon? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Isaiah

Read Isaiah 1:1-31, 6:1-13, 9:1-7, chapters 11, 12, 26, 40, 42, 49:1-26, 53:1-12, chapter 61, 66:1-24

Isaiah was an Israelite who lived during the time that the people of Israel were exiled out of their country into Assyria and Babylonia. Not much is said about his personal life.

- Isaiah made predictions under the reigns of four kings in Judah (Isaiah 1:1), which would be around 710 – 681 B.C.
- Isaiah made predictions about many of the neighboring countries such as Babylon (ch. 13-14, Philistia (Isa. 14:28-32), Moab (ch. 15-16), Damascus and Syria (ch. 17), Ethiopia (ch. 18), Egypt (ch. 19-20).
- As a prophet of God, Isaiah predicted both the destruction and captivity of Israel (such as Babylon taking Judah in chapter 39:1-8, and also the future return of the Israelites (chapter 49:1-26 and chapter 51).
- God revealed to Isaiah that a special baby would be born to a future Israelite. That child would be called The Mighty God, The Eternal Father (Isaiah 9:6). God was helping his people understand that the future Messiah (Christ) would actually be God born as a man.
- Isaiah wrote about the sufferings of God's servant in a way that could only describe the future suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 53)
- God revealed many things to Isaiah about his plan for the future to give hope to the Israelites.
- What other things do you observe about God in the account of Isaiah? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Daniel

Daniel, chapters 1 – 10

Daniel was one of the people of Israel who was taken captive by the nation of Babylon.

Babylon was one of the world empires at that time. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took many of the Israelites captive to Babylon and its empire.

- Daniel is an example of someone continuing to trust God even though circumstances looked like the work of God was being destroyed.
- Daniel was repeatedly promoted because of his outstanding character and abilities. With all this responsibility in an enemy country, he lived to please God in every way. (Daniel 1 -2)
- God used Daniel to help the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar become a worshipper of God. Read this unusual story in Daniel 2 – 4.
- Under King Darius, who overthrew the Babylonians, many officials opposed Daniel and tried to kill him in the lions' den, but God worked to show his greatness to this king also, who then proclaimed God's greatness to the whole empire. (Daniel 6)
- God gave Daniel visions of future world events, which he recorded. (Daniel 7-8)
- God also showed Daniel the final judgement of the world and a vision of the "son of man" coming to earth, who would be worshipped as the supreme authority with the "Ancient of Days", a title of God. (Daniel 7:9-14) All Jews viewed this as a prediction of their Messiah, which Jesus later claimed to be (Mark 14:62).
- What other things do you observe about God in the account of Daniel? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Jesus

Read Luke, chapters 1 – 24

Read John, chapters 1 – 21

Jesus Christ is the primary turning point of all history. Even the world's present dating system is based on the birth of Jesus. Jesus was also the turning point in how God worked with people. In the first major message given by Jesus (Sermon on the Mount), Jesus often said, "You have heard that ..., but I tell you ..." (Matthew 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43) Jesus placed emphasis on what was happening in people's hearts, whereas the Old Testament placed more emphasis on people's actions. There are four areas of reasons we know Jesus Christ is actually God, the Creator of the world. All these areas have the best historical documentation that was possible at that time.

- He fulfilled predictions made about him (the Messiah to the Jews) hundreds and thousands of years previous to his life.
- He claimed to be God to his enemies and to his followers.
- He demonstrated the supernatural powers of God.
- His followers spent their lives proclaiming he is God and they willingly died because they could not deny they had seen and touched Jesus in his resurrected body after he had been killed, just as he had predicted to them.

NOTE: The life of Jesus is very well depicted (very close to the Biblical accounts) in the movie "Jesus". This movie of his life can be viewed online in hundreds of languages at this website: www.JesusFilmMedia.org. The script is taken from the book of Luke and is very accurate. It also reviews the creation, fall, Abraham, life of Jesus, the gospel, and trusting Jesus for salvation. Following are some highlights of the life of Jesus here on earth.

- Jesus was born as one of the descendants of Abraham, Israel, and David (Matthew 1:1-17), which was a fulfillment of many predictions.

- The location of Jesus' birth was a fulfilled prediction. (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1, Luke 2:1-7)
- The events of Jesus' birth were miraculous. (Matthew 1-2, Luke 1:26 – 2:40)
- Jesus was such a powerful influence of European and western culture that the calendar system used around the world today is based on the date of his birth.
- Jesus knew he was God come as a man, even at age 12. (Luke 2:41-52)
- Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. (Matthew 3:13-17)
- Jesus lived in complete poverty, without a home, yet he continually helped other people. (All through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
- His many miracles of healing and control of nature were evidence that he was God in human form. (All through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) It is interesting to note that all his miracles were for the purpose of helping people in some way. He was not performing them simply to demonstrate his power.
- Jesus, himself, claimed to be God. (John 8:57-59, and John 10:30-33, 37-39) This was the reason the religious leaders said he must die, because he claimed to be God and the Messiah (John 19:7), but he had not overthrown the government as many thought the Messiah should do first of all.
- Jesus taught clearly about the Trinity, although he never used that word. Many times he talked about his Father, and at the Last Passover Supper he explained clearly about the Holy Spirit who would come to take the place of Jesus. (John 14 and John 16) It is clear that Jesus recognized his Father in heaven to be God, Jesus said that he, himself, is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God.
- Jesus also clearly taught about our greatest enemy, Satan (John 8:42-46).
- Jesus taught about eternal judgment (Matthew 25:31-46, John 3:16-18).
- Jesus knew that a primary purpose of his life was to be the ransom (payment) for many people (Mark 10:45), to rescue them from eternal judgment for their sins.
- Jesus understood that he was the focus of all history, from Moses to Revelation. He told his followers that his death was the fulfillment of the meaning of the Passover Lamb (a sacrifice to save the life of the firstborn). (Mark 14:12-25, Luke 22:14-20) He also said that the complete fulfillment would happen in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:16). In Revelation, Jesus is frequently referred to as the Lamb, because it is by his sacrificial death that every human being can be saved from eternal death into eternal life. (Revelation 7:9-17) This is why Jesus told his followers to share bread and grape juice together in memory of his sacrifice for our sin (Luke 22:19).
- Jesus predicted many times that he would be killed and return back to life three days later (Luke 18:33). Even his enemies understood this (Matthew 27:62-66). His disciples expected Jesus to set up his kingdom immediately, so they were very surprised when he was killed on the cross, and they did not expect him to come back to life (John 20:9).
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the strongest evidence for his claim to be God. (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)
- Jesus appeared to people over a period of 40 days after his resurrection. Then, while a group watched, Jesus ascended into the sky. Angels told the disciples Jesus will again return to earth in bodily form. (Acts 1:1-11)
- Jesus had previously told his followers that sometime in the future he would return as King, but no one knows the date. (Matthew 24:1-54)

- In the life of Jesus, what things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)
- **NOTE:** In Appendix 3, “God Uses All History to Make Himself Known,” there is more information on God’s Grand Plan and his “**Subplan – God shows himself through Jesus Christ – the Lamb of God.**” There you will find more amazing evidence of how God’s plan to become a human, as Jesus Christ, is the focal point of all history.

Holy Spirit

Read Acts 1:4-11, 2:1 – 41, 10:1-48, 19:1-7

The Holy Spirit is mentioned at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:2. In the Bible, he is not mentioned as often as God, the Father. He is also not mentioned as often as God, the Son (Jesus Christ). But the Bible makes it clear that he is God, the Spirit. Here are some verses that help us understand who the Holy Spirit is:

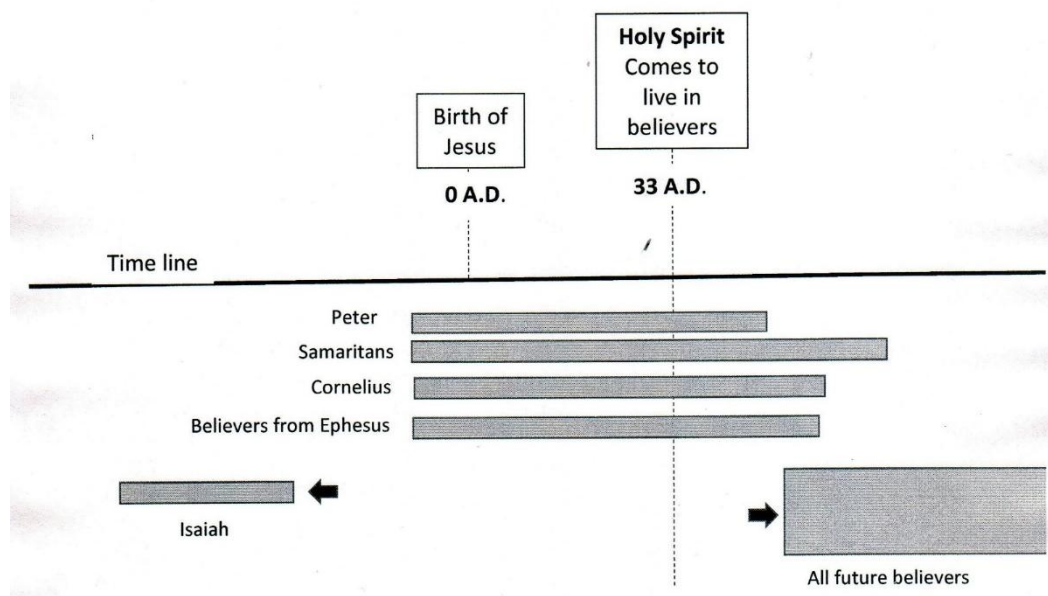
- Romans 8:9-11 – Talks about God, Christ, and the Spirit as the same, yet working as different persons. This is difficult to comprehend with our limited minds. The three of them are the same Being, yet they function as different persons.
- John 14:15-17, 25-26 and John 16:5-15 – Jesus tells his disciples that he will send the Holy Spirit to take the place of Jesus in their lives. In these verses Jesus explains the things that the Holy Spirit will do.
- Acts 1:8 – Jesus promised to send the Spirit to enable his disciples to be witnesses of him.
- 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, and Ephesians 1:13-15 – The Holy Spirit comes to live in the person who trusts Jesus Christ as his Savior.
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23, Titus 3:5 – The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to believers and helps them grow.

