

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 1 – Introduction
Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School
www.valleybible.net

Introduction

God declares that His Word should be our delight. Not just a little delight, but the delight of our heart.

¹⁶Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me **a joy and the delight of my heart**; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts. Jer 15:16

²But his **delight** is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. Psa 1:2-3

¹Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who **greatly delights** in His commandments. Psa 112:1

²⁴Your testimonies also are my **delight**; They are my counselors. Psa 119:24

⁴⁷I shall **delight** in Your commandments, **Which I love**. Psa 119:47

¹⁴⁰Your word is very pure, Therefore Your servant **loves** it. ¹⁴¹I am small and despised, *Yet* I do not forget Your precepts. ¹⁴²Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth. ¹⁴³Trouble and anguish have come upon me, *Yet* Your commandments are my **delight**. Psa 119:140-143

¹⁷⁴I long for Your salvation, O LORD, And Your law is my **delight**. Psa 119:174

Some famous men thought some impressive things about the Bible:

All things desirable to men are contained in the Bible. Abraham Lincoln

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education. Theodore Roosevelt

The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible. Dwight L. Moody

Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face. Ronald Reagan

The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian. Aiden Wilson (A. W.) Tozer

Other books were given for our information; the Bible was given for our transformation. We understand that the Scriptures bring about transformation in our lives. We understand that we need to long for the pure milk of the Word (1 Pet 2:2). ... BUT ...

As quoted in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Donald S. Whitney: a 1991 USA Today poll showed that 11% of people read the Bible daily and less than 50% read the Bible one time per month or never at all. Similarly, a 1990 Barna Research Group survey of “born again” Christians showed that only 18% read the Bible daily and 23% say they NEVER read the Bible.

What are some excuses that we use as to why we are not in the Word? Moreover, note that these are primarily excuses and not reasons. If we love our Lord Jesus and desire to live our lives for Him then there is no reason that we should not be in the Word. Two popular excuses are no time and no plan.

No Time:

To address the “no time” excuse look at the table below. It takes approximately 71 hours to read the Bible from cover to cover. This is at “pulpit rate” – the total time of the Bible on CD. Though most of us could probably read faster than we listen to someone else read.

Entire Bible (from Bible on CD)	71 hrs or 4260 min or 255,600 sec
One Month Plan	< 2.5 hrs / day
Six Month Plan	<24 min / day
One Year Plan	<12 min / day (OT – < 9 min /day) (NT – < 3 min /day)
One Year Plan (Weekdays only)	<17 min / day
Two Year Plan	<6 min / day
Three Year Plan	<4 min / day
Three Year and Three Month Plan	1 Chapter / day
Four Year Plan	<3 min / day
Five Year Plan	<2.5 min / day

To read the Bible from Genesis through Revelation in five years takes as little as 2.5 minutes per day. To read the Bible in one month would take a little less than two and one-half hours per day. How much newspaper reading, TV watching, gaming, web surfing, sleeping, etc. do we do?

No Plan:

There are many resources available to provide a Bible reading plan. If you do not know where to start you could look in your study Bible or at www.valleybible.net/reading_plans.php. If you like to design your own things you could try a plan below. Take the number of chapters for the Bible or the Old and New Testaments or for various sections of the Bible and simply design your own reading plan. Some examples are below:

Entire Bible = 1189 Chapters (OT = 929 and NT = 260)

Genesis – Esther: 436 (Genesis – Deut: 187 / Joshua – Esther: 249)

Job – Malachi: 493 (Job – Song of Solomon: 243 / Isaiah – Malachi: 250)

New Testament: 260 Chapters

1. Read 23 chapters per week = whole Bible in one year
2. Read 3 chapters Monday – Saturday and 5 chapters on Sunday = whole Bible in one year
3. Read 3 chapters in the OT and 3 chapters in the NT = OT one time and NT four times in one year
4. Read 5 chapters (one from every section below) everyday = whole Bible in ~9 months:
 - a. Genesis – Deut (Law) [187 Chapters]
 - b. Joshua – Esther (History) [249 Chapters]
 - c. Job – Song of Solomon (Poetry) [243 Chapters]
 - d. Isaiah – Malachi (Prophecy) [250 Chapters]
 - e. Matthew – Revelation [260 Chapters]
5. Read 9 chapters in the NT everyday = NT in one month
6. Read 5 Psalms and 1 chapter in Proverbs everyday = Psalms and Proverbs in one month

Why is it important for everyone to do a Bible survey?

