



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



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# The CCP (Community Church Planting) Pastoral Training Course Book 1

*Reaching all the Nations for Jesus Christ*

*Bereik al die Nasies vir Jesus Christus*

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**ÔNEMISSION**  
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*One Lord. One Life. One Calling.*

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# Survey of the Old Testament



# 1

## The Pentateuch (Five books/Torah)

### Lesson Purpose

- To give an overview of the people, geographic locations, historical events, literary style and theological themes in each book of the Pentateuch.

### Lesson Outcomes

- Students will know and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**.
- *These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*
- Students will have a knowledge of key people, historical stories, theological themes, and the geographic setting for each book in the Pentateuch
- Students will be introduced to Old Testament covenants and follow God's faithful fulfillment of his covenant promises in His relationship with the family of Abraham.
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

### Table of Contents

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Questions for Discussion

The first five books of the Old Testament are grouped together as the Pentateuch—the five books of the law. They record the history of God's personal involvement with our world beginning with its creation through the establishment of God's covenantal relationship with the nation of Israel.

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Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Creation: 1& 2 Adam& Eve: Fall 3 Cain & Abel: 4 Noah: 6-9 Tower of Babel: 11	Moses Plagues/Passover	Laws	Census Wilderness Wanderings	Moses' final words- keep the covenant!
Abraham: 12-25 Isaac 21-25 Jacob/Esau 25-37 Joseph:37-50	Exodus 10 Commandments Mt. Sinai Tabernacle Priesthood			
<b>HARAN TO EGYPT</b>	<b>EGYPT TO SINAI PENNISULA</b>	<b>SINAI PENNISULA</b>	<b>SINAI PENNISULA PENNISULA TO THE PLAINS OF MOAB</b>	<b>LOOKING INTO THE PROMISED LAND</b>

**Genesis:**

The name of the first book, Genesis, means “beginning.” The first eleven chapters move the reader quickly through centuries of time. The **creation** account is given in chapters 1-2. The fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden is re-counted in chapter 3 when **Adam** and **Eve** disobey God. Yet even in their punishment, God promised to provide them with a redeemer—one who will “*crush your head*” (Gen. 3:15). This would be the one who would deliver the death blow to the power of sin and death in human life. The resulting contamination of the human heart (**original sin**) is revealed in the story of **Cain** and **Abel** in chapter 4. As the earth is populated, human wickedness increases to the point where God regrets having created men and women and decides to send a world-wide flood to destroy all life, but the righteous life of one man, **Noah**, captures the merciful attention of God who offers Noah a plan for the salvation of his family and of animal life through the construction of the **ark**. When the waters of the flood recede God places a **rainbow** in the sky as a sign of his promise to never again destroy all life on the earth with a flood. Humanity had been saved, but the human heart remained sinful, so the first section of Genesis closes out with the **tower of Babel** in chapter 11. God strikes a blow to human pride and disperses the people throughout the earth and creates distance between them geographically as well as linguistically. The word “Babel” means a confused mixture of sounds and voices<sup>1</sup>. So, if one is looking for information on the creation, the fall, the source of pain and suffering, the flood, the rainbow, or for the origin of nations or languages, the Bible answers these questions in its first 11 chapters.

<sup>1</sup> Babel. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/babel> (accessed: June 14, 2009).

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In chapter 12 there is a dramatic narrowing of the focus of the book to one man, **Abraham** (originally called Abram). God calls Abraham to follow him (Genesis 12:1-3, NASB).

Now the LORD said to Abram,  
"Go forth from your country,  
And from your relatives  
And from your father's house  
To the land which I will show you;  
And I will make you a great nation,  
And I will bless you,  
And make your name great;  
And so you shall be a blessing;  
And I will bless those who bless you,  
And the one who curses you I will curse  
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Abraham's family home was **Ur**, and they had followed God as far as **Haran**. There his father has settled, so God called again - this time to Abraham

This is the beginning of the story of the nation of Israel and ultimately of the people of God. The land to which God called Abraham is what we know today as Israel. When God promised Abraham that he would make his descendents into a great nation, Abraham was an old man with an old wife. Unfortunately Abraham and his wife Sarah tried to rush ahead of the plan of God, and **Ishmael** was born, the father of the Arab nations. Sarah had given her maidservant, **Hagar**, to Abraham because she did not see how she, an old, barren woman would be able to bear him a son. Stepping outside of God's plan created a problematic situation that still impacts the Middle East today with conflict between Israel and the Arab nations. Yet God was faithful to his gracious promise to the elderly couple in spite of their failure to wait for Him to work in His time and in His way. **Isaac** whose name means "laughter" was born to them in their old age.

In the book of Genesis God is revealed as a maker of promises which are called "**covenants**." Covenants were legal, binding agreements between a superior and an inferior, or between two equals. There is a commitment to faithful fulfillment of the covenant stipulations required from both parties who enter into the agreement. In the Bible this is not merely a contract, but a commitment of oneself. Repeated throughout the chapters in the story of Abraham, God commits himself to Abraham and to all his descendents and to the nations who will be blessed through this family. God required that Abraham and all his male descendents be **circumcised** as a constant reminder and sign of the covenant between them and God. The covenant was made with Abraham, but it was a promise that God also made with us today—the people of the nations who have come to believe in Him and receive salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ. As you read the stories of Abraham's family, take note of how many times God re-affirms his covenant to faithful care and protection of Abraham and his descendents. Often there are signs or symbols that serve as reminders of these covenants: a rainbow, circumcision, and in the New Testament we have the establishment of the Lord's supper/communion. A specific demonstration of God's covenant faithfulness to Abraham came through a strange request—that Abraham take his only son, Isaac, to a mountain in the region of Moriah and there offer him as a sacrifice. Abraham had learned his lessons, and this time set out to follow God's request even though it may have seemed contrary to all he had longed for. Abraham had faith that somehow God would provide a redeemer—a lamb to be sacrificed. Just as he held the knife above his

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only son, the angel of the Lord stopped him. A ram was caught in the bush nearby. The angel told Abraham to release his son, Isaac, and instead to offer the ram in his place. God is faithful to his promises; He is faithful to his promise to provide a redeemer. If we are to experience God's salvation, we must learn to trust him, believe him, and obey him. This is what God was teaching Abraham. The same lessons are taught over again, although in different ways, in the succeeding generations.

Genesis follows Abraham's family through four generations. The first is Abraham and Sarah who give birth to Isaac. When Isaac comes of age, he is married to Rebecca, and they have twin sons, Jacob and Esau. God's promise rests on Jacob, renamed Israel. He had twelve sons. They become the pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

<b>Reuben</b>	<b>Simeon</b>
<b>Judah</b>	<b>Zebulun</b>
<b>Issachar</b>	<b>Dan</b>
<b>Gad</b>	<b>Asher</b>
<b>Naphtali</b>	<b>Benjamin</b>

**Joseph**—this tribe took his son **Ephraim's** name.

**Levi**-this tribe was set apart to be the priests so the twelfth tribe was from Joseph's second son **Manasseh**

The book of Genesis ends with the descendants of Abraham relocating to **Egypt**. Through the providence of God, Joseph's trials of enslavement and prison prove to be the means of salvation for his family during a severe famine. The people of Israel settle in the land of **Goshen** on the east side of the Nile River. When the second book in the Pentateuch opens we read this statement, "*The sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them*" (*Exodus 1:7, NASB*). This is what God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:2.

## Exodus

Exodus records the history of Israel's release from slavery in Egypt and the establishment of the Mosaic covenant on Mount Sinai. Four hundred years had passed since the family of Joseph came into Egypt to escape a terrible famine. They were shown favor by the pharaohs when they first entered the land. But as the Israelites became more numerous, the new family of **pharaohs** who did not know Joseph became fearful that this people group might take power from them. They enslaved the Israelites hoping to subdue and control them, yet the Israelites continued to flourish, increasing in number. In an attempt to decrease the Hebrew<sup>2</sup> slave population, one pharaoh declared that all the male Israelite babies were to be killed, and so begins the story of **Moses**. His family hid him in a basket designed to float on the waters of the river. He was found by one of pharaoh's daughters. **Miriam**, Moses' sister who had been keeping watch over the baby, offered to have Moses' own mother nurse the baby, but with the understanding that the Egyptian princess would claim him as her own. He would then be safe from the slaughter that pharaoh had ordered. Moses, a **Hebrew**, was raised and educated in the wealth and sophistication of the palace of Egypt. As a young man, he witnessed the harsh treatment of his people, and in anger killed an Egyptian, and then had to flee for his life to the wilderness of **Midian** where he became a shepherd. It was there in the wilderness that he met God through an encounter with a bush that burned but was not consumed by the flames.

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1. Hebrew: There are no Jews in the Old Testament – Judaism, like Christianity is a response to the Old Testament. Dr. John Oswalt

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God heard the cries of his people in slavery and chose Moses to be the deliverer of his people. *“But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.’ Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?’”* God said to Moses, **“I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”** God also said to Moses, *“Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.”* (Exodus 3: 11-15 NASB) God was faithful to keep his covenant with the descendants of Abraham. He was faithful to provide a deliverer for his people.

Moses returned to Egypt, and his brother, **Aaron**, served as his assistant and spokesman. Moses repeatedly asked the pharaoh to let God’s people go, but the pharaoh’s heart was hardened to God. God sent **10 plagues** against Egypt to demonstrate his great power and His superiority over all of the Egyptian deities and magicians, but the pharaoh did not relent until the final plague. The first 9 plagues were: water to blood, frogs, lice, flies, livestock disease, boils, hail, locust, and darkness. Each plague brought great suffering to Egypt. These plagues were direct attacks on the gods of Egypt proving that the Lord alone is God.