As we read in John 14:17 and 16:5-8, the Holy Spirit did not live in people at any time until after Jesus died, came back to life, and then ascended to heaven. In Acts we read different accounts of how the Holy Spirit came to permanently live in people. Today, he immediately comes to live in a person when they open their hearts to Christ. The book of Acts records the different events that God used to teach his children about this new role of his Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit changed dramatically from the thousands of years before Jesus when he was WITH believers to the time he began to live IN believers after Jesus ascended back into heaven. Following are highlights of how this happened.

- God’s Spirit first came to live in those who believed in Jesus Christ ten days after Jesus ascended back to heaven. (Acts 1 – 2) This happened on the day Pentecost, which was the Jewish Feast of Weeks. This was 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits (the same day Jesus rose from the dead).
- One of the first evidences of the Spirit coming to live in the believers was an ability to speak in a language they had not learned (Acts 2:1-13). This was very impressive to those around who spoke those languages and knew the first disciples had never learned the other languages. On that same day, there were about 3,000 Jews from many countries who believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:5, 41) As far as we know, there were no Gentiles who believed in Christ on this occasion.

- Soon afterward, people in Samaria (half Jew and half Gentile) believed in Christ. Read Acts 8:14-17. Peter and John were sent to them, and after they prayed for the Samaritan believers, the Samaritans also received the Holy Spirit.
- The next step was for the Holy Spirit to come live in Gentiles (people who were not Jews at all). This first happened with Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. When these Gentiles believed in Christ, they had the same kind of experience that the first disciples had experienced at Pentecost, which meant that they also spoke in languages they had not learned (Acts 10:44-48).
- The last category of people to receive the Holy Spirit were some people who believed in God's message through John the Baptist (who came before Jesus), but had not yet heard about Jesus Christ. After hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, they believed in him and received the Holy Spirit in the same way the first disciples did, even speaking in other languages (translated as "tongues" in some Bibles). Acts 19:1-7

NOTE: The Holy Spirit coming to live in believers was a major change in all history, but unseen by physical eyes. Believers who had lived before Jesus, such as Isaiah and Abraham, never had the Holy Spirit come to permanently live in them, although we will see them with the Lord. (See the diagram following this paragraph.) To help people understand this new blessing of the indwelling Holy Spirit, God gave some very unusual evidence when this indwelling first happened – the ability to speak in a language they had not learned. Then when other categories of people besides Jews experienced the same miracle, the Jews knew the Holy Spirit had also come to live in others because they saw the same unusual miracle of speaking in a language that had not been learned. (Those other categories of people were Samaritans (half Jew, half Gentile), Gentiles, and believers in John the Baptist before Jesus. After those four events, everyone else who came to believe in Jesus always received the Holy Spirit at the moment they believed without an accompanying miracle. This is what has happened to us (Eph. 1:13-14). After the historical transition period of the Holy Spirit coming to live in people, the miracle of talking in a real language (that had not been learned) was no longer given as evidence of the Holy Spirit coming to live in people. Today God can always give a miraculous ability to an individual for some



specific purpose, but speaking an unlearned language is no longer given as evidence of the Holy Spirit coming to live in someone. The following timeline is a graph to show the sequence of events that God brought about to help his children understand the new ministry of the Holy Spirit.

NOTE: Today, some Christians and non-Christians imitate the miracle of speaking in an unlearned language by making gibberish sounds, saying it is supernatural. But no one is amazed or impressed by it in the way people were in the book of Acts because no one hears them speaking a real language. Paul addressed this imitation of the miracle in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14), saying it is much better if a speaker knows what he is saying and if the listeners also know what is being said. It is definitely possible for God to give someone the ability today to speak a language they haven't learned, but it will be an obvious miracle when the listeners hear them speaking in their own language!

- The most important evidence of the Holy Spirit living in a person is their expression of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. These qualities are often called the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22-23. Paul explains that love is so important that even if someone talks in a language they haven't learned, it is useless if love isn't evidenced (1 Corinthians 13:1).
- The Holy Spirit's "job description" was given by Jesus during the last supper (Passover) with his disciples. As you read what Jesus said in John 14:26 and 16:7-15, write down each of the things Jesus said the Spirit would do. These are important for you to understand because all of them are things the Holy Spirit has done or wants to do in your life.
- Gifts of the Spirit are different abilities and different motivations given to different Christians, as members of Christ's body. The two primary verses that describe these gifts are Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. The purpose of these gifts is to build up other people, as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:7.

Remembering that the Holy Spirit is God, what qualities of God do you see in him? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")

Peter

Read Luke 5:1-11

Read Luke 6 – 24

Read John chapters 13, 20 – 21

Peter (Simon Peter) was one of the 12 men Jesus chose to be his disciples and the apostles.

Peter was very quick to say what he was thinking, which is probably the reason many things were written about him. He also wrote the Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter.

- Peter caught fish for a living before meeting Jesus. Jesus demonstrated his greatness to Peter by putting more fish into Peter's net than he had ever experienced (Matthew 5:1-11). After Jesus' resurrection, when Peter was still confused and went back to fishing, Jesus repeated the same miracle for him (John 21:1-14), even though Peter had denied knowing Jesus just before the crucifixion (John 18:15 – 27). Jesus then told Peter that Peter could show his love for Jesus by feeding his sheep (John 21:15-17).

- Jesus told Peter that his name meant “rock” and that Jesus would build his church on “this rock.” (Matthew 16:17-19) What did Jesus mean when he said this to Peter? The best way to know what he meant is to see what Peter said about Jesus building his church on the rock. He wrote an explanation of this in his epistle, 1 Peter 2:4-8.
- Peter experienced how easy it was to become influenced by Satan. In Mark 8 he had a great insight about Jesus and then soon after that he made a remark to Jesus and Jesus said “Get behind me, Satan.” (Mark 8:27-33).
- Peter helped the early church leaders understand that God provides salvation to people whose hearts are humble before him and not according to their actions or how well they kept rules (Acts 15:8-11). This is true for Jews and all people.
- God used Peter to open the door for communicating the gospel to people who were not Jews (Gentiles). Previously, the Christians had thought that people had to become Jews before they could accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Acts 10:1 – 11:18.
- In the life of Peter, what things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

John

Read Luke 5:1-11

Read John chapters 1 – 21

Read 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John

Read Revelation 1 – 5, 21 – 22 (or all the book of Revelation as soon as possible)

- John was a fishing partner with Peter before Jesus called them to be his disciples. John’s brother, James, was also a fishing partner and also joined Jesus as his disciple.
- When John wrote the gospel of John, he sometimes referred to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23).
- John also wrote 3 letters that became part of Scripture – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.
- John emphasizes that we can have eternal life through our belief in Jesus Christ. (John 3:16, John 5:24, John 20:30-31, 1 John 5:11-13)
- Near the end of his life John wrote Revelation, the last book of the Bible (Revelation 1:1-4). He wrote on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9), where he was exiled by Roman authorities. This book was primarily a revelation of what Jesus Christ would do in the end times (Revelation 1:1-2).
- The gospel of John, written about the life, death, and teaching of Jesus Christ, has many unique things recorded because his emphasis was on Jesus being God. John explains this purpose in John 20:30-31.
- In the life of John, what things do you observe about God? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles “God’s Salvation,” “God’s Characteristics,” and “God’s Promises.”)

Paul

Read Acts 7:54 – 8:3, 9:1 – 31, 11:19 – 30, 12:25 – 28:31

Read Galatians 1:13-24

After Jesus Christ’s death, all his disciples told people about Jesus being the King of Kings and the Savior from our sin. Paul at first opposed the disciples (at which time his name was Saul),

but after Jesus appeared to him, Saul also became a zealous messenger about Jesus Christ, (Acts 9:1-31). Later he was called Paul.

- Paul had received the highest education from the Jews of his day, which included intense study of the Old Testament, as we call it today. (Philippians 3:4-6)
 - God knew Paul's intention was to obey God to the best of his understanding, so Jesus Christ revealed himself to Paul in his resurrected glory (Acts 9:1-31, 1 Timothy 1:12-13). This was the turning point in Paul's life.
 - Paul was sent out as a missionary from the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). What do you see about God's work through his people in this passage? Record your observation in the section, "Basics about God – His Characteristics."
 - God used Paul to help the church leaders understand more clearly that salvation and life with God are based on God's grace and not on our performance or works. Paul explained this to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:19-21), and he also explained it to Peter and other leaders when they began to emphasize the Old Testament rules as necessary for salvation (Galatians 2:11-21).
 - Paul and his companions were the first ones to bring the gospel message of Jesus Christ to many of the cities from Antioch to Greece (Acts 13-21). In Acts 17:26-27, what understanding did Paul have about the way God works in people's lives? Write your observation in the section, "Basics about God – His Characteristics."
 - Paul revisited many of the cities where he started churches and wrote letters to them to help them grow in their life with Jesus Christ. Many of these letters were quickly recognized as part of Scripture by the original apostles, even during Paul's life. (2 Peter 3:14-16) Realizing that some of the letters were written while Paul was in prison (such as Philippians), what do you observe about God's characteristics? (Record your observations in the appropriate section.)
 - Paul's life is given as an example for us to follow in many ways (Philippians 3:12-17). His example of reaching people with the gospel message and starting churches has been followed throughout history.
 - Paul carefully taught theology and doctrine in many of his letters, especially Romans and Galatians.
 - What other things do you observe about God in the account of Paul? (Write your observations in the sections of this manual that have the titles "God's Salvation," "God's Characteristics," and "God's Promises.")
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God's Salvation

(Journal pages)

Jesus Christ said He was sent into the world to save it from condemnation (John 3:17). How does this salvation happen?

When a religious leader came to talk with him personally about spiritual things, Jesus told him, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again (John 3:3)." Nicodemus, the religious leader, then asked how such a thing could happen.

Whether it's called salvation or new birth, here is a summary of what the Bible says about the way God has made eternal life available for anyone who wants it. The titles of the sections that give an understanding of God's salvation are listed below. Then following the list, each section is expanded with Bible verses. After each section there is also a blank space where you can write more Bible verses that help you understand these same truths.

