

# BIBLE BACKGROUND

## JOURNEY 2: GO FOR THE GOLD!

### *God Keeps His Promises*

**Key Passages:** Genesis 12; Exodus 20; Luke 2

**Key Word:** *Promise*

**Key Thought:** Claim God's promises as you live each day.

**Key Verse:** "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." —2 Peter 3:9

## ONE BOOK OUT OF MANY

The books of the Bible were written by 40 different authors over a period of about 1,600 years. The Bible is one book, one history and one story. When these 66 individual books are brought together and bound up as a unit, they are often called "The Book."

- This book is a divine, progressive revelation of God to man.
- It begins in eternity past and ends with eternity future.
- One generation gives way to the next.
- The story of redemption unfolds gradually, one chapter after another.

The stories, though varied in time and place and written by different authors, seem to have been produced by one mind. Peter understood this when he wrote: "*For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:21). There is a unity of thought demonstrating that one mind inspired the writing of all the books. Each book bears the impression of its author so that in every aspect the book is the Word of God.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible is one book with one story—the story of how Almighty God will redeem a wrecked and fallen world. The Ancient of Days stands firmly behind the more than 10,000 events recorded on its pages. Between Genesis, the book of origins, and Revelation, the book of endings, God is unfolding His plan for Jesus to redeem a lost and broken world.

## CHRIST, THE LIVING WORD

The Old Testament describes the rise and fall of the nation of Israel. The New Testament

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<sup>2</sup> "Understanding the Bible," *What the Bible Is All About* by Henrietta Mears, Regal Books, 1998.

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presents the Son of God as the Savior of the world. God chose Israel to bring forth the man who would secure salvation for all. His appearance on earth is the central event of all history. The Old Testament sets the stage for this event, and the New Testament describes how it unfolded. The apostle John said that if all the deeds of this Christ were written down, the world could not contain the books. Therefore, God has selectively chosen the books contained in the Bible to reveal Himself and His plan for redemption.

## A QUICK SURVEY OF GENESIS

There are four major events in Genesis that lay the foundation for the redemptive history of man. They are

- **Creation:** God is the sovereign Creator of matter, energy, space and time.
- **Fall:** Creation is followed by corruption as Adam's sin separates man from God. The hope of redemption is promised in Genesis 3:15 as the Serpent is cursed.
- **Flood:** Man's growing depravity compels God to destroy the human race except for Noah and his family.
- **Nations:** As children of Adam and Noah, the human race was scattered at the Tower of Babel over the face of the earth into single cultures and languages.

Once the nations were scattered, God focused on one man and his descendants through whom He will bless all nations (Genesis 12–50). God chose Abraham to head up a special group of people who would become the nation of Israel. They would be God's chosen people. If Abraham would get up and leave the land of Ur (near present-day Iraq) and travel 500 miles to the land of Canaan, God would make him the father of many nations. God promised Abraham the following things would happen if he obeyed God's commands (Genesis 12:2, 3).

- His descendants would become a great nation (*Israel, the Hebrews, the Jews*).
- The land of Canaan would be an eternal homeland for his descendants (*Israel, Judah, Jerusalem*).
- All the world would be blessed by one of Abraham's descendants (*Jesus*).

These covenant promises—land, descendants, blessing—are the building blocks for God's Plan of Salvation (GPS) for all of mankind. How Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph participate in this covenant relationship fills Genesis 12–50.

- When Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, she at last gave birth to the legitimate heir of God's covenant promise—Isaac.
- God established His covenant with Isaac as the chosen spiritual link with Abraham.
- Isaac's son was Jacob, whom God transformed from a selfish opportunist to a willing servant and changed his name to *Israel*, the father of the 12 tribes (Genesis 32:28).
- Joseph was Jacob's favorite son, whose jealous brothers sold him to slave traders. He ended up in Egypt, where God providentially allowed him to become second-in-command under Pharaoh. Having forgiven his brothers, Joseph brought his family from Canaan into the land of Goshen to ride out the years of famine.

- Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, received a special blessing from Jacob before he died. God chose Judah to be the line of the Jewish race through whom the Messiah would come (Genesis 49:8–10). Jesus was known as *the Lion of the Tribe of Judah* (Revelation 5:5).

### THE EXODUS IN EXODUS

The book of Exodus opens with the 70 descendants of Jacob having greatly multiplied in Egypt. Their numbers had increased to almost 2 million over the course of 430 years, but they had become slaves to the pharaohs who had forgotten Joseph. When God sent Moses as their deliverer, it took much persuasion to convince Pharaoh to let the people go. Once the people were released, God led Moses into the desert and gave him the Ten Commandments as a covenant of obedience with Israel. His blessing was upon them as they chose to keep His commandments.

### LEVITICUS AND HOLINESS

Moses wrote the book of Leviticus to explain how Israel was to live as a holy nation in fellowship with God. There were to be special offerings that pictured the life and service of Christ. There were feasts to commemorate events in the life of Israel, each one pointing to the Messiah, who was to come. There were prescribed sacrifices that pointed to the shedding of Christ's blood that must be made for the forgiveness of sins. God said to Israel: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

### NUMBERS DON'T LIE

God instructed Moses to take a census and organize the people by tribe before setting off for Canaan. God used a cloud to guide their travels by day and a pillar of fire by night. It had been God's plan that Israel should go straight into the Promised Land. However, the people murmured against God. They showed a lack of faith in God's ability to overcome their enemies and take them into the land. They were only 11 days away from reaching Canaan but God sent them back into the desert to wander in the wilderness 40 years until the faithless generation that had left Egypt died out.

### JOSHUA STEPS UP

God would not allow Moses to lead the Israelites into the land because of an incident in the desert where Moses showed a lack of respect for God (Numbers 20:12). Leadership was passed to Joshua, and he bravely led the nation in the battle of Jericho as the people entered the Promised Land.

### JUDGES AND KINGS

As long as Israel honored God and obeyed His commandments, the people were blessed. When the people cried out for help, they repented of their sin and God sent a judge, or military leader, to defeat their enemies. They were grateful for a time, only to return to idolatry. The judges God sent included Deborah, Gideon, Samson and others. In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his or her own eyes.

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## **KINGS AND CHRONICLES**

When the people demanded a king, the prophet Samuel was angry because they did not see God as their king. Yet, God allowed Samuel to anoint Saul as their first king—but Saul proved to be a terrible ruler. Soon God showed Samuel that David, the young giant-slayer, would be the king to unify the people, help them to worship God and bring to the nation good fortune and prosperity. David did this before experiencing his own personal moral lapse. Eventually, his son Solomon, wisest of all men, led the nation into more prosperity, but his own alliances with foreign nations through his marriages eventually caused the nation to split in two. Now the chosen seed of Abraham had been split into two groups: 10 tribes in the north formed Israel; and two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, in the south formed the nation of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital.

## **PROMISES! PROMISES!**

The people had witnessed the blessings of their faithfulness to God, but their own willful spirits could not sustain such devotion. King after king in both Israel and Judah failed to lead the people in lasting commitment to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Still, God promised to bless them if only they would repent and obey. God promised a great deliverer—the Messiah—who would come to set up an eternal kingdom. The people longed for such a time but failed to obey the truth they had been given. How would God deal with their disobedience and lack of faith? They had failed to live up to His calling. Now they would live with the consequences of their decisions.

# TEACHING PLAN

## JOURNEY 2: GO FOR THE GOLD!

### *God Keeps His Promises*

<p><b>KEY PASSAGES</b> Genesis 12; Exodus 20; Luke 2</p>	<p><b>KEY VERSE</b> “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” —2 Peter 3:9</p>
<p><b>KEY WORD</b> <i>Promises</i></p>	<p><b>KEY THOUGHT</b> Claim God’s promises as you live each day.</p>



### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

**CONNECT** the Big Room experience with the Bible story by asking the students questions about what they saw.

- a. “What promises were involved in today’s episode?”
- b. “Which one of the characters was upset about a broken promise?”
- c. “How did things work out in the end?”



