

Story of the NT

Introduction Part 1

I'd like to welcome you to this GTN course, The Story of the New Testament. My name is Pastor Mike and it's a joy to be sharing this training with you in Senegal, in The Gambia, and wherever else you may be listening from. It would be helpful if you've already completed our prior course, The Story of the Old Testament.

If you've listened to the recordings of that course and reviewed related handout, you will have a solid foundation as we begin this course. As we begin, please turn to page 2 in your handout. You will see the table of contents.

There are two things I'd like to emphasize with you. We share these at the start of each GTN course.

First, we focus on teaching to the head, the heart, and the hands.

When we think of the head, we focus on the word, **INFORMATION**.

There is information, biblical truth that we will share with you. And it's good for us to take in information, to know these truths. But if training stops there, it falls short of God's intended purpose.

Information and knowledge by itself can puff up, it can make us prideful. So beyond just speaking to the head, we want to teach to the heart as well. And when we think of the heart, we can think of the word, **INSPIRATION**.

Biblical truth should impact our heart. We should believe things in a deeper way. These truths should impact us in a deep way. We should have a longing and passion to honor God with every part of our being.

So we think of the head as information and the heart as inspiration. But if training ends there, again, it falls short of God's intended purpose.

The last thing we want to teach to is the hands. Hands can represent **TRANSFORMATION**.

This represents putting things into practice, the things that we know to be true, things that have inspired us to believe with all of our heart, we want to apply them.

Jesus said, blessed are those who hear my words and put them into practice. We don't want to just be hearers of the Word, but we want to do what it says as well. So throughout the training, we'll always focus on head - information, heart - inspiration, and hands - transformation.

The goal of all training is spiritual transformation. To be transformed into the image of Christ, through the Word of God, by the grace of God, in cooperation with the Spirit of God, in fellowship with the people of God, for the glory of God. We are to take the things we have learned and to do something with it.

This leads to the second key thing that we emphasize at the start of all of our courses. This is the vision for all of our GTN training. It revolves around 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul was mentoring, discipling a young pastor by the name of Timothy.

Paul said, I've passed these things on to you, Timothy, and it's now time for you to teach them to reliable men who are able then to teach others. So just in that one verse, there is multiplication. There is spiritual reproduction. There are four generations of disciples included in this verse.

Whatever we have learned, we should be looking to pass on, to mentor, to disciple others, who would then disciple others, who would disciple others. That's the goal of discipleship.

Please take note on page 2 of the table of contents for this course, the story of the New Testament.

Lesson one is the Introduction. We will teach this in 3, 30-minute audio recordings.

One will be just a short review of the story of the Old Testament to bring us back, to refresh us on the things we taught during that course. And then there will be two more audios that help to provide helpful background information before we begin the actual story of the New Testament.

Lesson 2 will focus on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This is the GOSPEL of the Kingdom.

Lesson 3 will focus on Acts and the 21 letters. This lesson is the MISSION of the kingdom. Jesus establishes his new community called the church.

Lesson 4 will focus on the book of Revelation, the HOPE of the kingdom.

Jesus wins, in Christ we are victorious. From the very beginning in the Old Testament, God establishes His plan for building His kingdom. The fulfillment is that Jesus will return again as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and he will reign on David's throne as promised in 2 Samuel chapter 7. He will reign on that throne forever and ever. This represents Part 1 of the handout.

Part 2 of this handout is a tool kit. When we teach this course in a group setting, the learners pick one of the shorter books of the New Testament to study and then in small groups to teach it to others.

For the purpose of this course, I'll just introduce this to you. We will do an audio session for Part 2 reviewing the content of the Tool Kit. This is a study guide for each of the 27 books of the New Testament.

Let's turn to page 3.

Lesson 1 is the introduction and Part 1 will include a short review of the story of the Old Testament. There are four goals for this course.

1. To see how the story of the New Testament fits into the whole message of the Bible. And we'll be reminded that the whole Bible is about Jesus. Jesus is a central character.
2. To think through the New Testament story as a whole, not as individual stories or miracles or individual books or letters.
3. To be able to understand the major themes and purpose of the New Testament. And discover our part in the mission of God's kingdom. What is God calling us to do as we go and make disciples? As we see Jesus building his church, we're invited to be a part of this mission work.
4. And then lastly, to develop a love for reading, studying and preaching the New Testament story.