- 1. People's Problems**
- 2. People's Inadequacies**
- 3. God's Provisions**
- 4. People's Responses to God**
- 5. God's Assurances to His People**
- 6. God's Spirit Lives in You**

Each of these five subjects is at the top of one of the following pages, with examples provided. The blank space below each example is available for you to write Bible verses and explanations that relate to each of these five subjects. Each subject helps us to understand how God has helped people in many situations and to understand the eternal salvation from sin and death that God has provided in such an amazing way through Jesus Christ.

1. People's Problems

- Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-19 – Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God when they committed the first sin.
- James 2:10 – One action of disobedience to God separates us from Him as much as any amount of sin does.
- Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28 – Wrong thoughts are equally serious as wrong actions in God's sight.

Sin of any kind separates us from God and causes spiritual death. Following are some passages that explain this:

- The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).
- The consequence for all kinds of sin is not only physical death but also eternal death (2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 20:11-15 and 21:8), which is separation from God in eternal misery in a lake of fire.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

2. People's Inadequacies

- James 2:10 – No matter how much good a person does, it will never be enough to pay the spiritual death penalty every person deserves.
- Galatians 2:16, 20-21 – No matter how religious a person is, it will never be enough to pay his/her spiritual death penalty.
- Psalm 49:7-9 – Another person cannot pay the death penalty for someone because they need to pay their own penalty, which is eternal death.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

3. God's Provisions

- Ephesians 1:3-10 – God had a plan for rescuing (saving) people even before He created them.
- Romans 5:6-11 – Even though we were like enemies of God and utterly helpless to provide our own salvation, God took loving action and made salvation possible.
- Hebrews 10:8 – Sacrifices of animals were never enough to pay the death penalty for a human.
- God, who is our Judge, determined that a perfect human could take on the death penalty for other people (Hebrews 10:8-14). To make this possible, God Himself became a human, supernaturally conceived in Mary, about 2000 years ago. Mary's baby was named Jesus, and when He grew up he said he was the Christ (Messiah), so was called Jesus Christ. He told his followers he had come to pay the death penalty each one of us deserves (Mark 10:45).
- While Jesus Christ hung on the cross of execution, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46) At that time He was experiencing the full wrath of God's justice against the sin of people. (Romans 8:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Jesus Christ was the substitutionary payment (sacrifice) for our death penalty. This is symbolized in many ways from the beginning of the Bible to the end.
 - God provided a sheep for Abraham to sacrifice instead of his son – Genesis 22.
 - The Passover Lamb was sacrificed so the first born child would not die – Exodus 12:1-13.
 - Animal sacrifices had to be made at the temple to represent payment for sin – Leviticus 4:32-35, 5:1-19.
 - The Servant of God (Messiah) would bear our sins. – Isaiah 53
 - Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God many times (31x) in Revelation. (Rev. 7:17, 15:3, 21:23)
- Jesus Christ gave proof that His sacrifice for sins is valid and all His words are true. He predicted to His followers that on the third day after his death, he would come back to life (Matthew 16:21). This would be a clear demonstration that all his claims are true and that He really is God who became a human to rescue us. (John 5:36) In spite of all that Jesus' enemies did to prevent his resurrection, on the third day he began appearing to his followers and others. He met with people for 40 days, and then while a group watched, he ascended into the clouds. Before he left, Jesus made it clear that he would again return as the Ruler of this world, after which would come the final judgement of all people. (Matthew 27:62-66, Acts 1:1-11)

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

(Continued) 3. God's Provisions

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

4. People's Responses to God

- John 1:12, Romans 10:9-13, Romans 5:15-17, 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9 – All that is required for salvation is believing that God is offering his gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, and then accepting Jesus as God's gift for salvation.
- Romans 10:9-13, Acts 16:31 – Acceptance of God's gift is expressed by communication to God. This can be done verbally or by the thoughts of our mind.
- Luke 23:40-43 – The example of one of the thieves on the cross beside Jesus demonstrates how this gift of salvation can be accepted.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

5. God's Assurances to His People

Following are some Bible verses that confirm we are part of God's eternal family after we have put our trust in Jesus Christ (the One who has provided salvation by setting us free from Satan and paying the penalty we deserve for all our sin).

- John 5:24
- Roman 8:1-4
- 1 John 5:11-13
- Hebrews 10:10-14
- Psalm 103:12

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

6. God's Spirit Lives in You

Following are some Bible verses that tell of God's Spirit living in all who receive Jesus Christ. You are in Christ and Christ is in you.

- Jesus told his disciples before he left, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." John 14:16-17
- Ephesians 1:13-14 "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory."
- Romans 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- 1 Corinthians 6:19 "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?"

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

God's salvation in Jesus Christ is the focus of history

Jesus Christ's sacrifice for salvation is the focus of all history – for the past, present, and future of all humanity for all time.

God's provision of salvation came through Jesus Christ. He lived a very simple life, completely poor, and with only three years of public ministry, but his life, death, and resurrection have had a stronger influence on this world than any other person. God had prepared the world for the arrival of Jesus by recording predictions long before they actually happened (Luke 24:25-27). God also brought about special events to help people be prepared for Jesus Christ, who is also called the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Savior of the world.

- God continually narrowed the family line to which the Messiah (Christ) would be born, beginning with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Ruth, David, and Solomon's descendants.
- God predicted the exact small town where the Messiah (the Christ) would be born (Micah 5:2), about four hundred years before the event.
- God also predicted more than 400 years before the event that this special baby born to an Israelite family would be the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6).
- The location of Jesus' death was supernatural. Even though His enemies decided where to execute Him, it was on the same group of hills (Mount Moriah) where God had asked Abraham to sacrifice his son and where God had provided a sheep to be a substitute so a human would not have to die.
- The timing of Jesus' death was supernatural. Even though His enemies decided when to execute, it was at the same time as the Feast of the Passover when the Jews were killing lambs in memory of the Passover lambs killed in Egypt so people would not have to die.
- At the culmination of human history on earth as we know it now, Jesus Christ is depicted as the Lamb. In the last book of the Bible (Revelation), which depicts God's final work with the world, Jesus is called the "Lamb" thirty one times. The Lamb is the main character at the climax of history. He is called the Lamb because His sacrifice is the complete basis for sinful people to be restored to an eternal loving relationship with their Creator.

God accomplished this completely unique event to make eternal salvation possible for all humans who have ever existed and ever will exist. This most unique event of all history was done in such a way to demonstrate that it could only have been accomplished by the hand of our highly intelligent Creator whose abilities and knowledge are far beyond our comprehension. The more closely an honest person makes investigation, the more amazed they become at every aspect of the event. In a world full of suffering, pain, and confusion, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ give hope to every person.

God's Characteristics

(Journal pages)

The Bible describes many things about God. It describes things God has done since the beginning of the world and also things he will continue to do until he makes a new world in the future. We learn things about God from: 1) studying the Biblical accounts of what he did in past history, and 2) studying the descriptions the Bible gives about God. We also learn things about God from studying his promises, which will be explored in the final section of this manual.

As you read the Bible, look for things about God and also things that demonstrate an attribute of God. Write down the reference and a brief summary of each thing on the page in this journal that is designated for the characteristic of God seen in the passage. This will help you review these things in the future. Following is a summary of the characteristics listed on the following pages. Each characteristic listed is on a separate page with space to write the verses you find. After each characteristic, a few examples from the Bible are already given. You can continue adding more as you find them.

1. The Extent of God's **Power**
2. The Extent of God's **Presence**
3. The Extent of God's **Love**
(Including His **Mercy, Compassion** and **Grace**)
4. The Extent of God's **Knowledge**
5. The Extent of God's **Justice**
6. The Extent of God's **Control** and **Sovereignty**
7. The Extent of God **Never Changing**
8. The Extent of God's **Faithfulness**
9. The Extent of God's **Perfection** and **Purity**
10. The Extent of God's **Helpfulness**
11. Other Characteristics of God

As you write down things you see about God, your understanding of God will increase. And the more you understand about who God is, the more your life will be changed.

1. The Extent of God's Power

Many times throughout the Bible, God is referred to as the Maker or the Creator. We also learn he has the ability to control everything he has made. The Bible says many things about God's strength and power.

Genesis 1:1 –“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Psalm 146:5-6 –“Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them – the LORD, who remains faithful forever.”

Psalm 66:5-7 –God parted the Red Sea. “He rules forever by His power.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

2. The Extent of God's Presence

Genesis 28:16-17 – God spoke to Jacob through a dream when he was sleeping outside. This convinced Jacob that God was there, even though he had been completely unaware of Him.

Psalms 139:7-10 – “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

3. The Extent of God's Love

(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and ***Grace***)

Numbers 14:18 –“The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.”

Jonah 1-4 – God went to extra effort to help the people of Ninevah, a Gentile city that had a bad reputation for abusing and torturing other people. God wanted to bring them to himself!

Luke 13:34 –God loves all people, including those who hate him and rebel against him. This is demonstrated by Jesus when He cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

NOTE: In Scripture, God is defined with the following roles, all of which include a lot of love. You can write Bible verses after each of these roles, as you find them.

- **Savior**
- **Father**
- **Husband**
- **Friend**

Genesis 6-9 – God loves people and wants a loving relationship with them, but he will not force people to love him. He will not force people to live with him.

- God's heart was full of pain because of the selfishness of people who ignored him and even turned against him. (Genesis 6:6).

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

(continued) 3. The Extent of God's Love

(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and ***Grace***)

(continued) 3. The Extent of God's Love

(Including His ***Mercy, Compassion*** and ***Grace.***)

4. The Extent of God's Knowledge

Genesis 18:10-15 – When the Lord and two angels were visiting Abraham, the Lord knew what Sarah was thinking when he couldn't see her.

Psalm 147:5 – "His understanding has no limit."

Luke 12:6 – Jesus said that God knows every hair and every sparrow.

Psalm 139:1-4 – God knows every thought people have.

Luke 16:15 – God knows every motive that people have, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts."

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

5. The Extent of God's Justice

God loves people and wants a loving relationship with them, but He will not force people to love Him. He will not force people to live with Him.

Genesis 2:17 – God told Adam and Eve that whenever anyone sinned they would die.

This is demonstrated when God judged the world with a world-wide flood.

Genesis 6-9 –

- God's heart was full of pain because of the selfishness of people (Genesis 6:6).
- Noah spoke to the people about God (2 Peter 2:5), but no one wanted to join Noah, so God carried out His judgement on sin.
- We can be sure that everyone hated the flood, but God did not rescue them because they also did not want God. They wanted good things God gave them, but they did not want God, Himself.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

God's justice in dealing with nations in history:

Many people have said God was unloving and unjust when he required the Israelites to destroy large groups of people in Palestine. Read the following passages, pray, and make your decision.

