

The Big Picture

Daily Reading and Small Group Questions

After each daily reading, reflect on the following questions:

- 1) What does this passage tell me about God (who He is, His grace etc.)?
- 2) What does this passage say about me and my relationship with God?
- 3) What does this passage tell me about how I am to live with God, myself, others and His creation?

The small group questions can be found at the end of each weeks' worth of reading selections.

Texts in the Old Testament

While the whole of scripture is the inspired Word of God we find different types of literature in the Old Testament and it is helpful to know what they are when reading. The following is just a simple break-down of what you will find.

The Torah (Instruction and Teaching):

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Historical books:

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Poetry & Wisdom Literature:

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Prophets:

Major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
Minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Chronological order?

It is important to note that the books of the Old Testament (like the New Testament) are not necessarily written in chronological order. While we have approximate dates for many of the books as well as an understanding of who wrote them and to whom they were most likely written dating scripture is not as easy as looking at the copyright information at the beginning of the scroll.

Below is a brief outline of when different books would have been written in the history of the nation of Israel.

Old Testament History

Creation

(Genesis 1-2)

The Fall

(Genesis 3)

Noah and the Flood

(Genesis 6-9)

The Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)

(Genesis 12-50)

Slavery in Egypt/The Exodus/Wilderness Wanderings

(Exodus/Leviticus/Numbers/Deuteronomy)

Entering the Promise Land

(Joshua)

God Sends the Judges

(Judges 1-16)

Israel Move to the Monarchy (Saul and David)

(1 & 2 Samuel; 1st Chronicles 10 – 2nd Chronicles 9)

King Solomon and the Temple

(1 Kings 1-11)

The Kingdom Divides – North = Israel; South = Judah

(1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 16)

Assyria Takes over the Northern Kingdom

(2 Kings 17)

Babylon Occupied the Southern Kingdom

(2 Kings; 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:21)

The Temple is Destroyed and the Southern Kingdom Exiled

(2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:17-21)

Return from Exile and Rebuilding the Temple

(Ezra, Nehemiah)

Introducing Genesis:

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF GENESIS

- I. 1:1–11:26 History of Mankind
 - 1:1–2:3 Creation of the World
 - A. 2:4–4:26 History of Heaven and Earth
 - B. 5:1–6:8 History of Adam
 - C. 6:9–9:29 History of Noah
 - 1. 6:9–8:19 Noah and the Flood
 - 2. 8:20–9:29 Noah After the Flood
 - D. 10:1–11:9 History of Noah's Sons: Shem, Ham, Japheth
 - E. 11:10–26 History of Shem
 - II. 11:27–50:26 Patriarchal History
 - A. 11:27–25:11 History of Abraham
 - 1. 11:27–20:18 Before Isaac's Birth
 - 2. 21:1–25:11 After Isaac's Birth
 - B. 25:12–18 History of Ishmael
 - C. 25:19–35:29 History of Isaac
 - 1. 25:19–27:40 Before Jacob's Flight from Esau
 - 2. 27:41–33:20 Jacob's with Laban and Return to Canaan
 - 3. 34:1–35:29 Jacob's Later Family History
 - D. 36:1–43 History of Esau
 - E. 37:1–50:26 History of Jacob
 - 1. 37:1–40:23 Before and During Joseph's Dishonor in Egypt
 - 2. 41:1–47:31 After Joseph's Exaltation
 - 3. 48:1–50:26 The Blessing of Jacob's Sons and His Death

The Big Picture – Creation...

Week of September 9th

Monday – Genesis 1

Tuesday – Genesis 2

Wednesday – Psalm 8, 24

Thursday – John 1, 1 John 1

Friday – Colossians 1, Ps 139

Saturday – Genesis 1, 2

God knows what we're made for...

Discussion:

It can be *very* easy to get caught up in the “how’s” of creation. What does the creation narrative (**Genesis 1 & 2**) tell us about *why* God created the heavens, earth and all of us?

For what have we been made?

Who was with God in the beginning (**Genesis 1:2, John 1:1-5**)?

Read **Matthew 5:1-12**. All of creation belongs to God and it will be inherited by those who are meek (**Matt. 5:5**). Sometimes **Genesis 1:28** can be read in such a way as to lead us to believe that we are in control of creation rather than it's steward. How does **Matthew 5:5** help us understand how our relationship with God directs our relationship with His creation?

Why does God say creation is good? Do we consider it to be good still today?

What from the creation narrative gives you hope? What inspires you about God's purpose and reason for creating the world and all of it's inhabitants?

How do you see harmony with God, with ourselves, and with others being played out in the creation narrative?

The Big Picture – The Fall...