Before the final plague, the death of every firstborn son, the Israelites were given instructions to keep them safe during the night. They were to slaughter an unblemished **lamb** and put its **blood** on the frame around the door of their homes. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten. Also, they were to prepare **unleavened bread** that would cook quickly and travel without spoiling. They were told to pack and be ready for a quick departure. That evening the Lord passed over every Israelite home marked with the sign of the blood. They were saved from death. God asked that they remember this night with a yearly celebration called **Passover**. The covering of the blood of the lamb that night was a sign of the promised Redeemer, the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Every Egyptian home suffered the death of at least one family member. The pharaoh’s own first born son died. Finally in anger, he called for Moses and told him to take the people and go. Thousands of Israelites followed Moses out of Egypt towards the **Red Sea**. To their dismay, they turned and saw that pharaoh and his armies were pursuing them on chariots. Moses cried out to God and was instructed to lift his staff above the waters. At once the waters were parted, and the people were able to pass through on dry ground. God put a cloud of wind and dust between the people and pharaoh. When the last person stepped to safety on the other side, God allowed pharaoh and his army to enter between the waters. He then brought the waters together over the horses, riders, and chariots. His people were safe on the other side.

Moses would lead the people of Israel for forty years. They lived as nomads and herdsman, wandering throughout the area of the **Sinai Peninsula**. During this time, God miraculously cared for them providing them with fresh **manna**, bread from heaven, and **quail** every day with the exception of their Sabbath when they were to rest. They could gather extra food only the day before the Sabbath. Moses was their human leader, but God wanted them to understand He was their King and Lord. He had Moses gather the people at Mount Sinai. While Moses alone went to spend time with Him on top of the mountain, God gave Moses the **10 commandments** and many other instructions including all of the plans for the construction and equipping of the **tabernacle**—a portable tent of worship—and for the establishment of temple worship, including priestly robes and functions and the system of sacrifices. The 10 commandments,

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instructions for the construction of the tabernacle, its furniture, priestly garments, and dedication of the priests are included in the book of Exodus. This covenant, the complete terms of which extend from Exodus 20 to Numbers 10, was designed to teach the people who God is and what he is like.

God established a **theocracy**, a form of government where God was recognized as the Lord and King. God would communicate through Moses to the people, and His presence and glory were physically visible to the people through a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God's desire then as now is to be present with His people.

The people, however, were the ones who had a problem being faithful to God. Even while they waited for Moses to return from Mount Sinai, they decided to melt all their gold and make a golden calf, an idol that they worshipped through drunkenness and ungodly behavior. Moses returned from his holy and amazing encounter with God to find the people in defiant rebellion and adulterous worship. Time and time again in Exodus and the remaining books of the Pentateuch Moses confronted the rebellious, complaining, and sinful attitudes and ways of the Israelites. God is always merciful, but several times there are serious consequences and many deaths because the people's sin is so great.

### Leviticus

This is the book of the laws. It addresses the sacrificial laws as well as dietary laws, cleanliness, and relational laws. In contrast to the surrounding nations, there is no human sacrifice or sexual activity allowed in the worship of God. He is **holy**. To be holy is to be set apart, without sin, pure, righteous, and perfect in love and justice. God's Word says that we should be holy as He is holy. The intent of these laws was to instruct the people how to live so that they could be holy, set apart for God. The laws teach them how and when to make sacrifices. They also point to the necessity of the cross and to the need for a promised redeemer. *"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life"* (Lev. 17:11). The dietary laws were designed to protect them from illness. The laws that address marriage, sexuality, property, disputes and other relational concerns are designed for them to understand how to live in peace and love with one another. *"Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord"* (Lev. 19:18). Loving God foremost and loving our neighbor have always been the two greatest commands as Jesus pointed out in Matthew 22:37-40.

### Numbers

This book recounts the journey of the tribes from Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land. As such, it begins and ends with a census of the twelve tribes. It also recounts many stories of the testing and struggles in the wilderness. One of the most tragic stories recounts the people's lack of faith in God. In chapter 13, twelve spies are sent to Israel, the Promised Land, to report on its resources. Ten of the spies report that the land is filled with giants and great enemies. The other two spies, **Joshua and Caleb**, see this as the land of promise that is waiting for them to enter. The people of Israel are filled with fear and cry out in anger against God for bringing them into the desert to die. The punishment for their lack of faith is 40 years of wondering in the wilderness. All of that generation would die in the desert with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. The children would enter the land 40 years later without those who even though they had seen the parting of the Red Sea, did not have the faith to trust that God would also give them the land of Israel.



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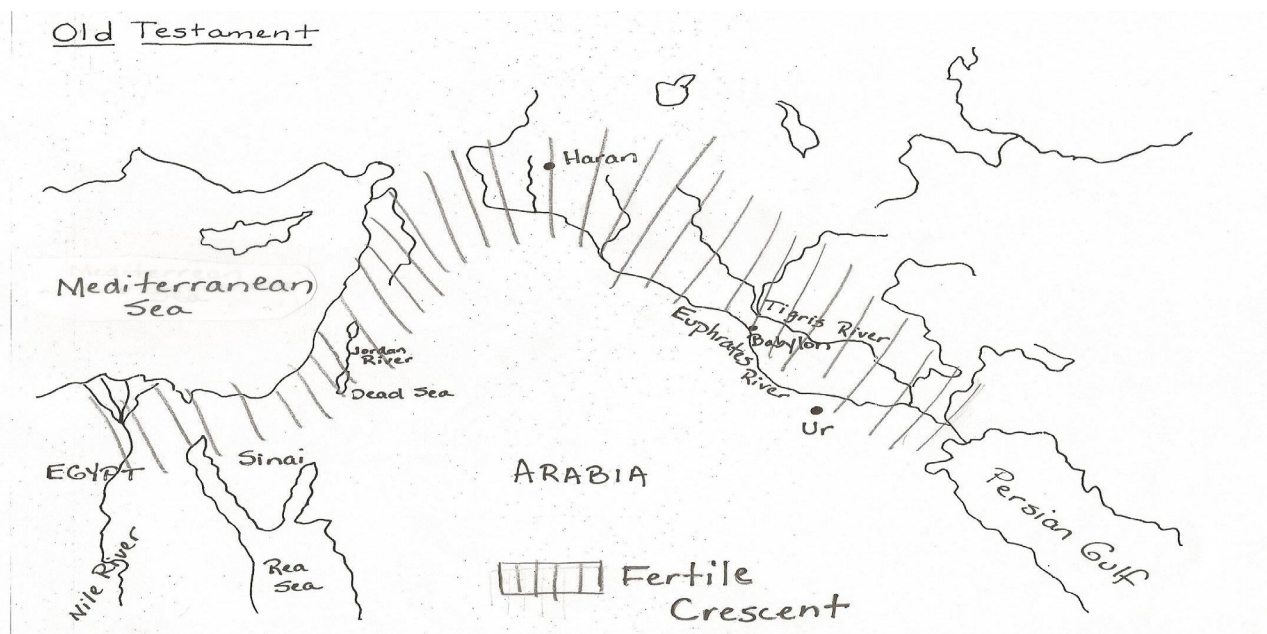
### Deuteronomy:

This is Moses' final message to the people of Israel. In it he seeks to motivate the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation to trust, believe, and obey God in way their parents has refused to do. He calls them to faithful commitment, reminds them of the laws-including the **Ten Commandments**, and of God's faithfulness. He prophesies what will happen if they disobey. He instructs them to pass on this knowledge to their children. Israel is called to remember their covenant with God.

*"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you in the Land where you are entering to possess it. But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give to them" (Deut 30:15-20, NASB).*

Deuteronomy ends at the edge of the Promised Land, Israel. Moses had sinned against God during the 40 years of wandering. He was forgiven, but the consequence for him was that he would not enter the land, but God in his mercy did allow him to see it from a distance. The mantel of leadership was to be passed to Joshua.

Historically these five books are attributed to Moses' authorship. His Egyptian education would have equipped him with the necessary writing and organizational skills. He would have had time during the period of wandering, and he also had an extremely close relationship with God. Geographically these five books have taken the people of Israel across the entire Fertile Crescent, from Babylonia to Egypt and back to Israel. God's people have been primarily nomadic, except during their 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Throughout these five books, God is the one who is faithful to His promises, who pursues a relationship with his people, and who is working to call and teach His people to follow and trust Him.



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**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Review the activity of God mentioned in these five books. What do you learn about His character?
2. God called Abraham to leave His home and to follow Him. How has God called you? Is He calling you now to follow Him? Are you willing even if you don't know where you are ultimately going?
3. Read through Moses' words in Deuteronomy. He was speaking to Israel, but let those words speak to you today. What is your choice? Does your life reflect that choice?
4. The laws in Leviticus set the Israelites apart from the other peoples of the land. How do God's laws set you and your church apart from the peoples of your land? What does it mean to be holy?

<b>Terms to Know</b>			
<b><u>Events</u></b>	<b><u>Places</u></b>	<b><u>People</u></b>	
Creation Rainbow Ark Tower of Babel Covenant Circumcision 10 plagues Passover Unleavened bread Lamb's blood Manna Theocracy 10 Commandments Tabernacle	Red Sea Sinai Egypt Israel Fertile Crescent Ur Haran	Adam/Eve Cain/Abel Noah Abraham/Sarah Hagar/Ishmael Isaac/Rebecca Jacob/Rachel Joseph	Pharaoh Moses Aaron Miriam Joshua Caleb I AM



# 2

## The Historical Books (Back in the Promised Land)

### Lesson Purpose

- To give an overview of the people, geographic locations, literary style, historical events and theological themes of the historical books.

### Lesson Outcomes

- Students will know and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**.  
*These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*
- Students will have knowledge of key people, historical stories, theological themes, and the geographic setting for each historical book.
- Students will understand the cyclic pattern resulting from the people's disobedience and God's mercy
- Students will study the movement towards a monarchy, the division of Israel into two kingdoms, and the exile
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

### Table of Contents

- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- I Samuel
- II Samuel
- I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles
- Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
- Questions for Discussion

These books record the history of the nation of Israel. They begin with Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. The new nation struggled with its identity as the people of God in the midst of a pagan world. There was an organizational switch from a theocracy to a monarchy and a progressive deterioration in the loyalty of the people to God and in their faithfulness to observe His laws. The warnings of Moses in Deuteronomy came to fulfillment when the people were taken into exile to Babylonia, back to the land from which God had called Abraham centuries earlier. Yet, God remained faithful to His covenant, and the account closes with the return of a prophesied remnant of people to re-build and re-settle their war ravaged land.

