

God Reveals Himself to Us

An Overview of the Bible
Volume 2: Job – Malachi



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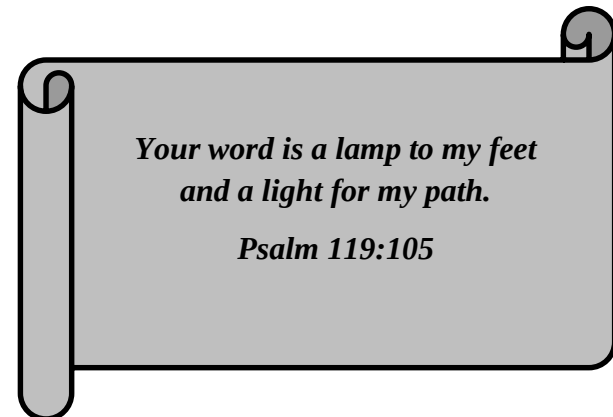
Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

This journal belongs to:

Notes



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God Reveals Himself to Us

Volume 2

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Resources

A part of devoting yourself to Bible study involves collecting some useful Bible study resources, such as Bible dictionaries, hand books, concordances, commentaries, atlases, etc. These, of course, are not as important as the Bible itself, but don't be shy about investing money and time in the study of the book that changed history. (It will probably be a lot less money and time than most people spend on entertainment.) Here are just a few suggestions of tools that might help.

Halley, Henry *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Zondervan, 2000.

Hamilton, Mark (editor) *The Transforming Word*, Abilene Christian University Press, 2009.

Kinnard, G. Steve *Getting the Most from the Bible*, Discipleship Publications International, 2000.

Lightfoot, Neil R. *How We Got the Bible*, Baker Book House, 1963.

May, Herbert G. (editor) *Oxford Bible Atlas*, Oxford University Press, 1974.

Notes

Conclusion

You have finished this survey of the Old Testament. This journal has consistently claimed that the Bible is the book that has truly changed history. As stated in Volume 1: while history is obviously important, it is hoped that the real result of you giving your heart to studying the Bible is that you are getting to know God better.

The most important question that these journals asked is:

*What did God reveal to you about himself in your personal readings,
and how does that impact your outlook on life?*

This might be a good time to write a summary of your answers to that question. What are some of your convictions about the character of God? Hopefully, these convictions are not from your own inventions of what you think God should be like, but from what He has revealed to you in His Word. And knowing his power, his love, his wisdom, his compassion, his desire to be in covenant with you, etc. – how do these convictions impact your outlook on life on a daily basis? In other words, don't just know facts about God and His book; know Him!

If you would like to continue this overview journey, pick up Volume 3 which takes you through the New Testament. The truth is, though, that you don't need that or any other guidebook to help you read the Bible. A guidebook like this one can help (hopefully), but it is not the essential. The important thing, no matter how you study the Bible, is to stay with that life-long goal of:

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God.

God bless!

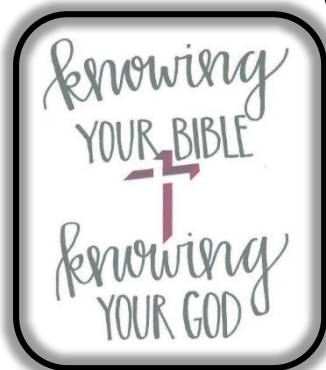
John Sullivan

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***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.
Zephaniah 3:17***



General Preface

You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.

Matthew 22:29

In the passage quoted above, Jesus pointed out a serious error to the religious experts of his day – an error we definitely want to avoid. So many mistakes come from either not knowing what God says or not knowing him well enough to make a difference in our lives.

Let's put that as a positive goal, one that will be the focus of these studies: we want to know Scripture and we want to know God better. This can be the life-long learning goal of any individual disciple of Christ, and it should be the goal of any church of Christ to provide that teaching – *from Cradle to Heaven*.

Knowing the Scriptures and Knowing God. While they are not the same thing – you can know Scriptures and not know God – Jesus had deep convictions about both. When he was being tempted after his 40 days of fasting, he quoted *Deuteronomy 8:3* to Satan: “*we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*” Let's not miss Jesus' conviction about the absolute necessity of knowing God's Word. You can see in the Gospels over 40 specific references to Old Testament stories and Scriptures in his teachings. Of course he knows the Word of God (after all he is the Word), but he also clearly wants his disciples to know it as well. At the same time, he gave a severe critique to other religious experts of his day who diligently studied the Scriptures, but would not come to him for true life (*John 5:39 – 40*). They knew a lot about the Scriptures, but they did not know the Lord.

Paul, who began his life as one of those religious “Bible-knowers who had totally missed Jesus”, kept his deep convictions about the importance of knowing Scriptures, while making sure that his new goal for knowing them was to know the Lord – not just the book. He reminded his listeners that the Scriptures are the sword of the Spirit that make us wise for salvation and train us to be the people of God (*Ephesians 6:17, 2 Timothy 3:14-17*, for instance). Yet, he also emphasized the goal of knowing Christ and knowing God better (*Philippians 3:10; Ephesians 1:17*, for instance). He was not interested in spending any more time in his life knowing the Word but not knowing the Lord. Nor was he interested in teaching others to do that. He wanted to know Scripture and know the Lord.

I want to know Christ.
Philippians 3:10a

Bible Study Tool #8

Knowing the Word – Knowing the Lord

Here are some examples of references and analogies about Jesus found in the Poetry and Prophecy books of the Old Testament. You can look for those in your future, more detailed studies of these books.

Old Testament Books	Some References to Jesus
<i>Job</i>	Intercessor and Advocate (16:19-21), Redeemer (19:25)
<i>Psalms</i>	Forsaken (22:1)
<i>Song of Songs</i>	The Bridegroom
<i>Isaiah</i>	Immanuel (7:14)
<i>Jeremiah</i>	The Lord Our Righteousness (23:5-6)
<i>Daniel</i>	The Anointed One (9:25)
<i>Hosea</i>	The Bridegroom
<i>Joel</i>	Pouring Out the Spirit (2:28)
<i>Jonah</i>	3 Days and 3 Nights
<i>Micah</i>	Born in Bethlehem (5:2)
<i>Zechariah</i>	Your King Riding on a Donkey (9:9)
<i>Malachi</i>	The Sun of Righteousness (4:2)

Life-long Learning Challenge:

Always look for Jesus in your Bible study.