- Deut. 9:4-6, 18:9-13, Psalm 106:34-38 – God's reasons for destroying groups of people.
- Leviticus 26:14-39, Deut. 28:15-68 – God would be even more severe with the Israelites if they did the same things (all of which God later did to Israel through Assyria, Babylon, and Rome).
- Genesis 2:15-17, Romans 6:23, Revelation 21:8 – God has the same standards for all people in all history.

6. The Extent of God's Control and Sovereignty

Genesis 37-47 – Many events in the life of Joseph fit together to make him a ruler next to Pharaoh, and later to rescue his brothers. The Midianite traders traveled by the brothers just as they were deciding what to do. Joseph was sold as a slave to Potiphar. The Butler and Baker were put in prison with him, and both had dreams, and then Pharaoh had a dream.

Genesis 50:19-20 – God used evil events to bring about His good plans.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

7. The extent of God never changing

1 Samuel 15:29 – God does not change.

Hebrews 13:8 – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

James 1:17 – God does not change.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

8. The Extent of God's Faithfulness

Genesis 13:14-17 – God told Abraham that his descendants would always inherit the land of Palestine. That is still true today, in spite of all the slaughter and destruction that the Jews have gone through.

Genesis 49:8-10 – compared with Revelation 5:5. God told Jacob that the future ruler (the Messiah) would come from Judah's descendants. This was later recorded in Revelation; that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah.

Psalms 146:6 – "...the Maker, ...the LORD, who remains faithful forever."

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

9. The Extent of God's Perfection and Purity

Joshua 7:1-26 – God instructed the Israelite army to totally destroy Jericho and not take anything for themselves. Because only one soldier took some things for himself from Jericho, God did not help the Israelite army when it attacked the next city. Soldiers died because of this. Not until Achan's sin was dealt with did God help the army again.

Revelation 4:8 – "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty."

Habakkuk 1:13 – God's eyes are so pure that He cannot even look at evil. (Obviously God sees all evil, but there is some way He does not want to see it.)

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

10. The Extent of God's Helpfulness

God is always teaching every person in the world in every aspect of their lives. He is always helping them know more of who he is and how they can experience his fullness.

Hebrews 12:4-11 – God uses trials to train us.

Psalms 71:17 – God taught the Psalmist from his youth.

Psalms 94:10-14 – God teaches people.

Psalms 32:8 – God leads and guides us.

Deuteronomy 8:2-5 – God teaches us and disciplines us.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

11. Other Characteristics of God

BIBLE VERSES:

God's Promises

(Journal pages)

Peter gives a good summary of why God's promises are so important:

"His [God's] divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-5)

Following is a summary of promises God has given, listed by general categories.

1. God's Promises about **Salvation / Reconciliation**
2. God's Promises about **His Presence**
3. God's Promises about **Leadership / Guidance**
4. God's Promises about **Protection**
5. God's Promises about **Wisdom / Knowledge/ Understanding**
6. God's Promises about **Provision / Gifts**
7. God's Promises about **Healing / Restoration**
8. God's Promises about **Help / Strength**
9. God's Promises about **Trials and Suffering**
10. God's Promises about **His Relationship with Us**
11. Other Promises from God

As you read the Bible, write down promises you find according to these different aspects of life, which we all need. Write down the reference and a brief summary of each one you find. This will help you review them in the future. Following are pages where you can write the promises you find. Each page has space for each category of promises. In each category there are a few examples of promises already given. You can continue adding more as you find them.

1. God's Promises about Salvation / Reconciliation

Exodus 6:7 – “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.”

John 1:12 – “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 John 5:11-13 – “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever who has the Son has life; whoever who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

2. God's Promises about His Presence

Genesis 28:15 – “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9 – “...the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Matthew 28:20 – “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

3. God's Promises about Leadership / Guidance

Psalms 32:8 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

4. God's Promises about Protection

Psalm 34:19 – “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.”

Psalm 46:1 – “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

2 Thessalonians 3:3 – “The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

5. God's Promises about Wisdom / Knowledge/ Understanding

John 14:26 – “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

James 1:5 – “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

6. God's Promises about Provision / Gifts

Philippians 4:19 – “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

1 John 5:14-15 – “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

7. God's Promises about Healing / Restoration

Exodus 6:6 – “I will heal you from being slaves to them.” (First to Israelites, and in principle applies to us being set free from slavery to sin.)

Exodus 15:26 – “I am the LORD, who heals you.”

Psalms 103:2-3 – “Praise the LORD O my soul, and don't forget all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases...”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

8. God's Promises about Help / Strength

Genesis 50:20 – “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Exodus 6:6 – “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.” (Refers to Israelites first, and then to all of us.)

Romans 8:35-37 – “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

9. God's Promises about Trials and Suffering

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 – Our temporary trials help our inner being and accomplish an eternal glory.

James 1:2-4 – Be thankful for trials because you know they are building your character.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – God's power is made more obvious in our weakness.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

10. God's Promises about His Relationship with Us

John 14:21 – “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

John 14:3 – “I am going there (to my Father's house) to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

John 14:12 – “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLE VERSES:

11. Other Promises from God

BIBLE VERSES:

Appendix 1

Practical Steps for Becoming a Spiritual Parent

When God created people, his plan and design for them was to marry and have children. Although not everyone is able to have physical children, it is still God's normal plan for most people. Spiritually, God's plan is similar. When someone is born into his family, God's plan for them is to mature and to help others too. In this way, God's normal plan for his spiritual children is to become spiritual parents. Jesus made this clear when he gave a commission to his followers before he ascended to heaven. (Matthew 28:18-20) Following are some practical steps for anyone to become a spiritual parent by helping another person to grow spiritually.

First of all, understand what a spiritual parent is.

- A spiritual parent is someone who helps one or a few people to make progress in their personal life with Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 1:11-12
- This can be a father or mother helping one or more children. Ephesians 6:4
- This can be anyone who follows the example of Jesus to help one or more disciples. Matthew 20:18-20 (NOTE: In the Bible, the word for disciple comes from a word that means "to learn.")



Understand what a spiritual parent does.

- A spiritual parent encourages and helps others to learn from Jesus. Hebrews 3:13
- A spiritual parent prays for each disciple and also helps each one pray for others. We learn this from the example of Paul and from the principle in Ephesians 6:18,
 - A spiritual parent discusses together with each disciple how to live every aspect of personal life in relationship with God according to the Bible. We learn this from the example of Jesus and from the principle stated in Joshua 1:8-9.



Understand what a spiritual parent does not do.

- A spiritual parent is different from a physical parent in one major way. A spiritual parent does not try to control disciples. Disciples always have complete freedom to participate or not, just as Jesus gave his disciples complete freedom to follow him or not. For example, Jesus gave Judas complete freedom, even while aware of the fact that Judas would use that freedom to betray his spiritual parent. Do not view yourself as having the authority to control your disciples.

Understand and practice the steps to become a spiritual parent.

1. Pray for and look for someone with a desire to make progress in their life with God. John 7:37-38
2. Meet together regularly. Hebrews 3:13-15
3. Discuss together who God is, in his character and attributes, and also learn what he has done for us. Discuss how all aspects of personal life can be lived in a relationship with God according to the Bible, God's Word. This is what Jesus did with his disciples, helping them live according to God's truth in every way.
4. Use the *Basic Training Manuals* as guidelines for what to discuss in the Bible. The manuals are guides to help you find references in the Bible according to the subjects that Jesus taught his disciples. At the beginning of each of the three manuals (Books 1, 2, and 3) are instructions for how to use that specific manual. Each one is used in a different way, but always to help people go to the Bible as their source for living life with God.
5. If other friends have a similar desire to make progress in their personal life with God, include one, two, or three others to be part of the group that you meet with regularly, (Five or more in a group makes it difficult for each person to share and discuss what is happening in their personal life.) NOTE: For complete openness in these personal discipleship groups, it is best for men to meet with men and women with women.
6. Advise and encourage your spiritual children to pray for family and friends and to look for one or more people they can help become a child of God and to grow in their life with God. In this way they will also become spiritual parents! (This follows the example of Jesus, who taught his spiritual children to help others, as he stated in Matthew 28:18-20.)
7. Continue friendship, prayer, encouragement, and advice with your spiritual children as long as possible. (This follows the example of Paul with his spiritual children, as in 1 Thessalonians 2:6-20.)



Additional guidelines for FAMILIES and BIBLE DISCUSSION LEADERS

Here are some guidelines for parents who want to help their children learn from the Bible or for spiritual parents who want to help others learn from the Bible. These guidelines are helpful for anyone who wants to learn and live by God's Word.

First of all, write down the following five questions and keep them in your Bible. They will help you learn what the Bible says and how you can live according to its truth. You can use these questions even if you have not read much of the Bible and even without preparing ahead of time (although preparation can help).



Five questions for Bible study groups:

1. What does this passage say about **God**?
2. Is there an **example** to follow?
3. Is there a **command** to obey?
4. Is there a **promise** to claim?
5. Is there a **warning** to be careful about?

When you meet together with your family or your friends for Bible study, do the following:

- Choose any part of the Bible to read. It could be half a chapter or a full chapter.
- Pray aloud to ask God to help you understand what you will read.
- Read the section out loud together.
- Look for answers to any of the five questions, beginning with the first one about God.
- Pray and ask God to help you remember what you learned (preferably take turns praying aloud).

Appendix 2

Reasons We Know the Bible is God's Communication

The Bible claims to be God's communication

The Bible claims to be communication from God, but so do some other religious writings. Each document that claims to be from God needs to be evaluated from every angle. Following are reasons we know the Bible is produced by a being with more intelligence and ability than humans and that it really is a message of love from the one who created us.