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Joshua	Judges	Ruth	I & II Samuel	I & II Kings	I & II Chronicles	Ezra	Nehemiah	Esther
Conquest The "ban"	Cycle of Chaos	Family of God	Samuel Saul David Promise to David	<b>Divided Kingdom</b>  <b>Time of the prophets</b>		Temple Restored	Building the walls	Story of Courage and Faith (Persecution of the Jews)
<b>Conquest</b>			<b>Monarchy</b>			<b>Exile/Resettlement</b>		
<b>Constant struggle with fidelity to God</b>						New commitment to ethnic and cultic purity		

### Joshua

After Moses died, **Joshua** became the leader of the Israelites. Repeatedly God assured Joshua that He would be with him. The book of Joshua tells how God enabled his people to conquer the land of Canaan (1-12) and how the land was then allotted to the various tribes (13-22). It closes with Joshua's call to the people to reaffirm their covenant with God. Joshua, the man, was the general of the armies, but God was the one who gave him orders and who directed the battles. To enter the Promised Land, the people first had to cross the **Jordan River**. Like the crossing of the Red Sea, the waters were stopped, and the people passed over on dry ground. The **Ark of the Covenant** (Exodus 25:10-22) became a transportable symbol of the presence and power of the Lord for the Israelites throughout the narrative of the historical books. It was carried by the priests and went before the people when it was not in its tabernacle resting place. Once the armies had been consecrated and prepared for battle, the conquest began. One aspect of these conquests, **the ban**, is often difficult for contemporary readers to understand. God declared before each battle what would belong to Him alone. In **Jericho** everything in the town except for **Rahab** and her family were under the ban. She was spared because she feared the Lord and protected the Israelite spies when they came to scout out the land. Everything in Jericho was to be destroyed and burned except for the silver, gold, bronze, and iron items which were to be placed in the treasury of the Lord. The ban required the people to trust God to provide for them. It also taught them to respect and fear the Lord. It may seem harsh or unjust that so many people were killed, yet the example of Rahab demonstrates that there was mercy for those who honored the Lord. Rahab was asked to hang a scarlet cord from her window, a sign that would indicate where she was and lead to the salvation of her family. Scarlet, the color of blood, was a sign of God's promised redeemer. One other purpose for the ban was to cleanse the land of pagan influences. As time passed, Israel became more and more tolerant towards the presence of the pagan people and their religious practices. This was a serious error and set the nation on a course for disaster and judgment. The conquered lands were distributed among the twelve tribes. Joshua's final exhortation to the people was to choose whom they would serve *"whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"* (Joshua 24:15, NASB). *"Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel"* (Joshua 24:23, NASB).

## Judges

One of the astonishing characteristics of the Bible is its honesty. The book of Judges records the tragic history of the Israelite people after the death of Joshua. Their efforts to continue their conquest of the land were unsuccessful because they failed to keep themselves separate from the idolatrous practices of the surrounding pagan nations. God was not pleased with them. There was a cyclical pattern of disobedience, foreign occupation, crying out to God, provision of a judge, period of peace, and then disobedience again.

### **A Few examples of the Judges.**

They were people from all walks of life. God chose them and equipped them to serve as leaders for the people.

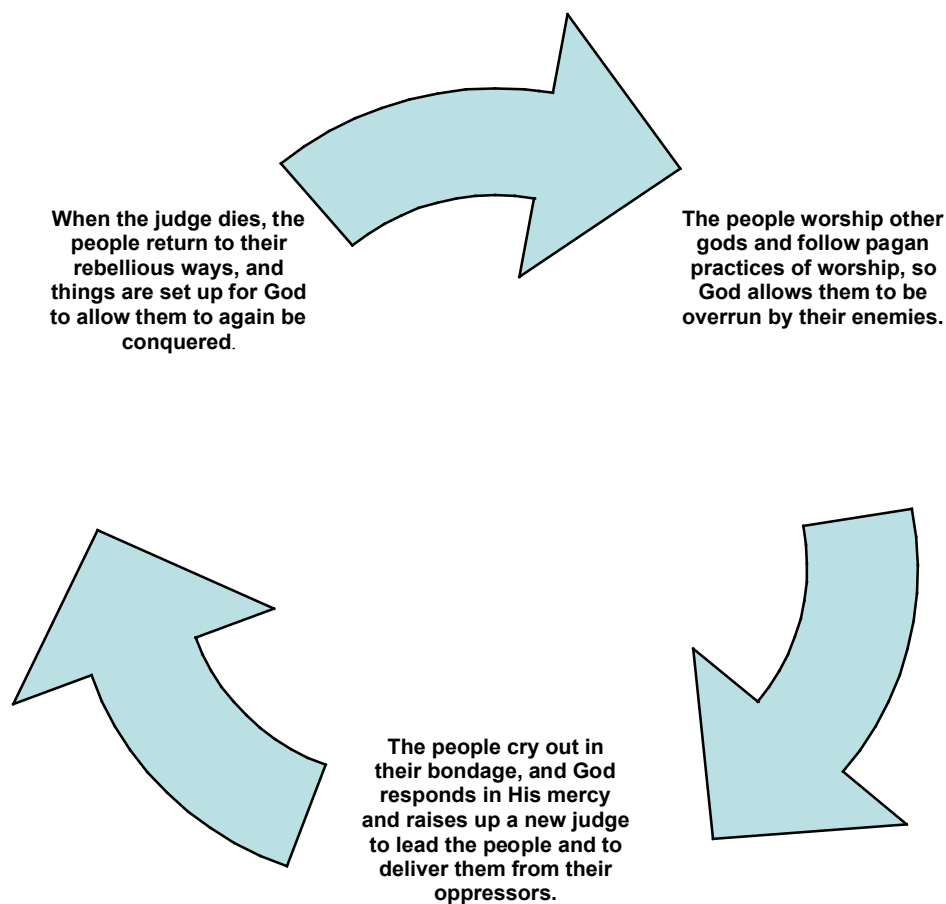
**Ehud**—skillfully used a double edged-sword.

**Deborah**—was a prophetess who listened to God.

**Gideon**—was a man with insecure faith, yet trusted God to direct him in battles.

**Jephthah**-- made a foolish vow that cost his daughter's life.

**Samson**—was filled with God's spirit, but undisciplined and careless about his great gift of strength.



## Ruth

This book is the story of redemption. **Naomi** was a Jewish widow living in the land of Moab with her two Moabite daughter-in-laws, **Ruth** and Orpha. As childless, widowed women with no male family members to marry they were in trouble. They needed to find the shelter of family connections. Ruth chose to return to Israel with Naomi. Her faithful loyalty to her mother-in-law captured the attention of family member **Boaz** who offered to marry Ruth and to pay the purchase price for her family's land. Boaz was her **kinsman redeemer**. He paid the price to bring Ruth and Naomi into the grace and protection of the family thus assuring her that the family inheritance of her deceased husband would be preserved. Obed, the son, born to Ruth and Boaz was the father of Jesse and the grandfather of King David.

## I Samuel

Samuel, the last judge of Israel, was born to **Hannah** after she cried out to the Lord to bless her with a son. She promised to dedicate her child to the Lord. So as a young boy, **Samuel** lived in the tabernacle with Eli the high priest. Samuel became a judge, but more importantly he knew and walked with God. When he was old, he appointed his two sons as judges. Because they were dishonest men, the people of Israel met together and petitioned Samuel to let them organize a new system of government. They wanted a king just like all the surrounding nations. Samuel was deeply upset. He understood the implications of this request. He explained to the people how their lives would be changed if they had a human king, but they refused to listen and demanded a king. So God told Samuel whom he should anoint. Israel had made the choice to exchange the theocracy that God had established for a **monarchy**, so they could be like everyone else.

The first king of Israel was **Saul**. He was tall and handsome, but he suffered from insecurity and impatience. He became increasingly careless with the instructions that Samuel gave to him from the Lord. He then blamed others and lied to hide his failures. Finally Samuel came to him and said, *"For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king"* (I Sam. 15:23, NASB).

Samuel was then sent by God to anoint a new king, the youngest son of Jesse, **David**. He was a shepherd and a song writer, repeatedly described as a man after God's own heart. As a young man, David demonstrated his faith in God when he met the great philistine giant, **Goliath**. He defeated him with a single well-aimed stone from his sling. When Saul realized that God's anointing now rested on David, he sought to kill him. David had to flee his own country and remain in hiding. David's character was revealed in his willingness to wait on God's timing. He never took advantage of any of the situations where he could have taken Saul's life. Many of David's psalms were written during the painful years when he had to live as a refugee.

## II Samuel

With the death of Saul, David began to move towards the throne. There was a seven-year period of civil war during which one of the sons of Saul claimed the throne, but finally David won the loyalty of people. He marched to Jerusalem to defeat the Jebusites and claimed the city as the capital of his Kingdom. *"And David became greater and greater, for the Lord God of hosts was with him"* (II Sam. 5:10, NASB).

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David consolidated his power and worked to establish Jerusalem as the center of both politics and religion. He had the Ark of the Covenant brought to Jerusalem. It was his desire to build a permanent **temple** for the worship of God. This temple would replace the tabernacle and local shrines that had been established during the years of Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness. God, however, said that David had shed too much blood. He promised David that one of his sons would build the temple.

David was an amazing king until he fell into sin. He lusted after and committed adultery with **Bathsheba**. He ordered the murder of her husband in order to cover his sin. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David who then became filled with remorse. His kingdom never again experienced the extent of peace and blessing that it had before his sin, yet God was merciful. A son, **Solomon**, was born to David and Bathsheba. He was the one on whom God's anointing would fall as the successor to David.

God had made a covenant with David that included God's blessing and protection, the promise that a descendent of David would build the temple, and that *"your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever"* (II Samuel 7:16). God continued to affirm his people that He would provide them a promised redeemer. Solomon was the son who succeeded David and built not only a magnificent temple, but also a great palace. He is known as the wisest man in the world and is remembered for the incredible wealth of his kingdom. Tragically, at the end of his life, Solomon's many wives, many of which were acquired through political alliances, and who had never converted to the Lord, turned Solomon's heart away from the Lord. As a result he reintroduced idol-worship into the land. Nevertheless, God kept his promises to David in the **Davidic Covenant** so that today Jesus, the son of David, sits at the right hand of God ruling a kingdom that has no end.