Let's begin this Introductory lesson with a short review of the Story of the Old Testament. In the middle of page 3 there is a chart with 5 sections. These are the 5 major sections of the Old Testament story. If we start with creation, the story starts around 4000 BC or earlier. But the time that God begins to work through Abraham is about 2000 BC and it continues on to about 400 BC. So there's a span of about 1600 years from Abraham all

the way to where Malachi ends with his looking ahead to the promise of a messenger who will come to prepare the way for the Lord.

Here is a short summary of the 5 sections of the OT Story.

The first section is called the **Formation**. It is the formation of the kingdom that takes us from the book of Genesis through Joshua.

The second section is the period of the **Theocracy** where God is meant to be the king over his people. The story is told in Joshua, Judges, Ruth and the beginning of 1 Samuel.

The third section is the period of the **Monarchy**. After Samuel, the people demand a king to be like the other nations. The Monarchy has two parts. There is the United Kingdom under King Saul, King David and King Solomon. This begins in 1 Samuel chapter 8-10 with Saul being anointed as the first king of Israel. The Monarchy continues through the division of the kingdoms into North and South. Both kingdoms eventually go into exile. The northern kingdom goes into Assyria in 722 BC. The southern kingdom of Judah goes into exile in Babylon beginning in 605. Jerusalem is eventually destroyed in 586 BC.

This leads to the fourth period which is called the **Exile**.

The southern kingdom of Judah remains in Babylon for 70 years as Jeremiah had prophesied. Daniel and Ezekiel were the two prophets that prophesied during this period.

At the end of the 70 years, King Cyrus of Persia, issues a decree to allow the people of Judah, the people of God to return to the land of Canaan, rebuild the temple, and repopulate Jerusalem.

This period is called the **Restoration**. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther help to tell this part of the story. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are the minor prophets of this season.

If you turn to page four, you can see the diagram of what we used in the course called the story of the Old Testament.

It's a pictorial roadmap. This is an easy way to tell the story of the Old Testament. And without going into a lot of detail, I will summarize the key points from the Formation to the Theocracy, to the Monarchy, then the Exile and the Restoration.

On page four, you can see all those five sections of history are detailed and are broken out with pictures that help to tell the story. The story of the Old Testament is broken into two parts. In Genesis chapter 1 to 11, God is working in a general way with all people of the world from creation to the Fall, to the Flood of Noah, and then to the rebellion, the division that takes place at the Tower of Babel.

At the end of chapter 11, God shifts His focus. The story of the Old Testament shifts to part two. God says, I'm going to begin to work in a very specific way with a specific group of people.

God calls out a people of His very own. And the story of the Old Testament shifts with God calling Abram, who becomes Abraham. And God makes an eternal, unconditional promise.

He says that through Abraham He is going to give him a land. God will make Abraham into a great nation. Many people who will come from Abraham. And all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.

We see in Genesis 15:6, that Abraham believes God. Abraham is not called by God because he is a good person or because he has done certain things. It is because of God's grace that Abraham was called.

And it's because of Abraham's faith in God and the promises of God that God credits His righteousness to Abraham. All who would come after him, who have the faith of Abraham, also believe in God's promise by grace through faith. In the Old Testament, people were believing in the promise of a Savior, the promise of a Redeemer.

And for us, we believe in the fulfillment of that promise through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As the story continues, after 25 years of waiting and trusting God and going through difficult times, Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah. He is the child of the promise. As Isaac grows, God reinforces with Isaac the same covenant promise that he made with Abraham.

And Isaac and Rebekah give birth to Jacob and Esau. And God's covenant promise is carried on through Jacob. This covenant promise to build an eternal kingdom, to have a land, to have a great people, to be a blessing to the world, was repeated through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And Jacob has 12 sons. God worked in a very special way through Joseph, who was hated by his brothers. But God had a very special plan to provide protection and salvation for His newly forming kingdom. After more than 400 years in Egypt, God would bring His people into the land that was promised to Abraham.

So in the pictures you can see under Jacob, the 12 tribes, the 12 sons. Joseph is highlighted. The story continues into Egypt, where Joseph was in prison and he faced many trials and much suffering. But he remained faithful to God and God was with him in all that he did.

Eventually, Jacob sends his other sons down to Egypt because of a famine that was in the land. By this time, Joseph had become second in command to Pharaoh by God's sovereign grace.

God worked through Joseph to save his people, save Jacob and his family. Eventually, they come and lived in Egypt. God protected His people from the pagan nations around them. In Canaan, they may have intermarried with the people there. The Egyptians would not intermarry. God was preserving, protecting and preparing his people to become a great nation.

