



Connect to the Bible

Leader's Guide

Week 2

Topic week 2: The Torah/Pentateuch/Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy)

Prework Summary: Before class read the full leader's guide and watch the videos on the website. Note the time of the videos so you can plan well.

Study these teaching points covered in the video (Refer to participants guide week 2):

- 1) Explain the Torah and the importance to Jewish tradition.
- 2) Explain the nature of oral traditions.
- 3) Explain the meaning of a covenant.
- 4) Genesis
 - Creation and the two ways to read (literally, allegorically)
 - Important people and events
- 5) Exodus
 - The two parts (Exodus and the Law)
 - Passover and the NT connection
 - Law and covenant – discuss new covenant
- 6) Leviticus overview
- 7) Numbers overview
- 8) Deuteronomy overview

Transcript ****

Good afternoon. Once again, my name is Shawn Allen, and I hope you enjoyed the first week where we did a very fast overview of the Bible and how it came to be. Over the next five weeks, we're going to break down and talk about the sections of the Bible. Once again, this is a 30,000 feet view look at the Bible. We want you to be able to understand the people and the stories, know where things are, and how they fit together.

The first five books of Christian bible are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books are known as The Law, the Pentateuch, or the Torah. Biblical scholars have often debated over authorship of the books. Traditionally, the church consensus has been that Moses was the author of all five books. But after exegesis and archaeological finds, most biblical experts agree that the Pentateuch was coauthored by a collection of ancient writers. The scholars have given them name letters, J, E, P, and D, based on writing style. Scholars can look at the writing and say they used the term Yahweh for God here and not here – they used a different term. Therefore, it was a different writer. There was an entire study of brilliant people who can look at how someone writes and know whether or not it's the same writer. This is important to know, because one of the things that is learned from this is that much of this was written down based on oral traditions. It was handed down by oral tradition and eventually it was written down. And I think one of the things we think in our society is, “well, then it can't be very accurate if they were just remembering it, right?” Because we can't remember our shopping list, right? I'm always going to be back at the store in an hour because I forgot something! But there are societies that don't have writing but they remember things just as accurately as we do. So, if you were to look at how Muslims sometimes memorize part of the Koran or in Africa, how they memorize stories, we recognize the importance of how they memorize them with an oral tradition. They take it seriously. When you hear something was handed down in an oral tradition, and maybe it was written down hundreds of years or more after the event happened, that doesn't mean that there is any inaccuracy in it because they took this very seriously. I think that's important because sometimes there are attacks on the Bible and its accuracy, and that can be one way that people try to attack. And I think it's important for you to know that what you're reading is an accurate version of it.

How is the Pentateuch, or the Torah, treated by the Jewish faith? Well, this, the Torah is the core of all of their beliefs and teachings. If you were to go to a Jewish service, they would read from the Torah and over the course of the year, they would read the entire Torah and then they would start over. It contains the laws that they follow and the festivals. As we were recording this today it is Rosh Hashanah, which is the Feast of the Trumpets or the Jewish New Year. This is laid out in both Leviticus and Numbers. All of their practices, their beliefs, the laws, they follow, all come almost entirely from the Torah. This is of huge importance to them. And it's important for Christians as well. One of the reasons we want you to engage in the Bible is because sometimes we treat the Old Testament as “I don't really have to follow this, this was for the Jews. These were the teachings that we no longer have to follow.” And we kind of write off the Old Testament as not being that important. Let me tell you, the entire Bible is the teaching of God. Now there's something called progressive revelation, which is that God revealed more to us over time. He revealed more. He didn't reveal everything at the beginning, or everything to the nation of Israel, but he revealed over time, ultimately culminating with the

incarnation of Christ. And so, when we read the Old Testament, we need to read it in light of the New Testament. When Jesus says, there's no foods that are unclean what's unclean comes from within us, not from without, yes. That means that we no longer need to follow the dietary restrictions set forth in Leviticus, because he said that there aren't foods that are unclean. But that doesn't mean all of the teachings on living with morality and things like that, are no longer valid. In fact, Christ said it wasn't. He said he did not come to abolish the law. It's important to acknowledge that we don't do something anymore, but then think to yourself, "why don't we do it anymore?" We might not do it anymore because we were subsequently told we didn't need to, but it's still very important and very applicable to our lives.