### **I & II Kings and I & II Chronicles**

These books chronicle the history of the kings. The warnings that Samuel gave proved true as the people struggled under the financial hardships of supporting a large government. By the reign of the fourth king, Rehoboam, the oppression of the people was so cruel that the kingdom divided into two nations: Israel to the north and Judah to the south. Distance from God and constant religious infidelity left the people open to God's judgment and consequent oppression by other nations. The brief description, *"he did evil in the eyes of the Lord,"* was used repeatedly to describe the majority of the kings who reigned. The law of God was lost and forgotten until it was literally rediscovered during a period of temple repair. During that time, God raised up **prophets**, men and women filled with God's spirit, to speak to His people and to call them to repentance.

### History of the Monarchy



#### Kingdom of Israel to the north

10 Tribes  
High Places in Bethel and Dan

Jeroboam was the first king. He set an example of defiance to the laws of the Lord which characterized the kingdom of the north until it was seized by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

The 10 tribes of the north were carried off into captivity and have essentially disappeared.

Some of the prophets who tried to warn the kingdom of Israel to repent:  
**Elijah, Elisha.**

#### Kingdom of Judah to the south

Tribes of Judah and Benjamin  
Jerusalem is the Capital

**Rehoboam** was the first king. The kings of the south also struggled with wickedness, yet there were several periods of grace when men who feared the Lord came to the throne such as: **Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah.**

This kingdom was eventually carried off into exile in Babylon, yet God had promised that He would spare a remnant which would return to Israel. God remained faithful to his covenant with David.

Prophets who spoke to the kingdoms of the south: **Isaiah, Jeremiah**

#### **Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther**

The final three books in this section were written during the Babylonian **exile**. Ezra and Nehemiah record events that occurred as the exiled southern Kingdom began its return to Jerusalem. Instruction in the Book of the Law of Moses was the major emphasis in the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah. They exhorted the people to maintain ethnic purity and religious fidelity so that they would not be returned to the humiliation of judgment and exile. The setting for the book of Esther is the Persian capitol of Susa. It chronicles an event that took place among the Judeans who remained behind in Persia after many of their people had returned home.

**EZRA:** The book of Ezra tells about the two returns of Judeans from exile. The first return occurred when God moved the heart of Persian **King Cyrus** so that the king not only allowed the exiles to return to Israel, but he also equipped them for the work of rebuilding their temple which had been desecrated and destroyed. The reconstruction work was difficult for several reasons. Forty or more years of exile had taken its toll on the people emotionally. They returned to find new enemies in the land who fought against them



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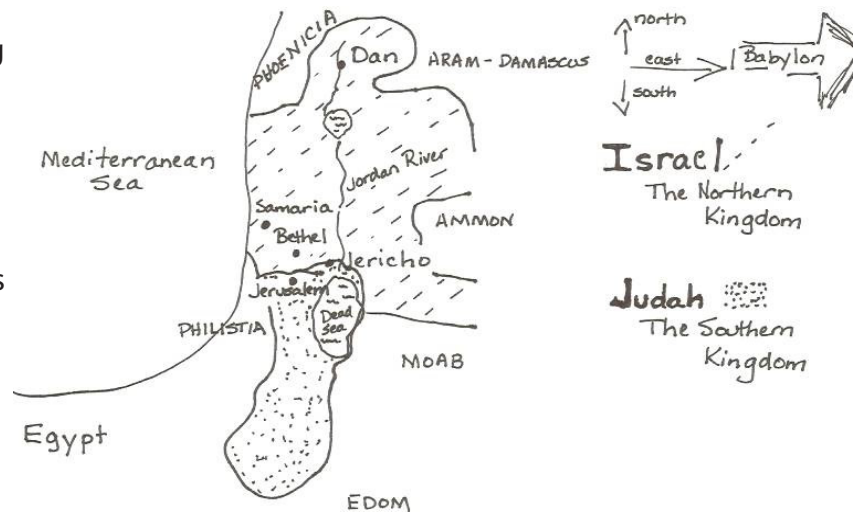
not with weapons, but with lies, discouraging words, and the interruptions that they created with political red tape.

Nearly one hundred years after the first return, although the temple had finally been completed, the city of Jerusalem had still not been rebuilt, and this symbolized the fact that the Judean people were still not exclusively committed to God. **Ezra** was commissioned by King Artaxerses to go review the situation in Jerusalem. This pagan king also ordered Ezra to instruct the Israelite people in the laws and ways of His God. Ezra's life was living proof of his testimony to King Artaxerses that, *"The gracious hand of God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him"* (Ez. 8:22). Ezra lived faithfully under God's hand. His work and ministry were blessed as he gave spiritual leadership to the people and called them to repent and to serve God in holiness and purity.

NEHEMIAH: Like Ezra, **Nehemiah**, who served as a cupbearer, was also returned to Jerusalem by the pagan King Artaxerses, but he was commissioned to give leadership and direction to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Because of Nehemiah's wise leadership, thoughtful planning, and life of prayer, the people worked day and night to rebuild the walls and to set the gates in place. Nehemiah and Ezra were together in Jerusalem. After the public reading of The Book of the Law of Moses, the people came under great conviction and grief over the degree to which they had wandered away from God's law. Nehemiah encouraged them, reminding them of God's grace and mercy with the following statement, *"Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Neh. 8:10).

ESTHER: The book of Esther is the story of a young woman's faith and courage in the face of racial persecution. **Esther** was a beautiful unmarried Jewish girl. When King Artaxerses needed to find a new queen, all the young, unmarried women of the land were brought to him. Out of them all, he chose Esther as his new queen, but he did not know that she was

Jewish. Esther's uncle, **Mordecai**, challenged her to take advantage of her position as the queen to bring to the king's attention the hateful plans of his leading royal officer, **Haman**. He was planning to annihilate all the Jews. Esther revealed her race and nationality to the king. She informed him that she would be included in this massacre. The king found that intolerable. Haman's life and plans came to an abrupt end. Esther's courage in addressing the king directly without receiving prior royal invitation led to the salvation of her people. The challenge of Mordecai that helped her to take that step of action has become one of the best known verses from this book. *"And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this"* (Esther 4:14). God has a plan and purpose for each person that sometimes comes to fruition at *"such a time as this."* The Jewish festival of Purim was established to commemorate this event.



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**Questions for Discussion:**

1. From Joshua to the exile, God's people repeatedly fail to keep themselves holy-separated onto God. How do they fail? Are there any influences from your culture or the other religions of your land or ancestors that may be hindering you or your church from fully serving and following God?
2. We do not naturally or automatically know the law or will of God. God has had his word written down so that we may know it. We depart from the law when it is not read. What is your plan to grow in your knowledge of the Word of God? How can you help the people in your church to hear and know the word of God?
3. To redeem someone's life is to pay the price required to buy back their freedom and return them to the safety of the family. For the church, this means bringing them back into the family of God. Are there men, women, or children that you may need to redeem as Boaz did for Ruth?
4. There are many who live today as refugees. What words of hope could you bring them from the life of David or from the testimony of the exiles who returned from Babylon?
5. Ezra devoted himself to the study of the word of God, to obedience of the word of God, and he taught others to know and obey it. The presence of God's Hand was seen clearly and powerfully in his life. His example is a worthy one for those who are called into ministry to follow. If you had to rate yourself in those three areas, how would you do? What do you need to do to improve?

<b>Terms to Know</b>			
	<b><u>Places</u></b>	<b><u>People</u></b>	
Ark of the Covenant The ban Kinsman redeemer Monarchy Temple Davidic Covenant Prophet Exile	Jordan River Jericho Israel-Northern Kingdom Judah-Southern Kingdom	Joshua Rahab Ehud Deborah Gideon Jephthah Samson Naomi Ruth Boaz Hannah	Samuel Saul David Goliath Bathsheba Solomon Rehoboam Jeroboam Ezra Nehemiah Esther



# 3

## The Books of Poetry Prayer, Song and Wisdom

### Lesson Purpose

- To give an overview of the literary forms and devices, themes, and unique features of in each book in the Books of Poetry.

### Lesson Outcomes

- Students will know and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**.  
*These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*
- Students will have knowledge of several key literary devices used in this section.
- Students will be able to identify these literary devices in the text and apply their understanding of the device in their interpretation of the biblical text
- Students will be introduced to some of the characteristics of wisdom literature
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

### Table of Contents

- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Songs
- Questions for Discussion

The literary form of the five books in this section varies between poetry, prose, and wisdom literature. Historical narrative is the primary literary form used in the first 17 books of the Old Testament. In this section the emotions of the human heart are expressed through prayers and song. Universal questions that have troubled the human soul and mind throughout the ages are pondered.

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Job	Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	Song of Songs
Job questions God's reasons for allowing his suffering.	Prayers and Songs	Wise Sayings about many things in every day life.	Solomon wrestles with the meaning of life.	A love poem
	Many psalms were written by David.	Many proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs are attributed to King Solomon who is known for his great wisdom.		

Knowledge of literary devices and their use is critical in order to be able to understand and effectively interpret the verses in this section. Some of the most common literary devices used are:

- **Simile**—a comparison that is indicated by the words “like” or “as.”  
*“But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God” (Psalm 52:8, NASB).*
- **Metaphor**—the juxtaposition of two apparently unlike things to clarify, describe, or to enrich understanding. *“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24, NASB).*
- **Personification**—inanimate objects are given life and personality, such as a storm invested with emotion. *“Wisdom has built her house; She has hewn out her seven pillars; She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table” (Proverbs 9:1-2, NASB).*
- **Symbolism**—an object, image, or number represents something else.  
*“O Lord, who may abide in Thy tent?” (Psalm 15:1, NASB). The tent symbolizes the presence and family of God. David is not speaking of a literal, physical tent.*
- **Allegory**—a story with a double layer of meaning—one perhaps literal and the other spiritual.  
*“I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me” (Song of Solomon 7:10, NASB). Some believe that this is a spiritual statement of Jesus' love for the church, his bride.*
- **Parallelism**—phrases or sentences that follow one another and say essentially the same thing but with slight changes. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105, NASB).*
- **Repetition**—words, phrases, ideas are repeated sometimes in exactly the same way or sometimes with a variation that adds to the emphasis or expands the meaning. *In Psalm 150, every line has a form of the phrase, “Praise the Lord.” The repetition creates a dramatic and cumulative effect.*  
*Praise the Lord!  
Praise God in His sanctuary  
Praise Him in the mighty expanse. . .  
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.  
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 150:1,6, NASB).*

## Job

The book of Job is considered by some scholars to be one of the oldest pieces of writing in the Old Testament. The book begins with a brief introduction to the man Job. His life had taken a tragic turn, and he has found himself enduring unimaginable suffering at the hand of Satan and with the permission of God. The majority of the book records Job's conversation with his three friends. They each tried to make sense of God's purpose for allowing suffering in the lives of men and women.

