



STUDY GUIDE

God's people study series

Introduction

Welcome to the 'God's people' study series. In this set of studies we're going to trace God's story from the end of Genesis, (Joseph in Egypt), to God promising Isaiah that a deliverer will come to save his people and through him bless the whole world.

This story is one of God's enduring faithfulness to a people who simply can't be faithful to him. Our prayer is that you will see God, the main character of the story, as the loving, kind, and compassionate One, who despite all the failures of his hard hearted people, still moves to save them.

We are excited for you to encounter and enjoy the story that God is writing over his people and the whole world. That you will see the Good News of Jesus running throughout these stories, because whole story of God, points to, and reveals, Jesus, the Messiah God's people need.

So however dark it gets, however hopeless it may seem for Israel, God has not forsaken them. His plan of salvation, love, and blessing, will not be stopped.

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Study 1: The Passover and Exodus

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/exodus-1-18/>

Introduction

The Exodus story actually starts in the book of Genesis. Joseph is Pharaoh's right hand man, and his family come to live there. They grow, and grow, and grow, (Ex 1:7 - which sounds like Genesis language), and a Pharaoh arrives on the throne who no longer remembers Joseph (1:8). The Israelites are enslaved (1:11-14), their male babies killed, life has become very hard for them (1:16). Through the brave act of two Hebrew (Israelite) midwives one particular baby is spared. Left floating in a reed basket he is found by Pharaoh's daughter and raised as a prince of Egypt. The boy's name is Moses (2:1-10). Moses grows up, murders an Egyptian, flees, and meets God in a burning bush (Ex 2:11-3:22). During this time the Israelites cry out to God and he hears them. Moses is chosen and raised up to partner with God in freeing his chosen people, so that they can be blessed to be a blessing to the world.

We then get a new, equally awful, Pharaoh and a series of 9 plagues (Ex7:14-10:29). God uses these to show Pharaoh who is the true King of Egypt and the whole world is! Pharaoh however is proud and refuses to let God's people go. We join the story at the tenth and final plague, the death of the firstborn. This story of the Passover and exodus is fundamental to Israel's understanding of who they are; a chosen people who have been rescued.

Read Exodus 11:1-2, 4-5 & 12:1-14, 21-23, 29-32, 40-42.

First reading - did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

What has been going on between God and Pharaoh? What is the final plague?

What must the Israelites do in order to for the LORD to passover their houses?

What happens to the Egyptians that makes them send the Israelites away?

Do you know what happens next in the story? (It's worth a read!)

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

How does God's final plague judge the previous Pharaoh's earlier actions (Exodus 1:15-22)?

Why do you think God asks the Israelites to kill a lamb, how does this save them?

Is it possible for Israel to stand in God's presence without the blood of the lamb?

What does this story tell us about what God thinks and feels about his people?

One the central themes of this moment in the bible (v12) is God's judgement of Pharaoh's pride and Egypt's gods, what do you make of this?

How is God keeping his promise to Abraham to bless the world through his line?

Read, 1 Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29, 1 Peter 1:18-19, what links can you make between these passages and the Passover story?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

Do you believe that it is only through 'the blood of the Lamb', that is Jesus, that you can stand in God's presence? How might this truth change how you worship and live?

Is there anything enslaving you? Thoughts, feelings, behaviours, addictions? How might God deliver and free you from those things? Would you like to ask him to?

Is there any area of your life that you, like Pharaoh, are saying no to God?

In Jesus, God has chosen you as his special possession, how does this make you feel? How might it impact how you live?

Study 2: The 10 Commandments

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/torah-exodus-2/>

Introduction

We rejoin the story on the other side of the waters of the Reed Sea. The Hebrews (Israel) have passed through them and the Exodus from Egypt is complete. Getting Egypt out of the people however, well, that might take a little longer...

God wants to bless this people, so he leads them through the desert to a mountain. His desire is for Israel to represent him to the world. He wants to bless them to be a blessing. To help them with this, God give them 'the 10 words' (in Hebrew), what we call, the 10 Commandments. They are instructions for guiding Israel's worship and lives with God and each other. They are so revolutionary that the legal systems of the Judea-Christian world have been build on them for 2,000+ years!

