



BibleSavvy

JOURNAL

MAY - SEPTEMBER • 2020

COVERED IN THIS JOURNAL

2 CHRONICLES 30-36

MARK • DANIEL • 1 PETER

ESTHER • 2 PETER • JUDE

EZRA • HAGGAI • ZECHARIAH

NEHEMIAH • MALACHI • REVELATION

PSALM 140-150 • PROVERBS 17-21

JOURNAL INDEX

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PASTOR
HOW THE SCHEDULE IS ORGANIZED
THE COMA METHOD
HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

.....

JOURNAL PAGES

.....

APPENDIX

LITERARY SETTING
HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL AS A FAMILY
HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL
IN A COMMUNITY GROUP
MEMORY VERSES
COMA AT A GLANCE
(Inside back cover)

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PASTOR

People tend to view their pastor as a Bible-Answer-Man. He's the guy who went to school for years to learn how to draw really cool insights out of God's Word, right? Well, I can vouch for the fact that I spent lots of years studying the Bible in college and graduate school, but I'd guess that 90% of my insights from Scripture have come from personally reading and applying it to my life day after day.

That's something any Christ follower can do--and should do! If you'll make time for the Bible every day, it will transform you into a wise, godly person who has a huge impact on your world. The apostle Paul wrote to his young friend, Timothy, that the Holy Scriptures are "able to make you wise for salvation," and are also "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17). That's why thriving Christ followers have always been people who meet with God in his Word every day.

The Bible Savvy Journal is designed to encourage you in daily Bible reading. It will take you through the entire Bible in a four-year period. It will also train you to get your own insights out of Scripture.

Here are some helpful tips to get you started:

- Choose a consistent time and place where you will read the Bible every day. By choosing the same time every day, this is more likely to become a good habit.
- Purchase and use an *NIV Study Bible*. This is what will enable you to make sense of difficult-to-understand passages. The footnotes to every passage include historical, theological, and application insights.
- Use the COMA method (described elsewhere in this journal) to come up with an application for your life from each day's reading. Reading the Bible won't change your life unless you are crafting a personal application from each daily passage and writing it down. This is where published devotional guides will let you down. They'll give you a sense that you've gotten something out of the Bible because you've read the author's one-page summary of the passage, but that's their insight and suggested application, not yours. Toss out the devotional guide, and allow God to speak to you directly.

- Don't expect every day's reading to be a stellar experience. There are going to be some books of the Bible that will be challenging to draw deep insights and applications from. **Keep reading.** It's the ongoing discipline of reading the Bible day after day that will transform your life over time. You don't have to come away from every passage with an amazing zinger for the day.

- If you miss a day's reading, you miss a day. Some people will want to go back and read the passages they missed. If you've got the time to do that, great! But if catching up becomes a burden to you, don't do it. Just pick up the schedule again at the current day's reading. Instead of guilt-tripping yourself for the days you miss, be reminded that you're possibly now reading the Bible more consistently than in the past.

I'm praying this journal will make a daily Bible reader out of you. May this habit enrich your relationship with Jesus Christ and transform your life as it has mine.



Jim Nicodem

Senior Pastor, Christ Community Church

HOW THE SCHEDULE IS ORGANIZED

This schedule has been put together thoughtfully so that the length and order of the readings make sense. Here are some of the principles that guided the creation of the schedule:

The Whole Bible in Four Years. The reading plan covers the entire Bible in four years and some New Testament books twice. Even though the Old Testament is longer, the readings are divided so there are an equal number of days spent in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Context Preserved. Because context is crucial, we will read through whole books from start to finish. This helps us keep track of the plot or the logic of each book. Likewise, there are some places where the chapter divisions—which were added years after the Bible was written—are not in the most logical place, so some readings are divided in the middle of chapters.

Reading Length. For the most part, readings will be 1-2 chapters long. They tend to be a little longer in the Old Testament and a little shorter in the New Testament. This is because much of the Old Testament is narrative, and it is easier to read a big chunk of a story. There are also key passages in the New Testament that are worth going through more slowly.

The Old Testament in Chronological Order. In order to follow the big storyline of the Bible, we will try to read the books in the order of the events they describe. When there are deviations from chronological order, it will be noted in the Context page for that book.

The Gospels are Spread Out. Because we want to frequently come back to the Gospels—the four biographies of Jesus—we are reading each of them twice and have spread them across the four years. This means that we will work through the life of Jesus twice a year.

The New Testament by Author. For the most part, books by the same author are grouped together. Associated authors are also grouped together. Mark and Peter worked together, so their books are together. Luke and Paul were associates, so Paul's letters come right after Luke's books. Matthew, James, and Hebrews all have a very Jewish flavor, so they are next to each other. When there are reasons like this for the order of the books, they will be noted in the Context page for each of those books in the journal.

Psalms and Proverbs. The only books that we will not read all at once are Psalms and Proverbs. Neither of these books are designed to be read all together. Psalms is the songbook of the Bible. These are prayers that are meant to be worked into our lives all the time, so we will read three chapters each month. Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings which are hard to digest if they are read too fast, so we will read one chapter each month.

THE DIFFICULT PASSAGES

Paul says, “All Scripture is...useful” (2 Timothy 3:16). Every passage in the Bible has something to teach us. This is why this reading plan covers every chapter and verse in the Bible. We want to learn from the whole Bible, not just the easy parts.