Even if you don't consider yourself a "Bible Student", you should still study the Bible and its teachings in detail. 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 (Prov 23:7). 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

We cannot know the whole story, let alone discover "the mysteries" by reading or even by studying in depth little passages in isolation. (Most cults have sprung up using this approach to Bible study.) Scripture explains and clarifies Scripture.

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17

2. Because much of the Bible is neglected

Some people tend to read and study the New Testament almost exclusively because it is written to the church. It is, after all, the basic "how to" manual for Christian living. Some people 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 and the emotional connection to God in our worship.

Proverbs: We love its practical advice.

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 breathe them?

3. Because we cannot understand any book by reading only half of its chapters

How many of us have read the Bible completely through? Did it help to understand isolated passages? Of course it did, and yet, many believers have never read the Bible completely through. Books are written to read and understand the whole story. The Bible has a chronology, story line, organization, and message. It has an introduction, a plot, characters, rising action, a climax, and a conclusion. It is, in other words, a book and needs to be read in whole.

4. Because the Bible is sufficient to answer all the problems of a person.

A recent popular movie is quoted as saying concerning the Bible, "This book doesn't have any answers." (Homer Simpson in "The Simpsons Movie") Yet, nothing is farther from the truth. Only Scripture is perfectly adequate for all matters of faith and conduct – for salvation and sanctification. Only Scripture is able to meet all the spiritual needs of God's people. Scripture is all-sufficient in regards to the soul of man, in our relationship to God, and in our relationship to others. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks.

¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the **wisdom that leads to salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷**so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** 2 Tim 3:15-17

²like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may **grow in respect to salvation,** 1 Pet 2:2

⁴But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Matt 4:4

¹²For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and **able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** Heb 4:12

The sufficiency of Scripture from Psalm 119.

- Blessed (joy and contentment) who keep (Psa 119:1-2)
- Produces thankfulness (Psa 119:7, 170-171)
- Keeps from sin (Psa 119:9, 11, 133; 165)
- Produces joy (Psa 119:14, 111, 162)
- Counsels the believer (Psa 119:24)
- Revives (Psa 119:25)
- Strengthens from grief (Psa 119:28, 143)
- Produces reverence for God (Psa 119:38, 120)
- Source of hope (Psa 119:49, 92)
- Comforts in affliction (Psa 119:50)
- Affliction causes the learning of Word (Psa 119:71)
- Makes wise (Psa 119:98-100)
- Gives understanding (Psa 119:104, 130)
- Produces peace (Psa 119:165)

Arrangement of the Old Testament

The order of books in the English Old Testament is not the order in the Hebrew Bible, and neither is in chronological order. Jesus showed the three general categories or groupings in the Hebrew Bible when He spoke to His disciples after His resurrection. Table 1 shows the Hebrew Bible arrangement.

⁴⁴Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the **Law of Moses** and the **Prophets** and the **Psalms** must be fulfilled." Luke 24:44

Table 1: Order of Books in the Hebrew Bible

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

The order of the 39 English Old Testament books is not chronological, yet it is a logical order based on subject matter. The first 17 books are history, the last 17 books are prophecy, and the middle five books are poetry. However, there is prophecy in the history books, history in the prophecy books, poetry in the history books, etc. Each of the three main categories (history, poetry, and prophecy) may be further broken down.

The first five books are called the Pentateuch and were written by Moses. These five books describe the creation of the universe and the early history of the Jewish people. This is where God’s law is given to His chosen people. It is this law that is a “tutor” which leads us to Christ (Gal 3:24). The next 12 books describe the continuing history of the Jewish people before becoming a kingdom, as a kingdom before the Babylonian captivity, and after the Babylonian captivity. These books describe God’s continuing faithfulness to His chosen people and how He responds to them depending on their response to His law.