### TABLE TALK 1: *The Big Picture*

**HAVE** everyone open their Bible to the table of contents page. **EXPLAIN** how the Old Testament is organized into groups: The Books of Law, Books of History, the Books of Poetry, the Major Prophets, and the Minor Prophets. **ASK** the Table Group Leaders (TGLs) to help the students turn through the pages to locate one or two books in each section. *[Be alert to younger students who are struggling to find things in the Bible. They will need a little extra help and encouragement, but it is well worth the time.]*



### EXPLORING THE BIBLE PASSAGES

*[Based on the age level of your group, choose one or more of the following activities to explore the lesson.]*

#### A. A WALK THROUGH THE BIBLE

**TAKE** the students on a walk through Genesis and the Books of History. As you turn through the pages, talk about the major events that took place. Be sure to mention the following people/events.

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- Adam
- Eve
- Fall/Satan
- Noah
- Nations
- Abraham
- Sarah
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph
- Israel, God's Chosen People
- Moses
- Samson
- Gideon
- Ruth
- Boaz
- David
- Goliath
- King Saul
- King David
- King
- Solomon
- Isaiah
- Joseph
- Mary
- Jesus
- The Church

## B. A HUMAN TIMELINE

Having reviewed the major events in the first part of the Bible, you are now ready to form a human chain to link all the people/events together. Make one name tag for each of the people/events listed above. Mix up the events/people among the groups. **ALLOW** each table group to organize themselves in sequence (some events/people will be missing in each group since they have been split among the groups) and then **HAVE** each table group connect with other groups and form one large line in the correct sequence across the room.

## C. A CAST OF CHARACTERS

Here's another way to distribute the name badges and reinforce the lesson:

- Divide the class into two groups. Place the name tags on the backs of students in one group. Students in the other group can read the name tags silently and give clues to the first group about what their name tags say. Students in the first group will try to guess who they are.
- Or, have the students pair up and try to identify the Bible person whose names are on their backs. When a "named" student guesses who she is, have her partner take her name tag off of her back and she can replace it on the front and then step to one side.
- When everyone has been identified, ask the group of students who were giving the clues to arrange the Bible people in the order in which they appeared in Scripture. If they need help with this, they can refer to their Bible or the Bible Timelines in the classrooms.

## PROMISES! PROMISES!

Now, with the Bible persons all in place, the next step is to help the students match the promises God made with the people God was using to develop His plan of salvation (GPS). (Note: There are 21 Bible people/events and only 12 promises, so not every person will have a matching promise.)

- Write out on a half sheet of red paper each promise in the chart to the right.
- Give the red promise sheets to the students who gave the clues.
- Each student will read his/her promise and then decide to which Bible person it belongs.

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- Each Bible person will take the red promise sheet and hold it in front of him.

## GPS: GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

**TAKE** a long piece of red cord/string/yarn and **WALK DOWN** the row of Bible people. **RUN** the red thread through the hands of the students representing each Bible person. Make sure they are lined up in the order given above.

Below, each promise is aligned with its correct Bible person.

BIBLE PERSON/ EVENT	GOD'S PROMISE
Adam, Eve, Satan	<b>Genesis 3:15</b> – A Savior will crush the head of Satan even though Satan will bruise His heel.
Noah	<b>Genesis 9:11</b> – I will keep my promises (covenant) with you. I will never flood the earth again.
Abraham	<b>Genesis 12:2–3</b> – I will make you a great nation and bless all the families of the earth through you.
Isaac	<b>Genesis 22:17</b> – I will give you many offspring who will bless all the nations as I blessed your father Abraham.
Jacob	<b>Genesis 35:10</b> – I will give to you all that I promised Abraham and Isaac. Your name will now be changed to Israel.
Israel	<b>Exodus 19:5</b> – You will be my treasured possession. I will give you my commandments to keep as sign of my covenant with you.
Boaz, Ruth	<b>Ruth 4:13, 21–20</b> – They were the great-grandparents of a royal line of kings who produced a king with an eternal kingdom.
David	<b>2 Samuel 5:1–3</b> – He was God's chosen king for Israel. From his line would come the King of Kings.
Isaiah	<b>Isaiah 7:14</b> – This prophet spoke about a man born of a virgin whose name would be Immanuel.
Joseph, Mary	<b>Luke 2:3–5</b> – God used their faith to bring His Son into the world.
Jesus	<b>Luke 2:7</b> – The long-awaited Messiah had finally come into the world.
The Church	<b>Matthew 16:18</b> – Jesus said, "... on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

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You will have literally laid out the plan of salvation in front of everyone.

