

Genesis: Christ Our Covenant Creator

Overview:

Genesis is the book of beginnings and describes the origins of our life and faith. If we summarize the entire Bible into the themes of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Renewal, Genesis contains the first three. From nothing, God made everything so the universe would declare His glory (Psalm 19:1). God made Adam and Eve in His image so we could lovingly obey and worship Him. After the Fall, sin and death began to devastate God's creation, resulting in a catastrophic flood. God chose Abraham so He could have a covenant people to love and redeem. Abraham's faith and family would eventually become the nation of Israel. Our future Savior will be revealed through the promised seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15) and the faithful lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Joseph.

Introduction Starter:

Story of a railroad worker responsible for trains crossing over a bridge. One day his son was playing on the bridge when an unexpected train came barreling towards it. The father had to decide whether to save his son by diverting the train and killing its passengers or save the passengers by sacrificing his son. What choice would you make?

Main Idea:

God has provided people of faith salvation through the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son.

Expositional Outline: Genesis 22:1–19

1. The Lord will test the faith of His people (Genesis 22:1–8).

- The Lord had tested Abraham's faith many times in preparation for this great test.
- It is amazing that Abraham obeyed the Lord's command while knowing God's promise.
- Abraham's faith is revealed by declaring God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice.

2. The Lord will provide for those whose faith is tested (Genesis 22:9–14).

- Abraham's faith is expressed as he binds and places Isaac on the altar.
- Isaac displays faith also by trusting his father as he allows himself to be offered.
- The Lord sends His angel to intervene and provides a substitute sacrifice.
- Abraham named the place "The Lord Will Provide" (Yahweh-yireh).

3. The Lord will bless those who pass the test of faith (Genesis 22:15–19).

- The angel announces the covenant blessings to Abraham.
- God rewards Abraham's obedience.
- The whole earth will be blessed because of Abraham's faith.

Christ Connection:

Jesus is seen in Abraham's obedience to God's will and his son Isaac's willingness to be offered. Most of all, Jesus is seen as the lamb God provided as a substitutionary sacrifice (John 1:29).

Concluding Idea/Application:

God tests and blesses His children. First comes testing, followed by our obedience that results in God's provision.

WEEK 2

Exodus: Christ Our Passover Lamb

Overview:

After years of slavery and captivity, God responded when His people cried out for help. He raised up a deliverer, Moses, who performed miraculous signs in Egypt while asking Pharaoh to let the people go. The tenth, and final, plague resulted in the death of the firstborn throughout the land and the Passover festival for Israel. Once God's people escaped through the Red Sea, God began to instruct His people on how to live holy lives. Through the giving of the Ten Commandments and the instructions of the tabernacle, Israel could live in the presence of God by being obedient to His Word.

Introduction Starter:

Where do you turn for help? Each season of life brings storms, those troubles and afflictions that we all go through. In the storms of life, we need something or someone to shelter us from the chaos all around. When we live in sin, we can especially feel the effects that the brokenness of this world can rain down on us.

Main Idea:

When God sees the blood of Jesus covering us, He passes over our sin.

Expositional Outline: Exodus 11–12

1. Saved through the death of a firstborn son (Exodus 11)

- The tenth plague upon Egypt would be the death of all the firstborn in the land.
- Israel was referred to as God's firstborn (Exodus 4:22); now the firstborn of Egypt will experience death.

2. Saved through the sacrifice of a Spotless Lamb (Exodus 12)

- The Israelites were to take the blood of the lamb and put it on the wooden doorposts so that the Lord would pass over their house.
- The meal was to be eaten quickly, and the people were to be dressed for travel.
- Passover was also established as a memorial and meant to be celebrated annually.
- During their flight from Egypt, Israel plundered the Egyptians for items that would later be used to build the tabernacle.

Christ Connection:

In the Gospels, Christ is presented as a new Moses who does miraculous signs and instructs God's people from a mountain (Matthew 5–7). The plagues in Egypt are like some of the events that will happen at the end of days as recorded in Revelation. Using the imagery of Exodus 11–12, Paul concludes that Christ is our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). He is both the firstborn Son who died on our behalf and the Spotless Lamb come to take away the sins of the world. Furthermore, the end of Exodus describes the intricate building of the tabernacle where God's presence would be, while Christ is God who tabernacled among us (John 1:14).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Those who trust in Christ do not avoid storms in life, but God provides refuge during them. As our Passover Lamb, Jesus takes on the wrath of God so that we might experience salvation. He covers our sin through His atoning death.

Leviticus: Christ Our Atoning Sacrifice

Overview:

Leviticus is a challenging book due to its many laws and instructions. Rather than dismissing it as ancient history, Leviticus reveals the holiness of God and His desire for us to be holy (19:2; 1 Peter 1:15–16). Obedience to the law sets God’s people apart from other nations. The sacrifices, priestly duties, and purity laws foreshadow the atoning work of Jesus on the cross (1 John 2:2).

Introduction Starter:

Have you ever needed help and a friend says, “I’ve got you covered”? Good friends help you finish where you fall short. The Bible tells us we all fall short of God’s glory and are destined for hell unless our sins are covered.

Main Idea:

Because of Jesus, we have a Great High Priest and an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Expositional Outline: Leviticus 16

1. Mercy is available because we have a Great High Priest (16:1–6).

- The Day of Atonement is the holiest day in Israel’s year.
- The high priest could only enter the Most Holy Place once a year.
- The high priest would first make atonement for himself and then for the people.

2. Mercy is applied because the blood of Christ covers all our sins (16:7–19).

- Two goats represent Israel’s need for propitiation and expiation.
- The sprinkling of blood upon the mercy seat appeases God’s wrath.
- The blood sacrifice would cover the sins of Israel but only temporarily.

3. Mercy is given because Christ has carried our sins far away from us (16:20–34).

- The high priest lays his hands upon the scapegoat and transfers Israel’s sins upon it.
- The goat is carried away into the wilderness, never to return.
- This symbolizes the removal of our sin “as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our Great High Priest who entered into a more perfect tabernacle not made with human hands (Hebrews 9:11–12; 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins on the cross, and He cleanses our sins through the sprinkling of His blood (Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 2:2).

Concluding Idea/Application:

When we gather for worship, we do not need to bring the blood of goats and bulls because God has wholly covered our sins through the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus, our Great High Priest. We can live forgiven because in Christ, God has us covered our sins!

Numbers: Christ Our Merciful Healer

Overview:

Israel's rebellion and wilderness wanderings are on full display in the book of Numbers. The book opens with a census of the entire Israelite community (Numbers 1) and a specific census of the Levitical priests (Numbers 3). Later, the priests are given a blessing that they can pronounce over God's people (Numbers 6:22–27). When the Israelites complained about their food, God was quick to provide (Numbers 11). However, when they refused to enter the promised land based on the report of some spies, God promised that the vast majority of the adults would not enter Canaan (Numbers 13–14). The rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16) and Israel's later worship of Baal (Numbers 25) further highlight the sinful rebellion of God's chosen people.

Introduction Starter:

What causes you to grumble and complain? Do you long for the “good ole days” but forget the problems you faced in the past? Like the Israelites, we tend to grumble before the Lord, often forgetting the hardships He has brought us through and saved us from.

Main Idea:

All who look to the risen and reigning Christ will be saved from the sting of death.

Expositional Outline: Numbers 21:4–9

1. When we refuse to acknowledge God's provision, we experience death (vv. 4–6).
 - As had become common in their wilderness journey, the people grew impatient (v. 4).
 - The Israelites longed for Egypt, seemingly forgetting their captivity there (v. 5).
 - In response to the people's complaints, the Lord sent poisonous snakes (v. 6).

2. When we do acknowledge God's provision, we experience healing (vv. 7–9).
 - Israel realized they needed a mediator, so Moses interceded (v. 7).
 - God instructed Moses to make a snake image and put it on a pole for all to see (v. 8).
 - Those who looked at the snake recovered from the poisonous bite (v. 9).

Christ Connection:

Jesus references the story of Numbers 21 in John 3:14–15, saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness. The comparison of Christ and the serpent goes all the way back to the garden where God told the serpent that he would strike the heel of Eve's offspring, but one day, the offspring would crush the head of the snake (Genesis 3:15). Christ suffered and died on our behalf, being stung by death before crushing the serpent in total defeat. Elsewhere, Christ's obedience is seen in the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1–21; Hebrews 10:5–7). Furthermore, Paul references the story of Numbers 20 to say that the rock stricken to provide water was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1–4).

Concluding Idea/Application:

God's people were saved by looking up in faith and trusting that He would keep his word to save them. Yet, they were in this position initially because of their lack of faith in God's provision. Our grumbling and complaining against God reveals a lack of faith for Him to provide on our behalf. We too need to turn to Christ in faith and look at His past provision.

Deuteronomy: Christ Our Great Prophet

Overview:

The book of Deuteronomy (“second law”) is the last book of the Pentateuch (“five books”) and a summary of its events. Moses wrote this for the nation of Israel before they crossed into the promised land so that the next generation of God’s people could remember their history and covenant with God. Moses failed in his leadership over a stubborn people and promised a future prophet who would be greater than him. There are blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, which anticipates the story of Israel’s future and their need for a Messiah.

Introduction Starter:

Have you ever felt “struck down” by someone’s words? Even though they did not physically assault you, it hurt nonetheless. When Moses struck the rock because he was angry at Israel’s constant complaining, he did more than disobey. His actions struck the heart of God, figuratively speaking, as Paul indicated that the rock Moses struck was Christ. Moses’s offense to God and failure to lead pointed to the need for a greater prophet for God’s people.

Main Idea:

Jesus is our Great Prophet who speaks the very Words of God that we must listen to and obey.

Expositional Outline: Deuteronomy 18:15–19

1. The Law reminds us to give loyal love and obedience to God (review of chapters 1–18).

2. Christ came in the likeness of Moses to deliver us.

- Both were saved from being slaughtered from birth (Exodus 1–2; Matthew 2).
- Both made the sea obey them (Exodus 14; Matthew 8).
- Both went up a mountain to meet with God (Exodus 19; Matthew 17).
- Both were rejected by their people (Numbers 11; John 1).
- Both experienced deliverance from death (Exodus 14; Acts 2).

3. Jesus is our Great Prophet who speaks the Words of God for us to obey (18:15–19).

- Jesus is the prophet God raised up and we are to listen to Him (18:15–17).
- Jesus speaks with God’s authority and we must heed them (18:18; Matthew 28:18–20).
- God will hold accountable anyone who does not believe and keep His commands (18:19, John 14:15).

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our greater prophet and final mediator between God and His people. He alone speaks the words that give eternal life (John 6:63–68).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Because of Jesus, we have the words that give us life and teach us to be holy. Our challenge is to obey Him and reap the blessings of that obedience.

Joshua: Christ Our Conquering Warrior

Overview:

After the death of Moses, Joshua took over as the Lord's newly appointed leader. Based on his own experience in Numbers 13, he sent out spies into the land to gauge the enemy. Joshua then led the people across the Jordan, where they set up a memorial to remember what the Lord had done. Throughout the ensuing conquest, Joshua led the people in a war to inhabit the promised land of Canaan. Once all the tribes had received their allotments, Joshua gave them a final appeal to choose the Lord as God rather than the false gods of Canaan.

Introduction Starter:

What qualities do you look for in a hero? Many look for someone strong, courageous, brave, and willing to stand up for justice. When we feel overwhelmed in the battles of life, we look for a hero we can trust in to fight on our behalf.

Main Idea:

To enter into God's promised rest, we need the right Warrior on our side.

Expositional Outline: Joshua 5:1–15

1. We need a Warrior who obeys the Word of God (vv. 1–9).

- By God's command, Joshua circumcised the Israelite men, a practice that had been abandoned during the wilderness wanderings (vv. 2–5).
- Circumcision was an outward sign, but the true motivation was obedience (v. 6).
- God graciously rolled away our disgrace, as noted by the place of Gilgal (v. 9).

2. We need a Warrior who reminds us of our salvation (vv. 10–12).

- Joshua also reinstated the Passover festival for Israel.
- Passover was a time to remember the salvation the Lord had provided in the Exodus.

3. We need a Warrior who defeats all enemies who oppose God (vv. 13–15).

- Joshua encountered a man with a drawn sword in a way that resembled Moses's encounter with Yahweh in Exodus 3.
- Both the man and Joshua are types of Christ, our Conquering Warrior.
- From Jericho to Ai to the kings of Joshua 10, Joshua defeated the other armies.

Christ Connection:

Joshua shares a name with Jesus, meaning the "Yahweh saves." Like Joshua, Jesus was fully obedient to the Word of God. Jesus also brings salvation to the nations, including being in the family line of Rahab the prostitute (Matthew 1:5). During the course of the conquest, enemies remained in the land that would be a thorn in Israel's side. In the future, Jesus will fully defeat all enemies forever (1 Corinthians 15:25). Just as Joshua gave the Israelites temporary rest in the promised land, there remains a future Sabbath rest for believers (Hebrews 4:8–11).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Christ is the hero we need. He has defeated all enemies, including death and the grave. We can trust in Him for the battles of life because He will never let us down or be defeated. Though He is a fierce Warrior, He is also a gracious Savior who gives us true peace and rest.

Judges: Christ Our Strong Deliverer

Overview:

The book of Judges is an unfortunate sequel to the book of Joshua. After conquering Canaan and distributing the promised land among the tribes of Israel, the Israelites failed to completely wipe out the Canaanites and eventually began to adopt their “gods” into their worship. Because of their disobedience and idolatry, God allows His people to be oppressed until they cry out for help. He would then raise up a judge or deliverer to set them free, and the people would repeat the cycle. This book longs for a great and final deliverer—Jesus the Messiah.

Introduction Starter:

When was the last time you felt utterly defeated? Years ago, the ABC television network aired a weekly show called “The Wide World of Sports,” making the phrase “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat” famous. Just as we have experienced this, so did the nation of Israel between the victories of Joshua and the agonizing defeat during the era of the Judges. The consequences of our sin can be devastating but God is always there and ready to rescue us when we repent.

Main Idea:

Jesus is our strong deliverer and the only one who can rescue us from our unfaithfulness.