The poetry books are mostly written during the time of Kings David and Solomon, though Job was written during the time of Genesis. These books describe the inner and outer struggles of God’s people as they try to live according to the revelation that God had given them.

The prophetic books are usually divided into two categories: major and minor. This division is essentially based on the size of the book. Another way to categorize the prophetic books is based on their relationship to the Babylonian captivity (pre, during, or post). The prophets challenged people to return to God lest they be judged. These books can also be categorized based on their recipients: Israel, Judah, or Assyria.

Tables 2 and 3 show the divisions of the English Old Testament.

Table 2: Divisions of the Old Testament

Old Testament (39)							
History (17)			Poetry (5)	Prophecy (17)			
				Major (5)		Minor (12)	
Pentateuch (5)	Pre-Exilic (9)	Post-Exilic (3)		Pre-Exilic (2)	Exilic (3)	Pre-Exilic (9)	Post-Exilic (3)
Genesis	Joshua	Ezra	Job	Isaiah	Lamentations	Hosea	Haggai
Exodus	Judges	Nehemiah	Psalms	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Joel	Zechariah
Leviticus	Ruth	Esther	Proverbs		Daniel	Amos	Malachi
Numbers	1 Samuel		Ecclesiastes			Obadiah	
Deuteronomy	2 Samuel		Song of Sol			Jonah	
	1 Kings					Micah	
	2 Kings					Nahum	
	1 Chronicles					Habakkuk	
	2 Chronicles					Zephaniah	

Table 3: Chronological Order of Old Testament Books

Historical Book	Additional Book(s) During Period	
Genesis	Job	
Exodus		
Leviticus		
Numbers		
Deuteronomy		
Joshua		
Judges	Ruth	
1 Samuel		
2 Samuel	1 Chronicles Psalms	
1 Kings	Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon 2 Chronicles (Overlaps 1 and 2 Kings)	
2 Kings	Obadiah	To Edom
	Joel	To Judah
	Jonah	To Ninevah
	Amos	To Israel
	Micah	To Judah
	Hosea	To Israel
	Isaiah	To Judah
	Nahum	To Ninevah
	Zephaniah	To Judah
	Habakkuk	To Judah
	Jeremiah	To Judah
Lamentations	To Judah	
Ezekiel		
Daniel		
Ezra	Esther Haggai Zechariah	
Nehemiah	Malachi	

Norman Geisler in “A Popular Survey of the Old Testament” shows the Christocentric structure of the Old and New Testaments (Table 4).

Table 4: Christocentric Emphasis of the Scriptures

Section of Scripture	Christocentric Emphasis
Law	foundation laid for Christ
History	preparation for Christ
Poetry	aspiration expressed for Christ
Prophecy	expectation of Christ
Gospels	manifestation of Christ
Acts	propagation of Christ
Epistles	interpretation and application of Christ
Revelation	consummation of all things in Christ

Old Testament Canonicity

Canonicity refers to the process by which books of the Bible were recognized as Scripture. When considering canonicity it must first be noted that the Bible is self-authenticating and individuals or church councils have only recognized those books that are Scripture. Some believe that Ezra first collected all the books of the Old Testament around 500 BC. However, the Council of Jamnia in AD 90 is generally recognized as the occasion when the Old Testament canon was publicly recognized (though Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon were disputed).

Specific tests to consider canonicity may be recognized. Did the book indicate Divine authorship? Did it reflect God speaking through a mediator? (e.g., Ex 20:1; Josh 1:1; Isa 2:1). Was the human author a spokesman of God? Was he a prophet or did he have the prophetic gift? (e.g., Deut 31:24-26; 1 Sam 10:25; Neh 8:3). Was the book historically accurate? Did it reflect a record of actual facts? How was the book received by the Jews? *The Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul P. Enns

Progressive Revelation and Dispensationalism

As we read through and understand the chronology of the Bible, we see that God did not provide all information about Himself at a single time, but progressively added more revelation concerning Himself and His plan. This is the idea of progressive revelation.