As you work through COMA* in the difficult parts, ask yourself, “Why would the author think it was important to include this?” The details of how to offer a sacrifice or build a tabernacle might seem irrelevant to you, but the fact that Moses (and God) chose to write them down might tell you something significant about what God is like and what he values.

At the same, it helps to be realistic. There are some difficult passages in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. This schedule does two things to help with these parts:

Ripping Off the Band-Aid. Some passages are tedious. They are repetitive and detailed. These passages are important, but that does not mean you have to spend a week slogging through nine chapters of names. When these stretches come up, the readings have been made longer in order to get through them faster. So, if a reading looks long, don't panic! That is done for your sake. The recommendation for these parts is: skim, but don't skip. Get the big picture of what is going on. This is where using the headings and notes in a study Bible will help a lot.

A Spoonful of Sugar. In some particularly long and challenging sections of the Old Testament, the choice has been made to weave in every-other-day readings from the New Testament. This way, even if one day the passage you read isn't very accessible, the next day you will have one that is more accessible.

*COMA is an acronym for Context, Observations, Message, and Application. A detailed description is located on the following pages as well as an at-a-glance guide on the inside back cover of this journal for reference.

THE COMA METHOD

How do you move from text to life when reading the Bible? Here is a simple, four-step process for doing just that. The four steps in the process form the acronym COMA.

C: Context

Before you can apply a passage from the Bible to your own life, you need to understand what it meant to its original audience. What was their context? There are at least two contexts that should be considered for every Bible passage.

- **Historical setting:** Who wrote this book? Who were they writing to? What problem were they addressing in the lives of their readers? When did the action in this book take place? What was going on in the world at the time?
- **Literary setting:** There are different kinds (or genres) of literature in the Bible and different rules for interpreting each one. In the appendix, there is a guide to the different genres you will encounter.

Context information can be found in the introduction to each book in *The NIV Study Bible*. At the start of each book in this journal, there is a space to work through some of these issues of context. For more on this step, check out the book, *Context: How to Understand the Bible*.*

O: Observations

Next, read the passage and make as many observations about it as you possibly can. Here are four things to keep your eyes open for. If it helps, you can use the acronym **TRTS** (“treats”) to remember them.

- **T: Theme:** What word or phrase summarizes what this passage is all about?
- **R: Repeating Words or Ideas:** What comes up multiple times in the passage?
- **T: Truths about God:** What does this passage tell you about God (Father, Son, or Spirit)?
- **S: Something Striking:** Anything jump out at you for some other reason?

You can get more details about how to make observations on pages 51-55 in the book, *Walk: How to Apply the Bible*.*

M: Message

The next step is to determine the basic message—a timeless principle—that God is communicating through this passage. To do this, pick just one of your observations—you will probably have a few—and ask, “What message might I draw from this observation?” Try to sum it up in one, simple sentence.

A tool to help you find the principle behind one of your observations is the acronym **SPECS**. Ask yourself, do I see one of the following in this passage:

- **S: Sin** to confess
- **P: Promise** to claim
- **E: Example** to follow
- **C: Command** to obey
- **S: Statement** about God

You can get more details about how to discover the message on pages 55-59 in the book, *Walk: How to Apply the Bible*.*

A: Application

This is where the rubber meets the road. How can you put this principle into practice in your own life? Here are some tips for applying the message of a passage to your life.

- Make it personal and specific.
- Write it down.
- Pray for help.

This is a process that you can do on your own, with friends or family, or in a community group. Even if you do this privately, it is more powerful if you talk with others about what you learn each day.

You can get more details about how to apply a passage on pages 59-63 in the book, *Walk: How to Apply the Bible*.*

**Context* and *Walk* are books in the *Bible Savvy* series by James L. Nicodem.

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

A survey of a thousand churches concluded that the number one contributor to a person's spiritual growth is daily reading and reflecting on God's Word. This has more of an impact on us than listening to sermons, serving in an area of ministry, or giving money to the Lord's work. These other activities are critical, but a daily encounter with the Bible plays an even bigger role in our spiritual growth. This journal has been designed to make that a simpler and more fulfilling experience. Before you jump in, here are some **tips on how to use this tool**.

The image to the right is a sample journaling page. Each page has two days of reading. The numbers marked are explained below.

1 Observations, Message, and Application

As shown in the example, your journaling will be written over top of the gray words. Don't worry if your writing overlaps into the next section, these words are just **visual reminders** of what you're looking for in each Bible reading passage. For details on what each section means, see the previous pages on COMA.

2 Memory Verse

You will be encouraged to **memorize a new verse every two weeks**. This verse will come from one of the readings during those two weeks. Don't let this intimidate you. Stick with it, and it will become easier each day!

3 PG Content

This symbol (★) will appear when the Bible reading for that day contains **"PG" content** (i.e. explicit violence and/or sexuality). If you are a parent, this will help you prepare for questions that may come from your children about the reading. See the note in the appendix about using this plan as a family.

4 Testament

On each page, you will see either an **OT** or **NT**. This will let you know if the Bible reading for that day is from the **Old Testament or the New Testament**.

NOW IT'S TIME TO GET STARTED!