Let's go through these books and mainly we're going to focus on Genesis and Exodus. Genesis starts out with Creation, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." How should we read the Creation story? This is going to be one thing that a lot of people disagree on one way or the other. I'm not going to tell you how to believe, but I'm going to tell you the two ways you can read it. The Creation story can be read literally that there were seven days, whether, I believe it's seven 24-hour days, or seven days, of whatever length. And that's how God created the earth in that time. That's a literal reading of what a day means. The other is allegorically, which is to say, this is a story about God as the creator. He created everything. He created man, and it's written in this style, but we don't have to follow the seven-day rule. We don't have to view the earth as 6,000 years old. We can believe the earth is 13 million years old. And that doesn't take away from the teachings. Whatever you choose to believe is entirely up to you. I think either belief can be read consistently with the writing. I have my opinion, but that's not what we're here for.

The one thing you need to know is the Word is a covenant, a promise. Covenants would often happen between nations outside the Bible, this was something they were familiar with. Maybe a larger country or group of people would have a covenant with a smaller one where they would protect them. But then the smaller one would also fight on their behalf. Whenever a covenant was made, there was always an element of blood, there was a sacrifice. And so as we see covenants, we're going to talk about this more. You will see in the covenant with Abraham, you'll see the sacrifice. You're going to see the blood in the covenant with the nation of Israel in Exodus. And, it's important because as we get to the New Testament, you're going to read that Jesus says the Last Supper, which was the Passover Supper, this is the blood of the new covenant. So now you understand that this is a new covenant, God is making with His people and it's being secured once again by blood.

Here's a quick walk through of Genesis. Genesis can be divided between primeval history, which is the first chapter to 11:27, there's not a set time when the story happens, and then ancestral history, when we can begin tracking time with Abraham. Creation, is the first five books, and then the story of Noah – and there is a covenant there as well. Next is the story of the tower of Babel. This is when the people were trying to build a tower to heaven. People

were trying to do this on their own without God, and He made it so they could not communicate well and their languages were dispersed. It's where we get the term babbling. Everybody disperses, and then when we get to Pentecost in Acts, we'll see that everybody was able to understand each other again. So, it's a full circle.

Next, we get to Abraham and there were multiple covenants or promises that God made with Abraham about his ancestors. Abraham's the start of the lineage where we can follow throughout. Abraham had two sons and was married to Sarah. Even though they were well past the child-bearing age, they were told that they would have a son. But they didn't trust God and took it in their own hands, and Abraham had a son with one of the slaves and their child was Ishmael. Eventually though they did have the son, Isaac, and then after all of that waiting for their son, God sent Abraham up to sacrifice Isaac. Now, when you read that story, you'll see that at no point did God intend that he would actually sacrifice Isaac, but it was a representation of his faith and his trust in God. From Isaac, he then has two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the younger brother and through some interesting manipulations, Jacob ends up getting the blessing of the older son and then becomes the one who inherits through that line. Then Jacob's name is changed, and he becomes Israel. Sometimes you'll see name changes through the Bible. Abram became Abraham; in the New Testament, Saul becomes Paul. Israel (Jacob) had 12 sons. He had two wives and then through some of the slaves as well, he had a total of 12 sons. Those became what are known as the 12 tribes of Israel. The 12 tribes of Israel are named after the 12 sons of Israel, who is Jacob. One of his sons was Joseph. The last large section of Genesis is about Joseph. He starts having dreams where he's above his brothers in status and they really don't like him. They throw him in a well and he's ultimately sold as a slave to Egypt. But he stays faithful and he eventually saves Egypt from a famine and gains great power within Egypt. And at that time, when the famine is hitting his family, they come to Egypt. It's a phenomenal story. Once again, this is why we're trying to encourage you to read this because we can't tell it as well as you can read it, but he saves his family and ultimately his entire family comes to Egypt. And that's what moves, everybody from where they were over to Egypt, which then becomes the start of Exodus.

Here is a map to show you where Abraham started out over here. This is where Jerusalem, modern day Israel is, and then down into Egypt. To give you a picture of what we're talking about here, and also, it's interesting to see the lineage as it goes down through the family line. We have Abraham, Abraham married, Sarah, and had Isaac. And then Isaac married Rebecca and had Jacob and Esau. And then Jacob had the 12 sons, if you count, you'll see 13, but it was a patriarchal club culture, and Dinah was not counted because she was a daughter. Once again, it wasn't the eldest son, Ruben who inherited, and whose line we follow. It was Judah. It was the line of Judah that can be traced to King David and ultimately to Jesus. So that's the lineage and we can track it all the way back.