Expositional Outline: Judges 6:11–23

1. We must avoid the cycle of sin’s consequences.

- Overview of the book of Judges
- The repeated cycle of Israel’s unfaithfulness and God’s faithfulness: Rebellion leading to Oppression leading to Remorse leading to Deliverance by a temporary judge/savior

2. The Lord’s strength will deliver us from the consequences of our sin even when we are weak (6:1–15).

- The oppression of the Midianites and the promise of the Lord to deliver them (6:1–9).
- The angel of the Lord confronts Gideon in his weakness (6:11–15).

3. The Lord is the rescuer for all who live by faith in Him (6:16–23).

- The Lord promises to be with Gideon.
- The Lord strengthens Gideon, and he defies the enemy’s gods.
- The Lord uses a tiny army to defeat his enemy (7:1–23).

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our strong deliverer who came to rescue us from the consequences of our sinful rebellion.

Concluding Idea/Application:

There is great danger in idolatry, and our sinful rebellion’s consequences can be agonizing. Yet, in Jesus, we have a Deliverer who can sympathize with our weakness (Hebrews 4:15). Like Paul, we take pleasure in our weakness for the sake of our Savior because when we are weak, He is strong (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Ruth: Christ Our Family Redeemer

Overview:

Although Ruth is the namesake of the book, the story centers of the life of Naomi, whose journey is like the wanderings of Israel. Just as God's people complained about their circumstances following their exodus from Egypt and drank bitter water (Exodus 15:22–27), Naomi claimed her life to be bitter after the death of her husband and two sons (Ruth 1:20–21). Along with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, she returns to Bethlehem, where they encounter a prominent relative, Boaz. His kindness to Ruth increases from leaving extra grain for her to taking her as his wife. However, when a son is born to Ruth and Boaz, the women of the town focus on the child's relationship with Naomi (Ruth 4:13–17). Like Naomi, Israel was promised redemption through a future Son.

Introduction Starter:

We all experience brokenness. Perhaps it is through the death of a loved one, a bad health diagnosis, or headlines from around the world. Through the grace of God, Naomi and Ruth experience redemption from their brokenness.

Main Idea:

Christ redeems us from the brokenness and emptiness of our lives by purchasing us with His blood.

Expositional Outline: Ruth 4:1–22

1. God redeems those who are far from Him (vv. 1–13).

- Ruth began the entire narrative as a foreigner who did not know God, but she was brought into covenant relationship with Him.
- Boaz, at great cost to himself, redeems Ruth and takes her as his bride.
- The Lord blessed Ruth and gave her a son.

2. God redeems those who have abandoned him (vv. 14–22).

- While Ruth is the mother of this new son, the focus is on Naomi. As the women talk to her (v. 14), she becomes a mother to the child (v. 16), and “a son has been born to Naomi” (v. 17).
- Naomi, along with her family, had left Bethlehem initially and abandoned the promises of God.
- Then, through His kindness, God redeemed Naomi, just as He had Israel.

Christ Connection:

Obed, the son born to Boaz and Ruth, is the grandfather of King David as well as being in the line of Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:21–22; Matthew 1:5; Luke 3:32). Like Boaz, Christ is a redeemer, even bringing those from other nations into relationship with God. Jesus would later be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, where Ruth and Naomi lived.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Whether you are feeling empty, bitter, or broken, Christ our family Redeemer came to bring His people back into relationship with Him. Those redeemed by the greater Son of David are part of a great multicultural, multigenerational family of God.

1–2 Samuel: Christ Our Compassionate King

Overview:

The books of 1–2 Samuel were initially contained in one book, which entails the dramatic transition in Israel's history from the era of the judges to the times of the kings. King Saul was the people's choice, but he failed to have the faith needed to lead God's covenant people. David was a man after God's own heart, and he would faithfully lead Israel to become a united kingdom, foreshadowing the greater kingdom Christ would establish. David stands alongside Abraham to represent God's kingdom and covenant with His people that Jesus would culminate at His first and second comings.

Introduction Starter:

When was the last time you struggled with revenge? The old saying is often true: "Revenge, like poison, consumes the vessel that holds it." Rather than seeking revenge, the gospel would have us extend grace instead. Rather than returning evil for evil, we can return evil with good. David set an example that culminated in Christ's grace toward us.

Main Idea:

Jesus is our compassionate King who grants us mercy rather than vengeance.

Expositional Outline: 2 Samuel 9:1–13

1. Rather than seeking revenge, we can choose to show Christlike mercy (9:1–5).

- King David had conquered all his enemies and began to settle into his kingdom.
- David wanted to keep a promise made to his close friend Jonathan to care for anyone still alive from Saul's family.
- A cripple named Mephibosheth was found. He was crippled as a baby when Saul died.

2. Rather than returning evil with evil, we can return evil with good (9:6–10).

- Mephibosheth was brought to the king's palace expecting judgment and death.
- David removed his fears and kept his promise to show mercy rather than take revenge.

3. Rather than using our power over the weak, we should seek to exalt them just as Christ did for us (9:11–13).

- David showed Mephibosheth mercy and made him a part of his family.
- David blessed him rather than punishing him for his father's sins.
- Christ came in the likeness of King David to bring sinners into His eternal family.

Christ Connection:

Like David's example, Jesus Christ is our compassionate King who came to show us mercy and bless those who show mercy to others.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Like Mephibosheth, we are crippled by our sins and come hobbling to the cross with nothing to offer our King. He died for our sins and now asks us to love the least of people and show mercy because we have received such great mercy (Micah 6:8).

1–2 Kings: Christ Our Covenant Protector

Overview:

Originally one book, 1–2 Kings trace the downfall of the united kingdom under David and Solomon to the divided kingdom under various kings, many of whom were evil rulers. Second Kings ends with God’s people being taken into exile for their unfaithfulness. The temple became a picture of the people’s downfall. In 1 Kings 6–8, the temple was built and dedicated in a glorious ceremony, while 2 Kings ends with the temple being burned. However, there are a few faithful kings of Judah in these books that gave hope for a better future King to come.

Introduction Starter:

Have you ever broken a promise before? Perhaps a promise to meet up with someone, a promise to help out with a certain project, or a promise to have a needed conversation. Promises can be broken when we forget or when we intentionally choose not to honor our word. In 1–2 Kings, Israel broke covenant promises with God in both ways. They forgot the book of the law that contained God’s words in the temple, while at the same time, many people chose to live contrary to God’s law.

Main Idea:

Despite our unfaithfulness, Christ is faithful to keep His covenant promises to us.

Expositional Outline: 2 Kings 22-23

1. God’s covenant demands we remember God’s Word (2 Kings 22).

- Even at the young age of eight years old, Josiah was noted for walking in the way of his ancestor David and not turning from God’s way (vv. 1–2).
- During the temple repairs, the book of the law was found and read to Josiah (vv. 8–10).
- The young king wept in response to God’s Word and inquired of the Lord because of the people’s disobedience (vv. 11–20).

2. God’s covenant demands we reform according to God’s law (2 Kings 23).

- Josiah renewed the covenant in view of all the people (vv. 1–3).
- The king led in reforming the worship of the people, removing the high places and altars to false gods (vv. 4–20).
- After reading about the Passover, Josiah reinstated the memorial for the people to remember God’s provision of salvation in the past (vv. 21–23).

Christ Connection:

Prior to Josiah’s death, the Bible remarks that there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart, soul, and strength (2 Kings 23:25). That is, until Jesus Christ. In fact, Josiah is noted as being in the line of Jesus (Matthew 1:11). Christ established a new covenant that would change our old, sinful hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–33). In this new covenant, Jesus serves as our Great High Priest who established the covenant with his precious blood (Hebrews 8:1–13).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Even though we are prone to break our promises, God has never broken a promise He has made to us. In fact, all of His promises are “Yes and Amen” in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20). Like the covenant between a husband and a wife, God is gracious to keep His promises and protect the covenant He has made with us.

1–2 Chronicles: Christ Our Glorious Temple

Overview:

Like the stories of 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles were originally one book placed at the very end of the Hebrew Bible because it contains a beautiful summary of the Old Testament. The genealogies and stories reveal God’s covenant faithfulness and the hope for His people’s redemption. Most of 1 Chronicles revisits the life of King David, the most significant type of Christ in the Old Testament. Most of 2 Chronicles focuses on the righteous kings of Judah who followed in David’s steps. Besides David, the temple plays a significant role in displaying the hope for God to be present amongst His people. Jesus, God’s Son incarnate, would one day act as the ultimate expression of God’s presence with His people.

Introduction Starter:

The first home you purchase is a very special place. It’s not so much because of the size or structure of the home but because of the life you live there and the family you raise in that place. A house becomes a home when you place your heart in it, and your people share their lives together in that place. The church should be similar when it is centered upon Christ, who came to dwell amongst His people.

Main Idea:

Jesus Christ is our glorious temple who came to forgive and dwell with His people.

Expositional Outline: 2 Chronicles 5–6

1. God is glorified when we proclaim His faithful love (5:1–14).

- Solomon took the materials David had collected and built the temple.
- Solomon gathered the leaders of Israel to assemble for the temple’s dedication.
- Once everything was completed according to plan, Solomon led the people to worship like they had never seen before.

2. God is glorified when we seek His forgiveness (6:1–42).

- The Lord is glorified by remembering His acts of forgiveness.
- The Lord is glorified when we recount His grace in our past.
- The Lord is glorified when we confess our sins and seek His favor.

Christ Connection:

Solomon asked in his prayer, “Will God indeed live on earth with humans?” Jesus came so that God would dwell or “tabernacle” among us (John 1:14). His disciples observed His glory just like Solomon observed the glory of God in the temple he built.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Jesus came as our glorious temple to redeem us. In Christ, we receive the mercy of forgiveness. As Christians, our bodies are now the temple where God resides through His Holy Spirit. We must strive to be holy because God considers our bodies as holy vessels for His glory (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Ezra: Christ Our Devoted Priest

Overview:

Together, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of how God's people returned to Jerusalem to reestablish a covenant community after the exile. Ezra begins with the decree of Cyrus to release the people of God, led by Zerubbabel, to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1–6:22). Years later, Ezra the scribe arrived to instruct the people in the Law of Moses, including practices such as repentance and confession (Ezra 7:1–10:44). While the wall is the main focus in Nehemiah, the rebuilt temple and covenant practices are at the forefront in Ezra.

Introduction Starter:

Sometimes you need a go-between. Nervous teenagers need a wingman (or woman) to talk to a crush. Professional athletes have agents to negotiate contracts on their behalf. In the Bible, God's people needed a go-between, a mediator called the high priest. Moses filled this role in the Pentateuch, and now Ezra continues the priesthood and shares many characteristics with Moses.

Main Idea:

Each of us have sinned, and, therefore, we need someone who can minister on our behalf before God.

Expositional Outline: Ezra 7:1–10

1. We have a priest with the proper descent (vv. 1–5).

- Only those from Aaron and his lineage were allowed in the priesthood (Exodus 28:1–3), just as Ezra is described in these verses.
- Although Ezra is in the line of Aaron, he will often be compared to Moses.
- Ezra highlights the need for a greater Aaron and a greater Moses to come.

2. We have a priest with the proper determination (vv. 6–10).

- In addition to being a priest, he was also a skilled scribe (v. 6).
- Ezra was determined to study the Bible, obey, and teach it (v. 10).
- To do all of his ministry, Ezra needed supernatural help, which is why God's hand was on him (vv. 6,9).

Christ Connection:

Jesus is the greater Ezra. He committed himself to the Word of God because all the Bible, including the Law of Moses, points to Him (Luke 24:25–27; John 5:39–47). When Jesus taught the Bible, people were amazed at the authority with which He spoke (Matthew 7:28–29). As a high priest, Christ came not from the line of Aaron that was corrupted with sin but from the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:1–28). Jesus, our Great High Priest, has sat down at the right hand of God because His work was finished on the cross (Hebrews 8:1). Indeed, His ministry as priest is superior to Aaron and Ezra (Hebrews 8:6).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Because of our sin, we need a go-between. Jesus is the greater Moses and Ezra, the high priest who never stops interceding on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25). Putting trust in a mediator means admitting that we need help from outside of ourselves. Ultimately, only those who have trusted in Jesus's priestly ministry will be allowed into the presence of God.

Nehemiah: Christ our Faithful Intercessor

Overview:

Nehemiah is the counterpart to the story of Ezra. Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the Persian emperor, risked his life by asking to return to Jerusalem to help reconstruct the city. In only fifty-two days, Nehemiah led the returning captives to rebuild the walls around the city of David amidst great opposition. Every available Jew was called to the task, and Nehemiah led them despite many attempts to intimidate his leadership. As many exiles returned to Jerusalem, Ezra and the priests opened the scrolls containing the Scriptures and read God's Word to God's people. A festival and day of mourning over sin was held, and the returning Israelites renewed their covenant vow to be faithful to the Lord. Nehemiah established reforms for the new community of believers.

Introduction Starter:

Sometimes, we need a negotiator to help resolve conflicts or help two parties find a way to communicate. A good negotiator will bring both parties together to resolve the distance and conflict. Because our sin creates distance between us and God, it is impossible to have fellowship with God without someone to intercede on our behalf. That person is Jesus.

Main Idea:

Jesus Christ is our faithful intercessor who has provided a way for us to plead directly to God.

Expositional Outline: Nehemiah 1

1. We need an intercessor in times of trouble (1:1–3).

- Nehemiah received difficult news about the safety of the Jews in Jerusalem.
- The once glorious city was lying in ruins and in desperate need of repair.
- The Jews had no defense against their enemies.

2. We need an intercessor who keeps his covenant promises (1:4–9).

- The Lord keeps His gracious promises.
- The Lord is attentive to our prayers.
- The Lord hears our pleas.

3. We need an intercessor who is attentive to our prayers (1:10–11).

- We can appeal to the gracious character of God.
- We can appeal to the compassion of God.
- We can pray to Christ, who is our Great Mediator.

Christ Connection:

Just as Nehemiah interceded on behalf of the struggling Jews in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ is our faithful intercessor who prays for us to the heavenly Father (1 Timothy 2:5).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Because of Jesus, we can direct our prayers and pleas to God, knowing that His grace and compassion will be given to those who seek Him. Strength, forgiveness, and blessings are available for God's people when they appeal to Him.