1. утверждаю, что я правее, а утверждаю, что я прав

*меш - Spagnum, mat ras, osennichko i zimnyem - Spagnum, mat ras, os

NT

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

- MARK 1:15

CONTEXT

1-2 CHRONICLES

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read 1-2 Chronicles.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The books of 1-2 Chronicles (which was composed as one book, but divided into two books because it didn't fit on one scroll) tells the story of Israel's pre-exilic history, but from the perspective of the people who have returned to the land after the Exile. It covers the same material as 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. Those books were written to explain why the Exile happened, so they emphasize the failures of Israel's leaders. Chronicles, however, emphasizes the faithfulness of Israel's leaders. By highlighting Israel's glory days, Chronicles gives models and inspiration for a new generation seeking to renew the nation in the wake of the Exile.

What do we know about the author of the book of Chronicles?

When was Chronicles written?

Who was the original audience of the book of Chronicles?

Watch the overview video about Chronicles from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read.

Chronicles is a narrative book. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting narrative.

1.

2.

3.

Fair warning, the first 9 chapters of Chronicles is a series of long genealogies (a.k.a. a list of names). We’re going to help you out by having you read all of them in one day so you don’t get bogged down. But here’s a tip: Don’t get too focused on individual names. Read the headings to identify the groups. Then ask which groups get the most space. Then ask, why would the author want to emphasize those groups? Could it be that people from those groups are the main characters in the rest of the book?

MAY 4, 2020

2 CHRONICLES 30:1-31:21

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 5, 2020

2 CHRONICLES 32:1-33

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.

PSALM 140:12

MAY 6, 2020

2 CHRONICLES 33:1-25

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 7, 2020

2 CHRONICLES 34:1-33

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.

PSALM 140:12

CONTEXT

PSALMS

In this journal, we will be reading one Psalm or Proverb per week. Rather than trying to read through those books all at once, we felt it would be more beneficial to have them come up regularly throughout the entire plan.

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read through Psalms.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

The book of Psalms is the songbook of the Bible. It is full of worship songs and prayers that have been used by the people of Israel and the church for thousands of years. These are the words God gave us to pray, and they teach us so much about who God is and how we can approach him.

Who wrote Psalms? What did you discover about them?

When were the Psalms written and collected?

Read the section on “Theology: Major Themes” and the “Theology: Summary” in The NIV Study Bible’s introduction to the Psalms. Jot down a couple of key themes to be on the lookout for as you read the book.

All of the Psalms are written in the poetic genre. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal, and write down the rules for interpreting poetry in the Bible.

1.

2.

3.

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 140

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.

PSALM 140:12

CONTEXT

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read through the Gospel of Mark.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

The Gospel of Mark is one of the four biographies of Jesus that open up the New Testament. Mark tells the story of Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection. The events in the book of Mark take place between 26 and 30 A.D. Mark was an associate of Peter, and many scholars think that the Gospel of Mark is based on the recollections of Peter. This is why, a few weeks after reading Mark, we will be reading the letters of Peter.

Who is the author of Mark? What do you know about them?

When was Mark written?

Who was the original audience of Mark? What was their situation? (Read “Recipients” and “Occasion and Purpose” in The NIV Study Bible.)

Watch The Bible Project's introductory video to the book of Mark, available at ccclife.org/context. Jot down a couple of key themes to be on the lookout for as you read the book.

Most of the book of Mark written in the narrative genre. Look at the guide to "Literary Setting" in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting narrative in the Bible.

1.

2.

3.

MAY 11, 2020

2 CHRONICLES 36:1-23

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 12, 2020

MARK 1:1-20

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.

PSALM 140:12

MAY 13, 2020

MARK 1:21-45

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 14, 2020

MARK 2:1-28

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.

PSALM 140:12

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 141

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor
and upholds the cause of the needy.

PSALM 140:12

MAY 18, 2020

MARK 4:1-34

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 19, 2020

MARK 4:35-5:20

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

PROVERBS 17:17

MAY 20, 2020

MARK 5:21-43

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 21, 2020

MARK 6:1-29

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

PROVERBS 17:17

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 142

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

PROVERBS 17:17

MAY 25, 2020

MARK 7:1-37

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 26, 2020

MARK 8:1-26

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

PROVERBS 17:17

MAY 27, 2020

MARK 8:27-9:13

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MAY 28, 2020

MARK 9:14-50

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

PROVERBS 17:17

CONTEXT

PROVERBS

In this journal, we will be reading one Psalm or Proverb per week. Rather than trying to read through those books all at once, this journal has been designed to have them come up regularly throughout the entire plan.

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read through Proverbs.

The following questions can be answered using the introduction at the beginning of the book of Proverbs in *The NIV Study Bible*. Even if you do not have *The NIV Study Bible*, links to the introductions to all the books as well as other resources for studying Proverbs are available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

The book of Proverbs is all about wisdom—how to live life well in God’s world, under God’s rule. Proverbs is full of practical insight into ordinary things like work, relationships, money, leadership, words, family, and much more.

Who wrote Proverbs? What did you discover about them?

When were the Proverbs written and collected?

Read the section on “Purpose and Teaching” and “The Wise Man According to Proverbs” in *The NIV Study Bible*’s introduction to Proverbs. Jot down a couple of key themes to be on the lookout for as you read the book.

Proverbs is “wisdom literature,” and there is one very important rule for interpreting this kind of writing. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal, and write down the rule for interpreting proverbs in the Bible.

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PROVERBS 17

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.