Highlights of the Books of Poetry and Prophecy (continued)

Minor Prophets

HOSEA	A prophet whose life and marriage was used by God to teach the lesson of God's unfailing love and Israel's unfaithfulness.
JOEL	Lamentations over the destruction of the land, exhorting the people to repent and promising that God will forgive.
AMOS	Prophecies God's judgment on the nations surrounding Israel, and then prophecies that God's strongest judgment will be on Israel, which, in spite of God's gifts, had still done evil.
OBADIAH	The shortest Old Testament prophecy, dealing with the destruction of Edom, an enemy of God's people.
JONAH	The account of Jonah's commission to preach to a hostile city, his refusal to do so, his encounter with the great fish, and finally his successful preaching to the city.
MICAH	A younger contemporary of Isaiah. He prophesied concerning threats of punishment and appeals to repent.
NAHUM	Prophecies concerning the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.
ZEPHANIAH	Prediction of a great day of wrath upon the nations of the earth if the people do not repent.
HABAKKUK	Prophecy concerning the destruction of the wicked city in Judah by the Chaldeans.
HAGGAI	Rebukes the Jews for their refusal to rebuild the temple of God, while they concentrated on building their own houses.
ZECHARIAH	Contains an earnest exhortation to repent and also promises the coming of the Messiah.
MALACHI	Attacks the degeneration of the priesthood, which Malachi finds particularly terrible since they now are able to worship again; challenges the unfaithful lack of tithing; and contains a prophecy concerning the forerunner of Christ.

*If you are pleased with me,
teach me your ways so I may
know you and continue to find
favor with you.
Exodus 33:13*

Many other Scriptures also remind us of the need of knowing Scripture and knowing God. You can look at *Exodus 33:13; Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 119:11, 18; John 17:3; and 2 Peter 3:18* for a short but inspiring list of such teachings.

One danger we have today, especially for church people, is to lose our enthusiasm and zeal for these two goals. It's hard to keep passionate about our desire to know God better and know his Word on a personal, intimate level. But with God's help both are possible. After all, that is God's desire for us even more than it is our goal for ourselves.

So it is possible to know the Bible (at least the facts of the Bible) and not know God. But is it possible to know God and not know the Bible? Maybe; but it is certainly not our goal to try to know God without knowing his Word. The word "disciple" implies being a student – both of the Word and of the Lord. So we do not want to have anything less than the highest desires to do both: we want to know the Word and we want to know the Lord!

James 1:22 – 25 talks about not deceiving ourselves by merely reading the Book, without putting it into practice. Verse 25 talks about looking intently into God's Word (*parakupto* – to bestow a close and attentive look, to look intently). Among other things that this can mean to us, it is clear that we want to have good intentions as we look into the Bible. So ask yourself as you begin this, or any, Bible study: what are my intentions about getting to know God's Word better and getting to know God better both now and in the years to come (*from Cradle to Heaven*)?

May God bless you to know more and more about Him and His Word!

John Sullivan

Reprinted from September 2016

***Now this is eternal life:
that they may know you,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ,
whom you have sent.***

John 17:3

Highlights of the Books of Poetry and Prophecy

The Books of Poetry

JOB	A long narrative in the form of a poem describing the suffering of Job and the ways of God, which are beyond human reasoning.
PSALMS	150 poems, mostly by David, dealing with matters of religion, history, and daily living.
PROVERBS	A collection of wise saying, mostly written by Solomon, concerning life and behavior.
ECCLESIASTES	More writings of Solomon pointing out the vanity of following the ways of the world.
SONG OF SONGS	A series of poems, probably written by Solomon, about two lovers, which could be symbolic of God's love for his people.

Major Prophets

ISAIAH	Prophecies concerning the Babylonian captivity, the restoration of Israel, and many prophecies concerning the Messiah.
JEREMIAH	Known as the weeping prophet, Jeremiah mainly predicts doom, but he does express hope for the renewal of God's covenant.
LAMENTATIONS	Poems by Jeremiah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the repentance of the people.
EZEKIEL	Ezekiel was one of those carried into captivity in Babylonia. His prophecies deal with both the times before and after the destruction of Jerusalem.
DANIEL	A young man carried into Babylonian captivity and used by God to deal with several foreign kings.

(continued on the next page)

*The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The ordinances of the LORD are sure,
and altogether righteous.
They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the comb.
By them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

Psalms 19:7 – 11

Option 1: Read all 493 chapters.

You can use the following chart to check off the chapters as you read them.

Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42																		
Psalms	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
	81	82	93	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31									
Ecclesiastes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12								
Song of Songs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8												
Isaiah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
Jeremiah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52								
Lamentations	1	2	3	4	5															
Ezekiel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48												
Daniel	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12								
Hosea	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14						
Joel	1	2	3																	
Amos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9											
Obadiah	1																			
Jonah	1	2	3	4																
Micah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7													
Nahum	1	2	3																	
Habakkuk	1	2	3																	
Zephaniah	1	2	3																	
Haggai	1	2																		
Zechariah	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14						
Malachi	1	2	3	4																

Option 2: Read an Excerpt from all 22 Books.

The following chart is a suggestion of a 13-week schedule that samples each book.

Week	Book	Chapters
1	Job	1, 2, 40, 41, 42
2	Psalms	1, 8, 23, 42, 103, 148
3	Proverbs	1, 3, 11, 14, 30
4	Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	3, 5, 12 1, 2
5	Isaiah	1, 6, 36, 37, 38
6	Jeremiah Lamentations	1, 24, 29 1, 3
7	Ezekiel Daniel	2, 37 1, 3, 6
8	Hosea Joel	1, 2 1, 2, 3
9	Amos Obadiah	4, 5, 6, 8 1
10	Jonah Micah	1, 2, 3, 4 6
11	Nahum Habakkuk	1, 2 1, 2, 3
12	Zephaniah Haggai	1, 2, 3 1, 2
13	Zechariah Malachi	3 1, 2, 3, 4

Introduction to This Journal

This journal is Volume 2 of the three-volume series on "*God Reveals Himself to Us*."

This series attempts to give an overview of the Bible from the perspective that this is the written way of how God reveals himself to humans. This series also gives an introduction to what God reveals about himself through a sampling of devotional readings directly from these Scriptures. You, the reader, are encouraged to discover for yourself what these Scriptures say.

The goal is to give anyone who is new to seriously studying the Bible an introduction to both its heart and its structure and also give anyone who has experience studying the Bible a reminder of the reasons why we want to study the book that changed history. This is the book in which God reveals himself. It is not just theology, if you think of theology as humans' thoughts about God. It is revelation – God actually revealing himself to us.

This journal is laid out in same three sections found in Volume 1:

1. **An overview description entitled "*How God Reveals Himself to Us*."**
2. **20 Devotional Readings.**
3. **Bible Study Tools.**

As before, the journal can be studied by individuals or used effectively used in a small group or class.

