

My Notes for Teaching the New Testament

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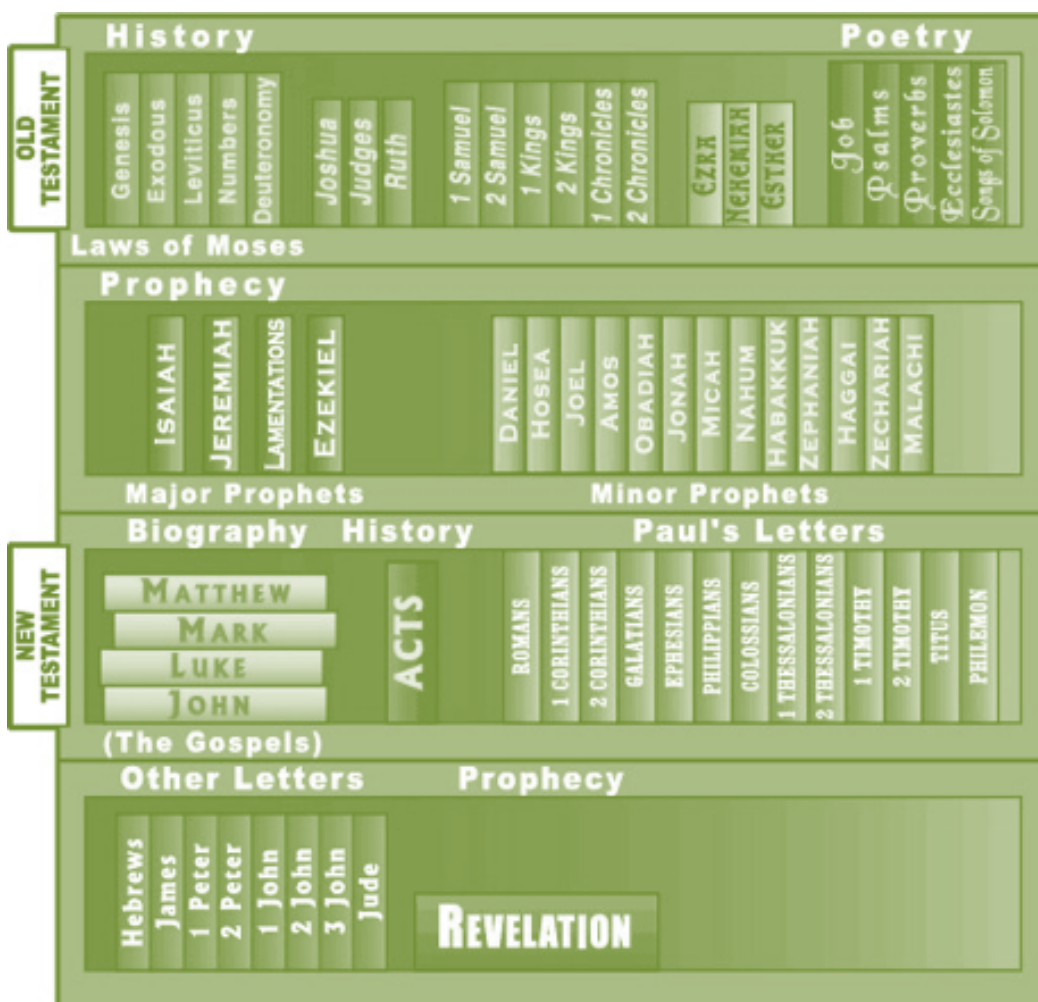
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A New Testament overview with lessons from people in those times



Please note:

Ideally every lady participant needs her own book. If this is not possible please feel free to copy notes for your ladies. You will need to copy the right side (numbered) pages for each lesson, plus the index page, the Bible library page, the map pages and the timeline page to go with the first lesson.

New Testament overview - learning from people who were there.

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Where Jesus walked

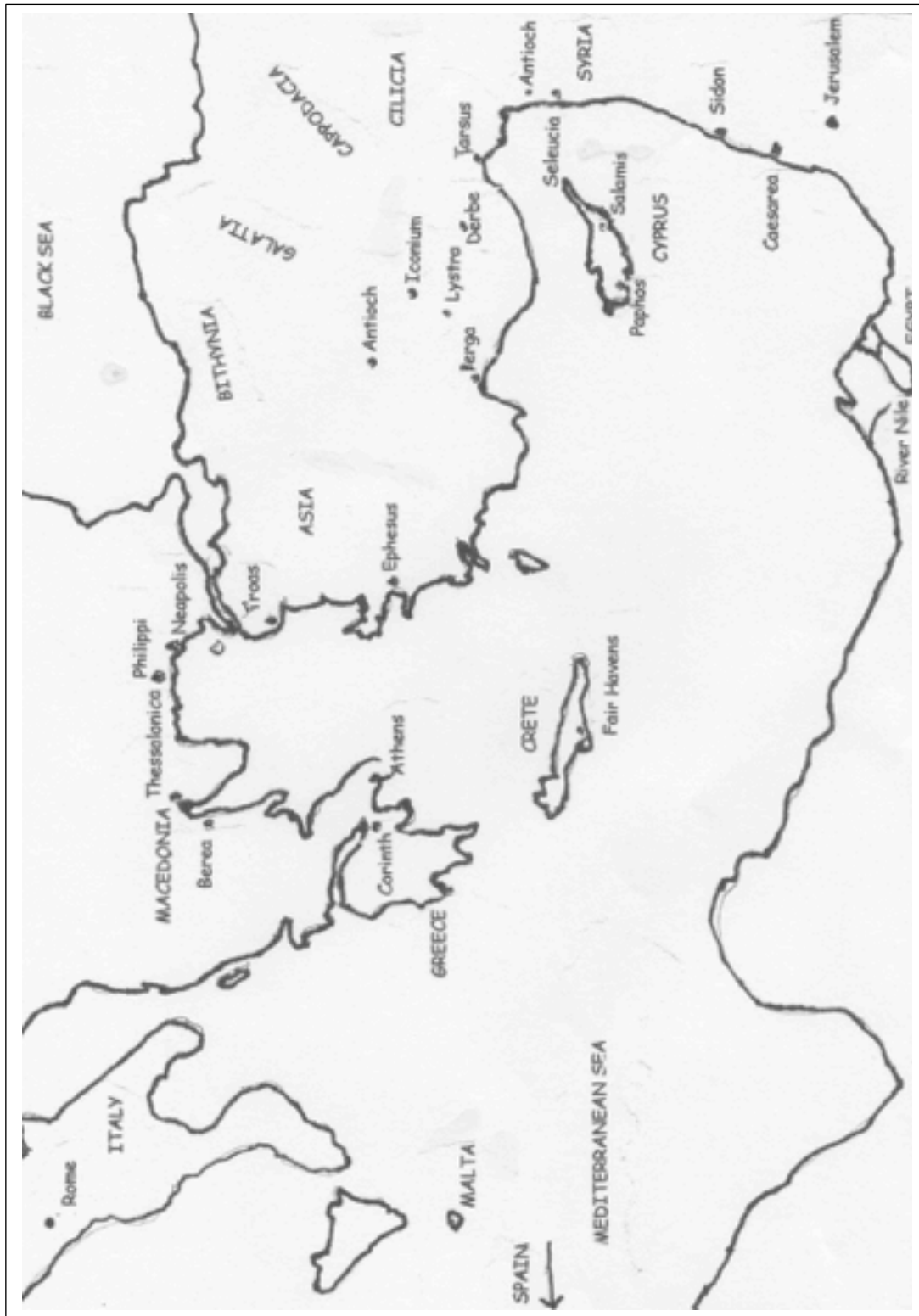


and where, later, Peter and Philip walked

Find where Paul travelled

- First and Second Missionary Journeys

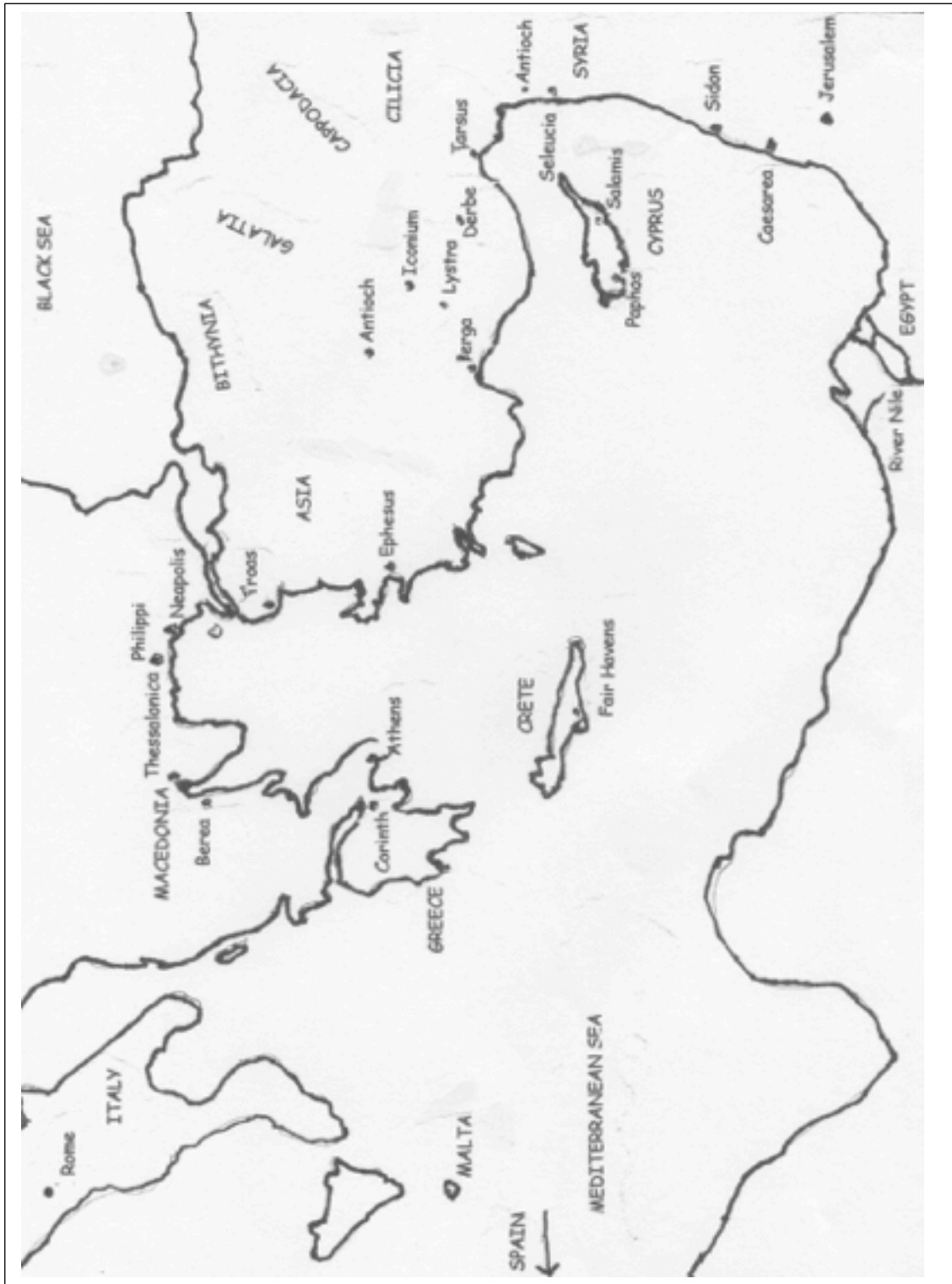
You may want to draw in the route



Find where Paul travelled

- Third Missionary Journey and to Rome

You may want to draw in the route



Timeline 33B.C. - 306A.D.

Throughout this period the major power was Rome, using Latin and Greek languages.

Date	Christian history	Bible books
33 B.C.	Emperor Augustus in Rome	
7-6 B.C.	Rome begins to govern Israel	
6-5 B.C.	Jesus is born in Bethlehem Holy Family go to Egypt	
4 A.D.	Herod the Great dies and the Holy Family return to Nazareth	
26-27	Jesus starts his public ministry	
30	Jesus crucified, risen and ascended Pentecost	
46-47	Paul's first missionary journey	
49	Council of Jerusalem	James
50-52	Paul's second missionary journey	Galatians
54		1 and 2 Thessalonians
53-57	Paul's third missionary journey	55 1 and 2 Corinthians 50-55 Gospel of Mark 55-60 Gospel of Matthew 57 Romans
59-62	Paul house arrest Rome	59-63 Gospel of Luke 61 Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians
62-63	Paul released	63-65 Titus, 1 Timothy 62-64 1 Peter 63 Acts by Luke
65-67	Paul in prison cell	2 Timothy
67-68	Peter and Paul executed Rome	2 Peter
70	Jewish rebellion ends - destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Centre of Christianity moves to Antioch, Alexandria and Rome.	pre 70 Hebrews
85		68-80 Jude Gospel of John
85-95		1,2,3 John
90-95	John exiled to Patmos from Ephesus	Revelation
306 A.D.	Emperor Constantine converted, makes Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire.	

Note : There were different systems for lengths of years and counting years through early history.

When learned men came together to simplify things they managed to have Jesus born in the 'Before Christ' era ! Hence the dates above.

Dates of this age need to be treated approximately not dogmatically.

How to use this study guide.

I want you to understand how this book came to be, and the reasoning behind it.

Three major influences:

1. This set of statistics. We remember:
 - 10% of what we read
 - 20% of what we see
 - 30% of what we hear
 - 50% of what we see and hear
 - 70% of what we collaborate on
 - 80% of what we are involved in doing
2. I did a course to teach TESOL English - a method using involvement and fun!
3. The experience of teaching Bible classes with ladies who did not want just an 'I speak and you listen' environment.

So - the studies in the last 10 years with Fusion - the name for our ladies' group - have involved teaching from me, finding facts and discussing scripture in small groups within a larger group context, having notes to keep and write on, and having homework - usually reading the Bible ahead for the next study. **Always remember your Bible!**

No two sessions will be the same in structure - they will depend on the subject.

Work sheets (the numbered pages on the right side) sometimes have the answers to what the ladies have been discussing - so keep those sheets yourself until after they have shared what they have found!! Sometimes you may need to give the notes out at the beginning, and gently encourage whole group answers and discussion. **Always consult your Bible!**

As you prepare think of questions that may be asked - my notes may help. You will also have some **cultural answers**. If you do not have the answer to a question raised, say so. Say you will research the answer and tell the group next time. Keep the promise!!

It is important to encourage the quieter members of the group to take part. Breaking into smaller groups for discussion can be helpful here. Be gentle how you reject an obviously wrong answer. Encourage the ladies to have paper and pencil with them.

These studies have assumed that the ladies read and write, have **access to a Bible** they can understand, and that it is possible to print sheets for them, lesson by lesson (if they do not have their own book). This may not be the situation where you are. Be creative. You may need to have some Bible passages read to the ladies by others. You may need to translate as you go, or even translate notes beforehand! Understand the aim of the lesson and get there, not as a dictator but as a gentle friend, **in the best way for your group**. Use the material and adapt the method. The ladies who work orally only may well have better memories than the rest of us!

You may decide to make some lessons take two sessions or more. **You are in charge**.

Enjoy studying together. **Enjoy learning more about God.**

Lesson 1 Leader's notes: Gospel or Gospels?

If your group of ladies have not done the Old Testament course, you may want to consider doing Lesson 1 from that course - So why study the Bible? - to be sure you are all looking at the Bible the same way. That lesson is reproduced in this book, see Appendix 1, pages 64-65. Or you may choose to revise some of the content - or jump straight into this lesson here!

What does the word 'gospel' mean to you? May be a good discussion starting point.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - are these familiar words?

Lesson 1 Gospel or Gospels?

We use the word 'gospel' in several different ways. So let's explore those uses to understand what 'Gospel' or 'gospel' means.

The English word 'gospel' comes from two words in an ancient English language - god = good spel = story **So the gospel or a gospel is a good true story.**

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 Paul says "I want to remind you of the gospel. By this gospel you are saved..... that Christ died for our sinsthat He was buried, that He was raised on the third day.....and that He appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time." **So the gospel is the message of Christ dying for our sins, His burial, resurrection and risen appearances.**

Gospel - usually with a capital **G** - also refers to the stories of Jesus' life in the New Testament, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

- **'The Gospel'** is a phrase with which you will be familiar if you worship in a church with a liturgy or written form of service. It refers to the Bible readings set for the day from one of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

- Sometimes in spoken English you could hear the phrase - **'the gospel truth'** - meaning whatever is being said is 'absolute truth'. In this modern usage, however, it may be used to back up a suspect statement. Be very careful if you hear it.

- **'Gospel music'** is lively religious music of Black American origin - some dating from slavery in the USA where it was an encouragement and a way of teaching Christian truth. Gospel music is still being written.

The Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

In the time of Jesus many ordinary people did not have or use books and scrolls. The people who met Jesus, and those who followed Him, would have retained His messages, not only by writing, but by remembering. As the early churches grew they would have spoken these to each other, and so they were preserved orally. There were probably groups of these remembered teachings and sayings, put together to be kept and used to encourage and teach younger Christians, later giving forms to worship. Look at 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Paul had passed this truth on to them when he was with them, and expected them to remember it and use it. Nearly two thousand years later, many Christians are familiar with these words in communion services they attend.

As time went on people realised that this knowledge of Jesus' life and teaching needed to be written for people in the future to have it. As with any famous person there were truths circulating about the Jesus and there were also guesses made and stories invented about Him. There were accurate stories and sayings recorded, and also invented ones. But who was going to decide what was good and what was bad?

Think up a small story from everyday life. There need to be several things happening. Several people's names. Several reactions. Tell the story. Now ask the ladies to say one thing they found in the story. I think you will find a variety of answers.

The differences we find in the *Gospels* are differences of emphasis, differing interest in the mind of the writer - they are not problems to cause us to doubt the inspiration of *God* in our *Bibles*.

We have access to Bibles that have 39 separate books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. How did they all come to be? The Bible finally came together as we know it in the 4th century AD (300-400 AD.) The Church Fathers - wise, respected spiritual leaders - between 100-300 AD gathered the sacred texts and evaluated them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Which ones were seen to be used by God? Authentic, helpful, used to encourage? Accepted by the Church over time? These became what is technically called 'the canon of scripture' - our Bible.

All four of the Gospel writers wrote to preserve information for the future, but they did not look at the information in the same way. They had their own perspectives and backgrounds.

Mark's Gospel was probably written by John Mark who was a companion of Paul and of Peter. Check: Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24, 1 Peter 5:13 (son = son in the faith). His Gospel is the shortest of the four, and is very direct. It could have been the reminiscences of Peter, taken down and put together by Mark. Peter was executed in Rome about A.D. 65.

Matthew has a similar order to Mark but is longer. The disciple Matthew, Matthew 10:3, was probably the author. He used lots of quotes from the Old Testament. Perhaps he used Mark's written account, and added the Jewish material to help his target Jewish audience.

Luke sets out his intention in Luke 1:1-4, to write an historical account of the life of Jesus. His order also follows Mark, but he adds other details he knows. Some of this information has to have come from Mary, the mother of Jesus, see Luke 1:5-2:52.

Luke and Matthew may also have used material known within the fellowship of believers but not preserved for us anywhere else. John makes reference to such material in John 20:30.

John tells us in John 20:31 the purpose of his Gospel: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." Usually John's Gospel is thought to be the latest of the four canonical gospels. Perhaps, as he taught consistently in Ephesus, he realised the need for people to have a theological appraisal of the life of Christ to keep alongside Paul's letters and the Synoptic gospels. Perhaps. It is not written to be a biography or a story, but is rather an explanation, a theology book, the thoughts of a witness, to encourage the believers in knowing, loving and serving God.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels. 'Syn' in Greek meaning together and 'optic' meaning view. They looked at the material the same way. All three were written as a history of Jesus. John wrote to share teaching and prove that Jesus was (and is) the Son of God, the expression of God in human form.

The sequence of some events is not always the same in one gospel as in another.

If we believe that God put the Bible together, then we must allow the perfect Father God to use imperfect human memories, and also allow God to put ideas on the arrangement of the material into the heads of those He chose to record the earthly history of His Son.

Lesson 2 Leader's notes:

Matthew and Mark begin the true story

Matthew - Jesus the Promised Messiah - the complete Jew - the King

Ask four different ladies to read one each of the references
Share what the verses show

In the western world genealogies need to be exact - father/son
Matthew is not exact in that sense, but he is accurate - we just do not have as many difficult names to say!

Why is it important that these five ladies are mentioned?

Tamar took the law into her own hands - and became a onetime prostitute
Rahab may have been a prostitute but trusted Israel's God
Ruth was a Moabitess, not acceptable to the Jews, but supported her mother-in-law
Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, was part of an adulterous relationship with King David
Mary, Joseph's wife, chosen by God.

They may not fit our idea of who God uses - they were not all Jews - Jewish religious leadership was usually male, with a few other notable exceptions, like Deborah and Esther.

Lesson 2 Matthew and Mark begin the true story

Matthew - Jesus the Promised Messiah - the complete Jew - the King

Matthew (also called Levi) was a tax collector and disciple of Jesus - Matthew 9:9-12, Mark 2:13-17, Luke 5:7-31. Matthew was probably not a popular man as a tax collector for the hated Romans, but he reached out to other tax collectors and brought them to have a meal and meet Jesus. A natural evangelist.

The Gospel according to Matthew was placed at the beginning of the compiled New Testament. Perhaps because of his Jewish emphasis Matthew's gospel was seen as the obvious choice to continue the true story from the Old Testament and break the 400 years of silence since the prophet Malachi. Israel came under Roman domination in 63B.C. In 37B.C. Herod was appointed ruler of Israel under Rome.

The first sentence of Matthew's gospel gives his **purpose** "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham." **Genealogy.** Matthew starts his gospel with a list of family history. History and family were important in Jewish culture, as they are for many South Sudanese and Sudanese people. He starts with Abraham, the father figure of Jews, and comes through King David, the greatest king Israel ever had and from whom the Messiah was promised to come.

Check 1 Chronicles 17:7-14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Acts 2:29-36 and Revelation 5:5-6.

For the Jews genealogies were representative, not strictly accurate in a modern, mathematical way. 'Father' in this context can mean 'father', 'forefather' or ancestor'. Matthew is highlighting that King David was an important ancestor of Jesus. Notice in 1:16 that Matthew is careful to point out that Joseph was the husband of Mary - not the father of Jesus. He takes the family line through Joseph, the legal father. Chapter 1:17 says there are fourteen generations in each of three sections of this genealogy. Seven in Jewish symbolism meant completion and perfection. By here using the number seven six times Matthew is pointing to God's perfect plan from Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation to Jesus. Matthew is highlighting the Jewish lineage of Jesus. Unusually he includes five women, and not all Jewish. Verse 3 Tamar, verse 5 Rahab, verse 5 Ruth, verse 6 Bathsheba, verse 16 Mary. Briefly check who they were and why their inclusion is important. Genesis 38; Joshua 2:1-21, 6:17,22-25; Ruth 1:11-18, 4:15; 2 Samuel 11, Luke 2:4-7.

Matthew is the only gospel writer to tell the story of the **visit of the Wise Men** - the astrologers and astronomers from Iran or Arabia, see 2:1-12 - foreigners who came to visit a baby King. Herod was unsettled because he was king appointed by Rome, not by birth. Important wise men, from hundreds of miles away came - with gold for a King, frankincense for a priestly King and myrrh for suffering Saviour. All for Jesus, not for Herod.

How do these Bible passages - Matthew 4:1-11
4:12-17
4:18-22
4:23-25
confirm Jesus' mission?

Mark - Jesus the Servant of God, a powerful Saviour

Get the ladies to cover their notes and then look up the seven references about Mark (opposite) and find the information about him

Dreams. Matthew records a dream God sent to Joseph, Matthew 1:20-24

A dream to the wise men 2:12

A dream to Joseph 2:13-14

Another two dreams to Joseph 2:19-23.

All are God's interventions to protect the promised Messiah. The family settle in Nazareth in Galilee, and years pass of which we know nothing from Matthew.

God can speak to us however He wants, but that does **not** mean that **every** dream is from God.