The Bible's documents are reliable in every way

We know the documents in the Bible are reliable in every way for the following reasons:

- **The consistency within itself.** The Bible was compiled over a period of 2,000 years, by more than 30 authors, yet is consistent within itself and is consistent with proven history and science.
- **The quality of the account.** The quality and quantity of its accounts is equal to or superior to any other writing from its time period. The eyewitness accounts and documentation of its central figure, Jesus Christ, are closer in time proximity and more in quantity than for any other historical person from that time period (0 – 100 AD).
- **The quality of the copies.** Many copies of large segments of the Bible (some more than 2,000 years old), are available in museums, libraries, and private collections. The content of these Biblical manuscripts is consistent with the present versions of the Bible, demonstrating the unchanging reliability of the content. All translations in all languages today can be compared with early documents in the original languages for accuracy.
- **The consistency with history.** The Bible is made of many narrative accounts of how God worked throughout history, and these are consistent with proven history.
- **The fulfillment of predictions.** The Bible is full of predictions about future events in nations and governments, many of which have already come to pass, and it also includes unusual predictions of the nation Jesus grew up in, predictions which are happening today.
- **The central person of the Bible is unique in all history.** No one else in history besides Jesus Christ has claimed to be God and then backed up that claim with miracles of all kinds, even predicting his own death and resurrection and then fulfilling it. The eyewitness accounts of these events (compiled in the Bible's New Testament) are of higher quality than any other historical account from that time period in history, as stated before.
- **The authority of Jesus Christ's recommendation.** Jesus Christ, who claimed to be God (and then backed up that claim, as already described), taught that all the Bible written before he was born (today's Old Testament) was completely accurate, reliable, and is God's communication to people. Based on the authority of who he is, no higher recommendation is needed.

The Bible demonstrates God is in control of all history

Probably the most unique and amazing characteristic of the Bible is that its author (the source who is above the human authors who wrote the Bible) demonstrates he is in control of history by predicting events thousands of years before they happen. The Bible is written in a way that demonstrates that it is put together by a being with much higher intelligence than we have – an intelligent being that knows what will happen thousands of years before the events happen.

Not only does the Bible demonstrate God is in control of history, it also shows that the central figure of the Bible is the most influential person in history. The followers of Jesus Christ have influenced the history, the culture, the sciences, the medicines, and the academics in this world more than anyone else. Even the most accepted dating system in the world is based on his birth.

The Bible's solution for life with God is unique

All religions in the world tell people how to improve their lives and make themselves acceptable to God or a higher being. However, the message of the Bible and its central figure, Jesus Christ, is different from all other religions. The message of the Bible is that God, our creator, offers eternal life with him as a *gift* that he has provided. The Bible explains that people can never make themselves worthy for life with God, but God loves people so much that he became a human and sacrificed his life to make it possible for any person who wants life with him to be able to receive it as a gift from him. This central message of the Bible puts the emphasis on what God has done for people and not on what people should do for God. It's a message of God's sacrificial love for people. This helps us understand that the Bible is God's communication to the people he made and loves.

Appendix 3

The Most Influential Person in History

God is the focus of the Bible, from beginning to end, and Jesus Christ is the human revelation of God. In this way, he is the central person in the Bible. The beginning of the Bible tells how God prepared for the future coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible then explains how he came to provide salvation for the world, and the end tells how he will return as ruler of the world and husband of those who love him.

No other person in the world in all of history has had as much influence as Jesus Christ. Today, almost every person in the world recognizes his birth when they write the number of this year. The most commonly used dating system all over the world is based on the approximate year of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The number of people who identify themselves as Christians in the world is larger than any other religion. Many of them misunderstand Jesus Christ, but they are at least attracted to him. The Bible, where Jesus Christ is the central figure, has been the most read book in the world ever since the printing press was invented. In fact, the printing press was invented for the purpose of printing more copies of the Bible. Millions upon millions of copies of the Bible have been sold, far beyond any comparison with any other book in the world.

Jesus Christ not only has more followers than any other person in history, but also his teaching has had a stronger influence than any other single person. Many of the original universities in Europe, North America, and South America were started for the purpose of teaching the Bible. Many of the hospitals throughout the world were started by people of the Christian faith. The Red Cross organization, with its many branches, has provided help throughout the world. Its origin came from Christians who recognized Jesus Christ as the greatest savior of the world and is often represented by a cross to symbolize how he gave his life for all humanity.

Not only does Jesus Christ have the greatest influence in the world, he is also the most unique person in the world. He predicted how he would be killed, how he would be dead for three days, and when he would come back to life. No other person in all history has done this.

Not only did he come back to life according to his prediction, but Jesus Christ also claimed to be God, the Creator of the world, who came in the form of a person. To demonstrate his power, Jesus healed every kind of disease brought to him, removed all evil spirits brought to him, created large amounts of food with no resources, controlled the weather, and read people's minds. No one else in all history has ever made the claim to be God, the Creator of the world, and backed it up by predicting his resurrection to show his power over death, which is the greatest enemy of all people.

Along with Jesus Christ's claim to be God, he also explained that all of the Bible written before his birth was written to predict his coming and to prepare the world for his coming. In other words, Jesus Christ claimed to be the climax of history, also saying that in the future he will return to the world as the savior and supreme world leader.

Transformed lives happen because of Jesus Christ

It's not surprising that many lives have been transformed by a personal relationship with this unique person. The first followers of Jesus Christ learned many things from him and saw him do many miracles. They were intensely motivated to do whatever Jesus said, but when they saw their leader arrested and tortured, they lost their motivation to be identified as his followers and deserted him. They dramatically changed though, after Jesus appeared to them repeatedly in his resurrected body for a period of forty days, and even ate with them. Finally, after they watched him ascend into the sky, their thinking was so thoroughly transformed that they became life-long advocates for him, even to the point of their own deaths, killed by those who opposed them, because the followers of Jesus refused to back down on their testimony that they had seen Jesus Christ physically resurrected three days after his death.

Paul, an enemy of Jesus Christ, was also transformed by personally seeing Jesus Christ in his resurrected body. Paul then went on to become friends with the other followers of Jesus Christ and also wrote down the teachings of Jesus Christ for every person in the world.

Jesus Christ is the way you will be transformed

Just like the disciples and the Apostle Paul, the more you understand who Jesus Christ is and who God is, and the more you submit to his truth, the more your thinking will be changed and your life transformed. The more you contemplate the realities of God, especially as revealed through Jesus Christ, the more you will be a different person. That's why Paul prayed this prayer for the Christians he knew,

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Ephesians 1:17 - 19

Paul also wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, with unveiled face, *continually* seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are *progressively* being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.” (From the Amplified Bible)

Some people enjoy Jesus Christ as their Savior, and they enjoy reading stories about his life, but they don't realize that Jesus is also the model for how to have a loving marriage. Other Christians don't realize that Jesus is the model for helping another person become a Christian, and many don't realize that Jesus is the model for starting a church! In reality, Jesus is the most important model for every aspect of our lives!

- He is the model for every loving relationship.
- He is the model for leadership.
- He is the model for helping and serving.
- He is the model for work and investment.
- He is the model for education.

Appendix 4

God Uses All History to Make Himself Known

The Bible was written by human authors who were led by God. (Read Appendix 2 for more information.) One evidence that the Bible was originated by God is how it demonstrates God's control of history over thousands of years. This becomes clear when we read the Bible and see that God's purpose has always been for people to know him and that he has been carrying out plans that reveal his character so people can know him. God's plans for helping people know him have been implemented over thousands of years, and are still in process today.

When we see how all of history is accomplishing God's purpose and plans for people to know him, it becomes clear that God really is the ultimate author of the Bible and that he really is in control of history. Following is a more detailed explanation.

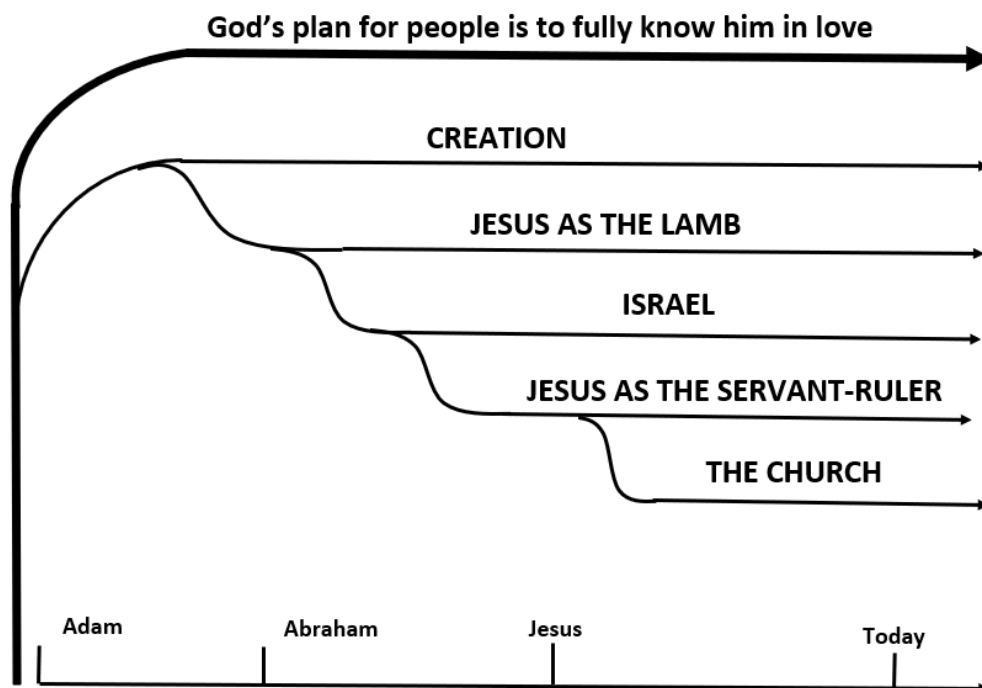
God's desire is for people to fully know him in love

All through the Bible we see God's emphasis on doing things to help people know him so he can have a relationship with them.

As with everything God does, the more we observe and study what he has done and is doing, the more we see his amazing knowledge, wisdom, and love. His abilities and character are shown in so many different ways! The more we see of them, the more it is like observing the beauty of a diamond. The many facets that a skilled jeweler cuts to bring out the beauty of a diamond are similar to the many ways that God has enacted plans throughout history to help people see, know, and understand the many aspects of who he is.



The following diagram is one way the whole Bible and all of history can be summarized. It is a simplified version of the timeline near the beginning of this manual, Book 1.



God's purpose and plans throughout history and throughout the world are explained in the complete Bible, from the beginning to the end. The following pages give an overview of what these are.