Job's unwavering belief in God gave him the strength to persevere in his worship of God even though he openly and honestly questioned the justice of God's actions. Throughout the entire conversation, Job defended his personal integrity. Job was unable to remember an unrighteous thought, word or deed that would have merited such judgment from the hand of God. His friends, on the other hand, accused him of being arrogant in his insistence that he had done no wrong. They equated the presence of suffering with judgment and continued to press Job to confess and repent of sin.

Job never cursed God, but he did challenge God to respond to his demand for an explanation. Job's suffering was so severe that he wished to die. His anguish was physical because he was struck with disease, emotional because he had lost loved ones and his ability to work, and spiritual because he could not understand why God had allowed this to happen.

Finally God responded to Job. *"Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me"* (Job 38:3; 40:7). Through a series of questions God revealed his power, majesty, and sovereignty to Job. Job had not sinned, but he had been wrong to accuse God and to question His wisdom. Job said, *"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know"* (Job 42:3). Job repented of his arrogance and of his failure to simply trust God even in His suffering. Job's three friends received a much more severe rebuke from God for misrepresenting Him as one who always uses suffering to inflict judgment. The book concludes with God's blessing coming in even greater measure again upon the life of Job.

## Psalms

There are 150 psalms. Some psalms specifically name the author, but many do not. Some of the psalms address specific historical events such as episodes from the life of David or the time of exile in Babylon. The psalms express the emotions of the human heart such as joy, fear, anger, despair, and love. They are honest in that both negative and positive feelings are expressed. Often even failures are admitted. God, in contrast, is always seen as constant, faithful, strong, and loving. The world and its people may be filled with many "unknowns," but God remains all powerful, all loving, all merciful, all holy, all righteous, all knowing, and all good. We should find our shelter in Him.

This collection of prayers and songs was written hundreds of years before the life of Jesus Christ. Yet, many of the psalms are quoted in the New Testament. After Pentecost, Jesus' followers discovered that several psalms had prophetic promises that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. Several examples are: Psalm 2, Jesus, the Son of God; Psalm 22, the cross; Psalm 41, betrayal of Judas; Psalm 110, the lordship of Jesus.

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The Psalms are not written according to a standard pattern. They are of varying lengths with Psalm 117, the shortest, with only two verses and Psalm 119, the longest, with 176 verses. There are, however, several recurring themes:<sup>1</sup>

- Petition to God—the psalmist makes a request to God

*“In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.  
Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue;  
be my strong rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me.” Psalm 31:1-2*

- Lament—the psalmist is in serious trouble and cries out to God

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?  
O my God, I cry out by day,  
but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.” Psalm 22:1-2*

- Thanksgiving—the psalmist recognizes the gifts of God

*“I will thank the LORD with all my heart  
as I meet with his godly people.  
How amazing are the deeds of the LORD!  
All who delight in him should ponder them.” Psalm 111:1-2, NLT*

- Praise—the psalmist extols the attributes of God

*“Praise the Lord.  
Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life;  
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” Psalm 146:1-2*

- Wisdom—the psalmist describes the benefits of observing the law of God

*“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinner or sit in the seat of mockers.  
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.” Psalm 1:1-2*

- Confession/Testimony—the psalmist tells a personal story

*“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;  
According to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.  
Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Psalm 51:1-2*

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.” Psalm 23:1-2*

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<sup>1</sup> James Luther Mays, *Psalms: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994), 19-29.

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## Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is composed primarily of short, memorable statements. These wise sayings each stand alone as statements of truth concerning the aspect of life that they address. They can be easily memorized and quoted. The purpose of the book of Proverbs is given at the beginning of the book:

- *for attaining wisdom and discipline;*
  - *for understanding words of insight,*
  - *for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;*
  - *for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—*
  - *let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance*
  - *for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.*
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:2-7)*

In the first nine chapters, a father calls his sons to listen and to receive instruction. He teaches them the benefits of following wisdom versus the dangers of folly. Wisdom will keep them on the path of righteousness, away from such evils as the lure of the prostitute. There are many excellent verses in this section, but perhaps the most quoted are: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6, NIV)*. Throughout the book of Proverbs, the fear of the Lord and obedience to his law are considered as absolutely essential if one to be truly wise.

From chapter 10 through chapter 29 the proverbs of King Solomon flow from one to another. At times several proverbs addressing the same topic are grouped together, but often the proverbs stand alone; each one deserving a moment of reflection before continuing on to the next. Some of the topics that Solomon addresses are:

- The benefits of work in contrast to the destructive results of laziness
- The rightful use of the tongue in contrast to the careless or damaging words
- The wise use of money in contrast to foolish waste
- The value of true friends in contrast to the negative effects of foolish company
- The honor of justice in contrast to the wickedness of injustice
- The blessings of obedience to God in contrast to evil ways
- The wisdom of seeking wise counsel in contrast to foolish pride
- The need for parental discipline in contrast to children left without guidance

The final chapter of Proverbs 31:10-31 ends with a lengthy description of *“the wife of noble character” (Prov. 31:10)*. She is respected, hard-working, financially astute, compassionate, and wise with her tongue. *“Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30)*.

## **Ecclesiastes:**

The book of Ecclesiastes is an example of another kind of wisdom literature. Like Proverbs, it contains some short, memorable truth statements. The book of Proverbs explains the certainties of the prudent life. Ecclesiastes, however, considers life's uncertainties, injustices, and the vulnerability of humanity. The author begins with a question that he strives to answer in the chapters that follow.

*Meaningless! Meaningless! says the Teacher.  
Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.  
What does man gain from all his labor  
at which he toils under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1:2-3*

Occasionally the author's style is extraordinarily poetic as in the beautiful passage that says there is a time for everything in life (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) But overall the tone of this book is rather pessimistic. The word "meaningless" occurs more than 35 times in the New International Version. The author repeatedly points out that all life ends in death. Neither riches, nor learning, nor productivity, nor pleasure make any difference in the end. There is injustice in the world, and people live never knowing when their lives will come to an end. Yet, in contrast to this negativity, the author's faith in and respect for God lift the reader up and out of the this world to the reality of eternity. God sees humanity's labors. To delight in work and to attend to the daily demands of life is an expression of praise to God. The church, God's house, is a sacred place where one can listen and spend time with Him in the midst of the toils of life (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7). Humanity may not be able to control their destiny nor what will happen with their legacy once they have died, yet God is God. He will remain, and He is sovereign. And so the author concludes:

*Now all has been heard;  
Here is the conclusion of the matter:  
Fear God and keep his commandments,  
For this is the whole duty of man.  
For God will bring every deed into judgment,  
Including every hidden thing,  
Whether it is good or evil.  
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*

## **Song Of Songs**

This book is a love poem. It is written as a conversation between the "beloved" who is the woman, the "lover" who is the man, and the "friends" who are the chorus. The language of this book is full of imagery and symbolism which represents both lovers' desire for one another and their descriptions of one another's physical appearance. Because of the sexual nature of this poetry, some interpreters prefer to interpret this book as an allegorical expression of Christ's love for the church. In the New Testament, Paul uses wedding imagery to describe Jesus Christ's relationship to the church. He is the groom, and the church is his bride. An example of a verse that fits this type of interpretation is 2:4, "He has taken me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love" which can be taken to allude to the final banquet that we will share with Jesus in heaven.



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Human sexuality was created by God. The world and society tend to promote a distorted view of the marriage relationship. Song of Songs offers a beautiful example of the joys and pleasures of the wonderful love that can be enjoyed only within the context of marriage.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Considering the book of Job, what should be our response to suffering in our own lives and in the lives of others? Mistakes, sin, and foolish choices can lead to negative consequences. In that case, we must take responsibility for the presence of suffering, but it is important to note that suffering does not necessarily mean that God is punishing someone. How can you use this truth to counsel those who are experiencing suffering which is clearly not the result of any sin or error on their part?
2. Read through the different types of psalms:
  - Petition to God—the psalmist makes a request to God
  - Lament—the psalmist is in serious trouble and cries out to God
  - Thanksgiving—the psalmist recognizes the gifts of God
  - Praise—the psalmist extols the attributes of God
  - Wisdom—the psalmist describes the benefits of observing the law of God
  - Confession/Testimony—the psalmist tells a personal story

Choose one and write your own psalm. Share it with the class. Try to include a simile or metaphor. Are there symbols or images that are a part of your life that you can use to express your relationship to God or your understanding of who He is?

3. Are there any proverbs in your village? What is the difference between wisdom and intelligence? According to Proverbs, true wisdom begins with what? How could you use Proverbs in your teaching ministry? Does it address some of the needs in your community? What are those needs?
4. Do the people in your church or town feel that life is “meaningless?” What could you say to encourage them and to show them God’s purpose and plan?
5. What is the concept of marital fidelity in your community? Would husbands and wives benefit from the example of the couple’s relationship in Song of Songs? Would they be comfortable or is that type of expression something that is not openly discussed where you live?

<b>Terms to Know</b>
Simile
Allegory
Metaphor
Parallelism
Symbolism
Repetition
Personification
Proverb: short, memorable truth statement
Psalm: song or prayer



# 4

## The Major Prophets

### Lesson Purpose

- To give an overview of the authors, central themes, warnings and promises in each of the Major Prophets.

