Session 1 – Introduction

- Objectives: discuss problems reading the Bible
- Objectives: discover Bible’s place in the Church
- Objectives: develop a Bible reading plan
- The Word consists of Scripture and Tradition
- Scripture is inspired – “God breathed”
- Scripture is inerrant – without error
- The Four Pillars of the Catechism:
  - 1. The Creed, 2. Sacraments & Liturgy
  - 3. Life in Christ, 4. Prayer
  - The Creed is the story
  - Sacraments & Liturgy – how we enter the story
  - Life in Christ – your script to live in the story
  - Prayer – intimacy with our Father in the story
1. Several common difficulties people have when they start to read the Bible were mentioned in the lecture. What has been your experience with Scripture?

Answers will vary; encourage discussion. Skip this question if you discussed it during the opening.

2. Many Catholics today feel as though they have received a “heap of Catholicism,” a random pile of separate Bible stories and facts about what the Church teaches. What solution do the four “pillars” of the Catechism present to this problem?

The Church fathers followed a narrative approach to teaching catechumens in which their explanation of the Christian faith was built upon the story of God’s working with His people as it is told in the Bible. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which you might think of as containing all that is in that “heap of Catholicism,” reflects this in its structure. All the information in the “heap” has been sorted into four “pillars”:

i. **The Creed**, as St. Augustine tells us, is the story of salvation history “in tightly wound form.” It comes first for a reason. Pillars 2 through 4 spring from the story that is told in the Bible.

ii. **Sacraments and Liturgy** comes next. They are how you get into the Story.

iii. **Life in Christ** is where you find your place in the Story. It is your personal script for living it.

iv. **Prayer** is the final pillar. It is where intimacy with God develops, the goal of the Story.

3. Why is it important to get the “big picture” of salvation history before reading or studying the Bible?

Each book of the Bible is linked to the other books by the “narrative thread” of God’s plan. If you don’t know the plan (which includes things like why we are here, and what went wrong at the beginning, and how God set about making things right again) it will be very hard to make sense of the various parts.

Another reason to learn the whole picture is that from the very beginning, God taught his people to pass down the Story of all He had done for them. As the story continues, they refer back to past events and look forward to things that have been promised. If you enter in the middle of the story, there will be many references you do not understand. The gospels, with which most Catholics are very familiar; are full of references to the Old Testament. Reading without an understanding of
these things, it is impossible to comprehend the intended meaning of the text. Consequently, the Catechism tells us that in interpreting Scripture it is essential to be “attentive to the content and unity of the whole Scripture” (CCC 112) and so “the way the truths of faith hang together among themselves and within the whole plan of divine Revelation” (CCC 114).

4. The “narrative books” section gives you the names of the fourteen books of the Bible that tell the Story from beginning to end. They are arranged across the top of the charts so you can see what historical time period(s) they describe. What are they?

The fourteen narrative books and the periods of salvation that they describe are: Genesis 1-11 (Early World), Genesis 12-50 (Patriarchs), Exodus (Egypt and Exodus), Numbers (Desert Wanderings), Joshua and Judges (Conquest and Judges), 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11 (Royal Kingdom), 1 Kings 12-22, 2 Kings (Divided Kingdom), 2 Kings 17,25 (Exile), Ezra and Nehemiah (Return), 1 Maccabees (Maccabean Revolt), Luke (Messianic Fulfillment), and Acts of the Apostles (The Church).

5. Fifty-nine “supplemental books” make up the rest of the Bible. These are not any less important than the “narrative books”, but for our purposes we will set them aside. Once you have learned the chronological story told in the narrative books, you will want to check the chart to see where the remaining books fit into that historical context before you read them.

Look at the top of the purple Royal Kingdom period. 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1-11 tell the story of this time, during which a kingdom was established under kings David and Solomon. What other books were written then?

1 and 2 Chronicals provide a parallel historical account of the time. The so-called “wisdom literature” was also written: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Many of these were written by one of the two primary kings of the Royal Kingdom: David and Soloman.

6. Central to the story told in the Bible is the way God formed a family for Himself by establishing a series of covenants with various individuals. These are marked by round white icons at the top of the chart in a section called “God’s Family Plan.” You will learn more about these later, but for now: look carefully at each icon and notice the type of family group named in each (“One Holy Couple,” for example). What do you notice about them, moving from left to right across the chart?

The family group grows from One Holy Couple (Adam and Eve) to One Holy Family (Noah, his wife and sons) in the Early World, to One Holy Tribe (under Abraham) in the time of the Patriarchs, to One Holy Nation (under Moses) after the Exodus, to One Holy Kingdom (under David) in Royal Kingdom, and finally One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (in the new
covenant with Jesus Christ). The thing to notice is that it grows! God started with a couple and built, over time, a world-wide family with membership in the kingdom of God.