Week of September 16th

Monday – Genesis 3

Tuesday – Genesis 6

Wednesday – Psalm 51

Thursday – Romans 5

Friday – Ps32, Rom. 7:15-25

Sat. – Gen. 11:1-9, 27-32

God knows what we are made for but it's broken by sin...

Discussion:

We continually refer to Genesis 3 as “The Fall” (into sin). Why is “falling” such an apt characterization of the events of chapter three?

Read **Genesis 3:1-15**. Did Adam and Eve trust that God wanted what was best for them? How do God's actions after they eat the forbidden fruit demonstrate that He does (**Genesis 3:8-9, 15, 22-24**)?

When verse 15 speaks of the enmity between the serpent and the woman (and their offspring) God is pointing to Jesus who, as Eve's offspring (**Luke 3:23-38**) will ultimately defeat Satan (**Romans 8:1-**) but not without being bruised himself (his death on the cross). How far has it sunk in to your heart, mind and soul that the Son of God died for you?

After the Fall the relationship between God and humanity was strained (to put it lightly). What lasting relationship disharmony do we continue to struggle with God, ourselves and others today?

As a result of the Fall we are born into sin (**Psalm 51:5**). How do **Psalm 51** and **32** to the nature of our repentant relationship with God?

The Big Picture – Abraham...

Week of September 23rd

Monday – Genesis 12

Tuesday – Genesis 15, 17

Wednesday – Romans 4

Thursday – Psalm 105

Friday – Acts 1

Saturday – Acts 13

Blessed to be a blessing...God trusts us to do His work...

Discussion:

What is something someone depends upon you to do (daily, weekly etc.)?

Read **Genesis 12:1-3**. How does God's promise to Abraham show that He is a

missionary God?

Read **Genesis 12:1-9**. Trusting in God's promise Abram follow God away from all he ever knew and almost immediately begins to make poor choices. If it wasn't because Abram was perfect why would God have chosen Abram and His descendants to work through?

Despite Abraham's failings (and our own) God still blesses us to be a blessing. What does this show about God's generous nature and desire to restore us to himself?

Read **Romans 4:13-25**. Though Abraham often tried to "help" God fulfill his promise he never doubted it would happen. How does Abraham's faith translate into your life today? Where are you being called to trust in the midst of seeming doubt and despair?

There are many stories of individuals who sacrifice their own welfare, safety, resources and comfortable way of life in order to help others (often people they don't even know). What makes these stories inspirational? How have you experienced faith growth in your own life when you hear others stories?

The Big Picture – Isaac, Jacob and Joseph...

Week of September 30th

Monday – Genesis 27

Tuesday – Acts 7

Wednesday – Judges 16

Thursday – Genesis 37

Friday – Genesis 50

Saturday – Exodus 2

God accomplishes his mission despite human shenanigans...

Between Genesis 17 & Genesis 27

Abraham and Sarah have a son, Isaac (chapter 21); God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, who is spared (22); Sarah dies and Isaac marries his wife Rebekah (23-24); Abraham dies

and Rebekah has two sons, Jacob and Esau (25); Jacob, the second born, takes his brother's birthright (27).

Have you ever used the excuse that you are "not perfect" as justification for why someone shouldn't see you as an example of faith? What do you think God would say if you used that excuse with him?

Read **Acts 7:8b-16**. Stephen's succinct retelling of the story of the Patriarch's of the faith provides us with a brief synopsis of the Genesis narrative. How do you feel knowing that God will use you even though you are imperfect?

Read **Genesis 50:15-21**. Despite Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery God uses Joseph to save them. What does God's work through Joseph's situation with his brothers tell us about God's character? Has God shown His glory through difficult circumstance you've been through?

Read **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**. How does God receive the glory when He accomplishes His will and works through us in our sinfulness?

The Book of Exodus

OUTLINE OF EXODUS

God's Covenant with the Chosen People

- I. 1:1–18:27 Birth of the Chosen Nation
 - A. 1:1–22 The People Enslaved in Egypt
 - B. 2:1–15:21 The People Liberated
 - C. 15:22–18:27 The Liberated People Brought to Mount Sinai
- II. 19:1–40:38 The Sinai Covenant
 - A. 19:1–24:18 The Terms of the Covenant
 - B. 25:1–31:18 Directives for the Maintenance of Communion with God
 - C. 32:1–34:35 The Covenant Broken and Renewed
 - D. 35:1–39:43 Directives for the Maintenance of Covenant Communion Carried Out
 - E. 40:1–38 Dedicated Tent of Meeting Filled with the Glory of God

The Big Picture – The Exodus...

Week of October 7th

Monday – Exodus 3

Tuesday – Exodus 12

Wednesday – Exodus 15

Thursday – Romans 8

Friday – Acts 7

Saturday – Matthew 2

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt...