Confirming Jesus' mission. John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, began preaching and baptising in the Judean wilderness. His main message was 'Repent of your sins and turn to God because the Kingdom of Heaven is near.' Jesus left Nazareth and went to the River Jordan where John was baptising. He asked John to baptise Him, and as He came out of the water there was a confirmation from heaven of Who Jesus was (and is), as God said "This is My beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with Him", 3:13-17.

Testing of Jesus 4:1-11. Beginning of ministry 4:12-17. First disciples 4:18-22.

Preaching and healing ministry in Galilee with large crowds 4:23-25.

Everything is in place for the ministry of Jesus, a descendant of both Abraham and David, confirmed by God the Father, revealed by Matthew as the promised Messiah, the King.

Mark - Jesus the Servant of God, a powerful Saviour

John Mark, to give him his full name, was a young man, not one of the inner group of twelve disciples. What do we know about him?

Acts 12:12 His mother, Mary, had a large house where the followers of Jesus met.

Acts 12:25 He joined the team with Paul and his relative, Barnabas.

Acts 12:5, 13:5,13 John started out on the First Missionary Journey with them but left them at Perga and returned to Jerusalem.

Colossians 4:10 He sent greetings to the Colossians - he knew some of them.

2Timothy 4:11 He was useful to Paul. 1 Peter 5:13 Peter valued Mark, 'my son in the faith'.

Mark's purpose in writing his gospel is put most clearly in Mark 10:45, where Jesus tells the disciples, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

There is very little preamble in Mark's gospel - verses from Malachi and Isaiah which speak of John the Baptist - then a summary of John's ministry, Mark 1:4-8,

- Jesus' baptism by John, 1:9, God's confirmation of Who Jesus is, 1:10-11,

- a brief mention of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness, (1:12-13),

- Jesus beginning to preach, heal, choose followers and attract crowds (1:14-45).

Everything is in place for the ministry of Jesus, confirmed by God the Father as His Son, and revealed by Mark as the Servant of God.

Lesson 3 Leader's notes:

Luke and John begin the true story

Luke - Jesus the Son of Man, the perfect Saviour

Perhaps write the five references from the first two paragraphs of the lesson on a sheet of paper.

Get the ladies to find out about Luke - either in twos, or small groups, or as a whole group.

You may want to get the ladies to talk about:

1. the issues of barrenness, 1:7
2. being an older mum, 1:36
3. going God's way and being misunderstood 1:38
4. needing to stand against tradition as Elizabeth had to speak up with the name John
1:59-64
5. thinking about the way God is working in your life even when you don't understand and just want to say "What's happening to me?" "What's all this about?" 1:24-25, 1:34,38,45.

Lesson 3 Luke and John begin the true story

Luke - Jesus the Son of Man, the perfect Saviour

What do you learn about Luke the person from Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:11 (Paul was probably in a prison in Rome when he wrote this letter), and Philemon 23?

Luke was almost certainly a *Gentile* and an educated man, a medical doctor and a travelling companion of Paul. Acts 1:1-2 link Acts with a former book the author had written. Ever since the second century A.D. the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts have been attributed to Dr Luke as author.

In Luke 1:1-4 Luke tells us that he had researched the material for the gospel, and had decided to write an 'orderly' account of the life of Jesus', so Theophilus can be sure the things he has been told are true. An 'orderly' account may mean chronological but it may also mean grouping events together to help understanding.

Luke 1:5-2:52 has events around the young Jesus that are not in the other gospels.

1:5-25 Zechariah has a visit from the angel Gabriel - where? - why? Priests would probably only do this particular temple service once in their lifetime. Elizabeth became pregnant and thanked God for taking away her disgrace among the people - her barrenness. In my culture there is no shame in barrenness - sadness perhaps. In many cultures barrenness is a state of shame, but God uses someone known as a barren woman to become part of His plan for the climax of the history of salvation. God changed her circumstances.

1:26-45 When Elizabeth is six months pregnant, the angel Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth, a virgin engaged to Joseph. The angel's appearance and greeting startle her - wouldn't it startle you? 1:26-38. Would you have the faith of Mary in verse 38? The engaged but not married virgin hurries off to visit her relative, Elizabeth. Think yourself into the position of Mary and Elizabeth and then read verses 39-45. Two ordinary women - one older, one younger - but obviously 'God-minded' - realising God was using them to fulfil His ancient promises. Elizabeth still had to go through a dangerous pregnancy as an older woman, and Mary had to live through being pregnant in an inexplicable way and the whispered rumours spread about her.

1:46-56 Mary speaks a song, which is very similar to Hannah's in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

1:57-66 Elizabeth and Zechariah's baby son, John, arrives. A Jewish baby was named at birth or at circumcision, on his or her eighth day.

2:1-7, 8-20 Shepherds are told about the birth of Jesus by angels. They visit Him.

2:21 Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and named Jesus, compare Matthew 1:21.

2:22-24 Forty days after the birth, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord and to make a purification sacrifice.

2:25-40 Simeon and Anna, recognised Jesus as the child of promise.

2:41-52 When He was 12 the family made their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

2:33, 49-50, 51. Mary treasured all these things and thought deeply on them.

To discuss-

If we put the birth of Jesus accounts from Matthew and Luke together with the first chapter of John's gospel we have a complete and rounded presentation of the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the coming of Christ.

Do you find it easy to imagine the baby in the manger and think of God's purpose from before time to bring new life through Jesus?

Do you think about John's theology of the coming of Christ and find it hard to understand a tiny baby in a borrowed cradle, escaping to Egypt and working as a carpenter? How can He be the One?

We need to push ourselves to hold all these truths together and stretch our minds.

Our salvation has been on God's heart for a long.....time!

Luke 3 John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism. Luke's genealogy of Jesus.

Luke 4 Testing of Jesus. Beginning of His ministry.

Luke 5 First disciples. Preaching, healing ministry in Galilee, with large crowds.

Luke's genealogy starts with Jesus, acknowledges Joseph the legal father, but then traces back through Mary - the blood relative. Both Mary and Joseph's family histories go back to King David. Luke then goes back to Abraham with the same names as Matthew, but he carries right back to Adam, emphasising that Jesus came for the Jews and the Gentiles, picking up two thoughts from 2:31-32. That's us!!

Everything is in place for the ministry of Jesus, confirmed by God the Father, revealed by Luke as the Son of Man.

John - Jesus the Son of God, a personal Saviour

John and James were sons of Zebedee, who had a fishing business on the Sea of Galilee. John is also the author of the three letters of John and the book of Revelation in our Bible. According to tradition and some early writings, John spent the later years of his long life in Ephesus, teaching the church there. For a while he was exiled on Patmos, an island penal colony off the coast near Ephesus. His crime? Gospel preaching!

John 20:30-31 John tells us that he did not use all the stories of Jesus in what he wrote. He then says he wrote to show that **Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God**. John wrote to **encourage us to believe and have real life in Him**.

So no birth stories or genealogies - they were already written elsewhere.
Fewer ministry miracles - only those John was using to prove Who Jesus was.
He records signs and "I am" sayings as pointing to Who Jesus really was (and is).

1:1-18 John starts his writing with a theological statement: Jesus is God the Word - God the Father's communication with us - with God from eternity, from before time - He had made the world but it did not recognise Him - He came to His own but they did not recognise Him - to all who received Him He gave the right to become children of God, John 1:1-5, 10-14, 18.

1:19-28 John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus.

1:29-35 John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God - evoking thoughts of Abraham, of sacrifice, of Moses and the institution of Passover.

Everything is in place for the ministry of Jesus, announced by John the Baptist, revealed by John as the Son of God Who takes away the sin of the world 1:29.

Lesson 4 Leader's notes:

Matthew continues the true story 5:1-20:34

Ask the ladies not to open their notes or books.
You will need paper and pencils, or a chalk board.

In twos, or small groups, get the ladies to work through Matthew 5:1 - 20:34 deciding which of four columns to put the various events into -

1. story and teaching
2. healing miracles
3. nature miracles

As you do this you may find things you think are especially important, or which summarise, or which add to the whole situation in the story - list them by references under

4. 'special findings'.

A few events may fit into more than one column, so put them in both.

This may be a very new idea - so be patient and help each group.

Try it for yourself ahead of time. Then you may be able to explain the idea to the ladies in a better way.

You may find you need to do it with them this time, and reassure them they are not chopping the Bible up, but looking at what is there in a different way, to try to understand it better.

I estimate it will take about half of the lesson time to do:

1. story and teaching
2. healing miracles
3. nature miracles
4. special findings.

Look at my suggested answers opposite, and complete the lesson page.

There is another miracle recorded by Matthew outside of these references in 21:18-22.

A Friendly warning ☺

using this lesson method may take a long time.

You can choose to break it up into two or three sessions if you have time.
It is good to encourage the ladies to handle and search their own Bibles.

Alternatively, you could show the class my and your answers for this lesson (Matthew) before getting ladies to find answers for themselves on the next two meetings -

for Mark lesson 5, and for Luke lesson 6.

Develop your best way to use this course book. Don't be bound by it.

Lesson 4 Matthew continues the true story 5:1-20:34

In his profession Matthew would have needed an eye for detail and for keeping accurate financial records. Hopefully you have read or scanned 5:1 to 20:34 and allocated each event into your choice of columns.

These are my findings - yours may not be exactly the same.

1. story and teaching 2.healing miracles 3.nature miracles 4.special findings

5:1-7:27			7:28-29
	8:1-17		
8:18-22	8:28-34	8:23-27	8:1, 27, 34
9:9-13	9:1-7		9:3-8, 33-34
9:14-17	9:18-34		
9:35-38			
10:1 -11:30			
12:1-8, 15-21, 22-45,	12:9-14, 22		12:2, 23-24,
	12:15		12:46-50
13:1-58			13:54-58
14:1-12		14:13-21	
	14:35-36	14:22-34	
15:1-20,	15:21-28	15:29-39	15:21-28
16:1-12, 16:13-28			16:21
17:1-13, 17:19-27	17:14-18		17:22-23
18:1-35, 19:1-30			
20:1-16, 20:17-19			
20:20-28	20:29-34		20:17-19

We have many healings - some mention faith, some do not. Forgiveness is mentioned in some and not others. We need to be careful not to build a formula for healing from one example - God is bigger than that.

We see Jesus' power to still the storm - Jesus' power to walk on water and quieten the wind - His power to feed 5000 and 4000 people from five loaves and two fish or seven small loaves and a few small fish, and still have plenty of leftovers!!!

My largest list of references is about the 'story and teaching'. We find Jesus walking from place to place, crossing Galilee on a boat, having lots of conversations with many different people. There were requests for healing, questions about theology, political news with the execution in prison of John the Baptist by Herod. Jesus used parables - word descriptive pictures to convey truth - as well as straightforward answers, and strong moral teaching.

Work through this page and talk about any other references the ladies have put under 'special findings'

Get them to explain their reasoning.

Encourage them to think and apply Scripture.

Now to my 'Special findings', a heading I selected for small items that carried big significance for the overall true story.

7:28-29 Crowds listened and followed Jesus. There were no computers, no phones, no radio, but here was news in the making. And the crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching because He spoke as someone who knew what He was talking about!

8:1,27,34 The crowds followed Him. The disciples were amazed and said "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him? In Gadara, where Jesus healed two demon possessed men, the townspeople asked Him to go because of their loss of business and their fear of Jesus' power.

His teaching and the following crowds brought Jesus to the attention of the religious leaders. They did not want their authority challenged and they did not want political trouble with the Roman authorities who ruled them.

9:3-8, 33-34 An early clash with teachers of the Jewish law creates awe and praise at Jesus' authority. A local synagogue leader needed help, 9:18 - his daughter was dying - he went to ask Jesus for help. See also Mark 5:22-23 and Luke 8:40-42 who both name the synagogue leader as Jairus. The Pharisees, some of the religious leaders, had their own thoughts on Jesus' power!

12:1-14, 23-24 The Pharisees criticise again, are rebuked and start to plot Jesus' death. A large crowd once more. More healings. Jesus asks people to keep quiet about Him to avoid a major clash before 'His time'. Matthew, a student of the Jewish scriptures, has a suitable text from Isaiah. Again the people think that Jesus is the promised Son of David. The Pharisees say Jesus is using the devil's power. Jesus answers them firmly.

13:54-58 Jesus teaches people in the synagogue in His home town and they refuse to accept Him. Was this Nazareth, His longtime home, or Capernaum, His adopted home? See 2:23, 4:13. Some translations make this Nazareth which is logical because the people know His mother and brothers and His trade.

15:21-28 Pharisees from Jerusalem come to question Jesus. A Canaanite woman - not a Jew - is commended for her faith.

16:21 Jesus starts to prepare His disciples for His death at the hands of the Jewish leaders and His resurrection three days later. The disciples enjoy being with the Miracle Worker speaking with authority. But they found talk of His death and resurrection very hard to take. 17:22-23 Jesus tells the disciples the same news for a second time. Reaction - grief. 20:17-19 For a third time Jesus spells out to the disciples what is going to happen.

Matthew has presented Jesus, the promised Messiah, showing the authority of God.

Lesson 5 Leader's notes:

Mark continues the true story 2:1-10:52

As in Lesson 4 ask the ladies not to open their notes or books.
You will need paper and pencils, or a chalk board.

In twos, or small groups, get the ladies to work through Mark 2:1-10:52
deciding which of four columns to put the various events into -

1. story and teaching
2. healing miracles
3. nature miracles

As you do this you may find things you think are especially important, or which summarise,
or which add to the whole situation in the story - list them by references under
4. 'special findings'.

Remember, a few events may fit into more than one column.

This may still be a very new idea - so be patient and help each group.

Try it for yourself ahead of time so you have answers to the ladies' questions!

You may still need to help them this time.

I estimate it will take about half of the lesson time to do.

1. story and teaching
2. healing miracles
3. nature miracles
4. special findings

Look at my suggested answers, and complete the lesson page.

There are 3 other miracles recorded by Mark but not in these references - 1:30-31, 40-42,
11:12-14, 20-21.

Work through page 14 and the top of page 15. Talk about any additional references the ladies
have put under their 'special findings'. Find out why they picked them out.

A second Friendly warning 😊

using this lesson method may take a long time.

You can choose to break it up into two or three sessions if you have time.

It is good to encourage the ladies to handle and search their own Bibles.

*Alternatively, you could again show the class my and your answers for
this lesson (Mark) before getting ladies to find answers for themselves on
the next meeting - for Luke lesson 6.*

Develop your best way to use this course book. Don't be bound by it.

Lesson 5 Mark continues the true story 2:1-10:52

Scan through the nine chapters above and put them into the sections you choose below.

1. story and teaching 2. healing miracles 3. nature miracles 4. special findings

2:6-12	2:1-5		2:12
2:13-17			2:17
2:18-28	3:1-6		3:6
3:13-35	3:7-12		3:12
4:1-34		4:35-41	4:41
	5:1-43		5:31
6:1-29		6:30-44	
	6:54-56	6:45-53	
7:1-23	7:24-37	8:1-10	
8:11-21	8:22-26		8:31-33
8:27-9:13	9:14-29		
9:30-10:45			9:30-32
	10:46-52		10:32-34

As in Matthew there are lots of healings. The same four 'nature miracles' are in both. There is story, teaching and conversation with the Pharisees.

My Special findings

2:12 Amazement and praise to God

2:17 People puzzled over Who Jesus is

3:6 Jesus heals on the Sabbath causing plotting by the religious leaders who felt threatened by Jesus

3:12 Jesus wants to keep a low profile until the right time

4:41 Even His disciples are terrified at Jesus' power

5:31 The disciples do not understand when Jesus asks "Who touched My clothes?" when they were in a crowd. Their response was that everybody was touching someone! In Luke 8:46 Jesus says "Someone touched Me; I know that power has gone out from Me." Someone had touched Jesus seeking His healing power. This is what Mark explains in 5:28 "She thought, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." Verse 29 clearly says she was healed immediately. She came forward and in verse 34 Jesus confirms to her "Daughter, your faith has healed you"

8:31-33 Jesus started to teach the disciples that He would be rejected by the religious leaders, killed and rise again. Peter argued against this idea and was rebuked severely

Don't forget to **find out why** ladies have put other references in their 'special findings'.

The names used for the disciples can confuse us. This paragraph is just to answer the question - yes, three of them do have different names in the different Gospels!

by Jesus. Jesus went on to say, recorded in Mark's version, and in Matthew's and in Luke's, that anyone who follows Him must carry their own crosses. It obviously made a deep impression on everyone who heard it. They could not forget it.

There were always crosses to be seen, where regular executions took place. It was the Roman's preferred cruellest punishment method. Reminders. Solemn thought!

9:30-32 Jesus talks about His death again. The disciples had been talking about who of them would be the greatest. Jesus knew and told them that to be important they must strive to become the servants of all. Another solemn thought!

10:32-43 On their way to Jerusalem Jesus talks to the disciples for a third time about what will happen to Him.

The Gospel of Mark does not have as many parables recorded as Matthew or Luke. Mark has just five. What Jesus did was important to Mark. He is very direct in reporting what Jesus did, and does not have as much of what Jesus said as Matthew and Luke. The words translated 'immediately', 'as soon as' and 'straightaway' (1:29, 6:45, 6:50), are often used, together with eye witness detail, probably from Peter. There are times when you can almost hear Peter saying to Mark "and then...." - talking as they spent time together, perhaps in Rome. Peter also remembered that Jesus had gone to sleep on a cushion 4:38, that the grass was green, which tells us the time of year 6:39, that the man could only see people as trees walking 8:24.

Mark has presented Jesus as the Servant of God - doing what God wants Him to do.

Have you ever been confused about the names of the disciples?

Check Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16.

Simon Peter

James the son of Zebedee

John the son of Zebedee

Andrew - Peter's brother

Philip

Bartholomew also known as Nathanael

Matthew also known as Levi

Thomas

James the son of Alphaeus

Thaddeus also known as Judas son of James

Simon the Zealot

Judas Iscariot

Lesson 6 Leader's notes: Luke continues the true story 6:1-19:27

Ask the ladies not to open their notes or books.

You will need paper and pencils, or a chalk board as in the previous two Lessons.

In twos, or small groups get the ladies to work through Luke 6:1 - 19:27 deciding which columns to put the various events into -

1. story and teaching
2. healing miracles
3. nature miracles

As you do this you may find things you think are especially important, or which summarise, or which add to the whole situation in the story -list them by references under

4. 'special findings'.

Events may be put into more than one column.

Patiently help each group to handle and search their own Bibles.

Do it for yourself beforehand so you have answers to the ladies' questions!

Encourage the ladies your way into what you think is best for them.

It should take about half of the lesson time to do.

1. story and teaching
2. healing miracles
3. nature miracles
4. special findings

Look at my suggested answers, and complete the lesson page.

Note: There are two other miracles recorded by Luke before 6:1.

See 4:38-39 (healing miracle), and 5:4-11 (nature miracle).

Lesson 6 Luke continues the true story 6:1-19:27

Scan the 14 chapters above. Choose suitable categories to put them into below. My findings are below, but please do your own first. It helps us in thinking by this kind of doing.

1. story and teaching 2. healing miracles 3. nature miracles 4. special findings

6:1-5, 12-15	6:6-10		6:11
6:12-49	7:1-10, 11-17		
7:18-35, 36-50			7:50
8:1-18, 19-21	8:26-39, 40-56	8:22-25	8:1-3
9:1-9		9:10-17	9:18-20
9:18-20, 21-27			9:21-27
9:28-36, 43-50	9:37-43		9:43
9:51-56, 57-62			9:43-50, 9:51
10:1-24			10:18
10:25-37, 38-42			10:41-42
11:1-13			11:28
11:14-28, 29-54	11:14		11:53-54
12:1-59			12:1
13:1-9, 18-35	13:10-17		13:17
14:1-34	14:1-4		
15:1-32			
16:1-31			
17:1-10	17:11-19		
17:20-37			
18:1-34	18:35-43		18:31-34
19:1-10, 11-27			

Luke, the educated Greek doctor, records healing miracles as you would expect, plus the feeding of the 5000 and the calming of the storm. Luke shares more of Jesus' parables than Matthew or Mark. Several of the parables that Luke records involve outcasts of society - look up 10:33, 15:11-24, 19:2. Luke was especially interested in Jesus' reaction to women and children - have a look at 7:45-47, 8:3, 8:41-42, 8:43-48, 9:38, 10:38-42, 11:27-28.

Now to look at the 'special findings'.

6:11 the fury of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law and their planning what to do about Jesus.

7:50 Christian salvation comes only by faith in our Lord Jesus and what He has done.

Work through the 'special findings' together.

Remember to check any other references the ladies have picked, as well as mine.

This is important.

Involve the ladies - what do you think about that?

- how easy is that?

- does that encourage you?

The 'special findings' (continued from page 16)

8:1-3 Jesus + the Twelve + Mary, who had been cured by Jesus, the wife of the chief of Herod's household, Susanna and others - using their own financial means and contacts to provide for food, accommodation and whatever else was needed for the travelling group. The ladies were not necessarily with the team all the time, but made provision for Jesus and his followers. A valuable ministry! Lydia at Philippi was another lady with this ministry. Acts 16:14-15, 40.

9:18-20 a quiet moment with no crowd around - Peter's confession of faith.

9:21-27 Jesus talks about His coming death, and says that His followers were to take up their crosses daily. That's us! Verse 27 means some of the people listening would see the arrival of the kingdom of God with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Judas Iscariot did not.

9:43 are you amazed at the greatness of God like these people were? Why?

9:43-50 Jesus talks a second time about His death and resurrection, but the disciples are more interested in who would be the greatest among themselves.

9:51 as the God appointed **time** approached Jesus went **resolutely** - **He set His face** - towards God's holy city for the sacrifice that He was about to make, ready to pay the price.

10:18 compare with Job 1:6-7, Jude verse 6, 2 Peter 2:4. Satan (and company) have been cast out but are still, at the moment, able to roam the earth, under God's constraints.

10:41-42 we need to be learning more about Jesus and spending time with Him **and** we need to be following hard after God in our everyday living.

11:28 **obedience** to God is always the key to a blessed life.

11:53-54 the opposition was watching to catch Jesus out using His own words.

12:1 **many** thousands! A countless number.

13:17 the people were delighted, opponents humiliated. **Both could be dangerous.**

18:31-34 Three times Jesus has told them this information - just as Matthew and Mark record. His death and resurrection was all planned in God's timing, **not** an accident of history.

Luke has presented Jesus as the Son of Man - reaching for God men and women of all backgrounds.

Lesson 7 Leader's notes: John continues the true story 2:1 - 11:57

There will be time pressure on this lesson once again!

See if any of the ladies can remember why John wrote his Gospel, from this book chapter 1, page 7. (or John 20:31).

Work through the first two paragraphs of the lesson.
Look at the map about Judea and Galilee on page 3.

Below is extra information in case you want it for paragraph three opposite.

Before 1400 A.D. most copying of literature was done by hand. The availability of such literature was therefore very limited.

Printing using wood blocks started in China about 200 A.D. Moveable wood block type was developed around 1000 A.D. Woodblock printing was also used in Europe, but in the 1400s European printers produced metal type pieces. This began an economical book printing industry, and with it came an explosion of knowledge.

Printing enabled many more people to have books. It was a major development in education and communication. The advent of computers has revolutionised commercial printing - hence this book ☺ - and made it easy for an individual to communicate to many more people than she or he might ever meet.

Note: Some of the references in the four sections (opposite) are outside of John 2:1 - 11:57. This is deliberate. The next Lessons on each Gospel in our course cover Palm Sunday to Ascension, and we will have difficulty fitting it all in!

Suggestion: teach three 'special findings' passages (opposite), by asking the ladies questions. especially go through 'material from John that is **not** in the Synoptics.'

Extra information you may find useful:

A.D.70 The Roman forces destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, and slaughtered many people, after the Jewish rebellion against Rome in A.D.66.

Note: we are **not** doing our usual 'four column research' during this lesson.

Lesson 7 John continues the true story 2:1 - 11:57

As we saw earlier John's purposes in writing his Gospel were:

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name".

John wants to show to Jews that the promised Messiah has come.

He wants to show to **everybody** else that Jesus is the Son of God - divine.

John's Gospel has no genealogy, no birth stories, nothing about Jesus' temptation, no transfiguration, no appointing of disciples, no parables.

John concentrates on the divinity of Christ, the only begotten of the Father. He records more Jerusalem and Judean ministry than Matthew, Mark and Luke, who record a lot of ministry in Galilee.