The question that was often asked before is asked again:

"What did God reveal to you about himself in your personal readings this week, and how does that impact your outlook on life?"

Hopefully, that will be the most valuable question for you.

John Sullivan
October 2024

Psalm 119:18

These three journals could be used in a class or small group for either new disciples or those who want a refresher. Their goal is to get an overview of God's Story and, at the same time, develop a personal appetite and a healthy personal habit for daily feeding on God's Word.

Session 1 "*God Reveals Himself through His Writings*" (p. 2)
 Session 2 "*God Reveals Himself through Events and People*" (p. 3)
 Session 3 "*God Reveals Himself through His Covenant*" (p. 4 – 6)
 Session 4 "*God Reveals Himself through His Son*" (p. 6)

The entire 3 journals could be taught in either a 3-month span or spread out over a 6-month span.

Kings and Prophets

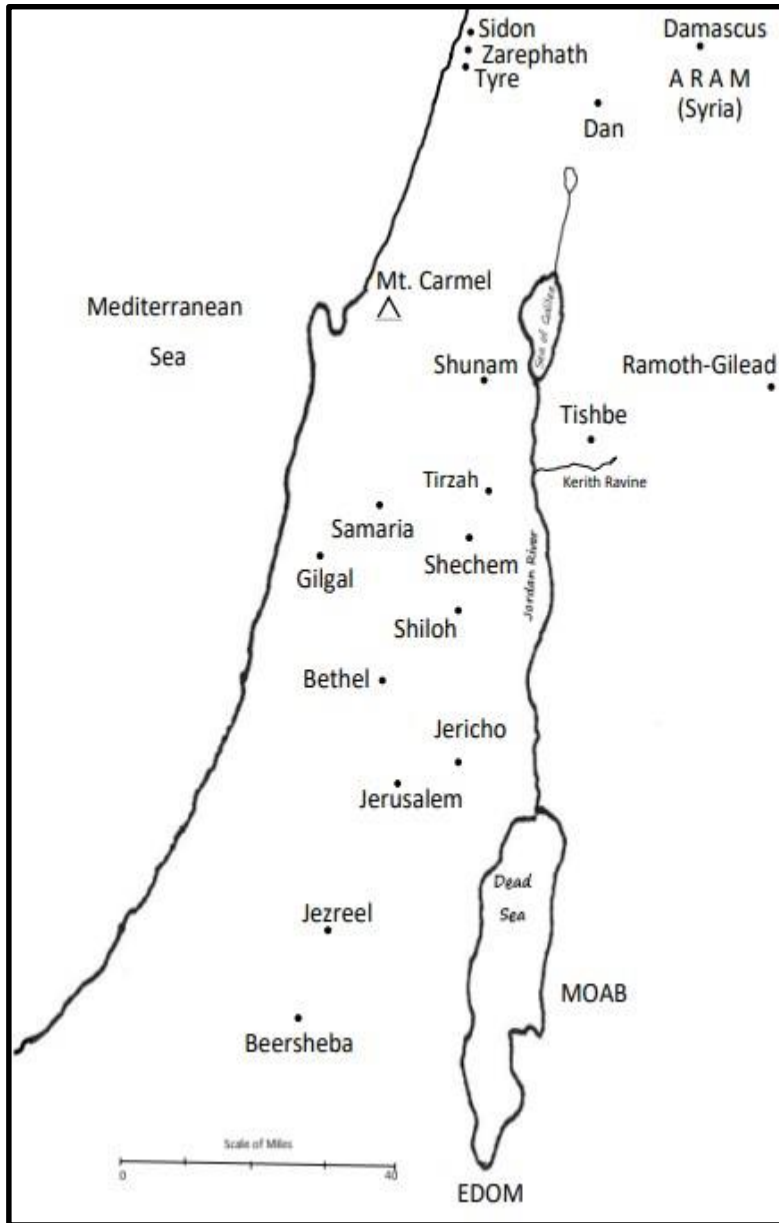
<i>King</i>	<i>Approximate Dates* (BC)</i>	<i>Prophet</i>
Saul	1050 – 1010	Samuel
David	1010 – 970	Nathan
Solomon	970 – 931	

Israel (The Northern Kingdom)

King	Approximate Dates* (BC)	Prophet	King	Approximate Dates* (BC)	Prophet
Rehoboam	931 – 913		Jeroboam I	931 – 910	
Abijah	913 – 911				
Asa	911 – 870		Nadab	910 – 909	
			Baasha	909 – 886	
			Elah	886 – 885	
			Zimri	885	
			Omri	885 – 874	
Jehoshaphat	870 – 848		Ahab	874 – 853	Elijah/Micaiah
Jehoram	848 – 841		Ahaziah	853 – 852	
Ahaziah	841		Joram	852 – 841	Elisha
Athaliah (Queen)	841 – 835		Jehu	841 – 814	
Joash	835 – 796		Jehoahaz	814 – 798	
Amaziah	796 – 767		Jehoash (Joash)	798 – 782	
Azariah (Uzziah)	767 – 740	Hosea	Jeroboam II	782 – 753	Jonah/ Amos
			Zechariah	753 – 752	
		Isaiah	Shallum	752	
Jotham	740 – 732	Isaiah	Menahem	752 – 742	
			Pekahiah	742 – 740	
Ahaz	732 – 716	Isaiah	Pekah	740 – 732	
			Hoshea	732 – 721	
Hezekiah	716 – 687	Isaiah/Micah			
Manasseh	687 – 642	Nahum			
Amon	642 – 640	Zephaniah Habakkuk			
Josiah	640 – 608				
Jehoahaz	608				
Jehoiakim	608 – 597	Daniel			
Jehoiachin	597	Jeremiah			
Zedekiah	597 – 586	Ezekiel			

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Palestine in Old Testament Times



Section 1

How God Reveals Himself to Us

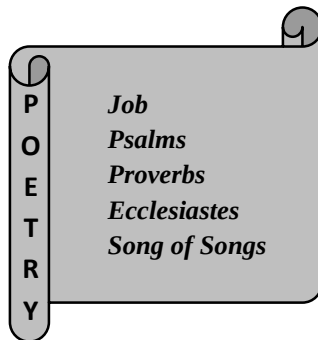
As noted in Volume I, the four ways highlighted in this journal do not claim to be an exhaustive list. However, it can be helpful to look, as you are reading God's Word, about how He reveals himself to you in these ways:

- *God Reveals Himself through His Writings.* (The Scriptures that Changed History)
- *God Reveals Himself through Events and People.* (The Events and People that Changed History)
- *God Reveals Himself through His Covenant.* (The Agreement that Changed History)
- *God Reveals Himself through His Son.* (The Promise that Changed History)

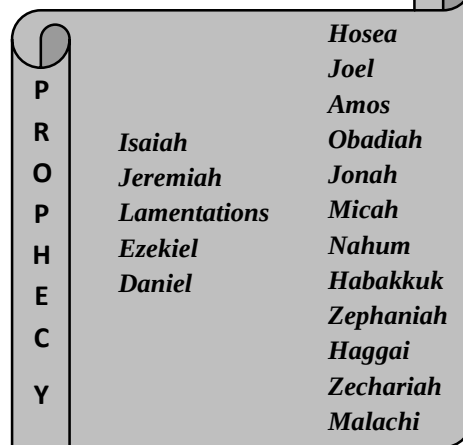
1. God Reveals Himself through His Writings

The Scriptures that Changed History

Refer to the *Library of the Bible* in the **Bible Study Tool #1** for a complete listing of the books of the Bible. Here are the names of the 22 books comprising the **Poetry** and **Prophecy** sections of the Old Testament. Look also in the **Bible Study Tool #7** for a brief summary of each book.



These five books of poetry were written over a long period of time, mostly during the times of the kings, and they provide deep and inspirational readings for believers and seekers throughout all ages.

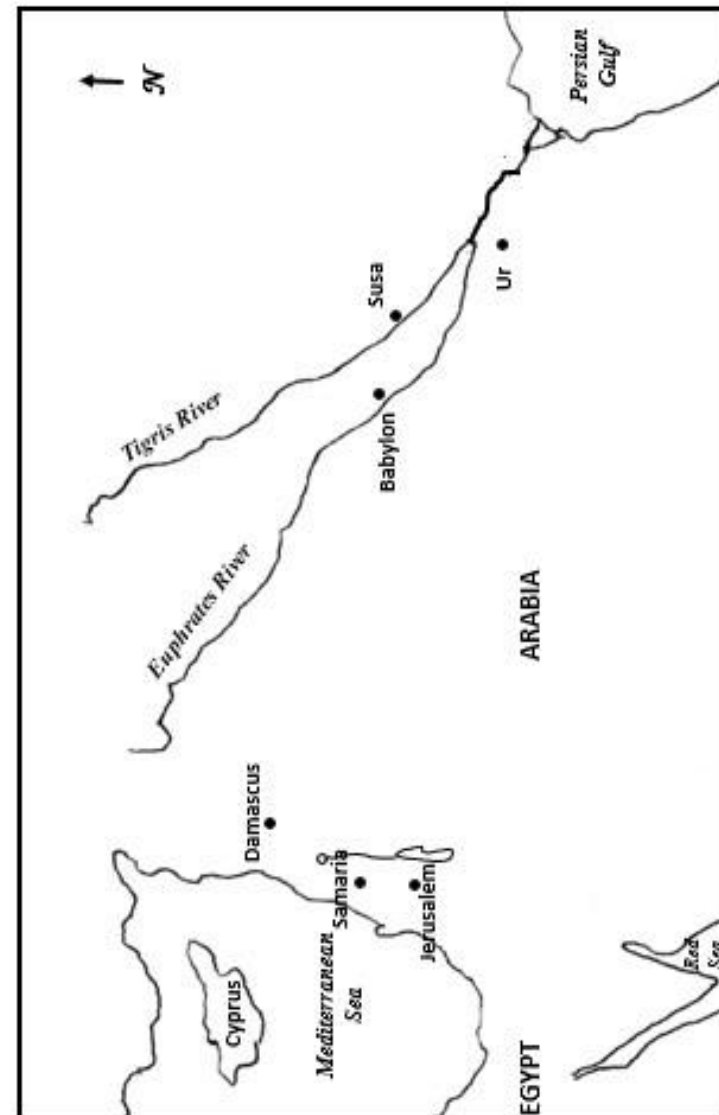


The first five books are called "Major Prophets," and the last twelve are called "Minor Prophets," not because of their importance, but because of their lengths. These prophets lived during the times of the kings or the exile or the return from the exile.

These Scriptures gave people of that time (and ours) a clear revelation of what God is like and what it really means to be his people. Instead of guessing and inventing gods and religion, this was a revelation from the true God himself. This shows you how much God wants us to know Him and what He is like.

Learning Challenge #1:

Memorize the names of these 22 books, in order, and practice finding them in your Bible. Add these to your memorization of the first 17 books.



The Middle East in Old Testament Times

(A few cities and regions are labelled here. You can add more as you go through your study.)

A Condensed Old Testament History

OT Books:	Major Events and Characters:	Approximate Dates*:
	CREATION	
	Adam & Eve	
	THE GARDEN OF EDEN	
	Abel Cain	4004 BC
	Seth	
Genesis	Noah	2348 BC
	THE FLOOD	
	Shem	
	Abraham	1921 BC
	Ishmael (Arabs) Lot (Amonites & Mobites)	
	Isaac	
	Esau (Edomites) Jacob (Israelites)	
	Twelve Sons	
	EGYPTIAN BONDAGE	1706 BC
Exodus	Moses	
Leviticus	THE EXODUS	1491 BC
Numbers	GIVING OF THE LAW ON MT. SINAI	
Deuteronomy	40 YEARS IN WILDERNESS	
Joshua	ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND	1451 BC
Judges; Ruth	Judges	1400 – 1095 BC
I & II Samuel	Kings	
I & II Kings	UNITED KINGDOM	
I & II Chronicles	(Saul, David, Solomon – each 40 years)	1095 – 975 BC
Books of Poetry	DIVIDED KINGDOM	
	Northern Kingdom "Israel"	
	Southern Kingdom "Judah"	
	Prophets: Elijah Elisha Amos Hosea Jeremiah	
	Prophets: Joel Isaiah Micah Zephaniah	
Major & Minor Prophets	Assyrian Destruction of Northern Kingdom Nahum	721 BC
	Habakkuk	
	Babylonian Captivity/Destruction of Temple	586 BC
Esther	Daniel	
Ezra	Ezekiel	
Nehemiah	Return to Jerusalem	536 BC
	Birth of Jesus	

* All dates are approximate. Different resources estimate them differently.

2. God Reveals Himself through Events and People

Events and People that Changed History

The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel



With the exception of the book of *Job*, the vast majority of the Poetry and Prophecy books of the Old Testament focus on the 600 years comprising the rise and fall of Israel as a physical kingdom. The historical background for the Poetry and Prophecy books is presented in the books of *1 & 2 Kings*, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther*.

