

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey, Lesson 1: Introduction

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE SURVEY

Introduction:

The Elders at Valley Bible came to me and asked if I would teach another adult class. I asked, "What would you like me to teach?" Their answer, "How about a survey of the entire Bible? After all, you teach Old and New Testament at your school so it should be easy, right?" I prayed about it and decided, though it wouldn't be easy, it would be fun, and it certainly is needed in the church in general and our church in particular.

At a Bible church, in our quest to put the microscope to passages and even to individual words in order to be accurate and "rightly divide the Word of Truth" we sometimes lose the "Big Picture." God gave us a written revelation with a certain purpose that gives great meaning to the universe and to our daily lives. We need to study it word by word, phrase by phrase, paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter, book by book, but also as a complete unit.

Of course, then the Elders threw in the kicker. They added, "We would like to think that there is also a way to make it more than an information survey, but make it practical and apply it to our daily living today. *Okay?*"

So, our challenge is to get an organized overview of the entire Scripture, how it fits together to present God's "whole counsel," without losing sight of it's power to affect our everyday lives in the real world. After all, *"All Scripture is God breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness so that we may be completely equipped."* (2 Timothy 3:16)

Actually, this did not surprise me, because as I prayed about doing this study I was impressed with the need to make the class more than informational, more than an academic exercise, more than just another notebook full of good stuff . . . a real potentially life changing Bible study.

We can begin by asking the question,

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE TO DO A BIBLE SURVEY?

Even if you don't consider yourself a "Bible Student," are not gifted in a way that causes you to drool over detailed word studies, or just get confused and would rather have believers you trust help you dig out the truths, you should still do a Bible survey.

R. C. Sproul in his book, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* says,

"Every Christian is a theologian. We are always engaged in the activity of learning things about God. We are not all theologians in the professional or academic sense, but theologians we are, for better or for worse. The "for worse" is no small matter. Second Peter warns that heresies are destructive to the people of God and are blasphemies committed against God. They are destructive because theology touches every dimension of our lives.

The Bible declares that as a man thinks in his heart, so he is. This declaration sounds strange. It is almost as if the biblical writer blunders. He seems to confuse the mind with the heart. We normally

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associate thought with the brain and feelings with the heart. So what does it mean to say a man *thinks* in his *heart*? The phrase *to think in the heart* refers to thoughtful reflection. Many ideas are briefly entertained by the mind without ever penetrating the heart. Those ideas that do grasp us in our inner most parts, however, are the ideas that shape our lives. We are what we think."

1. BECAUSE GOD GAVE US A COMPLETE BOOK

- a. *"All Scripture is inspired by God (God breathed) and profitable for, teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* I Timothy 3:16-17
- b. We cannot know the whole story, let alone discover "the mysteries" by reading or even by studying in depth little passages in isolation. (Many, in fact most, cults have sprung up using this approach to Bible study. Scripture explains and clarifies Scripture.

2. BECAUSE MUCH OF THE BIBLE IS NEGLECTED

- a. We read and study the New Testament almost exclusively because it is written to the church (in this, the church age) and is primarily doctrine. It is, after all, the basic "how to" manual for Christian living.
- b. We tend to read the New Testament plus a few Old Testament favorites:

Genesis: We love the creation debate and seeing things happen for the first time.

Psalms: We love the comfort it gives, not to mention the calling down of God's wrath on our enemies.

Proverbs: We love its practical advice, especially if we can pick and choose which we will follow.

Daniel, Joshua, Esther: We love great hero stories.

But what about Numbers, or Leviticus, or those picky little Prophets? Aren't they important, too? If not, why did God breath them?

3. BECAUSE YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND ANY BOOK BY READING ONLY HALF OF ITS CHAPTERS.

- a. How many of you have read the Bible completely through? Did it help you understand isolated passages? Of course it did, and yet, many believers have never read the Bible completely through.

How do you read an Agatha Christie mystery, a John Grisham or Tom Clancy action adventure, a James Faulkner, Henry James, Emily Bronte, Stienbeck, Dickens, Laura Wilder, Amy Tan novel.

Even in non-fiction we don't read snatches of Charles Swindall, John MacArthur, J. I. Packer, or C. S. Lewis. Books are written to read and understand the whole story.

The Bible has a chronology, story-line, organization, message. It has an introduction, a plot, characters, rising action, a climax, and a conclusion. It is, in other words, a book.

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4. BECAUSE WE WANT TO ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO READ THROUGH THE ENTIRE BIBLE (OR RE-READ IT).

- a. We know that it is of great value to memorize Scripture. *"Thy Word have I hid in my heart so I may not sin . . ."*
- b. Reading through the Bible over and over is the best way to see all of Scripture in context. Discussing Scripture with one who has read it through often is an exciting experience. It brings balance and sanity to Biblical discussion.

It takes only 80 hours of leisurely reading, or less than 15 to 20 minutes a day taking weekends off. Compare that with the time you spend reading the daily newspaper, magazines, watching TV, or even exercising.

5. BECAUSE IT IS FUN

- a. Nothing is more fun than discussing a good book with other people when everybody has read it.
- b. Nothing is more boring than discussing a book with people who have not read it.

It is my desire that this study will be fun as well as informative and useful.