“Knowing” is the foundation of love

Love is a unique quality that does not take place in machines. Mechanical robots do whatever they are programmed to do and cannot express love. Love requires the ability to make choices for expressing appreciation, value, desire, and enjoyment toward another person. Choices can also be made to reject a person.

A choice to love is based on knowledge and experiences with another person. The more you know someone's good character and experience their expressions of value and appreciation, the more likely that you will respond with appreciation and value them, which is love.

Likewise, knowing God is the basis for loving him.

Because God designed people for love, he had a plan for how he would demonstrate his love toward those he created. The Bible says that God has always had plans for how he would make his love known to people so they could respond in love. Not only that, the Bible says that God had a plan before he created the world for how he would show his love to people even after they had made choices to reject his love!

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” (Ephesians 1:4-8)

The more people know about God and his love, the more likely they will be to respond to his love. That is consistent with the repeated emphasis on knowing God that we see throughout the Bible.

- The book of Ezekiel contains about sixty statements where God says he does different things in the world so that people will know that “I am the LORD.”
- God predicted through Jeremiah that there will be a time in the future when the people of Israel will all know him in a personal way. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- Jesus said that eternal life is all about knowing God. (John 17:3)
- Paul said his primary goal in life was to know Jesus Christ. (Philippians 3:7-10)

In Paul's recorded prayers, his big emphasis was asking God to help people know things about God more completely. (Ephesians 1:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-19, Philippians 1:3-11, Colossians 1:3-12)

It's helpful to understand the full meaning of “know” as used in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the same Hebrew word used in Ezekiel to “know” the Lord (approximately sixty times) is the exact same Hebrew word used in other passages when it refers to a man and a woman having

sexual oneness (Genesis 4:1, 4:17, 4:25, 38:26, and 1 Samuel 1:19). Knowing God, according to the Bible, is more than just an intellectual understanding. It is a complete sharing of every aspect of life. And when we share every aspect of life with another person, that is love.

With this understanding, it becomes clear why God and the writers of the Bible placed such a strong emphasis on knowing God and Jesus Christ. Because God is love and he created people to love, his purpose is for all people to know him.

Knowing God is the foundation for all of God's instruction in the Bible, which Jesus summarized by saying,

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
(Matthew 22:37-40)

Knowing God more completely is what produces the greatest love for God and the strongest love for people.

With this in mind, we can better appreciate the many things God has done throughout history to help people know him more completely. His work to make himself known to people can be summarized in the following five plans:

1. CREATION – the context for people to fully know God in love
2. JESUS AS THE LAMB – the sacrifice made to fully know God in love
3. ISRAEL – the nation God used for everyone to fully know God in love
4. JESUS AS THE SERVANT-RULER – the king we need for fully knowing God in love
5. THE CHURCH – the bride beginning to fully know God in love

Seeing the greatness and beauty of God (summarized as seeing the glory of God) can be compared to seeing the glory of a diamond. When a diamond is buried underground, its beauty is not evident. It is a diamond, but it needs to be cut and shaped to bring out its beauty. After a master jeweler works on it, people admire its amazing beauty. Similarly, God wants people to see his beauty. Throughout history God has used different plans to reveal his glory more graphically and clearly.

The more we see and understand the different ways God has made himself known, and is making himself known, the more we will say with the apostle Paul, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Romans 11:33)

The following pages give more explanation of what the Bible says about these five ways that God has made himself known and is making himself known.

1. CREATION

The context for people to fully know God in love

Logic tells us that the more complex and specific a structure's design is, the greater the intelligence that was required to make the design. Most people would laugh if someone suggested that a computer or a car could be produced by chance if enough time was available. The need for a creator is intuitive for people who have used cars and computers.

When we look at the design of our bodies, or at the design of the trees and flowers outside our homes, we find their design to be far more complex than that of a car. And the more that scientists study the complexity of the structures within each cell in our bodies, or the complexity of galaxies in space, the more obvious it is that our Creator has intelligence far beyond our comprehension! It's not just knowledge that would be required, but also power and abilities that are beyond our imagination.

We read in Psalm 19:1-4, "The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Nature around us helps us understand the greatness and glory of God. The evidence is there, proclaiming his abilities in so many ways. In fact the evidence for God is so strong that Romans 1:20 says, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men (people) are without excuse."

Seeing God beyond nature

In observing creation, what *isn't* obvious about God are his character qualities of love, grace, mercy, patience, and forgiveness. To reveal these qualities, God became a man, like us. All of history, from beginning to end, is focused on this man, Jesus Christ.

Following are four primary ways the Bible helps us know God more fully by helping us understand and know Jesus Christ in all his love.

2. JESUS AS THE LAMB

The sacrifice made to fully know God in love

Most people are not impressed with a lamb (baby sheep) other than how cute it might be. So on the surface, it is not immediately clear why the all-powerful God of the universe would want to be seen and known as a lamb. But the more we investigate the meaning of this symbolism in the Bible, the more we understand about God's heart and character.

God used the symbolism of a lamb to broaden our understanding of himself. The Bible often associates the lamb as a creature to be slaughtered for a sacrifice. This is depicted all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. It can seem odd to a casual observer, but after study, many people throughout history have bowed themselves in humility and appreciation before the One who has depicted himself as The Lamb of God. Through identifying *himself* as a sacrificed lamb, God's character of humility, love, and justice were demonstrated in ways that could not have been understood through nature.

The lamb symbolism began immediately after the first man and woman rejected the instruction given by their Creator and became aware and ashamed of their nakedness. Genesis 3:21 says that the Lord God made clothing of skin to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve that had been exposed in a new way after their sin. This meant that an animal had to be slaughtered to provide the skin covering necessary after their disobedience.

After that, animal sacrifices became a form of worship before God, as described by an incident that took place with two of the children of Adam and Eve. (Genesis 4:2-7)

Another unusual event depicting a sheep for sacrifice is recorded in Genesis 22. God asked Abraham to do an unusual thing by asking him to walk three days to a certain location (Moriah) to sacrifice his only son. (Genesis 22:2) At the last minute God provided a sheep for Abraham so Isaac would not have to die. (Genesis 22:1-19) This became a symbol of Jesus Christ, the **Lamb of God**, who would later be provided as the substitutionary sacrifice so that people who choose to accept this sacrifice provided by God will not have to face eternal death. This event becomes even more meaningful when the reader of the Bible learns that this same location, Moriah, was where Jesus Christ, God's only Son, was sacrificed more than two thousand years after Abraham (2 Chronicles 3:1 – Moriah is a group of hills, not just one peak.)

As the years passed, God continued to provide more symbolism and explanation that would lead toward the actual sacrifice of the perfect God/Man. It then became clear how the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ was not only an expression of God's love and mercy but also the only hope for any person to be restored to life with their Creator. Following are some of the highlights given in the Bible that have helped people understand the importance of what our Creator has done, as symbolized by a lamb.

- Moses was used by God to free the people of Israel from slavery and go to the land God had promised to them. The final plague God performed to bring freedom was the death of the oldest son in every family. At that time, God explained that if each family sacrificed a lamb and painted the blood on the door frame, the angel of death would pass over that home. This was when God instructed Moses to institute the annual Passover celebration, in memory of the **lamb's blood that was required** for the angel of death to pass over. (Exodus 11:1 – 12:17, and 12:29-33)
- The Tabernacle was designed by God as a place to meet with him and worship him (Exodus 25:8-9, 33:7-11). **Lambs** and sheep were used as sacrifices at the tabernacle, symbolizing the cost of sin, which is ultimately death. (Numbers 28-29, Exodus 25:8-9, 29:38-46, Hebrews 9:1-28)

- God revealed some unusual things to Isaiah about a future servant ruler who would suffer in the future. (Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12) This special servant would be pierced for the sin of people and crushed for their iniquities, and by his wounds people would be healed (53:5). Several times God said that this special servant would bear the sin of people (53:6, 11, 12). God even revealed to Isaiah that this special servant would be **“led like a lamb to the slaughter.”** (Isaiah 53:7)
- John the Baptist lived at the same time as Jesus, but began his ministry before Jesus. He told the people that the **Lamb of God** would come, referring to Jesus. (John 1:29-31)
- Jesus Christ, while he lived here as a physical man, claimed to be God. (John 10:22-33) He said his purpose was to pay for sin. (Mark 10:45) At the last Passover, Jesus said the **cup represented his blood (as the Lamb of God)** instead of representing the blood of a sheep, which was a new explanation. Previously the cup at the Passover had represented a lamb’s blood. (Luke 22:20)
- Jesus Christ was crucified at the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed! (Luke 23:20-56) His followers later referred to him as **the Passover lamb** sacrificed for us. (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- After Jesus Christ’s resurrection, he was referred to as **the resurrected Lamb**. (Luke 24:1-12, 36-53, Revelation 5:6)
- The wedding of **the Lamb** will take place after the return of Jesus Christ as King. (Revelation 19:6-21) As described in this chapter, all those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior will be united with him forever.
- God will create a new heaven and earth where God and the Lamb will rule. (Revelation 21:1- 22:6) Jesus is called **the Lamb** 31 times in the book of Revelation.

The reality of Jesus Christ being a sacrificed lamb is important to every person on earth. There is no other way that anyone can be freed from the consequences of their sin. But everyone who accepts Jesus as their substitutionary sacrifice for the penalty of their own sin is declared righteous in God’s sight, and is set free from death and Satan, our greatest enemies! This is explained in 1 Peter 1:17-21 and many other places. Through Jesus Christ, God’s love, wisdom, and glory was shown by doing for people what they could not do for themselves. No person could provide a payment for sin that would be sufficient to pay the death penalty required. (Romans 6:23) Only the one perfect human could do this, and that was the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

3. ISRAEL

A nation God used for everyone to fully know God in love

God’s promises about what he would do for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (name later changed to Israel) were foundational for him showing that he is in control of all events in the world. Fulfillment of these unusual promises has shown God’s greatness to the world! Even today God is in the process of fulfilling these promises for the people of Israel, who

are the descendants of Abraham. Even though many of them do not believe in him, God continues to demonstrate his sovereign power and faithfulness.

God's plans to make himself known are all interconnected. His plan to make himself known through Jesus as the Lamb was partially fulfilled through the descendants of Israel. At the same time, God's plan to make himself known through Jesus as the Servant-Ruler was also partially fulfilled through the descendants of Israel.