Before we look at 2:1-11:57 we need to look at 7:53-8:11. This short passage is **not** in the oldest Greek manuscripts. A few manuscripts use part of this short section in two different places in John, or in two different places in Luke. It may be that a scrap of a manuscript was separated from its original document and later tucked into different places. Remember, these original documents did not have chapter and verse references. References were only added for our convenience in 1551 A.D. Printing presses were only invented in 1440-1450. Before that manuscripts were copied by hand.

It feels like an authentic Jesus story but we cannot base categoric or dogmatic teaching on what we are not sure is an original record.

Section one: If we had searched John 2:1-11:57, as we did for Matthew, Mark and Luke in Lessons 4,5, and 6, **we likely would have come to these three passages in our 'special findings'**.

2:23-25 In Jerusalem, the religious centre of the Jewish nation, at the Passover Festival, people saw the signs - John's code word for miracles - and believed in Jesus. Verse 25 Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves.

10:40-42 John's testimony to Jesus had proved to be true.

11:45-54 Conspiracy by the priests/Sanhedrin to keep their Temple and their nation secure - but even though they had Jesus killed the nation still perished in A.D.70.

Compare Caiaphas' words in 11:50 with Jesus words 10:11.

Section two: **John has material in his Gospel which is not in the Synoptics.**

There are also occasions where John's account clarifies something in one of the Synoptic Gospels. See Mark 14:53-54 and John 18:15-16,

Mark 14:57-59 and John 2:19-21,

Mark 15:1 and John 18:31-32.

You may need to teach this section by asking questions, and discuss the second section (below opposite), because of time.

Seven miraculous signs

Look at these references for signs - **pointers to Who Jesus is** - in twos or small groups, or as one group led from the front if that works better for your group and/or timewise.).

Discuss.

What does each sign teach us?

I've done the first two as examples - you do the rest!

2:1-12 (verse 11) Mary trusted Jesus - Jesus respected Mary - the new wine is superior to the old, as is everything in Jesus' Messianic age.

4:45-54 (verses 48 and 54) An important man but unable to sort this problem himself - Jesus could and He did. The important man and his household believed.

5:1-15

6:1-14 (verses 2 and 14)

6:16-21

9:1-7

11:38-44, (see description in 12:18)

Note: Some add an eighth sign as 21:1-14, after Jesus' resurrection.

John does say in 20:30 he knew of more than seven.

7 'I am's. 'I am' is a phrase we all use, but Jesus is using it with reference to the name of God, compare Exodus 3:14, John 8:58.

Check the verse or verses in the Gospel of John. Check the cross references if there are any.

Put your thoughts together.

What do each of these 'I am's that Jesus says mean for you?

6:51

8:12

10:7 and 9

10:11 and 14

11:25

14:6

15:1 and 5

Section three: John uses the word 'signs' rather than miracles. Some English translations use the words 'miraculous signs' - they point to Who Jesus really is. John records at least seven signs.

What does each sign teach us?

1. 2:1-12
2. 4:45-54
3. 5:1-15
4. 6:1-14
5. 6:16-21
6. 9:1-7
7. 11:38-44, 12:18

Section four: John also records seven occasions when Jesus describes Himself. He begins with the words, 'I am'.

How does each 'I am', describing something of Jesus, help or encourage you?

6:51 compare John 1:14, Mark 14:22

8:12 compare John 1:9-12

10:7 and 9 Several shepherds would keep their sheep together in one enclosure overnight, and employ an under shepherd to guard the single entrance.

10:11 and 14 What does a good shepherd do? Psalm 23:1-4

11:25 compare John 1:4, John 5:25-26

14:6 What is Jesus saying? He is the Way to ____
He is the Truth about ____
He is the Life of ____

15:1 and 5 compare Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 2:6-7

John has presented Jesus as the powerful and caring Son of God.

Lesson 8 Leader's notes: The purpose of the true story from Matthew 21:1-22:46, Mark 11:1-12:37, and Luke 19:28-22:6

Work through the Jewish leaders section.

Holy Week summary.

If the ladies have Bibles ask some to have Matthew open, some Mark and some Luke.

As you read through 'Holy Week Summary' ask - who has what in the gospel they are looking at?

See how similar or dissimilar the three versions are.

Lesson 8 uses thought and logic

Lesson 9 uses feelings and emotion

Again, ask some of the ladies to have Matthew open, some Mark and some Luke.

Work through 'A quick look at Holy Week' - who has which stories?

Draw out that **together** they make a more complete picture.

Lesson 8 The purpose of the true story from Matthew 21:1-22:46, Mark 11:1-12:37, and Luke 19:28-22:6

Jewish leaders. Pharisees - believed in resurrection and in the authority of the Old Testament Law **and** the oral traditions of the rabbis.

Sadducees did not believe in resurrection but believed in the Old Testament Law.

Rabbi - a teacher of the Jewish Law - a leader of a local synagogue.

Sanhedrin means "sitting together" - the supreme Jewish legislative and judicial court - a group of 71 rabbis in Jerusalem, probably comprising Sadducees and Pharisees.

Holy Week summary. As far as we know all the disciples were at the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and stayed through that week until Last Supper. late Thursday. All the disciples were at the Last Supper - Judas may have left during it. All the disciples were in Gethsemane. Mark possibly was. (His mother, Mary had a large room where Jesus and His disciples may have met. See Acts 12:12-17 and see Mark 14:51-52.) We know that Peter and John were nearby after the arrest of Jesus and through the trials, and John was near the foot of the cross.

When the disciples met together after the Crucifixion and after the Resurrection they must have exchanged their experiences of the last few days. So Matthew, Peter, Mark and John know the events that happened. All four Gospel writers have a story to tell. Matthew, Mark and Luke cover a lot of the same narrative. John is much more selective.

A quick look through Holy Week

Sunday The so called Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. One donkey or two? Does it matter? No. Not ridden on before as befits a king. Hosanna - the crowd praise Jesus.

Monday The Temple is cleansed by Jesus - the Court of the Gentiles was as far as non-Jews could go into it. Those who changed money (at very high rates) into the kind of money that could be used to buy sacrificial animals, had made Jesus' Father's house into a den of robbers. They made it more difficult for non-Jews to find space there.

Tuesday The religious leaders were not amused by Jesus' actions - He was challenging their authority. Judas makes a contract to betray Jesus.

Thursday The disciples make preparation for Passover - perhaps in Mark's mother Mary's house?

Thursday later on Jesus and the disciples share the Passover - Judas is sent (released by God's sovereignty) to betray Jesus. Most disciples do not understand what was happening.

Thursday-Friday The grief of Gethsemane.

Friday Betrayal, arrest, desertion. Trials of Jesus, Peter's denials, suicide of Judas, mockery by the Roman soldiers.

We'll look at Jesus' discussions with the Jewish leaders using Matthew's account for four occasions and Luke for one.

Matthew 21:23-27

Work through the leaders' (the chief priests' and elders') questions, with Jesus' answers. Stay in one whole group.

For **Matthew 21:28-22:14** Divide the class into three groups.

Read one parable in each group, with the ladies' looking for what Jesus was actually telling the religious leaders. (two sons 21:28-32; tenants 21:33-41; wedding banquet 22:1-14).

Ask each group to share their answers. Try to keep them from looking at my suggestions while they are searching their Bible's for themselves!

Matthew 22:15-40 Still in the three groups - give **one** of my questions opposite to each group. They can answer more than one if they finish their own quickly.

Matthew 22:41-46 Move on to the Messiah/Son of David teaching when appropriate. I suggest you teach this to the group altogether.

Luke 21:1-4 The widow's offering - how should we give to our Lord?

Create your own suitable picture or use the comparison below.

Compare this giving to the Lord:

- Rachel has a husband with a job, her children are married and she gives £5
- Emma has five young children and her husband cannot always get work and she gives £5
- Lydia has one very sick child and her husband has a back injury and cannot work - she gives £5

We are not seeking to judge other ladies, we are asking a question of ourselves.

Discuss the references at the end of the next two paragraphs with the ladies. They have these two paragraphs in their notes.

Jesus was born the Son of God and the Son of Man. But what He had come to do on earth was yet future. He had done wonderful things because of Who He was - but His main purpose was yet to be fulfilled.

We are coming to the climax of Jesus' ministry as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But we need to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry of salvation is set in the context of eternity, from creation, through God's eternal purposes to the glory of heaven for ever.

Ephesians 1:3-6, 19-23, 3:10-11; 1 Peter 1:10-12; Revelation 5:6-14.

Encourage the ladies to push their minds trying to understand God's forever purposes.

Let's look at Jesus' discussions with the Jewish leaders, using Matthew and Luke.

Matthew 21:23-27 The leaders ask a question and Jesus responds with a question. The leaders are not willing to answer - why is this?

Consequently Jesus chooses not to answer them either, but after this interaction He instead tells them three teaching stories and asks one very important question:

Matthew 21:28-22:14

1. You have God's commands but you only keep them if it suits you.
Total obedience is required.
2. You rejected the prophets, and now you are rejecting Me (Jesus your Messiah).
Others will receive your inheritance.
3. You have refused God's wedding invitation.
You must enter God's kingdom on His terms. Your own are not accepted.

Matthew 22:15-40

1. How does this apply to you today? Compare Matthew 22:15-22 to Romans 13:6-7.
2. How important is it to believe, and act on what the Bible teaches? Compare Matthew 22:23-33 to 2 Timothy 2:15.
3. How is this commandment the greatest? Compare Matthew 22:34-40 to Micah 6:8.

In **Matthew 22:41-46** Jesus poses another question to the Pharisees. Check Psalm 110:1. King David, the most respected and honoured king the Jews ever had, says 'God Almighty is saying to Jesus, sit in the place of honour next to me'. Compare Revelation 5:1-14. Jesus is once again saying that He is God. Most of the Jewish leaders were furiously offended.

Luke 21:1-4 Mark and Luke both record the Jesus noticing a widow putting her offering into the Temple treasury. She gave very little. She had very little. She gave all she had. Offerings to God are not to be measured by how much we give, but how much we still have!

Jesus was born the Son of God and the Son of Man. But what He had come to do on earth was yet future. He had done wonderful things because of Who He was - but His main purpose was yet to be fulfilled.

We are coming to the climax of Jesus' ministry as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But we need to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry of salvation is in the context of eternity, from creation, through God's eternal purposes to the glory of heaven for ever. Ephesians 1:3-6, 19-23, 3:10-11; 1 Peter 1:10-12; Revelation 5:6-14.

We really have to stretch our minds to begin understanding the scope of eternity, God's eternal purposes and 'forever'.

Lesson 9 Leader's notes: The purpose of the true story continued in Matthew 26:14-27:66, Mark 14:12-15:47, and Luke 22:1-23:56

Tell the Bible's true story or read the story written opposite.

Encourage the ladies to express their own thoughts about it.

For example, ask them to think how they would feel in the situation

if they were Jesus,

if they were a disciple

if they were one of the ladies' support group

(dare I say it?) if they were God the Father

Most Bible references included in the opposite writing are from Mark's gospel. Ladies could find more from Matthew and/or Luke as an exercise.

Note:

Not every detail from the Matthew, Mark and Luke accounts is mentioned here - Pilate washing his hands and declaring his innocence of Jesus' blood - Jesus' flogging - Simon of Cyrene made to carry Jesus' cross, and more.

Lesson 9 The purpose of the true story continued in

Matthew 26:14-27:66, Mark 14:12-15:47, and Luke 22:1-23:56

Jesus and the disciples celebrate the **Last Supper** Mark 14:22-23 - Passover with a whole new significance- Jesus our Passover Lamb - the new covenant. Then they went out to the Mount of Olives - Jesus tells the disciples that they will desert Him, but that after He is risen He will go ahead of them into Galilee. Peter says he will die with Jesus and all the disciples say the same. They move on to **Gethsemane** Mark 14:32, Jesus tells the disciples to stay where they are.

He takes only Peter, James and John with Him before saying, "Stay here and keep watch with me". He goes beyond them. Jesus falls on His face, talking to His Father about what must happen in the next few hours. Peter, James and John have fallen asleep. Three times Jesus is nearly overwhelmed as He contemplates what He is about to do, what He has known was the plan from eternity. "**Your will, Father**", He says, Mark 14:36. The disciples are still asleep. Jesus rouses them saying, "Rise. Let us go. Here comes my betrayer."

It is sometimes easy to be asleep when Jesus wants us to be awake!

In the blackness of night and the darkness of betrayal, Mark records a possible self-portrait in 14:51. In the noise and confusion of **armed arrest** Mark 14:43, Peter uses a sword to lash out and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus. Jesus heals him. The arresting men take Jesus back into Jerusalem, to the house of the high priest. There is a fire in the courtyard there. Peter goes to warm himself. He ends up denying any knowledge of Jesus three times. **The cock crows** Mark 14:72 - just as Jesus said it would.

It is sometimes easy to deny Jesus by what we say or don't say, what we do or don't do!

The authorities had to wait until sunrise before they could start a trial which would bring a death sentence. The guards amuse themselves by **mocking, insulting and beating Jesus** Mark 15:16-19. At daybreak the Jewish leaders begin a trial and soon have the evidence they want to take Jesus on to the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate. Here they work the words around to make it a political accusation. Pilate says, "**I find no basis for a charge against this Man**" Mark 15:14. Discovering that Jesus came from Galilee Pilate chooses to send Jesus to Herod . Herod had jurisdiction over Galilee. Herod wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. The soldiers enjoy the mockery. Jesus is sent back to Pilate.

Pilate had a difficult job trying to rule Judea and Jerusalem. He tries to release Jesus because he can find no just cause to execute Him. **The crowds shout for Jesus to be executed** Mark 15:12-13. Pilate tries again. But the crowd shout they want Barabbas, a murderous rebel, to be released, not Jesus. **Pilate tries to release Jesus a third time** Mark 15:15 but makes an expedient practical decision against his own better feelings. Pilate "surrendered Jesus to their will" Luke writes. "They led Him away to crucify Him." Matthew and Mark.

At an appropriate time share this from the footnote to Matthew 27:22 in the NIV Zondervan Study Bible:

"Crucify. Usually meant to affix a person to a cross-shaped pair of wooden beams, either with ropes or nails through palms and ankles, with arms outstretched until the person was so fatigued that they could no longer lift their head off their chest enough to breathe. It was a standard but very cruel form of execution the Romans used for slaves and the worst of criminals".

Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified, Matthew 27:26.

Ask about the significance of many women being nearby to Jesus.
Do you wish you were there? Why? Why not?

So Jesus was crucified at nine in the morning, outside the city as decreed by Jewish law. Two other men, both rebels, were crucified at the same time. Jesus was in the middle. Jesus said, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"**. Luke 23:34.

The soldiers were allowed to take for themselves any minor possessions the prisoner had. Then they sat and watched.

Onlookers scoffed, soldiers mocked. One of the other crucified men mocked Jesus, while the third man said, "We are being punished justly. But this Man (Jesus) has done no wrong. Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Jesus replied **"Truly, I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise"**. Luke 23:43.

At noon darkness came over the land until three in the afternoon. In the Old Testament darkness sometimes means God's displeasure. Put that with Luke 22:53. When the Jewish leaders arrest Jesus in Gethsemane. Jesus said to them, "...this is your hour - when darkness reigns." Un-natural darkness - a God intervention. Compare Habakkuk 1:13. God cannot look on sin/evil, though He does still love the sinner and wills their repentance.

At about three in the afternoon Jesus cried out **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** Matthew 27:46. This is the moment when Jesus carries the sins of humankind feeling the complete break of His previously unbroken communion with His Father.

Then Jesus says' **"Father, into your hands I commit My spirit"**, Luke 23:46. When He had said this, He breathed His last.

Another God intervention - the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. God had made a way for people to freely access His presence through Jesus' sacrifice.

The centurion in charge of that day's crucifixion seems to know more than he can understand from events of the last few hours.

This Man was (and is) God! Luke 23:47 compare Mark 15:39.

Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, gets permission to bury Jesus' body, in linen cloth, in a tomb cut out of rock. And the tomb was sealed. Matthew 27:65-66.

Who was at the cross? Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49.

Who was at the tomb? Matthew 27:61, Mark 15:47, Luke 23:55-56.

Lesson 10 Leader's notes: The purpose of the true story from John's perspective 12:1-19:42

Don't forget this is not just a brain exercise, it must involve hearts as well.

Pray God the Holy Spirit will move on people during your Lesson.

This section of John is full of teaching which builds blocks into Christian living if applied properly.

Work through these **John references** - involving the ladies by asking and answering my questions if discussion does not flow easily.

12:1-8 Were people right to be indignant? Why? Why not?

What reason did Jesus give for Mary's actions?

What was His anticipated result?

Does that surprise you? Has it happened?

13:1-17 Here is the Creator of the universe washing your feet -
is there anything you should not be willing to do for Him?

14:6 Ten words in English that give us three ways to think about God the Son and

God the Father. May God the Holy Spirit lead us in our answers:

What does believing these three truths do for your Christian life?

How does it change your life from before you believed?

15:1-8 I can picture lemon trees we planted in our Khartoum North garden. After two years they produced much enjoyable fruit. We got what we expected for our work.

What fruit does your Christian life produce for your Lord Jesus? What He expects?

15:12 The little word 'as' makes a big difference here. It is **not** a full stop between two short sentences. What do you think it means to "love others **as** Jesus loves"?

Lesson 10 The purpose of the true story from John's perspective 12:1-19:42

John does not record the interaction of Jesus with the Pharisees, but he records five chapters of teaching, encouragement and prayer. Precious time spent with the disciples. Sometimes time is best thing we can give to someone.

12:1-8. John records a feast at the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany, where Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived. The story is also in Matthew and Mark - they record the perfume being poured over Jesus' head by a woman, as He reclined at the table. Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9. John has the perfume being poured over Jesus' feet by Mary. May be it was both? She used her hair to wipe His feet. Some people were indignant - the perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor. But Jesus said that Mary has anointed His body for burial, John 12:7. "Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her". Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9. Matthew and Mark place this story during Holy Week. John has it the day before the Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem.

Mary did what she could, she used what she had. There's a challenge for us today!

13:1-17 In the Middle East it is hot and dusty. You have a bath and then go out. By the time you have walked a little way your feet are dusty. It was the lowest job in the house to be the one who washed the feet of others. In a Jewish household a Jewish servant was not expected to do this. If they had one, a Gentile slave would be made to do it.

Peter would probably have washed Jesus' feet but not the other disciples' feet!

Yet Jesus stoops to wash your feet and my feet! Compare Matthew 20:25-27.

Another challenge! Sometimes women resentfully feel that the world has called them servants or slaves. Jesus says we should be willing to represent Him and take the role of a good servant.

14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life". (1) Jesus is our way to God, (2) He is the truth of God displayed and (3) He gives everlasting life. He is God in a way we could understand - in human flesh like ours.

Do you really believe this?

15:1-8 Jesus says "I am the true Vine and My Father is the Gardener.....I am the Vine; you are the branches". In many Old Testament references the vine represents Israel, but here Jesus changes the picture. He is the Vine - as a vine produces fruit through its branches **we are like branches for Jesus! Are you ready for this?**

15:12 Jesus said, "My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you". Notice it is a command, not just advice. This sounds soft and cuddly. The fact is **it is a big challenge.**

John 16:7-22 Share ways you know the Holy Spirit as:

your Helper, verse 7

One Who convicts you, verses 8-9

your Teacher, verse 13

One Who **glorifies** Jesus to you, verse 14 (What **does** that mean?)

17:1-5 Put into words the relationship between Jesus and His Father in heaven.

Ideas may include - perfection, purity, glory, family, love, and more.

17:6-26 Choose one point from Jesus' prayer and share why it is special for you.

Again, **don't forget** this is not just a brain exercise, it must involve hearts as well.

Pray God the Holy Spirit will move on people during your Lesson.

Work through the section on the differences between John and the Synoptics.

Look up the Scriptures and let them speak to the ladies.

19:14, 16 The whole crucifixion process, from passing judgement to certifying death on the cross took a long time. This may help explain apparent discrepancies.

Three more words from Jesus on the cross.

Ask the ladies which of these they see as most significant. Then ask them to explain why!

19:38-42 Think of opponents of Jesus around you. Then pray for their salvation.

John 16:7-22 Jesus says He will go to heaven Then the Holy Spirit will come and "guide you into all truth." Compare Acts 1:9, Ephesians 1:13-14, Galatians 5:22-23. If we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, seeking His forgiveness for our sins, the Holy Spirit is promised to live in us. Jesus encourages His disciples. **Are you encouraged? No-one can really take away our joy because we live after Jesus' resurrection.**

17:1-5 Jesus is looking forward to sharing glory with His Father again, the way it was before He came to earth as a man.

17:6-26 Jesus prays for the disciples and all believers - **that's us!!!**

What is different in this 'Gethsemane to the death of Jesus' narrative, between John's Gospel and the Synoptics we saw mainly in Lesson 9?

18:13 Jesus is arrested and first taken to the house of Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas. Annas had been High Priest but the Romans appointed Caiaphas to take his place. Many Jews still felt that Annas was the real High Priest!

18:15-16 John knows the High Priest and gets Peter allowed into the compound. See how John refers to himself, but not by name!

19:7-15 At one Sanhedrin meeting Caiaphas said "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish". John 11:50. Pilate realises he is not now coping with common rebel, but someone beyond his understanding. Prisoners may curse and swear. The composure and words of **this** prisoner unnerve Pilate. The Jewish leaders did not want Caesar ruling over them, but at that moment they were angrier with Jesus than with Caesar.

19:14 "It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon". Time passes.

19:16 "Finally Pilate handed Him over to them to be crucified". Mark 15:25 places the crucifixion at nine in the morning. Matthew, Mark and Luke have darkness coming at noon for three hours, while Jesus was on the cross.

Three more words from Jesus on the cross. He saw His mother and John the disciple.

19:26-27 "**Woman, here is your son.**" "**Here is your mother.**" In the physical anguish of bearing the weight of all sin, Jesus makes provision for the woman who gave Him birth.

19:28 "**I am thirsty**" Shows again Jesus' genuine humanity.

19:30 "**It is finished**" Yes, His human life was at an end. His resurrection body was new, different, yet continuing life. **What He had come to earth to do was accomplished.** He had paid the price of sin and made a way for people to have a good personal relationship with Almighty God. **Salvation is now available to all.**

19:38-42 Nicodemus, who earlier met Jesus in secret one night, brings spices for the burial of Jesus' body - Nicodemus and Joseph - two members of the very Sanhedrin who opposed Jesus, now work together to honour the Man they believe is God's Son, Jesus our Saviour.

Lesson 11 Leader's notes: Our Lord Jesus' Resurrection from Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20-21

Ask the ladies not to look at their notes yet.

Before we rejoice in the fact of Jesus' Resurrection, we need to look at some possible endings of Mark's Gospel.

Get the ladies to look at Mark 16:9-20 in their own Bibles.

Here we have another problem like John 7:53-8:11. (See page 18.)

Perhaps ask the ladies what they learned about John 7:53-8:11 back in Lesson 7.

The earliest existing manuscripts do not have Mark 16:9-20. It has been suggested that Mark stopped there to provoke his readers to realise that verse 8 was not what Jesus intended to happen and to challenge them to go out and tell people the Gospel. It is more likely that the last few verses of Mark 16 got lost from the manuscript until some well-meaning copyists later added verses 9-20, or even another ending, to 'tie up or finish' the story.

Another possible ending found is "Then they reported all these instructions briefly to Peter and to his companions. Afterwards Jesus Himself sent them out from east to west with the sacred and unfailing message of salvation that gives eternal life. Amen." However, this sounds like a very short summary which has been added later.

Once again remember, we cannot base dogmatic and authoritative teaching on what we are not sure is an original Scripture.

Now on to the Resurrection accounts. Still not looking at notes.

Perhaps **split the ladies into three groups** to look at Matthew, Luke and John.

Ask them to find the first event in their story. Matthew 28:1-10, Luke 24:1-8, John 20:1.

Take Mark 16:1-8 yourself - the rest of the stories are not in Mark!

After suitable time share your story from Mark. Get the three groups to share and compare in turn. The first part of the resurrection accounts are itemized in the notes.

Follow the chart opposite starting with Luke 24:9-12, going left to right and line by line, collecting all the details from the four gospels in time order.

May be you can ask someone to **write them on a board** for everyone to see?