7. Key people and events in Bible history are arranged in chronological order across the timeline. This section is divided into three horizontal bands representing the different parts of the Middle East. The central gray area represents the land of Canaan, where most of the events take place. When the action moves out of Canaan – to the northern countries like Babylon, for example, or to the south and Egypt – they appear above or below the gray area. Look at your chart: what examples of geographic movement can you find?

Understanding the Bible Timeline Chart is a full-color guide sheet that is included in both the Leader’s and the Student’s packs.

Hint: Look at the big arrows that point from horizontal section to another and for other times the bloodline crosses between areas. The major movements are:

1. God calls Abram out of Ur (Event No. 6; from the Northern countries into the land of Canaan; beginning of the Patriarchs period). There is another minor move during this time when Jacob flees into the North and has his sons.
2. Jacob’s family moves to Egypt (Event No. 14; from Canaan into South and Egypt at the close of the Patriarchs).
3. Israel’s move from the Egypt to Canaan across the Desert Wanderings period (there is no arrow).
4. Israel goes into Assyrian exile and Judah falls to Babylon (Events Nos. 44 and 47; four arrows in Exile period).
5. Three returns to Canaan in the Return.

8. Don’t miss the events in secular history that are ranged across the bottom of the chart. Take time now to find one you are familiar with. What was going on in the development of God’s plan at the same time?

Answers will vary with the periods people select. If there is time, allow some discussion of this. It is important for people to know and understand that biblical history is written about real people to whom real things happened in real time, in countries that we know about already. As the weeks go on, it will become clear that you cannot study the Bible in a vacuum. The situations in the surrounding countries have a dramatic impact on the Bible story.
Session 2 – The Early World

- The color for The Early World is turquoise
- The color of the earth viewed from space
- The narrative book is Genesis 1-11

| Gen 1:1-2 | In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. |

- In the beginning the earth is formless and void
- First three days of creation bring form
- Days four through six of creation fill the void

| Gen 1:26-27 | Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. |

- Six is the number of the animals and the flesh
- Seven is the number of covenant
- **Covenant** – sworn oath that creates family
- Creation in image of God means we can reason
- We can act on the good that we see
- We have the capacity to love

| Gen 2:15 | The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. |

- **Shamar** – to guard or protect

| Gen 2:16-17 | And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” |

- **Nahosh** – sea monster, large venomous creature
Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die.

*Concupiscence* – the tendency to do wrong

The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

*Protoevangelium* – the first news of plan of redemption

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

To the woman he said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

*East of Eden* – away from the presence of God

*Toledoth* – the generations of
Session 2 – The Early World

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. The story of the Early World is told in Genesis chapter 1-11. Locate the Early World period on your Bible Timeline chart. Who are the main characters, and what are the main events?

The main characters are Adam and Eve; Cain, Abel, and Seth; Noah; Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The main events are Creation, the Fall, curse and promise, the Flood, and the people scattered at Babel.

To encourage discussion, ask “What did you learn from the Creation story?”

2. What choice were Adam and Eve given in the Garden of Eden?

The choice put before Adam and Eve was literally between obeying God – by refraining from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – and following the Serpent’s advise – by eating that same fruit and “becom[ing] like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). In essence, they were asked to choose between accepting God’s rule over them and becoming their own gods. The same choice is before us today.

3. What were the consequences of that choice, both for them and for us?

When they failed to trust God and followed the Serpent instead, Adam and Eve made a decision to go their own way instead of God’s way. This had the logical consequence of removing them from God’s friendship. It brought sin and corruption and pain and toil and death into the world.

4. How can you see those consequences in the lives of the people that follow?

The consequences of the Fall are evident immediately in the story. Cain kills Abel. From Cain grows a civilization that is violent and vengeful. By the time of Noah, the world is full of wickedness. Immediately after the flood, Noah gets drunk, his sons sin, and his grandson is cursed. The earth is again filled with people who seek to make a name for themselves. The people who build the Tower of Babel exemplify the choice Adam and Eve made in the garden; they have chosen not to follow God, but are going their own way instead.
5. **Turn to Genesis 3:15 in your Bible. What hope is given at the outset of the story that the situation will be redeemed?**

In Genesis 3:15, God announces that the “seed of the woman” will crush the head of the “seed of the serpent” – in other words, there will one day be a battle in which a human will deal the devil a death blow.

The fact that God barred further access to the tree of life actually offers a second ray of hope to the situation: His children will not be allowed to make their separated state permanent.