Refer to the *Condensed Outline of Old Testament History* on p. 22 for the general summary of all of the history of the Old Testament period. Also, look at p. 25 for a detailed listing of the prophets and the kings of Israel and Judah, which is the focus of this journal.

King David and his son, King Solomon, wrote most of *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song of Songs*. They ruled over Israel during its highest point, from about 1055 to 975 BC. Unfortunately, Solomon left God during his reign and brought in the worship of foreign idols. From the attitudes he described in *Ecclesiastes*, it is possible (and hopeful) that he realized the error of his ways by the end of his life and returned to God. But the damage had been done to the kingdom, and the nation divided after his death.

The Northern Kingdom, usually referred to after that point as Israel, pulled away, not only as a separate country, but more importantly and sadly as a nation devoted to idol worship. In particular, they no longer worshiped at the temple in Jerusalem, but set up idolatrous temples in their capital city of Samaria. Their kings and queens were typically evil in the sight of God, with a few exceptions of faithfulness. There were many prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, who tried to turn them back to God. The Northern Kingdom was destroyed in 721 BC by the Assyrians, who forced them to intermarry with other nations, producing the Samaritans that we read about in the New Testament.

The Southern Kingdom, usually referred to as Judah, started out faithful to the worship in the temple, but eventually fell to idol worship as well. Some of their kings were just as bad as the northern kings, but there were some exceptionally good ones as well, like Josiah and Hezekiah. The Southern Kingdom was taken into exile by the Babylonians in 586 BC, but returned 70 years later to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple as described in the writings of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*.

The writings of the Major and Minor Prophets fit into this time period, and they reveal so much about (as *Romans 11:22* says) both the kindness and the sternness of God.

3. God Reveals Himself through His Covenant

An Agreement that Changed History

The Rise and Fall of God's Covenant

"I will be your God."

"We will be your people."

God's Covenant Established (Review)

In our overview of the first 17 books of the Old Testament, we saw the beginning of God's covenant with His people. One verse we memorized in Volume 1 was **Leviticus 26:12**. See if you still have it memorized.

*I will walk among you and be your God,
and you will be my people.*

In both the Old and New Testaments, these two promises are often repeated. God promises to be our God, and we promise to be His people. We're even told in **Revelation 21:3** that this will be the description of our relationship in heaven. It is a promise from God to us, and it is a promise from us to God.

We often talk about heart and strategy. Think about both the inspirational (heart) and the practical (strategy) results of these two promises:

- When God is promising to be your God, what does that promise mean to you?
- When you promise to be one of God's people, what are you promising to Him?

God's Covenant Broken

Unfortunately, the history of God's covenant is tainted with unfaithfulness on His people's part. Many of the Scriptures in the Poetry and Prophecy sections of the Old Testament that refer to the covenant deal with that unfaithfulness. For instance:

Jeremiah 7:21-26 In this paragraph you can feel God's pain as He describes their stubbornness and unfaithfulness to the covenant.

Hosea 1:9 God had to utter the sad words that they were not his people, and he was not their God.

Bible Study Tool #1

The Library of the Bible

The Bible is not just a book – for many reasons, some deep and spiritual, some simple and structural. One of the simple reasons is that, rather than being a single book, it is actually a whole library of 66 books. Here is the typical way this library's structure is explained.

THE OLD TESTAMENT (39 books)

The Books of Law	<i>Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</i>
The Books of History	<i>Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther</i>
The Books of Poetry	<i>Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs</i>
The Books of Prophecy	
Major Prophets	<i>Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel</i>
Minor Prophets	<i>Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi</i>

THE NEW TESTAMENT (27 books)

The Biographies of Christ	<i>Matthew, Mark, Luke, John</i>
The History of the Church	<i>Acts</i>
The Letters and Epistles	<i>Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude</i>
The Book of Prophecy	<i>Revelation</i>

Section 3

Bible Study Tools

The following 9 pages give you some Bible study tools, many of which are repeated from Volume I. You can use these in the study of this journal as well as your future studies of God and His Word.

God's Covenant Revived (Temporarily)

Around 621 BC, there was one example (among others) of a notable and effective revival in the covenant. **2 Kings 22 – 23**, which we read in the first journal, tells the story of young King Josiah who led that revival. The *Book of the Covenant* was accidentally discovered in the temple after years of being ignored by the priests and kings. When Josiah read it, he started cleaning house. The revival was amazing, but it also shows you how far they had fallen from the covenant. Josiah even had to remove idols from the temple – idols that his own father and grandfather had established in their reigns as kings. He then had a public ceremony of renewing the covenant with God and His people.

NOTE: 300 years earlier, as we also saw in the first journal, God predicted to King Jeroboam that a man named Josiah was going to remove the idols that Jeroboam was establishing. See **1 Kings 13:1 – 3** for this amazing prediction.

One of the prophets who prophesied during Josiah's time was Zephaniah. The first two chapters of his short book show the powerful preaching he did in the years before King Josiah's reform. Chapter 3 of his book shows God's rejoicing with them after the reform as seen in the following verse.

*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.*
Zephaniah 3:17

Don't miss the impact of what that verse reveals about God. Do you hear God singing over you?

God's New Covenant Promised

Unfortunately, Josiah's reform did not last. The next generations quickly fell back into breaking the covenant, and God had to punish them with the Babylonian exile, starting around 786 BC. The prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zachariah were among the prophets during that time. They often spoke of God's promise of a New Covenant with His people. For instance:

Jeremiah 31:31 – 33 Here God declares that the new covenant would be written on our hearts.

Ezekiel 34:11 – 31 God refers to himself here as the shepherd of his people and declares again his desire for the new covenant.

Zechariah 8:7 – 8 Once again, God himself describes his desire to be their God and have them be his people.

(continued on the next page)

This New Covenant will be a subject of our next journal. But you can see that the two promises are the same: *I will be your God; you will be my people.*

It's encouraging to see **Hosea 2:23** reversing the tragic situation found in **Hosea 1:9** that we saw on page 4. That Scripture is referred to in the New Testament (**1 Peter 2:10**) to describe the New Covenant and clearly reveals God's desire to live in covenant with his people.

He is our God; we are His people!

Learning Challenge #2:

Memorize *Zephaniah 3:17*.

Start each day during this study with faith that God is singing over you.

End each day with gratitude for God's covenant with you.

4. God Reveals Himself through His Son

The Promise that Changed History

Recall the two New Testament Scriptures which are quotes from Jesus that we read in Volume 1 when we were studying about the way Jesus was revealed in the first 17 books of the Old Testament: **John 5:39 – 40** and **Luke 24:27**. Jesus was clear about the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures testified about Him. We need to be clear about that as well.