Read Exodus 20

First reading - did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

What does God say before he gives Israel the 10 commandments?

What do you notice about the first five commandments?

What do you notice about the second five commandments?

What will keep the people from sinning?

What commandment does God come back to at the end of the passage?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

Why does God remind Israel about what he has done for them, before giving them the 10 commandments?

If you kept the first commandment how would that effect all the other commandments?

Why do you think God Israel these commandments, is he just being like a boring school teacher, or worse, a dictator?

Which commandments get the most 'air time' why do you think that is?

Is it important to 'fear God'? What does that mean?

Are these 10 commandments still important today? Aren't we covered by the grace of Jesus? (Romans 3:19-24 - might be helpful)

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

Understanding God's moral standard is really important, it's how we know we're sinners. We are however saved by Jesus' work and grace. Which part of this do you find it hard to hold? That you're a sinner or a saint? How can you learn to hold both in a way that leads you to worship?

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." God encourages Israel to fear him, to respect his power, and glory, that they might live and flourish. Do you have a healthy fear/respect for God?

God remind Israel who they by telling them what he's done for them in verse 1. How does what Jesus has done for you tell you who you are?

Write your name in the space.

You are..... who I love, have saved, forgiven, and set free through my death on the cross and resurrection to life, this is what I ask of you today, trust me, follow me and obey me.

Does that change how you feel about following Jesus today?

Study 3: New land, new leader

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/joshua/>

Introduction

The Hebrews now have a new leader. A whole generation has died in the desert and sadly that includes Moses. He sees the Promised Land from a distance but never gets to enter it. God appoints Joshua as the new leader of His people and the one who will lead them into the Promised Land.

The land ahead of Israel has water in front of it, and after that it has loads of very scary nations. Nations who are practicing all sorts of evil and wickedness, such as idol worship, child sacrifice, ritual killing and temple prostitution to name but a few things! (Nothing you'd find in the 10 Commandments!) God promises to lead Israel, they just need to trust him.

Read Joshua 1

First reading - did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

What does God say to prepare Joshua for battle?

What is the repeating command God gives Joshua?

How will Joshua and the Hebrew inherit the land? (7-8)

Are the people happy to follow Joshua?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

Why doesn't God give Joshua battle plans before his battle? What do you make of God's words to Joshua instead?

Why is it so important for Joshua to be 'strong and courageous'? Why does God keep saying it to him? What does this tell us about God?

Why will obeying God's word make them prosper?

What do you make of Israel's army and their declaration in v16-18?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

What battles is God calling you to fight today? Is there something in your life that is rebelling against God, does it need conquering by the Holy Spirit today?

Are you feeling sacred about something you're facing right now? How does God's command to Joshua speak into your situation?

There are no formulas in scripture however, here at least, it seems that obeying God's word seems to release his favour and blessing. How are you getting to know the bible, and God's best for your life? Are there areas that need to come into line with his best for your life?

Study 4: A repeating cycle

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/judges/>

Introduction

Israel are now living in the promised land. There is one small problem though... Canaanites. God has told Israel to drive them out of the land but they've ignored him. Surely it won't be a problem, right? Erm, well, yes, it turns out to be a big problem. The Canaanites were morally bankrupt as a people and in worship of their gods children were regularly sacrificed. This has no place in God's kingdom.

We've all heard those stories of people who didn't make great choices when they were younger, the refrain is usually, "then I fell in with the wrong sort of people." Sadly, that is Israel's story. It's not long before Israel start adopting all the Canaanite behaviour.

A cycle begins in Israel's history and slowly gets worse, before a shocking and horrific tale at the end of the book, showing how far Israel has fallen. The cycle looks like this; God appoints a Judge (leader) to help Israel stay faithful, the Judge does ok, but they either die, or become corrupted in some way, and then Israel runs away from God and things get worse. Then God sends another Judge and so on. It's an ever worsening cycle of apostasy (abandoning your faith). Not a great chapter in Israel story as God's chosen people, a people he wants to bless, in order to bless the world.