6. **In the story of Noah, we see God deal with the mounting wickedness by destroying the earth with a flood. Did that solution to the problem work? Why or why not?**

The consequences of the Fall are so ingrained that not even wiping out the “bad guys” and starting over with a righteous man (Noah) makes a difference. The post-flood population is no better than the people who preceded it. The effects of the Fall will not be limited to those who caused it. What we are seeing is “original sin”: internal consequences passed on through the generations. Something more will need to be done.

7. **Describe the condition of mankind at the close of the Early World period.**

The people of Babel’s desire to “make a name for themselves” sets them against those like Noah, who call on God’s name. As a consequence, God confuses their languages and scatters them across the earth. Their inability to communicate and their scattered state are in effect a vivid physical manifestation of their spiritual reality.

8. **Do you ever face choices today that are in any way like the choice put before Adam and Eve? Explain.**

If people have trouble answering this question, prompt them by asking it in other ways: Have you ever had to choose between doing what you want and doing what you know God wants you to do? Are you ever tempted to define good and evil for yourself, instead of listening to what God says is right or wrong? Etc.
Session 3 – The Patriarchs

- The color for The Patriarchs is burgundy
- The blood covenant with Abraham
- The narrative book is Genesis 12-50
- Key patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen 12:1-3</th>
<th>Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”</th>
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- God makes 3 promises to Abram (Abraham)
- The first promise is land (Gen 12:1)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gen 12:1</th>
<th>Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Gen 12:2</th>
<th>And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.</th>
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- The third promise is worldwide blessing (Gen 12:3)

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<tr>
<th>Gen 15:2-4</th>
<th>But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.”</th>
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- **The Akedah** – the binding of Isaac

| Gen 22:12-13 | He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. |
Session 3 – Patriarchs

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. We last saw mankind scattered, their languages confused, after trying to build a name for themselves rather than calling on the name of the Lord. What was God’s first step toward restoring them to Himself? (See Genesis (12:1)

   God’s first step toward restoring his scattered people to Himself was not to reach out to gather everyone back in. Rather, He began by calling one man, Abram, to leave everything behind to leave everything behind and follow Him to a new land which He would show him. The restoration is implicit within the blessing he gives Abram, by whom “all the families of the earth will bless themselves” (verse 3)

2. Patriarchs means literally “fathers” in the sense that we use it in “forefathers” for founding fathers. This period tells of the patriarchs – the founding fathers – of the nation of Israel. Who are they?

   Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the main patriarchs. Some people also include as patriarchs Jacob’s sons – particularly Joseph, whose story takes up the final third of the book of Genesis.

3. Why is the color burgundy used to represent this time period?

   Burgundy is the color of blood, and blood is what sealed the covenant God made with Abraham.


   Genesis 12:1-3 says: “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.’”

   This promise can be broken into three parts: a promise of land for his many descendants; a promise of nation and a great name; and a promise of worldwide blessing. The chart lists the second promise as a promise of royal kingdom because later on in Genesis, God tells Abraham that this is His plan for them.
Notice that in the fulfillment of this promise, and in return for Abraham’s faithful obedience, God will give Abraham’s family what he did not allow the people at Babel to achieve for themselves.

Note: As the weeks go on, if you find that looking up these passages takes too much time, you might assign them ahead of time or come with a Bible already marked that you can pass to the person who will do the reading.

5. To whom did the promises pass in the following generations?

The promises of God passed down from Abraham to his son (by Sarah) Isaac; to his son Jacob; and from Jacob to his sons Judah and Joseph (through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh). Eventually, the promise would extend to all mankind.

6. Over and over, the question is posed to mankind: will you trust God? In what ways did Abraham demonstrate his obedient trust over the course of his lifetime?

Answers will vary based on familiarity with the story. It is not for nothing that Abraham is known as the father of all who have faith. Here is a litany of examples from Hebrews 11:8-19;

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker was God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore… By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.” He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

7. How might God be calling your to trust in Him today?

Answers will vary. Encourage continued discussion by adding a question or two such as: What makes it hard or easy to follow in that area? Does anything you learned from this lesson inspire you or give your strength?
Session 4 – Egypt & Exodus

Desert Wanderings

- The color for The Exodus is red
- Red symbolizes the Red Sea
- The narrative book is Exodus
- The color for The Desert Wanderings is tan
- Tan symbolizes the sands of the desert
- The narrative book is Numbers

| Ex 1:8-9 | Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. |

- Hapi – the Egyptian god of the Nile
- Heqt – the Egyptian frog god
- Manna – Hebrew for “what is it?”
- Ex 24 – God enters into a covenant with Israel
- Ex 32 – the nation is laicized except the Levites
- The Ark of the Covenant contains 3 things
- A bowl of manna, the tablets, Aaron’s rod
- 40 is the biblical number for testing
- Kadosh – Hebrew word for holiness
- Deuteronomy – the second law
- Baal – son of Canaanite gods El and Asherah
Session 4 – Egypt & Exodus/Desert Wanderings

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. God introduced Himself to Moses as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (from the burning bush, Exodus 3:6). What did that tell Moses about God?