Think - if you were getting up very early to visit a tomb and then saw angels, you might not remember exactly the same details as the person with you!

Different events meant more to different people. That is what individuals remembered.

Lesson 11 Our Lord Jesus' Resurrection from Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20-21

Before we rejoice in the fact of Jesus' Resurrection, we need to look at some possible endings of Mark's Gospel. See Mark 16:9-20. (Refer back to Lesson 7 page 18).
Once again, we cannot base dogmatic teaching on what we are not sure is original Scripture.

Now to the Resurrection accounts -

Matthew 28:1-10 two Marys, earthquake, one angel, guards incapacitated, angel speaks to women "Don't be afraid", Jesus has been raised, tell the disciples He is going to Galilee, the women frightened but with great joy rush to tell the disciples, Jesus meets them all, they hold His feet and worship Him, don't be afraid, tell my brothers to go to Galilee, they will see Me there.

Mark 16:1-8 two Marys and Salome buy spices on Saturday late, at sunrise they go to the tomb, the stone has been rolled away from the entrance, they enter and see a young man clothed in white sitting, women startled, angel says ...'Jesus...has been raised from the dead...go and give this message to His disciples, including Peter, Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee'. The women fled, trembling and bewildered, saying nothing to anyone because they were too frightened to talk.

Luke 25:1-8 women took spices to the tomb early Sunday morning - the stone was rolled away no body present, they are puzzled, two men in dazzling robes appeared, the women are terrified and bow to them, the men ask, 'Why are you looking in a tomb for Someone Who is alive?', don't you remember He said He would rise again after three days, then they remember He had said this, (the ladies were within hearing distance when Jesus said it!).

John 20:1 Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb while it is still dark, the stone is rolled away.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
		24:9-12	20:2-10 20:11-18
28:1-15		24:13-35 24:36-49	20:19-23 20:24-31 21:1-25
28:16-20		24:50-53	

The ladies need to have the opposite page of notes to help their thinking.

Take time to think about feelings in both stories.

Ask what did Jesus do?

Ask how did Jesus do it?

Ask why did Jesus do it?

Encourage the ladies to listen to Jesus in their own personal situations too.

Another idea to prompt sharing:

"It is a Christian life-principle that the darkness of crucifixion often comes long before the glory of resurrection. Too many Christian believers want the joy and glory of resurrection without the dark pain of crucifixion. The Lord Jesus says to us all, "Follow Me".

Discuss: What does Jesus mean by this, for us in our lives today?"

Colin Salter: Thoughts from my Journey with Jesus.

Think yourself into these two situations.

1. The road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-45

There is immediate confusion and incredulity on that Sunday morning. 'I simply cannot believe it'. What has happened? Can you feel the anguish and disappointment begin to lift as they dare to start believing? Only to be followed by thinking, "what happens now?"

Later that Resurrection day two men, part of the larger group of followers, set out to walk the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They talk about Jesus - the hopes they had had, His death and now rumours that His body was missing and women from their group had seen angels. Jesus comes alongside them - like He does with us even though we may not see Him. He asks what they are discussing. Then He explains from the Old Testament all the things there about Himself. They still did not know that it was Jesus. Nearly home, they invite Him to stay with them. Suddenly, as the visitor gives thanks and breaks the bread, the two men realise Who had walked and talked with them. They rush back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples with other followers that they have seen and talked with Jesus! While they are talking Jesus appears - shows them His hands and feet, eats in front of them and "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures".

Jesus cares for each one of us, just as He cared for those two men. He wants us to learn and understand about Him - and be excited by our faith in our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus reinstates Peter - John 21:1-19

Seven of the disciples have gone back to Galilee and are out fishing. It was what they knew how to do. They have not caught any fish. A stranger watching on the shore tells them where to throw their nets. John realises it is Jesus on the shore. Ever impetuous Peter cannot wait. He jumps out of the boat and wades ashore. Jesus had a fire burning, some fish cooking and bread there. Jesus provided breakfast for them. He provides for us too - probably not always fish! After they have eaten, Jesus initiates a chat with Simon Peter. It was a conversation Simon Peter needed to have with Jesus. We often get things wrong and need to talk to Jesus, asking His forgiveness. However large or small those wrong things are, we need to talk to Jesus about them.

Very carefully, but directly, Jesus redirects Peter's thinking and recommissions him.

What our Lord Jesus Christ had come to earth to do was accomplished at Calvary's cross. He had paid the price for sin and made a way for us to have a great living relationship with God - an eternal relationship - human death is not our end. Salvation is now available. In the Resurrection our omnipotent God raised Jesus from the dead and He promises a future eternal life in glory for all true believers.

Lesson 12 Leader's notes: Starting points and Pentecost Acts 1-2

Work through the first four paragraphs opposite.

More thoughts about Luke's authorship of Acts.

Remember or review the second paragraph, Lesson 3 page 10.

Luke also accompanied Paul on some of his missionary travels

Ask the ladies to listen for a change of personnel as you (or an able volunteer) reads Acts 16:6-9 and straight into 10-17. "They" becomes "we".

See also Acts 20:5-21:18 and 27:1-28:16 - the so-called "we/us" passages. It seems that Luke joins Paul at these times. He sees and hears firsthand what he writes about.

Starting point for the group of believers

Look at the references one at a time, working as one group. If time is an issue, divide into small groups taking two references each.

Ask folk to describe how believers felt in each reference.

A range of emotions - but they were also beginning to think how to go forward.

Lesson 12 Starting points and Pentecost Acts 1-2

Starting point of the author 1:1,2 compare Luke 1:1-4

"During the apostolic age books were not typeset with machinery such as we are accustomed to in this day. Books were written by hand, usually on parchments made out of papyrus. In antiquity, the standard length of a book written in this manner was about 35 feet (10.7 metres) long. The scrolls were then rolled up to be preserved carefully as they were read and passed from church to church".

"Initially Luke penned two volumes on separate scrolls. His gospel account of Christ, ... was carried along with the book of Acts. Very early on, it became the practice of the church to collect the four biographical sketches of Jesus that we call the four Gospels ... keeping them together in the church to be read and studied. As a result, the Gospel of Luke was separated from his volume two, the book of Acts." Adapted from R.C Sproul: Acts.

The authorship of the book of Acts has never been seriously questioned, and is mentioned in the Muratorian Canon around A.D. 170 - 'Luke author of the third gospel and the Acts of the Apostles'. It has had several names: Acts - Acts of the Apostles - Acts of the Holy Spirit - The History of the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The date of writing has been a matter of conjecture. However, Luke seems to use Acts 1:8 for his structure - from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. This makes a writing date between A.D. 62 and A.D. 64 possible. The story covers Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, modern day Turkey and Greece, and Paul has reached the distant capital of the empire, Rome, by the end. There is no mention of Paul's trial and execution A.D. 65-67, or of Peter's execution, or of the destruction of Jerusalem A.D.70. This indicates that the book of Acts was probably written before AD.65.

Starting point for the group of believers Acts 1:3-26, Luke 24:36-53

The Ascension was 40 days after the Resurrection.

Pentecost 50 days after the Resurrection.

Think about what all this was like for the believers at the time!

Luke 24:36-43

44-49

50-51

52-53

Acts 1:3-8

9-11

12-14

15-20

21-22

23-26

2:1

Ask three ladies to each read one of the references for the background history to the annual celebration of Pentecost.

Closer to the early Church time it had begun to be used to celebrate the giving of the Law. It was one of the obligatory feasts for men to attend in Jerusalem. It was a feast of joy and a holiday.

The ladies in your group may or may not have developed views on 'Pentecost' in Acts 2. It is important that we put aside any ideas we may have to look at what scripture says. By the early 1900s teaching on the Person and role of the Holy Spirit had been sadly neglected. Suddenly it was emphasised to the exclusion of other basic teachings. The emphasis split churches. The Holy Spirit and Pentecost are important for every Christian. Each one of us needs to be working with the indwelling Holy Spirit because He points out our sin and reminds us of Jesus day by day.

Work together through Acts 2:1-4

verse 1 they were together - more likely 120 than 12 see 1:15
verse 2 a sound like a violent wind - where they were sitting
verse 3 seemed like tongues of fire resting on each of them
verse 4 filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them

Add in what you learn from these Old Testament references

These would all be part of the picture of God that these people had

Exodus 13:20-22 God's presence with them in cloud and fire
Exodus 19:17-19 the giving of the Law - and the presence of God - fire, smoke, earthquake and noise
Matthew 3:11-12 Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire speaking of purity and judgment.

Acts 2:5-13

verse 5 godly men
verse 6 each heard what was being said in their own heart language
verse 7 amazement
verse 12 amazed and perplexed

Consult the map for verses 9-10. Ladies may find a few places (not all). See pages 3-4.

Work through the sermon Acts 2:22-41

Five main points verses 22, 23, 24, 33 and an appeal verse 38

Response in verse 41

What important **changing actions** were happening in that first church? **Verses 42-47**
Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, miracles, everything in common, met together publicly. You may come up with different numbers, but how important are these things?

Pentecost Acts 2:1-13

Pentecost - 50 days after the Sabbath of Passover week.

Also known as Feast of Weeks Deuteronomy 16:9-10

Feast of Harvest Exodus 23:16 (first fruits of first harvest after the Exodus - like USA Thanksgiving or British Harvest Festival).

Day of first fruits Numbers 28:26 in the Feast of Weeks

Try to disregard any personal history you may have about **Pentecost** - what do we learn by reading **Acts 2:1-4**?

verse 1

verse 2

verse 3

verse 4

Now mix in Exodus 13:20-22 God's presence with them

Exodus 19:17-19 the giving of the Law - sound and sight

Matthew 3:11-12 purity and judgement

For any Jew the things that happened in 2:1-4 spoke clearly of "God".

Reaction Acts 2:5-13 What do you learn from these verses?

verse 5

verse 6

verse 7

verse 12

See the maps on pages 3-4 and spot some of the places listed in verses 9-10.

Sermon Acts 2:22-41

Pick out the main points or structure

Jesus

accredited by God

crucified

raised again by God

exalted - Peter uses Psalm 110:1 as he had heard Jesus do in Luke 20:42

'just over seven weeks ago you crucified Jesus - now God has shown Him to be the Lord and Christ (Messiah)'

verse 37 response

verse 38 repent and be baptised - forgiveness - gift of Holy Spirit

verse 41 3000 people responded positively

Actions Acts 2:42-47 What important actions were happening in that first church in Jerusalem following Pentecost? Try to find seven key transformational things?

Lesson 13 Leader's notes: Healing, preaching, prayer Acts 3 and 4

Healing Acts 3:1-11

Working altogether as a group, go through the five references (opposite) commenting on what happened. Focus on answering the top questions

1. The Christians at this point are still observing the Jewish times of prayer - 9am, 3pm (the time of the evening sacrifice) and sunset. They are still meeting in the Jewish Temple courts as well as in homes.
2. They were used to seeing and hearing people begging but Peter and John stopped to speak especially to this man.
3. "What you are asking for we do not have, **but** we do have Jesus and He is able to heal you".
4. There is no mention of any prayer or the man's faith until after the healing. Peter commanded and helped him up! Not only could the man walk, he could jump and praise God, apparently at the same time!
5. People around knew who the man was - they had seen him there many times on their way into the Temple. They were amazed. The power of Jesus healed and amazed.

The carfuffle created an audience and Peter took the opportunity immediately to speak about Jesus.

Sermon Acts 3:12-26 Continue working altogether to analyse Peter's sermon.

Introduction. Peter does not start talking about abstract concepts, He uses the immediate interest - "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power we had made this man walk?" It is no surprise when you really know God.

Main points

verse 13 God did this. This God has glorified Jesus.

Conversely, you were all complicit in the death of Jesus. (Along with us).

verse 14 You acted against Jesus. You killed "the Author of Life".

verse 15 We are witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. We've experienced it.

verse 16 Can you see the difference placing faith in Jesus makes?

Notice it is **Jesus**, not your faith, Who changes things.

Lesson 13 Healing, preaching, prayer Acts 3 and 4

Healing Acts 3:1-11

What do you learn from these verses?
Do you find these things easy or difficult?
Why?

1. Acts 3:1 Jesus' disciples followed good habits of prayer.
2. Acts 3:4-5 They kept themselves aware of people around them.
3. Acts 3:6 When prompted, they publicly trusted Jesus to intervene.
4. Acts 3:7-8 Is there one single method to always follow when seeking healing?
5. Acts 3:9-11 Since changed lives attract the attention of outsiders, think of what to live like and to pray for.

The carfuffle or commotion created an audience. Peter immediately pointed away from himself and toward Jesus.
(Carfuffle, kerfuffle, kurfuffle is pronounced k'fuffle. It's an old English word)!

Sermon Acts 3:12-26

Introduction verse 12 Those believers were not surprised by God's action. Unbelievers were. How about you reading this true story?
Or by events recently in and around your life?

Main points

verse 13 Who did this miracle?

verse 14 Why did the people reject the One God sent?

verse 15 Is it easy to work against God, even by mistake?

verse 16 How do you explain God and humankind working together in this healing transformation?

Conclusion

verses 19, 25, 26

Ask the ladies to discover how many times 'God' or 'Jesus' are mentioned by Name in Peter's sermon.

Verse 19 '**Repentance**' means a change of mind and purpose, always leading to different action.

Verse 24 God told Abraham that 'through his **offspring** (a singular word) all peoples on earth would be blessed'. See Galatians 3:16 and Genesis 12:3.

Prayer Acts 4

Work through the references from Acts 4 opposite

The Sanhedrin knew a miracle had undeniably happened.

They could not see how fishermen Peter and John could possibly do this on their own. Hence verse 7's question.

The word 'boldness' would summarise the attitude of Peter and John with the man, and then the Jewish leaders, even after a night in prison.

Where had their boldness come from? Verses 8, 10 and 13.

The focus on Jesus is typical of people "filled with the Holy Spirit", verses 8-12.

'Jesus-centred' people show differences from everybody else, verses 13-14.

There was no disputing the healing miracle, verses 15-17.

Verses 18-20 Even today some folk speak of their Christian experiences. Others do not. Why is this?

Verses 21-22 How do you get 'people power' on Jesus' side? Is it right to try and do so?

Verse 23 It is always good to respect all parts of the local Christian fellowship.

If you had been through a situation like this, would your prayer be like that of this church in 4:29? Verse 31 God was pleased with their attitude!

4:32-35 is a heartwarming summary of what happened, but it also led to two problems: dishonesty 5:1-11, and organisation/administration 6:1-2.

People **and** processes can both be difficult!

4:36 introduces us to well-named Barnabas - son of encouragement.

More in 9:22.

Conclusion

Verses 19, 25, 26 Notice how God is the centre of Peter's preaching.

Christian conversion and Christian living - both responses to what God has done.

Jesus has come to you first of all - don't miss the opportunity of meeting God His way.

Peter started from where the people were - amazed at a healing - and took them to Jesus.

A very good example for us in preaching, and in daily conversation.

Look for opportunities this week to lead conversations to Jesus.

Prayer Acts 4

4:1-3 By now it was getting towards evening and the upset Temple authorities decided to jail overnight these men who spoke about Jesus and Resurrection. The gates of the Temple were closed after the evening sacrifice about 4p.m.

4:4 Despite threats of prison, the believers' group grew to about 5000 men.

4:5-6 The next morning the rulers, elders and teachers of the Law met.

4:7 What does this question imply? Compare verse 9.

4:8-12 Where is the focus of Peter and John's answer? Why?

4:13-14 What makes people describe others as 'Christian believers'?

4:15-17 What was the controversy about? Why?

4:18-20 What makes a person 'unable to stop sharing experiences of Jesus'?

4:21-22 Describe the value of 'people power'.

4:23 Why did Peter and John do this?

4:24-31 (especially 29) How do you know God was pleased with this prayer?

See the summary in 4:32-7. Compare to Acts 2:43-47. Would other people say you are a 'daughter of encouragement'?

Lesson 14 Leader's notes: More Firsts Acts 5:1-6:7

Deception and consequent discipline Acts 5:1-11

As a class work through the references for Acts 5:1-11, plus the 'Compare' references (opposite, below them). Find answers to questions (1) and (2).

Ananias and Sapphira had set out to deceive and make themselves look as if they were giving more than they actually were. If they had said "We have sold land and this is *part* of the money we received" there was no problem. But they had colluded together to imply that they were giving **all** of the money, when they were not. **Their sin was deception.** They keep back for themselves, they give Satan space, they speak untruth both to people and to God, verses 1-4. We would say 'they were hypocrites'.

Peter was in tune with God. Prompted by God he confronted the couple singly.
Our God is a pure God. He demands purity from His people and His Church.

Christians must take seriously their honest living!
Church leaders can be put into difficult situations by God.

Next explore the references for Acts 5:12-42. Use public reading verses with some question and answers, or silent reading with arising questions.

Summary Acts 5:12-16

verse 12 signs point away from themselves to something or somewhere else
verses 12-13 meeting together brought strength and encouragement
verse 13 considered by outsiders as morally and professionally good
verse 14 more people became believers. Some did not dare to. Why?
verses 15-16 faith and healing are linked. Faith is demonstrated not spoken.
Compare with Acts 19:11-12, Luke 8:42b-48. Neither Peter's shadow, nor Paul's handkerchiefs, nor Jesus' garment possessed magical powers. Healing resulted from the faith of the person/persons and especially the power of Jesus Christ.

Jealousy from the Sadducees Acts 5:17-42

Jealousy - a feeling of anger or bitterness fearing losing something
verses 18-21 God works differently. Here miraculous release, compare 4:3-7
verses 21-24 obedience to God is a non-negotiable priority, compare 4:18-21
verses 25-26 prisoners are not in the prison! Notice the word 'fear' again.
verses 26-32 apostles escorted gently to be confronted by the Jewish leaders
Luke records an unintended testimony to their success in verse 28
Peter boldly and wisely points everybody towards Jesus, whenever he can
verses 33-39 God uses Gamaliel's intervention. Not a Christian, but ... used. Does God still use 'outsiders' to help His people today? How?

Summary Acts 5:40-42 Costly. Everywhere. Always talking the gospel of Jesus.

Lesson 14 More Firsts Acts 5:1-6:7

Keep in mind 4:36-37 and Barnabas' example.

Deception and consequent discipline Acts 5:1-11

5:1 Joining in God's work ...

5:2 ... but not wholeheartedly

5:3-4 Confronted and found out

5:5-6 Fearsomely judged by God

5:7-10 Gently given a second chance, but failed to take it

5:11 "Great fear" is *'mega phobos'*, originally meaning wanting to fly/run away! Some of them probably thought, 'Let's get out of here'. Would you have?

Compare Hebrews 4:13, 10:31, 12:29, Psalm 97:1-3, Habakkuk 1:12-13a,
1 Timothy 4:12, 1 Peter 2:12.

(1) Describe the problem exactly in your own words.

Can you find at least three things?

(2) Why was the punishment so immediate and strong? See verses 5-6, 10.

Living honestly as a Christian is a serious business! Pray for yourself.

Being a leader in the church has its difficult moments. Pray for your pastor.

Summary Acts 5:12-16 compare John 10:23, Acts 3:11 Solomon's Colonnade

5:12 notice believers were out, mixing with the general population. Why?

5:13 are there ways we can earn high respect from outsiders? What?

5:14 Who adds people to the true Church?

5:15-16 compare Acts 19:12, Luke 8:42b-48.

Where did people's faith come from?

Jealousy from the Sadducees Acts 5:17-42

5:17 the same popular miracles brought admiration, respect **and** opposition

5:18-21 Angel's serve God Whose plans cannot be thwarted. God recommissions.

5:21-24 Notice 'teaching' is a big part of evangelism, verses 21, 25, 28. Why?

5:25-26 Christians may be afraid of ungodly authorities, who may also fear us!

5:27-28 See how "this Name" is crucial? Note verse 30. Try to speak of **Jesus**.

5:29-32 a witness is one who speaks simply what he/she has seen and heard

5:33 Why does the mention of **Jesus** make everyone appear to go mad?

5:34-39 How does God use Gamaliel? See especially verses 38-39. Therefore, trust God always.

5:40 The apostles knew what it was to 'take up their crosses', Luke 9:23-24.

Summary Acts 5:42 All the time, any place they went, **and** at home, the Christians taught and preached Jesus. God was very pleased, I'm sure!

Read Acts 6:1-6 in the group.

Ask - What is going on here? What issues are raised?

The problem at first appears racist, but is more administrative with racial overtones.

Both groups were Jewish believers.

The Twelve decide that it is not right for them to look after the needy - they were required to keep the ministry of the word of God and prayer foremost in their time and effort. But the needy still had to be cared for. There was an opening for an administrative level of leadership.

For this new level of leadership men who were full of the Holy Spirit and exhibiting practical wisdom were essential. It was as important as preaching.

Today all levels of leadership still need godly men and women.

These men were set apart for their role. Prayer and the laying on of hands in the presence of the whole church was a visible encouragement to everyone. The issue was seen to be being taken seriously.

Important question

Sometimes people say "**Why don't we just go back to the Early Church and be like them?**"

I think they mean 'let's just work for Jesus, love each other and let God work what He wants'.

That is hard to argue against because the above sounds so ideal and is **part of** the situation we have seen in the Early Church.

But, people are Christians? - yes. And Christian are perfect? - no!

Some are picky about how things are done, some have an inflated view of their own abilities. Growth in numbers attending multiplies different views and every person comes with their own baggage. Aren't we human beings wonderful?

We all need to be transformed by Jesus. We will never be perfect until we get to heaven. Yet we must keep trying!

Ask the question opposite.

Firsts seen here include - discipline - judgement - more growth - prison and miraculous freedom - wisdom of Gamaliel - embargo on speaking about Jesus - ignoring it - believers upset - new level of spiritual leadership introduced.

And another first - division within Jewish Christian believers? Acts 6:1-6

What is going on? What are the issues?

6:1 Was growth good or bad ? Was it good **and** bad? It brought issues with it.

6:2-4 The Twelve took a decision - then what did they do?

- what guidance did they give to the disciples?

- why did they do all this?

6:5-6 What was the relationship between the Twelve and the disciples? Different roles. Various callings and giftings. All in the same, one, work of God.

The new administrative staff all had Greek names - diplomacy - it was the Greek speaking widows who had felt neglected. The "whole group" 6:5 chose the seven deacons for a specific responsibility, and the Apostles ordained them.

Suddenly, instead of those who had been with Jesus **and** those who had come to believe on Him later, there are leaders with teaching and prayer ministry responsibilities **and** leaders with administrative responsibilities **and** many believers.

Suddenly, the simplicity had become a bit more complicated!

Think of issues in a local church that may cause problems today. Share them.
What guidelines would you pass on from Acts 6:1-6, to all people who may be involved?

Summary Acts 6:7

word of God spread in ever widening circles

number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly

large number of priests became obedient to the faith - **Hallelujah**

What 'firsts' have you seen today in Acts 5:1 - 6:7?

Problems of growth in church, just like we face in a smaller way, as our families grow and children get older! Growth is good, but it is not always easy.

Please read Acts 6:8-8:1 for next time

Lesson 15 Leader's notes: Acts 6:8-8:1

Another first - Stephen

Get the ladies to read and itemize what happens, verse by verse.

Ask them to only choose what they think are **the key points** each time.

6:8 Stephen outgrew his ministry of 'helps administration'. He made the essentially practical ministry of verse 2, into a 'signs and wonders' ministry that pointed people to the available transforming new life of the risen Jesus.

Remember, people can grow as they serve!

People can grow into new service. Make sure you give opportunities for this.

6:9 opposition from the Synagogue of the Freedmen, likely emancipated Roman Jews, made up of Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia (Saul's/Paul's home town of Tarsus was in Cilicia) and Asia - see map page 4.

6:10 Stephen was obviously an eloquent speaker.

Note the outward influence of the Holy Spirit on Stephen's service.

6:11 Trumped up untrue charges (as with Jesus, Matthew 26:59-61).

Lying witnesses. Jesus called the devil, "the father of lies" John 8:44.

People are not our real opponents, but the devil will use who he can.

6:12-14 Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin, together with false witnesses. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 18:16-20?

The first Christians expected to face persecution for following their Lord.

6:15 The Sanhedrin looked at the accused - trying to work out who he was, what kind of person he was, what he represented? Would he be overawed by the situation he was facing, knowing they could pass a death sentence on him?