Read Judges 2:6-23 & 21:25

First reading - did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

How do things starts for Israel in the promised land?

What happens after Joshua dies?

Who do Israel start to worship?

How does God try and help the Israelites?

How to Israel respond to God's help?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

In v7 we read, "the people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel." Now we know they didn't completely dial it all the time, but what do you think helped Israel stay faithful to God in those years?

In v10 what does it seem Israel has failed to do? What can we learn from this, for our church and home lives? What does it tell us about our responsibility as 'elders'?

Why do you think Israel decided to start worshipping the Baals? Do we have an equivalent today?

Why is the word 'prostituted' used in v17? What does this tell us about our relationship with God?

Should we as Christians retreat from the world for fear it will corrupt us? If not, how should we interact with the world around us? How should we teach the next generation to?

What does v18 tell us about God?

What does the constant need for another 'Judge' tell us about Israel?

How might this cycle end?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

As an older Christian, how are you passing your faith onto the next generation? It doesn't matter whether you have children yourself, who has God placed around you to raise up in faith?

Israel are constantly tempted by the culture around them, what temptations are you finding really hard at the moment?

God is still kind to Israel in their failures, is there stuff you need his compassion and forgiveness for?

Study 5: Friendship and redemption

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ruth/>

Introduction

The book of Ruth links the two major parts of Israel's history together, bridging the gap between the first part (Genesis – Judges) where Abraham's descendants become a nation and make a covenant with God, and the second part where the kingdom of Israel is established and unfolds over the generations.

Though God isn't mentioned by name much, the story of Ruth demonstrates his continual presence in day-to-day life and shows how, even under the radar, his purposes are accomplished in the lives of his people. The narrative also evidences his redemptive plan for all of humanity through the events that take place in Ruth's life and also the wider statement God makes in including Ruth's child in the lineage of his own Son.

Bible Study:

Read Ruth: 1:1-18, 2:1-12, 4:5-14

Did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

Passage 1:

Naomi's Husband, Elimelek, had moved the family from Bethlehem to Moab - what made Naomi make the decision to move back?

What do you think factored differently in Orpah and Ruth's decisions when Naomi sent them away?

Ruth and Naomi are famous for their friendship. What qualities do you see in their relationship?

Passage 2:

What is gleaning? Where does the practice come from, and what is its purpose (Leviticus 19:9-10 will help)

Who is Boaz to Ruth and Naomi?

What does the passage show us about Boaz' character?

What do we learn about Ruth?

Passage 3:

Why did Boaz create a situation where only he would be able to redeem Ruth (and her father in law's land)?

How did Ruth's future change in that moment?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

Ruth was a Moabite woman, do you know where her tribe descends from?

Read Genesis 19:30-38

What are your thoughts on the origins of this tribe? How do you think God viewed them?

The book of Ruth repeatedly mentions Ruth's lineage, why do you think that is?

Outside of this book, Ruth is only mentioned one other time. Read Matthew 1:1-16 Only 4 women are mentioned between verses 1 and 15. What made those women worthy of mention?

What is important about Ruth's position in Jesus' lineage?

What does it say about God?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

The word redemption means: the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil. Galatians 3:13-14 and Ephesians 1:7-10 talk about the redemptive work of Christ.

What does the story of Ruth illustrate about God's redemptive plan for individuals? Can the book be used to understand more of God's redemptive plan for creation as well?

How does including Jesus help us in our understanding?

How is God involved in your day-to-day life? Do you find him easy to spot him?

What relationships do you have that bring out God's goodness in your life?

Where do you see God's redemptive purposes at work in our world?

Where would you like to see God's breakthrough in your life?

Study 6: Israel asks for a king

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-samuel/>
(stop at 4:41 - save the rest for next week!)

