**Day 1: New Testament Overview**

“Walking out of the Gospel of Luke”

Today’s Reading: Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:17; Matthew 5-7; Hebrews 11

The New Testament consists of 27 books written by 9-10 authors over 100 years. It was written in Greek and covers the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the end times. It’s in this testament, especially, we learn valuable insight into the roles of God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Specifically, we are shown their roles in the lives of believers.

The Old Testament ends with Malachi 4:6, and the New Testament begins with Matthew 1:1. Between these two verses is a period known as the Intertestamental period, or anecdotally, as “400 years of silence”. During these years we do not have written record or indication of God’s words or movement. This time was crucial, and likely confusing, to the remnant of Israel because the Old Testament prophets foretold of the coming Messiah. Strangely, in their eyes, God was silent for the next 400 years. We might wonder, “why”. We aren’t told in Scripture, but some Christians believe it was out of righteous anger from the Lord over Israel’s constant rebellion. Others believe it built anticipation for Christ’s coming. Malachi 4:6, recorded a prophecy that was fulfilled by John the Baptist in Luke 1:17, which ended this silence from God; John came to prepare the way for Jesus!

The New Testament is often understood to be separate from the Old Testament, which could not be further from the truth. The Old and New Testaments go together, revealing God and His character. There is an account woven through both testaments, known as the scarlet thread, that cohesively and decisively points us to Jesus. We find this thread in the many prophecies from the Old Testament that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Further, the epistles (letters from the apostles to the early Church) refer often to Old Testament laws and figures. To fully grasp God, reading the Old *and* New Testament is essential.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for how your Word teaches about you. Show me more as I read my Bible daily.

**Day 2: Gospels**

Today’s Reading: Luke 2:41-52; John 1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 27-28

The word ‘gospel’ means good news. The Gospels, in Scripture, refer to the first four books in the New Testament which chronicle the life of Jesus. The four writers share eyewitness accounts personal to them, or recounted by those were witness to Jesus. The gospels were all written within 20 years of one another and three of them are understood to be synoptic—meaning they cover a similar catalog of accounts that provide a clear picture of who Jesus is and what he did on earth.

The Gosples of Matthew and Luke are the only two that include the story of Jesus’ birth, though all the gospels recount his ministry, death, and resurrection. As the gospels describe, Jesus came to earth as a baby in a stable, surrounded by farm animals. He could have come on a cloud or been born as a mighty warrior, but he chose to come in the form of a baby to humble himself and relate to us. Luke 2:41-52 touches briefly on the life of Jesus before he started his ministry. Verse 52 tells us that “Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Though fully God, Jesus was also fully human and grew in the same manner as you and me.

John 1-3 is integral to our understanding of two essential parts of the ministry of Jesus. God initiated and inaugurated the ministry of Jesus through his baptism which marked the start of his three years of ministry. Scholars assess that Jesus began his public ministry at the age of 30, during which time he called disciples to follow and assist him in ministry. He died at age 33.

When the time came for the Father’s will to be enacted in Jesus’ death, he willingly took on the sins of all humanity, taking our punishment, dying on the cross. Fulfilling prophecy, Jesus was resurrected on the third day, defeating death and offering salvation to all who would repent of their sins and follow him.

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven to be with God, the Father. This ushered the “church age” into history, largely described in the book of Acts.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you, Jesus, for your sacrifice on the cross and your resurrection that allows me to be forgiven and enjoy eternal life with you.

**Day 3: Church Age**

Today’s Reading: Acts 1:8; Acts 2; Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 6:19

Like me, may you’ve been around the table with some of your closest friends and thought, “I love the people God has placed in my life.” Did you know this is how God intended for his people, the Church, to think of one another? Acts 2:42 describes the people of God, known as the Church, in fellowship with one another. Reading through to verse 44 we find account of how they cared for one another and “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). This is the God-ordained DNA of how the Church was intended to look.