### Lesson Outcomes

- Students will know and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**.
- *These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*
- Students will be introduced to each prophet and the setting and situation which he was called to address
- Students will develop their understanding of the prophetic calling and ministry in the Old Testament
- Students will discover God's promises to send a Redeemer for his people
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

### Table of Contents

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah and Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Questions for Discussion

Sixteen of the last seventeen books of the Old Testament bear the name of the prophet whose message is recorded in that particular book. The one exception is Lamentations. It is an additional book written by Jeremiah. The first five are called the **Major Prophets** because of their length, not their importance. The writings of those prophets filled entire scrolls. The second group is called the Minor Prophets. Because of their short length, one scroll could contain all twelve of them.

All of these prophets were called by God to deliver a divine message to God's people. The period of time that God spoke through these prophets extended from the divided monarchy through the fall of both Kingdoms. It continued into the exile and concluded in the post-exilic years. They primarily spoke messages that addressed the present situations of the nations of Israel and Judah, but some of the prophets delivered a word from God to the surrounding nations.

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The message of these prophets generally included the following:

- A charge against the people for their violation of their covenant agreement with God.
- A warning that judgment would come upon them (usually by means of enemy nations) if they did not repent.
- A promise of restoration if they would repent

In addition to their primary concern to address the current situations of God’s people, many of the prophets were also given visions of God’s plans for the future. Sometimes this future was not much more than months away as in Jeremiah’s warnings of the fall of Jerusalem or perhaps as far as 70 years away such as when they spoke of a remnant that would be spared and of the return from the exile. At other times, the promise that they saw extended hundreds of years ahead to the time when God would send the messiah. Finally a few of them saw past even our own time to the promise of a returning Savior who would come to call both the living and dead to everlasting life.

**Prophets** were called by God. It was not a profession that one could choose for oneself. Those who falsified that calling paid the high price of death by stoning when their message was proved to be inaccurate. Prophets were not generally liked and often they suffered persecution because their messages were not well received. Sometimes God asked them to serve as living examples of their message; their lives became a visual representation of the spiritual truth that God wanted his people to hear and see. Their writings tell of their strong emotional response to the call of God on their lives to speak out for Him. They could not refrain from giving the message that they had received. At times their visions were so powerful, some swooned or became ill. Many were priests by profession, but not all.

The prophets are similar to the Books of Poetry in their use of symbolic imagery and poetic form. At times, this makes interpretation challenging because some of the images are no longer familiar or significant to the modern reader. Use of commentaries and Old Testament scholarship is often necessary to understand the context in which the prophets were writing. Many of the prophets quote God directly. It is important for those who study the Bible to take note of who is speaking in the text—the prophet, God, or someone else. Some of the prophets include historical narrative. One other aspect that makes reading the prophets challenging is to determine the time frame of the prophecies. Were they fulfilled? Are they yet to be fulfilled? When were they fulfilled? The prophets themselves move forward and backward in time as they proclaim God’s message to the people. Occasionally the time frame is specified, but generally the burden is on the reader to discern the time setting for each prophecy.

The Major Prophets

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Lamentations	Ezekiel	Daniel
Prophet to Kingdom of Judah	Prophet to Kingdom of Judah before the fall of Jerusalem	Lament of Jeremiah for his country	Prophet during Babylonian exile.	Prophet during Babylonian exile

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**Isaiah**

*"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."(Is. 1:1,NASB).*

**Isaiah** is an extraordinary book. It contains some of the most graphic and specific prophecies of the promised messiah that were without doubt fulfilled by Jesus Christ. God, Himself, is revealed through the words that he gave Isaiah to record. His covenant love and faithfulness to Israel permeate the entire book as His own words flow from chapter to chapter. Isaiah portrayed the tenderness as well as the justice of God through his personal and descriptive writing style. Finally, the length and expanse of time that Isaiah recorded God's message enhance the overall impression of this powerful book.

From the outset, God made it clear that he could not tolerate the disobedience of His people. He was not fooled nor appeased by their form of religious practice such as offering sacrifices. He knew their hearts and saw their actions.

Isaiah 1:16-20, NASB  
"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight  
Cease to do evil,  
Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Reprove the ruthless,  
Defend the orphan,  
Plead for the widow.  
"Come now, and let us reason together,"  
Says the LORD,  
"Though your sins are as scarlet,  
They will be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They will be like wool.  
"If you consent and obey,  
You will eat the best of the land;  
"But if you refuse and rebel,  
You will be devoured by the sword"  
Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

God addressed their sins, yet offered them forgiveness, instructed them in right behaviors, and promised them blessing. Yet, failure to receive this gift would result in their destruction which eventually is what happened with the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah to Babylon.

Isaiah himself was not exempt from God's call to purity and righteous living. He recorded his own story in chapter 6:1-8,NASB . One day when he was in the temple, Isaiah had a vision of God sitting on his throne. The hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphim were with God singing, *"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts."* Isaiah

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was overcome by his guilt and unworthiness to stand in the presence of God. He confessed that he was a **man of unclean lips**. Considering that he had been serving as a priest in God's temple, this was a humbling admission. One of the seraphim took a burning piece of coal from the altar using tongs and touched Isaiah's lips with it. He told Isaiah that his sin had been cleansed and forgiven. Then Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah responded, "Here am I. Send me!" Even though he was a priest by profession, Isaiah had to come to repentance and be cleansed before he could hear and obey the call of God.

Isaiah's people were called to be a light to the nations, but since they, like Isaiah, were a people of "unclean lips," they too had to have a vision of the Lord's holiness and greatness (chaps. 7-39); they too had to endure the fire of cleansing (chaps. 40-59), so that they could fulfill their mission (chaps. 60-62).<sup>1</sup>

The means by which God would complete his saving and cleansing work was the Messiah. Isaiah's messianic prophecies are often quoted at Christmas and Easter.

*Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."*

*Isaiah 9:6 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace."*

*Isaiah 53:4-6 "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

### **Jeremiah and Lamentations:**

**Jeremiah** is sometimes referred to as the "**the weeping prophet**." He was God's prophet to the nation of Judah in its final years. The Babylonians were literally camped outside of Jerusalem, waiting to take the city as Jeremiah cried warning in the streets and in the palace. He said that the Babylonians were God's hand of judgment and that Judah should surrender to them. The Judean kings branded Jeremiah as a traitor and assured the people of God's faithfulness to them and to his covenant. In doing so they were ignoring all the warnings that God had grown weary with their failure to obey Him and keep their covenant vows. Jeremiah continued to cry out. God occasionally instructed Jeremiah to represent through drama and visuals the impending disaster. No one listened; instead they tried to keep him silent through a period of imprisonment, by ripping up the scroll that contained his prophecies, and threatening to murder him. Jeremiah wept for his people, for the city of Jerusalem, and for himself. He openly shared his own feelings in both the book that bears his name and more personally in his prayer of lament, Lamentations.

Jeremiah's call came when he was young. God's assurances were the source of his strength when he himself could not humanly bear the cost of being God's prophet. "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," says the Lord. (Jeremiah 1:7-8 NASB) Even when Jeremiah tried to run from God's call and keep silent, he could not. "But if I say, 'I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,' then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it." (Jeremiah 20:9 NASB) God always promised His presence and His words to those whom He called. He repeatedly

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<sup>1</sup> John Oswalt, author of the commentary on Isaiah. NIV Application Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

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told his appointed servants to not be afraid; He would be with them.

Even though the immediate context of Jeremiah was the impending destruction of Jerusalem, his book of prophecy held promises of hope and redemption of the people of God. Through Jeremiah the people were prepared for **70 years of exile**; they knew that there was a beginning and an end after which they would return to their land.

A promise for 70 years into the future: *Jer. 30:2-3 (NLT) "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Write down for the record everything I have said to you, Jeremiah. For the time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people of Israel and Judah. I will bring them home to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it again. I, the LORD, have spoken!"*

A promise that would be fulfilled in Jesus: *Jer. 31:33-34 (NLT) "But this is **the new covenant** I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the LORD. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."*

A promise for each and every day: *Lam. 3:22-23 (NASB) "The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is His faithfulness."*

## Ezekiel

**Ezekiel** received his call from God in exile. Many of the Judeans were taken into exile before the fall of Jerusalem, and there they heard the word of the Lord through his prophet Ezekiel. The first 24 chapters record God's words spoken during the seven years before Jerusalem was destroyed. The people, both in Judah and in Babylon stubbornly refused to believe that such a thing could happen. But Jerusalem would fall. God could no longer tolerate their involvement with idolatry and disobedience. But chapters 33-48, spoken after that terrible event had indeed occurred, have a very different tone. Here God was speaking to a broken people who now thought all was lost. Ezekiel assured that although they had been unfaithful to God, yet He was continuing to reach out to them.

God asked Ezekiel to use object lessons and allegories or parables to deliver his messages. Ezekiel had visions of heavenly creatures with many eyes, wings, and wheels and of God on his throne, a rainbow of jewel-tone color all around him. He described detailed plans for the New Temple where God's people would once again worship, and God's glory would once again fill the temple. Many of the images he uses are difficult to understand. He is a prophet who moves backwards and forwards in time speaking of the near future, years ahead, and of eternity.

In Ezekiel's book, God centered his attention on the human heart as the source of his people's weakness and rebellion. God promised through Ezekiel that He would redeem His people through a heart transformation—not transplant—but a totally new heart. *Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you **a heart of flesh**. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

One of the best known passages in Ezekiel refers to the **valley of dry bones**. God took Ezekiel to a valley filled with bones which is a metaphor for the apparently hopeless condition of God's people. God asked

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Ezekiel if the bones could come to life again. Ezekiel replied that only God would know that. Then God asked him to preach His word to the bones and to proclaim to them that God could renew and restore life to them. Ezekiel obeyed and began to preach. There was a sound of rattling as the bones began to come together. Flesh covered the bones, but the bodies were not alive. God told Ezekiel to prophesy and preach again so that they would be filled with breath, and they were. An entire army stood before Ezekiel where there had only been a valley of broken bones. *Ezekiel 37:12-14 Therefore prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.*" Ezekiel teaches that it is not enough that we be saved from the consequences of our sins. We must also be filled with God's Holy Spirit so that we can live godly lives. Jesus came so that both of these things may take place in the lives of those who put their trust in Him.