Introduction

So Israel are a messy tribal people who are disobeying God, and acting just like all the other nations around them. God has tried raising up Judges, but they've all been pretty hopeless. So God raises up prophets to call his people back to him. Elijah and Eli do amazing things in Israel, and show God to be the true God of all. Next God raises up a prophet called Samuel. He is the son of Hannah (which means grace). Hannah was desperate for a child, and in calling out to the LORD, he heard her cry and gave her Samuel. She, in turn, gives him back to the LORD and Samuel is raised by Eli in the 'house of the LORD.'

Hannah's song in chapter 2 sets up the themes of the book, most notably that God opposes the proud and elevates the humble. Israel will need humility to thrive under God.

Read: 1 Samuel 8

First reading - did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

In v1-5, why do Israel want a king?

What is God's response to this?

What story does God tell of Israel in v8?

What will a king do to Israel?

What is Israel response to this?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

Do think Israel are right to ask for change to the way they are being led?

How are they rejecting God as their leader?

Why do you think Israel believe it will be easier to serve a human king than God as king?

Why do you think God tells Israel what a king will do to them?

In vv19-20, why do Israel want a king? Why does this fly in the face of God's plans for Israel to be a chosen nation?

Why do you think Israel want to be like everyone else?

Why do you think God relents and gives Israel a king? What does this tell us about him?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

If everyone is following someone, who are you following? How is this moulding and shaping your life and the decisions you make?

Where in your life are you rejecting God as King?

Does your life look different to the culture around you, or are you feeling the pressure to look and act just like them? How does this story challenge you?

Study 7: David anointed as king

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-samuel/>
(Start at 4:41 to the end)

Introduction

The books of Samuel describe the unfolding events that take Israel from a nation to a kingdom. After years of being ruled by Judges, Israel decides that they want a King, and they go to the prophet Samuel in order to ask him to appoint one (1 Samuel 8). Samuel doesn't like this idea at all, but God honours the wishes of his people and instructs Samuel to anoint Israel's first ever King, Saul (1 Samuel 9). Saul's leadership is fruitful for a while but ultimately, he disobeys God and so the need for a new, God-fearing and humble King arises.

Bible Study:

Read 1 Samuel: 8:1-6 and 19-22, 16:1-13

Did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

How is Samuel feeling at the beginning of the chapter? Why?

What instructions does God give him?

Who from Bethlehem is involved in Samuel's visit?

What is achieved by Samuel's visit?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

What is the purpose of Samuel's sacrifice? Is it more than just a cover story?

Throughout most of 1 and 2 Samuel God is heard through Samuel reporting what he has said, but in the account of God choosing David we see his direct speech in conversation with Samuel - why do you think that is? What does it tell us about this event?

Without God's intervention Samuel would have anointed the wrong person, why?

What did God say to redirect Samuel to his plans for a King?

Samuel anoints David in secret, with only his family as witnesses, why?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

God makes a habit of using the least likely people in his plans, why? Because the list of attributes the world uses to judge our suitability (good looks, strength, wealth etc.) is just not what God is interested in.

What does God look for in his children?

Are there other scriptures that point to a better set of attributes for God's people to aspire to? (Galatians 5:22-26, Colossians 3:12-14)

How do we live in a world obsessed with the outside, and serve a God who is interested on the inside?

How do you cope with following God into situations that make you fearful?

Are you good at listening to God's voice above your own?

David held onto his anointing in secret for a long time before he ascended to the throne. What prophetic promises are you holding onto in your heart that have yet to come to fruition?

David is another example of being blessed by God in order to be a blessing to others. What blessings have you received that enable you to bless those around you this week?

Study 8: A True King of Israel

Watch: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/isaiah-40-66/>

Introduction

It's all gone wrong for Israel. They've had a civil war, the nation split in two. Israel was conquered and fell first, but Judah eventually followed suit. Soon Israel will be conquered by Babylon and sent into exile. It looked pretty hopeless.

Yet, God will keep his promise to Abraham. There are whispers of a coming Messiah. Someone who will sort everything out and make everything right again. Isaiah was one of the prophets who spoke lots about this Messiah. If you read closely however, he doesn't seem like a conquering war hero type. His salvation of others looks different...