Stephen's face was 'like that of an angel' - he radiated Christ, he reflected Christ. Compare Exodus 34:29-35 and Psalm 34:4-5.

7:1 the trial begins.

Lead steadily through the 'Stephen's history lesson' section. Have the extra verses ready to read out, or set up chosen ladies to read them.

Check them yourself first to be sure of what is coming!

Lesson 15 Acts 6:8-8:1 Another first - Stephen

Acts 6:8-15, 7:1

6:8 compare 6:5-7 what has changed?

6:9-10 what caused the opposition?

different opinions of traditional Jews and Christians like Stephen:
was Jesus of Nazareth the long-awaited Messiah, or not?

"argue" is translated "dispute" elsewhere. It may well mean a formal
debate on current religious issues.

Who Jesus was and 'did He rise again?' may well have been subjects.

6:11 does the word 'secretly' cause alarm bells to ring in your head?

We need to remember that God sees all secrets, positive and negative.

Matthew 6:6 our individual prayers. Psalm 44:20-21 every heart is open.

6:12-14 'stirred up', 'false witnesses'

whatever opposition we face **our God is greater**

compare Daniel 3:16-18. God's will is always what we want.

6:15 compare Exodus 34:29-35.

How can you take Psalm 34:5 for yourself in difficult times?

7:1 a straightforward start.

Acts 7:2-53 Stephen's redemptive 'history lesson' to the leaders of Israel

7:2 he speaks with respect, "brothers and fathers", even facing hostility -

he was not there to defend himself - rather he wanted the Sanhedrin to

understand Who Jesus really was - notice 'our' father Abraham. That's Stephen, the
Sanhedrin members, and Jesus!

Remember, all his hearers could be saved too!

7:2-8 Find the gist of these Genesis verses in Stephen's Acts 7 speech:

Genesis 11:31; 12:1-4; 15:2-7, 13, 16a; 17:3-8; 21:1-5; 25:19-26

7:9-16 Genesis 35:23-26; 37:1-4; 41:25-40; 45:1; and Joshua 24:32

(12 sons of Joseph are listed here with Leah first as his first wife and
Rachel second as his second wife.

Chronologically the sons were born -

Leah x 4, Rachel's maid x 2, Leah's maid x 2, Leah x 2, Rachel x 2.

**Keep going through Stephen's history lesson -
he knew the Old Testament well.**

God the Holy Spirit brought it to Stephen's mind when he needed it:

Deuteronomy 11:18

Psalm 119:11

Our Lord Jesus said, "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit", Mark 13:11.

Keep encouraging the ladies to find what Stephen is speaking about in their own Old Testaments. Familiarity with the Bible helps Christian growth.

Draw attention to Stephen's focus on what God has done - and is doing:

Acts 7:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (x3), 17, 25, 32, 33-34, 35, 37, 42, 44, 45, 46, 48
and in finishing verses 55-56.

The death of Stephen 7:54-8:1

Again, ask the ladies to read the verses and itemize what happens.

7:54 leaders furious

7:55-56 Stephen sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God in glory;
must have been a tremendous uplift for him when facing his death

7:57 unbridled fury - no recorded formal declaration of guilt

7:58 hot work! compare 8:1

7:59-60 forgiving like Jesus, compare Luke 23:34 and Psalm 31:5

Pray together, perhaps in small groups.

Please read Acts 8 for next time.

- 7:17-19 Exodus 1:8-11
God raises and deposes even secular rulers.
God always knows what He is doing.
- 7:20-36 Exodus 2:1-10, 11-14; 3:1-3, 4-10; 15:1-5
Moses protected by God at birth. Went his own way at 40yrs.
At 80yrs. encountered God and was called into His special service
Sanhedrin believed they followed Moses.
- 7:37-38 Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 18:14-15.
- 7:39-41 Numbers 14:27-35
Moses was misunderstood when alive. Stephen thinks he is again now!
- 7:44-47 Exodus 25:1-8, 10, 23, 31; 26:1; 27:1, 9, 20; 28:1-5;
Numbers 10:33-36; Joshua 3:17; 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 17; 1Kings 5:1-6.
The Temple was a good idea for public worship, but fell short.
- 7:48-50 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 6:1, Isaiah 66:1-2
God is much bigger than any worship system humankind could devise.
Beware thinking you, and your church, 'have it all'.
- 7:51-53 Confrontation. Did Stephen sense the audience becoming restless?

The death of Stephen 7:54-8:1

- 7:54 Were the judges level headed and calm?
- 7:55-56 An encouragement to Stephen, an encouragement to us?
- 7:57 Measured justice or mob rule?
- 7:58 When Luke wrote Acts he realised the effect this episode had
on Saul/Paul see 8:1a also
- 7:59-60 compare Luke 23:34 and Psalm 31:5 . God alone gives grace to forgive.

The first Christian martyr - the first of millions. Would you and I be ready? Take a moment to answer for yourself, to yourself.

In many, many places in our world today Christians are being persecuted and martyred for their faith, Sudan and South Sudan included, as you know well.

Pray for those standing up for their Christian faith.

Pray for the families the martyrs leave behind.

Pray for places where there is supposedly freedom, but where it is still not acceptable to present a Christian view. **Pray** for wisdom for believers.

Lesson 16 Leader's notes: Acts 8:1-40

Another first and it's results - more firsts!

Acts 8:1-4 Ask the ladies to find eight different happenings here.

1. Saul approved of the death sentence passed on Stephen.
2. Persecution of Christians followed.
3. Christians fled throughout Judea and Samaria.
4. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem.
5. Godly men buried Stephen.
6. Saul started a persecution.
7. Saul dragged Christians off to prison.
8. Those who had been scattered witnessed where they found themselves.

We begin to see the outworking of Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8.

Persecution **helped** the believers obey God.

Acts 8:5-13

What was the basic problem with Simon the sorcerer?

He wanted power that secret knowledge would give him. This is called Gnosticism - from the Greek word '*gnosis*'= knowledge. Gnosticism was growing in New Testament times. Finding 'secret' knowledge was believed to be empowering, as we see from Simon. Gnostics also believed that the spiritual is superior to the physical, that matter is evil, and therefore Jesus being flesh cannot also be God.

(Gnosticism is pronounced nosti-sism)

Paul began to encounter Gnosticism and warned Timothy about it in 1 Timothy 6:20 and again in 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

John, who wrote at least 30 years after Paul, is emphatic that Jesus was God and Man, in John 1:1-2, 14; 1 John 1:1-4; 2 John 7.

Gnosticism is still alive and well today in many forms:

- in sects with Christian connotations like so called Christian Science,
- in ways of living that base on 'the power of positive thinking',
- Freemasons and other secret societies claiming allegiance to God.

Gnosticism says 'come and join us, bring your faith with you. We will add it to our collection!' It gathers new ideas and wants Biblical Christianity **plus other things**. Be careful!

Jesus did **not** say "I am the way, plus you need some other things".

Jesus said:

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" John 14:6.

Lesson 16 Acts 8:1-40

Another first and it's results - more firsts!

Acts 8:1-4 What do you learn from these verses?

Can you discover at least eight things?

1. Another little detail from Luke adding to our understanding of Saul/Paul.
 2. Can you see God anywhere in what happened?
 3. And the result? Christians in new places.
 4. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem.
 5. Stephen was respected greatly.
 6. Saul ravaged the church like a wild beast.
 7. Saul increased the prison population.
 8. Christians continued to live out their faith wherever.
- 'destroy' in verse 3 is also used in other contexts of the ravages of wild animals.

Now compare Acts 1:8. What was **God** doing by all of the above?

Philip in Samaria (one of the seven deacons/administrators, Acts 6:5)

Can you find some more details in Acts 8:5-13?

- 8:5-8, 14-16 Philip preached in the city of Samaria.
Men and women believed and were baptised.
- 8:9-13 A dangerous distraction.
Sorcery involves evil spirits, black magic and witchcraft.
- 8:14-17 The church in Jerusalem heard what was happening and sent Peter and John to see. They prayed for the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit.
- 8:18-19 Simon wanted this ability to give the Holy Spirit.
- 8:20-23 Peter told Simon he could not buy the ability to give the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit and evil spirits do not co-exist.
- 8:24 Simon responded positively.
- 8:25 More preaching before returning to Jerusalem.

Philip down south on the Gaza Road Acts 8 continued.

Get the ladies to make short summary sentences for each reference, then share them.

verses 26-29 Very specific directions to Philip, leading to a prepared listener.

verses 30-35 Philip went from the reading of Isaiah 53:7-8 straight to Jesus.

verses 36-39 Philip baptised the eunuch - an important government official.

When I was in Sunday School this government official was known as the Ethiopian eunuch, but it is more likely that he was actually from the Nubian empire which the Old Testament calls Cush. This was between Aswan in southern Egypt and Khartoum in Sudan.

verse 40 God took Philip to where He wanted him next.

Philip is seen in Azotus.

He then travelled preaching until he got to Caesarea .

Caesarea. Rebuilt by Herod and named in honour of Caesar Augustus. It was the headquarters of the Roman procurator. Pilate did not live in Jerusalem; he lived in Caesarea and came only on special occasions to Jerusalem.

Ask the class to close their Bibles and their notes.

Invite them to speak out **as many 'firsts' as they can think of** from Acts chapters 1-8.

(You could divide into small groups of three or four and make a competition out of it.

Every group may write/compile their own list, rather than calling out aloud.

After five minutes compare the lists to see which group has remembered most).

Please read Acts 9:1-31 for next time

Philip down south on the Gaza Road Acts 8 continued

verses 26-29 What do we know about the man in the chariot?

verses 30-35 Who had organised this encounter between two men?

verses 36-39 How do we know that there was at least one other person in this story?

verse 40 How many towns did Philip preach in between Azotus and Caesarea?

We leave Philip here, and in Acts 21:8 we find him still there 20 years later.

Firsts so far in Acts!

First church growth

First sermon by Peter

First apostolic healing

First church discipline

First confrontation and arrest

First problem in the group of believers - leading to new/more leadership

First martyr

First organised persecution

First mission to Samaria - Philip

First counterfeit attempt - trying to buy the power of the Holy Spirit

First confirmation/verification - Peter and John, sent by the church in Jerusalem, picking up leadership responsibility to the check on new churches

First time Jesus' Gospel goes to Africa? Philip meets the Finance Minister to the Queen of Nubia/Cush, a God-fearing Gentile, who believes, and following on is immediately baptised.

Lesson 17 Leader's notes:

The persecutor converted and persecuted; and the ministry of encouragement Acts 9:1-31

After his conversion Saul/Paul becomes a major exponent and theologian of the Christian faith. Let's take a good look at his background and see what God had put into Saul's life *before* He confronted him on the Damascus road, and *before* He gave him a special job to do. God made him ready.

We will use biographical details from several accounts.

Teach the first seven lines of the page opposite, and then get the ladies to go through the following Bible references and find the answers to the questions I have asked. Go through their answers together, thinking especially about the last four references, 7:58, 8:1a, 8:3, 9:1-2.

Acts 22:25-29 Paul was a Roman citizen by birth -

From the Zondervan Study Bible: "Roman citizenship was a high honour and not granted to everyone. People could gain it by birth, emancipation (being freed) from slavery, for significant service to the Roman Empire, and sometimes by purchase (usually involving some bribery). Citizenship by birth was regarded as the most noble".

We believe that God organised and protected our Scriptures the way they are - He used human writers' minds and pens. Some minor details in the three of Saul's conversion accounts differ. Remember the story exercise we did opposite page 26, and the differences in the resurrection morning accounts?

Divide the ladies into three groups: allocate each group one of Acts 9:3-9, 22:6-11, 26:12-18

Ask each group to note down **about light**:

who fell?

who heard the Voice?

what did the Voice say first?

what did Saul say first?

what else happened?

Share the groups' findings.

In his commentary R C Sproul's translation of Acts 26:14 is of God saying, "Saul, you stupid ox! You are no different from oxen that kick against the ox goads while you carry on your hostility toward Me".

Lesson 17 The persecutor converted and persecuted; and the ministry of encouragement Acts 9:1-31

God prepared Saul for the job He gave him.

What is there in your Christian life that God has put there? A background that helps you get alongside someone? An experience that gives you common ground with someone? Take a brief moment to think of, and may be share, ideas you can see.

Saul/Paul? - Saul was his Jewish name. The Greek version was Paul. Saul was the up and coming, high flying boy, a rising star in Judaism. No-one else had organised persecution like this. Saul did 100%.

What do we know about Saul?

21:39 Paul gives his religion, his home city and an advert for it. Check maps on and opposite page 4.

22:3 Where was he brought up?

22:3 Who was his student professor? compare 5:34.

22:3-5 In his sincere zeal for God, what did he try and do?

22:25-29 In the Empire Roman citizenship was highly prized.

26:5 To what Judaism group did Saul belong? Compare with the top of page 20.

7:58 What do you think Saul was thinking standing there watching?

8:1a It is one thing to give mental assent to a verdict - it is another to physically see a person stoned to death.

8:3 How did Saul set out 'to destroy the church' in Jerusalem?

9:1-2 Was his enthusiasm to destroy the church covering a wriggling doubt in his mind - that these Christians were actually right?

Saul meets Jesus Christ 9:3-9 22:6-11 26:12-18

Three accounts of one event, with some differences. Can you find them?

The 'goads' 26:14 - spikes put on the front of ox carts - so that when the stubborn ox refuses to move, it feels the flick of the whip, and consequently kicks out, the cart is protected, and the ox decides it is better to move than get the pain from the spikes! I would too! A goad may also be a hand held pricker. So we have the phrase 'to goad someone or something into action.'

Ask two people to read Acts 9:10-16 Reader 1 verse 10
Reader 2 verses 11-12
Reader 1 verses 13-14
Reader 2 verses 15-16

Working in twos ask students to put Ananias' response to God into their own words.

Ananias had a vision and said "Yes, Lord". Then God told him the job He wanted done. Ananias shared his feelings about this job with God. God said again. "Go. I know what I'm doing". God shared the purpose of Saul's conversion - a ministry to the Gentiles, their kings and to the Jewish people.

Ananias is not mentioned in the Acts 26 account - the message he was given to give to Paul comes in the confrontation on the Damascus Road. A short form of the information?

Continue in twos

Encouragement is usually, and sadly, undervalued in our churches.

Work in twos again to look at the references opposite thinking about **how** the encouragement happened in these situations and how we may make it happen with us today.

Share the answers with the class. **Perhaps discuss** if questions arise.

Reactions - lead the whole group from the front.

- 9:19-22 How easy was it for the disciples in Damascus to have fellowship with Saul? Why? What else did Saul do?
- 9:23-25 Death threats from some. Others helped escape to Jerusalem.
- 9:26 Disciples including the Apostles were afraid of him.
- 9:27-28 Barnabas encouraged Paul by introducing him to the believers and vouching for him. Supposing he had been wrong!
- 9:29-30 Paul debated - more death threats - the believers protected him - sending him off to his home city.

Summary 9:31 lead the whole group from the front. Bring out these points:

1. There were a plurality of churches present in Judea, Galilee and Samaria
2. Peace without persecution brought joy
3. Became stronger
4. Lived knowing they were always in God's sight and He was watching over them
5. Open to, and therefore encouraged by, the ministry of the Holy Spirit
6. The local churches and the overall Christian Church grew numerically.

Please read Acts 9:32-11:18 for next time.

Read Acts 9:10-16

Can you put this conversation into what you would say if you were Ananias?

Try, and then share with others.

But then remember that **Ananias obeyed God**.

Acts 9:17-18 If that had been you, would you have been able to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street, ask for Paul, and greet him as "**Brother** Saul"? (Ignore the male/female divide here!). Remember what Saul had been doing.

That greeting with its acceptance must have been very, very important to Saul. **Can you explain why?**

Encouragement is usually, and sadly, undervalued in our churches.

Think about how you can encourage specific people in your fellowship.

The word 'encourage' means to 'put courage into', to support.

1. How does encouragement happen in the following Bible examples?
2. How can you help it happen in your fellowship?

Acts 14:21-23

Acts 15:30-33

Acts 20:1-3a

Romans 15:4-6

Philemon verse 7

Hebrews 10:24-25

1 Peter 5:12

Remember to answer both questions 1 and 2 above.

Acts 9:19-30 Reactions

Discover as many different reactions to the now converted Saul as you can. I found at least eight. We can all learn from all of them.

How would you react?

Acts 9:31 is a summary verse which tells us six things. What are they?

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Pray these things for yourself and for your local church.

Leader's notes Lesson 18: A major new departure Acts 9:32-11:18

Lead this page from the front

Invite various ladies to read out each Bible reference as you get to it

Compare Acts 1:8 Jesus speaking immediately before His ascension
with Acts 9:31 from the end of our last Lesson.

What have you found? They have reached part of the goal. Now what's next?

In perhaps 10 years at most, the infant church has grown - building blocks have been put in place which will characterize it forever.

Ask the ladies if they can recall stories in Acts which mention items in the list opposite - use the references below to check information or to nudge memories.

Suggest the ladies write down the historical story or reference to have it for the future.

Meeting together	1:13-14; 2:1, 2:42,46
Presence of the Holy Spirit	2:38
Outreach preaching - to Jews, half-Jews, to a Gentile 'god-fearer'	3:11-13; 8:4-7, 8:25, 8:26-29
Teaching	2:42; 3:12-26; 5:42; 7:2-53
Prayer	2:42; 4:23-24
Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Eucharist, Sacrament, Lord's Table	2:42
Persecution	4:3; 5:17-18, 5:40; 7:54-59
Healing	3:6-8; 5:12
Administration	6:2-4
Oil of encouragement	9:17, 9:27, 9:31
Conversions	2:37-41; 4:4; 6:7; 8:35-38
Discipline	5:1-11
Doctrinal truths - principles to stand on	5:27-32; 8:18-24

Now 9:32-10:48 we travel with Peter

9:32-35 Lydda is about 30 miles north-west of Jerusalem

9:36-43 miraculous healing in Joppa (See map page 3)

9:43-10:48 a major new departure

Verse 43 does not have many words, but their importance is great. Peter stayed with Simon the tanner. "A tanner was involved in treating the skins of dead animals, thus contacting the unclean according to Jewish law, so he was despised by many".

Peter had seen Jesus mix with tax collectors and sinners. Now he does the same.

"Peter's decision to stay with Simon shows already a willingness to reject Jewish prejudice and prepares the way for his upcoming vision and mission to the Gentiles". Both quotes from the NIV Study Bible 1985.

Lesson 18 A major new departure Acts 9:32-11:18

Compare Acts 1:8 Jesus speaking immediately before His ascension and Acts 9:31 from the last meeting. What have you found?

In perhaps 10 years at most, the infant church has grown. The following 13 building blocks have been put in place which will characterize it forever.

1. Meeting together
2. Indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit
3. Outreach preaching - to Jews, half Jews, to a Gentile 'god-fearer'
4. Teaching
5. Prayer
6. Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Eucharist, Sacrament, Lord's Table
7. Persecution
8. Healing
9. Administration
10. Oil of encouragement
11. Conversions
12. Discipline
13. Doctrinal truths - principles to stand on

In Acts 9:32-10:48 we travel with Peter

Acts 9:32-35 Who did Peter walk to see?
How was Aeneas healed? What else happened?

Acts 9:36-43 How did Tabitha/Dorcas help people? What else happened?
Is this a ministry you could have?

Acts 9:43-10:48 My translation has just 12 words in 9:43, but why are they very significant?

Continue leading from the front. Ask the ladies to read Bible verses and then answer the questions. Again, it would be good if they wrote their answers in their books.

Acts 10:1-8 **What do you know about Cornelius?**

- Centurion in charge of 100 men in the Italian regiment
- lived in Caesarea (see map page 4)
- devout, God-fearing (worshipping the God of Israel), stationed in Caesarea, gave generously and prayed regularly
- one afternoon about three (a regular Jewish time of prayer) he had a vision of an angel calling his name as he prayed, verses 30-31
- he calls the visitor "Lord "
This didn't happen to centurions!
But, being a soldier, he obeyed the given order
- Cornelius sends servants, with a 'deeply religious' soldier, to Joppa

Acts 10:9-23a Perhaps read this story to the ladies

Depending on time read the following sections yourself, or get ladies to read them one at a time. Share answers where applicable

Acts 10:23b -33 Preliminaries . They share how they got to be there

10:34-35 Peter shares what he had only very recently learned

10:36-38 He revises what they knew or may have heard about

10:39-43 He tells the **way of salvation** through Jesus Christ of Nazareth

10:44-48 **Reactions** in the hearers, and in Peter
Holy Spirit comes on new believers
Peter's team and local Joppa people are all amazed
Peter wanted new believers baptized in the name of
Jesus Christ, and it seems they were
Peter stayed with them a little while longer

Acts 11:1-18 News spread. Peter explained what had happened in Joppa and Caesarea so that even the Jewish believers understood and praised God.

In terms of **how** the church had grown, **what had now happened ?**

"I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold.

I must bring them also". Jesus in John 10:16. Does He still want this?

Please read Acts 11:19-12:25 for next time.

Acts 10:1-8 What do you know about Cornelius?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How does the angel reassure Cornelius?

What does he tell him to do?

Acts 10:9-23a A vision given by God in order to teach a very big change in thinking. But look at 10:28-29. Peter had understood. Sometimes God asks us to make changes to our thinking - changes are not always easy, but sometimes are very necessary.

Acts 10:23b-33 We read this earlier. The people needed to get acquainted!
How warm a welcome do you think it was? Why do you think that?

Acts 10:34-35 Peter underlines what he has **so recently learned**. Always keep learning!

Acts 10:36-38 Peter reminds them of the story of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Acts 10:39-43 Pick one important piece of information from each verse, which together make the way of salvation.

Acts 10:44-48 What are the five reactions/events in Cornelius and friends, in the believers who had come from Joppa, and in Peter himself?

Acts 11:1-18 Back in Jerusalem -
What was the first reaction of Christians there?
How did this change **after** Peter's explanation? Why?

Thank God, because that means we can all be accepted, especially verses 17-18.

In terms of how the church had grown, what had now happened?

**"I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold.
I must bring them also". Jesus** in John 10:16.

Rejoice as you trace God's hand in this true history 9:32-10:48. Play your part today.

God was with Peter. He will always be with us as we obey His will for us.

Lesson 19 Leader's notes: Converted persecutor becomes teacher, plus different persecution! Acts 11:19-12:25

Lead from the front again, keeping the whole class together.

For the **map search**, remember there are two towns named 'Antioch'.

11:26 Paul had studied Jewish law under Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He was a very knowledgeable man. When he realised the truth about Jesus, he had to reorganise his own thinking. He now knew that Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of lots of Old Testament prophecy. He had to work his own way through to a **Christian** theology. We find it in his letters.

Peter wrote of Paul's writings in 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Difficult things are not wrong - they simply need to be studied well. ☺

For discussion: 'Is encouraging infectious?' 'Why?' Ideas ladies, please!

Revise

Ananias encouraged Saul, Acts 9:10-19

Barnabas encouraged Saul, Acts 9:26-30

Barnabas is encouraged by what he sees happening in Antioch,

He also encourages all of them with his teaching, Acts 11:22-24

Barnabas goes to Tarsus to find Saul and brings him back to Antioch so they can teach together and encourage the new believers.

Ask

Do you find it easy to accept encouragement? and absorb it?

Do you find it easy to see if someone is discouraged?

Do you then find it easy to encourage someone?

Share your experiences, or use this one of mine. (Also in the opposite notes)

A long time ago, when I was less experienced in having folk stay with us and when our two children were still little, we had a man and his wife coming to stay. I was scared at the thought. She always seemed so in charge and they lived on a more expensive level than we did. Before they arrived I was reading my Bible and talking to the Lord about this. It came into my mind - I believe God put the thought there - 'she needs help and encouragement - reach out'. I asked God to help me have the right things to say. He did, of course. We had a good and helpful time together. We are still good friends.

Challenge

Encouragement is not preaching or having all the answers - it is coming alongside.

Encouragement is a job all of us can do.

Lesson 19 Converted persecutor becomes teacher, plus different persecution! Acts 11:19-12:25

Acts 11:19-24 Help each other find some of the places mentioned, map page 4.

11:19 God used the persecution! Where did people go with the message of Jesus? Who did they speak to?

11:20-21 Other people went where? and spoke to? with what result?

What happened to Peter in the previous Bible chapter?