Esther: Christ Our Sovereign Deliverer

Overview:

The story of Esther provides the background for the Jewish festival of Purim, where the Jews were saved from government-sanctioned destruction. While men like Ezra and Nehemiah had journeyed back to Jerusalem after the exile, some Jews, like Esther and her cousin Mordecai, had stayed in Persia. The evil Haman, exalted by King Ahasuerus, made plans to destroy Mordecai and the rest of his people (Esther 3:1–6), even building gallows to hang Mordecai on (5:14). Yet, God continued to work to preserve His people. When the king could not sleep, someone read to him a story in which Mordecai preserved his life (6:1–3). Even Haman’s falling on a couch providentially happens as the king walks in (7:8). Truly, God is sovereign over all.

Introduction Starter:

Do you ever feel as if God is silent? Often, we can wonder if God hears our prayers or cares about our circumstances because we cannot see how He is on the move. In Esther, the only book in the Bible in which God is not mentioned by name, God seems silent, but the sovereignly orchestrated events reveal He is working and planning for our good and His glory.

Main Idea:

We do not know the details of God’s plans, but we can trust that He will always act for our ultimate good.

Expositional Outline: Esther 4:13–14

1. God’s plans include perfect positioning (v. 13).

- Esther is an intercessor for God’s people because of God’s positioning and timing in her life.
- The position of Esther is noted in verses 13–14 as her being in the king’s royal palace.
- Out of all the women brought to the king, Esther was chosen as queen (Esther 2:17).

2. God’s plans include perfect timing (v. 14).

- Twice, Mordecai mentioned “at this time” and “for such a time as this.”
- Mordecai suggested that the preceding events of Esther’s exaltation and the Jews’ arranged destruction have happened for a reason.

Christ Connection:

Through her position and actions, Esther served as an intercessor for her people and a type of Christ. Esther dared to go before the king, knowing that it may cost her life (Esther 4:16). Jesus willingly went to the cross, knowing that it would certainly cost His life (Titus 2:14). Esther was exalted to the right position and at the right time to intercede for her people. In the fullness of time, God sent His own Son, Jesus, who would first be rejected and then exalted (Galatians 4:4–5; Philippians 2:8–11). Even Mordecai, condemned to die on wooden gallows before being exalted, points to Christ, who died on a tree but was later raised up (Esther 7:10; 10:1–3; Galatians 3:13).

Concluding Idea/Application:

By looking back on your life, perhaps you can see how God has orchestrated certain events and plans in your own life. Esther is a reminder that God continues to work to preserve His covenant people. God is there, even if it seems He is silent.

Job: Christ Our Living Redeemer

Overview:

The book of Job is a fascinating story written in ancient Hebrew poetry. Job was the victim of great suffering incited by Satan, and Job was not told why. In losing everything, Job was forced to acknowledge a sovereign God amid his suffering. Job initially believed God is compassionate and refused to blame Him. After his unhelpful friends demanded to know which sins Job committed for being judged by God so harshly, Job angrily appealed to God and was rebuked until he repented and again humbly submitted to a sovereign God. Then God restored Job and blessed him more extensively at the end of his life than at the beginning. Job needed a redeemer to help him through his distress, and so do we. That Redeemer would ultimately be Jesus Christ.

Introduction Starter:

Children are quick to say, "It's not fair," when they feel mistreated. A good parent will remind them that life in a sinful world isn't fair, so we must trust in God's plans for us. This becomes much harder when innocent people suffer for no apparent reason. Why does this happen? This is one of the most vexing questions for Christians to answer. How can God allow suffering and still be good? Fortunately, the book of Job addresses these difficult questions and gives us hope amid hurting.

Main Idea:

Jesus Christ is our living Redeemer and our perfect example of how the innocent suffer while trusting God.

Expositional Outline: Job 19

1. We need to trust in God's plan when we are mistreated by others (1:1–20:29).

- Job suffered as a test of his faith and trust in God.
- Job's friends were convinced that Job was hiding his sin, so they falsely accused him.
- Job has been mocked and humiliated; he is seeking God's justice.

2. We need to show mercy because we don't know why God allows suffering (21:1–22:30).

- Job felt that God was punishing him, but he did not know why.
- He pleaded for his friends to have mercy on him.
- Jesus told us to be merciful if we are to partake in His kingdom (Matthew 5:7).

3. We can endure mistreatment and suffering because we have a Redeemer who shows us how to bear suffering while remaining righteous (19:23–27).

- Job wanted his testimony written down to reveal his faithfulness to God.
- Job declared that he had a Redeemer in the living God and knew that he would be justified at the end of his days.
- Job declared his belief in the bodily resurrection of the saints and hope that one day, he would see the face of God.

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our living Redeemer; he suffered righteously and rose from the grave victoriously.

Concluding Idea/Application:

We can expect to suffer and to be mistreated in this life, but we must not lose faith. Because of the resurrection, we have been redeemed, and our lives will be justified.

Psalms: Christ Our Victorious Priest-King

Overview:

At 150 chapters, Psalms is the largest book in the Bible. Various authors from many time periods contribute the songs that compose the Psalter. Like the Torah, the book of Psalms is divided into five sections that begin and end with a doxology. Furthermore, subgenres such as lament, praise, and thanksgiving reveal differing life situations in which God's people can call out to Him. The book of Psalms provides both instruction and worship for believers. Using images from throughout Israel's history, these songs also provide a record of God's faithfulness. The vivid emotions depicted in Psalms encourages us to come to God no matter what life situation we face.

Introduction Starter:

Books and movies love to portray a conquering hero who overcomes obstacles and defeats all enemies. Even when the hero experiences a trial in the story, vindication is provide in the resolution at the end. In Psalms, we get a glorious picture of the true Victorious King.

Main Idea:

Our promised Priest-King will defeat all enemies and serve His people.

Expositional Outline: Psalm 110:1–7

1. Follow this victorious king (vv. 1–3).

- David pictures a king whose foot rests on all of his enemies.
- Ruling over the enemies captures the heart of the people as they volunteer for battle.

2. Follow this vicarious priest (v. 4).

- Priests in the Old Testament were from the line of Aaron, not Melchizedek.
- All priests were to serve on behalf of the people vicariously, offering substitute sacrifices in their place.

3. Follow this vindicating judge (vv. 5–7).

- Not only does this figure provide great victory, but He also serves to judge all of the nations, righting the wrongs of sin.
- When all is finished, He will lift up his head in exaltation.

Christ Connection:

Out of all of the Old Testament, Psalm 110 is the most quoted chapter in the New Testament, making several clear references to Christ. Jesus used Psalm 110 to challenge the religious leaders to affirm that the promised Messiah would be both God and man (Matthew 22:41–46). Peter would later affirm Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection as messianic (Acts 2:31–36). Hebrews is especially notable for interacting with Psalm 110 through allusions and direction quotations (Hebrews 1:3, 13; 5:6; 7:17, 21; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2). In Hebrews, the author encouraged the persecuted church by referencing Jesus's "sitting down," which acknowledged His finished work and His high-priestly ministry.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Do you recognize your own need for a hero? We all need a king who can fight the battles that we cannot, defeat the enemies that put us down, and judge the wrongs of this world. Even nonbelievers long for this kind of king who brings victory and justice. Jesus fulfills every psalm, making us long for His return in glory.

Proverbs: Christ Our Wise Counselor

Overview:

The book of Proverbs is a poetic collection of Hebrew wisdom intended to instruct the wise and warn the foolish. The proverbs teach us wisdom from God, which begins when we live in awe and reverence of Him. Wisdom is putting the truth of God's Word to work. The first nine chapters are written by the wise King Solomon, who crafted ten speeches from a father to his son. The rest of Proverbs contains an assortment of individual wise sayings and instructions that can be categorized thematically. Remember, these proverbs are not promises, but probabilities for those who choose to live them out to the glory of God.

Introduction Starter:

Every culture has proverbial sayings like "Don't make mountains out of molehills" or "Don't cry over spilled milk." These adages encourage us to make wise choices and avoid foolish ones. When was the last time you suffered the consequences of a foolish decision? To live a life pleasing to God, we must know God's wisdom and choose to apply it to ourselves.

Main Idea:

We become wise when we become like Christ, who is the wisdom and power of God.

Expositional Outline: Proverbs 8:22–36

1. The Son of God formed the universe to reveal His power (8:22–29).

- The Son of God existed eternally before anything physical was made.
- The design of the universe reveals the wisdom of God.

2. The Son of God crafted creation to reveal His glory (8:30–31).

- The glory of creation reveals the glory of God.
- The Son of God takes delight in all creation, especially in us.

3. The Son of God offers us the wisdom to obtain eternal life (8:32–36).

- The warning not to ignore God's wisdom
- The assurance of happiness for those who pursue God's wisdom
- The promise of eternal life for those who believe in Jesus, the wisdom of God

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our Wise Counselor, and when we imitate His life, we enjoy the wisdom that comes from God.

Concluding Idea/Application:

When we live by faith in Jesus and apply His wisdom to our lives, we will enjoy life to the fullest, just as He promised (John 10:10). We should read Proverbs often so we can know God's wisdom and avoid foolishness. We must teach our children God's wisdom so they will avoid foolishness and know how to live for God's glory rather than only for themselves.

Ecclesiastes: Christ Our Good Life

Overview:

The Teacher of Ecclesiastes is a son of David and a king of Israel (Ecclesiastes 1:2,12). His main concern in the book was to address the futility and temporary nature of life on earth or “under the sun” (1:2–3, 14; 2:1, 11, 17–18, 26; 3:16; 4:1, 7, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:1, 12; 7:15; 8:15; 9:11; 10:5; 12:8). One frequent illustration he uses to describe this futility is chasing wind, something that cannot be caught. Examples of empty pursuits in the book include pleasure (2:1–3), possessions (2:4–11), work (2:18–26), wealth (4:4–16), and planning (9:10). Instead, the Teacher asserts, “I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and enjoy the good life” (3:12). The good life is the wise life, a life that can only come from God.

Introduction Starter:

If you were to ask your friends what the meaning of life is, what would they say? Some may suggest the pursuit of wealth. Others may offer up happiness as the key to a meaningful life. In Ecclesiastes, we are told that the pursuit of anything “under the sun” will only leave us empty.

Main Idea:

Pursuing the futile pleasures of earth leaves us empty, but following Jesus is true fulfillment.

Expositional Outline: Ecclesiastes 12:9–14

1. Hear the purpose of the good life (vv. 9–11).

- The wisest man who ever lived explored the depths of wisdom and wrote out many proverbs to share wisdom with others (vv. 9–10).
- Like cattle prods, wisdom compels us to live according to God’s standards.
- Shepherding is an appropriate metaphor for wisdom since it is meant to guide others along.

2. Do the practice of the good life (vv. 12–14).

- The Teacher’s study of wisdom has led to many books, which have wearied him (v. 12).
- Two main practices summarize his lifelong pursuit of wisdom: fearing God and keeping His commands (v. 13).
- One’s acts or practices will ultimately be judged by God (v. 14).
- Solomon’s lack of practicing what he outlines here points us to a future and better Shepherd King.

Christ Connection:

While Solomon, the author, often failed to truly live on the path of wisdom, Jesus Christ always chose the wise and good life. In fact, Christ became the wisdom of God for us (1 Corinthians 1:30). Those who hear the teachings of Jesus and put them into practice are said to be wise (Matthew 7:24–27). Christ is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11). Jesus is the only one who can truly offer the good life (John 14:6).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Our time and money often go to that which fulfills us. Do you give of yourself toward ultimate fulfillment found in Jesus or to the temporary vanities of this world? Looks will fade. Money will fade. Our bodies will fade. Only in Jesus will we receive an unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4), the mark of a good and wise life.

Song of Songs: Christ Our Jealous Bridegroom

Overview:

The Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon, is a beautiful piece of Hebrew poetry that sings about covenant love in marriage. More importantly, it foreshadows the covenant love that believers enjoy with Christ as His bride, the church. This book sings about the purity and intimacy of love between a country maiden and a shepherd king. It also describes the challenges of keeping covenant vows and fighting to maintain passion in the relationship. Just as the bridegroom in this love song vows to care for and protect his “darling” bride, so too will Jesus love and protect His bride, the church, with an everlasting and jealous love.

Introduction Starter:

What is your favorite love song? Do you have a favorite decade of music? Which songs stir your heart and create a longing for admiration and attention from your spouse or a special friend? Love songs celebrate the commitment we make in choosing a person to marry and share intimacy with. They remind us of the strength of covenant love. Covenant marriage points us to God’s love for His people, and the love Jesus celebrates with His church. As believers, we are gloriously bound up in the jealous, powerful love of God.

Main Idea:

Christ’s covenant love for His church is stronger than death and greater than earthly possessions.

Expositional Outline: Song of Songs (8:6–7)

1. God loves His people with a jealous and powerful love (8:6).

- This love song celebrates a covenant between a husband and his wife.
- Christian marriage should be a celebration of intimate, committed love.
- Just as a couple commits to love each other until death, Jesus commits to love His church with a love stronger than death.

2. God loves His people with a love far greater than anything in this present world (8:7).

- God’s love for us is jealous, and we must not love anyone or anything more than Him.
- Jesus loved us by dying in our place and providing an escape from sin and death.
- There is nothing in this world that can replace God’s covenant love, and we should be willing to give up everything to receive it.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our jealous bridegroom and promises to love His church with an everlasting love.

Concluding Idea/Application:

The love we celebrate in marriage should imitate God’s jealous and covenant love for us. God’s love is forever and forgiving, and so should our love be. Christ’s love is sacrificial and enduring; we should imitate this in our covenant relationships. Marriage is a wonderful testimony and witness of the gospel when we love each other like God loves us.

Isaiah: Christ Our Suffering Servant

Overview:

Chapters 1–39 of Isaiah deal primarily with the sinful state of God’s people, while chapters 40–66 anticipate the exile and the future deliverance through the Messiah. In the first part, Judah’s leaders and sinful habits are denounced, being compared to “worthless grapes” (Isaiah 5:2). Even the brief narrative of King Hezekiah in Isaiah 36–39 presents a king who made foolish choices and did not always trust God. The Servant Songs in the latter half of Isaiah depict a figure who would be everything that Israel was not. He would be a light for the nations and salvation for all the captives, a description that created anticipation for Jesus, who would come centuries later.

Introduction Starter:

Everyone loves an underdog story. David and Goliath is well-known even in popular culture because of the unlikely victory brought by a lowly shepherd-boy. In movies and sports, underdogs capture our imagination as we consider what might be possible.

Main Idea:

Our King became a humble servant and took on our sin so that we might be healed.