God's plan to make himself known through the descendants of Israel began with Abraham in Genesis 12. God gave him three promises that laid the foundation for his plan to make himself known to all and to bless all people in the world. The fulfillment of these promises demonstrates his greatness in a variety of ways. Following are the three promises:

1. "I will make you into a great nation." (Genesis 12:2)
2. "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)
3. "All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." (Gen. 13:14-17)

These promises are repeated for a total of **five** times, just in the book of Genesis!

- God repeated his promises to Abraham three more times (Genesis 17:3-8, 18:18-19, 22:1, 6-18).
- God later repeated these promises to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:14). He promised both of them that their descendants would always live in the land.

In other places, God warned that if they or their descendants disobeyed, they would be removed from the land (as explained on the following pages).

God's plan to use the people of Israel

God's plan to make himself known through the Jews does not mean the Jews are more favored by him. God has made it clear that he cares about and loves all people in the world. That includes you! God's plan to use Israel to accomplish salvation for the whole world is similar to the story about a father's plan when his family was stranded in a lifeboat on the ocean. After floating for a day, he saw they were floating past an island. He found a rope in the boat and asked his oldest son to tie the rope around his waist and swim as hard as he could toward the island to pull the boat toward the piece of land. Did that mean the father favored his son more than his wife, daughter, and baby, who were also in the boat? Not at all! He chose this son to swim because that was the best plan to rescue the whole family! Likewise, God has chosen to use one nation in his plan for rescuing the whole world, and in the process, God has demonstrated his awesome abilities to all by working throughout history to accomplish this plan.

The first promise to Abraham

The fulfillment of God's first promise, "I will make you into a great nation," is difficult to measure. During the reign of David and Solomon around 1,000 BC, Israel became a powerful nation, but that was the high point of their world influence. Today, Israel is an influential country, but it's difficult to define the meaning of "great".

The second promise to Abraham

The fulfillment of the promise, “I will bless all peoples on earth through you” has been primarily fulfilled by God revealing himself to the world in several ways:

- God has given his written word, the Bible, through the people of Israel, both the Old and New Testaments.
- God gave a model for worship to all people through the people of Israel. This was the tabernacle.
- God revealed himself as a human, Jesus Christ, by being born into the family line of Israel, and then he gave himself as a sacrifice for all of humanity.

God becoming a human like us is a climax in human history, and that climax prepares the way for the greatest climax when people will be restored to a close relationship with God, as described at the end of the Bible in Revelation. God prepared the way for these climaxes by communicating ahead of time what would happen. He did this through the prophets of Israel. Following are some examples:

- At the beginning of the Bible, God helped Jacob (Abraham’s grandson) understand that the future ruler of the nations would be a descendant of Judah, one of Jacob’s twelve sons (Genesis 49:10). More than 2,000 years later, Luke wrote in the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:33), that Jesus was a descendant of Judah.
- God told David, through the prophet Nathan, about 1,500 years before Jesus Christ, in 2 Samuel 7:8 and 16, that one of David’s descendants would be the eternal ruler of Israel. Jesus Christ is the one who fulfills and will fulfill this.
- Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, God told Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14) that God would provide a child born to a virgin woman who would be a descendant of Israel. He would be God in the form of a man, who would become a Savior from their sins. Later, the historians, Luke and Matthew record how God did this. (Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-21)
- God also told Isaiah about the special baby who would be born in the future to the people of Israel. This baby would have attributes of being God, as he wrote in Isaiah 9:6-7. Then, later in the Bible we read how this prediction was fulfilled. The accounts of the close followers of Jesus Christ tell us that Jesus made the claim to be God come as a man, and that he backed up this claim with many kinds of miracles, including his resurrection from the dead. (John 10:29-33, John 8:58-59, Matthew 26:63-65, Colossians 1:13-20, Hebrews 1:1-12)
- The prophet Micah wrote about the same time as Isaiah. God told Micah that the future ruler of Israel, whose origin is from ancient times, would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. (Micah 5:2) In the New Testament of the Bible we read how God worked this out.

The third promise to Abraham

The fulfillment of the promise, “I will give the land of Canaan to you and your descendants forever” can be measured by whether or not the descendants of Israel have continued to come back to their land. This fulfillment of the promise has had so much opposition throughout the events of history that the fact that Israel exists today in the land of Canaan is miraculous.

What makes the original promise to Abraham even more amazing is that God removed most of the people of Israel from the land three different times in history, as he predicted would happen if they were disobedient. (Leviticus 26:33-38 and Deuteronomy 28:49-68) Then he has repeatedly brought them back to the same land throughout history.

Following is a brief summary of how this happened.

1. IN THE LAND – Jacob (Israel) and his family were in the promised land.
2. LEFT THE LAND – Jacob (Israel) and his family all left to live in Egypt at the time of Joseph.
3. RETURNED TO THE LAND – Moses and Joshua led the people of Israel back to the promised land.
4. REMOVED FROM THE LAND – Most of the people of Israel were killed or removed from the land by the Assyrians and Babylonians, around 700-600 B.C.
5. RETURNED TO THE LAND – Many of the people of Israel were brought back to the land and Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, around 500-400 B.C.
6. REMOVED FROM THE LAND – The Romans killed and removed most of the people of Israel from the land, around 70 A.D.
7. RETURNED TO THE LAND – After the holocaust of World War 2, many nations opened the door for the people of Israel to return to Palestine, which they did. After that, Israel's survival was not expected when all the surrounding Arab nations united in war to destroy them in 1948, 1967, and some in 1973. But Israel survived these onslaughts.

Nothing like this has ever happened to any other country or group of people in the world. Hundreds of years later, after his promise to Abraham, God even said he would do this to show the world who he is, as he told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 28:25-26 and Ezekiel 36:22-28. Israel has continued to come back to the land not because they are God's favorite nation but rather for the whole world to see and know that God is Lord over all!

Now, because of the promise to Abraham in Genesis and the existence of Israel in Canaan, two things are made clear. These are:

- There is an Author of the Bible (God) who has a much higher intelligence than the human authors and is able to know the future events of the world thousands of years before they happen.
- God is in control of the events in the world throughout history.

An important explanation about predictions in the Bible

When God made predictions through the prophets of Israel, broad statements were sometimes made that covered all future history. The fulfillment of these predictions often did not happen all at once, but at different times. Also, some have been partially fulfilled and will be completely fulfilled in the future.

- This happened with predictions about Jesus. His birth, death, payment for sin, and reigning over all nations are often intermixed in the predictions. For example, when

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, people recognized him as the rightful ruler, but then a week later he was crucified. His future reign as king is still to come.

- Predictions about Israel include God's blessing, God's discipline, removal from the land, and restoration to the land. Some of the predictions about Israel turning back to God and being at peace with all nations still need to be fulfilled in the future.

Over thousands of years, God has worked through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) to make himself known to people all over the world.

4. JESUS AS THE SERVANT-RULER

The king we need for fully knowing God in love

Jesus Christ "is the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15) We see more of God's heart and character through Jesus as the Servant-Ruler, described well by the apostle Paul when he wrote in his letter to the Philippians:

"... Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
(Philippians 2:5-11)

This plan for Jesus to be the Servant-Ruler goes back to the beginning, when God first made people. His plan was for them to rule over his creation as stated in Gen 1:26-28. God's plan was for people to care for his creation while they would remain in fellowship (friendship) with him. But this friendship was broken when Adam and Eve disobeyed his instruction. God continued communication with people and implemented a plan to restore people back to his original plan of ruling with him.

Part of this plan of restoration was that God himself would become a ruler with them. He would first of all become the sacrifice necessary to take the judicial penalty they deserved for their sin, and then he would become the model ruler, having the heart of a servant. We read about this plan that God predicted through his prophets before Jesus came as a man.

- Genesis 49:10, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the **ruler's** staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his." The implication was that one of Judah's descendants would rule the nations.
- 2 Samuel 7:8, 16, "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be **ruler** over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone ... Your house and your

kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” The implication was that one of David’s descendants would rule forever.

- About 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah said, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come from me one who will be **ruler** over Israel, whose origins area from of old, from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2) The implication was that a future ruler would be born in Bethlehem who would have spiritual existence with God before becoming a ruler of Israel.
- The prophet Isaiah was a contemporary of Micah, and he predicted that a descendant of Jesse (father of king David) would become a righteous ruler who would judge the nations and bring the descendants of Israel back to their homeland. (Isaiah 11:1-16) In the same chapter Isaiah also predicted that when this ruler is be in control, all animals will get along and not kill each other. Obviously all this has not happened yet, but these predictions affected how the people of Israel looked forward to a certain kind of ruler.
- God later told Jeremiah, about 600 years before Jesus was born, “The days are coming when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD, our Righteousness.” (Jeremiah 23:5-6) This statement clarified that one of David’s descendants would become a king, and he would also be God.
- About 500 years before Jesus Christ, Zechariah said that the future king of Israel, as the one who would provide salvation for Israel, would come to Jerusalem on a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9) One of the close followers of Jesus, Matthew, described how Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11), and the people praised him as a coming king and called him the “son of David”, which gave him the right to become king of Israel, according to his lineage. The people at the time of Jesus Christ were expecting him to become King of Israel and to lead them in overthrowing the Roman rule, especially after all the miracles he had performed and the supernatural abilities he had shown. They were correct, that becoming king was part of the prediction about Jesus Christ, but the people did not understand the order of events in God’s plan. And even more importantly, they did not understand their need to be rescued from the slavery and penalty of their own sin, which was more of a priority than a new government being set up.

When Jesus began his public ministry about 2,000 years ago, people quickly saw he was a unique leader. He looked like any ordinary person, except that he was poorer than most, had little education, and no home. But he was very helpful to people, and he had the ability to do miracles like no one before, and he could stand up to all religious and political leaders. Many thought he was the predicted leader for Israel who would also judge the nations.

