

**Associated Canadian Theological Schools
BIE 500 An Introduction to the Bible**

Ed Stuckey, D.Min.
Spring, 2010
2 credit hours

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Class Dates: February 11-13

Class Times: Thurs, 5:30pm-9:30pm; Fri,
8:30am-4:30pm; Sat, 8:30am-4:30pm

This is a required course for all students at The Journey who have not taken similar courses at the Bible College level. It is recommended for all students who desire a thorough review in order to gain an overview of the Bible.

I. Course Description

The Bible is the greatest literature known to humankind, and utterly unique in that these writings alone ultimately arise from the mind of God. Its text is His revelation in words; its narratives are the definitive account of His workings through human history; and its wisdom and instruction represent the insight we have into His divine mind. As such, the Bible is foundational to both personal spiritual growth and ministry leadership. Indeed, here is the essential content for all ministry. This foundational course is intended to assist each student to gain an overall comprehension of the essential nature, major themes, chronology, and content of the Bible, as well as enhanced competence in the basic skills of biblical study.

II. Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, each student should:

- Develop deeper appreciation of the unique value of the Bible as divine revelation.
- Be aware of challenges to a high view of Scripture, as well as know how to respond.
- Be able to trace the process of the Bible's revelation and transmission, from the mind of God into our hands as biblical scholars and communicators.
- Be able to trace the broad themes and essential unity of the Bible from Genesis through to Revelation, as well as the essential content of the major groups of books and most individual books.
- Develop confidence in the use of basic resources for personal Bible study, both for personal spiritual growth and for teaching and communication.
- Develop capacity to see the various books of the Bible in their geographical, historical and cultural context within the biblical world.

III. Course Textbooks

Required (to be read in entirety):

Arnold, B.T. and Beyer, B.E. *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*. Grand Rapids, Michigan; Baker Books, 1999. [500 pages and cd.]

Elwell, W.A. and Yarbrough, R.W. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids, Michigan; Baker Books, 2005 [420 pages and cd.]

A Bible, preferably New International Version [NIV] or New American Standard Bible [NASB]. Students are encouraged to consider a good study Bible with adequate study notes and other help. *The NIV Study Bible* is recommended.

Recommended, but not required:

Bruce, F.F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Fee, Gordon and Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, (2nd ed.) Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Whose Bible Is It? A History of the Scriptures Through the Ages*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2005.

Yancey, Philip. *The Bible Jesus Read*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

Zuck, R. B. (ed). *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press. 1991.

Zuck, R. B. and Darrell Bock, (eds). *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

IV. Course Assignments

1. Textbook Reading and Answering Study Questions (40% of final grade)

Because of the very short duration of the instruction days, all students should complete the reading of both texts as soon as possible. Note that each chapter includes a list of "Study Questions." As a record of your reading, for **most** chapters, choose ONE of the questions and write about a half page answer based on the text, but including your own reflections. In addition, each major section (designated PART 1,2, etc) of both texts has an introductory chapter; for each chapter designated "Introduction to the . . ." you should answer ALL the study questions. (Questions on Arnold and Beyer due Feb 28; Questions on Elwell and Yarbrough due March 13)

2. Bible Reading and Spiritual Journal (10% of final grade)

While our practice is often to read only short portions of the Bible for personal instruction and spiritual help, there is benefit in seeking for an overview as well. In other words, we ought to try for a grasp of the "forest" as well as of the "trees." During these weeks, each student is to **scan through the entire Bible**, looking for major and recurring themes (while also listening to God).

Look for the following pattern which recurs throughout Scripture:

- Evidence of the fallen human condition illustrated by a narrative or a prophecy or teaching of failure, bondage or need
- God’s intervention in deliverance, provision or promise
- Human response to God’s provision; was there a full acceptance? partial acceptance? or outright rejection?
- The enduring lesson or principle, sometimes clearly stated, otherwise implied

Write a personal journal entry recording your observations as inspired by the pattern above for each of the following groupings of Bible books. (This represents **four entries, each approximately two pages**. Evaluation will be based on clarity of insights and your giving evidence of internalizing and interacting with the biblical material)

Feb 5,	Gen – Esther
Feb 19,	Job – Malachi
Feb 26	Matthew – Acts
Mar 5	Romans – Revelation

3. Personal Mentorship and Report (20% of final grade)

Plan to meet with your mentor at least four times during the duration of the course.