Expositional Outline: Isaiah 52:13–53:12

1. Christ was exalted for us (52:13–15).

- Through His humility, Christ was exalted (Philippians 2:5–11).
- Before the cross, Christ was beaten and disfigured, but many did not understand.

2. Christ was rejected for us (53:1–3).

- During His ministry, Christ experienced constant rejection, including from some of the disciples closest to Him.
- Because of His experience, Jesus can identify with our rejection.

3. Christ was crushed for us (53:4–12).

- Christ’s piercing and wounds brought us peace and healing.
- Images like a lamb and guilt offering help capture what Christ does for us.

Christ Connection:

The many New Testament quotations and allusions help us see the Christ connections in Isaiah. Whereas Israel had failed to be the Lord’s vine that produced good fruit, Jesus would be the righteous branch and true vine in whom we can bear good fruit (Isaiah 4:2; 5:1–7; John 15:1–8). Christ would also be the promised Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14–17; Matthew 1:22–23). His ministry would be a light for the nations and bring salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:5–6; Acts 13:47). Finally, Christ is the promised Messiah, who heals the brokenhearted and sets the captives free (Isaiah 61:1–2; Luke 4:16–21).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Underdog stories would not be appealing if there was no resolution or victory at the end. The underdogs who simply come close to victory would not be remembered. Christ willingly became low and humble to bring about great victory. While His heel would be momentarily bruised in death, he gained ultimate victory over death and the grave, crushing the head of the serpent.

Jeremiah: Christ Our New Covenant

Overview:

The book of Jeremiah is the largest book (by word count) in the Bible. For nearly fifty years, the weeping prophet mourned over the suffering of God's wayward people whose leaders had given themselves over to idolatry. Jeremiah witnessed the nation of Judah from its glorious heights under King Josiah to its decay and complete destruction under kings like Manasseh and Zedekiah. Jeremiah proclaimed a message of God's justice and mercy throughout his lifetime. He called kings and citizens to repent for forsaking their covenant obedience to the Lord and promised severe judgment for their sins. Even though the nation of Judah would eventually suffer in exile for their disobedience, Jeremiah sees a new and greater covenant that God would establish with His people, a covenant sealed by His Holy Spirit and ratified by the blood of Jesus.

Introduction Starter:

Many of us have stood at the front of the church on our wedding day and made this promise to our future spouse, "until death do us part, according to God's holy law." Covenant vows are solemn, and the commitment we make should be lasting. The same goes for the covenant God makes with us. Christ had eternity in mind when He made a covenant with His people, the church. But how can we avoid being like Israel, which failed to keep its side of the promise? Why is the new covenant so much better than the old one?

Main Idea:

God has provided us a new and permanent covenant relationship through His Son and His Spirit.

Expositional Outline: Jeremiah 31:31–34

1. Our new covenant relationship with God cannot be broken (31:31–32).

- Jeremiah tells the story of Judah's unfaithful kings and the suffering of God's people.
- The Old Testament is a sad tale of God's people continually violating God's covenant commands, whereas the Lord was constantly faithful to His people.

2. Our new covenant relationship with God will be ratified by the blood of Christ and written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit (31:33–34).

- The new covenant would be written on the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit and mediated by Jesus.
- Jesus announced the new covenant at the Last Supper with His disciples (Luke 22:20).
- We celebrate our covenant relationship each time we gather for the Lord's Supper.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our new covenant. He paid for our sins with His precious blood, and with the Holy Spirit, He sealed the covenant promise that we would be His forever people (Luke 22:20; Ephesians 1:13).

Concluding Idea/Application:

God wants a deep and lasting relationship with us. Unlike the nation of Israel, whose sins kept them from enjoying a covenant union with the Lord, we can keep our covenant obligation because the Holy Spirit has sealed our salvation and helps us to love and obey God. We have God's Word written on our hearts, which gives us the strength to resist sin and live in joyful obedience.

Lamentations: Christ Our Merciful Portion

Overview:

Written after the destruction of Jerusalem, Lamentations contains poems mourning over the city. In addition to the temple being destroyed (Lamentations 2:6), many of God's people were taken into exile. The book details several of the sins that led to Israel being taken captive, like the influence of ungodly kings (2:9) or even the downfall of prophets and priests (4:13). The poems of lament capture the emotional state of the people, especially the brokenness over Jerusalem's fall, yet there is also an emphasis on God's faithfulness (3:22–24).

Introduction Starter:

Remembering truth can be hard in the midst of suffering. When bad things happen, sinful choices can seem appealing because they offer instant, yet temporary, satisfaction. Lamentations, though its pages can seem bleak, offers a better hope. Here, we are reminded that God offers lasting hope in suffering because His faithfulness and mercies are new every morning.

Main Idea:

Just as we suffer, Jesus suffered for us so that we can rest in His faithful provision.

Expositional Outline: Lamentations 3:1–27

1. Where should we look in our suffering (vv. 1–18)?

- Like the book of Job, Lamentations 3 pictures a sufferer who calls out to the Lord.
- During his appeal to God, Jeremiah mentioned living in darkness (v. 2), being blocked out from God (v. 8), and being lost (v. 18).
- Although the man is looking in the right place, he expressed emotions that many of us experience when we are suffering and feel as if we have been abandoned.

2. Why should we look up in our suffering (vv. 19–27)?

- After lamenting the lack of an answer to suffering, Jeremiah discussed reasons that he continued to look to the Lord in affliction.
- In his depression, he called hope to mind (vv. 20–21).
- The Lord's faithful love, mercies, and portion are new every morning (vv. 22–24).
- Jeremiah reminded himself that it is good to wait on the Lord (vv. 25–27).

Christ Connection:

Jesus was no stranger to suffering. From the pursuit of King Herod at His birth to rejection in His hometown to betrayal in the garden, Jesus suffered many afflictions. Like Jeremiah in Lamentations 3, Jesus asked why God abandoned Him while He was on the cross (Mark 15:33–34). Yet Jesus was a greater prophet than Jeremiah. In Christ, we have Jesus Himself as our portion and His Spirit as a down payment of the inheritance we will receive (Ephesians 1:11–14). Jesus remains faithful because He never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Do you look to God in suffering? What about when you have been waiting for an extended period of time? Even in years or decades of waiting, God remains faithful to His promises. Those who trust in Him can look at His past faithfulness for future confidence. In Jesus, we have the example that we need to persevere in suffering with the help of His Spirit.

Ezekiel: Christ Our Good Shepherd

Overview:

The book of Ezekiel brings us to the Babylonian captivity, in which the prophet was carried away to Babylon along with the first captives, like Daniel and his friends. Ezekiel was in Babylon when he heard the news that God's temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. God would give the prophet a vision of a new and glorious temple. The Lord gave Ezekiel several fascinating visions of the future where God would restore His covenant. Hope for God's people meant a return to Jerusalem and reconciliation with God. Though Israel had become like a valley of dead skeletons, God would resurrect His people and provide a Good Shepherd to lead them.

Introduction Starter:

The most impressive feature of a lighthouse is not its tall structure but the enormous amount of light it shines at night to direct ships from crashing into rocks. Without the light, the ships would have to navigate dangerous waters alone. This is why we need leadership to help us navigate the dangers in our lives. Israel's leaders had failed their people. They were awful shepherds who left their flock unattended to care for themselves. God promised to send His Son, the Good Shepherd, to find the lost sheep of Israel and bring them into His forever fold.

Main Idea:

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who came to seek and save the lost (see John 10:11; Luke 19:10).

Expositional Outline: Ezekiel 34:11–31

1. The Good Shepherd seeks and rescues His lost sheep (34:11–16).
 - God entrusted His people to the leaders of Israel, who became false shepherds.
 - God would rescue His sheep from danger, heal their wounds, and bring them home.
 - God's Shepherd will lead His sheep into good pasture (Psalm 23).

2. The Good Shepherd will judge between the believers and the rebellious (34:17–24).
 - The Lord knows which sheep belong to Him (rams) and those who do not (goats).
 - A shepherd-king from the lineage of David would renew a covenant with Israel.

3. The Good Shepherd will renew and restore His sheep to a heavenly pasture (34:25–31).
 - This Shepherd will be their prince of peace and make a covenant of peace with them.
 - The Shepherd will gather His sheep from all the nations (John 10:16).

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our Good Shepherd who seeks to save His lost sheep and bring them into His eternal pasture.

Concluding Idea/Application:

The Bible tells us we are all like lost sheep who have gone astray. Jesus desires to be our Good Shepherd, heal our spiritual wounds, and find peace and rest in His care. We need to live on mission because Jesus is still collecting His sheep from all over the world. One day, Christ's sheep from all over the world will "dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Daniel: Christ Our Kingdom Conqueror

Overview:

Daniel is the likely author and the main character of the book that bears his name. He, along with other young Hebrews, were deported to Babylon under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:1–7). Daniel would live during the entire seventy-year captivity under both Babylon and Persia, holding a high position in the kingdom. Chapters 1–6 of Daniel are historical narrative that detail Daniel and his friends' faith in exile, while chapters 7–12 anticipate future events through prophecies and visions. With his vision of the Son of Man, Daniel looked forward to a future conquering King who would be even more powerful than those who ruled over God's people during the exile.

Introduction Starter:

History is full of great kingdoms. The expansive Roman Empire or the naval prowess of the British Empire are but two examples of rulers amassing great wealth through conquering. Two of history's greatest empires, Babylon and Persia, play major roles in the Bible, especially in the book of Daniel. Yet, we are also prone to build our own "kingdoms" in which we want to rule.

Main Idea:

Our King will establish a forever kingdom by conquering all of His rivals.

Expositional Outline: Daniel 2:1–49

1. God uses supernatural means to advance His kingdom plans (vv. 1–30).

- King Nebuchadnezzar has the first of many dreams, though none could help (vv. 1–9).
- The Chaldeans got one thing right: no one on earth could interpret dreams alone (v. 10).
- Daniel, like Joseph with Pharaoh in Genesis, was enabled by God to interpret dreams and visions (v. 16; compare to 1:17).
- Daniel asked his friends to pray for mercy on his behalf (vv. 17–19).
- After the revelation, Daniel praised God and acknowledged His provision (vv. 20–30).

2. God uses ordinary people to advance His kingdom plans (vv. 31–49).

- Daniel and his friends were young men when captured, but God continually used them to advance His kingdom during exile.
- Part of Daniel's interpretation was a great stone, representing Jesus and God's kingdom, that would conquer all others (vv. 34–45).
- Daniel would be exalted, leading to even foreigners praising God (vv. 46–49).

Christ Connection:

Daniel is a type of Christ due to his faithful life. Like Daniel, Jesus would resist temptation relating to food by trusting in God (Matthew 4:1–11). Furthermore, He would also be sentenced to death only to rise again in victory and exaltation. In Daniel 2, Jesus, the rejected cornerstone, is the stone that will crush all other kingdoms (Matthew 21:42–44).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Are you the ruler of your own kingdom or have you turned the throne over to Jesus? Our sin makes us prone to pridefully want to decide the courses of our lives. But for followers of Jesus, He has called us to relinquish our lives so that His will would be done. Like Babylon and Persia, Christ will send our kingdoms crumbling if we try to build our lives without Him.

Hosea: Christ Our Redeeming Husband

Overview:

The book of Hosea begins the Minor Prophets section of the Old Testament, which is known historically as “The Twelve.” These books were contained in a single scroll, and they cover Israel and Judah’s failure and eventual defeat due to their idolatry and disobedience. The prophet Hosea lived in the northern kingdom in the decades leading up to the Assyrian invasion of Israel. Like Ezekiel, Hosea was asked to live out his prophecies dramatically. Hosea was told to marry a prostitute who would continue her adulterous ways, eventually ending up on the slave market to be sold as a worthless woman. Hosea went and purchased her from slavery and redeemed her to be his wife. Her unfaithfulness is a depiction of Israel’s constant spiritual adultery against the Lord, and Hosea’s commitment to her points to the coming Messiah who would enter into the slave market of sin and purchase His forever bride, the church.

Introduction Starter:

When you take your marriage vows, you announce to your bride or groom, “For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and health, till death do us part.” These sobering words contain an important covenant promise. In the same way, Christ entered a covenant relationship with His church, an everlasting marriage built upon His desire to redeem worthless sinners and make them a part of His glorious bride.

Main Idea:

As the church, we must remain faithful to Christ, our Redeeming Husband.

Expositional Outline: Hosea 3:1–5

1. God’s gracious love reaches out to us while we are loving others more than Him (3:1).
 - Hosea married Gomer even though she gave herself to other lovers.
 - We tend to love the things of this world more than God, who made all things (1 John 2:15).

2. God sent His Son to purchase and rescue us from the slave market of sin (3:2).
 - Christ redeemed us while we were sinners not able to save ourselves (Romans 5:8; Colossians 2:13).
 - Having been purchased, we are to remain loyal to Christ our Redeemer.

3. God desires for all His redeemed children to repent and remain faithful to Jesus (3:3–5).
 - In the last days, Israel will repent and return to their Messiah (Romans 11:26).
 - All the redeemed will make up the bride of Christ and spend eternity celebrating their marriage with their King, who is greater than David (Revelation 19:7).

Christ Connection:

Jesus entered into the marketplace of sin on the cross and purchased us with His shed blood. By His substitutionary death, He rescued us from judgment and freed us to become His glorious bride (Ephesians 5:25).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Like Gomer, we have the tendency to be enslaved to our passions and idols, but Christ has freed us and redeemed us to live for Him. We can rest in God’s unfailing covenant love for us.

Joel, Amos & Obadiah: Christ Our Righteous Restorer

Overview:

Although the Minor Prophets span many years and cultures, they each address aspects of God's coming judgment and justice. In the books of Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, the theme of restoration figures prominently. For Joel, restoration was promised for the years taken by the locust (Joel 2:25–27). At the end of Amos, restoration and repair to the house of David was promised to God's people (Amos 9:11–15). In Obadiah, Edom's betrayal and persecution of Israel would result in future deliverance and restoration (Obadiah 1:15–21).

Introduction Starter:

Do you long for wrongs to be made right? We all have a sense that there are things in this world, like death and disease, that are not the way life is supposed to be. From wasted years to our own sinful state, Christ will come to bring restoration.

Main Idea:

Though we deserve judgment for our sins, we can be restored to righteousness in Jesus.