PROVERBS 17:17

JUNE 1, 2020

MARK 10:32-52

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JUNE 2, 2020

MARK 11:1-25

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MARK 13:31

JUNE 3, 2020

MARK 11:27-12:12

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JUNE 4, 2020

MARK 12:13-44

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MARK 13:31

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 143

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MARK 13:31

JUNE 8, 2020

MARK 14:1-31

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JUNE 9, 2020

MARK 14:32-72

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MARK 13:31

JUNE 10, 2020

MARK 15:1-47

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JUNE 11, 2020

MARK 16:1-8

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MARK 13:31

CONTEXT

DANIEL

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Daniel.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The book of Daniel begins with the Babylonian invasion, in which some of the young members of Jerusalem elite were taken captive. The story picks up in the Babylonian court with Daniel and his three friends. Their stories are some of the more famous stories in the Bible, involving a fiery furnace, giant statues, a lion’s den, and more. We like to tell these stories to kids, but they have a very serious message about how to live in a world that holds different values that are at odds with the kingdom of God.

What do we know about the author of the book of Daniel?

When was Daniel written?

Who was the original audience of the book of Daniel?

Watch the overview video about Daniel from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read. (If you have time, you may also want to watch the videos on “The Way of Exile” and “The Son of Man” which both cover key themes in the book.)

Daniel is a narrative book. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting narrative.

1.

2.

3.

The second half of Daniel contains some prophetic sections. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting prophecy. This is a specific type of prophecy known as apocalyptic. It uses vivid imagery to reveal the spiritual reality behind earthly appearances.

1.

2.

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 144

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MARK 13:31

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

PSALM 145:8-9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

PSALM 145:8-9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 145

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

PSALM 145:8-9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

PSALM 145:8-9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

PSALM 145:8-9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PROVERBS 18

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

PSALM 145:8-9

CONTEXT

1 PETER

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read 1 Peter.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are focusing on the books that come from the era of the Exile. In his first letter, Peter picks up on some of these same themes. He is writing to people who are a minority religious group in a world that is often at odds with them. That is why addresses them as “God’s elect, exiles” who have been “scattered” around the Roman Empire (1 Peter 1:1), which Peter symbolically calls “Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13). His message to them is summed up in 1 Peter 2:11-12, “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” As you read 1 Peter, you may want to try and identify ways this book helps us live as people who are “not the home team” in our society (or any society until Jesus returns).

What do we know about the author of 1 Peter?

When was 1 Peter written?

Watch the Bible Project video about 1 Peter. Write down a few themes that you will look out for as you read the letter.

1 Peter is a letter (often called an “epistle”). Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal, and write down the rules for interpreting epistles in the Bible.

1.

2.

3.

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

JULY 1, 2020

1 PETER 1:13-2:3

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JULY 2, 2020

1 PETER 2:4-12

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 146

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

JULY 6, 2020

1 PETER 3:1-7

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JULY 7, 2020

1 PETER 3:8-22

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

JULY 8, 2020

1 PETER 4:1-11

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JULY 9, 2020

1 PETER 4:12-19

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 147

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

CONTEXT

ESTHER

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Esther.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The book of Esther is set in the empire of Persia, which took over after Babylon. Esther is a young Jewish woman who finds herself caught up in a crisis that threatens to wipe out God’s people. It is a story of courage, but even more, it is a story of how God is at work behind the scenes, even in places where he seems completely absent. In fact, God is never mentioned once in this book. However, you may notice some “coincidences” that seem a little too coincidental. I wonder who is responsible for those?

What do we know about the author of the book of Esther?

When was Esther written?

Who was the original audience of the book of Esther?

Watch the overview video about Esther from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read.

Esther is a narrative book. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting narrative.

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JULY 13, 2020

ESTHER 1:1-2:18

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JULY 14, 2020

ESTHER 2:19-4:17

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

CONTEXT

2 PETER

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read 2 Peter.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In his first letter, Peter wrote to strengthen Christ-followers when they faced pressure from the outside world. In his second letter, his concern is internal threats to the Christian community. False teachers have arisen in the church, and Peter offering a stern warning about the danger they pose.

Watch the Bible Project video about 2 Peter. Write down a few themes that you will look out for as you read the letter.

2 Peter is a letter (often called an “epistle”). Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal, and write down the rules for interpreting epistles in the Bible.

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OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 148

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

CONTEXT

JUDE

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Jude.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

This short letter was written by one of the brothers of Jesus.* Like 2 Peter, Jude is warning Christ-followers about false teachers that have arisen in the church community.

Watch the Bible Project video about Jude. Write down a few themes that you will look out for as you read the letter.

**As an aside, if Jesus was an imposter, do you think his brothers would have followed him? I mean, if anyone knows that you are not the perfect Son of God, it's your siblings, right? What would it take to convince you to worship your brother? He'd probably have to do something amazing like, I don't know...rise from the dead.*

Jude is a letter (often called an “epistle”). Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal, and write down the rules for interpreting epistles in the Bible.

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OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

CONTEXT

HAGGAI

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Haggai.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The book of Haggai is set in the time of the Persian Empire. It addresses the people who have returned to the land, but have failed to do what God wants them to do, especially with regard to the temple.

What do we know about the author of the book of Haggai?

When was Haggai written?

Who was the original audience of the book of Haggai?

Watch the overview video about Haggai from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read.

Haggai is a prophetic book. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting prophecy.