Israel has not heard form God for 400 years and they are slaves in a foreign land. What about the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them the land of Canaan? Where was God? Did He know of their plight? These words told Moses that the same God who spoke to Abraham and made those great promises; the same God who gave Abraham and Sarah Isaac in their old age; the same God who watched over Jacob for all those years and reaffirmed His promises was alive and well and listening and ready to make good on His Word.

2. What important message did the ten plagues send to Egypt and Israel?

Again and again, God says He will do a thing so that Israel and Egypt will know that He is the Lord. The original word that is here translated “Lord” is YHWH – “I AM,” the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush, the God who made the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the plagues, He reveals even more about Himself: to begin with, that He is greater and more powerful than any of the gods of Egypt, which He slays one by one with impunity.

3. God told Pharaoh, if you will not free my firstborn son, then I will kill your firstborn son. How did He accomplish this, and what is the name of the annual remembrance of this event?

God struck the first born sons of Egypt in the final plague, in which the angel of death passed over the land of Egypt and slew all but those covered by the sign of blood on the doorway. Then annual Jewish remembrance of this event is the Passover.

4. Think about it: In the Red Sea crossing, the children of Israel were freed from their enemy by passing through water. What New Covenant sacrament does this prefigure? Explain.

The crossing of the Red Sea prefigures baptism, in which we are freed by water from sin. In this sacrament we enter into Christ’s death and rise again with him to new life.
5. The first terms of the Sinai Covenant are what we know as the Ten Commandments, which John Paul II called “the law of freedom: not the freedom to follow our blind passions, but the freedom to love, to choose what is good in every situation, even when to do so is a burden” (Celebration of the Word at Mount Sinai, St. Catherine’s Monastery, 26 February 2000). Think about the Ten Commandments. What kinds of “false gods” do they free us from?

Answers will vary. The Ten Commandments free us from the false god of self; from the gods of lust and power; of money and revenge. They free us to set our eyes on God and live as we were created to live, as His children and in His image.

To encourage, discussion, ask how people have experienced this in their lives. Have they found themselves attracted to any false gods? How do those gods enslave us?

6. What did the Tabernacle signify to Israel?

The Tabernacle signified the presence of God dwelling among His people. This is the first time we have seen this since God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is a sign of and a step toward restoration of the broken relationship.

7. Which tribe was given the priesthood after Israel’s unfaithfulness with the golden calf?

The Levites, who alone rallied to Moses and the Lord when Moses confronted the people with their sin, were set apart to the Lord as priests.

8. Why did God make Israel wander for forty years in the desert, and what was He trying to teach them?

When Moses sent twelve spies into the land of Canaan, they brought back a report that it was fertile and full of Giants. Ten spies felt the foes were too might to defeat; only two stressed the bounty of the land and said that God would lead them in. Because the people listened to the ten and did not trust God to take them safely into the land and give it to them (in spite of the way He had delivered them from Egypt), He made them wander a year in the desert for every day the spies had been in the land. This would allow a generation to grow up learning to trust entirely on God’s providence.

9. St. Paul tells us that these stories “were written down for our instruction” (1 Corinthians 10:11). What message do they carry for you today?
Answers will vary; encourage discussion. You might also ask why it will be important for the Israelites to teach their children. What might happen if they do not? Is this important for us today? Why or why not?
Session 5 – Conquest & Judges

Royal Kingdom

- The color for The Conquest & Judges is green
- This represents the green hills of Canaan
- The color for The Royal Kingdom is purple
- This is the color of royalty
- First three kings of Israel: Saul, David, Solomon

Josh 1:7-8  | Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

- Baal – Canaanite god over the water
- Gilgal – Hebrew word for camp
- Sampson means sunshine, Delilah means night

Ruth 1:16-17  | But Ruth said, “Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you.”