Expositional Outline: Amos 9:11–15

1. Restoration of a promised lineage (vv. 11–12)

- David was perhaps the greatest type of Christ in the Old Testament, and God had promised to establish a permanent kingdom through His line (v. 11).
- After the reigns of David and Solomon, the kingdom was divided into Israel and Judah, but God promised to restore this “fallen shelter.”
- Even Edom, a people who did not follow God, would be possessed by Israel (v. 12).

2. Restoration of a promised land (vv. 13–15)

- From the covenant established with Abram back in Genesis 12, a specific promised land had always been a part of God's planned blessing for His people.
- Like Adam, Israel would tend to gardens and enjoy the fruit of the vine (vv. 14–15).
- Not only would these gardens be fruitful, but they would never be “uprooted.”

Christ Connection:

Each of the Minor Prophets reveal Christ in unique ways. Joel 2:28–32 is quoted by Paul in Acts 2 as a fulfillment of the Holy Spirit coming down at Pentecost. Obadiah's promise of deliverance from persecution previews Christ's ultimate victory and judgment (Revelation 16:5). In Amos 9, Jesus came from the promised Davidic dynasty to build a forever home for God's people (John 14:2–3; Acts 15:14–19). In His restoration, Jesus restores righteousness to His people (Romans 10:4). Christ will also lead His people in enjoying the fruit of the vine, a heavenly banquet to celebrate our eternal consummation (Revelation 19:1–10).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Do you grieve over the brokenness that your sin brings? God desires our repentance so that He can restore us to right relationship with Him. Confess your sins to Him so that you can experience Christ's work as the righteous Restorer in your life.

Jonah: Christ Our Gracious Savior

Overview:

The book of Jonah is fascinating and odd because Jonah seems to do everything opposite of what a prophet of God should do. He avoids his calling, runs from God's direction, refuses to preach the God-given message, and has no desire to love his enemy. Still, God used him as part of His sovereign plan to save the Ninevites. One of the great revivals in history happened in the capital city of the Assyrians, foreshadowing the coming of Jesus, who is graciously willing to save anyone and everyone in the world.

Introduction Starter:

We know the great command of God is to love our neighbor, but it becomes challenging when that neighbor is our enemy. Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. We can only accomplish this if we remember that we were once Jesus's enemies when He went to the cross for us. Jonah is an example of what not to do in loving those who are unlovable.

Main Idea:

Salvation is God's gracious gift to anyone who repents of their sins and believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Expositional Outline: Jonah

1. God will hear our prayer of distress even when we have been disobedient (2:1–3).

- Jonah lived in disobedience and ended up in a place of death.
- Jonah prayed, and God was gracious to listen to his plea.

2. God will resurrect us from death and sin by His power and grace (2:4–6).

- Jonah was crushed by the consequences of his sin.
- While we were dead in our sins, God breathed life into our hearts (Eph. 2:1–6).

3. We should give praise to the Lord for remembering our need for salvation (2:7–10).

- Like Jonah, God will remember us in our time of need.
- To worship idols is to forsake the grace and love of God.
- God desires to provide the grace of salvation to all who repent and believe.

Christ Connection:

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for his disobedience, Jesus was buried in an empty tomb for His obedience to His Father's will. Jesus is the greater Jonah, dying to provide salvation for anyone who repents, even His enemies.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Even though we must suffer the consequences of our sin and disobedience, God will always be faithful to hear our prayers when we confess and repent. The grace of salvation is given to anyone who comes to Jesus by faith.

Micah, Nahum & Habakkuk: Christ Our Shepherd-King

Overview:

The Minor Prophets help us to gain a clearer picture of who the Messiah is and what His role will be among the people of God. Micah addresses both the rebellion and oppression of Israel but offers hope of a future Ruler who can lead God's people to follow Him. Nahum pictures the fall of the great city of Nineveh, but the book also references an avenging God and a Herald who proclaims peace (Nahum 1:2, 15). Finally, Habakkuk offers a Savior in whom we can have faith and be declared as righteous (Habakkuk 2:4). Each prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, with several of the prophecies from these books being specifically quoted in the New Testament.

Introduction Starter:

Where do you find peace? For some, peace looks like a day at the beach or time spent in the mountains. Peace has even been the mantra for entire movements and organizations. Yet, the Bible offers peace that comes not from circumstances but from a Person.

Main Idea:

In Christ, we have been given a peace that surpasses all understanding and circumstances.

Expositional Outline: Micah 5:2–6

1. His origin is divine (v. 2).

- Bethlehem was not a notable town, other than the story of Ruth taking place there, and now the Messiah is promised to come from there.
- Only God could have an origin "from antiquity."

2. His kingdom is vast (vv. 3–4).

- The focus is on Israel, the participants in the kingdom.
- Unlike some of the false shepherds that were present, this is a Good Shepherd.
- Even the ends of the earth will fall under the greatness of His rule.

3. His peace is sure (vv. 5–6).

- No enemy, not Assyria or Nimrod, can stand against this Ruler.
- In spite of invasions and opposition, "he will be their peace."

Christ Connection:

Bethlehem, though small in size, plays a large role in the Bible because the town is linked to the ancestry of David and the birthplace of Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:1–22; Matthew 2:1). Jesus would also assert His origin from antiquity with responses such as, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Likewise, Jesus claimed to be the Good Shepherd who would protect and lay down His own life for His sheep (John 10:1–18). Only Jesus brings true peace with God (Romans 5:1).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Everyone longs for peace. Could you say that your life is truly peaceful? Our Good Shepherd offers peace even when the afflictions of life come at us from all sides. He guards us from enemy attacks and grants us inner peace.

Zephaniah: Christ Our Saving Warrior

Overview:

The prophet Zephaniah called God's people to seek the Lord and live humbly. A descendant of King Hezekiah, he lived just a few decades before the destruction of Jerusalem. Seeing the arrogance of Judah's leaders, he announced the great day of God's wrath that would bring destruction. Zephaniah saw beyond the destruction of Jerusalem to the time of final judgment and the Messiah's future restoration. God will judge the nations but will save the repentant. Christ will gather His people who will unite to give Him praise and worship.

Introduction Starter:

At the end of the Revolutionary War, some Americans wanted to make General George Washington king, and others were afraid he would make himself the first king of America. Instead, Washington served humbly as president and stepped down rather than clinging to authority. We admire and revere Washington to this day. This mirrors Jesus, who humbled Himself to the point of death for our sake and will return in power and glory to claim us.

Main Idea:

We can endure prideful leaders who oppress their people because Christ has promised our restoration and future glory.

Expositional Outline: Zephaniah 3:14–17

1. Our lives should be a celebration of our deliverance from sin and judgment (3:14–15).
 - Judah would face judgment due to arrogant leaders who denied God His due.
 - God's people will be restored and called to celebrate the Lord's salvation.
 - One day, the King of Israel would dwell in the presence of His people.

2. Our Savior won the battle against our sins and takes delight in those who rejoice in Him (3:16–17).
 - God's presence should remove our need to fear.
 - God's deliverance should make us strong.
 - God will sing over His people on the day of Christ's return.

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our Saving Warrior. He will return in power and glory to rid the world of its arrogant leaders who set themselves up against God (Revelation 6:15–17). At the end of time, Christ will restore His church and rule over His people with gladness.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Arrogance leads to destruction, but humility brings God's help. The gospel, which includes Christ's second coming, should shape our love. There is future grace for those who trust Him.

Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi: Christ Our Covenant Messenger

Overview:

Like the other Minor Prophets, the final three books of the Old Testament look forward to the fulfillment of God's promises. With the temple in ruins, Haggai foresaw a future temple where the final glory would be greater than the first (Haggai 2:9). Zechariah prophesied that the future Messiah would be both priest and king (Zechariah 6:13), yet He would also humbly embrace victory by riding on a donkey (9:9). In Malachi, there is hope for a better priesthood through a better Messenger who purifies sinners (Malachi 3:1–4).

Introduction Starter:

Is there a time in your life that you have waited for something with great anticipation? Maybe you looked forward to a certain gift, a new season of life that you expected, or a fun experience you wanted to have. At the end of the Old Testament, four hundred years of silence would begin with a sense of great anticipation.

Main Idea:

To purify His people, our Messenger will bring a new covenant through His blood.

Expositional Outline: Malachi 3:1–4

1. Who will the Messenger be (v. 1)?

- Responding to previous cries of injustice, Malachi gave the Lord's response.
- There are two messengers mentioned in verse 1, but there is a greater-lesser relationship between the two.
- The first messenger clears the way for the second, whose ministry will concern both the temple and the covenant.

2. What will the Messenger offer (vv. 2–4)?

- Using purifying language, Malachi offered the occupations of a refiner and a launderer to picture what the Messenger would come to do.
- In a sense, He would do the job of the priests of Levi, who have already been called out repeatedly in the book.

Christ Connection:

The New Testament specifically tells us that the initial messenger mentioned in Malachi is none other than John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). While John the Baptist is important, his ministry was to clear the way for a greater covenant Messenger. He would prepare the path for a man who referred to Himself as the Way (John 14:6). A future Messenger, Jesus Christ, would purify God's people Himself, not with fire or bleach, but with His blood that washes us whiter than snow (Psalm 51:7; John 13:10; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 7:14). Jesus, our Covenant Messenger, would establish a new covenant with us that He would inaugurate with His shed blood (Luke 22:20).

Concluding Idea/Application:

We are often impatient in our waiting. Yet we know that Jesus our Covenant Messenger has come once and will one day come again. With that truth, we can patiently and expectantly say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Matthew: Christ Our Promised Messiah

Overview:

The Gospel according to Matthew begins the New Testament and the coming of the long-awaited King of Israel. While the Old Testament covers thousands of years of biblical history, the New Testament only covers fewer than a hundred years, and it centers on three years of Jesus's earthly ministry. Matthew forms the bridge between the Old and New Testaments, and from His genealogy to His sacrificial death on the cross, this Gospel declares Jesus to be our Messiah. Look at Matthew's Old Testament connections, and consider Christ's Sermon on the Mount characteristic of His kingdom. Jesus's miracles confirm His identity, and His resurrection demonstrated Jesus's victory over sin and death.

Introduction Starter:

There are few scarier moments than when you experience danger and are alone. The feeling of being forsaken can be terrifying. Part of the mystery of the cross is the moment when Jesus bore the sins of the world on His body and experienced being abandoned by His heavenly Father. He did this for us so that we won't be forsaken by the Father at the final judgment.

Main Idea:

Jesus was forsaken on the cross to fulfill the law and complete our salvation.

Expositional Outline: Matthew 27:45–55

1. Our Messiah was forsaken by God as He bore our sins on the cross (27:46–49).

- God darkened the sky as His Son suffered in humility.
- As Jesus bore the weight of our sin, He felt distanced from His Father and cried out in agony (Psalm 22:1).
- When Jesus cried out, some thought He was calling on Elijah to come and rescue Him.

2. Our Messiah completed the atoning work necessary for our salvation (27:50–51).

- As Jesus gave up His spirit, the veil covering the Most Holy Place was torn in two.
- On the cross, Jesus provided for our eternal redemption through His blood and there is no longer a need to offer the blood of sacrificial animals (Hebrews 9:11–14).
- When Jesus breathed His last, the earth shook at the death of God's Son, the Messiah.

3. Our Messiah's death and resurrection were witnessed by saints old and new (27:54–55).

- The death of Christ was witnessed by Old Testament saints who were resurrected.
- The death of Christ was witnessed by the Roman centurion who declared Him to be the very Son of God, along with His disciples who were there.

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our Promised Messiah. He fulfilled every Old Testament law and became the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins. His death and resurrection prove Him to be the Son of God.

Concluding Idea/Application:

The church is given the keys to Christ's kingdom, and we are to carry out Christ's Great Commission, giving witness to the world that Jesus is the Son of God who has provided for our forgiveness.

Mark: Christ Our Servant Redeemer

Overview:

Mark is the shortest account of Jesus's life and ministry, but, with the influence of Peter, is thought to be the first recorded Gospel. The focus of Mark's account is on the action and ministry of Jesus. Events quickly transition from one to another, finally slowing down in the final weeks of Jesus's earthly life as He awaited the cross. Mark refers to Jesus as the Son of God (Mark 1:1) to show the audience throughout the book that Jesus was who He claimed to be.

Introduction Starter:

What constitutes greatness? Children and teenagers dream of becoming the greatest in their potential fields or future professions. However, our desire to be great reveals the sin of pride that is within our hearts. Instead, we would do well to model Christ, who came to earth to be a servant to all.

Main Idea:

Christ became a servant to pay the ransom for our sins.

Expositional Outline: Mark 10:35–45

1. The question of greatness (vv. 35–37)

- James and John continue the theme of greatness as the disciples had argued about the subject back in Mark 9:33–37.
- Their bold question revealed a misunderstanding of Christ's kingdom.

2. The process of greatness (vv. 38–40)

- Jesus explained that to sit in glory, one must face God's wrath first.
- Foolishly, the brothers believed they could do this.
- Even if the brothers could somehow take the cup and baptism, Jesus said that the positions were not His to give away.

3. The example of greatness (vv. 41–45)

- Understandably, the other disciples were not pleased with the question.
- Jesus contrasted the greatness of the kingdom with the surrounding Gentiles.
- Jesus explained that giving away one's life was true greatness.

Christ Connection:

The image of Jesus as Servant Redeemer is at the heart of Mark's Gospel. Including this passage, Jesus frequently refers to Himself as the Son of Man, fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel 7 as the figure granted all authority from God. Yet, Jesus is also the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52–53 because He gave "his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). To the outside world, this combination of authority and service does not make sense, but Jesus said this is what true greatness looks like.

Concluding Idea/Application:

As believers, we follow the example of our Savior by living a life of service to others. We serve Christ and others through His strength. While service may not lead to accolades of greatness on earth, such Christlike attitude will be great in God's kingdom.

Luke: Christ Our Seeking Savior

Overview:

Luke's Gospel is the first of two books written by Luke, the physician. In it, he connects Jesus to Adam and describes Him as the perfect Son of Man. Whereas Matthew focuses on the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, Luke focuses on the physical needs of the poor and oppressed who need a Savior. Jesus seeks those the world has neglected and offers them eternal life through His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.

Introduction Starter:

Have you ever lost something important to you that others considered worthless junk? They did not realize the object's value and why you would go to great lengths to find it. The same happens with Jesus when He goes to great lengths to save sinners like us. Though we may appear to be without value, Christ sets His affection and favor on us, then He seeks us out and saves us to become a part of His forever family.