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OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PROVERBS 19

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

CONTEXT

ZECHARIAH

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Zechariah.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The book of Zechariah was written in this era, as the people wait for the full restoration of God’s kingdom. Zechariah confronts Israel’s present sin, but also offers hope for the future arrival of the Messiah. Zechariah contains some the strangest imagery in the entire Bible. These images are not literal, so you’ll need to engage your imagination to make connections between the symbols and the reality they are describing. Keep in mind that the prophets aren’t always predicting the future. More often they are giving God’s perspective on the present. As you read, focus on the question: how do these symbols address the issues facing Israel in their day?

What do we know about the author of the book of Zechariah?

When was Zechariah written?

Who was the original audience of the book of Zechariah?

Watch the overview video about Zechariah from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read.

Zechariah is a prophetic book. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting prophecy.

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JULY 27, 2020

ZECHARIAH 1:1-2:13

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JULY 28, 2020

ZECHARIAH 3:1-4:14

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

JUDE 24-25

JULY 29, 2020

ZECHARIAH 5:1-6:15

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

JULY 30, 2020

ZECHARIAH 7:1-8:23

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 149

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

CONTEXT

EZRA & NEHEMIAH

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Ezra & Nehemiah.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The books of Ezra & Nehemiah tell the story of the groups of Jews who returned to the land of Israel, even while the Persians were still ruling over them. (Originally, it was composed as one book, but it was divided because it didn't fit on one scroll.)

What do we know about the author of the books of Ezra & Nehemiah?

When were Ezra & Nehemiah written?

Who was the original audience of the books of Ezra & Nehemiah?

Watch the overview video about Ezra & Nehemiah from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read.

Ezra & Nehemiah are narrative books. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting narrative.

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AUGUST 3, 2020

ZECHARIAH 12:1-14:21

★ OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 4, 2020

EZRA 1:1-2:70

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

AUGUST 5, 2020

EZRA 3:1-5:1

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 6, 2020

EZRA 5:1-6:22

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 150

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

AUGUST 10, 2020

EZRA 8:1-36

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 11, 2020

EZRA 9:1-10:44

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you

ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

AUGUST 12, 2020

NEHEMIAH 1:1-2:20

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 13, 2020

NEHEMIAH 3:1-4:23

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you

NEHEMIAH 9:6

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 19

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you

NEHEMIAH 9:6

AUGUST 17, 2020

NEHEMIAH 7:1-8:18

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 18, 2020

NEHEMIAH 9:1-37

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you

NEHEMIAH 9:6

AUGUST 19, 2020

NEHEMIAH 9:38-10:39

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 20, 2020

NEHEMIAH 11:1-12:26

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you

NEHEMIAH 9:6

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PROVERBS 20

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you

NEHEMIAH 9:6

CONTEXT

MALACHI

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Malachi.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

In our Old Testament readings, we are currently reading books that come out of the context of the Exile. In 586 B.C., the people of Israel were taken captive by the Babylonians. Decades after this event, the people were permitted to return to their land. However, the kingdom of Israel was never fully restored. They remained under the thumb of empire after empire, even up to the time of Jesus.

The prophet Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament (in modern Bibles), and it deals with the fact that even after the Exile, the people of Israel are still struggling with the same unfaithfulness that led to the Exile in the first place. This is why the book also contains predictions of the real solution to the problem of sin. It contains prophecies that are fulfilled by John the Baptist and, ultimately, Jesus.

What do we know about the author of the book of Malachi?

When was Malachi written?

Who was the original audience of the book of Malachi?

Watch the overview video about Malachi from The Bible Project, which can be found at ccclife.org/context. Pick out a couple of themes to look for as you read.

Malachi is a prophetic book. Look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal or at ccclife.org/literarysetting, and write down the rules for interpreting prophecy.

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OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

In a loud voice they were saying: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

REVELATION 5:12

CONTEXT

REVELATION

The first step in COMA is “Context.” In order to understand any particular passage in a book, we need to understand the context of the book as a whole. Fill out this page to have handy as you read Revelation.

The following questions can be answered using the resources available for free at ccclife.org/context.

Overview

Here we are! The final book of the Bible: the book of Revelation. (Note: People commonly call this book “Revelations” by mistake, but there is no “s” on the end.) This book is the capstone of the entire Bible for three reasons.

First and most obviously, Revelation tells the story of how everything wraps up. The final chapters of the book describe the return of Christ, the judgment of the world, and the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

The **second** reason Revelation is the capstone of the Bible is that you really need to have read the entire Bible to make sense out of it. Almost every verse in this book uses an image, a quote, a phrase, or story from somewhere else in the Bible. One of the big reasons people get confused by this book is that they have no context for the wild and weird imagery of the book, but almost all of them come from other parts of the Bible. If you are unfamiliar with the rest of the Bible, you’re going to end up speculating in all sorts of strange directions about the meaning of the symbols.

The **third** reason this book is the capstone of the Bible is that, honestly, it is challenging. It’s like climbing a mountain. Getting to the top provides a breathtaking view, but you have to work hard to get there, and there are pitfalls to avoid along the trail. If you find this book confusing, you are not alone. We’ve provided some tips to help on the following page.