11:22-23 From Jerusalem the church leaders - the apostles - heard news, and sent Barnabas to investigate. Barnabas, the encourager, encourages and is himself encouraged. He is strengthened as he tries to put strength into others.

Acts 11:23-24 A wonderful summary about Barnabas.

What four or five things are said about him?

Change the words to 'she' and 'woman'. Then ask, **is this true of you?**

Acts 11:25-26 Barnabas has a job for Paul.

11:25 Where was Paul? See again the map on page 4.

11:26 What was the job?

The Christians in Antioch lived so like Christ, and/or talked so much about Him, that the locals call them 'christianoï' - Christians. Now that is a definite challenge for us.

Discussion about encouraging

It does not say so in the Book of Acts but I am sure some of the encouraging and teaching was not in the formal meeting times but in personal conversations Paul and Barnabas had with individuals around them. Group teaching **and** one to one chat encourages.

What do you think? How and where does your encouragement happen?

A long time ago, when I was less experienced in having folk stay with us and when our two children were still little, we had a man and his wife coming to stay. I was nervous at the thought. She always seemed so in charge and they lived on a more expensive level than we did. Before they arrived I was reading my Bible and talking to the Lord about this. It came into my mind - I believe God put the thought there - 'she needs help and encouragement - reach out'. I asked God to help me have the right things to say. He did, of course. We had a good and helpful time together. We are still good friends.

Encouragement is not preaching or having all the answers - it is coming alongside another.

Acts 11:27-30 two issues.

Try reading the Bible's true story aloud together. 😊😊😞😊

1. Prophets, prophecy and gifts

The office of prophet was a recognised gift to some in local churches, as were many others .

Ephesians 4:11-12 says Christ gives the gifts to build up believers and churches

Romans 12:6-8 we have different gifts according to God's grace

1 Corinthians 12:7-11, and 12:28-30 say the Holy Spirit gives the gifts

the two Givers mentioned are **both** within our God - the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - so **God gives**.

1 Peter 4:10-11 gifts are given by God's grace so we can serve others and bring God praise

Notice carefully these guiding truths about spiritual gifts:

1 Corinthians 12:11 the Spirit distributes each gift as He determines

"It is the same and only Holy Spirit Who gives all these gifts and powers, **deciding which** each one of us should have", Living Bible.

1 Peter 4:10a use the gift **you** have received to serve others

Ephesians

4:12 gifts are given **to build up** the local church

2. Social gospel.

Emphasise that this is not an 'either/or', but 'both together' for all genuine Christians.

We must live out **and** love with the gospel; show **and** speak the gospel; demonstrate **and** declare the Good News of Jesus Christ our Lord.

As the ladies look up these verses, ensure they answer the questions in section 2:

Mark 12:29-31

Matthew 25:31-40, 45

Matthew 28:18-20

John 13:34-35

Read the story Acts 12:1-19a to the class or have ladies read it out loud.

Then work in pairs or groups to answer the questions opposite.

Share the answers.

Advance news for Lesson 20 and further on:

Rather like the work we did on the gospels - the ladies need to find information for each of Paul's three missionary journeys.

Acts 11:27-30 raises two issues to think about.

1. Prophets, prophecy and gifts

Notice the difference between Old Testament prophets - working directly from God and answerable only to Him - and New Testament prophets - working under the leadership of the apostles and church leaders.

Look up Ephesians 4:11-12 Christ gave the gift of prophets - why?
Romans 12:6-8 Do we all have the same gifts?
1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 12:28-30 How does the Holy Spirit give gifts?
1 Peter 4:10-11 Find two ways any gift we are given must be used?

2. Social gospel

In the last two centuries some Christians have said that the social gospel (helping people physically) is **the true** gospel. Some have responded by saying we should **only preach** the gospel. Jesus taught us very clearly the truth that **'gospel action' and 'social gospel action' have to go together.**

Look up Mark 12:29-31 What were Jesus' two priorities?
Matthew 25:31-40, 45 How did Jesus value helping people?
Matthew 28:18-20 What is this command of Jesus?
John 13:34-35 What is this command of Jesus?

11:29-30 Who took the gift from the Antioch church to Jerusalem?

Acts 12:1-19a

Who is attacking the church now? See Appendix 2 page 65 - Knowing which Herod is which.

Who was the second Christian martyr? why?

Who did Herod Agrippa arrest and imprison next?

What happened in the middle of the night before the planned trial?

When Peter realised what had happened, where did he go? Why?

Would you want Rhoda as your doorkeeper? Why?

Peter shared what had happened and told the assembled group to tell who?

What a carfuffle next morning at the prison! According to the Justinian Code which applied to all prison guards, if a prisoner escaped, whatever his sentence was then applied to the guards responsible - beating, scourging, crucifixion, beheading. Compare Acts 16:22-34.

12:19b-23 Herod went back to Caesarea. There he was involved in a problem with the people of Tyre and Sidon who disliked his new trade arrangement for the wheat they needed. They needed the food so they worked hard to placate Herod. He made an amazing entrance, was acclaimed by people as 'a god', collapsed, and reputedly took five days to die.

12:24-25 Summary - God's Good News flourished. What does that mean? Barnabas and Saul/Paul finish their business in Jerusalem (see 11:25-30) and return to Antioch with Barnabas' nephew/cousin, John Mark, later the author of the Gospel of Mark.

Lesson 20 Leaders notes:

First Missionary Journey; the Council of Jerusalem Acts 11:19-30, 12:25, chapters 13-15. A.D. 46-50

You need to have gone through this page and have your own answers before you teach the lesson!

Lead from the front to start with. Note first paragraph opposite.

The ladies need to gather information on the starting point and each place visited on the journey.

- Where?
- Who?
- Make up of the church?
- How long?
- What happened? Good and bad.

Sometimes you may find the information is not obvious or even just not there!

It may be an idea to write the 'Where?' 'Who?' etc. on a blackboard or large piece of paper to keep reminding the ladies what they are looking for!

Set the ladies in pairs or groups. Go around visiting to helpfully encourage them. Nudge them along to tackle the next references.

If you **work through this first example (below) with the ladies**, it will help them to understand what to do. **Tell them to read the Bible verses. Ask some questions to elicit the information from the whole group:**

Example of - 1. Antioch in Syria 11:19-30, 13:1-3

Five local leaders - Barnabas, Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, Saul

A church of Jewish believers and Greeks - Gentiles, for some 1-2 years

Challenge to reach Jews **and** Gentiles? What of the famine prophecy?

Shared money and later sent valued men, Barnabas and Saul, out on mission

Then show them a different example, - 7. Derbe 14:20-22

Paul and Barnabas together - recovering from persecution

Won a large number of disciples to Lord Jesus Christ.

Now invite the ladies to work in pairs or small groups to find the information for the other eight places. You have shown them Antioch in Syria - now they can do Salamis, Paphos, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, the revisiting of three towns, before going back to Syrian Antioch.

After enough time

Lead from the front again. Ask the ladies to answer the four questions opposite using the information they have found. Share the answers altogether.

My answers: 1. Jews and Gentiles. 2. Yes and no.
3. Sorcery, opposition, riot, plot. 4. Appointed leaders, prayed with them.

Lesson 20

First Missionary Journey; the Council of Jerusalem

Acts 11:19-30, 12:25, chapters 13-15. A.D. 46-50

The journey Barnabas and Paul undertake is usually known as the First Missionary Journey. There are two maps opposite and on page 4. **You may like to draw their route on one when you have found it.** Acts chapters 11, 13 and 14 tell you where the team went.

We are looking for **change**, for **progress**, for **problem issues** and for **their answers**. **The Church and churches were growing**. Write down the information you discover from:

1. Antioch in Syria 11:19-30; 13:1-3
2. Cyprus - Salamis - synagogues, 13:4-5
3. Paphos - several weeks/months 13:6-12
4. Antioch in Pisidia 13:13-50
5. Iconium 13:51-14:7
6. Lystra 14:6-20
7. Derbe 14:20-22
8. Going back through the same towns 14:21-23
9. Sailing home to Syrian Antioch and on arrival there 14:24-27

From your own research of Scripture, compile answers to these questions:

1. **Overall who responded to Barnabas and Saul's preaching?**
2. **Was the message popular?**
3. **What special problems did Barnabas and Saul have?**
4. **How did they particularly help the new believers?**

Go through the 'three little details' opposite with the ladies.

Perhaps share the references out between the ladies so each reference is ready to be read by someone at the appropriate time.

See if the listeners notice and pick the differences for number 2.

When finished ask the ladies to read these four Bible passages out loud:

11:1-4, 15-18

13:44-47

15:1-4

15:5

What was the problem? - Gentiles becoming Christians, and how to respond?

Could this be like converts to Jesus coming to you from a different tribe today?

How to accept them in your fellowship?

What difficulties may have to be overcome? How can this be done?

The Council of Jerusalem 15:1-35

A church meeting - a tricky problem - a problem of growth - trying to understand all the issues - how to make a wise decision - and to communicate that decision to everyone who needs to know.

Get the ladies to work in small groups - to find the above stages in 15:1-35

- understand - verses 1-4, 5-6, 12
- wise decision - 13-21
- communicate - 22-29

Go through the group answers altogether.

Another tricky issue arises, this time within the team

Read 15:35-41 with the ladies. Ask them to pick out some important details.

Growth in the Antioch church - many teachers and preachers.

A dividing of the ways - but did good things come out of it in the end? What?

Paul and Barnabas were able to use their knowledge and experience in two areas instead of one. Two missionary outreach teams, greater area covered.

But I'm sure there will still have been 'feelings' to get over. What do you think?

Three little details to tidy up:

1. Acts 13:5 and 13 John Mark left them. We don't know why. See 15:36-40. Notice that Mark spent time in Rome with Paul later on - see Philemon 24, Colossians 4:10 and 2 Timothy 4:11.
2. Acts 12:25, 13:2, 13:13, 13:42, 14:1 Did you notice the change from Saul to Paul, and a change of the order from 'Barnabas and Saul' to 'Paul and Barnabas'? It may have been because Paul quickly became the main speaker.
3. Acts 14:27 Barnabas and Paul reported back to the sending church and had a needed extended time (of rest and recovery?) with their home church.

What is the major problem in the following verses?

11:1-4, 15-18

13:44-47

15:1-4

15:5

Can you think of any similar, if **difficult**, **challenges for your churches** now?

The Council of Jerusalem 15:1-35

Growth always causes problems - from a growing child needing new and bigger clothes to a church changing to reach out towards different kinds of people, and then receive them into full fellowship.

Whenever there is a problem we need to-

- understand the issues
- make a wise decision
- communicate to those who need to know

Can you find the Council people going through these three stages in the reading?

Point out the verses that illustrate this.

What was the response back 'home' in Antioch?

Another tricky issue arises, this time within the team 15:35-41

What are you hearing that is important information on this incident?

Note them down.

Problems are for solving, not festering. Leaving a problem alone usually makes it worse.

Sometimes what we see as a setback is God's way forward.

He is an amazingly great God!

Lesson 21 Leader's notes: Second Missionary Journey

Acts 15:40 – 18:22. A.D. 50-52

Like the last lesson, you will need to have gone through this page, and have your own answers, before leading the lesson!

Lead from the front, but with the ladies split into twos or small groups.

Encourage them to make notes so they have them for future reference.

Walk round the groups as they work, inspiring them to keep on track.

After a while get the ladies to share their information.

Syria & Cilicia 15:40-41 consolidated, helped to improve local churches

Derbe & Lystra 16:1-5 informed them about the Council decisions, from 15:23-29

supporting and backing up the letter's content, verse 27

the result was increase as faith in Jesus Christ was reinforced.

Move into a class-wide discussion from the Timothy questions opposite

Mixed race, respected in local church, gifted, see 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.

The New Living Translation says in Acts 16:3 "In deference to the Jews of the area, he (Paul) arranged for Timothy to be circumcised". He wisely considered other people's viewpoints as well as his own. He wanted no barriers for his gospel.

Back to looking for information. Read the Bible verses suggested:

Phrygia and Galatia, Acts 16:6-10 unsure of direction, given clear answers

Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, 16:11-12, 'we' 16:10-12 Luke joined them

Think about guidance from this incident and the references opposite

Philippi Acts 16:13-40 Read about three incidents:

First incident verses 13-15

Ask the ladies what they have found out about Lydia, fill in five answers opposite:

- devout, 200 miles from home, in business, hospitable, God working in her heart.

Place of prayer - women there - no synagogue - that required ten Jewish men.

Purple cloth was a luxury item.

Paul did not walk away from a group of women - he was not by himself - 'we' verse 13, probably included Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, no-one could misunderstand.

Second incident 16:16-22 Check answers the ladies found to five questions.

Share this: Can you see a change in motivation within 16:19-21?

The owners of the slave girl had a financial problem, but what they said to the magistrates was a racial and a religious argument. Jews have often been unpopular for their frequent business success, and because they stick to their religion and its rules, not integrating with their host community.

As you well know **racialism and religious persecution** or oppression exist today. In the UK there is a big debate now about the treatment of Jews within one of the political parties.

Here we find the same thing in Philippi a long, long time ago.

Lesson 21 Second Missionary Journey

Acts 15:40 – 18:22. A.D. 50-52

Don't forget you have a map where you can mark Paul's route – page 4.
It is different from the first journey.

You are looking for **what happened in each of the places**, good or bad.
Syria and Cilicia 15:40-41

Derbe and Lystra 16:1-5

What do you know about Timothy? 1.
2.
3.
4.

Why did Paul decide it would be good for Timothy to be circumcised? Ouch!

Paul is not saying that all new non-Jewish believing men have to be circumcised. He is saying that because he is taking Timothy on ministry where it would be good to be able to sit, talk and eat with Jews, table fellowship would not be possible with strict Jews unless Timothy was circumcised.

Phrygia and Galatia, 16:6-10 How did they know where to go and where not? Can this work over decisions in your life? How?

Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, Philippi, 16:11-12

Why do you think they went to Philippi after the vision? See verse 12 and think!

Guidance in 16:6-10 - compare John 15:26, 16:13-14; Galatians 4:6, 5:25.

There is no formula for knowing what God wants us to do. We need to trust God the Holy Spirit working in us to show us the way, however He wants to.

Philippi read Acts 16:13-40 First incident verses 13-15

What do you know about Lydia? 1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Paul thought women were of value and needed to know Jesus as much as men.

Second incident verses 16-22

- 1, Who was doing the fortune telling?
2. Who was getting the money?
3. Was what the slave girl said in 16:17 right? compare James 2:19.
4. Why was Paul annoyed?
5. Why were Paul and Silas taken to the authorities?

Third incident in Philippi, Acts 16:23-40

Talk through the questions opposite

The jailer - revise 12:19 - if there was an escape then the jailer would receive the punishment the prisoner was due to receive. This jailer was not going to wait for that.

Pride? Much more likely to raise the standing and respect for the new, young church.

Philippi's church - Lydia and her household? The slave girl? The jailer and his family and household? Plus others who responded.

Thessalonica, Acts 17:1-10

Read the verses and share answers to the questions opposite.

Another house church - Jews, Greeks and influential women.

Is it always right to stay and fight? Or is it always right to run away? Why?

Berea, Acts 17:10-15

Same again!

Athens, Acts 17:16-34

And again.

The Areopagus was an intellectual debate centre where new ideas could be presented, thought about, questioned and otherwise discussed.

Paul took something he saw in their city - an altar 'To an unknown god' - and he 'talked them from there to Jesus'. A great guide in witnessing.

Ask the group: If only a few respond positively, is it a successful mission?

Corinth, Acts 18:1-18 Read the verses and share ladies' answers.

So we discover there were Christians in Rome.

God gave a vision of Encouragement. Or Assurance. Or Confidence. Or Support.

Gallio's ruling means that Christianity became a protected religion under Roman law, and that Christians became innocent of breaking Roman law.

God is able to use all rulers (even non-Christian ones) to further His will as He chooses.

Ephesus, Acts 18:18-22

Jerusalem was still where the apostles and leaders were based.

Antioch in Syria was his home church.

Third incident in Philippi, Acts 16:23-40

What was the first punishment for Paul and Silas?

And the second?

What happened then?

Why did the jailer immediately think to kill himself?

Do you think the jailer had heard Paul and Silas in the town? Why?

Conversions, medical treatment, baptisms, a meal, an unplanned night they had!

The authorities had decided to release Paul and Silas - why the delay?

Did Paul and Silas refuse to leave quietly because of their own pride?

If not, what others reasons did they have?

In 16:40 the church met in Lydia's house. Who do you think was part of it?

On to Thessalonica, Acts 17:1-10

Who made up the new church?

What emotion caused the riot?

What did the believers do?

Berea, Acts 17:10-15

Who was with Paul? check 17:14-15.

What was the response? Who responded positively to the gospel?

Trouble came from Thessalonica and once again the believers protected Paul.

Athens, Acts 17:16-34

Had Silas and Timothy caught up with Paul?

What distressed Paul?

Where was Paul able to speak?

At the Areopagus how did Paul start his talk?

Is this a good method for us - always to 'start where people are'?

Were there any believers?

Corinth, Acts 18:1-18

What job did Paul do? With whom? Why had they left Rome?

Silas and Timothy arrive - what big change does Paul make? Why?

The Jews oppose Paul, so what does he say and do? Who was converted?

Can you describe God's message in the vision, verses 9-10, using just one word?

Would you like to have been in Paul's teaching class for those 18 months? Why?

The Jews take Paul to the area Governor who is not interested in their case -how significant is this?

Ephesus, Acts 18:18-22

Why go to Jerusalem?

Why go to Antioch?

Lesson 22 Leader's notes: Third Missionary Journey

Acts 18:23-21:26 A.D. 53-57

Ask the ladies to keep their notes closed to start with

18:23 Paul goes back through the churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, helping every believer grow in understanding and apply their newly found Christian faith into their daily lives

Read 18:23 adding the names of the towns (above), which by now have been mentioned several times.

Next ask the ladies the top question opposite.

See what contributions you receive from the class.

Then **share yours, and then mine**, using my 1,2,3 notes and paragraph opposite.

So now we are travelling with Paul again.

But first there is a piece of **catch up information 18:24-28**

Invite the ladies to work through the passage, in pairs, to answer the questions opposite.

Share their answers, perhaps writing them on a board, until you have everything - build up a brief word-picture of Apollos.

Suggest the ladies work through 19:1-20 using the questions opposite.

19:11-12 compare Acts 5:15, Mark 5:25-34

The miracle power is from God. His must be all of the praise.

19:17-20 Results from Paul's ministry

1. awe city wide. Common people wondering, "What is going on?"
2. the name of Jesus was looked on very favourably, even reverentially
3. new Christians discarded their previous involvement in witchcraft
4. people responded positively to Jesus' Gospel. The area was impressed.

Share

19:21-22 Paul is thinking ahead. It would need forward planning because travel took so long. We know that now it is possible to fly from Juba or Khartoum to Nairobi, Kenya and on to Cape Town in South Africa, have a couple of days there and be back in four to five days. Paul and his companions would have walked a lot of each journey, possibly ridden a donkey or in a donkey cart part way, and sea journeys were in rowed sail boats. No engines or cars.

Slow!

So Paul is not saying 'I'm going tomorrow' - he is planning ahead. Always a good idea.

We'll watch how it works out.

Lesson 22 Third Missionary Journey

Acts 18:23-21:26

A.D. 53-57

Paul is off again on his travels! 18:23.

Can you think of three things that we have seen Paul consistently doing - things that motivated his life?

My list would be:

1. telling people about Jesus
2. teaching people the truths about Jesus and Christian living
3. encouraging and strengthening young Christians

Yes, there is overlap within those three things, but they summarise Paul's reasons for doing what he did. Like a good parent Paul wanted to educate his 'spiritual' children properly. He knew this would be foundational in their lives.

While Paul went to Jerusalem, and then back to Antioch for a break, **someone else arrived at Ephesus where Paul had left Priscilla and Aquila.** 18:24-28.

- What was his name?
- Was he local? an incomer? Alexandria, north Egyptian port, see map page 4.
- What else do you know about him?
- Who helped him, why and how? There is more than one described.

How good are you at seeing a need and helping to meet it? Or coming alongside someone to assist their spiritual development?

Note: Unusually for the time, Priscilla (the wife) is here mentioned first, before her husband. Perhaps she was the more able teacher? Or he ran the business?

See Acts 18:18-19, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19. Wives and husbands may serve our Lord together, doing the same, or different, things.

19:1-20 Paul arrives at Ephesus - a very wealthy city, home of the Temple of Artemis, one of the most famous buildings in the Roman world.

- 19:1-7 in your own words, what was the gap in the disciples knowledge?
19:8-10 how long did Paul teach in the synagogue? Why so long?
what took so much time in and from the lecture hall of Tyrannus?
19:11-12 Who did the miracles? Is this always the case? Why?
19:13-16 a mix of Jewish and pagan rituals - the evil spirit knew the difference between real power and merely claimed power
19:17-20 four results: 1. verse 17
2. verse 17
3. verses 18-19
4. verse 20

Another challenge – Acts 19:23-41 Read the story and then invite the ladies to find six important points.

Share their answers.

1. Those who benefitted from tourism in the Temple and from selling souvenirs stirred up trouble, verse 24.
2. They were frightened their income would stop because of the teaching about one God rather than 'many gods', verse 26.
3. Riot because Artemis was being confronted, verse 28-29.
4. Chaos, verse 32.
5. A senior administrator in the city spoke very sensibly and dismissed the crowd. It is easy to rouse a rabble! Verses 33-34.
6. God used a non-Christian administrator, who was proud of his city, to calm the situation, verses 35-41.

20:17-35 What were the main points of Paul's farewell to the Ephesian Elders? (The only recorded speech of Paul made to believers).

20:17-21 You know how I lived among you – the tears, the testing, the upbuilding teaching – to both Jews and Greeks – focused on repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.

20:22-24 God is sending me to Jerusalem – I keep getting warnings from Him of prison, hardship – but I just want to be where God wants.

20:25-27 You will not see me again – I have taught you about the God we serve – you must now take collective responsibility for yourselves.

20:28-31 Be watchful shepherds of your own lives and of the life of the flock, the local church, for whom you have responsibility. There will certainly be attacks on you leaders and your flock.

20:32-35 I worked tent-making, Acts 18:3, while I was with you to provide for my own needs – now be blessed as you look after each other.

20:36-21:1a Prayer with high emotion on both sides, those staying and those going.

21:1-16 Ask, How did Agabus' acted prophecy affect Paul? 21:11-14. Why?

Do this if there is time, or **choose to make time if you can.**

Think together about Paul's attitude to 'future suffering in God's will'.

Compare with Jesus, Mark 14:36, Apostles, Acts 5:29, Saul/Paul, Acts 9:16.

We are not Paul or Peter or Jesus. **How do we cope with following God's will even if it is not the easier way we may choose left to ourselves?** Perhaps our eyes are fixed too much on suffering and too little on God? Hebrews 12:1-3.

Another challenge - Acts 19:23-41

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Praise God He uses whoever He chooses to further His purposes.
We can always rely on that.

- 20:1-6** **Keep on adding to your map**, on page 4.
20:7-12 Paul had a lot to say - to share and encourage. Note the danger of sermons that are too long! ☺ A sensational miracle. No sleep for Paul!
20:13-16 **Paul was running out of time to get back to Jerusalem.**
20:17-35 What were the main points of Paul's farewell to the Ephesian Elders? Put them briefly **into your own words.**

20:17-21

20:22-24

20:25-27

20:28-31

20:32-35

20:36-21:1a

- 21:1-16** Follow the map once more.

Who did Paul and Luke stay with? Where? 21:7-8

How did Agabus' acted prophecy affect Paul? 21:11-14.
Why do you think this?

Think about Paul's attitude to future suffering in God's will. Compare with our Lord Jesus in Mark 14:36, and the disciples in Acts 5:29, Acts 9:16.

I know we are probably not 'spiritual giants' like Paul or Peter or Jesus. I'm not!

But why are we sometimes afraid of the suffering God leads us to face?

Food for thought for all of us as our Lord Jesus Christ's followers.

Lesson 23 Leader's notes: The Earliest Letters

- James pre 49-50 A.D., Galatians 51-53 A.D.,
1 and 2 Thessalonians 51-52 A.D.

Lead from the front.

Perhaps ask the ladies what they think life was like in the time the book of Acts records - highlight as many differences as you can between then, and our lives today?