While you are free to discuss whatever issues related to the course you choose, early in the process both of you should share your faith journey asking when and how has God “touched” your life, as well as discussing what you and your mentor consider to be the most essential elements of a thoroughly biblical worldview. Write an approximately four page report describing learnings and insights from the mentoring sessions. (Due: April 9)

4. Research Paper on a Bible book (30% of final grade) (Due: April 9)

Using term paper format (Turabian with footnotes is preferred, but APA style is OK), write a 12 – 15 page paper giving an overview of ONE of the following Bible books: Genesis, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1-2 Samuel; Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Ephesians, or Hebrews. The paper should demonstrate your ability to grasp and articulate the overall message of a Bible book. Your Bibliography should include at least ten different items, including major academic works on your chosen Bible book, and your writing should clearly evidence the actual use of the sources cited.

The paper should include the following topics:

- Authorship: Who wrote this book (if an author is indicated) and how do we know?
- Setting: Where was the book written and how do we know?
- Purpose: Why was the book written and how do we know?
- Theme: What is the theme of the book?
- Outline: What are the major divisions of the book and how does the author develop his theme in each major section?
- Contribution: What does this book contribute to the overall message of the Bible?
- Message: What is the unique and enduring message of this book for those who seek to love and serve God?

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Descriptor	Grade Point
A+	97-100	Superior	4.30
A	93-96	Excellent	4.00
A-	90-92	Very Good	3.70
B+	87-89	Proficient	3.30
B	83-86	Good	3.00
B-	80-82	Average	2.70
C+	77-79	Adequate	2.30
C	73-76	Acceptable	2.00
C-	70-72	Needs Work	1.70
F	Below 70	Below Standard	0.00

V. Notes and Policies for Written Assignments

Developing Writing Skills for Papers: During the class session we will review a hand-out entitled *Points to Ponder for Papers*. It is understood that students come from a variety of educational backgrounds. For those who have never (or not for a long time) written an academic paper, it may well be necessary to receive additional coaching from the instructor.

Submitting Assignments Late: For all of us, life becomes full at times. All requests to submit an assignment late **MUST** be received **PRIOR** to the due date of the assignment.

Appealing a Grade: If unsatisfied with the evaluation of your work, you may submit an appeal to the instructor indicating a reason for your dissatisfaction. Further appeals may be directed to the Dean of the seminary where you are enrolled.

VI. Course Outline

1. How to Approach the Bible
2. The Structure and Divisions of the Bible
Present and Past
3. The Nature of the Bible as Divine Revelation
How the Bible Came to Us and Why
4. The Transmission of the Bible
Languages, Manuscripts, Canon, Transmission, and Translations
5. The Context of the Bible
Introduction to biblical geography, culture, and history
6. The Human Origins of the Bible
Introduction to “Critical Theories” of Authorship for the Old Testament
The “Documentary Hypothesis”
The Authorship of Isaiah

The Authorship of Daniel

Responses from Conservative Scholarship

Introduction to “Critical Theories” of Authorship for the New Testament

Source Criticism: The Synoptic Problem

Form Criticism

Redaction Criticism

Canon Criticism

The Bible as Literature

Post-structuralism and Reader-Response Theories

Responses from Conservative Scholarship

7. Survey of the Old Testament

Overview of the Historical Context

Overview of the Pentateuch

Overview of the Historical Books

Overview of the Poetic Books

Overview of the Prophetic Books

8. Survey of the New Testament

Overview of the Gospels and the Life of Christ

Overview of Acts and the Expansion of the Church

Overview of the Historical Context

Overview of the Pauline Epistles

Overview of the General Epistles

Overview of the Revelation

9. Seeing the Bible as a Whole

VII. Personal Comments

My hope is that this course will not only enlarge your understanding of the Bible, but will awaken your spirit to the God who has given us this most precious of all treasures. Our purpose in studying the Bible is not to encounter a deposit of truths, but to experience the Revealer of truth who calls us to engagement in His cause. Thus to study the Bible is not about comprehending God’s message, but rather engagement in His mission. My hope is that your understanding, your spirit, and the very direction and purpose of your life will be touched by this course.