Tips

- Focus on the main purpose of the book: to encourage persecuted and tempted Christ-followers. Keep asking: what does this tell me about persevering in a hostile world?
- When it gets weird, focus on what the passages tell you about Jesus. What titles and images are used to describe him? How does he act? What does he say and do for his people? What does he say and do to his enemies?
- Don't assume every passage is about the future. Some passages are talking about things that have already happened, some are describing things that are ongoing throughout history, while other passages describe events that are yet to come.
- Don't try and connect the symbols with events in the news or global politics. Every generation has thought this book was predicting their day, and they were wrong. Jesus told us not to try to predict his return (Matthew 24:36). What Jesus wants is to find us faithful when he comes at a time we least expect.

Most of all, read this a book of hope and joy, not doom and gloom. There is some intense stuff in there, but this is meant to be read as good news. The King is coming back! He is making all things new! Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

If you are interested in learning more about what Christ Community teaches on the end times, check out the series "Return of the King." You can find a link to it at ccclife.org/context.

Who is the author of Revelation? What did you discover about him?

When was Revelation written?

Why was Revelation written? What situation was it addressing? (See “Occasion” and “Purpose” in The NIV Study Bible.)

Watch the Bible Project videos on Revelation. Jot down a couple of key themes to be on the lookout for as you read the book.

The book of Revelation is written in the genre known as apocalyptic. It uses extreme and vivid symbols to reveal the spiritual reality behind earthly appearances (the word “apocalypse” means “to reveal” in Greek). Apocalyptic is similar to prophecy, so look at the guide to “Literary Setting” in the back of this journal, and write down the rules for interpreting prophecy in the Bible.

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AUGUST 26, 2020

REVELATION 1:1-20

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

AUGUST 27, 2020

REVELATION 2:1-17

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

REVELATION 5:12

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 119:1-56

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

REVELATION 5:12

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

REVELATION 5:12

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

REVELATION 5:12

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 119:57-112

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

REVELATION 5:12

SEPTEMBER 7, 2020

REVELATION 8:1-9:21

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

REVELATION 10:1-11

NT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

PSALM 119:160

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

PSALM 119:160

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PSALM 119:113-176

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

PSALM 119:160

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

PSALM 119:160

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

PSALM 119:160

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

WEEKEND

PROVERBS 21

OT

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

PSALM 119:160

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

REVELATION 21:4

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

REVELATION 21:4

OBSERVATIONS

MESSAGE

APPLICATION

MEMORY VERSE

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

REVELATION 21:4



BibleSavvy
JOURNAL

APPENDIX

LITERARY SETTING

Interpreting Different Kinds of Writing

The books of the Bible contain a wide variety of literary genres. *Genres* is just a fancy word for kinds. Each one of these literary genres must be interpreted according to its own rules. As you go through the process of COMA, these rules will be especially helpful in when you get to “M,” the step when you take one of your observations and determine the message behind it.

In this journal, whenever we start a new book of the Bible, the Context page will highlight which genres show up in that book and prompt you to review the rules for those genres.

For more on these literary genres, see chapter 2 (pages 47-86) in *Context: How to Understand the Bible* in the *Bible Savvy* series by James L. Nicodem.

HOW TO INTERPRET NARRATIVES (STORIES)

Narratives are stories. Over one-third of the Bible comes to us in this form. As you read the stories in the Bible, keep in mind these rules:

- **Summarize the theme (or major lesson) of the story.** The Bible’s stories never come right out and tell us the moral, the theme, or the major lesson of the story. It is our job to figure that out. It’s a good idea to try figuring it out because this exercise keeps us from getting lost in the details of the story. You can get some pretty whacked-out interpretations by reading way too much into a minor detail or two. What is the theme of the whole story? Why do you think God included this story?
- **The real hero of every narrative in the Bible is God.** A lot of times, the main character in a Bible story is not the good guy. Even if they are, there is always a more important character: God. Even if he is behind the scenes in a story, pay attention to what God is up to.
- **Decide what’s descriptive and what’s prescriptive.** Some details of Bible stories are merely descriptive. They give us the particulars of what happened. They are not meant to be a pattern for our lives. But other details of Bible stories are prescriptive. God is indeed saying to us readers today: “This is how I want you to respond in similar situations.” Prescriptive parts of a story will always be backed up by non-narrative, directive passages in other parts of the Bible.

HOW TO INTERPRET LAWS

There are over 600 laws in the Bible, and all of them are found in books two through five of the Old Testament (Exodus through Deuteronomy). These laws were given to Israel—the nation God chose to be his people in the Old Testament. How do we understand these laws today?

- **Determine whether a law is moral, ceremonial, or civil.** Biblical laws fall into three major categories. There are moral laws that help God's people of every era determine right from wrong. Moral laws are timeless and directly applicable to our lives. There are ceremonial laws that enabled Old Testament believers to maintain a proper relationship with God. (Many of these laws had to do with priests, sacrifices, and the Temple.) Ceremonial laws have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ and are indirectly applicable to our lives. And, finally, there are civil laws that were used to govern the nation of Israel and are indirectly applicable to our lives today.
- **Look for the principle behind the law.** Most moral laws are pretty straightforward. The principle is obvious. It's clear what God wants you to do—or not do. But sometimes the principle is buried beneath the cultural trappings of Bible times and you'll have to dig it out in order to apply it to contemporary life.

HOW TO INTERPRET POETRY

Poetry makes up over one-third of the Bible. There are entire Bible books that come to us in this form. Even books that are predominantly another genre often contain some poetic portions.