Discussion

How would you respond to the statement “You never know God is all you need until God is all you have”?

How would you describe the environment the Israelites were living in as slaves in Egypt (**Exodus 1:8-11**)?

As a baby Moses' life is spared (**Exodus 2:1-4**) and he is brought up in Pharaoh's home before fleeing to Midian after killing an Egyptian who was beating one of his people (**2:11-15**). God calls Moses to return to Egypt to free His people (**Ch. 3**), a task for which Moses does not feel prepared. How does the Lord promise to be with him? How does he respond to Moses' concerns of inadequacy (**4:10-16**)?

Throughout the Old Testament God reminds the Israelites of his faithfulness in bringing them out of slavery in Egypt. Why do we need to be continually reminded of what God has done for us?

In the Old Testament God delivered His people from physical slavery. From what kind of slavery has Christ saved us?

In **Acts 7:17-36** Stephen retells the story of the history of the Israelites. God chose Moses, who the people had in fact rejected, to be the one to lead his people (**7:35-36**). What does this tell us about why God invests in each and every one of us?

The Big Picture – Covenants...

Week of October 14th
Monday – Genesis 9:1-17
Tuesday – Genesis 15
Wednesday – Exodus 19-20
Thursday – 2 Samuel 7
Friday – Jeremiah 31:31-40
Saturday – Hebrews 8

Christ and the New Covenant...

Discussion

What is a covenant? How is a covenant different than a contract?

Covenants in the Old and New Testaments

Noah	Abraham	Moses	David	Christ
Genesis 9:1-17	Genesis 12:1-9; 15	Exodus 19 & 20	2 Samuel 7:1-17	Jeremiah 31:31-345 Matthew 26:26-29

Why does knowing which covenant we are living under matter?

Read **Galatians 4:21-5:1**. How did God's covenant with Moses prepare people for His covenant with us through Christ?

How do the other covenants point to Christ?

Noah:

Abraham:

David:

The Book of Joshua

Joshua is a story of conquest and fulfillment for the people of God. After many years of slavery in Egypt and 40 years in the desert, the Israelites were finally allowed to enter the land promised to their fathers. Abraham, always a migrant, never possessed the country to which he was sent, but he left to his children the legacy of God's covenant that made them the eventual heirs of all of Canaan (see Ge 15:13, 16, 18; 17:8). Where Deuteronomy ends, the book of Joshua begins: The tribes of Israel are still camped on the east side of the Jordan River. The narrative opens with God's command to move forward and pass through the river on dry land. Then it relates the series of victories in central, southern and northern Canaan that gave the Israelites control of all the hill country and the Negev. It continues with a description of the tribal allotments and ends with Joshua's final addresses to the people. The theme of the book, therefore, is the establishment of Israel in the promised land.¹

The Book of Judges

The book of Judges depicts God's grace by showing that it was through the mercy of God that Israel was not absorbed by the pagan nations around her. Individual judges, as spiritual and political deliverers, portray the role of Jesus as the Savior-King of his people. The recurring cycle during the period of the judges is: disobedience and apostasy of Israel, foreign oppression (as a means of chastening Israel), cries of distress, gracious divine deliverance. Judges contrasts most glaringly the unfaithfulness of Israel with the faithfulness and mercy of God.²

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

- I. 1:1–3:6 Prolog: Why God Raised Up Judges
- II. 3:7–16:31 Core Content: What the Judges Did to Deliver Israel
- III. 17:1–21:25 Appendix: How Deeply Israel Had Fallen

¹ Hoerber, R. G. (1997). *Concordia self-study Bible* (electronic ed.) (Jos). St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House.

² Ibid.

The Big Picture – Judges...

Week of October 21st

Monday – Joshua 23
Tuesday – Joshua 24
Wednesday – Judges 4-5
Thursday – Judges 6
Friday – Judges 7
Saturday – Judges 8

The cycle we are stuck in...

Discussion

The book of **Judges** covers at least 250 years (longer than the United States has been a country) and details the struggles the Israelites had being a holy nation that was blessed to be a blessing.

Read **Joshua 23:5-13**. If God calls us to be His witnesses why would Joshua caution the Israelites not to mix with the other nations in the promised land? What difficulties do you face being a Christian living in a multi-religious and cultural society?

Read **Joshua 24:14-25**. Joshua warns the Israelites that they must turn away from their foreign gods and serve God AND that serving Him will not be easy. Who and what is necessary for the Israelites to be able to serve God?

Read **Judges 2:11-23**. For what reason did God send the judges?

Read **Judges 4-5**. How is the cycle of brokenness and restoration seen in the book of Judges?

God sends twelve judges to lead the Israelites back to God and away from the downward spiral they were walking. Chapters **4** and **5** relate the narrative of Deborah. Read **Judges 5:2**. What happens when we take up the call God has placed on our lives?

