



St. Andrew's, Albany

BECOMING DISCIPLES THROUGH BIBLE STUDY

Based upon the popular **DISCIPLE*** course, this year-long tour of the Old and New Testaments lets you explore the Bible in a way that works best for you:

- ✓ come and view the videos when you can;
- ✓ participate in the discussions if you like;
- ✓ read each week's Bible selections;
- ✓ buy the Study Manual/Workbook and follow the daily assignments, including the Theme Word and Bible Verse, the Human Condition, the Bible selections, the weekly prayer, the Bible Teaching, the Marks of Discipleship, and the "IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE" section;
- ✓ start or join a small study group;
- ✓ something we haven't even thought of.

Discipleship is the practice of moving from *who we are* to *whom we are committing ourselves to be*. And studying Scripture together is one way to discover how others have done it, with God's help. But just studying together is not enough. Since no one has a monopoly on understanding Scripture, it is important for us to learn to really listen to each other and welcome unusual opinions on and different understandings of Scripture—not only accepting, but honoring our differences. And as we better understand our differences, we can grow in our appreciation of one another—and God. To become a disciple through Bible study means trusting the Holy Spirit to instruct us and empower us through Scripture to find and use our gifts to love and serve God and each other.

The Old Testament

Session 1: September 17, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Biblical Word

Psalms 84; Hosea 11; Exodus 15:1-18
1 Kings 19; 1 Chronicles 22; Acts 9
Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5-6; Micah 4
Philemon
Luke 15

The ancient biblical story of God is of vital importance for readers of all generations. This *living* word of God is ultimately concerned with establishing a new sense of inclusive community. By reading the Bible in community you can hope to gain a sense of the tradition of Christian faith; a sense of direction for your own actions in, and for, the world; a sense of belonging to one another; and a sense of the Other, the One who cares more about you than you could ever care about yourself.

Session 2: September 24, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Creating God

Genesis 1:1-2:3; 2:4-25
Psalms 8; 19:1-6; 33; 104; 150
Job 38-39; 40:15-41:34
John 1:1-5

Genesis 1 and 2 were not written to answer questions we might have about the origins of the universe. Genesis is an ancient book that spoke very clearly and powerfully to God's people living thousands of years before our time. And the central message is this: "I am your God. I created everything you see. The heavens and the earth are my doing. Therefore, worship me and no one else." The Creator God is also the personal God. This is the message of Genesis 1 and 2, and this is the proper starting point for reading the Bible.

Session 3: October 1, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Rebel People

Genesis 3-4; 6:5-9:29; 11:1-9
Jeremiah 8:18-9:11
2 Samuel 11:1-12:7
Psalm 51

Genesis 3–11 connect the story of creation to the story of Israel's ancestors, beginning with Abraham, in Genesis 12. These chapters describe the fall of humanity and the spread of sin in the world. These stories in Genesis are, in their own right, vehicles for powerful theological messages that address the Bible's basic purpose: to reveal who God is and why God is worthy of worship.

Session 4: October 8, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Called People

Genesis 12-13; 14:17-17:27; 18-23; 24-27; 28-33; 35; 37; 39-41; 42-45; 47-50

The call and creation of Israel that begins in Genesis 12 is commonly known as the "patriarchal history"; however, the Bible attests to the importance of Israel's matriarchs as well. God promises the patriarchs and matriarchs that by them and through them, all the families of the earth will be blessed. The covenant with Israel will eventually extend and encompass all peoples and nations. God's promises are sure. Beginning with the patriarchs and the matriarchs, we see how God partners with us in the realization of God's promise.

Session 5: October 15, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

God Hears the Cry

Exodus 1-4; 5-7; 8-11; 12-14; 15-18

Divine memory prompts God to fulfill past promises. The Exodus is a story of divine memory and action. Memory of the Divine promise to Israel causes God to enter human history, to save the Israelite people from slavery and death, and to create a new future by fulfilling past promises to their ancestors. The Passover Haggadah (Jewish celebration of the Exodus) also creates hope, since remembering the past salvation of God also leads to a future vision, when all evil will be destroyed.

Session 6: October 22, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

God Sends the Law

Exodus 19-20; 21:1-23:19; 31:18-32:35

Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33; 5-9; 6:4-9; 13; 14:22-15:23; 21-22; 25; 34

Leviticus 11; 17:10-19:37

Numbers 6; 13:1-14:38; 18

Psalms 19:7-14; 1

Obedience to God's Law is the people's response to God's deliverance on their behalf. The Law is an act of God's self-revelation, providing a way for the community of faith to know God and remain close to God. The Law was given before the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Once they had been slaves; now they were free. Yet, with freedom came responsibilities under God's covenant and the requirement to act in certain ways before God and with families and neighbors alike. The presence of these laws reminds us now that to be a person of faith is not just a matter of what we believe; it is also a matter of how we behave.

