



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

BURSCOUGH

MicroGroup Study Material

A Walk through the Bible - Leslie Newbigin

The Bible can often be used like a unique, “anthology of helpful thoughts”. Often we study it in small sections at a time but there is a bigger story here, a metanarrative which tells Gods story. “A unique interpretation of universal history, the history of the whole of creation and the history of the human race. And therefore a unique interpretation of the human person as a responsible actor in history”.

Newbigins book can look simple and it is easily accessible to even the newest for faith. For those who know more then I encourage you look deeper, as there is much to consider.

It helps us to see how the bible comes together as one story, weaves together the stories and characters of the old testament, where and how the prophets fit in and also some of the writings of the apocrypha. It shows how Jesus is the great centre point of history and how his action opens the door for humanity.

How I'd like us to study this book

This whole book could be read in one sitting, but I am asking you to take it slowly, one chapter at a time.

- After one chapter, then spend a couple of weeks considering it.
- Understand the story
- Maybe even draw a timeline picture (be creative)
- In your bible find and read again about the characters and stories mentioned
- Spend some time as a micro-group or house group looking deeper and discussing the implications.
- How is this part of Gods wider story and plan?
- How does this affect us and our place in his story?

Each meeting

- Everyone please read the chapter well before you meet,
- Take time to consider it
- Take time to read around
- Come ready to discuss, contribute and share what you have discovered

The questions below are simply a suggestion to get discussion to flow. If you have your own questions, then please go with them.

This study can be done in three levels, depending on time and direction of the group.

Option one

Simply read the chapter of the book and discuss it.

Option two

Read the chapter of the book and the corresponding bible chapters which relate to it and discuss.

Option 3

Read the chapter, the corresponding and bible chapters and attend to the discussion questions attached. Some of these may open up for much wider theological discussion

Copy of the book

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Walk-Through-Bible-Lesslie-Newbigin/dp/0281052530>

You can purchase the book from here or other more reputable book shops, but they are can be difficult to find new. If you are struggling, I have a stock so please ask.

Chapter 1 – A Unique account

Read: **Genesis: 1-4**

1. Try to write one sentence which describes the whole story of the bible?
2. What is the purpose of the bible?
3. Consider the symbolism of some of the words used in the creation narrative, what may they represent, or what do they tell you about God and his creation?

Light and dark

Order and chaos

Distinguish between

Thrive and grow

Responsibility

Glory

Blessed

Rest

4. "The purpose for which we were made is to glorify God and enjoy him forever"
You may have heard something like this in church or even sung it in worship. What do you understand by it? Does it mean we simply sing songs and pray all day, or is there more?
5. The Fall
 - i. How does this describe human nature?
 - ii. How does this describe God's nature?
6. "Adam where are you?" the writer suggests this phrase echo's through the whole of scripture and is repeated with Jesus. Where do you see this question being asked through the whole of scripture?

Chapter 2 – Chosen by God

Read: **Genesis 6:5-end** (Noah) / **Genesis 11:31-end** (Abraham) / **Exodus 3** (Moses) / **Exodus 19-20** (Israel)

"We have come to the point where Adam and Eve decide that they could not trust God but must find out for themselves what is good and what is evil. That act of mistrust brought to an end the innocent relationship with God, with one another and with the natural world."

1. What are the choices that Adam and Eve and their early decedents make and what are the results?
 - a. How does this reflect you own experience?
2. "Adam, where are you?". With Noah, Abraham and Moses God continues to try and reset the relationship with humanity. What happens with each?
3. Are rules restrictive or freeing?
4. The bible tells us that Israel is a priesthood. What may this mean?
 - a. How are Israel a priesthood and to whom?
 - b. What does it mean for the role of a priest in our church?
 - c. What does it mean for the role of a Christian today?
5. How does Israel learn to live by faith and trust?
 - a. How does this go well?
 - b. How is it difficult?
 - c. What can we learn from this?

Chapter 3 – Judges, Kings and Prophets

Read: Numbers 13 / Joshua 6 / 1 Samuel 8-9

“Moses is on Mount Sinai and Israel is at the foot of the mountain, already forgetting their covenant and falling into paganism and idolatry. Moses has wrestle with a disobedient and unbelieving Israel all through their journey across the desert. They must learn to depend on daily manna for food and miraculous springs from the rock to drink, and for their guidance a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. Later generations would look back on these years as a time when Israel was taught to live by faith and not to seek any other kind of security.”