God's warnings and rebuke were stern, yet His desire was to show mercy and to redeem His people. He would once again be their God, and they would be wholeheartedly His people.

## Daniel

The first half of the book of **Daniel** is the historical narrative of Daniel's life in **Babylon**. He was taken captive in the first wave of exiled Judeans, about 20 years before Jerusalem's final fall, and chosen for service in the royal court. Daniel was a man devoted to God, and God blessed him and his friends with knowledge and understanding. Daniel could understand visions and dreams. (1:17)

Daniel's devotion to God brought him the recognition of several kings. He was a man of prayer, faith, and unwavering obedience. Neither he nor his friends would defile themselves in any way even though they were living in a pagan land. Their defiance landed Daniel's friends in a fiery furnace, and Daniel was thrown into a lion's den, but all were miraculously spared. Because of the witness of their lives and the evidence of the power of their God, **King Nebuchadnezzar** testified; *"Now, I Nebuchadnezzar praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble"* (Dan 4:37).

One of the interesting features of the book of Daniel is that it was written in two languages. Chapter 1-2:4 and from chapter 7 to the end of the book were written in **Hebrew**: the language of Israel. From Chapter 2:4 through chapter 6, **Aramaic** was used. It was the language of world commerce at that time. The stories of the Babylonian and Persian courts were written so that anyone of that time would be able to read them. It's almost as if there was a public section and a Judean section. With modern translations, this difference is no longer apparent.

In chapters 7-12, Daniel recorded a series of visions that he received during his life in captivity. He dated them by the year in office of the reigning king: Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. Some of Daniel's visions, as well as some of Ezekiel's, are **apocalyptic**. The end of the world or "the end times" is the theme of apocalyptic literature. Numbers, symbols, unusual creatures, signs in the heavens, and other images are used by the prophet to try and portray massive universal change or the end of this world as it is presently known. Daniel is pointing to the time when the kingdoms of this world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God.

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**The Time of the End** "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever ( Dan. 12:1-3,NASB).

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What is a prophet? How were the Old Testament prophets the same as a preacher or evangelist? How were they different?
2. Isaiah had to confess sin before he could respond to God's call. Jeremiah needed assurance of God's help because he was young. Share about your call to ministry? Are there any areas of sin, doubt, or fear that you need to bring to God? Take time to pray for one another.
3. Jeremiah was scorned by his own people. Ezekiel was asked to preach to dry bones. Daniel faced death because of his faithfulness to God. What are some of the challenges that you face in your ministry today? What lessons can you learn from the prophets? What do you need to remember about God?
4. What does it mean to have a heart of flesh? What is a heart of stone? What does wholehearted commitment to God look like? What is the condition of your heart? Ask God to search it and show you? What are the conditions of the hearts of the people to whom you are ministering and where you live? Are there specific bondages that your people struggle to let go? What bondages keep them from wholehearted love for God?
5. Read the quote from Daniel. What do you learn about the end times and the return of Jesus Christ from this passage? How brightly are you shining now for Jesus? Are you and people in your church ready for that day?
6. What is the new covenant that Jeremiah refers to? When was the new covenant put into effect? (Hint: Communion; the Last Supper)
7. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. Share some of the ways a Spirit-filled person might be enabled to be especially obedient to God.

<b>Terms to Know</b>	
Aramaic	Babylon
Hebrew	King Nebuchadnezzar
Apocalyptic	Isaiah
Valley of Dry Bones	Ezekiel
Heart of flesh	Daniel
The new covenant	Prophet
The weeping prophet	A man of unclean lips
Jeremiah	Major Prophets





# 5

## The Minor Prophets

### Lesson Purpose

- To give an overview of the authors, central themes, warnings and promises in each of the Minor Prophets.

### Lesson Outcomes

- Students will know and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**.
- *These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*
- Students will be introduced to each prophet and the setting and situation which he was called to address
- Students will learn the theme of each of the prophetic books. These themes appear in bold for each book
- Students will discover God's promises to send a Redeemer for his people
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

### Table of Contents

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malach
- Questions for Discussion

The **Minor Prophets** are minor because they are shorter in length. They contain prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus, words of hope and faith for those who are suffering, and warnings for those who are walking in disobedience. Even though much of what they had to say was addressed to a particular people and situation, the God for whom they spoke is the same today as He was then. There are many important lessons that present day readers can learn and should consider as they read the stories and prophecies written by these men.

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Hosea	Joel	Amos	Obadiah	Jonah	Micah
Prophet to Israel	Prophet to Judah	Prophet to Israel	Prophecy to Judah about Edom	Prophet to Nineveh	Prophet to Both Kingdoms
Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi
Prophet to Judah about Nineveh	Prophet to Judah	Prophet to Judah	Prophet to Judah after the exile	Prophet to Judah after the exile	Prophet to Judah after the exile

### Hosea

God called **Hosea** not only to speak on His behalf to Israel, but to serve as a living example of God’s love for His rebellious people. *“When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, ‘Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.’ So he married **Gomer**” (Hosea 1:2-3a).* Gomer was an adulterous woman. She did not remain faithful to Hosea, even though they had given life to three sons. Gomer left Hosea to be with other men, but God told Hosea to go and to love his wife again. Hosea had to buy back his own wife, calling on her to remain with him and refrain from all sexual infidelity.

The kings and people of Israel worshipped other gods and idols. They adopted pagan worship practices that included forms of debauchery, sexual activity, and human sacrifice. They treated the Lord like Gomer treated Hosea. God warned them through Hosea that his judgment would come upon them. Throughout the book of Hosea, God’s relationship to Israel is portrayed as a marriage relationship of husband and wife. Israel’s unfaithfulness was equated with adultery. Yet, God’s love for them compelled Him to wait and to continue to call them to repent and to return to Him, their bridegroom. *“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord” (Hosea 2:19-20).* **God’s merciful and boundless love is the theme of Hosea.** Tragically Israel never returned to Him and so they were lost.

### Joel

The book of **Joel** proclaimed that the **Day of the Lord** was coming with a vengeance. The judgment and destruction that would occur on that day were compared to armies of locusts ravaging all the land. Darkness, gloom, death, and fear would sweep over the earth. Was Joel referring only to the fall of Judah, to a later day that has come and gone, or to a future day of reckoning that perhaps yet stands before us now? Perhaps all three of these questions have an affirmative answer because the prophets’ visions were not usually seen from the perspective of a time line.

Still, there was and is no need for the people of God to fear. *“Even now, declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Joel 2:13).* Joel spoke of the great things that God had done, of his power to redeem the damage of the locusts in the lives of His people (2:25), and assured that *“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord*

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will be saved" (2:32).

After the Day of the Lord, there was a promise of blessing. *"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days"* (Joel 2:28-29). Peter stood before the crowds in Jerusalem on Pentecost and quoted this promise as the explanation for the amazing witness of the many spoken tongues when God's Spirit was poured out on the apostles. Yet, Joel's prophecies continue to speak on beyond even Pentecost to the New Jerusalem. God's redeeming grace and promise of a future time of peace and blessing are themes of Joel. Tragically many have not repented nor have they given their hearts to God. **The theme is: Repent, for the Day of the Lord is near.**

### Amos

The prophet **Amos** also spoke of the Day of the Lord as a Day of Judgment and destruction, but his words were directed primarily to the Kingdom of Israel. The certainty of judgment and the intensity of God's wrath towards Israel is vividly presented in Amos' prophecies.

Amos 2:6-8 (NLT)

This is what the LORD says:

"The people of Israel have sinned again and again,  
and I will not let them go unpunished!

They sell honorable people for silver  
and poor people for a pair of sandals.

They trample helpless people in the dust  
and shove the oppressed out of the way.

Both father and son sleep with the same woman,  
corrupting my holy name.

At their religious festivals,  
they lounge in clothing their debtors put up as security.

In the house of their god,  
they drink wine bought with unjust fines.

Israel was proud and content in their sin. God was ready to act. Judgment came in the form of the Assyrian armies who murdered, ravaged, and emptied the land of God's people. Yet, God was merciful. Amos's final prophecy told of the days that were coming when the land would again be rich in produce, the cities rebuilt, and His people restored to the land. Tragically His mercy was rejected, and Israel was judged. **God's justice and judgment is the theme of Amos**

### Obadiah:

The prophet, **Obadiah**, was given a vision of God's message for **Edom**. Edom was the land east and south of Israel where Esau, the brother of Jacob, had settled hundreds of years earlier. Edom offered no assistance when Judah and Israel were in trouble. *"You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune"* (Obadiah 1:12). In fact, they assisted the Babylonians in the sack of Jerusalem. God promised that they would be punished for their lack of compassion and pride. He would restore the house of Jacob, but the house of Esau would

be left in ruin (verse 18). God's sovereignty over all nations is a theme of Obadiah. Tragically the nation of Edom did not offer help to their relatives in Israel and Judah. The theme is: **Judah's God is Edom's Judge.**

## Jonah

The book of **Jonah** is the historical narrative of the Prophet Jonah's call to **Nineveh**. Nineveh was located north and east of Israel along the Fertile Crescent. It was the chief city of the mighty Assyrian empire that would eventually capture Samaria and destroy Israel, Jonah's home. So Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed. When God asked Jonah to tell the city that God would destroy them in forty days if they would not repent, Jonah refused to go and tried to run away. Jonah had no compassion for Nineveh. Jonah got onto a boat heading in the opposition direction. But God sent a violent storm that threatened the lives of the sailors. Jonah realized that God was pursuing him through the storm, so he asked to be thrown into the sea where God had prepared a large fish to swallow him alive. Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of the big fish, repenting of his disobedience.

The fish spat Jonah out on the land, and he went to Nineveh to announce the God's judgment, and just as he feared the people responded with repentance. Even the king cried out for God's mercy, so God spared Nineveh that day.

Jonah was furious. He did not think the city deserved a second chance. God rebuked Jonah for his lack of compassion for those who were lost. **God's concern for the entire world is a theme of Jonah.** Tragically, even a prophet can fail to understand God's mission of mercy to reach all who are spiritually lost. A rebellious prophet spent three days in the belly of a whale; the promised redeemer would spend three days in a grave.