Session 7: October 29, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

When God Draws Near

Exodus 24-27; 34:29-36:1; 40

Psalms 81; 100

Leviticus 1-5; 6-7; 16-17; 23

Deuteronomy 18; 16

To be holy, to be pure, is to lead a life that is in divine order. That definition of order, set forth in the priestly laws, influences all aspects of daily life. To restore that order once it had been broken took place through the act of atonement, described in Leviticus, the process of achieving and maintaining oneness and reconciliation with God. These priestly laws in the Christian canon remind us of our ongoing responsibility to God in all our existence, underscore the importance of worship, and remind us that how we live our lives should be an act of worship.

Session 8: November 5, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The People without a King

Joshua 1-3; 4-6; 7; 8; 24
Judges 1-2; 4-5; 6-8; 10:6-12:7; 13-16
Psalms 24

The period of history from the death of Joshua to the beginning of David's reign is described as an endless cycle moving from sin to punishment and back again, with only brief periods of relief provided by the activities of the Judges. The last few chapters in Judges illustrate what happens when individuals in society become their own standard of morality. The stories included in Judges 19–21 stand as horrific examples of the evil that can reign supreme when God does not reign supreme.

Session 9: November 12, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The People with a King

1 Samuel 1-7; 8-10; 12-13; 14:47-20:42; 31
2 Samuel 11:1-19:8; 21-24
1 Kings 1-3; 4:20-8:66; 9-12

Israel's historians neither idealized their kings nor attempted to glamorize the stories of their personal and political lives. In the historians' eyes, each of the kings of Israel and Judah contributed in some way to their nations' downhill slide toward destruction. Even David is pictured as a man with serious flaws in his character who made foolish, sinful choices that had disastrous consequences for the health of the United Kingdom. The historians, priests, prophets, and theologians of Israel and Judah considered it an act of faith to call their leaders to account for their errors in judgment.

Session 10: November 19, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

God Warns the People

1 Kings 16:29-19:18; 19:19-22:40
2 Kings 2:1-18; 9
Amos 1-4; 5-9
Isaiah 1-7
Jeremiah 2

Against the background of the lowest point in Israel's history—when King Ahab had perverted the nation's faith and worshiped Baal, the god of the Canaanites—the prophet Elijah comes on the scene. Elijah's ministry sets out to turn the heart of the people back to the one and only true God. In Israel the king cannot act outside the law: he must honor God. The historian of First Kings asks: "Will the king and people listen to the prophetic voice that demands faithfulness and justice?" For God's people today, the question remains the same.

Session 11: November 26, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

God Punishes the People

2 Kings 17-20; 21-25

Jeremiah 8; 19; 24; 27; 37-39

Isaiah 28:1-30:18

Lamentations 1-5

King Josiah led the nation to renew its covenant with God and reinstated the celebration of the Passover in accordance with the book of the covenant. Under Josiah, Judah regained religious vitality and love for the Torah. However, the prophet Jeremiah found the last kings of Judah falling far short of the stature of Josiah. As Jeremiah warned, the time of judgment finally came to Jerusalem. However, Jeremiah saw the Exile only as a temporary stage in history and preached hope with confidence and practiced hope by buying land on the very eve of its destruction.

Session 12: December 3, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

God Restores the People

Isaiah 40-43; 44-46; 49-50; 51-53; 55; 61; 65

Jeremiah 30-33

Ezekiel 1-5; 37

Psalms 40

Jeremiah and Ezekiel both claim that God used the Babylonians to punish the people of Judah for their sins. But the same God who holds people accountable for their behaviors is also gracious and forgiving. Second Isaiah (the writer of Isaiah 40–55) sees hope for the people after the Exile, that the people will return to their land and that their relationship with God will be deepened. Jeremiah 31 affirms that after the Exile God will establish a new covenant with the people, one written on people's hearts.