The Poetry and Prophecy books of the Old Testament have numerous prophecies about Jesus as well as references that apply to Him – probably many more than what you see in the first 17 books of the Old Testament. Here are just 3 of the many insights into Jesus that are found in the Poetry and Prophecy Books. **NOTE:** There are many more listed on page 29.

Jesus	Old Testament Scriptures	New Testament References
<i>The Suffering Servant</i>	<i>Isaiah 53</i>	<i>1 Peter 2:21 – 25; Acts 8:26 – 40</i>
<i>Zeal for the House of Prayer</i>	<i>Isaiah 56:1 – 8</i>	<i>Mark 11:15 – 17</i>
<i>Anointed to Preach Good News</i>	<i>Isaiah 61:1 – 3</i>	<i>Luke 4:16 – 19</i>

These promises from God about His Son centuries before they were fulfilled show us God's heart and plan all along for us, his people, and how much he was willing to sacrifice for our salvation. That just makes you appreciate him so much more. If God was willing to do that for us, how can we not love Him?

Devotional 20

A Covenant of Peace

Read *Ezekiel 37:15 – 28*.

Today's Date: _____

The two promises that typically are found in the covenant passages are found here in verses 23 & 27.

We are also told that this is a covenant of peace (verse 26), a phrase also found in **Ezekiel 34:25**.

What do you think that meant for them? And how do you think it applies to you?

What was the point of the visual aid of the two sticks?

How important is it to God that His covenant people be unified with each other?

Pray, not only for your covenant with God, but also for peace and unity among God's covenant people.

NOTE: Hopefully this sample of devotional readings has given you an appetite to spend the rest of your life reading all of the exciting and inspiring stories and teachings found in God's Word. Be a life-long learner!

Thought Questions for Week 4

(These can also be used in group discussions.)

1. What did God reveal to you about himself in your personal readings this week, and how does that impact your outlook on life?
2. How do you think the promises about Jesus found in the Poetry and Prophecy books and other Old Testament Scriptures changed history?
3. What do these promises tell you about God?
4. How can knowing facts about these promises (how to find them in the Bible, etc.) help you to know God's Word better and know God better?
5. How can knowing these facts NOT help you to know God better?
6. Then why should we study them?
7. Overwhelmed by this study? What can we do about that?

**Devotional
18**

Undivided Heart

Read *Ezekiel 11:14 – 21*.

Today's Date: _____

The two covenant promises that we usually see are found in verse 20. This Scripture refers to the time the faithful exiles would return and renew that covenant.

Verse 19 talks about an undivided heart, which could be very similar to the idea of the singleness of heart spoken of in the previous devotional. See also David's prayer about the undivided heart in **Psalms 86:11**.

- What do you think that means for the people who are in this covenant?
- Talk to God in prayer about how that is working for you.

Verse 20 talks about the new heart and new spirit resulting in God's covenant people being careful to keep His laws. Moses used that phrase also. See **Deuteronomy 6:12** and **25**, for instance.

- What do you think that means for people who are in this covenant?

Talk to God in prayer about how that is working for you.

**Devotional
19**

A New Heart and New Spirit

Read *Ezekiel 36:26 – 28*.

Today's Date: _____

A new heart and a new spirit.

Ezekiel, who lived after Jeremiah, was a part of the exile. He saw visions and spoke about them to help both the people left in Jerusalem and those taken to Babylon. Here he was predicting the time that the exiles would return to Jerusalem and renew the covenant. Again, you see the two promises that we usually see in connection with the covenant passages. Here, though, the emphasis is on the new heart and the new spirit that God would give them.

- What kind of heart transplant did God say would happen to them?
- What would be the result of the new spirit in them?

As you look at this passage and the one in yesterday's devotional, there is a great emphasis on heart and spirit. Is that your responsibility or is it a gift from God? In other words, is God expecting you to come up with a different heart from those who broke his covenant, or is He saying that He will give you a different heart than they had? (Or is it some combination of both?)

Meditate and pray about this amazing fact: God is willing and able to give you the heart necessary to fulfill your part of this great covenant. Ask Him for it and be willing to go along with the changes that accompany the new heart.

Section 2

Devotional Readings

The following 20 Bible studies will give you a sampling of the way God reveals himself to you through the wisdom of his writings, through his compassionate and powerful involvement in people and events, through his covenant, and through the promises about his Son. In every reading, try to focus on the way God is revealing himself to you.

Schedule wise, they are laid out in this journal over four weeks – presenting five of them each week. The **Thought Questions** come at the end of every five devotionals and, as stated on their pages, could be used in group discussions if you are doing this with a group.

These readings are just a small sampling of these 22 books, chosen to build your appetite to read more in the future. See page 26 for two optional plans to read more, or all, of these books in the next 3 months (or at whatever pace you would like to choose).

The prayer in the psalm quoted on page v is a great way to start every reading. As you pray those thoughts, believe that God **will** show you wonderful things in your reading. Also, keep in mind the two questions suggested in Volume 1:

- 1) What does this Scripture teach me about God?
- 2) What does it teach me about God's view of me?

NOTE: As stated in Volume I, these readings are designed to take about 30 minutes a day, but keep going at your own pace. Don't make the daily habit of reading the Bible a routine or chore, but do use the self-discipline that God has given you to develop a heart that consistently desires to feed on God's Word.

Week 1

Devotional 1

Advocate and Intercessor

Today's Date: _____

Read *Job 16:19 – 21*.

Job experienced some of the most intense suffering ever known for any one person. He didn't understand why, and his "friends" did a very poor job trying to comfort him. It wasn't until God spoke (in chapters 38-42 of this book) that Job realized that God was wise enough and powerful enough to handle it for him.

The story of Job is also interesting because it may have happened even before Abraham. There is no mention of Abraham, Moses, the Law, or the temple anywhere in the story. But to be such an ancient story there are several glimpses of fairly deep understanding about God – for instance, these verses.

In spite of his misery and his lack of understanding why it was happening, Job said he was convinced that he had an advocate on high and an intercessor as a friend. Read the following New Testament verses and note how Job's convictions fit in with the descriptions of Jesus.

- **1 John 2:1 – 2**
- **Romans 8:31 – 34**
- **Hebrews 7:25**

You can't help but wonder how Job knew all of that with so much conviction. But the important question for you is: *are you convinced that Jesus is your advocate and intercessor?* Meditate and pray about that.

Devotional 2

Delighting and Meditating

Today's Date: _____

Read *Psalms 1*.