1 Sam 8:4-5  | hen all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations.”

- Samuel warns king will: tax, take kids, take land
- Saul unites the kingdom, David expands it
- 2 Sam 7 key, God makes a covenant with David
Session 5 – Conquest & Judges/Royal Kingdom

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. Before he died, Moses told Israel how to live in order to receive God’s blessing in the Promised Land. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 out loud (it is printed below). This passage is kept alive today by Jews all over the world, who must pray the Shema, as it is called, each morning and night. You heard today about Israel’s conquest of the land. Did they follow Moses’ advise? What happened?

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

The generation that entered the Promised Land was – with the exception of Joshua and Caleb – the children of those who had crossed the Red Sea. In the forty years of wandering the original generation had died out. This new generation had spent their entire lives experiencing God’s provision (food, water, whoes that didn’t wear out; healing, protection from and victory over enemies). In the new land they would be tempted to forget God and follow pagan gods instead. But remembering God and obeying His commands would be crucial to their success and well-being. Unfortunately they did not teach their children or obey God. In a shockingly short time – just one generation – an entire generation grew up who did not know God or what He had done for Israel. They left God, did evil in His sight, and worshiped other gods. As a result they were delivered over to their enemies.

2. How well did Israel follow God’s command to possess the land of Canaan?

Under Joshua, Israel did exactly as the Lord commanded Moses and successfully conquered the bulk of the land. At his death, all that remained was for Israel to finish pushing out the inhabitants, cleanse the land of pagan altars, and occupy her inheritance. But the new generation did not know God; they not only allowed the Canaanites to remain, they began worshiping their gods and doing evil in God’s eyes.

Note: Many have a hard time with the story of the conquest of Canaan. They wonder how a good God could command His people to destroy so many “innocents.” This part of the story must be read in the context of the larger story. Previously, God showed Himself greater than the false gods of the world. Now He is reclaiming for Himself part of the territory that has been taken over, since the Fall, by the enemy. In turn, He will establish Israel as His people and they are charged
to be living witnesses of His righteous rule. The necessary pre-requisite to this is a cleansing of the land. If they fail to follow God’s ways, they themselves will lose their place in God’s land (which in fact will happen, later in the story).

3. **Explain the seven-fold cycle Israel experienced during the time of the Judges.**

We have already seen how those who stand against God are prone to sin and wicked practices. Violence, polygamy, slavery, sorcery, even human sacrifice are the hallmark of the cultures Israel has been commanded to dispossess. Those who are squeamish about destroying them might read the book of Judges right to its horrifying close. It shows vividly the way Israel, which has failed to fully conquer the Canaanites, falls under the influence of her neighbors and becomes like them. It is hard to imagine anyone thinking that the depths of religious and moral corruption to which they sink is something to be desired or protected.

Israel’s sin in forsaking God led to defeat by their enemies and servitude. In anguish they cried out to God (“supplication”) and He raised up judges to deliver them (“salvation”). A period of peace and silence was soon followed once again by sin, and the cycle began again. This happens seven times during the time of the Judges.

4. **At the close of the period of Conquest and Judges, what plea did Israel make?**

Tired of the endless cycle of subjection to the other nations, Israel cries out for a king “like all the other nations.”

5. **Who was the first king of Israel, and how did he fare?**

King Saul was the first king of Israel. He was not to be like other kings, but subject to God and His Word. Saul’s great contribution was to unite the kingdom. He does well to begin with, but ultimately fails to trust God. He is twice disobedient, sacrificing when he is not supposed to and sparing the life of an evil king God says to destroy. As a result, the kingdom is torn away and will be given to a man with a heart after God.

6. **Read 2 Samuel 7:1-16. How did the Davidic covenant fulfill and expand upon God’s second promise to Abraham?**

God’s second promise to Abraham was one of kingdom. God reiterated that promise to David and made a convenant with him, promising to build a royal dynasty from him that would last forever. (A dynasty is a succession of kings in the same bloodline.)
7. **King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. What caused him to turn away from God? (1 Kings 11:4-6).**

Solomon made the mistake of taking 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. These turned his heart away from God to the point that he followed other gods and even built altars to Chemosh and Molech and others so his wives could worship them.

8. **God said David was “a man after His own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). What qualities do you think that means that David had, that you might want to emulate?**

People will have varying answers to this question. Encourage discussion by asking things like “What does it mean to have a heart like God’s?” “How did David show these qualities?” and so on. You might ask them to consider why Saul lost the kingdom for his sins, while David sinned with Bathsheba yet received an everlasting promise. What was different about David?
Session 6 – The Divided Kingdom

The Exile

- The color for The Divided Kingdom is black
- This represents Israel’s darkest period

| 1 Kgs 12:10-12 | And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, “Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but do you lighten it for us’; thus shall you say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins. And now, whereas my father laid upon you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.’” So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, “Come to me again the third day.” |

| 1 Kgs 12:16 | And when all Israel saw that the king did not hearken to them, the people answered the king, “What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.” So Israel departed to their tents. |