The Judges:

Othniel – 3:7-11; Ehud – 3:12-30; Shamgar – 3:31
Deborah – Chapters 4-5; Gideon – Chapters 6-8; Tola – 10:1-2
Jair – 10:3-5; Jephthah – 10:6-12:7; Ibzan – 12:8-10
Elon - 12:8-10; Abdon – 12:13-15; Samson – Chapters 13-16

The Big Picture – Kings...

Week of November 4

Monday – 1 Samuel 8, 9
Tuesday – 1 Samuel 10
We – 1 Samuel 15, 16
Thursday – 1 Kings 2
Friday – 1 Kings 3
Saturday – 1 Kings 10, 11

Taking down the high places...

Discussion

Have you ever wanted something just because someone else had it first only to find out that it wasn't all you thought it was cracked it up to be?

Read **1 Samuel 8:1-22**. What “king” did the people reject?

Why would God have Samuel warn the people about their desire to have a king? Why did the Israelites want a king? Why do you think Samuel's warning wasn't heeded?

The kings of Israel and Judah struggled to take down the “high places” (places of pagan worship). How did their lack of doing so impact their relationship and the Israelites relationship with God?

Is there something, like the kings of the Old Testament, that you struggle most to remove from your life (an attitude, lifestyle etc.)? What is most frustrating about working on addressing this aspect of your life?

We emphasize mentoring and the need to walk with the next generation as they grow up. Read **2 Kings 23:21-32**. Though Josiah was one of the best kings of Judah his son Jehoahaz, his successor, sucked. What does this tell us about the need to invest in the next generation?

The Big Picture – Prophets...

Week of November 11

Monday – Hosea 4

Tuesday – Malachi 1, 2

Wednesday – Malachi 3, 4

Thursday – Amos 1, 2

Friday – Amos 4

Saturday – Jeremiah 29

The prophets would never settle...

Discussion:

Sometimes we just don't want to hear the truth. What problems do we create in our own lives when we try to ignore and/or run away from reality?

The prophets never settled – they were never going to tell people “it's all good”. Read **Hosea 4:1-6**. Hosea doesn't paint a very pretty picture of Israel does he? (Remind you of any place you know?). The state of Israel is clearly not as God intended it to be. Why would this be a message that the Israelites need hear?

Read **Amos 4:1-2**. How are the people Amos is challenging using their blessings to be a blessing?

Read **Jeremiah 29:10-14**. The prospect of being in exile indefinitely would have been hard to handle. How do Jeremiah's words bring a sense of hope to those in exile? What hope do we have today?

The prophet always balances the reality/truth of the situation with God's promise to be faithful when we come to Him in repentance. Do you struggle with calling others to repentance and speaking of God's grace and faithfulness to us? Do you lean more toward one or the other?

Prophets before the exile: Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Amos, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jonah, Zephaniah

Prophets during exile: Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah

Post-exilic prophets: Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi, Isaiah

Prophets to other nations: Jonah, Obadiah

The Big Picture – Exiles...

Week of November 18

Monday – Daniel 1

Tuesday – Lamentations 1

Wed. – Lamentations 2

Thursday – Lamentations 3

Friday – Daniel 3

Saturday – 1 Peter 1

We are the elect exiles...

If our government closed the doors of churches how would you live your faith and with whom?

How do you feel your values are challenged by today's culture?

Read **Jeremiah 29:4-9**. How are you helping your community improve?

Read **Daniel 3:8-30**. How did God's people remain faithful to him while in exile?

Read **1 Peter 1:1**. What do you think Peter means when he refers to the Christians as “elect exiles”? From looking at other texts written during periods of exile to those in exile as well as warnings to those going into exile what similarities do you see?

Recognizing that we belong to God, do you find it a challenge to not become too accepting of our culture today? What tensions should always be present between Christianity and culture?

The Big Picture – Restoration...

Week of November 25

Monday – Ezra 1, 2

Tuesday – Nehemiah 1

Wednesday – Nehemiah 8

Thursday – Nehemiah 9

Friday – Isaiah 40

Saturday – Rev. 21:22 - 22

A double-dip fulfillment...

What troubles you most about our culture today? How do you believe it can be restored?

Given St. Andrews strengths and the problems around us how does our

focus on mentoring address some of those issues?

Nehemiah is the cupbearer to the king of Persia. Upon learning of the state of Jerusalem he prays that God would remember his faithfulness to his people. Read **Nehemiah 1**. What does his prayer tell us about his trust in God's power to restore? What does it tell us about what he believes his role is in that restoration?

Read **Revelation 21:22 – 22**. What is our ultimate restoration as Christians?