



Birth of Jesus

— Sessions 16-23

YEAR 2

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Please check out the complete Journey through the Bible series outline.

Journey through the Bible YEAR 1	Journey through the Bible YEAR 2	Journey through the Bible YEAR 3
Sarah, Abraham and Joseph —Sessions 1-15 • 978-08272-90662, \$60.00	Divided Kingdom and Babylon —Sessions 1-15 • 978-08272-90716, \$60.00	Holy Week —Sessions 1-8 • 978-08272-90792, \$32.00
Exodus —Sessions 16-24 • 978-08272-90679, \$36.00	Birth of Jesus —Sessions 16-23 • 978-08272-90723, \$32.00	Birth and Growth of Church —Sessions 9-19 • 978-08272-90808, \$44.00
Promised Land and New Kingdom —Sessions 25-39 • 978-08272-90686, \$60.00	The Ministry of Jesus —Sessions 24-39 • 978-08272-90730, \$64.00	The Ministry of Paul —Sessions 20-39 • 978-08272-90815, \$80.00
Support Sessions, can be studied at anytime.		
Old Testament Life, Ruth and Others —from Year 1, Sessions 40-47 • 978-08272-90693, \$32.00	The Psalms —from Year 2, Sessions 40-45 • 978-08272-90747, \$24.00	New Testament Life, James and Others —from year 3, Sessions 40-47 • 978-08272-90822, \$32.00
What Is the Bible? —from Year 1, Sessions 48-51 • 978-08272-90709, \$16.00	Jewish Festivals —from Year 2, Sessions 46-51 • 978-08272-90785, \$24.00	How the Bible Came to Us —from year 3, Sessions 48-51 • 978-08272-90839, \$16.00
Extra Articles—Year 1, 2 & 3 • 978-08272-90846, \$4.00		

Introduction to the Course

Journey Through the Bible is a church school curriculum series that introduces participants to the stories in the Bible in chronological order. Over a three-year period, the major people, events, and places from Genesis to Revelation are studied. At the adult level, a single resource is available for both the leader and the learners. All age levels study the same basic scripture or subject at the same time.

Course Assumptions

Every curriculum series for the church school has behind it a set of theological and educational assumptions. These assumptions shape both the content and the activities of the sessions. *Journey Through the Bible* is no exception.

About the Bible

- The Bible is not just a book, it is *the* book that records the mighty acts of God in history, witnesses to the unique revelation in Christ Jesus, and calls people to a response to and involvement in the ongoing ministry of Christ in the world.
- The Bible is the Word of God, but it is not the words of God. Within its words is housed the Word, which is changeless and eternal.
- The Bible is a book of history, but it does not claim to be objective history. Rather, it is faith history, with its primary focus on the covenantal relationship of God with people. It therefore views and interprets historical events from within the context of that faith relationship.
- The Bible is more concerned with the *why* questions of life than the *how* questions. Thus, it is not a science book. It is written from within the worldview of its writers, a worldview quite different from that of the present day. Nonetheless, it claims that God is God of all creation, that Christ's crucifixion and resurrection have cosmic implications, and that people are an

integral part of creation as well as called to be stewards of it.

Regarding Content and Process

- Adults need to be familiar with the flow of the biblical story. Regardless of whether they are new to the church or long-time members, many adults express a lack of knowledge of the chronological order of biblical events.
- Adults need to learn basic Bible skills, how to find particular books and passages, etc., and they need background information to assist them with interpretation. Therefore, the basic text for this course is the Bible. This series uses the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The secondary content is the background articles provided for each session in this resource. All participants, including the designated leader(s), use this same book.
- Adults interested in this course prefer discussion as a teaching/learning method to lectures and to creative activities. Therefore guidance will be given to facilitate meaningful conversation that will help them learn the stories and the ongoing story, discover the implications of the information in the background articles, and see the relationship to their lives.
- Participants will be encouraged to read both the Bible story and the background article for each session, but it will not be assumed that they have done so. Some adult participants will have children involved in this same course at their own age levels. These parents will be encouraged to use the suggestions made in the cover leaflets for the children for activities that can be enjoyed at home.
- Adults benefit from sharing their faith and understandings with children. Opportunities will be provided every ten to twelve sessions for participants to experience a mentoring role.
- As a unique setting in which adults learn and grow in faith, the church encourages relationships and builds community. This course will intentionally look for ways to contribute to that process.