Communications may be the biggest difference - there were no radios, televisions, CDs and tape players, photocopiers, telephones or computers. Electricity nor batteries for running these things did not exist either.

The few books there were, were handwritten, not printed.

Times have changed!

Make sure the ladies have understood the first three paragraphs opposite.

1. James - research which of four 'James' wrote our letter of James?
- share out the readings below and have ladies ready to read. Ask the ladies to read the two for the first James. Then work through the Scriptures for the three other 'James' we find in the New Testament.

- James the father of Judas - mentioned in Luke 6:16, Acts 1:13
- James the son of Alphaeus - Matthew 10:3; Acts 1:13
- James the brother of John - Matthew 10:2; Acts 1:13, 12:2
- James the younger half-brother of Jesus - Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:17-18,
1 Corinthians 15:7, Galatians 1:19.

Conclusion : the last option fits best.

Now look at the James section opposite.

Share out the first six references - what does James call the people he is writing to in them? What is the significance of the descriptions?

Look altogether at the next Acts (x2) and James (x1) references opposite.

What are the main things James is writing about?

James is very, very practical. It is hard to misunderstand what he is saying.

Read the opposite verses, or get one of the ladies to read them, one at a time.

After each one ask 'how does this work out in real life?' Try not to avoid the truths. It is a natural human defence mechanism to do so.

Invite the ladies to fill in their short answer on the bottom line opposite.

You might want a few minutes of quiet to let James' practical challenges sink into class members' hearts and lives, as the Holy Spirit works on His word.

Lesson 23 The Earliest Letters

- James pre 49-50 A.D., Galatians 51-53 A.D.,
1 and 2 Thessalonians 51-52 A.D.

Sometimes we assume everywhere and every age functions the way we do in our culture and time. **But the Middle East was a melting pot** of cultures in Bible times - because of the rise and fall of Empires over the years and the growth of geographically wider spread trade. More contacts were made between different peoples.

The first century A.D. was dominated by the Roman Empire - it's legal structure, it's geographic occupation of other countries, it's roads, it's military retirees settling in far flung corners. The century was also influenced by **Greek thinking** from the previous Empire. There were centres of education - Rome, Athens, Corinth, Alexandria - with much trade, travel and thinking between them.

On the time line opposite page 5, the earliest New Testament letters are listed as James, Galatians and two to the Thessalonians. We need to try and **remember** the information we have gleaned from the narrative of Acts, and **mix it** with the local context from history, plus **details** found in the letters themselves. Then we can learn from these New Testament letters in colour, rather than only black and white.

1. James

Most people think this was a letter written by James, a younger half- brother of Jesus, who became leader of the church in Jerusalem. He wrote this to Jewish believers, probably before the Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15.

In James 1:19, 2:1, 2:14, 3:1, 4:11, 5:19, what does James call the people he is writing to? Three things. Why is this important?

In Acts 2:5-11 Jews from all over the known world were frequently in Jerusalem, some living there, more visiting on business or religious celebrations.

In Acts 2:41 3,000 people were added to the church .

Some travelled home again - were these some of the people James wrote to? There was a Jewish diaspora - and then a Christian diaspora - just as there is now a Sudanese diaspora, James 1:1. **God knows where we are, always, without fail!**

James is practical and personally challenging

1:2-5 How easy do you find 'pure joy' in the context of the passage?

1:19-20 Are you quick in producing 'the righteousness' that God desires?

2:1-4 Do you treat all people, each individual, equally? Why? What makes it hard?

2:14-18 Do your deeds tell the right things about your Christian faith?

3:3-10 Do you control your tongue or does your tongue control you? Why?

5:19-20 Do you look out for others? Do they look out for you? How?

Now put together 1:5, 3:13, 3:17 and complete this sentence. 'Get wisdom, show wisdom and humility, by being

2. Galatians

Lead from the front again.

Ask the ladies what they remember about Pisidian Anioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, from our Acts lessons, pages 44-46. Paul was there several times. No-one is sure exactly when this letter to Galatians was written. Letters were precious because they were hand written and were passed on to be shared from one fellowship to another.

**What do you learn from Galatians 1:1-2?
and 6:11?**

Paul would have used a secretary to write clearly and well on a scroll exactly what he dictated. Here he is so concerned for the Galatians that **he takes up the pen and writes himself** to underline the last lines of this letter.

Large letters because he had eye problems? malarial headaches? shaky hands?

We don't know. But **his concern and love for new believers shows clearly through.**

Ask someone to read the first reference opposite, 1:6-9, and **talk about it together.**

Next use the two Galatians 3 references together and talk about them.

Read all the references one at a time. **Talk about and complete each one** before moving on.

Share

Even after the decision of the Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15:19-29, there were obviously people who insisted that new believers needed to be circumcised, 'to be the same as them'. They travelled around trying to influence and persuade new Christians to their way of thinking. Paul says that theologically they are wrong, **and** they are disagreeing with the decision taken at the Church Council of Jerusalem. "Don't be foolish or bewitched by them".

3. Thessalonians - still lead from the front.

Thessalonica was a bustling seaport. It was a trade centre on the end of the busy Egnatian Way, (Via Egnatian), crossing between the Aegean and Adriatic seas.

1 Thessalonians was probably written by Paul from Corinth, Acts 18:11.

After receiving back a report, he wrote 2 Thessalonians while still there.

Ask someone to read the first line of all references opposite and then talk about the texts. Ask for the main thrust of each teaching? Why is Paul writing this particularly?

Share: These letters are encouragement to keep believing

to keep living Christ's way

to feel supported, 'we love you and pray for you'

to 'hang in there' through difficulties

Think: **Who can you encourage this week?**

2. Galatians

Acts 13:14-14:23, 16:1-5, and 18:23 all speak of churches in the Roman protectorate, then province, of Galatia - Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. We have seen in Acts that Paul visited this area several times so there may have been other local churches as well for which we do not have names. **Antioch in Pisidia** was on a trade route between Ephesus and Cilicia. It was a Roman colony with Greeks and Jews living within it. **Iconium** was a wealthy and productive region. **Lystra** was a Roman defensive town, while **Derbe** was on the border.

What did Paul write to them about? Keeping this question in mind construct your brief summary below, for each of the Bible passages:

1:6-9

3:1-6 and 26-29

4:19-20

5:1-7

6:12-16

We all, always, need to be careful of travelling preachers - wherever they come from. Their background and home reputation we do not know and cannot easily verify. They may be saying something quite **different from accepted Christian truth**. Today this also applies to apparently 'Christian' literature, TV, radio, CDs, USB installed teachings **as well**.

Weigh absolutely everything up carefully - test teaching and people against Scripture - don't be gullible, easily taken in!

3. Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1

1 Thessalonians 1:2, 6-10

2:1-4, 9-13, 17-18

3:7-13

4:9-12, 13-18

5:12-15

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

2:1-4, 15

3:6-13, 14-15, 17

Living Christianly is not usually easy. Try to give, and receive, help to/from one another.

Lesson 24 Leader's notes: 1 and 2 Corinthians 55 A.D.

Lead from the front.

Share the following **historical information** about Corinth: see map page 4.

Corinth had been a very busy, diverse city when it was captured and sacked by the Romans in 146B.C. It was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44B.C. and established as a Roman city and seat of government for the province of Achaia. At the time of Paul's visits there were probably 100,000 people in the city and surrounding area. That is one fifth of the population of Juba or Port Sudan (from the 2019 figures www.worldpopulationreview.com).

There was a harbour at each side of the isthmus, neck of land, (see map) and a *diolkos* (Greek for 'haul across') - a 6th century B.C. stone paved road way that connected the two - ships were dragged across the *diolkos* on rollers. This saved a long, time consuming and difficult trip for cargo and passengers. It was controlled by Corinth. A good money-earner for the city no doubt.

A canal across the isthmus at Corinth was begun under the emperor Nero in 67 A.D. but only finally completed in 1893 - four miles of canal to provide an essential shipping route between the Ionian and Aegean seas.

The Corinthians were culturally diverse - from strict Jews to many prostitute priestesses in the Temple of Aphrodite: many followed Greek philosophers in individualism, equality, freedom and distrust of all authority: so there were ascetics who shunned the physical pleasures **and** hedonists who indulged in them wholeheartedly: the Isthmian Games, second only to the Olympic Games, were held every two years.

Corinth was known for its 'free love' and sexual immorality - to follow that way of life was known as 'to Corinthianise'!

Like both its ancient predecessors, modern Corinth is the centre of commerce between northern and southern Greece. Today, it has a population of about 30,000.

Make sure you have understood page 52 opposite, before working through it with the ladies. The various Corinthian letters (some of which we don't have) and the number of visits are not easy to sort out. I offer my best guess.

Discover the difficulties together - top half of page 52 before

Looking through the 'understandable time line' that I suggest, together.

Lesson 24 1 and 2 Corinthians 55 A.D.

The city of Corinth was very cosmopolitan (representative of all parts of the world). So new believers came from many backgrounds and ideas. Paul had to be very firm and strong with them, balancing enforcement with encouragement. Remember, we have the Bible to refer to. They did not. They had what they had been taught, but not always the knowledge and wisdom to properly evaluate Corinthian ideas. As Paul wrote to help them, so he helps us.

- **Paul visited Corinth at least three times:**
- visit one -Acts 18:1-18
- visit three -Acts 20:2b-3a
- we only know about the middle visit, two, from 2 Corinthians 2:1.

Reading between the lines

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 a 'previous' letter. How was it misunderstood?

2 Corinthians 2:1 'I will not make another painful visit'.

Why would a meeting hurt? Look in the next verses, especially 4-8.

2 Corinthians 2:3-4, 7:8 the stern letter.

Sometimes 'toughness' brings the right result under God, note 7:9-13.

It may well not be easy, but it can be necessary.

Let's try and put these details into an 'understandable time line':

1. **Visit 1.** see Acts 18:11.
2. **Letter 1.** A previous or warning letter, which God has not kept for us, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9.
3. **Letter 2.** Our First Corinthians letter, written from Ephesus.
4. **A Planned visit.** Mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:6 in Paul's last year at Ephesus - 'perhaps I will spend the winter with you'. This did not happen then.
5. **Visit 2.** The painful visit 2 Corinthians 2:1.
6. **Letter 3.** A stern letter - letter of tears - mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, 7:8. We do not have this letter.
7. **Letter 4.** Our Second Corinthians letter, talking about when Paul comes for the third time, 2 Corinthians 13:1-11.
8. **Visit 3.** see Acts 20:2-3.

It is important to recall to whom our letters are written? 1 Corinthians 1:2, and 2 Corinthians 1:1 tell us, 'the church of God, people sanctified in Jesus, who are called to holy living under His Lordship, meeting as one people but in various places across the city and Achaia province'. Christians like these (and like us?) still have our challenges!

Ask ladies to read the first set of references and ask everyone to listen carefully.
They are trying to discover what the problem is that Paul is addressing, and what his offered solution is.

Ask for their answers - what is the problem?

How do the Corinthians need to correct their thinking? What must they do to respond?

Work through every Bible passage, one at a time.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13 and 3:1-11

Divisions and supporting different leaders

Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, to Whom all earthly church leaders must openly defer.

5:1-5, 9-11

The church must always have very high moral standards. They lived in a very lax sexual society. They should have put the wayward man out of their fellowship, back into the realm of Satan, until he realised his wrong, repented, and reformed. Accommodating him was not loving, it was wrong.

6:1-8

Their calling as believers was to honour the name of Jesus, not to drag His name through the non-Christian courts. Always find wise and godly people in the church to adjudicate between people, or, choose to be wronged and leave it go, even suffering loss.

7:1-5

Husbands and wives should always be faithful, and fair, to each other.

8:1-13

Use your freedom wisely, carefully considering its effect on others.

An idol has no power. So there is no problem. **But** if someone who has not thought it through thinks there is a problem, a Christian has a responsibility to the weaker sister (or brother) not to make her stumble. Better not to eat it than to upset the faith of your sister.

This carries over into other areas of life as well, not just meat offered to idols. Share some of these from your own experiences if you are able.

12:1, 4-12

Receive and use the gifts of the Holy Spirit only in God-honouring ways.

The spiritual gifts are exactly that, **gifts**. You are given a gift. You do not choose it.

God the Holy Spirit chooses what gifts to pass to whom.

All of the gifts are given for the good of the whole Christian fellowship.

For 2 Corinthians 13:11 and 13 - see opposite.

What did Paul write about? And what can we learn for our church life and individual part within it today?

From 1 Corinthians

1:10-13 and 3:1-11

key verses 1:10 and 13

5:1-5, 9-11

key verses 5:1 and 5:2

6:1-8

key verses 6:1, 5-6

7:1-5

key verses 7:2-4

8:1-13

key verses 4, 9, 13 Meat bought in the market may have been slaughtered in the name of an idol.

12:1, 4-12

key verses 1, 7, 11-12

2 Corinthians 13:11 and 13

The relationship of Paul with the churches in Corinth was not an easy one. Members of the churches came from very different backgrounds, beliefs and even moral thinking. At times some resented Paul's authority. They could be a loud and headstrong bunch. Paul kept seeing them as his 'children in the Lord' and always wanted only what was best for them.

'Peace' comes twice in verse 11. How they needed that. Stropky faction leaders needed to become of one mind in Jesus. They needed to rejoice in what God had done for everybody. They needed to encourage everyone else.

They needed to know that other Christian churches loved them, and wanted God's best for them, **worshipping and living in a God-pleasing way.**

Lesson 25 Leader's notes: Romans 57A.D.

Lead from the front.

Use the historical information below, if you think it useful to the ladies.

Rome was founded 753 B.C. and grew through monarchy into a republic, governed by regularly elected consuls in 509 B.C. By 146 B.C. Rome ruled much of Spain, parts of North Africa and Greece.

In 45 B.C. Julius Caesar became dictator of Rome for life. He was murdered in 44 B.C. There was leadership turmoil until Octavian became sole ruler, and assumed the title of Emperor Augustus in 27 B.C.

'Pax Romana' (the peace of Rome) had arrived and with it the golden age of Rome's Empire. Augustus died in A.D.14.

Rome built roads in every direction - roads that really lasted well. Some survive in England, where I live, today! They were definitely in charge. God used this improved communication network to give freedom for the Gospel to spread.

The golden age continued until about A.D.192 when the Empire began to decline and disintegrate. Finally, in A.D.476, a Germanic prince won control of the Roman army in Italy.

"Among the many legacies of Roman dominance are the widespread use of the Romance languages (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian) all derived from Latin. The modern Western alphabet and calendar and the emergence of Christianity as a major world religion Rome's military conquests led directly to its cultural growth as a society, as the Romans benefited greatly from contact with such advanced cultures as the Greeks. The first Roman literature appeared around 240 B.C., with translations of Greek classics into Latin; Roman people would eventually adopt much of Greek art, philosophy and religion."

<http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/ancient-rome>

The God of history used the times and the people He had created to facilitate the spread His message. Jesus is Lord!

God can use nations, governments and leaders who do not acknowledge His authority. Ultimately, nothing and nobody can frustrate His eternal will.

Now start teaching page 54.

Ask different ladies to read a Bible passage, one at a time.

Listen carefully and **all share answers** to any of these questions as you go along:

1. What do we know about Paul's desire to go to Rome?
2. What makes up the different parts of 'Paul's gospel'?
3. Can you see 'another side' of the usual Paul coming through? What is it? Why?

Lesson 25 Romans 57A.D.

"Romans is one of the most important theological documents of all time. Its influence on the course of Christian history and the development of Christian theology is inestimable".

- NIV Zondervan Study Bible.

This letter was most likely written during Paul's 3 month stay in Corinth, Acts 20:2-3.

Paul's desire - can you find reasons Paul wanted to go to Rome?

Romans 1:8-15

Acts 19:21

Acts 22:29-30; 23:1, 9-11; 25: 10-12

Romans 15:23-24

What essentially is "Paul's (my) Gospel"?

Romans 16:25-27, see verse 25

Romans 1:14-17

1 Corinthians 15:1-7

Galatians 1:6-9

Colossians 1:13-23

Has Paul a more human side than we often see? What describes it?

Look up Romans 15:13-16:24 - we are used to Paul's preaching and correcting, and we are grateful to God for Paul's teaching writings, but this passage at the end of Romans provides us with insights into **another side of Paul**.

What are the insights and what do they show us?

How may we apply them into **our** daily lives and dealings with people?

15:13-14

15:23-24

15:25-27

15:28-29

15:30-33

16:1-2 see Acts 18:18

16:3-5 still leading a house church, this time in Rome see Acts 18:19, 24-26

16:5-16 men, women, Jews, Gentiles, working together, followers of Jesus.

16:19

16:21-24

Invite the ladies to work in twos or small groups, writing, or composing and sharing, one short sentence explaining each of the references opposite. Share their sentences for each reference.

If you still have time you could **ask the ladies** if they have thought of **any other verses, from different Bible books, or elsewhere in Romans**, which reinforce these same truths. (I have given some possibilities in brackets below).

Romans 1:16-17 *God's righteousness is faith revealed to us by faith (Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; Romans 3:22)*

1:18-20 *God is angry with sin (Romans 2:5)*

3:11-12, 23 *Everyone has sinned (Romans 5:12)*

3:24-25 *We have been declared not guilty (Ephesians 1:7)*

5:1, 9-11 *We have a restored relationship with God (Colossians 1:21-22)*

6: 23 *We have the gift of eternal life (Matthew 25:46)*

8:1-4 *There is now no condemnation (Romans 8:31-34)*

8:12-17 *Live as sons and daughters of your heavenly Father
- suffering and glory (Galatians 6:7-10)*

11:33-36 *God did it all - what an awesome God we have (Job 11:7)*

12:1-2 *How to live it out - **principle** (Ephesians 4:1; 5:15)*

12:3, 9, 14, 21 *How to live it out - **practice***

13:1-8 *How to live it out - **more practice***

14:1, 12, 13, 19 *How to live it out - **still more practice***

15:7 *How to live it out - **even more practice!** (1 Peter 4:10-11)*

Notice how practical Christian discipleship is, affecting all areas of life.

Paul's gospel outline in 15 chapters!

Write, or think of, one sentence explaining each of the references below - to build your own 'theology page' of Paul's teaching on **What is the Gospel?**

'Theology' is the study of the nature of God. What we believe ought to affect how we live.

Romans 1:16-17

1:18-20

3:11-12, 23

3:24-25

5:1, 9-11

6:23

8:1-4

8:12-17

11:33-36

12:1-2

12:3, 9, 14, 21

13:1-8

14:1, 12, 13, 19

15:7

Lesson 26 Leader's notes: Back to the Book of Acts - 21:27-28:31

I suggest that you go through this exercise yourself before the day the ladies try it. They may need more paper for making notes. Walk round the groups as they work - encouraging and helping. This is not an easy exercise!

Divide the ladies into four groups and give each group a Bible section to work on -

1. Acts 21:27 -23:22
2. Acts 23:23-24:27
3. Acts 25:1-26:32
4. Acts 27:1-28:31

Each group must aim to be able to tell their part of the big true story to the assembled other groups.

Ask them to **put themselves into the sandals** of the people they are reading about - Paul, the Roman commander, the centurion, Felix and Drusilla, (see Appendix 2 page 69), Agrippa and Bernice, Julius and the shipwrecked, people who visited Paul in prison at Caesarea, people who visited Paul under guard in Rome. **Imagine what were they feeling** at the described events. Things like:

- *apprehension?
- *joy?
- *fear?
- *opportunity?
- *curiosity?
- *stress of leadership?
- *peace?
- *responsibility?
- *anger?
- *anything more you can see in the narratives? ? ? ?

These were real people, not just names! They had feelings just as we all do.

After an appropriate time ask each group to share the story with the whole class, commenting on how people in the story must have felt.

Some extra information if required:

Paul's bad eyes? Acts 23:1-5, compare Galatians 4:15, 6:11.

Questions are raised here, but there are no definitive answers.

Lots of security given to protect this 'special' Roman citizen from known threats, Acts 23:23-24.

Paul was in prison for two years - waiting, not even serving a sentence, 24:27.

Lesson 26

Back to the Book of Acts - 21:27-28:31

We pick up again the narrative of our true story in Acts, with Paul in Jerusalem to bring the monetary gifts from Philippi, Berea, Corinth, (no international banks or Western Union then!). He also reports to James and the leadership of the Jerusalem church and celebrates with others the Jewish feast of Pentecost.

Group 1. Work together on imagining how people felt in Acts 21:27 -23:22.

Group 2. Work together on imagining how people felt in Acts 23:23-24:27.

Group 3. Work together on imagining how people felt in Acts 25:1-26:32.

Group 4. Work together on imagining how people felt in Acts 27:1-28:31.

This will be a challenge - please enjoy rising to it!

To finish the true story of Paul's life:

Paul was in prison at Caesarea awaiting a court hearing, probably A.D. 57-59.

He was then under house-arrest in Rome A.D.60-62.

He was freed, and travelled more, but we have no record of where.

- **see opposite.**

He was rearrested around A.D. 65-67 and executed in Rome.

The end of Paul was not the end of his ministry ☺. Far from it!

Perhaps your own children, your church ladies group, your Sunday School class, will be what you leave to influence future generations into Christian discipleship?

Can you think of more investment for Jesus you can make into other people who will live on after you?

Luke the doctor, who so faithfully recorded the life of Jesus, the early history of the Church including the life of Paul, disappears from ancient records.

How much we owe to his diligence in researching and recording under God!

He was a doctor for Paul and an intermittent but faithful companion.

2 Timothy 4:11 "Only Luke is with me."

There are no reliable details of his life or his death.

God will certainly reward Luke in glory! A great encouragement for us who work away quietly and obediently at everything God gives to us to do. God knows and He totally understands.

From frightened men in Jerusalem to teaching about Jesus Christ in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, including all over the then known world.

God knew what He was doing then.

He still does!

We can wholeheartedly trust Him, 100%.

Look up these references – they may give some clues about Paul between his two arrests A.D. 62-65.

Romans 15:24 and 28

The following letters were written during Paul's house arrest in Rome:

Philippians 2:24

Philemon 22, most probably in Colosse

1 Timothy 3:14-15; 2 Timothy 1:3-5

All these guide best guesses for what Paul did, we don't know for sure.

How did Paul cope with everything that came his way?

Check the next references – share what was happening for Paul.

Think how he might have reacted facing these various things?

Acts 14:19-20

Acts 16:19-24

Acts 27:21-26

Acts 28:15

Romans 16:1-2, 13

1 Corinthians 16:10-11

Galatians 1:6, 3:1

2 Timothy 2:9, 4:6-8, 9-13, 16, 20-21. (written during his final imprisonment)

Are you able to do what Paul says, in your life?

in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18?

in Philippians 4:11-13?

in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10?

Note: Any of these would make **good verses to memorise!** In your mind and in your heart God's word can encourage you at any time, even surprising times!

No-one said living Christianly was easy.

Trust the One who loves you.

Encourage each other.

Lesson 27 Leader's notes:

Letters written from house arrest in Rome A.D. 60-62

Ephesians - Share this information with the ladies:

Second Missionary Journey Acts 18:19-21, a short visit to Ephesus that left Aquila and Priscilla behind while he (Paul) went to Caesarea and Antioch, before starting his third journey - this time overland to Galatia and Phrygia.

Third Missionary Journey Acts 19:1 - 20:1 Paul continues overland to Ephesus. This was the most important city in what is now Turkey - a harbour, on a river, leading into the Aegean Sea, at an intersection of trade routes, with a famous temple to a pagan Roman goddess, Diana (in Greek 'Artemis').

Paul used **Ephesus as a centre of evangelism** throughout the area, for two years three months plus, Acts 19:10. Colosse is quite nearby. In Revelation 2:7 the first of the 'seven churches of Asia' mentioned is Ephesus. Laodicea is the furthest from Ephesus, about 100 miles, Sardis, Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamum, and Philadelphia are all within that mileage, although not that direction. Every one of them may well be results of Paul's concentrated evangelism in Ephesus.

There are no specific greetings in Paul's letter to the Ephesians - perhaps it was **designed to be a circular letter** to be read in all the churches associated with Ephesus. Compare with Colossians 4:16, Revelation 1:4 and 11.

Invite one or two of the ladies to read Ephesians 1:1-14 out loud and slowly. Ask the ladies to try and find each phrase (opposite) as the lady reads. Take a few moments to think about each of those mentioned blessings. Then answer the questions together. Don't rush! Be wowed! Enjoy!