Read: Isaiah 52:13-: 53:12

First reading - did anything jump out at you? Thoughts? Questions? Confusion?

Observation Questions - (getting to know the text)

How will the Servant act?

In v14 what seems to have happened to the Servant?

In 53:2-3, what do people seem to think of this Servant?

Write down all the things he does for God's people in vv4-11?

What is Isaiah's conclusion about people in v6?

What happens to the Servant in this passage?

Interpretation Questions - (what does the text mean?)

Think back to previous studies, why is this Servant different from other leaders, priest, kings, judges and prophets that Israel have had?

What does it mean for this Servant to 'take up our infirmities' and 'be crushed for our transgressions,' and 'bear the sin of many? Why do we need this to happen?

If Jesus really have died for our sins? How should we respond?

How do you feel about being compared to a sheep? Fair? Unfair?

What does this passage tell you about God and his plan to bless the nations?

Does any of this seem fair towards the Servant? What does it tell us about him?

What does this passage tell us about Israel's collective identity?

Application - (what is God saying to me and what does it look like in my life?)

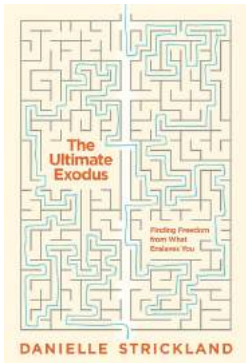
Israel, from the time of the Exodus, had been a people who needed a Saviour. What would change in you, if this was a core part of your identity? Do you believe you need a Saviour?

The idea that we are like sheep who've run away, and Jesus is the Good Shepherd who comes to get us, at the cost of himself, is the core of the Good News. We have a Saviour and someone who loves us to (his own) death! Can you pray and ask God to give you an opportunity to share this Good News with someone this week?

What sins are you holding onto, feeling guilty about? Can you let them go to Jesus today?

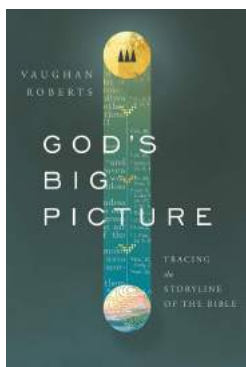
Is there any continual sinful habits that you'd like to confess and lay down at Jesus' feet so that he can bring you freedom?

Resources



The Ultimate Exodus - Danielle Strickland

Danielle is an international speaker and bible teacher. In this book she uses the framework of the Exodus story to help us consider what is enslaving us. Weaving together scripture and powerful stories the aim of the book is to help walk in the freedom God has created us for.



God's Big Picture - Vaughan Roberts

The bible does have quite a few pages right? Where do you start? This book shares the big story of the bible, looking at themes and different style of literature and how to engage with them. Complete with bible studies at the end of each chapter this book is a really excellent resource for anyone who wants to get to know the bible.



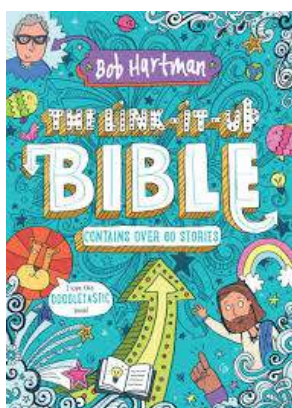
The Bible Project - www.thebibleproject.com

We've watched their videos throughout this series and at St B's we cannot recommend this FREE resource enough. With beautiful visual overview videos of bible books, as well as on themes and storylines. It is a treasure trove. They also have blogs, podcasts and a free classroom where you can do in-depth study on various bible books.



The Bible Course - The Bible Society

This is free online course, ideally for groups, but can be done solo, which take you on a journey through the bible. You can find it on the Bible Society website.



Link it up bible - Bob Hartman

Author of the very successful 'Rhyming Bible', this next instalment looks at how the bible is one unified story. Find the links between Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc, and Jesus. This is a brilliant resource for helping younger children engage with the big story of the bible. Parents might learn a thing or two along the way as well! It's a great bedtime devotionals resource.

Notes