- The kingdom divides in 930 BC (1 Kgs 12:16)
- Narrative books are 1 Kgs and 2 Kgs
- Southern kingdom consists of the two tribes
- Called Judah (tribes of Benjamin and Judah)
- Headed by Solomon’s son Rehoboam
- Northern kingdom consists of other ten tribes
- Called Israel and led by Jeroboam
- Famous northern prophets: Elijah and Elisha
- **Hosea** – major prophet who spoke to the North
- **Samaritans** – northern tribes mixed with 5 nations
- **Jonah** – prophet sent to Assyria preaches grace
- **Isaiah** – prophet to the South warns of exile
- **Exile** – God puts you where you are spiritually
- **1st wave** – Daniel in 605 BC
- **2nd wave** – Ezekiel and Baruch in 597 BC
- **3rd wave** – Jerusalem destroyed in 587 BC
- Babylon, Persian, Greece, Rome
- Jesus sees Israel in exile and leads the return
Session 6 – Divided Kingdom/Exile

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. Shortly after Solomon’s death, the glorious Royal Kingdom split in two. (Look at the map on page 28. The line of division is just North of Jerusalem.) What precipitated the division?

   Solomon’s son Rehoboam, following the advice of his fellows instead of his father’s advisors, refused to lighten the heavy load Solomon had laid on his subjects. In response, the ten tribes to the North denounced David’s line and formed their own kingdom.

2. What were the two resulting kingdoms called?

   Northern Kingdom: Israel; Southern Kingdom: Judah

3. What grave sin did King Jeroboam commit soon after the Northern Kingdom was formed, and why?

   Worried that the people would return to Judah to worship at the Jerusalem Temple, Jeroboam set up golden calves at two cities and announced that these were the gods that brought Israel out of Egypt. He also appointed priests who were not Levites to service these altars. In effect, he started his own religion. It wasn’t long before the people fell into idolatry and followed the wicked practices of their neighbors.

4. Notice on your chart how much longer the Southern Kingdom lasted than the North. How do you account for this?

   The Southern Kingdom (Judah) may have lasted longer than the Northern Kingdom (Israel) because God continued to be worshiped in the South, in the Jerusalem Temple, and David’s royal line was on the throne there. All the kings of the South were from David’s royal line. For the sake of His promise to David, God continued to “maintain a lamp” in Jerusalem – in other words, His Holy city and the promised throne were maintained. The people did not always obey and eventually even they were exiled, but the situation in the North was far worse. A succession of evil dynasties took the throne. Not one king followed God, in spite of many prophetic warnings and pleas.

   If there is time, introduce the charts on pages 34 and 35 of the workbook; these provide an overview of the kings of both kingdoms. You may want to get familiar with them yourself before you lead the discussion group.
5. In what sense is the punishment Israel and Judah received for their sin a physical reflection of their spiritual state?

By rejecting God’s rule and following after other gods, the people of Israel and Judah removed themselves from God’s presence. This spiritual exile was manifested physically when God removed them from the land He had chosen.

6. Read the names of the supplemental books up in the top portion of the chart during these periods. How many are there? Who do you think wrote these books, and why did they write them?

18. With the exception of 2 Chronicles, which contains a parallel history to the books of 1 and 2 Kings, the supplemental books during this period are written by prophets God sent with messages of love and warning to Judah and Israel (two, Obadiah and Jonah, carried messages to other nations).

The chart of the prophets on page 36 can help keep straight which prophet speaks when and to whom. Point it out for future reference.

7. The dark period of the Divided Kingdom is fittingly represented by the color black. What color is used to help recall the period of Exile and why?

Baby blue recalls the sorrow of the exiles as Juday spent seventy years “singing the blues” in “Baby-lon.”

8. Read Jeremiah 31:31-33. God says that Israel has broken the covenant He made with Him. Look along the top of your chart where the covenant icons in “God’s Family Plan” appear. What is this “new covenant” Jeremiah announces and when will it be made?

Ask someone to read Jeremiah 31:31-33: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
Jeremiah announces the new covenant that will be made in Jesus Christ. It will be made during the time period of Messianic Fulfillment.

9. **How might looking to “other gods” in our culture result in a spiritual exile from God?**
   Search your heart to see if there are idolatrous attachments you need to forsake.