- **Note the historical background.** Most of the Bible's poems address or respond to specific situations. Without knowing those situations, the point of the poem can be hard to figure out. In Psalms, pay attention to the headers or "superscriptions" that come at the beginning of many psalms. If the poem comes up in the flow of a narrative book, then the story will provide this background. In prophetic books, the details of the prophecy will often give you clues to the situation it addresses.
- **Unpack the figurative language.** The language of poetry is colorful and highly emotional. Many of the words and expressions are meant to be understood figuratively, not literally. The poet is painting word pictures. Bible poetry uses colorful, highly emotional, figurative language. Sometimes it's dark. Sometimes it's rich and inspiring. Savor it. Meditate on what it's saying.

- **Look for truths about God.** Look for God's names, titles, or attributes. When you do, take a moment to praise God for what that particular word or expression tells you about him.

HOW TO INTERPRET PROVERBS

Proverbs are short, pithy statements of wisdom. When you come across a proverb, here is the main thing to keep in mind:

- **Proverbs are not absolute promises but statements about how life usually works.** Many proverbs can come across as definitive, universal statements. But they actually express general truths about life that typically apply, but there can be exceptions.

HOW TO INTERPRET PROPHECY

Most prophecy is not about predicting the future. It is about communicating a message from God, usually confronting sin in people's lives and urging them (and us) to turn back to God. These portions of Bible prophecy are fairly straightforward, as long as you keep the historical context in mind. However, some prophecies also are about predicting the future. When that is the case, the following rules help a lot.

- **Distinguish between what has already been fulfilled and what—as yet—is unfulfilled.** Most predictions in the Bible came to pass within the timeline of the Bible. In these cases, you and I are not looking forward for their fulfillment; we are looking back at how God already brought them about. This is why knowing the big story of the Bible is so important. Also, a good study bible can help with this.
- **Distinguish between figurative descriptions and literal descriptions.** Much of the imagery in prophecy is symbolic and poetic. It tells the truth about the future, but it is not literal. It is more like a political cartoon (using animals and objects to represent nations and people) than a news report. This rule is especially important to keep in mind when you're reading the New Testament book of Revelation.

HOW TO INTERPRET PARABLES

Parables are short stories that Jesus tells to explain how things work in the Kingdom of God. The Gospels—the four biographies of Jesus in the New Testament—contain dozens of them.

- **Not every detail is symbolic.** Jesus' stories are full of imagery drawn from the everyday life of 1st century Israel. Often, this imagery is symbolic of deeper realities. But, not every detail has a one-to-one connection to something else. It is better to look for the one main point the parable communicates, rather than trying to find a hidden meaning in every detail.

- **Ask why Jesus told this parable in this situation.** Most of the parables Jesus told address specific people and situations. Who was Jesus talking to? The disciples? The Pharisees? The crowds? What was Jesus responding to when he told the story? What kind of reaction was he trying to get from his hearers?

HOW TO INTERPRET EPISTLES (LETTERS)

Most of the books of the New Testament are letters. Many readers find these letters to be among the easiest portions of the Bible to interpret and apply because their teaching is so direct and because they're written to fellow Christ followers (not citizens of ancient Israel). Even so, a few rules can help us understand these letters better.

- **Discover the historical background.** Letters are written to address particular people and situations. Knowing those circumstances makes it easier to know why the author said the things he did and how he expected them to be applied.
- **Understand each part of the letter in light of the whole letter.** Letters are written to be read all at once, not chopped up into tiny pieces. That is why reading the New Testament epistles once through at the start can be really helpful. You don't have to get all the details the first time through, just get a quick overview.
- **Summarize the main point of the passage.** The reason people often misinterpret the Bible is because they tend to pull out minor details and then blow them out of proportion. The easiest way to avoid making this mistake is to evaluate each passage as a whole.

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL AS A FAMILY

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done." - Psalm 78:4

We tell the next generation by talking about our personal experiences with God. We tell the next generation by consistently bringing them to church worship services and age-specific ministry environments designed for kids and students. We tell the next generation by teaching them to study and apply the Bible. It is in all these moments that God's Holy Spirit can best open the eyes and capture the hearts of the kids we love.

Here are some encouragements for your family in studying God's Word together:

- Every member of the family, elementary age and older, should have their own journal to use. Use the *EPIC Journals* for kids in elementary school. For younger kids, utilize the *Family First Look* resource passed out at the end of KidsWorld each week.
- Read the daily passages together as a family or, depending on the reading level of the kids, each person can read on their own. Do what works best for your family. The key is every person, in a developmentally appropriate way, consistently spending time with God in prayer, reading and, memorizing his Word.
- If your family reads privately most days, have a goal to gather as a family at least once or twice a week for Bible reading, discussion and prayer. Sometimes your kids might not want to participate. Expect some misbehavior and bad attitudes from time to time. Do not let that deter you. Do what is best, not what is easiest. At the same time, give your kids the grace to be kids. Do not expect them to sit still on your couch, fully engaged for long periods of time while you wax eloquently.
- Do not wait for a weekly, planned family devotional time to have spiritual conversations with your kids. Elementary age through adults are all reading the same passages and memorizing the same verses. Find casual times throughout the day/week to discuss the reading or memory verse. Not every discussion about God and the Bible has to happen formally in the same way or place. (See Deuteronomy 6:4-7)
- Some sections of the Bible are more exciting to read than others. For example, it can be difficult to read through multiple lists of names, each name seemingly harder to pronounce than the last. Sometimes it is okay

to skim as you read. Look for any verses in that day's reading where insights and applications can be found. If none are readily seen, that might be a good day to go back to the previous Psalms or Proverbs chapter or key in on the memory verse for that day.