Session 13: December 10, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Songs of the Heart

Psalms 136; 78; 90; 137; 42; 43; 22; 130; 38; 51; 65; 116; 104; 100; 145; 73; 127; 133; 23; 139

The Psalms are sometimes called “mirrors of human emotion,” expressing great joy as well as deep despair. The Psalms pray with great boldness. In their praise and lamentation the psalms mirror our hearts, speak our deepest thoughts, and teach our hearts about who God is and what God has done. Above all, the Psalms teach us how to pray to God. With their vivid language and strategic mix of praise and lament, the Psalms challenge us to pray with just as much beauty and boldness as the psalmists did when they wrote them.

Session 14: December 17, 2006, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Righteous are like a Tree

Psalms 1; 19:7-14; 37; 112; 128
Proverbs 1-6; 10-17; 20-25; 31
Ezra 1; 3; 4:1-5; 5-7
Nehemiah 8:1-9:5; 10:28-39

The book of Ezra tells of the Jews returning from exile. For a people who have lived without a temple, proper temple worship will become a major theme. For a people now geographically divided—some still living in Babylon, some having returned to the land, and all living in the midst of people who worship other gods—properly defining communal boundaries will also be a major concern. And, as always, the community of returning exiles will have to decide how to live faithfully and practice righteousness.

Session 15: January 7, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

When Trouble Comes

Job 1-10; 11-19; 20-31; 32-37; 38-42

The book of Job presents a number of challenges, not the least of which is how to reconcile the compliant Job of the Prologue with the complaining Job of the dialogues. After all the discussion and debate among Job and his friends and God, Job does not so much repent of wrongdoing, as he renounces his argument with God. In response to God's appearance, Job does not simply withdraw his complaint; he is moved to see himself and God in a new way.

Session 16: January 14, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

People Hope for a Savior

Daniel 1-3; 4-6; 7; 12
Isaiah 24-27; 53-55; 65; 9:1-7; 11:2-10; 42:1-9
Zechariah 9
Micah 5:2-4
Malachi 3-4
Psalms 118

The book of Daniel is a composite of two different kinds of literature—stories of Jewish “heroes of faith” under foreign rulers (both Babylonian and Persian) in chapters 1–6 and apocalyptic visions in chapters 7–12. The hero stories give us examples of remaining faithful in times of trial, even if it means defying some of the policies of the worldly powers over us. And the visions assure us that we can be boldly defiant because our God has ultimate dominion over all.

Session 17: January 21, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Time of Transition

Esther 1-4; 5-10

Jonah 1-4

The books of Esther and Jonah come to us from the Persian period in Jewish history. During this time, the Persian Empire ruled over the Jews, and it was a time of transition and challenge. How were they to interact with a foreign government? How should they relate to the Gentiles around them? What did it mean to be a worshiper of the God of Israel in a foreign land? And, most importantly, where was God in this different, expanded world? Was God just the God of Israel, or did God's power extend to the Gentile nations? Both Esther and Jonah tackle these questions, though in different ways. And both affirm that God is the God of both Jews and Gentiles and that God's power and mercy extend over the whole world.

The New Testament

Session 18/19: February 4, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Radical Discipleship

Matthew 1-7; 8-18; 19-25; 26; 27; 28

Matthew's distinctive fingerprint on Jesus' story can be found in five major themes that pervade his Gospel. First, Matthew emphasizes Jesus as teacher. Second, Matthew focuses less on miracles than do the other Gospels. Third, Matthew has a strong Jewish orientation. Fourth, Matthew emphasizes what might be called "superabundant" righteousness. And, finally, embedded in Matthew's Gospel is a constant tension between the universal and the particular. Matthew's radical teaching calls for radical discipleship.

Mounting Controversy

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' birth, no less than his death, resurrection, and deeds, evoked both acceptance and rejection. Certain leaders among the Jews rejected Jesus; but the ordinary Jew, the one seeking to be obedient to the Law, recognized the revelation of God in Christ. The problem for Jesus in Matthew is never the Jews or the Jewish religion. The problem is the Jewish leadership, the authorities into whose hands the people have been placed by God. Matthew consistently affirms Judaism, but as it is interpreted by Jesus.

Session 20: February 11, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Hidden Messiah

Mark 1-4; 5-8; 9-12; 13-16

In Mark, Jesus says and does strange and mysterious things for a Messiah: the first disciples he calls are fishermen; he heals many who are sick with various diseases and casts out many demons. But: “He wouldn’t allow the demons to speak, because they knew him.” Throughout most of Mark’s story, Jesus tries to keep his messianic identity secret. This strange motif in Mark has been called “the Messianic secret.” Like a good mystery, Mark uses this device to not only hook his original listener’s attention (as well as later readers), but also to get his audience to think about how they will respond to this secret now that it is no longer hidden.