Yet Jesus’ style of leadership was very different than most leaders. Even his close followers had difficulty adjusting to Jesus’ style of leadership. Therefore, he frequently addressed the common misconception of what a ruler is. On at least three different occasions he explained to his close disciples that a ruler is to primarily be a servant. (Matthew 20:25-28, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:24-27) Jesus taught this, and he also modeled it. He summarized in Mark 10:45, “For

even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The extent to which Jesus went to serve was far beyond what his followers had ever seen. A strong example happened when they celebrated the Passover meal together. No servant was available for the customary washing of feet before the meal so Jesus took off his coat, got some water, and washed everyone’s feet, including those of Judas, the one whom he knew had just recently betrayed him to the religious leaders! (John 13)

But three years after Jesus began his public service, all hopes of him becoming the Messianic ruler for Israel were dashed. He was falsely accused and then killed as one of the worst kinds of criminals.

The followers of Jesus had forgotten that he had predicted his death and also his resurrection after three days. After the trauma of losing their leader, they were overjoyed when he began to physically appear to them in a variety of different situations. Their hopes were revived that this might be the time he would set up his rule over Israel and the nations.

During one of these appearances, Jesus made an extravagant statement to a group of them, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus had all authority, meaning that he was the highest ruler of all. Yet the one who had all authority in the universe had given them a different kind of instruction than they expected! He was instructing them to serve others just as he had served them.

Soon after that he went up into the clouds. Angels appeared and reminded the disciples that Jesus had told them he would return again (Acts 1:10-11), but it took a while for them to understand what was really happening. After days of prayer and discussion, the Holy Spirit came to live in them and their mission became clear. (Acts 1:12-2:4) They were now the representatives of their unseen servant-ruler to a world that desperately needs Jesus Christ!

John, one of the close followers of Jesus, was later exiled to the island of Patmos, and in the book of Revelation he wrote what God’s Spirit had shown him about Jesus Christ in the future. John wrote that God’s plan will be fulfilled—that of Jesus being the supreme servant-ruler with his created people, ruling his creation in fellowship with him, as had been described at the beginning of Genesis. He wrote, “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ... And they will reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 22:3, 5) At that time his people will have his heart of being a servant-ruler, which will be the basis of a kingdom characterized by love, peace, and joy in the life of every person.

5. THE CHURCH

The bride beginning to fully know God in love

On the surface, the Christian church does not look very impressive. In fact, one of the common reasons people give for not thinking about Jesus seriously is all the hypocrisy and problems they see in the lives of people who call themselves Christians. But those who study the Bible, learning how God likes to work, know that God specializes in taking things that are problematic and producing something beautiful beyond our comprehension. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Definition of the spiritual group – the church

In broad terms, the beginnings of God's spiritual family originated early in history, recorded in Genesis. With this understanding of spiritual reality, the universal church (God's family) began thousands of years before Jesus Christ lived on earth as a man. We know this because the Bible explains that the church is made of all people who have put their trust in God's promises so they can have life with God. In Romans 4, Paul explains that everyone who puts their belief in God's promises is a child of God. Abraham is given as the primary example of someone who did this. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:3) The Bible says that all people for all time who have put their belief in God's promises are part of his eternal family. (Galatians 3:6-9, Hebrews 11:1-2, Ephesians 1:3-14)

The church includes all people who have believed in God's promises made about coming Messiah or the promises Jesus Christ made about himself. This includes all believers from the beginning of time, and in all parts of the world. Gatherings of these people take place in many forms and in many locations throughout the world.

Origin of the church

Today we generally use the word "church" in a more narrow sense, meaning those who have trusted in Jesus Christ after he was here on earth. When Jesus lived here, he gathered people who put their faith in him and wanted to follow him. This was actually the first organized church as we use the term today. After Jesus died and rose back to life, he commissioned his followers to help others do all that he had trained them to do. The book of Acts records this beginning. It also highlights some of what Jesus' original followers did to establish the church in Jerusalem and then start churches in many other towns, cities, and places throughout the world.

When we put our trust in Jesus Christ, God adds us to his church. The more we learn to practice the same principles of believing, trusting, and obeying Jesus as the first disciples did, the more we benefit from being part of his church, which is his eternal family.

Part of the process of establishing the early church after Jesus physically left was to understand who is in God's family. The Jews had previously thought that people needed to become Jews to become part of God's family. But the Holy Spirit helped the original disciples of Jesus understand that the door was open for every person in the world to become part of God's eternal family if they wanted to. All they needed to do was put their faith in Jesus Christ as their

Savior and Lord. He had given his life as the sacrifice for the penalty of their sin and then defeated death by his resurrection. (Romans 10:9-17)

The Spirit of God had not lived permanently in people before, but Jesus explained that after he died and came back to life, the Holy Spirit would come to live in believers. (John 14:16-17) This first happened in a room when the first disciples were praying together. At that time, the reality of the Spirit's coming into them was miraculously demonstrated by them being given the ability to speak languages they had never learned. (Acts 2:1-4) When people visiting Jerusalem from other countries heard them speaking in their languages, they knew something miraculous had happened. (Acts 2:5-13) The result was that hundreds of others from many parts of the world became believers in Jesus Christ, and the Bible says that God added these new believers to his church. (Acts 2:14-47)

It was then a step-by-step process to help the Jews understand that all people could become part of God's eternal family. At first, it was only Jews who received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2) After that, the half-Jew, half-Gentile people of Samaria believed in Jesus and had the same evidence of the Holy Spirit coming to live in them. (Acts 8) Soon after that, God led Peter to talk with a group of Gentiles (completely non-Jewish) who believed in Jesus, and they also began speaking in languages they had not learned, as did the original disciples (Acts 10). This convinced the Jewish Christians that all people in the entire world could now put their faith in Jesus and the Holy Spirit would come to live in them. This gave strong historical evidence that the Holy Spirit would come to live in all people at the moment of their belief in Jesus. (Ephesians 1:13)

Growth of the church

After Jesus died and rose back to life, he commissioned his followers to help others do everything he had trained them to do. The followers of Christ quickly began to go to many towns and cities throughout the world, telling people about God's amazing salvation provided by Jesus Christ and also explaining the opportunity to live each day in fellowship with their unseen Lord. After that dramatic beginning, millions of people throughout the world have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Stories and examples of how God has worked to bring people into his family vary as much as people vary in their physical looks! Each testimony is special and very personal. God, in his unlimited ability, is able to give personalized attention and care to each person from the beginning to the end of their life on earth. Each believer can enjoy the confidence of an eternal relationship with God, even though they still struggle with problems and sin. Each one is in a process of being changed by God's Spirit. (Romans 8:28-30)

We must be careful not to make judgements about the status of another person's relationship with God. Since we cannot see God's Spirit in another person's heart, it is impossible for us to know who is actually a true Christian and who is not. You can be completely sure of your own salvation based on God's promises to you, but we need to be careful about saying with certainty that we know another person's status before God. True Christians give testimony of their trust in Jesus Christ and increasingly show the qualities of love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, etc. (Galatians 5:22-23) But this happens in varying degrees, and only God can know for sure which people have his Spirit living in them. God alone knows the people who make up the true church because only God knows the heart.

Purposes of God's church

The purposes of God's church are essentially the same as the purposes of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church. God makes himself known through the church as his representative body.

Some of God's purposes for the church are stated in the following passages:

- "It was he (Jesus Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13)
- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20) This means that God is using his church to communicate his message of salvation to all people in the world!
- "His (God's) intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10-11)
- "... you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

Even though Christians are weak people, each one is a member of Christ's spiritual body, similar to the many different members of our physical bodies. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31) We all need each other and have different roles under Christ's leadership. We are each a messenger of God and a representative of God in this world. (2 Corinthians 5:16-20) Besides helping people understand God's truth and his message of salvation, God's children serve others in unlimited ways, in this way making God's character of kindness and care known to the world.

Many of the services and institutions making a difference in the world today were originated by followers of Jesus Christ. Organizations such as the Red Cross were founded by followers of Christ. The first printing press was invented by people who wanted to reproduce many copies of the Bible. The concept of public education was originated by Christians to provide education to everyone. The concept of a university was originated by Christians, as were also the first hospitals. Many inventions originated as answers to prayer. (Examples taken from "What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?" by D. James Kennedy)

No one knows how much has happened in this world as a result of God answering the prayers of his people. The importance of praying and asking God to work in the lives of others and to

intervene in the events of the world cannot be overestimated. (Ephesians 6:18-20) Only God knows how much happens in the world as a result of the works and prayers of his people.

Book 3, “Basics of God’s Plan for Relationships” gives more details of what the Bible says about the design, purpose, and function of the church.

Future of God’s church

During the last supper that Jesus spent with his disciples, he knew that difficult times were ahead, and he also knew that he had big plans to always live with these special people he loved. He told them, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:1-3)

At that time, he was the groom talking to the bride before the wedding. Then, at the end of the Bible we read about the wedding. In Revelation we read that all people who have been made pure and clean by the blood of the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) will be his bride to live with him forever.

- Revelation 19:6-9 – The wedding of the Lamb with his bride, made up of the saints made pure by the Lamb, Jesus Christ.
- Revelation 21:9-10 – The bride of the Lamb will be a holy city.
- Revelation 21:27 – The holy city will be filled with those who have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life.
- Revelation 22:3-5 – “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

According to the Bible, this large group of saints made clean by the blood of the Lamb will include all believers from all time; from the believers in Genesis until the final believers who will meet Jesus Christ when he returns to earth in person as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (Revelation 19:11-16) We will be united with Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Moses, Ruth, David, Esther, Daniel, Mary, Martha, Thomas, John, Aquila and Priscilla, along with millions more from all centuries in all history. What a massive celebration that will be, and it will only be the beginning of eternity with our amazing God and Savior!

The following thoughts are given to summarize God’s purposes and plans:

God's Purpose and Plans

All of God's work throughout history helps accomplish his purpose. Highlights of his purpose and plan can be summarized in the following way:

God's plan for people is to fully know him in love

He does this through:

1. CREATION – the context for people to fully know God in love
2. JESUS AS THE LAMB – the sacrifice made to fully know God in love
3. ISRAEL – a nation God used for everyone to fully know God in love
4. JESUS AS THE SERVANT-RULER – the king we need for fully knowing God in love
5. THE CHURCH – the bride beginning to fully know God in love

All of these plans, woven together, show God's awesomeness beyond our full comprehension. They are like different facets cut on a diamond to bring out its full beauty. These plans not only reveal God's abilities, but also his heart and character. What we have seen this far is amazing, and there is still more in the future, especially when Jesus returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The book of Revelation records the final fulfillment of all these predictions, and at that time God's awesomeness will be even more amazing!