- Have the students repeat to you the names of the people who prepared the way for Jesus to come.
- Ask them where they would place themselves in the timeline. (*in the Church*)
- Explain that we are in the Church Age now as we wait for Jesus to return and take us back to live with Him.
- Ask how a person can be sure if he/she will be able to go back with Jesus when He comes.
- Listen to their answers and then explain the plan of salvation. Close in prayer.



### BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITY: *Promise Box*

**Supplies:** wooden Bible boxes, “promise” strips of paper, preprinted “promise” sticker, pencils/pens, Sharpies®/markers

- Distribute pencils/pens, Sharpies®/markers and “promise” strips of paper among the classroom.
- Provide one gift box and one “promise” sticker to each student.
- Instruct the students to affix the sticker to the top of the box then write one of God’s promises on each strip of paper. Place God’s promises in the gift box. [*Use the promises listed at the end of the Teaching Plan.*]
- Suggest to the students they may wish to decorate their gift boxes with additional Christian symbols of love and promises such as the cross and rainbow.
- Discuss with the students how God always keeps His promises. They can look in their promise box and read His promises any time they feel troubled or need help.



### APPLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

Discuss the following questions in table groups.

1. How can someone discover God’s promises? (*read the Bible*)
2. Describe any promises you already know that are found in the Bible.
3. How can believing in those promises help you? (*gives you hope, peace, confidence, security*)
4. Which of the following promises are you learning to count on?
  - Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).
  - Jesus is coming back (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).
  - I am with you; do not worry about anything (Philippians 4:6–7).
  - I will be with you to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:19–20).
  - I want God to guide my steps (Proverbs 3:5–6).
  - I want God’s will for my life (Psalm 37:4).
5. Would you consider yourself a good promise keeper? Why or why not?
6. How do we know God will keep His promises? (Hebrews 6:18)





## A LOOK IN THE BOOK

Have the students locate the promises written on the red paper in their Bibles and mark them with a red star or underline.



## SCRIPTURE MEMORY: 2 Peter 3:9

**EXPLAIN** that God's promises to us are more precious than gold or silver or any type of paper money. Because God keeps His promises, we can place our total faith and trust in Him. Sometimes we don't always understand His timing, but He always does what He says He will do.

- **READ** the verse aloud and **EXPLAIN** what it means.
- **POINT OUT** these key words: *promise, slow, patient, perish, repentance*.
- **WRITE** each word across the picture of a coin.
- **PROVIDE** each table group with a set of these coins.
- **HAVE** each table group put the coins in order so that the verse is clearly written out.
- **ASK** them to say the verse over and over until everyone in the group can say it together.
- **HAVE** each group stand before the class and say the verse aloud from memory.

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” —2 Peter 3:9



## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do the letters GPS mean when we are talking about the Bible? (*God's Plan of Salvation*)
2. Where did God's plan for redeeming mankind first appear in the Bible? (*Genesis 3:15*)
3. What does God's salvation provide for man? (*hope, peace, eternal life*)
4. How is Jesus connected to Abraham? (*Jesus was born a Jew; Abraham was the patriarch, the father of the Jewish people.*)
5. How are Ruth and Boaz connected to King David? (*great-grandparents*)
6. What was God's plan for the people called the children of Israel? (*He wanted them to tell the world who the true God really was.*)
7. Why did they fail at this task? (*They became unfaithful to God and worshipped idols and rejected His authority over them.*)
8. What eventually happened to them? (*They were captured by foreign nations and taken away as slaves.*)
9. How is Jesus connected to the Jewish people? (*He was a Jew Himself.*)
10. Why did God have to send Jesus? (*to rescue men from the punishment of their sin and keep them from eternal separation from God*)