- Some suggested discussion topics and questions for the times you meet to read and pray together:
 - Anything someone wrote in their journal since you last met that they would like to share.
 - Anything someone read that was confusing that they have questions about. It's okay to respond, "I don't know" to a question and seek out an answer later. It's also okay as a parent to bring up something you don't know and have questions about.
 - What was the best or your favorite thing you read this week?
 - What action steps does everyone plan to take because of what you read and how can our family help and encourage each other toward that?
 - How can we pray for each other this week?

Do not feel like you have to hit on all of those topics each time you meet. Treat each gathering time uniquely. Gauge the length of time and number of topics on how the conversation is going.

PG Material

Some parts of the Bible are sexual or violent in nature. These passages are identified in both this journal and the EPIC Journal as they come up in the reading schedule. You might want to read those passages ahead of time and decide how you want to handle them with your kids. You might want to read them together so you can explain and answer questions. You might want to have your child skip that day's reading altogether. On days you decide to have them skip the reading because of the graphic content, rather than simply saying, "We're just not going to read the Bible today," you might want to have your kids spend some extra time reading and discussing that week's memory verse, or you might want to have them re-read the previous weekend's passage from Psalms or Proverbs.

Have fun!

Enjoy your time as a family growing together in Christ.

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL IN A COMMUNITY GROUP

Discuss with your Community Group how you might encourage personal Scripture reading through the use of the Bible Savvy Journal. Here are three ways to do so:

Check-In Questions

This method combines personal sharing with accountability and can be used as a regular supplement to your study. These questions can be inserted as a meeting kick-off activity or at another convenient point in the agenda:

- *How consistent has your daily Bible reading been since we last met?*
- *Share one significant truth or application that God brought to your attention through the daily readings.*

Community Group Study

Your Community Group can also study in-detail one of the specific Bible Savvy Journal readings since your last meeting. Create a COMA study (ccclife.org/cgstudy) or use these generic COMA questions:

- *What do we know about the context of this passage that might be helpful?*
- *What “jumps out at you” from this passage?*
- *What timeless truths do you find in this passage?*
- *How will you apply one of these timeless truths?*

Of course, facilitators should feel free to add their own specific questions as needed or desired.

Both of the Above

For a focused use of the Bible Savvy Journal, combine both approaches. For breadth, begin your meeting with the Check-In Questions covering all of the readings since your last meeting. Then for depth, drill down on one of the daily readings through the Bible study portion of your meeting.

Focus Prayer on Application

As with any other Community Group study, if group members mention specific applications arising from the study, look to incorporate these applications into group prayer.

MEMORY VERSES IN THIS JOURNAL

I know that the LORD secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. **Psalm 140:12**

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity. **Proverbs 17:17**

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. **Mark 13:31**

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. **Psalm 145:8-9**

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **1 Peter 2:9**

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. **Jude 24-25**

This is what the LORD Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other." **Zechariah 7:9-10**

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. **Nehemiah 9:6**

In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" **Revelation 5:12**

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. **Psalm 119:160**

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. **Revelation 21:4**

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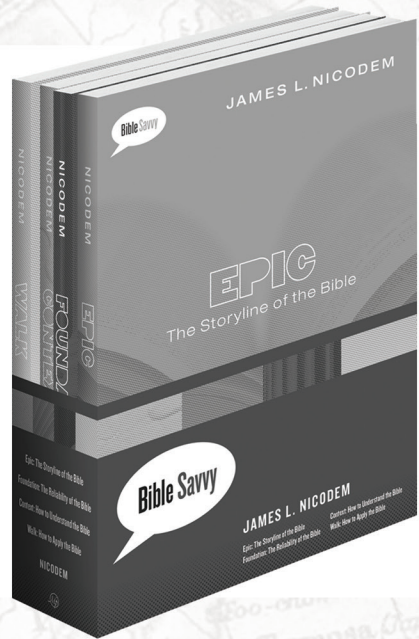
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TOOLS TO ENGAGE GOD'S WORD

Bible Savvy

by James L. Nicodem

This four-book series provides a brief but comprehensive overview of the Bible for both first-time readers and Bible study leaders. It covers the Bible's storyline, formation, rules for interpretation, and steps for application.



COMA

AT A GLANCE

CONTEXT

- **Historical Setting**

(Read the introduction to each book in an *NIV Study Bible*)

- **Literary Setting**

OBSERVATIONS

Look for **T.R.T.S.** - • **Theme** • **Repeating words or ideas**

• **Truths about God** (Father, Son, Spirit) • **Something striking**

MESSAGE

- Identify the **timeless principle** behind one of your observations.

- Use **S.P.E.C.S.** - **Sin** to confess, **Promise** to claim,

Example to follow, **Command** to obey, and **Statement** about God

- Summarize that timeless principle as if it were a **slogan on a wall plaque**.

APPLICATION

- **Personal and specific** to your own life

- **Pen and paper:** write it down

- **Pray:** ask God to help you put it into practice

For a detailed description of the COMA process,
see the guide in the front of this journal.