Notice the word 'mystery' or 'secret' in Ephesians 3:1-6.

God's plan through the ages is now revealed, opened up to our view, our way back to God and the inclusion of the Gentiles. These buzz words for Gnosticism (mystery, secret) show that the teaching of Gnosticism - the need of special knowledge - was now proved false. God had shown clearly what was previously a mystery. There is no other specific teaching against Gnosticism here. Perhaps Paul was warning them beforehand?

Challenge the ladies to keep their Christian thinking and their understanding in line with the way they live. That way their lives will have impact on outsiders who watch them.

The prayers of Ephesians 1:17-19 and 3:16-19 we can pray for each other.

Lesson 27

Letters written from house arrest in Rome A.D. 60-62

The people receiving these letters lived in cosmopolitan towns and cities, with a variety of cultures. They did not live in 'all Christians together' ghettos. Do you live in a Christian community or are you challenged with other cultures next door and nearby?

Ephesians falls easily into two sections:

theory: God's purpose for the church

living out our spiritual blessings in Christ wherever we are

practice: God's purpose for believers; always living as children of Light.

Let's look at blessings Paul lists for us.

He lists them for us to know, but he really lists them so we will live always conscious of them.

Let's be excited by them:

Ephesians 1:3-14

verse 3 we are blessed in our Lord Jesus Christ

verse 4 God chose us - **I wonder why?**

- in Christ, **how?**
- before the creation of the world, **when?**
- to be holy in His eyes, **why?**
- predestined us to be His sons and daughters, **why?**
- for His praise, **why?**
- in Him we have redemption, **how?**
- in Him we have forgiveness, **how?**
- He lavished His grace on us, **how?**

Take time to absorb every Bible phrase above. Then answer the 'bold word' questions.

wow WOW WOW WOW WOW **WOW!**

An action meditation: **God** (one finger pointing up)
 loves (cross arms as in a big hug)
 me (pointing to your own heart)

Before you ask me - yes, our ladies group in UK did the actions. ☺

So sit there, close your eyes, do the actions while saying the true words in your heart (or out loud). **Let the truth refresh you again.**

It's incredible and it's wonderful!

The challenge to us is to express our beliefs about Jesus always, by everything we do and every word we speak in our daily lives.

Lead from the front - share the information.

Colossians

We have no record in the Book of Acts that Paul visited Colosse. It is in what is now Turkey. It was on an east to west trade route from Ephesus to the river Euphrates and was primarily a Gentile area. Look at Acts 19:10, Colossians 1:7-8, 4:12. It seems as though Epaphras was converted under Paul's ministry and took the Christian Gospel of Jesus Christ to Colosse. The church started had later problems for which Epaphras sought Paul's advice.

Ask ladies to read from the references opposite to discover possible problems the church was experiencing. Then look at Paul's answer texts.

Paul mentions a letter to Laodicea in 4:16. We do not have it.

Philippians

Second Missionary Journey - Acts 16:9 "Come over to Macedonia and help us".

Acts 16:11-12, Singing in prison at midnight. What songs might they have sung? First church members: probably a business woman - Lydia from Thyatira (see seven churches of Asia, proximate to Ephesus), a jailor plus family, and a healed slave girl! Philippi was on the main highway from the east to Rome - the Via Egnatia. It was in a gold producing area of Macedonia. By Paul's time it had many Italian settlers, retired soldiers from the legions. It was a vigorous and cosmopolitan city.

Ask ladies to read the Bible passages listed opposite to discover the main subjects Paul wrote about.

Philemon

Read the whole letter out loud together - it's only 25 verses!

This is a very personal note from Paul.

Onesimus' name means 'useful'. By running away he had become useless as a slave to Philemon. Now he has become a born again Christian. Paul asks the slave master to take back Onesimus the slave, this time as a brother in Christ.

A big ask - but it should be possible because of Christ's work in both men.

The issue of slavery - Paul does not say that slavery is wrong.

In verses 15-17 he says slavery should not happen in a Christian setting. "Master" and "slave" are brothers in Christ, even if different in rank and job.

Encourage the ladies to pick up the four challenges from the four New Testament letters.

And never forget the **wow** factor!

Colossians

Several possible problems in the church are referred to by Paul:

2:16-17, 2:20-23; 3:11 legalism - observances and rules for special days
2:18 angel worship
1:15-20; 2:2-4, 9 deprecation, disapproval, deep criticism of Christ
2:2-3 supposed secret knowledge for some, Gnosticism

Paul's answer is a strong emphasis on the all sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

1:15-23 See if you can find at least 11 truths about our Lord Jesus here. WOW!
2:6-15

Next Paul says 'live out what you know to be true'.

3:1-17 Share the positives and the negatives here. There are many of both!
4:2-6

The challenge to us is 'stand firm in right doctrine (belief) and daily lifestyle' .

Philippians

Philippians 1:13-14 fits the period described in Acts 28:16-31

1:5; 4:14-19 very sincere thanks for the gifts sent him
1:27-30; 4:4 encouraging the Philippians to stand firm in Jesus
2:1-11; 4:2-5 encouragement to humility and unity between everyone
2:19-30 Timothy and Epaphroditus were coming to visit
3:1-4:1 warning against Judaisers, and antinomians, people who believed they could have a faith in the true God and yet live as they wanted to!

The challenge to us is Paul's prayer for the Philippians 1:9-11, 27a.

Do you pray those things for yourself, for believers you know? Why/why not?

Philemon

Written with Colossians, taken to Colosse by Onesimus and Tychicus.

A letter of tactfulness and courtesy.

verses 1-3 note who the letter is from.....? and to

Philemon was a slave owner (reportedly Athens had 21,000 freemen and 4,000,000 slaves)

Apphia - probably his wife

Archippus - Colossians 4:17 - leader of a house church, fellow soldier of Paul

verses 4-7 praise and thanks for Philemon - a reviver and revitaliser of other people in the church - "Well done my friend"

verses 8-16 Onesimus, called 'my son, my brother'

verses 17-21 please take Onesimus back, with no recriminations. I (Paul) will repay anything he owes to you because he is so important to me

verses 22-25 I (Paul) want to stay with you - greetings to five other men - a mixture of Jews and Greeks on his team.

Think about slavery, verses 15-17, in light of both our relationships and responsibilities?

The challenge to us is to visit, to speak with, to encourage and to spiritually renew someone else.

Lesson 28 Leader's notes: 1 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, 1,2,3 John

Encourage the ladies to work in twos or small groups to find good things and bad things about the churches mentioned in these letters and to write them down.

Perhaps study one book at a time - there are ten in all.

Share the general information (my first paragraphs below) - **encourage the ladies to find answers** (like my second paragraphs) and **then share them together**.

1 Timothy

1:3 Writing to Timothy, a valued, younger friend, an apostolic representative left in charge of the church at Ephesus. It was written after Paul's release from house arrest in Rome.

Warnings about false teachers of Jewish myths, wrong behaviour, asceticism (self-denial of physical pleasures to attain spiritual goodness), dangers in the love of money, are all in this letter, as well as qualifications for church leadership, praying for government leaders, and 'trustworthy sayings'. These were accepted sayings of Christian truth probably being passed around from local church to local church.

Titus

This letter was also written after Paul's release from house arrest in Rome.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13, 7:5-7; Titus 1:4-5. Titus was left in Crete to superintend the formation of good and proper local churches there.

Look for Jewish false teachers again, the need for sound doctrine to be taught, and encouragement for Titus himself. Note 3:12 the west of modern Greece, and 2 Timothy 4:10 Dalmatia, modern Albania, the next country north west of Greece.

1 Peter

The Apostle Peter, writing from Babylon, possibly a small town on the Euphrates River in modern Iraq, or more likely, he is using a hidden, Christian codeword reference to Rome. Peter writes to Christians in what is modern day Turkey. Written 62-65 A.D.

It is a letter with many themes - suffering, persecution, glory, hope, the grace of God, encouragement to live holy lives, reminding that elders should be shepherds not bosses.

2 Timothy

Paul writing to Timothy, from his later imprisonment in Rome. Check the details opposite.

This letter is more to Timothy than to the church he serves. It is noticeably encouraging, encouraging, and encouraging.

Lesson 28 1 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, 1,2,3 John

These books were written after the close of Acts 28. **We are looking for facts about the growing early church** from them. They may be things we have mentioned already, but write them down with the new ones. Do you see any of these traits in your own life or church?

1 Timothy

1:3-7

1:15 compare 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Titus 1:9

2:1-2 compare Matthew 5:43-47

3:1-13

3:2-3, 6:10, 17-19

4:1-6

Titus

1:10-16, 3:9-11

2:1

2:15

1 Peter

2:12

5:1-4

2 Timothy

What was Paul's situation? 4: 9-13, 1:15-18, 2:8-9, 4:6-8

I know Timothy was a leader, but **can you take encouragement from what Paul says here** to Timothy? Which of Paul's encouragements challenge you? Think about them with Father God.

1:3-14

2:1-7

2:14-18

2:25-26

3:10-15

4:1-5

2 Peter

3:1-2 It looks as though we have both of the letters that Peter mentions. Again, written to Christians in modern day Turkey - to stimulate wholesome thinking by them. The letters were written 65-67 A.D. Peter was martyred in Rome 67-68 A.D.

There are strong similarities between 2 Peter and the letter of Jude. Did one copy the other? Did they both quote from the same teaching? We do not know. But God chose to put them both into the canon of scripture for us to learn from Him.

1:5 Make every effort to add to your faith.

2:1 There were, and there will always be, false teachers.

3:10 Jesus is coming again - God is in control.
Grow, learn, persevere, keep on!

Hebrews

We do not know who wrote Hebrews but whoever it was knew Timothy, 13:23.

It was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 - there is no mention of what was a major event for Jews - the destruction of their Temple. It was written **for Jewish Christians** to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of everything God had said and done in the Old Testament.

Jude

This letter was written either by Judas the Apostle Acts 1:13, or Judas the brother of Jesus Matthew 13:55. It is more likely Jesus' half-brother as Jude does not claim to be an Apostle in Jude 17, simply saying he is the brother of James. The most famous James in Acts was the leader of the early church. He was Jesus' brother. Written A.D. 65-80

Verse 3 'Contend', argue in order to defend. Verse 4 'Secretly slipped in among', infiltrated.

Three letters from John

These letters were written by John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, the fisherman, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' in John's gospel. The recipients were most likely Christians in churches around Ephesus, where John is thought to have lived A.D.70-100, and also others in the province of Asia.

John wrote in a context of, but against, Gnosticism which says - matter is entirely evil and the spirit is entirely good - man's body is therefore bad, and God is good - salvation is escape from the body achieved by 'special knowledge', not by faith - Christ's humanity was therefore denied outright - these beliefs spawned asceticism - 'the evil body is to be treated harshly' - and 'love God and do as you like' - matter was evil, so things done with the body are of no consequence and breaking God's law consequently was not wrong.

We need to be knowing and holding the truth so we can safely recognise heresy.

Remember to keep looking for facts about the growing early church.

2 Peter

1:3-11 Can you pick out one phrase which summarises this section?

2:1-3 Peter says these kind of people will always be around - be careful. 1:12.

3:8-13 What is the great encouragement Peter uses?

3:17-18 Grow in what? Explain exactly what this means for you.

Becoming a follower of Jesus is one event - but what do we all need to be doing afterwards?

Hebrews

1:1-4, 5-6 Jesus is greater than

3:1-6 Jesus is greater than.....

4:14-5:10, 7:22-27 Jesus is the Great _____ of the new, far superior covenant.

2:1 Have you gradually slipped away from God in the last year?

What is the remedy?

Or have you grown in love and admiration for Him? Keep on going!

Jude

Verse 3 What is the strong word that reminds you of athletics or wrestling?

Verse 4 What is the phrase that implies these people sneaked or crept in unnoticed?

There is a balance between readily welcoming new people into the church, and not being gullible to troublemakers. We all come to Jesus Christ with baggage from the past, and we have to work at being the new creations God has made us into. Some people come with their baggage **and want to spread their misunderstandings** (or deliberate mischief) through the fellowship. Beware!

Three letters from John

What do you learn from each of these key references?

1 John 2:20-27

2 John 7-11

1 John 3:16-18

3 John 9-11

1 John 5:18-21

When we recognise heresy we must confront it. Both love the truth **and** 'love one another'. You love your child enough to teach her the dangers of the river she plays by.

Try to avoid 'Christian accidents' over truth.

Keep on going your entire life!

Page 61

Lesson 29 Leader's notes: Revelation and Acts 1:6-7

Lead from the front and share these two paragraphs first of all:

The book of Revelation - together with Daniel and Ezekiel - talk about end times, latter days. The picture language used has been interpreted in many ways. Different churches and Christian denominations have different interpretations in their statements of faith. We are not going there. It is **not** the purpose of this book to create or prolong divisions. I want to help our ladies have 'a working understanding' to aid their Christian walk.

The book of Revelation - or apocalypse, unveiling, disclosure - was written by the Apostle John about A.D.95 from the island of Patmos, 50 miles off Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. He was exiled there because of his Christian teaching. Christians were being persecuted due to their opposition to emperor worship. The angel sent by God **tells John to write what he sees**. The resulting letter is to reassure struggling Christians that their ultimate victory is coming when Jesus the Christ returns, the wicked are forever destroyed, and God's people enter an eternity of glory and blessedness. However this book is still difficult to fully understand!

Invite the ladies to look at the Acts references top opposite.

Share the story as a group and then **answer** the two questions.

Ask one lady to read the promise of Revelation 1:3.

Ask the ladies to find what items are mentioned in the next **six Revelation verses**.

Suggest: 'Write them in your notes'.

The significance of 'seven' meaning 'completeness' is lost on us when we don't understand it.

Ask five pairs of two ladies to read the **Genesis/Revelation** listed verses and one pair to read the other three references from Revelation. 'Jesus comes!'

In Revelation 2 and 3 Jesus is looking at all seven churches He is speaking to.

Look at each one in turn: Find what Jesus says was 'good' about that church?

Find what Jesus says was 'bad' about that church?

Most (all?) local churches I know are a mixture of 'good and bad' even today. 😊

Perhaps look at one church, compare answers and then move on to the next.

What do you think Jesus says when He looks at the church **you** are part of?

Are there things to learn here? **Invite your ladies to share as many as they can.**

Lesson 29

Revelation and Acts 1:6-7

You will have noticed that one Bible reference in the heading of this lesson is not from the book of Revelation. This text is, however, **a key basis for understanding**, or trying to understand, the book of Revelation.

Acts 1:1-11 What is happening? Tell the story.

Acts 1:6-7 What do these verses **warn us** about?

According to our Lord Jesus can we know all the future timings and details? Yes or no?

Revelation is difficult, but 1:3 is **the only promise** like this for a particular Bible book: **'Read, think, apply, and be blessed'**.

There are many symbols, images and numbers used. For example:

Seven is prominent - the symbolic number for completeness. Seven 'what' in these?

Revelation 1:4

5:1

8:2 two items

10:3

15:1 two items

16:1

What is **the real meaning** of 'seven' in each of these contexts?

There is **symmetry** between *Genesis* and *Revelation* - the beginning and the end:

Symmetry means exact similarity between two parts.

Genesis 1:1	heaven and earth	Revelation 21:1
1:16	sun and moon	21:23
2:22	a wedding	19:7
3:6-8	the beginning, and the end, of sin	20:10, 21:8
3:1-6	success of, then defeat of, Satan	20:10

There is also symmetry within *Revelation* itself - 1:7-8 and 22:7, 12-13. **'Jesus comes!'**

Seven churches of Asia Revelation 1:4-5

2:1-7 **Ephesus**

2:8-11 **Smyrna**

2:12-17 **Pergamum**

2:18-29 **Thyatira**

3:1-6 **Sardis**

3:7-13 **Philadelphia**

3:14-22 **Laodicea**

**One really encouraging idea is to follow 'the glory of Jesus' through Revelation.
So let's do it!**

Lead the whole group to work together. Invite ladies to read references as necessary.

1:10-19 - fill in the descriptions opposite

Five of the descriptions used in the messages to the seven churches are also in 1:10-19.
3:7 and 3:14 add tremendous new descriptions. What are they?

Just stop and think over the descriptions you have written down and talked about so far -
close your eyes and think.....and **look in visionary wonder. Our Lord Jesus is amazing.**
If it was not for the fact the Bible says this, all of it would seem incredible (unbelievable).

No power failures in heaven! Humanly generated light is not needed, 21:22-24; 22:1-5.

Another vision of Jesus, with some songs of praise and worship, is in chapter 5.
**Try reading 5:8-13 with the leader reading the narrative and all the ladies together
reading the three sections of songs.** There may be a problem with various Bible
translations, but it would be very good to involve the ladies speaking those words of praise.
Never forget you may always laugh in joyful praise too!

Yet another description in chapter 19. **What more can you learn from it?**
Always think of the majesty, the mystery and the moral might of our God.

**Praise comes from a pure heart.
A pure heart comes from a close relationship with Jesus.
Pure hearts can get dirty - so walk in step with Jesus.
Every moment of every day in every way.**

Let's look at the glory of Jesus in Revelation.

We need to remember that we are looking at scenes in heaven, not on earth, with beings whose bodies are spiritual bodies even if with the appearance of man.

Think, imagine and meditate on our Lord Jesus with:

1:10-19 a voice like -
looking like -
dressed in -
hair like -
eyes like -
feet like -
hand holding -
mouth with -
face like -

2:1, 2:8, 2:12, 2:18, 3:1 present descriptions almost verbatim from 1:10-19. Check them out.
Additionally see 3:7 -
see 3:14 -

21:22-24
22:1-5

5:5-14

19:11-16

Acts 1:7, Ephesians 1:3-10. God has a plan and purpose in history past and history future. If we think about that, we realise how infinitely small we are as individuals in that plan, but as individuals we are very important to God. Amazing! So can we trust Him for His future plan?

- **Remember**, our Lord Jesus said, "**It is not for you to know**" all the details.
- **Be satisfied** with the glory of Jesus that we can begin to appreciate now.
- **Wait** for everything else to become clear, in God's time.

- **Look at** Luke 21:27-28; Acts 1:11; Revelation 22:12-14. Then
- **Look up**, and keep looking up, because Jesus is coming again. He said so. Do you believe Him? John 14:2-3 says we have a certain future home.

Thank You, Lord. Hallelujah!

Hope to see you all there 😊.

Appendix one: So why study the Bible?

What is the Bible?

Law - God's rules for living

History - the history of the Jews

Poetry - special descriptive writing

Prophecy - people speaking what God has told them to say

39 different books in the Old Testament

Gospels and Acts - the story of Jesus and the early church

Letters from Paul, Peter and John - teaching Christians then, including us today

Prophecy - picture language of what God will do at the end of time

27 different books in the New Testament

When? - The Bible was written over a period of 1600 years but finally came together as we know it in the 4th century A.D. (300-400 A.D.) The Church Fathers in 100-300 A.D. gathered the sacred texts and evaluated them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit - which ones were seen to be used by God, authentic, helpful, used to encourage, and accepted by the Church over time? These became what is technically called 'the canon of scripture'.

Who? - God inspired the Bible while human authors wrote it down.

Authors: Matthew Mark Luke John Paul Peter James Jude

Moses (First five books of the Old Testament and at least one Psalm, 90)

King David (Psalms)

King Solomon (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

Joshua, Samuel

Ezra (Ezra, Nehemiah and perhaps 1 and 2 Chronicles)

Asaph and sons of Korah (Psalms)

Agur and King Lemuel (end of Proverbs)

16 other named prophets

some names forgotten over the centuries

some who edited court papers into records of history (1 and 2 Kings?)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; 1 Peter 1:1; Psalms 23 and 90. Do we know who wrote each of these?

Read Psalm 92 and Hebrews 1:1, 13:22-25. Do we know who wrote each of these?

We know who wrote some parts of the Bible, but not all of it.

How? - There are three languages used in the Bible with occasional other words, for example

Daniel 5:25-28

Hebrew - the ancient Jewish language (used in Israel today)

Greek - the most used language 100B.C.-200A.D.

Aramaic - the language Jesus used most - see Mark 5:41

Where? - Countries involved in the Bible include some in Africa, Asia and Europe as well as the Middle East.

Where did Bible people live? Who did they have contact with? You may need to use the maps on pages 3 and 4.

Look up Genesis 11:31; Daniel 1:3-4; Acts 8:26-27; Acts 10:1-2; Acts 19:1; Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1:1.

Why? - and this is most important - **God purposed and preserved His word - a single book with a single Author - a single theme - God the Holy Spirit revealing God the Son and the saving purpose of God the Father.**

This truth is the greatest key of the Bible. He shows Himself to those who seek Him:

"without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him", Hebrews 11:6.

Studying the Bible

It is easy to misunderstand the Bible and to make it say things it does not say. Read Psalms 14:1, 53:1. Yes, the Bible does say, "there is no God", but *in context* our Bible reads that only fools say that!!

So here is a simple guide in three columns to help us get it right:

1. Observing the text	What does it say?	Look
2. Interpreting the text	What did it mean?	Understand
3. Applying the text	What does it mean for today?	Do

When you read the Bible for yourself use the column of words above that makes most sense to you!

1. Observing - first read the passage then answer the question

- a). Genesis 3:6 Question - Who ate the fruit?
 Answer - Eve first but then Adam
- b). Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11 Question - How many wise men were there?
 Answer - We don't know, but there were three gifts
- c). 1 Timothy 6:10 Question - What is the root of all evil?
 Answer - *Not* money, but the love of money!

2. Interpreting - read the passage, seeking to explain any difficult meanings.

- a). Acts 10:9-10. In many colder countries houses have sloping roofs because a flat roof would collapse under the weight of snow in winter. So in UK, where I live, this would need to be explained because no one would go and sit on a roof! For some of you it is easier to understand!
- b). Luke 14:26 - 'Hate'? To emphasise how much we must love Jesus more than our family, the original language uses 'hate' our family - in English that needs to be explained - perhaps in your language too? 'Hate' means to dislike someone or something very much.

(continued over page)

Compared to our love for Jesus, our love for family and friends must be in 2nd and/or 3rd places in any competition.

c). Psalms 18:2 and 19:14 talk of God as a rock - does this mean God is hard and unfeeling? - or God is strong and dependable? The psalmist is using the good attributes of a rock to describe God, taking things we know to describe Someone we do not fully understand. We must be careful to discern scripture correctly, sometimes literally, sometimes not.

3. **Applying** - bringing the Bible and everyday life together

a). 1 Corinthians 8:13 - the problem for these Christians was eating meat offered to idols - the principle Paul sets for us to apply today is - 'if my action causes my sister to stumble I must stop doing it', 'even if I am otherwise free to do it'

b). Luke 9:23 - we must go Jesus' way even if it is very hard. There is no other choice

c). John 21:15; Titus 2:3-5 - we must look after the younger Christians we know

Always ask yourself questions of the Bible text - look objectively even if you have known the story since you were little!

Ask:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| who? | who is involved in this passage? |
| what? | what is happening? |
| when? | what happened before and what happened after? |
| where? | where did this take place? |
| why? | why did it happen? |
| how? | how did it happen? |

Look/Understand/Do - correctly reading, interpreting and applying the Scripture is vital.

Appendix two: There are several mentions of Herod in the New Testament - it is a title rather than a personal name - this family tree may help.

Herod the Great

Herod the Great - murdered three of his 9/10 sons, and several of his 5/8 wives. Killed the Bethlehem boys. Builder. Died 4BC Kingdom divided 4 ways. Mt 2:1-9, 12, 13-18

Archelaus	Herod Antipas	Philip	Aristobulus
ruled Judea, Idumea and Samaria 4B.C. -6A.D. Matthew 2: 19-23	ruled Galilee and Perea, Deposed A.D. 39 Mark 6:14-28 Ruled Judea, Idumea and Samaria after 4B.C.	ruled Trachonitis died A.D.34. Luke 3:19	not mentioned in the Bible
	Daughter Herodias Married Uncle Philip and then married Herod Agrippa Mark 6:14-28		Herod Agrippa I ruled Trachonitis from A.D.34. Gained Galilee and Perea from A.D.39 Acts 12:1-24
	Salome		daughter Drusilla, Acts24:24 and son, Herod Agrippa II Acts25:13-26:32

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