The book of Acts, authored by Luke, and thought to be a continuing account of the Gospel of Luke, is where we find the Church Age chronicled in the New Testament. (Side Note: Presotnwood Women has two studies available covering the book of Acts.) Luke recorded life among the apostles in the wake of Pentecost, when Jesus ascended to Heaven. This was a season when the Gospel spread and the apostles traveled and performed miracles. In fact, Acts 1:8 reads, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This is an echo of the call to fulfill the Great Commission and spread the name of Jesus everywhere. Today, we enjoy the fruit of the early apostles’ labor, as we remain part of the global Church thousands of years and thousands of miles in distance.

Referenced above, Pentecost is one of the most important, pivotal moments described. We find the account in Acts 2, as the Holy Spirit filled every believer in Jerusalem. Jesus prophesied about this day in Matthew 3:11 and Acts 1:4-5 by referring to baptism with the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost, Christ-followers experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit inside them. Every believer is now a temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the Church. Thank you for bringing your people together. Let us serve you and make your name known.

**Day 4: Epistles**

Today’s Reading: 2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible is host to many different genres of literature. The New Testament is heavily comprised of epistles, also known as letters. There are Pauline epistles, which are the letters of the Apostle Paul, and general epistles, which are letters authored by others: John, James, Jude, Peter, and one unknown author who wrote the book of Hebrews. Following the four Gospels and the book of Acts, an epistle's main role is to equip the Church and guide believers.

Epistles generally follow similar outlines of an opening, body, and closing remarks. The opening typically identifies the sender and recipient and illuminates their sentiment in form of a prayer; the body can vary in content but is the bulk of the letter, while the closing often ends with a prayer. There are similar themes throughout the books of the epistles, so comparing the epistles is a beneficial study idea.

The epistles are essential reading for believers because they teach us how to live the Christian life. One commentary states, “the epistles have played a major role in the formation of doctrine and Christian theology throughout Church history precisely because they expound on the great themes of God’s saving work on the cross.” It is important to note epistles should be read with regard to the context in which they were written, and with an understanding of the specific churches and people groups involved. This helps us better understand the author’s intent.

2 Timothy 3:16 states, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” and the epistles are very useful in each of the areas Paul mentioned. The Bible consists of God’s words, designed to teach us, shape us, and conform us to the image of Christ. As we say in our women’s ministry, Bible study is not a class you take; it’s a rhythm you keep as a believer. The epistles are just one way God communicates with us through Scripture.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for Your Word and for encouraging me with it. Please teach me through your Word and help me learn from You.

**Day 5: Revelation**

Today’s Reading: Revelation 22:20-21

There is much intimidation surrounding the book of Revelation. It is filled with judgment, punishment, grace, mercy, and everything in between. The apocalyptic imagery describing end times is hard to interpret, even for the most studied of readers, so before reading we should seek the Holy Spirit’s help in understanding. We might also find benefit in resources designed to assist us in our understanding of this portion of the Bible. Even though it’s a challenging part of Scripture, when read with trustful eyes and strong faith in God, it can be a book of hope. After all, one day, those of us in Christ will be united with him for eternity!

John is the author of Revelation, and the majority of what he writes comes from a vision given him by God to show what is to come at the end of the age. It is classified as an eschatological book since it speaks of the end times; it is also authoritative, which means it lets us know what the last days will look like and how things will end. Revelation concludes the canon of Scripture. This means that after Revelation 22:21, the very last verse in the Bible, there is nothing that there is nothing more to be added to the Bible. Though God still moves, there is no fresh revelation needed to live in relationship with Christ or in relationship with one another.

One of the most encouraging verses in Revelation is found in verse 20, “He who testifies to these things says, ‘I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” This can be the heart posture of all who believe in Jesus: Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus! We take comfort in knowing one day God will bring all things to Himself, and we can spend eternity with Him forever.

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for knowing the end and having a plan. Help me to not look to the future with fear, but with joy as I await your return!