This psalm contrasts the results of walking with God (*a tree planted by the water*) with the results of walking away from God (*chaff blown away by the wind*). Meditate about those two poetic descriptions and what they mean to you. (Look up the word "chaff" if you're not familiar with it.) Write your thoughts here:

The Tree Planted by the Water

The Chaff Blown by the Wind

Which result do you want?

Those are the results. Verse 2 gives one of the causes: *delighting in the law of the LORD and meditating on it day and night*.

What is it about the writings of God that gives you delight?

Week 4

Devotional 16

The Parable of the Figs

Today's Date: _____

Read *Jeremiah 24*.

The Babylonian exile had begun. Jeremiah was shown two baskets of figs in front of the temple – one basket was filled with very good figs; the other with very bad figs. The good figs represented the remnant of the exile that would return to Jerusalem and renew their covenant with God.

Notice that verse 7 has the same two promises that we usually see in connection with the covenant. However, the heart that God wanted to see is what is emphasized here. The two ideas that are mentioned in that verse concerning the heart of God's people are:

- They will have a heart to know me.
- They will return to me with all their heart.

One theme that we have consistently emphasized in these studies is the desire to know God better. You can see that God wants us to have a heart to know Him.

How do you think that applies to you? And do you think you have a heart to know Him? Pray about that.

Devotional 17

Our Covenant with God

Today's Date: _____

Read *Jeremiah 32:36 – 41*.

This passage gives the two covenant promises in verse 38. God promises to bring His scattered people back from exile and renew their covenant.

Verse 39 also says that God would give them a singleness of heart. The result of that singleness of heart mentioned there is the ability for God's covenant people to fear Him for their own good and for the good of their children.

- What do you think that means for the people today who are in this covenant?
- Talk to God in prayer about how that is working for you.

That verse also said that this would be for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

- Is this something that you have deep convictions about?
- Pray about that as well.

Let's conclude with a resounding affirmation: *Being in a covenant relationship with God is clearly the best thing that could happen to me and to the generations after me.*

**Devotional
15**

The LORD our Righteousness

Read *Jeremiah 23:5 – 6*.

Today's Date: _____

What do you think it means that he would be called “*The LORD our Righteousness*”?

Read **1 Corinthians 1:26 – 31**. Jesus is our righteousness.

- Are you righteous?

That's a bit of a tricky question. On our own merit, of course, all of us would say, “*No, I'm not righteous; none of us are righteous.*” But God clearly says that Jesus is our righteousness. (Recall, for instance the passage in **2 Corinthians 5:21** that was referred to in Devotional #4.) So, from that stand point, if we are in Christ, we can say, “*Yes, Jesus is my righteousness.*” At the same time, we can always keep in mind what verse 31 says about boasting.

- Do you believe that Jesus is your righteousness?

Spend some time thanking God for the righteousness that He has given you through Jesus Christ and thinking about how that will affect your day today.

Thought Questions for Week 3

(These can also be used in group discussions.)

1. What did God reveal to you about himself in your personal readings this week, and how does that impact your outlook on life?
2. How do you think God's covenant changed history?
3. What does God's initiation of this covenant tell you about Him?
4. How can knowing facts about the covenant (how to find it in the Bible, what is its history, etc.) help you to know God's Word better and know God better?
5. How can knowing these facts NOT help you to know God better?
6. Then why should we study the covenant Scriptures?
7. Overwhelmed by this study? What can we do about that?

**Devotional
3**

God's Creation and His Word

Read *Psalms 19*.

Today's Date: _____

The first part of this psalm of David (verses 1 – 6) gives an inspiring, poetic account of the creation of God, giving Him glory. Spend some time today looking at God's creation and listening to its declaration of God's glory.

The rest of the psalm gives an equally inspiring description of the way God's word gives Him glory.

- Which of these descriptions stand out to you as something that always causes you to delight in God's word?
- Which of these descriptions stand out to you as something that you really need to grow in so that you can echo what is being said here?

Begin your day today with the prayer in verse 14 of this psalm. Try to recall it often throughout the day today. Then close your day meditating on how that affected your day.

**Devotional
4**

Why Forsaken?

Read *Psalms 22*.

Today's Date: _____

This psalm of David is one of his open, honest outpourings of feelings of pain and dejection. As you read it in its context, there is no claim that it is any kind of a prophecy about Jesus. We only know that verse one applies to Jesus because he quoted it on the cross.

So, looking first at how it applied to David, what do you learn from the way he dealt with this kind of deep emotional pain?

Now, read **Matthew 27:45 – 56**, when Jesus quoted this passage while on the cross.

Spend some time thinking about the answer to that question. Why did the Father forsake Jesus on the cross?

Since the answer to that question ultimately comes down to what is said about Jesus in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, we are brought to our knees with a combination of awe, gratitude, and speechlessness. Thank you, Jesus, for being willing to be forsaken so that I could be forgiven. Meditate and pray about that.

Devotional
5

Our Shepherd

Read *Psalms* 23.

Today's Date: _____

This is obviously one of the most famous Scriptures in the Bible. But it is always important to not let familiarity with a passage rob us of its depth. Since most of us today are not personally familiar with actual shepherds, some shepherding analogies may take some study on our part to fully appreciate them.

- For instance, we can research the role of shepherding to see the importance of what is said in verse 2 about making them to lie down. How do you think that applies to what God tries to do for you?
- As you have time now, and throughout your lifetime in the future, look at other shepherding principles found here and throughout Scripture and meditate about how they apply to you. Keep in mind that the whole point of this psalm is the fact that God is your shepherd.

Spend some time today talking to Him as sheep to the Shepherd.

- Is there some gratitude you want to express to your Shepherd?
- Are there some needs that you want to ask the Shepherd for?
- Is there anything about the way you have not allowed Him to shepherd you that you want to confess?
- Is there anything you want to say to Him about your determination to trust Him as Shepherd?

Thought Questions for Week 1

(These can also be used in group discussions.)

1. What did God reveal to you about himself in your personal readings this week, and how does that impact your outlook on life?
2. How do you think these last 22 books of the Old Testament changed history?
3. What does the fact that God chose to have these books written down tell you about God?
4. How can knowing facts about these books (how to find them, etc.) help you to know God's Word better and know God better?
5. How can knowing these facts NOT help you to know God better?
6. Then why should we study these writings?
7. Overwhelmed by this study? What can we do about that?

Devotional
13

Husband, Shepherd, Father

Read *Jeremiah* 3.

Today's Date: _____

This chapter is an emotion-filled description of God as our Husband, our Shepherd, and as our Father.