Session 21: February 18, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

God Seeks the Least, the Last, the Lost

Luke 1:1-4:13; 4:14-9:50; 9:51-12:59; 13-15; 16:1-19:27; 19:28-24:53

In Luke, Jesus’ ministry is filled with memorable stories of Jesus standing up for the overlooked and despised, while challenging the presumptions of the wealthy and the socially accepted. Through Jesus, God will redeem the least and the lost, but his role as Savior will not be limited to any one group, nation, or people. He came for all the least and the lost, no matter who they are or where they live. In this way, Jesus immediately challenges all of the conventions by which we seek to limit God’s forgiveness and salvation.

Session 22: February 25, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Lifegiver

John 1-2; 3-4; 5-6; 7-8; 9-10; 11-12

The distinctiveness of John’s Gospel is apparent from the start. John begins his Gospel before Creation and emphasizes Jesus’ power, sovereignty, glory, and divinity at every turn. Jesus and God are one with each other and with all believers. In John, Jesus promises abundant life, that peculiar quality of life that is lived in perfect, intimate unity with God and Jesus. And John stresses repeatedly that the life Jesus promises is available right here, right now.

Session 23: March 4, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Advocate

John 13-14; 15-16; 17-18; 19-20; 21
1 John 1-5

Like John's entire Gospel, his vision of the Holy Spirit is distinctive. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are in a unified relationship. Jesus existed with God from the beginning, came to earth, established the church, returned to God, and sent the Holy Spirit to guide the church after he was no longer physically present. What exactly is the Holy Spirit to do? As a spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit will abide with Jesus' disciples, teach them and remind them of everything he said, help them worship, testify to Jesus, guide them in Jesus' ways, glorify Jesus, and empower them for mission work.

Session 24: March 11, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Explosive Power of the Spirit

Acts 1-2; 3-5; 6-8; 9-11; 12:1-15:35

According to the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit is the source of power for the early church—power whose origin was (and is) the resurrected Jesus; power received through acts of prayer; and power whose goal is to bear witness to the gospel. Luke's narrative in Acts shows how Jesus' followers were empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak, teach, and act as eyewitnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Though opposition and persecution were often the consequences of the Holy Spirit's power in Acts, the disciples remained persistent and “were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness” (4:31).

Session 25: March 18, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Gospel Penetrates the World

Acts 15:36-18:28; 19-20; 21-23; 24-26; 27-28
Ephesians 1-4

Luke's purpose in writing Acts, the sequel to his Gospel, is the same as his purpose in writing the gospel: to proclaim to the world “this Jesus God raised up” (2:32). Acts, then, is the story of those who first proclaimed the story of Jesus. And just as Jesus encountered resistance and conflict, the early church in Acts, representing Christ's body in the world, also encountered resistance again and again. In spite of these difficulties, the earliest Christians developed particular strategies for accomplishing their mission to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Session 26: March 25, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Put Right with God Through Faith

Romans 1-2; 3-4; 5-8; 9-11; 12-16

The key question that drives the letter to the Romans is this: can God be trusted? This question arises because of Paul's conviction that the Gentiles—foreigners who do not keep the commandments of God's covenant with Israel—have also received God's grace. Paul does not simply focus on the question of individual salvation. He is addressing the problem of God's universal justice, God's faithfulness to Israel, and how the death and resurrection of Jesus are to be understood as the fulfillment, rather than the undoing, of all God had promised Israel from the beginning. Thus, Paul's letter confirms that the God who has chosen us freely in love can be trusted.

Session 27: April 15, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

A Congregation in Ferment

1 Corinthians 1-4; 5-7; 8-11; 12-14; 15-16
2 Corinthians 3-5

In First Corinthians, we have what is believed to be at least four letters that Paul wrote to the Christian community at Corinth. In them, Paul responds to the questions of the leaders of the community and the conflicts that were being experienced within the community. Paul emphasized the importance of maintaining the unity of the body so that each member could exercise his or her gifts to the fullest. Both clergy and laypersons are to be "servants" of God, servants who live by faith, and servants who each have a special gift—or in some cases many gifts—to be used for building up the body of Christ.

Session 28: April 22, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

The Son Shall Set Us Free

Galatians 1; 2; 3-4; 5; 6

Galatians presents an impassioned conversation about the religious and social boundaries of the church. For Paul, faith in Christ provides access to God's grace beyond any narrow social boundaries, allowing unity within the church in the midst of social diversity. However, Christ abolishes the dominance of one over the other based on these differences. In addition to promoting communal harmony, Paul insists that Christian faith engenders freedom. Galatians is an ancient "emancipation proclamation," announcing that believers have been freed from the forces that enslave them and thereby freed for loving service to the neighbor.