The story continues then after Joseph dies. 275 years pass, and Moses was born. God called Moses to be the deliverer, to bring God's people out of slavery and into the land promised to Abraham more than 400 years earlier.

You can follow the roadmap and see pictures of the crossing of the Red Sea, the Passover, the deliverance, the coming to Mount Sinai, the giving of the law. God said, I'm your God. I've taken you out of Egypt. And because you are my people and I am your God, here is how you are to live in relationship with a Holy God.

The Law was put in place to show the need of a Savior. All of the sacrifices that were described in the Law were there to show the need for forgiveness of sin, the need to confess, the need to repent, the need to have the shedding of blood to provide forgiveness of sin. This would restore and continue the relationship by grace through

faith in God. All of these rituals were pointing ahead to Jesus, who would be the Messiah, the Savior who would come.

After a period of time, Moses leads the people from Mount Sinai to the promised land. There is a rebellion that takes place at Kadesh Barnea. The 12 spies are sent into the land. If you remember that, they come back and say, the land is good. The land is full of milk and honey, but there are huge people there. There are enemies there. There are giants in the land. We could never take the land. And 10 of the spies say, No, it is impossible.

Two spies, Joshua and Caleb, say, Yes, we, we can take the land. God is with us.

Yet all the people listen to the 10 spies. And because of that, God says, for 40 years, one year for every day that you spied out the land you will wander in the wilderness. You can see the number 40 a key part of this story.

For 40 years, you'll wander in the wilderness until all the men who are 20 years of age or older, the fighting men, they will die in the wilderness. And at that time, Joshua eventually will lead you into the promised land. Through the book of Numbers Moses leads the people in the wilderness. Deuteronomy takes place on the border of the Jordan River in the plains of Moab with God's people waiting to enter the promised land.

40 years has passed. Moses dies. He never enters the promised land.

Joshua is called by God to lead the people into the promised land. You see there the picture of Joshua as they cross the Jordan. They conquer the land. The land is divided among the 12 tribes. This is the period of the Theocracy where God is meant to be their king.

There is no human king. There is no other spiritual leader or official leader of the nation of Israel, other than God. After Joshua dies and the next generation dies, the people begin to wander and they begin to do whatever is right in their own eyes. In the book of Judges, there are seven cycles of decline that take place. God provides judges like Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Jephthah. The people would be walking with God. Then they turn away to idolatry and sin. God would bring discipline upon them. The people would repent and cry out to God. God would send a deliverer in the form of a judge and the people would respond and there would be peace for a period of time, 20, 30, or 40 years. And then the cycle would be repeated again.

It was a dark time for the nation of Israel. Yet the story of Ruth takes place during this period. And Ruth, as we so often see throughout the Old Testament - in the darkest times, there is always a message of hope.

God is a faithful God. He's a promise-keeping God. He's going to build his kingdom.

Ruth is a story of hope. It reminds us of how all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Ruth was a Moabite. She put her trust in God. Ruth marries Boaz and Ruth becomes the great-great-grandmother of King David. She is in the line of the Messiah.

Even in the darkest times, even in the time of this Theocracy, when the people were turning from God, there was a message of hope. God raised up Samuel toward the end of the period of Theocracy. Samuel was the last of the judges and the first of the prophets.

During that time, the people rebelled against God and demanded a king. They were not satisfied with God as their king. They wanted to be like all the other nations.

God said to Samuel, let them have a king. Samuel anoints Saul as the first king of Israel. Remember, Saul had no heart for God.

Samuel also anoints David as to be the future king of Israel. He was a man after God's own heart. David had a whole heart for God. God made an eternal promise with David in 2 Samule 7, stating that a king from the tribe of Judah would reign on David's through forever. This promise looked forward to Jesus as the King of kings.

And then David's son Solomon would become the third king of the United Kingdom, the United Monarchy. Solomon had half a heart for God, a divided heart. He started well, but he had many wives from foreign countries and they worshipped other gods and other idols. The worship of those gods and idols wooed Samuel's heart away from God. And because of that, when Solomon died, there was a division of the kingdom. This is the period of the Divided Monarchy.

The Northern Kingdom was made up of the 10 tribes of Israel. The Southern Kingdom was two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles provide the details for this story. Both kingdoms eventually were judged by God and went into captivity.

In 722 BC, The Northern Kingdom, because of the sin of the first king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam, went into captivity in Assyria. And the Southern Kingdom wasn't much better.