- Because the Christian life is a call to servant ministry, adults need opportunities to help, share, and serve. As an integral part of this course, suggestions will be made periodically for such activity.
- Primary to the teaching/learning experience in the church is the conviction that the Holy Spirit is present and active when people open themselves to the biblical message and to one another. Sessions need to be filled with dialogue and relationships and to invite the participation of the Holy Spirit.

Bible Story Sessions		
36 Bible story sessions plus 3 review sessions each year; 108 Bible stories and 9 reviews		
Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Early Stories	Divided Kingdom	Holy Week
Sarah and Abraham	Exile in Babylon	Birth of the Church
Joseph's Saga	The Return Home	Growth of the Early Church
Exodus	The Birth of Jesus and His Preparation for Ministry	The Ministry of Paul
Settling the Promised Land	The Ministry of Jesus	Past and Future
Establishing a Kingdom		

Course Organization

Sessions for each year are presented in three sections: Bible story sessions, support sessions, and special days sessions.

Bible Story Sessions

These stories make up the heart of this series and will help the participants grasp the ongoing chronology of the biblical story. After learning about two early stories about events before written history, participants begin with Sarah and Abraham and go through the Bible all the way to Paul's ministry in Rome. The series concludes with a look at the past, using the Letter to the Hebrews, and the future, using the Revelation to John.

Support Sessions

The support sessions are designed to provide learnings that are not integral to the biblical chronology, but that will help the participants see the larger picture. They *support* the purposes of the series. In addition, they look at some books of the Bible that the series would not otherwise deal with. The support sessions can be used during the summer when Sunday church school attendance tends to be sporadic. That way the group will not miss part of the ongoing chronology. They can also be used at other times, at the discretion of the teachers.

A TIME LINE FOR YEAR TWO

922 B.C.	800	700	600	550
922 B.C. Kingdom divided: King Rehoboam of Judah (922-915); King Jeroboam of Israel (922-901)	c. 850 Elijah (Israel)	760-745 Amos (Israel) 755-725 Hosea (Israel) 746-687 Isaiah (Judah) 722-721 Fall of Israel to Assyria 722-701 Micah (Judah) 715-687 King Hezekiah of Judah	640-609 King Josiah of Judah 636-587 Jeremiah (Judah) 621 Deuteronomic reforms 605-562 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon 593-571 Ezekiel (Judah and Babylon) 587-586 Fall of Jerusalem, Judah to Babylon 586-538 Babylonian exile	

Support Sessions		
12 support sessions each year		
Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Life in Old Testament Times	The Psalms	Life in New Testament Times
Some Other Bible Stories	Jewish Festivals	Some Other Bible Stories
What Is the Bible?		How the Bible Came to Us

Special Days Sessions

The primary focus of this series is the sweeping biblical story. Each year, however, the resources do provide session plans for four very important days in the life of the church: the first Sunday of the church school year, Christmas Sunday, Easter Sunday, and Pentecost Sunday.

As congregations begin this *Journey Through the Bible*, it will be helpful if planning is done for the whole year by all the age groups involved. One of the strengths of the series is that all age levels study the same subject or biblical passage at the same time. To preserve that characteristic, decide through joint planning when to schedule support and special days sessions. Such planning will also enable teachers to take advantage of any opportunities to experience learnings across age levels.

A Guide for Leaders/Learners

A Guide for Leaders/Learners is organized in the same three sections as the course: Bible story sessions, support sessions, and special days sessions.

On the first page of every session the scripture that is the focus of the session is given, along with the memory verse. Under the title "Where We're Going," the session objectives are listed. Activities for the session are explained under "How We're Going to Get There" and are divided into two parts: "Hearing the story" and "Making the story your own." Instructions for the activities continue on the third page of the session plan. At the end there is a brief section called "Looking Ahead" that suggests ways to prepare for the next session.

On the third page of each session of the Bible story section is a Bible background article for the story. These are written to help the participants see the place of each story in the overall story, gain background information, and make the transition from one story to the next. Because it is the practice of most biblical scholars and in the Middle East, the abbreviations B.C.E. and C.E. are used in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible articles instead of B.C. and A.D. They mean "Before the Common Era" and "Common Era." Their use in these articles in no way removes the centrality of the birth of Christ as the pivotal date in the Roman calendar. Elsewhere the more customary B.C. and A.D. are used.