Remember one important thing: Just because the Old Testament was progressive does not mean that it is wrong in any way. There is simply development. For example, the standards of morality established in the Old Testament were totally refined in Jesus. God gave man a progressive revelation. The distinction is not in the nature of the truth; it's in the amount and time of it. Children are first taught letters; then they worry about the words and the sentences. God gave His revelation in the same way. His spelling book began with types, ceremonies, and prophecies and progressed to final completion in Christ. *The Superiority of Christ*; Introduction to Hebrews by John MacArthur; Hebrews 1:1-2 Tape GC 1600

The doctrine of dispensationalism is not a way of salvation, but a framework for interpreting the Bible that recognizes that God has dealt with people differently through the ages or dispensations. Up to eight dispensations can be identified:

- 1) creation to the fall being the **dispensation of innocence**,
- 2) the fall to Noah being the **dispensation of conscience**,
- 3) Noah to Abraham being the **dispensation of human government**,
- 4) Abraham to the Law of Moses, being the **dispensation of covenant/promise**,
- 5) the Law of Moses to Christ being the **dispensation of the law**,
- 6) Christ to the tribulation (church age) being the **dispensation of grace**,
- 7) the **tribulation period being a dispensation**,
- 8) the Millennium to the eternal state being the **dispensation of the fullness of times**.

Yet God has maintained the same way to enter into a relationship with Himself in all dispensations – faith. The distinctives of dispensationalism are 1) maintaining a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture, 2) maintaining a distinction between Israel and the church, and 3) maintaining that the glory of God as God's ultimate purpose in the world.

General Chronology of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not arranged in chronological order. However, a historical flow can be determined from the study of the Old Testament. Table 5 shows general historical flow of the Old Testament.

Table 5: General Historical Flow of the Old Testament

Dispensation	Historical Flow
Innocence (Gen 1-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation - Fall of Adam and Eve and expulsion from Eden
Conscience (Gen 4-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cain kills Abel - Seth born - Inhabitants and wickedness grew on the Earth - The Flood
Government (Gen 9-11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repopulation of the Earth - Tower of Babel and confusion of languages - (Possible separation of land masses)
Promise (Gen 12 – Ex 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The call of Abraham and birth of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph - Joseph sold into slavery to Egypt - God saves the Hebrews in Egypt through Joseph during the famine - The Hebrew population grows and they are made slaves - Moses and the Exodus
Law (Ex 20 – Christ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Israel receives the Law - Joshua leads Israel into the promised land - Period of the Judges - Samuel - Saul becomes first King - David becomes King then sins with Bathsheba - Solomon becomes King, asks God for wisdom, builds the Temple - Nation of Israel divided: Israel to north and Judah to south - Divided kingdoms fall to foreign powers – First Israel (destroyed) then Judah (exile) - 70 years of captivity - Daniel - Return from Babylon/Persia under Ezra and Nehemiah - Malachi written around 400 BC - Silence

Emphasis of the Old Testament

There are several reasons given in the New Testament for the Old Testament.

1. To lead us to Christ

⁴⁴Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the **Law of Moses** and the **Prophets** and the **Psalms** must be fulfilled." Luke 24:44

²⁴Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. Gal 3:24

2. To show that faith is the requirement for entering into a relationship with God.

²²Therefore IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. ²³Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴but **for our sake** also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. Rom 4:22-25

3. To give us examples and instruction for sanctification, perseverance, and encouragement.

⁶Now these things happened as **examples for us**, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. 1 Cor 10:6

⁴For whatever was written in earlier times was **written for our instruction**, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Rom 15:4

¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were **written for our instruction**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 1 Cor 10:11

Homework

Next week we will study Genesis.

1. Read Genesis (Minimal reading plan: Gen 1-4; 7-8; 15; 19; 22; 27-28; 37; 41; 45)
2. Outline Genesis
3. Answer the following questions:
 - What were the sins committed at the Fall, what were the results of the Fall recorded in Genesis 3, and how do you see them manifested today?
 - On what basis did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob receive the promise of God?
 - On what basis did Abraham enter into a relationship with God? Is it the same today?
 - What is the Biblical worldview of history and how is that shown in Genesis?