There were no good kings in the Northern Kingdom, 19 evil kings. There were 20 kings in the Southern Kingdom, and only eight of them were good. Only 8 followed the ways of King David.

God is a faithful God though. He sends them into captivity in Babylon because of the sin of these kings, the sins of the people. But he makes a promise through Jeremiah the prophet that after 70 years, they would return to the land.

And he's going to fulfill his promise to build his kingdom. This leads to the period of the Exile. 70 is a number in red. It's the 70 years of the exile, followed by the Return and the Restoration. At the end of the 70 years, King Cyrus issued a decree. At that point, Persia had defeated Babylon. Persia the ruling kingdom at that time.

And Cyrus said, the people of God, the people of Judah can return to the land of Canaan. Zerubbabel leads the first group back to rebuild the altar and begin to rebuild the temple

The second group is led by Ezra the priest. And his goal is to rebuild the people to get back to a place of true worship of God.

And then the third group are led by Nehemiah. His charter was to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, make reforms, and repopulate the city. The prophets at that time were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

The end of the story of the Old Testament is the book of Malachi. Malachi prophesied that God would send a messenger, someone to prepare the way for the Lord. And from that time, there are 400 years of silence. It was not that God was not working during those years. There were no writing and speaking prophets for 400 years until we come into the New Testament when John the Baptist is the prophet that Malachi prophesied about. And he came to prepare the way for the Lord. And that's where the story of the New Testament begins.

At just the right time, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. That through the death and the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus, we could become children of God.

That's a summary of the story of the Old Testament.

Flipping back to page three, you can see the structure of the Old Testament. You can see the numbers 5, 12, 5, 5, 12. This was a simple song to remember the structure of the Old Testament.

5 books of the Law, 12 books of History, 5 books of Poetry, 5 Major Prophets, and 12 Minor Prophets.

You see also a reference to the red thread throughout the Old Testament. Jesus is the main character of the Old Testament. Jesus is woven into every book of the Old Testament.

There's a red thread of Jesus woven throughout the Old Testament and throughout the Bible. In Luke 24:44, after the resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, "these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Then he opened their minds and he showed them where he was written about in the Scriptures. There are examples of the red thread of Jesus all throughout the Old Testament

It is easy to be sharing the Old Testament and link to the gospel and point ahead to the New Testament.

At the bottom of page 3 there is a chart that we used in the story of the Old Testament. It describes the message of the Old Testament. It is the story of God's kingdom. There are two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. God made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 regarding the promised kingdom that would come through Abraham. In order to have a kingdom, you need a king, you need people, you need a place and you need God's law or purpose. God promised all of this to Abraham.

There was conflict in Genesis chapter 3 through 11. We see this conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. Sin entered the world. There was rebellion against God.

In Genesis chapter 12, God said, I'm no longer going to work in a general way with the world. I'm going to work through a specific group of people. I'm going to call a people

of my own who will love me with all their heart and soul, mind and strength, and they will love others.

God would work through them to be a light to the nations, the people who are separated from God because of sin.

Throughout the Old Testament, there are people from the nations, separated from God, like Ruth, like Rahab, like others who put their faith in the promise of the Messiah. There's a chasm that separates the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. The law of God was given to show the need for a savior.

People were and are spiritually dead in sin. Prisoners to sin.

There is no way we can cross over to God other than by His grace. This is the hope of the Gospel in Romans 6:23. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Jesus said in John 14:6 said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me". We use this chart to tell the story of the Old Testament yet it is relevant to the story of the entire Bible.

People have always been saved by grace through faith. People have never been saved by works. It has always been a story of faith in God, having the faith of Abraham and as a result, having God's righteousness added to us.

In the Old Testament, it was faith in the promise of the Savior to come, the promise of the Redeemer. In the New Testament, it's looking back to the cross and believing in Jesus as the Savior.

There's no other name given to men under heaven by which we may be saved other than the name of the Lord Jesus.

So this is just a quick summary of the Old Testament story. I hope you notice the foundation from which the New Testament is built. Many of these promises that look ahead to Jesus are veiled but they become clear as day in the light of the fulfilled promises of the New Testament.

When we continue with Parts 2 and 3 of the Introduction, we'll look at the New Testament from three points of context. We'll look at it as a work of literature, from an

historical perspective, and as a theological message. This will provide a solid foundation from which to begin telling the story of the New Testament.

I look forward to meeting with you in the next audio recording as the Introduction to the Story of the New Testament continues.