1. How and in what ways do these stories help to form the nation of God’s people?
 2. When Israel takes the land of Egypt, there is a lot of fighting?
 - a. How do we feel about this?
 - b. How do we feel about the writers explanation of this and do we have anything else to contribute?
 3. This section introduces human leadership through the judges and the kings.
 - a. How does this help humanity to know God?
 - b. How does it restrict or confuse it?
 - c. What parallels can you see in human leadership or the application of human ideology today?
 4. What is the role of the prophets in these times?
 - a. What prophecies to you know and where to they fit in this narrative?
 - b. Look at the different books of Prophets and talk about where they fit in the narrative.
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Chapter 4 – Return and Renewal

Read: Lamentations 1 / Jeremiah 7 or Ezekiel 34:1-19 / Daniel 7: 1-14 / Zachariah 7: 8-14

“We have reached what looks like a dead end. The two Israelite kingdoms of Israel and Judah have been destroyed. Their cities are in ruins, their people have been carried away captive and their temple has been burned to the ground. It looks as if the end of the line has come.”

1. The great promises made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have seem to have come to nothing. The covenant with Israel seems to be in tatters. Israel laments. Lament is not often talked about in church, it’s a process of not complaining, but remembering and crying out to God. As you read the poem of lamentations 1, did you notice a structure and focus?
 2. How do you deal with disappointment and failure?
 3. What are some of the key messages contained in the prophetic books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel?
 - a. When you go wrong, how to you find a way to come back to what is right and important?
 4. Kingdom after Kingdom overthrow each other. How do we see this in the great vision in Daniel 7?
 5. There is new hope in Ezra-Nehemiah and the prophets of Zecharia, Haggi and Malachi, what new hope do they describe?
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Chapter 5 – God’s Kingdom and Jesus

Read: John 1-2 / Luke 4

“In our journey through the story told in the Bible we have come to the time when Jesus is to be born.”

1. “Lord, how long”, we hear this through the Psalms and the prophets. Have you ever felt like this with God?
 - a. How do you deal with waiting?
 - b. What can we learn, waiting?
 2. Reactions to waiting, what are you and why?
 - a. Political revolutionary, co-operation, keeping-the-law, withdrawal?
 3. John expresses a lot about who Jesus is. In the passage of Jesus’ baptism consider what elements of Jesus is it trying to express?
 - a. The baptism of John was for the forgiveness of sins. Why did Jesus need to be baptised?
 4. What has Jesus come to do?
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Chapter 6 - Sacrifice

Read: Matthew 13 / Mark 11-12-v12 / Luke 22 v14-20 / Luke 23 v26-49

“We have arrived at the point where Jesus has come into Galilee announcing that the Kingdom of God has come.”

The Kingdom of God, we have a lot of references back here, to covenant, kings/kingdom and the words of the prophets.

1. Jesus comes to establish a ‘New Kingdom’, how may this contrast with the kingship of Israel mentioned earlier?
 2. In what ways does Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem challenge the authority of others?
 3. Jesus links The Jewish Passover and the last supper with his disciples.
 - a. What links do you see?
 - b. Discuss what celebrating this could have meant for the disciples
 - c. This supper has significance on many levels and is foundational to church. Talk about the significance of this meal in as many ways as you wish.
 4. The words Jesus cry’s on the cross also have significance for the whole of the story of the bible. Talk about these in the context of the rest of this book.
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Chapter 7 New Life, New Communities

Read: Luke 24 / Acts 2 / Acts 13 / Hebrews 11-13

“So Jesus has been crucified, is dead and has been buried. To his commentaries it must have seemed that this was just one more failed revolution, one more nail in the coffin of the Jewish hopes for the Kingdom of God”

1. How does Jesus appear alive to his disciples and what is his message to them?
 - a. Who does he appear to? Is this significant?
 - b. How does this reflect the New Kingdom, he talked about?
 - c. How does this continue in Acts 2
 2. When we think about how earlier in the bible story the nation of Israel as a priesthood to the nations, how does this now relate to those in the early church?
 - a. How does this work out with the ministry and Paul and Barnabas?
 - b. Consider this further with the words of Hebrews
 3. Where do the journeys of Paul and Barnabas end up?
 - a. Why may it be significant that this is also the centre of Political and cultural power?
 - b. How may this represent the words of the prophets, Daniel and Jesus in seeing a new Kingdom?
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Chapter 8 – Future Revelation

Read: Revelation 4 / Revelation 21

“We are coming to the end of this story of the Bible as a whole - a story which focuses on the particular history of 1 nation, Israel, and focuses on one man, Jesus. And so the story is told because God has chosen Israel and Jesus to be bearers of his purpose for the whole of creation and of the human race.”

1. Spend some time reviewing the whole story. Draw a timeline and label on it as many of the elements of this story as you can and the books and characters represented.
 - a. share what you have learnt with each other
2. The book of revelation is a story of a great conflict between power and truth. How has this conflict been shadowed in the story of the bible?
3. Revelation describes a new heaven and a new earth, how are these different to the old ones?
 - a. Utopia is a human image of a perfect world. How is this different to what the message of the bible ends on?
4. The ultimate purpose of Christians is to worship God. That’s not simply singing songs for all eternity, so what may it involve?