## Micah

The prophet **Micah**, a contemporary of Isaiah, presented God's case against his rebellious people. In particular, Micah addressed the corrupt prophets and spiritual leaders who had lead the people astray and had encouraged their rebellion. Micah prophesied what would happen to the false prophets. *"The sun will set for the prophets and the day will go dark for them. The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God"* (Micah 3:6b-7).

Micah reported much that was wrong, but God made it clear to Micah what people were to do to please God. *"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God"* (Micah 6:8). God did not want religious behavior like prayers or offerings as much as he wanted daily living that reflected the integrity and the love (i.e. the holiness) of his own character

God promised to send a faithful leader, a prophet/priest/king who would redeem them. So Micah was also given several prophecies that pointed to God's redemption of His people, and in particular His plan to redeem them through a messiah. *"But you, **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient time."*(Micah 5:2). *"He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace"*( Micah 5: 4-5). **God's judgment coupled with His plan to redeem is a theme in Micah.**

## VII. NAHUM

Like Jonah, **Nahum** was also given a judgment on Nineveh. About 100 years after Jonah, Nahum spoke again of God's charges and impending judgment against that wicked city. But this time there would be no repentant response. Nahum concluded his message with the following words to Nineveh: *"Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?"* (Nahum 3:19).

Unlike the warnings that were given to Judah and Israel, there was no promised redemption. The entire book preached warning and destruction for Nineveh with the exception of one verse. *"The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him"* (Nahum 1:7). Nahum's personal testimony about His God stands out against the chaotic and violent scene that would be the reality of a nation who rejected the goodness of God. **The judgment of God against Nineveh is the theme of Nahum.**

## VIII. HABAKKUK

**Habakkuk**, a contemporary of Jeremiah, challenged God's justice, but much like Job, concluded that God is worthy of worship even if he does not explain his ways to us. Habakkuk presented two complaints to God. First, he complained that God was allowing wicked people to prevail over good ones. The leaders of Judah had become corrupt and the people were suffering in an unjust society. God answered that He had chosen the Babylonians as the means to inflict his judgment on Judah. They would invade and ravage the land. Habakkuk raised a second complaint. How could God use the Babylonians, who were more wicked than the Judeans, to bring His judgment on Judah? In God's response He reaffirmed the reasons for his plan to bring judgment, but He also assured Habakkuk that He was sovereign. *"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"* (Hab. 2:14). *"But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him"* (Hab. 2:20).

Habakkuk finished his prophecy by writing out his prayer to God. He knew that God's judgment was coming upon the land of Judah, and that there would be even greater suffering to come for the people of God. Yet, he took to heart God's assurances that He was sovereign and closed his prayer with the following statement of faith.

*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are not grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce not food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights"* (Hab. 3:17-19). **The theme of the book is: Faith in the sovereign, loving justice of God.**

## IX. ZEPHANIAH

**Zephaniah**, also a contemporary of Jeremiah, prophesied during the reign of King Josiah in Judah. **King Josiah** was the last of the Judean kings who loved God and who led a period of revival in Judah. This revival, which grew out of the re-discovery and teaching of God's laws, was not long-lived, but it had a far-reaching effect by preparing the faithful remnant to protect and study God's word throughout the exile. Because of the rebellion that had persisted in the land, God warned the nation through Zephaniah that the Day of the Lord would come when there would be judgment and suffering. But God's mercy was made known through the following invitation. *"Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger"* (Zeph. 2:3).

Judah, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria all received warning through Zephaniah. Yet, his prophecy ended with God's promised restoration of Jerusalem. *"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing"* (Zeph. 3:17). **God is holy and just and also great in mercy and love; this is the theme of Zephaniah.**

## Haggai

There is a gap of about 100 years between the book of Zephaniah and **Haggai**. The context for the book of Haggai was post-exilic Jerusalem. The temple had been essentially left in ruins for over 70 years. The Persian Kings had allowed the Judean exiles to return to their land and had given them both their blessing and resources to re-build the temple. But the work had only started when it was abandoned. So the foundations had stood empty for about 15 years when the Lord directed Haggai to speak to **Zerubbabel**, governor of Judah, to Joshua the high priest, and to the people living in post-exilic Jerusalem. Four times the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai, directing them to begin work on the temple again. The first time, God brought a rebuke to the people. They were busy re-building their own homes while the temple remained in ruins. God called his people to turn their attention to His home and assured them that they would be blessed for their obedience. God then sent word of encouragement. Even though the people had returned to their land, they were a broken people and defenseless against the many new enemies who had settled the land while they were in captivity. God next called them to purity, not only in their lives, but in the care that they were to take in every stone that they would lay in the construction of the temple. Finally, God encouraged Zerubbabel, assuring him of His presence and blessing as the governor for Judah. One phrase of the prophet's message is repeated five times to emphasize the theme of the book. **"Give careful thought to your ways: Is God and what concerns Him your priority?"**

## Zechariah

**Zechariah** was also a prophet for post-exilic Judah. He began his ministry only a few weeks after Haggai began his. Zechariah had a series of visions that spoke of God's blessings on Zerubbabel and Joshua, as well as the restoration of Jerusalem and of his people in the land. God desired his people to live in righteousness before Him and one another. . Zechariah's visions and messages were meant to encourage a discouraged people. God was still the ruler of the world and he intended to use his people, even in different conditions, to be the bearers of the Messiah through whom the world will be judged and saved.

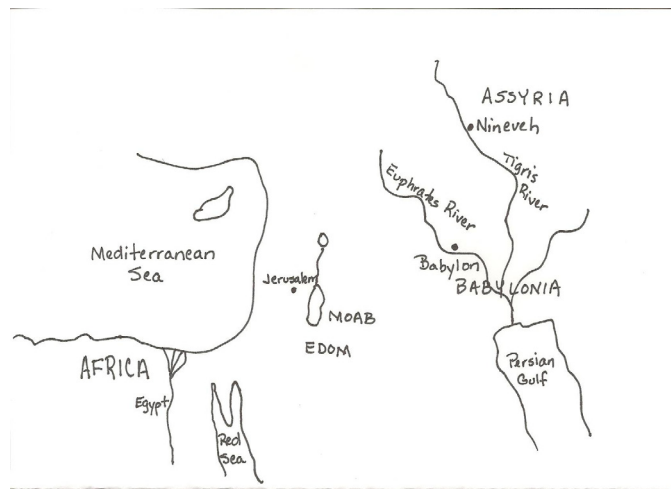
The prophecies extend beyond the return of Judah to promises of the messiah. *"See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey"* (Zech. 9:9). *"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity"* (Zech. 13:1). Zechariah's vision extended beyond the time of the messiah to the day when *"the Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name"*(Zech. 14:9, NIV). That fountain was Jesus' shed blood on the cross. **The Lordship of God is the theme of Zechariah.**

## Malchi

The prophet **Malachi** may have been a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah. Many of the conditions he addressed were similar to those they faced. The temple had finally been completed as a result of the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah. But now some 75 years after their work, the city itself had still not been rebuilt. This symbolized the reluctance of the people to give God their sole allegiance. So God called his people to covenant faithfulness. God, through his prophet Malachi, addressed the corruption at the highest level of their society, the priesthood. They dishonored God with unworthy sacrifices, careless observance of the law, stingy offerings, and divided loyalty of their hearts. God affirmed his expectations for them; *“For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty”* (Mal. 2:7).

Part of the reason that neither the priests, nor the people, nor the husbands were faithful to their covenants is that they did not feel that God really rewarded the righteous or punished the wicked. In response, God assured them that he himself was coming and that he would set all things right. Interestingly the last two verses in this final book of the Old Testament prepare us for what will come next. *“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse”* (Mal. 4:5-6). John the Baptist would fulfill this prophecy; God’s promised Messiah would not be long in coming. God cannot be fooled is a message to hear from Malachi.

**The theme of the book is: the God of Justice is Coming.**



The map is not to scale. Notice the location of Nineveh where Jonah was sent. The exiles were led on foot from Jerusalem to Babylon along the route of the Fertile Crescent. Many died in that journey.

The CCP Pastoral Training Course  
Survey of the Old Testament

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**Questions for Discussion:**

1. The call to repentance is heard throughout the Minor Prophets. Joel specifically mentioned the necessity of wholehearted sincerity. Have you experienced this type of complete repentance personally? In your church? If not, what may be hindering the obedience to that call? Are you preaching it to your people?
2. Read Habakkuk's final prayer. Personalize it. What might be the cost or losses in your context that would most deeply impact you and your community? Would you still be able to place your hope in the Lord?
3. What can you learn from the prophet Jonah? Are you in any way trying to run away from the call of God on your life? Has God sent you to a people that are difficult for you to love? Take time to pray and ask others to intercede for you.
4. Even though the Minor Prophets are filled with words of judgment and destruction, God's promise of redemption is always present. He is a redeemer. What promises of God give you hope for today and tomorrow? What promise are you sharing with the people to whom you minister? Have you learned some things that you should share from your study of the Old Testament in this course?
5. The message of Haggai is to stop and give careful thought to your ways both in your personal life and in the life of the church. Does all that you do bring glory to God? Would there even be one brick that's been laid in your church that would not bring Him glory?
6. Is there a sin pattern in your community that God is calling you to address? Is there any form of idolatry? Are the hearts of the people in the church divided in their loyalties? Are the leaders leading holy lives worthy of imitation?
7. God has promised to write his New Covenant on our hearts (Jer. 31:31). The covenant in the Bible is about giving God exclusive control over our lives and behavior. Is that true in your life? Do you live a Christlike life in every area of your life – finances, family, sexuality, etc.? Why or why not?

<b>Terms to Know</b>		
Hosea	Zephaniah	Bethlehem
Joel	Haggai	Edom
Amos	Zechariah	King Josiah
Obadiah	Malachi	Zerubbabel
Micah	Gomer	Riding on a donkey
Nahum	Day of the	A fountain
Habakkuk	Lord	Nineveh