   Answers will vary; encourage discussion.
Session 7 – The Return

The Maccabean Revolt

- The color for The Return is yellow
- This represents brighter days ahead for Judah
- The color for The Maccabean Revolt is orange
- This represents fire in the oil lamps in the temple
- Zerubbabel (1st return) rebuilds the temple
- Ezra (2nd return) teaches the people
- Nehemiah (3rd return) rebuilds walls of Jerusalem
- The color for the Maccabean Revolt is orange
- This represents fire in the oil lamps in the temple
- Hellenization – to spread Greek culture
- Ptolemies and Seleucids take over Greek empire
- Septuagint – Greek translation of Old Testament
Session 7 – The Return/The Maccabean Revolt

Answers to Discussion Questions

1. **What color is used to characterize the Return, and why?**

   The Return is characterized by the color yellow, representing brighter days as Judah returns to the land of Canaan after seventy years of exile.

2. **What unlikely person did God use to return His people to the Promised Land, and how?**

   God called on a foreign king, Cyrus of Persia, who was “stirred up by the Lord” to send back anyone who wants to return to Judah to live and rebuild the Temple. Everyone who stays behind is told to help with silver, gold, and other freewill offerings. Cyrus provides building materials and returns the Temple treasure previously stolen by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

   The prophet Isaiah had foretold this very event many years previously, with exact detail right down to Cyrus’ name.

3. **What three kinds of rebuilding were necessary when the Jews returned?**

   Everything had been lost. The Jews had to rebuild the Temple, the city itself, and their lives. This latter included instruction in God’s Law. Each “return” tackled a different aspect of this rebuilding (see the event boxes on the chart).

4. **What kinds of opposition did they face, and how did they overcome them?**

   Judah faced opposition from within and without on their return to Canaan. From the start, they were opposed by the Samaritans, who consider them a political threat. The Samaritans provide opposition every step of the way. From the inside, the rebuilding effort is compromised when the people stop working on the Temple in order to build their own homes. Later on, the Jewish leaders put heavy taxes on the common people to the point that they have to pawn their fields and houses and even their children. They overcome these obstacles of sin with the help of Haggai and Nehemiah, who called them to account and led reforms. Thanks to the ongoing and dedicated leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, the community was established and brought under the rule of God’s law.
5. What kind of crisis confronted the Jews at the beginning of the Maccabean period, when Greece became the world power?

A policy of radical Hellenization threatened their Jewish identity. The Greeks – Antiochus Epiphanes in particular – imposed the worship of their gods and banned under penalty of death not just worship but all practices that separated the Jews from others (the Sabbath, circumcision, etc.). Many were being killed until a man named Mattathias and his sons stood up against them and launched an all-out campaign to fight for their faith. Ultimately, they were successful in pushing back the Greeks and maintained their own rule for a time.

6. Based on the story of the Maccabees, what evidence do you see that Israel is learning to trust God?

Rather than conforming to Greek ways and abandoning their religion, many of the Jews resisted and fought back, risking their lives in the process. 1 and 2 Maccabees are full of heroic stories of resistance and martyrs. Clearly they have learned the lessons of the exile and would rather follow God than abandon Him.

7. Why is the color orange used to represent the period of the Maccabean Revolt?

The catalyst for the Maccabean Revolt was the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, and the war started by the courageous Mattathias led three years later to the taking back of the Temple and its purification. According to the Talmud, oil enough for one lamp lasted miraculously eight days. The event is commemorated today as Hanukkah – the Festival of Lights. The miracle of the oil, while not recorded in Scripture, gives us our color for this period: orange, for the light in the lamps.

8. What have you learned from these two periods that you can apply to your own life?

Answers will vary. Are there any parallels between the Hellenization that threatened the identity of the Jews and secularism today?

9. We have completed the Old Testament story. What positive progress has been made in God’s plan to restore His children to Himself?

One way to look at this question is to see what has been fulfilled of God’s covenant with Abraham. He has had many descendants; they have inherited and inhabited the promised land of Canaan, lost it and returned. They did become a royal kingdom but are now under foreign rule. It has been hundreds of years since someone in David’s line has sat on the throne. The promise of
worldwide blessing was fulfilled in a limited sense in Egypt, when Joseph saved many nations from starvation, and again under David and Solomon, but this promise seems to have foundered.

Another way to look at it is to follow the “God’s Family Plan” icons on the chart: what began with a covenant relationship with a couple, Adam and Eve, grew to a family with Noah and his wife and sons, a tribe under Abraham, a nation under Moses, and a kingdom under David. Great progress has been made and yet something still separates God from His children.

10. What is left to be done?

There remains the problem of sin: man’s fallen nature still separates him from God. Even with all the benefits and advice and help God has given them, Israel can’t seem to follow Him as He asks.