Main Idea:

Jesus came to seek and save sinners, and we can join Him in His mission to reach the lost.

Expositional Outline: Luke 19:1–10

1. When we seek salvation, we realize the Savior is first seeking us (vv. 1–5).

- Zacchaeus, the tax collector, heard about Jesus and wanted to see Him.
- Zacchaeus realized Jesus was seeking him instead and went to His house.
- We love God because He first loved us and sought us out (1 John 4:19).

2. Our Savior is willing to go out of His way to seek and save sinners (vv. 6–8).

- Jesus risked His reputation to dine with sinners like Zacchaeus.
- Zacchaeus was transformed and displayed the fruit of repentance.
- While we were sinners, Jesus loved us and offered His salvation (Romans 5:8).

3. Jesus came to seek and save those considered unworthy of salvation (vv. 9–10).

- Jesus declared that everyone who believes in Him is Abraham's child.
- Jesus's mission is to seek and save the least of people.

Christ Connection:

Jesus is our Seeking Savior. He is greater than the Pharisees, who only identified with the self-righteous. Jesus humbled Himself to identify with sinners and take away their sins on the cross. He sought us before we sought Him.

Concluding Idea/Application:

We should pray for our lost friends and family members, asking the Lord to seek and find them. Like Jesus, we should be willingly inconvenienced to reach the lost and show them God's love. Like Zacchaeus, true repentance leads to a transformed life.

John: Christ Our Divine Son

Overview:

Although the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke share much material, John's thematic approach to his Gospel account includes many unique stories about Jesus's life. John had the unique privilege among the Gospel writers to be part of Jesus's "inner circle," along with his brother James and Peter. From the great "I AM" statements to the recorded miracles of Jesus, John desires that all would believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and have life in His name (John 20:31).

Introduction Starter:

Out of sight, out of mind. This saying often refers either to people or tasks that we forget because they are not right in front of us at the moment. Yet, as believers, we are called to believe in that which is out of sight. As the author of Hebrews writes, faith is the proof of what is not seen (Hebrews 1:1).

Main Idea:

Until our faith is made sight, we believe in Jesus through the eyes of those who saw Him.

Expositional Outline: John 20:19–31

1. Faith blesses those who believe in the peace and mission of Jesus (vv. 19–23).
 - Twice in these verses, Jesus comforts His disciples with "peace be with you" and allowed them to touch Him.
 - John's version of the Great Commission includes a comparison of how Jesus Himself was sent from heaven to earth with the gospel (v. 21).
2. Faith blesses those who believe without seeing Jesus (vv. 24–29).
 - Thomas refused to believe until he could see Jesus just as the other disciples did.
 - His statement of "my Lord and my God" stood against the divine claim of Roman emperors.
 - In contrast to Thomas, those who believe without seeing Jesus are blessed (v. 29).
3. Faith blesses those who believe in the life Jesus gives (vv. 30–31).
 - The purpose of John's Gospel is explicitly stated.
 - One cannot have true life until first having belief.

Christ Connection:

From the opening verses, John's Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfillment of glorious Old Testament truths. "In the beginning" (1:1) refers to Genesis 1, while the tabernacle (v. 14) and the sacrificial lamb (v. 29) are also alluded to in John 1. The end of John's Gospel that is outlined above details how one should respond to this Divine Son who fulfills centuries of promises. John did not record stories about Jesus to entertain but to make sure that one could believe in Jesus and live.

Concluding Idea/Application:

How can you have a strong faith in someone you cannot see? John provides story after story of amazing miracles and important truths that Jesus produced during His ministry so that we could believe in Him despite not being able to see Him. One day, we will be like Thomas and see Jesus, but until that day, our faith must be in the unseen.

Acts: Christ Our Gospel Witness

Overview:

The book of Acts, or “the Acts of the Apostles,” is the second part of Luke’s historical account. Luke records the beginning of the Christian church and shows how the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus’s disciples to fulfill His Great Commission to proclaim the gospel and start churches worldwide. Pay attention as the narrative shows the gospel reaching thousands in Jerusalem and then spreading through the apostles’ witness, especially in the life of Saul, who became better known as Paul the missionary.

Introduction Starter:

Have you witnessed something you will never forget? Something that changed your life, having seen it? The resurrection of Jesus changed the lives of the disciples, now apostles, who were sent to proclaim the good news of their Messiah everywhere.

Main Idea:

The Holy Spirit empowers us to fulfill Christ’s mission to proclaim His gospel in our communities, our nation, and throughout the world.

Expositional Outline: Acts 1:4–11

1. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to empower His global mission (1:4–5).

- The long-awaited promise to usher in a new covenant relationship was about to begin.
- The baptism of the Holy Spirit or regeneration will be greater than the promises that bound God’s people through the older prophets.

2. Jesus sends out His disciples to fulfill His global mission (1:6–8).

- The disciples thought Jesus was going to complete His kingdom in their midst.
- Jesus promised to fill His disciples with the power of the Holy Spirit and grant them the authority to proclaim His gospel to both Jews and Gentiles.

3. Jesus ascended back to heaven to reign and rule over His global mission (1:9–11).

- Jesus concluded His earthly ministry after handing over the mission to His disciples.
- Jesus ascended back to heaven to rule over His growing kingdom at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1).

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our gospel witness. He fulfills the Old Testament promises and has empowered us by His Spirit to complete His mission to reach the nations with the gospel. Jesus now reigns as King of His kingdom from heaven at the right hand of His heavenly Father.

Concluding Idea/Application:

We are to be living witnesses of the gospel. Although sharing our faith may seem intimidating, the Holy Spirit empowers us to proclaim the good news to everyone. We are to be missionaries in our cities and send others to plant gospel-centered churches everywhere.

Romans: Christ Our Righteous Justifier

Overview:

Part of Paul's desire in writing Romans was to gather support to take the gospel where it had not gone by stopping in Rome on the way to Spain (Romans 15:20–29). To ask for support, Paul grounds his mission in the overall redemptive plan of God. Romans is Paul's longest letter, and it is rich in the doctrine of salvation. The letter addresses our sinful state, God's gracious sending of Christ to justify us, and how the gospel informs our unity and mission as a global church. Romans clearly presents how one can be saved, making it one of the most memorized and quoted books in the Bible.

Introduction Starter:

To ride a roller coaster, many parks have a measuring guide as people wait in line. Kids must put their backs up against the guide to see if they “measure up” to ride the roller coaster. Those who fall short of that standard are not able to ride. In the Bible, our sin causes us not to “measure up” to God's standard, meaning that we need someone who won't fall short to stand in our place.

Main Idea:

Through the blood of Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are made right with God.

Expositional Outline: Romans 3:21–26

1. The righteousness of God is revealed in Scripture (v. 21).

- In the immediate context of Romans 3:19–20, we see the law cannot save us.
- Throughout the whole Bible, God's righteousness has been revealed.

2. The righteousness of God is available to those who believe in Jesus (v. 22).

- Righteousness has always been given to those who believe in Jesus.
- No distinction means that both Jews and Gentiles can believe.

3. The righteousness of God is necessary for all people (v. 23).

- Though the standard of God's glory and righteousness is revealed, we fall short.

4. The righteousness of God is possible through the blood of Jesus (vv. 24–26).

- By grace, we are both redeemed and justified through Jesus.
- Just as Old Testament sacrifices had to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for sins, so has Christ become our mercy seat.

Christ Connection:

Despite our sin, we can be justified before God through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. At the cross, God's justice and mercy were poured out to make us righteous. Even prior to the coming of Jesus, Old Testament saints are said to have been credited righteousness through their faith (Genesis 15:6). Indeed, this righteousness is the only way that one can dwell with a holy God (Psalm 15:1–2). For eternity, those who have believed in Jesus will live with God on His holy mountain, finally seeing the glory of God that we once fell short of.

Concluding Idea/Application:

In what ways do you feel like you do not “measure up” to the standards of the Bible? Feelings of inadequacy and shame should drive us to repent of our sin and believe in Jesus. Only in Christ can we meet the perfect standards of the law and receive life with God.

1 Corinthians: Christ Our Resurrected Victor

Overview:

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was to encourage and instruct a troubled church that had become divided over several controversies. The church had become torn over factions and favoritism. The church was divided over sexual sin and certain foods. There was disunity and discord in their corporate worship. They were even divided over their understanding of Christ's resurrection. In each major section of this letter, Paul answered questions and solved problems in the hope that the church would maintain unity around the gospel and flourish by renewing their relationship with the resurrected and returning Christ.

Introduction Starter:

Have you ever purchased something with a "lifetime warranty" only for it to die? Sometimes, trying to get the warranty honored is harder than just purchasing something new. As Christians, we have an eternal lifetime warranty, which was promised and honored by Christ himself. Jesus's resurrection is all the proof we need to believe we will live forever with Him.

Main Idea:

We have hope of eternal life and victory over death because of the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Expositional Outline: 1 Corinthians 15:20–22, 35–49

1. The glorious resurrection of Jesus is a down payment for our future resurrection.

- Jesus is the first to be resurrected in His glorified body, having become a guarantee that those who die believing will one day be resurrected also.
- Although sin and death came to everyone because of Adam's sin, forgiveness and eternal life come through Jesus, the greater Adam.

2. The glorious resurrection of Jesus guarantees our future immortality.

- Because we were made in God's image, we will be resurrected in the image of Jesus if we are united to Him by faith.
- Our heavenly bodies will be perfect and in complete unity with our spirits.
- Christ's resurrection gives us hope in this life and the next.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our resurrected and glorified Savior. He is the greater Adam who came to remove the curse of sin and death. His resurrection guarantees our future hope. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the hallmark truth of our faith.

Concluding Idea/Application:

The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope to flourish in this life and to enjoy eternity with Christ in the next. This humble hope should motivate us to fight for unity in our local church and not become divided over minor issues. The resurrection of Jesus allows us to stand firm in our faith and share the hope of heaven with others.

2 Corinthians: Christ Our Merciful Reconciler

Overview:

In between 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote a letter that “grieved” the church and led to their repentance (2 Corinthians 7:6–16). However, false teachers in the church, whom Paul referred to as “super-apostles,” still plagued the church and led to the letter of 2 Corinthians (11:5). At the heart of the letter is Paul’s appeal for reconciliation for the brothers and sisters at Corinth. Second Corinthians is one of Paul’s most personal letters, even noting the lengths that the apostle would go to tell others about the reconciliation offered by Jesus (11:16–33).

Introduction Starter:

When important leaders cannot personally go somewhere or do something, they can send an ambassador. The ambassador conducts himself as if the leader were there, saying what this leader would say and doing what he would do. As ambassadors for Christ, we are only enabled to fulfill our role because Christ has reconciled us to Himself.

Main Idea:

We are reconciled to God through Christ, and therefore, we now offer our lives as His ambassadors.

Expositional Outline: 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

1. As ambassadors, we have been made part of the new creation (v. 17).

- In Christ, we are not just made better but completely transformed from old to new, becoming part of the new creation (see Isaiah 65:17–25).

2. As ambassadors, we have been reconciled to God Himself (vv. 18–19).

- Reconciliation means that we now have what we were always meant to: a restored relationship with our Creator.

- Being reconciled means we have been given a ministry that spans the whole world.

- Our trespasses are no longer counted against us but on Christ.

3. As ambassadors, we have been tasked to plead on Christ’s behalf (vv. 20–21).

- We continue the work Christ started of preaching the gospel of reconciliation.

- Pleading demands a sense of urgency along with vocal expression of the gospel.

- Verse 21 gives one of the clearest statements of the gospel in the Bible where Christ has willingly exchanged His righteousness for our sin.

Christ Connection:

Christ is responsible for our creation and our new creation (Colossians 1:15–20). That is, we were created in God’s image, but because our sin distorted that image, He has restored those in Christ to His image by making us new. Only as a new creation in Christ can we be reconciled and have peace with God. But this glorious news cannot be kept to ourselves. We follow His example by continuing the mission He started through proclaiming the good news to a lost and dying world.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Are you fulfilling your role as an ambassador and minister? Some believe that ministry is only reserved for the pastors or those paid by a local church, but these verses make clear that such ministry is given to all who are part of the new creation in Jesus. Our role as ambassadors demands that we know Jesus well since we speak and act on His behalf. Otherwise, we may give a false impression of who Jesus is and what He stands for.

Galatians: Christ Our Gracious Substitute

Overview:

Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia after his first missionary journey. After hearing that these Gentile believers were being influenced to turn to the law of Moses, Paul quickly penned this letter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to affirm and clarify the gospel. Paul made it abundantly clear that the works of the law do not justify a person, but faith in Christ alone brings justification. The letter provides specific details about Paul's conversion and early ministry. Paul thus argued the core doctrine of justification by faith in contrast to the false teaching affecting the Galatian churches. Paul's letter reminds us we are heirs according to the promise. He concluded the letter by giving helpful applications on how to live with the freedom that Christ has given us. Paul taught us how to walk in the Spirit and avoid the sins of our flesh.

Introduction Starter:

Sometimes you go to a restaurant wanting a specific food and are told they are out of this item and they offer a substitute instead. You reluctantly accept the substitute, but it doesn't quench your desire. Fortunately, God has provided us the best substitute we could ever hope for. On the cross, Jesus replaced our sin with His righteousness. We receive this as a gift of God's amazing grace by faith alone.

Main Idea:

We can stand firm in the gospel of grace, knowing we are justified by faith in Christ alone for our salvation.

Expositional Outline: Galatians 3:10–14

1. Our righteousness comes as a free gift from God for those who believe (3:10–12).
 - We remain under a curse if we think we can become righteous on our merit.
 - Righteousness only comes through faith as a gift of God's grace (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17).
2. Christ redeemed us by taking the curse of sin and giving us His righteousness (3:13–14).
 - Jesus fulfilled the promise of being cursed by God while hanging on a cross (Deuteronomy 21:23).
 - The righteousness we receive fulfills the promise God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3).

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our Gracious Substitute. On the cross, He took away our curse of sin and replaced it with His righteousness. In Jesus, we receive the blessings promised to Abraham, which includes the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Although we do not earn salvation, our obedience to Christ should come from a heart of thankfulness for what He has done for us. Because of the gift of God's Spirit, we know how to live by faith and can produce the good fruit of the Spirit. We are free to please Christ with our love and good works.