Session 29: April 29, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

A Pastor Gives Guidance

1 Timothy 1-2; 3-4; 5-6

2 Timothy 1-4

Titus

First and Second Timothy and Titus have traditionally been known as the Pastoral Letters because they were written as pastoral advice from Paul to his younger colleagues in ministry, Timothy and Titus. The church found itself assailed by false teachings and the need for strong leaders who would help the church faithfully proclaim “sound teaching” through word and deed. Paul therefore advises these young leaders about what the church is to teach and to preach. Paul saw that the care of the young church was an effort to promote faithful community and that caring for each other in the household of God calls for mutual accountability in love.

Session 30: May 6, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Our Great High Priest

Hebrews 1-3; 4-6; 7-8; 9-10; 11-13

The writer of Hebrews has crafted a skillful sermon that is addressed to a group of Jewish and Gentile believers. The writer speaks at length about Jesus’ exalted status; about the gifts and privileges Jesus secured for his followers through his death and resurrection; and the debt of gratitude and loyalty the recipients of his gifts owe. The believers addressed by Hebrews had been subjected to a great deal of harassment, abuse, and marginalization for their association with Jesus. The writer of Hebrew therefore challenges the community of believers to persevere in their faith and gratitude toward God and Jesus as they are faced with the costly choices of discipleship.

Session 31: May 13, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

A People Set Apart

1Peter 1-2; 3-5

2 Peter 1-3

Leviticus 11; 19

Isaiah 52-53; 55:1-56:8

The writer of First Peter lets us know that he is delivering a particular message for a particular people. These people have been "chosen and destined" by God and are living scattered among strangers, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Even in the midst of the trials they are suffering, God has not abandoned them; they are still God's own people. So even today, being a priest means being a servant among the people, a bridge between them and God. Yet, being set apart also means being part of the world—to serve, to pray, to teach, to be a blessing.

Session 32: May 20, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

We Never Lose Hope

Revelation 1-3; 4-7; 8-12; 13-16; 17-20; 21-22

Revelation is not an easy book to understand. Most scholars regard an apocalypse, of which Revelation is an important example, not as historical foresight but as theological insight. An apocalypse is an “unveiling,” a “revelation” of the true nature of reality. It was written in times of severe trial as a way of encouraging believers to endure, to trust that, despite all contrary appearances, God and not evil would ultimately triumph. Revelation offers us a theology of creation’s completion. It tells us that our cosmos will be redeemed, and that humans will come to be what they were created to be. That, above all, is the meaning of Revelation.

Session 33: May 27, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

Gifts of Each Disciple

Romans 12

1 Corinthians 12; 13; 1:17-31

James 1-2; 3-5

John 13:1-20

No matter how far the people of Israel wandered from the path of life, no matter how often the disciples of Christ misunderstood their teacher, no matter how often we sin, God desires to be in relationship with us. Not content simply to be near us, God unbelievably decides to become one of us. But God’s movement toward us in Jesus Christ must be met with a reciprocal movement from our side. God has chosen to be with us; we must choose whether or not we want to be with God. By choosing God’s way over against the way of “this world”; by receiving God’s gifts instead of promoting our talents; and by doing God’s word rather than keeping it to ourselves, we become God’s very presence in the world.

Session 34: June 3, 2007, 9:30 – 10:15 am

A Last Supper Together

Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-21; 24:17-22

Leviticus 2:11-16

Matthew 5:13

Jeremiah 31:31-34

2 Corinthians 3:1-6

Matthew 5-7

Hebrews 9

Isaiah 6

A covenant is a special relationship in which the participating parties pledge themselves to one another. The Bible talks about a covenant as an agreement between God and God's people. In celebrating the Lord's Supper, we remember that Jesus is the mediator of God's new covenant with us, a covenant that promises forgiveness of sin and newness of life. The making of the new covenant with God is not an individual act. It is a communal one. We not only have obligations toward God, but also toward the members of the community. So as members of the new covenant community, let us remind ourselves that we can love because we are loved. The love of God in Jesus Christ empowers us to love one another.

* Richard Byrd Wilke & Julia Kitchens Wilke, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*, (Abington Press, Study Manual Second Edition, 1993; Revised Videos, 2005)