There also remains the problem of the broken covenant. This is a problem: how can God pay out the terms of the covenant, which demand death for the guilty party, and at the same time keep His promises?

How will God move to solve these two things?
Session 8 – Messianic Fulfillment

The Church

- The color for The Messianic Fulfillment is gold
- This represents the gifts of the Magi
- The color for The Church is white
- This represents the spotless bride of Christ
- Christocentric – everythings points to Christ
- Allegorical – how does passage relate to Christ
- Moral sense – how does passage relate to me
- Anagogical sense – how does passage relate to future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matt 1:1</th>
<th>The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.</th>
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- **Hypostatic union** – Jesus fully God and Man
- **Gebirah** – the queen mother
- **Albiet** – the one who is over the household

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<tr>
<th>Acts 1:7-9</th>
<th>He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.</th>
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- Acts 1:1 – 8:3 – the witness in Jerusalem
- Acts 8:4 – 12:25 – witness to Judea & Samaria
And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

- Go bring Christ to the world
1. Open to the very first book of the New Testament, Matthew, and read the first verse. Imagine you are a first-century Jew who knows the Story. What does this verse mean to you?

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” – a son of David has finally come to sit on the throne! Participants may have persona reactions as well.

2. How do Jesus and His New Covenant fulfill these Old Covenant promises? (There are many: these are just a few)

(“Extra Credit”: Can you name the period and/or books of the bible that tell about each of these promises, or explain the context in which it was given?)

- The seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.
- God will provide a lamb for the sacrifice.
- God’s people will have a land/nation/kingdom to live in
- That kingdom will be ruled by someone sitting on David’s everlasting throne
- Israel will be a source of blessing to the entire world

Jesus and His New Covenant fulfill the Old Covenant promises:

Jesus is the seed (child) of Mary, the second Eve, who comes to defeat Satan, the Serpent, on the Cross. The original promise was given in the Early World to Adam and Eve after the Fall in the context of God’s curse on the Serpent (Genesis 3:15).

Jesus Christ is the ultimate Passover Lamb who takes the place of all the others and makes the one sacrifice needed to atone for sin. We have been looking for the lamb since the Patriarchs and Genesis 22, when Abraham told Isaac that God would provide the lamb for the sacrifice.

The original promise came to Abraham in the Patriarchs period, in Genesis 12, 15, 17, and 22, and it referred to the decendants of Abraham. In Jesus this is a spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of God on Earth; in time that will find its ultimate fulfillment in the kingdom of God in heaven. The promise is not just for the blood descendants of Abraham but for all who are his children by faith.

Jesus Christ rules from the heavenly throne over a kingdom established on the twelve tribes and twelve apostles, successor to the kingdom of David. The original promise of David’s everlasting throne was made in 2 Samuel 7 (Royal Kingdom).
Through her son Jesus Christ, Israel blessed the entire world and gave a way to all God’s scattered children to return to Him. This was originally part of God’s covenant promise to Abraham (Patriarchs; Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22)

3. **What did Jesus do, that Adam failed to do?**

Both Adam and Jesus were tested in a garden. While Adam was silent in the face of the Serpent’s temptation and Eve’s indecision, Jesus cried out to the Father. He defended his Bride and willingly suffered and laid down his life for her. He did the will of the Father. He trusted completely in God.

By taking the fruit of the forbidden tree, Adam said, “my will be done.” Jesus refused the fruit offered by Satan in the desert and drank of the cup of suffering instead. His entire life testifies “not my will, but Thine be done.”

4. **Explain the meanings of the colors used to represent Messianic Fulfillment and the Church.**

Gold (Messianic Fulfillment) is the color of the gifts of the Magi, of kingship. White represents the spotless bride of Christ, which is the Church. Just as the white of light contains all the colors of the rainbow and turns them into a pure, illuminating stream, the white of the Church gathers up all the colors of the previous periods and shows them in their full glory. All those other “colors” point toward and have their end in Christ and in His Church.

5. **After Christ’s death and Resurrection, how was He able to live on, both in and with the Church?**

Christ lives on in the Church through the Holy Spirit, which lives in the hearts of Christian believers and which animates and unifies the Body of Christ, the Church.

6. **Describe the “three waves of witness” that propelled the gospel message outward from Jerusalem.**

The Gospel message was preached first in Jerusalem. Persecution pushed the believers out to witness in Judea and Samaria. From there, they took the message out to the ends of the Earth. This process is described at the beginning of Acts (1:8) and provides a structure for that book.

7. **How do you live the life of Christ today?**
Encourage discussion.

8. Israel’s story is our story. What difference does knowing the Story make in your life?

Encourage discussion.