Ephesians: Christ Our Fragrant Offering

Overview:

The book of Ephesians addresses the mystery of God's will to bring all things together in Christ (Ephesians 1:9–10). Specifically, Jews and Gentiles had been brought together in the major city of Ephesus at this local church, so Paul addressed how Christ had torn down the “dividing wall of hostility” between the two groups (2:11–22). Ephesians is divided into two major sections. Chapters 1–3 address the doctrines of grace and salvation given by God, while chapters 4–6 consider the application of these gifts in the church. In Christ, the church has been made into a multiethnic community to proclaim His gospel.

Introduction Starter:

Have you ever been part of a diverse group of people? Sports teams that have larger rosters often have diversity, and groups such as a theatre troupe can be comprised of a variety of people. God has given diversity in the church since we all share salvation in Jesus. Christ desires unity in diversity because we are part of the “one body” (Ephesians 4:4–6).

Main Idea:

Our fellowship and love in the church must be sacrificial, just as Christ gave Himself for us.

Expositional Outline: Ephesians 5:1–2

1. Our position: imitators and children (v. 1)

- God's people have imitated Him since the first chapter in the Bible when they were made in His image (Genesis 1:26–27).
- In giving the law, God desired for His people to be like Him as holy (Leviticus 19:2).
- Holiness is lived out in Jesus, who never sinned.
- Children naturally imitate others, and we must imitate our heavenly Father.

2. Our description: walking in love (v. 2)

- Walking is a favorite metaphor for Paul to describe the progression of the Christian.
- The love we share is influenced by the love we have received in Christ (1 John 3:16).
- Later in the letter, husbands are called to embody this love to their wives (Ephesians 5:25).

Christ Connection:

Under the old covenant, the high priest would put animal organs on the altar so that the aroma would be pleasing to God (Leviticus 1:9). This fragrant offering was a regular part of Old Testament worship (Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18; 2 Chronicles 2:4; Psalm 66:15). Animals were regularly sacrificed to atone for sin. In Christ, we have a sacrifice offered once and for all (Hebrews 10:10–14). Christ is our Great High Priest who does not need to offer sacrifice for His own sin since He is sinless. He is our sacrificial offering. No longer do we come to God through the blood of goats and sheep but through the precious blood of His only Son.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Naturally, we think and act differently from those who experienced other upbringings. Such differences can often be divisive. However, in the church, unity in diversity declares the gospel because Christ prayed that we would be one so that the “world may know” (John 17:23).

Philippians: Christ Our Humble Lord

Overview:

Paul wrote to the church at Philippi while in prison for proclaiming the gospel. The apostle was grateful for his partnership with this church and wrote to encourage them. The cooperation to fulfill the mission brought Paul a tremendous amount of joy. Their love for Paul strengthened his spirit while he remained in chains. This letter centers around a beautiful hymn about Jesus that reflects on His humility in going to the cross for us and exalts His deity as Lord of lords.

Introduction Starter:

What brings you the most joy? Is it fulfilling your purpose in life? Is it through loving relationships? Is it by being content? Most people try and fail at accomplishing these things, but as Christians, we can succeed through a personal relationship with Jesus. When Jesus is our joy, life finds purpose, relationships become loving, and we find contentment and humility because of our union with Christ.

Main Idea:

We should model the humility of Jesus, who veiled His deity by taking on a human for our eternal salvation and for His future glory.

Expositional Outline: Philippians 2:5–11

1. The Son of God humbled Himself by taking on humanity and dying for us (2:5–8).

- Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who is distinct from and equal with God the Father (and God the Holy Spirit).
- Jesus humbled Himself by taking on humanity and veiling His eternal glory.
- Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a curse and dying on a cross for our salvation.

2. The Son of God has been exalted and is to be glorified above all things (2:9–11).

- Because of Jesus's obedience, God has placed Him in the most exalted place in heaven.
- As Savior and Ruler of the universe, everything in creation must bow to Jesus's name.
- Our lives and worship must be to exalt Jesus and yield to His authority.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our humble and exalted Lord. He has existed from eternity yet condescended in history to become like us so that we might become like Him. Our joy and our strength come from Jesus.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Gospel partnerships are essential for the church to complete its mission. If a church maintains Christ's humility, it will remain united in purpose and pleasing to God. Our gracious witness to the lost is to tell them Jesus is Lord. They can either repent of their sins and receive Jesus as their Savior now or bow before Him later as the final judge (Revelation 20:11–15).

Colossians and Philemon: Christ Our Sufficient Savior

Overview:

To address heresy in the city of Colossae, Paul encouraged the believers to consider the sufficiency and supremacy of Jesus. The Colossians were meant to apply the truths of the great Christ hymn to all areas of life, including family and work. The short letter of Philemon is appropriate to consider alongside Colossians since Philemon was a local church leader in Colossae. In his brief letter, the apostle Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would the apostle, even offering to pay for the former slave's wrongdoings.

Introduction Starter:

How do companies sell their product? Many spend a significant amount of their annual budget on various forms of advertisement. Commercials, billboards, ads, and even apparel can market a product to show the consumer why they should consider the given product. The language used in this kind of appeal attempts to show how one's product is sufficient to meet the consumer's needs.

Main Idea:

Jesus has proven His sufficiency, but many still doubt Him because of false teachings.

Expositional Outline: Colossians 1:15–20

1. Jesus is sufficient for creation (vv. 15–17).

- The image of God was distorted by sin, but Jesus is the perfect image (v. 15).
- Jesus existed before creation and continues to exert His authority over every square inch (v. 16).
- All things in the universe continue to depend on the sufficiency of Jesus (v. 17).

2. Jesus is sufficient for new creation (vv. 18–20).

- Jesus's resurrection is key for us to be transformed into a new creation (v. 18).
- God's fullness dwells completely in Jesus and those who accept Him (v. 19).
- Through His blood, Jesus has made peace with God for distorted image bearers (v. 20).

Christ Connection:

Because Paul addressed several issues related to the person and work of Jesus, Colossians and Philemon are among the most Christ-centered books in the Bible. Christ is the beloved Son who transfers us into the kingdom of God and forgives us (Colossians 1:13–14). Those who have been raised with Christ can see the things above and put on His moral characteristics (Colossians 3:1–17). In Philemon, Christ is our mediator who has charged the payment of our transgressions to His account (Philemon 18).

Concluding Idea/Application:

There is no need that cannot be met in Christ. Products and people can let us down, but Christ cannot and will not. Other religions appeal to the works and efforts of man as ways to earn salvation. Colossians is clear that while the believer must "put on" and "put off" certain characteristics and practices after being reconciled to God, Jesus alone is sufficient to meet our deepest needs.

1 Thessalonians: Christ Our Coming Lord

Overview:

Paul's letters to the church at Thessalonica were among his first letters, and the apostle wrote to a gospel-centered, evangelistic church that loved the Lord Jesus and waited expectantly for Christ's return. Despite being persecuted for believing in Jesus, these believers remained faithful and on mission. In his first letter, Paul shared his love for the church and encouraged their endurance. He instructed them to remain holy and hopeful. The apostle answered pertinent questions about the return of Jesus and told the church to live with anticipation of the second coming.

Introduction Starter:

At the height of World War II, Japanese forces overwhelmed the Allied defense stationed in the Philippines, forcing the military to flee to Australia. General Douglas MacArthur promised he would return to liberate the Philippines one day, a promise he would fight to fulfill two years later. The hope of MacArthur's return maintained the nation's perseverance in the face of great adversity. In the same way, our hope for the return of Jesus should strengthen us to persevere through any trial of adversity we face.

Main Idea:

We can take comfort in knowing Christ will one day return and gather His church to be with Him in heaven forever.

Expositional Outline: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

1. We have hope in our waiting because we believe in the resurrection (4:13–14).

- Jesus's death on the cross and His glorious resurrection give us hope for His return.
- Christ's imminent coming should allow us to grieve the loss of Christian loved ones with hope and not despair.

2. We have encouragement to endure this life because of Christ's return (4:15–18).

- One day, heaven will dramatically declare the return of Jesus to earth (Revelation 19:11–16).
- Christ will resurrect the bodies of past saints and then glorify the remaining bodies of believers who will be caught up with Him as He returns.
- When Christ returns, we will always be with our Lord in our glorified state forever.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our coming Lord. Just as He promised He would die in our place on the cross and be resurrected on the third day, He also promised to return and take us to our eternal home in heaven (John 14:1–3).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Knowing our future is secure, we can endure all types of difficulty in life and in death. We can grieve the loss of Christian loved ones with hope because death is only temporary and heaven is eternal. Our lives will be more joyful and content if we live looking forward to Christ's return.

2 Thessalonians: Christ Our Eternal Encourager

Overview:

For the context of 1–2 Thessalonians, persecution was a major factor for the church at Thessalonica after Paul and Silas had been there in Acts 17. In addition, there was confusion surrounding the future coming of Christ, leading Paul to address eschatological questions in both letters. Second Thessalonians encourages believers to endure and live worthily of God’s calling (2 Thessalonians 1:3–12), look forward to Christ’s return (2:1–17), and not grow weary of doing good (3:1–18). The same themes of perseverance and hope are offered to us today as we anticipate Jesus’s return.

Introduction Starter:

Many people make New Year’s resolutions to lose weight, read more books, or some other initiative. Unfortunately, these resolutions often end before February due to a lack of perseverance. It can be tempting to lose hope or grow weary when persevering for an extended period of time. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul encouraged the church to persevere by looking ahead.

Main Idea:

We can stand firm because of the current and future hope we have in Jesus.

Expositional Outline: 2 Thessalonians 2:1–17

1. Be encouraged because Christ will destroy any opposition (vv. 1-12).

- The “day of the Lord” in the Bible refers to that day on which God will judge sin and provide justice to right wrongs.
- The Thessalonians had to deal with people trying to predict the coming of Christ, just as we do today (vv. 1–2).
- A “man of lawlessness” will first bring apostasy and destruction (vv. 3–12).
- Though this antichrist figure will come, Jesus “will destroy him with the breath of His mouth” just as God’s breath first gave us life (v. 8).

2. Be encouraged because Christ has chosen us for salvation (vv. 13-17).

- Not only will God destroy His enemies, but He also will save His people.
- Through the gospel, we have been both chosen and called (vv. 13–14).
- God’s people can stand firm in the last days because of previous revelation (v. 15).
- Paul concluded the chapter by remembering the eternal encouragement given for saints to persevere in difficult times (vv. 16–17).

Christ Connection:

Christ is the Messiah promised throughout the Bible who will defeat all opposition, including the man of lawlessness. Because of Christ’s second coming, believers can be encouraged now to persevere in the faith. Until Jesus returns, we encourage one another with good works.

Concluding Idea/Application:

We have all faced the prospect of giving up on hope. Whether it is a resolution we have made to lose weight, or in our thinking about the future, we need to persevere. In the face of persecution, Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the encouragement we have in Christ. Do you look to Christ to persevere in difficult times, or do you try to make it through on your own?

1 Timothy: Christ Our Immortal King

Overview:

Paul's personal letters to Timothy reveal his love and care for his true child in the faith. His first letter also provides important instructions to the local church. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with some bad teachers in the church and correct false doctrine. Timothy was commanded to set the church in order and to ensure that it conducted itself as God's household. This letter contains several small but powerful doxologies exalting the person of Christ.

Introduction Starter:

God made animals with an innate response to either flee danger or to fight furiously. Humans have this too, even though we're more complex creatures. As Christians, we have a spiritual "fight or flight" response that is given to us by the Holy Spirit. Using this, we can flee from anything unrighteous and fight to conform ourselves to the righteousness of Christ. Jesus is worth fighting for because He deserves our highest respect and honor.

Main Idea:

We must hold on to our belief that Jesus is our Immortal King and Sovereign Lord while giving Him the honor and worship that He alone deserves.

Expositional Outline: 1 Timothy 6:11–16

1. Our Immortal King deserves our pursuit of righteous living (6:11–12).

- We are to flee from anything unrighteousness and pursue Christlikeness.
- We are to fight for the faith delivered to us and cling to the promise of eternal life.
- We are to keep our confession that we made when we first expressed faith in Jesus to save us.

2. Our Immortal King deserves our proper confession and highest praise (6:13–16).

- God the Father and Jesus made confessions about Jesus's identity (Matthew 17:5; 27:11).
- God the Father will send His Son to return to earth according to His perfect will.
- While we await Christ's return, we are to worship Jesus as our Sovereign King and immortal God.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our Immortal King. He has existed eternally as the glorious Son of God and presently as the resurrected and returning Christ. Because of who He is, Jesus deserves our highest honor and praise.

Concluding Idea/Application:

We must know when to flee immorality and unrighteousness so that we can pursue a life that imitates our eternal King Jesus. It is important to confess the truth about Jesus to ourselves and others. We can fight the good fight of faith if we live in anticipation of Christ's imminent return.

2 Timothy and Titus: Christ Our Blessed Hope

Overview:

Together, the Pastoral Epistles of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus were written by Paul to address some of his younger mentees in ministry. Second Timothy was written as Paul awaited execution in a Roman dungeon and has stood as one of his most personal correspondences. As a final charge to Timothy, he encouraged his son in the faith to honor God's Word in order to fulfill his ministry (2 Timothy 4:1–8). Titus had been left in Crete to “set right” what was left undone after Paul's visit (Titus 1:5). Because the Cretans had a reputation for their immorality, Paul encouraged Titus to ensure that the church and its leaders were pursuing godliness.

Introduction Starter:

Imagine getting into your car only to have the dashboard light up with all sorts of warning lights. You probably wouldn't have much hope or confidence that your car would get you where you needed to go. When we put our hope in the things of this world, it's like trying to drive a car that needs maintenance. Only in Jesus can we have true hope.

Main Idea:

In contrast with the fading promises of this world, Christ offers us a lasting and blessed hope.

Expositional Outline: Titus 2:11–13

1. The answer of hope: Jesus has come (v. 11).

- The answer and basis of our hope is that Christ came to earth in the incarnation.
- Jesus's name means salvation, an indication of why He came (Matthew 1:21).

2. The antithesis of hope: living in the present age (v. 12).

- The world offers temporary hope and amusement in the form of godlessness and lust.
- As believers, we reject the temporary for the eternal, which includes living according to God's sensible and righteous standards.
- Christ sanctifies us in our pursuit of godliness.