- Verse 15 talks about God providing human shepherds in our lives that would have His shepherding heart. That's a promise. The Shepherd loves you, and he wants you to have relationships where you can both receive and give His kind of Shepherding. How do you feel about that?
- Verses 14 and 20 refer to God as our husband. Yes, He is our King and Master. But it is so much more than that. We are bound together by love. How does it feel to see God begging His bride to come back to Him?
- Verse 19 shows God's heartache. He wanted them to call Him "Father." But they didn't. How do you feel about that?

Spend some time meditating on all three of these characteristics of God and praying to Him as your Husband, your Shepherd, and your Father.

Devotional
14

Harsh Reactions to God's Word

Read *Jeremiah* 20.

Today's Date: _____

Jeremiah often experienced the harsh, negative reaction that some people can give when the word of God is truthfully presented. The chief officer in the temple of the LORD, who obviously should have been one who supported Jeremiah's ministry, had him beaten and put in stocks.

We might think that Jeremiah, who was such an awesome man of God, would take this persecution with singing and rejoicing, the way Paul and Silas did in **Acts 16:22 – 25**. But as you see in this chapter, that was not Jeremiah's first reaction. He even thought about quitting – no longer speaking in God's name anymore.

But what happened (verse 9) when he tried to hold back speaking the Word?

We've seen many encouraging and faith-building thoughts in our devotionals so far, giving us plenty of reasons to delight in the Word of God. But it is not always delightfulness that is associated with God's Word. It is not always pleasant. God told the false prophets of Jeremiah's day that they were preaching peace when there was no peace and were not taking the problems of their day seriously enough. (See **Jeremiah 6:14** and **8:11**, for instance.)

What is your conviction about God's Word? Do you truly delight in it; is it also a fire within that cannot be contained, even when others don't want to hear it?

Week 3

Devotional 11

God's Ways and Thoughts

Read *Isaiah 55*.

Today's Date: _____

The writings of God obviously come from the thoughts of God. What do verses 8 and 9 say about the thoughts of God?

How does that make you feel?

Verses 10 and 11 tell us that God's Word will accomplish His purpose.

- What would you say are some of the purposes of God that are accomplished by His Word?
- What does that do for your faith and trust in God's Word?

Devotional 12

Rejoicing

Read *Isaiah 61:10 – 11* and
Zephaniah 3:17.

Today's Date: _____

Isaiah said that he delighted greatly in the LORD and rejoiced in his God. Zephaniah said that God delights in us and rejoices over us in singing, in a Scripture that was emphasized on page 5. Think about those two concepts.

- What is there about God that causes you to say, "I delight greatly in Him and rejoice in Him"?
- Are you at the point where you are convinced that God delights in you?

Spend some time in your devotional today praying to God with delight and joy. He is your King, your Shepherd, your Husband, and your Father. Throughout the day today try to envision Him smiling over you and look for opportunities to tell others about the God that you love.

Week 2

Devotional 6

Our Great King

Read *Psalms 47*.

Today's Date: _____

This psalm is a call to worship "the great King over all the earth!" (verse 2).

God is our King – not our elected official who is subject to our will. We are in His Kingdom – not a democracy with a constitution and laws that we vote on. What does that mean to you personally?

On the other hand, he is such a loving King! He does not force His kingdom on us. He allows us to choose Him as King. Spend some time talking to Him about your resolve to let Him be the King – with no arguments, complaints, or reservations on your part.

We are told in this psalm to sing praise to our King (verses 6 & 7). Try that in your devotional time and throughout your day today. You might use a song like "Stand in Awe" or "Every Praise" to help you or you might be able to write your own psalm of praise to our King. Worship the King!

Devotional 7

Delighting in God's Word

Read *Psalms 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174*

Today's Date: _____

This psalm is the longest chapter in the Bible. There are 31 books of the Bible that have fewer verses than this one psalm. As you have time, read the whole psalm, which is devoted to the theme of the wonders of the Word of God.

The 9 verses highlighted in today's reading all talk about delighting in God's Word. (The following two questions are similar to the ones asked in Devotional #3.)

- Which of these descriptions stand out to you as something that always causes you to delight in God's word?
- Which of these descriptions stand out to you as something that you really need to grow in so that you can echo what is being said here?

(The following question is a continuation of the one asked in the devotional Devotional #2.)

What is it about the writings of God that gives you delight?

Devotional
8

Immanuel

Read *Isaiah 7:1 – 17*.

Today's Date: _____

The original hearers and readers of this prophecy did not know that it was a prediction of the Messiah. They thought that it was just saying that the current threat they were facing was temporary.

But the New Testament makes it clear that “*Immanuel*” refers to Jesus. Read **Matthew 1:22 – 23**.

What amazing thoughts come with the idea that Jesus is “*God with us*”?

The ever-present nature of God is one of His attributes that captures our attention and keeps us focused. Spend some time meditating on that thought and how you will let it change your day today.

Devotional
9

Praising the Messiah

Read *Isaiah 9:6*.

Today's Date: _____

Remember that we always want to see Jesus when we search the Scriptures. This passage is certainly an uplifting accolade about the Son of God!

Spend some time thinking: *what you have learned these last few weeks that has helped you to know your Bible and know your God better?*

Pray about how you want to use that to help you live your life for Him.

Devotional
10

The Incomparable Nature of God

Read *Isaiah 40*.

Today's Date: _____

Again, this is a very famous passage. Many songs have been written based on these verses, and you may hear many lessons from this chapter.

Verse 11 especially highlights the role of God as our Shepherd. Meditate on what is said in that verse.

- How does it impact you personally?
- What message is found there that you would really like for others to know?

Verses 12 – 31 talk about the incomparable nature of God. As it asks, to whom will you compare Him?

- There is no wisdom or knowledge that can compare with His.
- There is no power or strength that can even begin to compare with His.

Think about this: how does that affect the trust you can have in Him as your King, Shepherd, Husband, and Father?

Spend some time today talking to God as sheep to the Shepherd, as bride to the Husband, as child to the Father, and as a citizen of the Kingdom to the King. Find ways to use the thoughts from this chapter in your conversation with Him.

Thought Questions for Week 2

(These can also be used in group discussions.)

1. What did God reveal to you about himself in your personal readings this week, and how does that impact your outlook on life?
2. How do you think the events and people referred to in these 22 books changed history?
3. What does God's involvement in these events and these people's lives tell you about Him?
4. How can knowing facts about these events and people (how to find them in the Bible, when and where they happened, etc.) help you to know God's Word better and know God better?
5. How can knowing these facts NOT help you to know God better?
6. Then why should we study these events and people stories?
7. Overwhelmed by this study? What can we do about that?