Participants will find these articles especially helpful if they read the biblical passage(s) given under "The Larger Picture" on the first page of each session and then read the article. A second reading, then, of "Today's Bible Story" will bring deeper understanding and enable the leader to make the learning experience much more significant.

At appropriate intervals amidst the Bible story sessions, there are three review sessions. These are designed to help the participants recall the stories of that particular section as well as remember the

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

500	400	300	200	100	A.D. 1	30
540 Second Isaiah (Babylon)				167 Desecration of the temple in Jerusalem		7-4 Birth of Jesus
539 Fall of Babylon to Persia				167-142 Maccabean revolt		4 B.C.-A.D. 39 Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee
538 Beginning of return to Jerusalem				164 Dedication of temple		25/29 John the Baptist
538-332 Jerusalem under Persian rule				63 Roman occupation of Palestine		26/27-29/30 Ministry of Jesus
445 Nehemiah appointed governor of Judea				40-4 Herod the Great, king of the Jews		29/30 Crucifixion of Jesus
427-397 Ezra brings the Law to the people						
386-323 Alexander the Great						
332 Fall of the Persian empire						

ongoing story. By the end of the thirty-nine Bible story sessions each year, the participants should be able to recall in broad strokes the biblical story in chronological order and to continue the story as another year is added. There are no Bible background articles for these review sessions. The third page of each may be photocopied to assist the learners in their review.

Articles

There are two articles in *A Guide for Leaders/Learners, Year Two*, that should be helpful. One is on spirituality and is titled "The Bible: An Aid to Spiritual Growth." The other is on ways to creatively tell the Bible story by using role play, drama, and the like.

These articles appear in the guides at all age levels. They can provide the basis for one or more training and planning meetings.

Suggestions for Using This Guide

This Guide was developed for both leaders and participants of adult classes. Because some adult classes rotate leadership among members, teaching suggestions are provided to enable shared leadership. For classes with one or two primary leaders, participants may want to read only the Bible background article and the scripture for each session, leaving the activity suggestions to their leaders.

Each class will need to decide how much of the "Bible Background," "Today's Bible Story," or "The Larger Picture" participants should read before the class session. Each session plan includes a reading of "Today's Bible Story" during the class and refers to certain paragraphs of the "Bible Background," but participants will gain a deeper understanding if they have read "The Larger Picture" and the background article before the class session. Emphasize, however, that all participants are welcome to the class even if they did not read the material. They will still learn much from the class discussion.

The activities encourage you to read the Bible in a variety of ways: for example, in parts, silently, in unison, as conversation, in role play, etc. You may discover that your group prefers a particular style of reading, so feel free to adapt the activities to fit your class. You may also discover that you do not have enough time for all the activities in one session. If you are trying to coordinate your schedule with other age levels and allow only one week per session, choose the activities most helpful for your class. If you are not coordinating with other

age levels, you can set your own pace and spend as much time as you like on any one session.

Supplemental Resources

It is impossible in such limited space to provide leaders all the information they need to teach this course. It is therefore important that every congregation make sure there is available a variety of supplemental resources. Here are some that are recommended.

- *The Concise Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version* edited by John Kohlenberger III, Oxford Press. It helps find important words in the Bible.
- *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* edited by Watson E. Mills, Mercer University Press. It offers information on 1500 biblical subjects.
- *Holman Concise Bible Atlas*, Holman Publishers. It provides maps of Bible lands at various periods of history.
- *A Guide to Pronouncing Biblical Names* by T.S.K. Scott-Craig, Morehouse Publishing. Here are preferred and permissible pronunciations of some three thousand names, mainly of people and places.
- *Bible Study Maps*, Abingdon Press. This set of five 11x14" maps includes: Early Bible Lands, Egypt to Canaan, Old Testament Palestine, New Testament Palestine, and the Roman Empire.
- *Celebration: The Book of Jewish Festivals* edited by Naomi Black, Jonathan David Publishers, Inc. Through text, art, and photographs, this volume gives thorough description of the six Jewish festivals featured in *Journey Through the Bible*.
- *The Family Treasury of Jewish Holidays* by Malka Drucker, Little, Brown and Company. Actually written for Jewish families, this is a good resource for older children and adults filled with facts, stories, recipes, crafts, and songs.
- *The Seder: Celebration of the Passover for Christians* by C. Edward Weisheimer, Christian Board of Publication. This booklet gives guidance for holding a seder for Christians in ways that honor the Jewish tradition while holding firm to belief in Christ.