3. The anticipation of hope: waiting for Jesus (v. 13).

- Blessings have always been part of God's covenant with His people (Genesis 12:1–3; Deuteronomy 28:1–14; Psalm 1:1–3).
- Christ first appeared in a humble manger, but His second appearance will be in glory.
- Waiting is made easier with the promise of blessing, but we wait primarily because we love the One who has blessed us.

Christ Connection:

When we trust in Jesus, our hope is made secure in heaven (Colossians 1:3–5). Yet, we keep our eyes on Jesus so that our faith can be perfected in such a way that we can lead godly lives (Hebrews 12:1–2). We are made in God's image, but because of our sin, we still have a need to continually be transformed into the image of Jesus (Genesis 1:26–27; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Where do you find hope? Do you look to your circumstances or your own ability? Or do you keep your eyes on Jesus for lasting hope? Finding hope in Jesus encourages us to look ahead to His second coming when our faith will finally be made sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Hebrews: Christ Our Superior Priest

Overview:

The letter to the Hebrews may be the most Christ-centered letter in the Bible. Written by an unknown author, this book may have been initially a sermon given to a church composed of Jewish believers and Jewish agnostics who were struggling whether to become Christians or go back to Judaism and the Mosaic law. Presenting Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament's types and shadows, this letter shows His superiority over Judaism's customs and beliefs. The author uses many Old Testament passages to reveal the supremacy of Christ over angels, Moses, priests, and temple sacrifices. Christians are called to endure with complete faith in Jesus, our Great High Priest.

Introduction Starter:

You may have heard the phrase “the good is the enemy of the best.” We use it to avoid getting distracted and settling for good things when something much better is available. This has been the dilemma for Jewish people since the coming of Christ. Do they remain faithful to the customs and beliefs of Judaism, or place faith in Jesus as their Messiah and live for Him? Knowing that Jesus is superior to everything else makes the decision worthwhile.

Main Idea:

Jesus is our superior High Priest who ushered in a better and permanent covenant relationship with God.

Expositional Outline: Hebrews 8:1–13

1. Jesus is superior because of His heavenly priesthood (8:1–6).

- Jesus ministers to us from His heavenly sanctuary, not an earthly one.
- The priests and their sacrifices in the Old Covenant were merely types or shadows of the better things to come.

2. Jesus is superior because of His eternal covenant (8:7–13).

- Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry because He mediates a better covenant.
- If the old covenant was sufficient for a person's salvation, there would be no need for a better one or for Christ to come as a superior high priest.
- Jeremiah 31:31–34 is quoted to show God's promise of a new and better covenant that would be established within the hearts of His people and not based on tradition or rituals.
- We have complete forgiveness and restoration with God because of Jesus.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest, serving us in His heavenly sanctuary. Through Christ's blood sacrifice, which brings us complete forgiveness, we can enjoy a perfect and eternal covenant with God.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Our covenant with Christ has eternal benefits, including salvation, forgiveness of sin, and complete reconciliation with God. Because Jesus is our Superior High Priest, God will never remember our sins or hold them against us.

James: Christ Our Royal Law

Overview:

Writing to persecuted Christians, James addresses many practical outworkings of one's faith. Starting with perseverance through trials and ending with an emphasis on prayer, saving faith is evident to those around us through our works. These works do not save us, but they do offer proof of our salvation. James shows how both Old and New Testament teachings of wisdom and law hinge on the necessity of faith.

Introduction Starter:

Laws designed for our good are all around us. Speed limits indicate a safe speed at which we can drive. Tax requirements enable governments to function and provide services for the good of the people. God's law, as revealed in His Word, requires believers to live according to His holy standard. Yet, as with our modern laws, we have a tendency to consistently break the rules.

Main Idea:

Through His perfect life, Jesus satisfies the requirements of God's law for us, and because of this, we can freely lead lives of wisdom in Christ that accord with the law's teaching.

Expositional Outline: James 2:8–11

1. The law requires faith that loves your neighbor (vv. 8–9).

- Quoting from Leviticus 19, James upheld the requirement of neighbor love just as Jesus did in Matthew 22:36–40.
- A "royal law" is the law of the kingdom, which Jesus describes most clearly in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7.
- Rather than favoritism, which James describes earlier in the chapter (2:1–4), believers are to show love regardless of one's status.

2. The law requires faith that is held to a perfect standard (vv. 10-11).

- Stumbling at only one point of the law is akin to breaking it all.
- James gives examples from the Ten Commandments to show how breaking just one of them and not the other is still breaking the law.
- Based on these requirements, and our inability to meet them, we need someone greater than the law.

Christ Connection:

Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17), and He also fulfills the law on our behalf. Christ uses the fire of trials to test our faith (1 Peter 1:6–7). Apart from Him, we cannot produce any good works of faith (John 15:5). Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:30). He exemplifies humility (Philippians 2:1–11). Finally, Jesus taught that our treasure must be focused on heaven and not earth (Matthew 6:19–24).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Our inability to live up to the perfect standard of the law can result in guilt and shame. Instead, Christ's perfect life fulfills the law and takes away our imperfection. When we trust in Him, we receive what the Law was always designed to give: life in the presence of God.

1 Peter: Christ Our Holy Shepherd

Overview:

The apostle Peter wrote two letters to the churches dispersed by famine and persecution. Peter was a rambunctious disciple of Jesus but now writes as a gentle pastor caring for his flock. Peter's first letter is flush with Old Testament imagery because Peter sees the church as the new and greater Israel, a holy priesthood with Jesus as the cornerstone of the church and Chief Shepherd among His people. Like Israel of old, Peter wants Christians to be holy because God is holy. For Peter, the "good life" is the holy life because it honors God and imitates Christ's love for others.

Introduction Starter:

A great athletic coach motivates a team rather than inciting fear. True leadership is about building each other up rather than commanding or dictating. The best leaders are humble and determined. The best pastors are the same because they imitate Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, when they do.

Main Idea:

Local church pastors are to care for their congregations under the watchful eye of Jesus, our Chief Shepherd, who rewards the humble with His grace.

Expositional Outline: 1 Peter 5:1–5

1. Local church pastors are to lead their people with the humility of Christ (5:1–3).
 - Those who suffer with Christ will share in Christ's glory when He returns.
 - Pastors are to serve willingly, humbly, and with the right motives.

2. Church members are to humbly yield to the caring leadership of their pastors (5:4–5).
 - Jesus is our Chief Shepherd and will reward pastors and church members who remain humble and faithful.
 - Church members should yield to the authority of loving leaders (Hebrews 13:17).

3. All believers within the church must humble themselves to receive the grace of Christ (5:5).
 - We are to clothe ourselves with Christlike humility, which is a mark of holiness.
 - God will resist the proud while granting grace to the humble.

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is both the Cornerstone and Chief Shepherd of his people. The church is built on Christ and led by Christ. Jesus purchased the church with His own shed blood (Acts 20:28). Soon, our Chief Shepherd will return to claim His church, reward its faithfulness, and unite Himself to us forever in heaven (Revelation 19:9).

Concluding Idea/Application:

We are to clothe ourselves with Christ's humility. We must avoid arrogance because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Church members are to submit to the loving care of their pastors and pray for their humility so they will imitate Jesus.

2 Peter and Jude: Christ Our Majestic Glory

Overview:

Second Peter serves as something like a last will and testament, since Peter wrote it shortly before being executed. Utilizing several Old Testament stories, Peter encouraged the church to remain steadfast during times of false teaching and persecution. As they waited for Christ to return, the believers were to “make every effort” to lead godly lives (2 Peter 3:14). Likewise, the brief letter of Jude also uses Old Testament imagery to warn believers about the presence of false teachers. Jude, the brother of Jesus, urged the believers to live firmly in their faith as they awaited the return of the Messiah.

Introduction Starter:

Often, detectives rely on eyewitnesses to provide context for their case. They need people who saw a crime in progress rather than ones who contrive a false narrative. Like the people in Peter’s day, there are plenty of teachers in our time who promote “made-up stories” and teachings about Jesus (2 Peter 2:1–3). Only by reading the eyewitness accounts of those who were with Jesus can we truly know who He is.

Main Idea:

When we behold the glory of Christ, we see Jesus for who He truly is.

Expositional Outline: 2 Peter 1:16–21

1. Christ’s glory is revealed in His person (vv. 16–18).

- In contrast to the false teachers of the day, who had “cleverly contrived myths,” Peter was able to appeal to actual eyewitness memories of Christ’s glory (v. 16).
- The Old Testament typically limited glory to God’s presence in the tabernacle and temple, but now glory has been passed from Father to Son (v. 17).
- God frequently chooses to reveal Himself on important mountains (v. 18).

2. Christ’s glory is revealed in His Word (vv. 19–21).

- Indeed, the prophetic Word is a lamp for us (v. 19; see Psalm 119:105).
- In a mysterious way, the Holy Spirit carried along certain men to write down what we have as the Bible (vv. 20–21).
- The Holy Spirit’s inspiration does not negate the human author’s perspective, as evidenced by Peter’s recollection as an eyewitness.

Christ Connection:

Peter, along with James and John, was privy to the transfiguration of Jesus where the disciples beheld His true glory (Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–13; Luke 9:28–36). The disciples saw Elijah and Moses, two Old Testament prophets who also encountered God on mountains (Exodus 33:12–34:9; 1 Kings 19:9–18). The glory of Jesus is now available to those who believe and are transformed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Concluding Idea/Application:

Do you view Jesus in light of His majestic glory? In a day and age where different streaming services, memes, and false teachers attempt to capture aspects of who Jesus is, we would do well to return to the eyewitnesses of the Bible to behold His glory. After all, in Jesus, we have the promised glory of God come to be a tabernacle among us (John 1:14).

1, 2 & 3 John: Christ Our Atoning Advocate

Overview:

The short letters of John have themes like those of his gospel narrative. Across both genres, John presented Jesus as the Son of God. The themes of light, life, and love guide both writings. Jesus's great command to His disciples was to love one another (John 13:34–35). Those who walk in the light of Christ and love like Christ are the defining marks of a Christian in the last days. John's first letter is his longest, and along with encouraging the church to remain in the light of Christ and for her members to love one another, he also exhorted them to obey God's commands and stand firm in the truth, which will assure them of their salvation.

Introduction Starter:

Children are quick to “cover it up” when they do something wrong. Usually, the truth comes out, and they have to suffer the consequences for their wrongdoing. While we may fool another person by covering up our wrongdoing, we cannot fool God. Ultimately we need someone to completely atone for our sins if we are to ever have a right relationship with God. That person is Jesus, our advocate and atoning sacrifice.

Main Idea:

Jesus Christ is both the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and the advocate who secures our forgiveness before God.

Expositional Outline: 1 John 1:5–2:2

1. Christ wants us to enjoy fellowship with Himself and with each other (1:5–10).

- We can only have fellowship with Christ if we remain in the light (1:5–7).
- We deceive ourselves by saying we have not sinned in the darkness (1:8, 10).
- If we confess our sin, God will forgive us and cleanse us from unrighteousness (1:9).

2. Christ made it possible for us to enjoy fellowship with Him by way of His atoning sacrifice (2:1–2).

- When we sin against God, we can call upon Jesus to be our advocate (2:1).
- Jesus went to the cross to be the once-for-all atoning sacrifice for sins (2:2).

Christ Connection:

Jesus Christ is our great advocate to the heavenly Father; He is the Lamb of God who has atoned for the world's sins. Because Jesus offered Himself as a perfect propitiation (or substitute sacrifice) to God, we can enjoy fellowship with our heavenly Father as we remain in the light of Christ.

Concluding Idea/Application:

Jesus desires us to enjoy fellowship with God, but that can only happen if we remain in Him. We must walk in the light of Christ, which means we love like Christ and obey His teachings. When we sin, we can always seek forgiveness because Jesus is our advocate with the heavenly Father, and He paid the price to cover all our sins on the cross.

Revelation: Christ Our Eternal King

Overview:

Revelation culminates the themes of covenant, kingdom, and redemption seen throughout the Bible. While the imagery of Revelation is mysterious and can be confusing, we need to see its message of encouragement through the eyes of the original audience. John began with a heavenly vision of Jesus the faithful witness (Revelation 1) before addressing persecuted churches of the first century (Chapters 2–3). He then recorded a vision of the throne room (Chapters 4–5) that led to a series of judgments (Chapters 6–17). Ultimately, Satan is defeated and Christ returns to reign as King (Chapters 18–20). Believers will enjoy heaven forever with the Lord, whose glory will light up everything (Chapters 21–22). This message of hope still resonates today, just as it encouraged first-century believers to endure persecution because of the coming eternal King and His kingdom.

Introduction Starter:

Military heroes throughout the Bible foreshadow the final King and His ultimate victory. Joshua led the conquest of Canaan as a warrior, David led Israel to rest by defeating surrounding nations, and Nehemiah led the people to fend off attacks by holding both swords and trowels. Yet none of these leaders brought final rest by cutting off the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). At the end of history, we will need Jesus to return to completely defeat the enemy.

Main Idea:

Our Eternal King begins His public reign by thoroughly defeating all enemies and ruling all nations.

Expositional Outline: Revelation 19:11–21

1. See the Faithful Rider who rules eternally (vv. 11–16).

- The first time Jesus came to earth, He embraced humility by riding on a donkey—but later as a warrior, He will come on a white horse ready for war (v. 11).
- Christ will carry a sword so that His people will not have to (v. 15).
- At the cross, Jesus was positioned beneath a sign declaring Him king, and later the title will appear on Him (v. 16).

2. See the final battle that ends decidedly (vv. 17–21).

- As with Revelation 19:6–9, God’s people will feast because of Jesus’s victory (v. 17).
- The final attempt to oppose God and His armies does not last long (vv. 19–21).
- Even those who are deceived will face the same punishment as the beast and the kings of the earth who worshiped Him.

Christ Connection:

Christ is the culmination of all the good and precious promises made to God’s people since the opening pages of Scripture. In Revelation 19–20, the vision of the final defeat of Satan offers hope to believers to endure the temporary trials of this earth. We hope in our eternal reign with Him.

Concluding Idea/Application:

The people who first read Revelation lived during the Roman Empire, one of the mightiest human empires of all time. As they faced persecution, they were likely overwhelmed with the constant pressure they encountered. However, Revelation pictures an Eternal King who is greater than Babylon, Rome, and any other worldly empire, including the final opposition of the antichrist and beast. We too can trust in our King as we face persecution today.