At the end of Genesis, the family is doing really well but then time passes and we come to Exodus and things really change. The Pharaoh has forgotten what the Jews had done, what Joseph had done. The Jews are enslaved and they're crying out to God. God chooses Moses who is a Jew and had been raised outside of the Jews. He wins them back with his brother, Aaron, and tells him to speak to the Pharaoh and let the Israelites leave. Pharaoh would not, which then brought upon a series of plagues. The river turned to blood, there were locusts and many different plagues. Ultimately it gets to the last plague where Pharaoh will have no choice. In this final plague, the oldest male of every family, including the animals, was going to die. But he told the Jews to take an unblemished lamb, and take the blood from it and put the blood over the doorway of your house. And then you will be passed over and no one in your family will die. This is what the Jews did and the plague came upon Egypt and the Jews were saved from it. And that is Passover, which is still a celebration. It was the Passover meal that Jesus was celebrating on the Last Supper. This is a very important part of both of our cultures.

In the Jewish culture Passover is what led to the Exodus – the crossing of the Red Sea. Then they're out in the desert and they quickly lose faith. They're constantly wondering “why did we do this? Weren't we just better as slaves?” Eventually we will skip down to chapter 19 where they are in the Sinai mountains and this is where Moses goes up and talks to God. It is here that God gives him the 10 Commandments, which he brings down on stones. This is the covenant with the nation of Israel, that they are His chosen people. Next in Exodus are the instructions on how to build a Tabernacle, a mobile place of worship, with the Ark of the covenant and everything in it. There are very detailed instructions regarding the Tabernacle. Aaron and his sons become priests, the highest priests. Here you have the story of the golden calf when Moses is up on the mountain talking to God, and once again, the people immediately lose faith. They go to Aaron, and they say, “make us something we can worship”. They melt down all the gold and they make a golden calf. Because of this, God is ready to wipe them out and just start over. And He tells Moses, “I will start over with you, you are the new Abraham.” Moses pleads with Him to change His mind, and God does, He changes his mind. We see Moses as a real advocate at that point, starting in chapter 33, then they head toward the Promised Land, the land that God had promised, Abraham. All the land, which is in the Jerusalem area now. Next, we see the creation of the Tabernacle. The heart of Judaism and the Nation of Israel happens right here.

The book of Leviticus is next and it is likely that when you read, you're going to struggle through it. It's one of the hardest ones, this is the laws. There are five sections: sacrifice, dedication of the Tabernacle, ritual purity, holiness, extra laws. It has 613 laws on what to eat, what not to eat, things like that. I'm not going to

spend a lot of time here, but it's still important to read. Most of the laws are not followed as much because of the progressive revelation.

Next is the book of Numbers. This takes us from Mount Sinai to the edge of going into the Promised Land. Here is the designation that Levites, the priests, in chapters 13 and 14, are sent into the Promised Land and God says He will take care of them and protect them. The Levites go in and they are scared of the people there and they don't have faith in God. They come back and say, "we can't go in there". This is bad and the punishment that God gives them is to say "none of this generation will go into the Promised Land. You will wander in the desert for 40 years." And that's what happens. When wandering for 40 years, it's not that they just didn't have a good map, they were actually not allowed to enter, and what you see during that time is war, rebellion, rules, repeat. They would constantly be not following what they should and there were repercussions. They would come back around and then it would cycle and toward the end of the numbers, we see them preparing for the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy is next and is a great recap of all of this in four parts. There's the discourse of Moses, which is a historical recap. You have a review of the law and covenant, then you have the ratification. The covenant, this is with the blood. And then you have at the end, the death of Moses. One of the arguments of why Moses didn't write it is because his death is included in the writing. But Deuteronomy is a great recap of everything. There are some of the same events here, it doesn't exist on its own.

The last thing I want to discuss, and I mentioned in the last section, is about the culture. I believe the culture is the hardest thing and the biggest inhibitor to reading the Old Testament. The culture seems very different. Even the New Testament culture, which is different also, doesn't seem as different as what we see in the Old Testament. I would recommend, that should you choose, and I hope you will sit down and read the Bible, to get a commentary that helps you understand the culture. A book I will recommend is called "Epic of Eden" by Sandra Richter. It is the best book I've ever read on understanding the Old Testament culture. I've given it to so many people and every one of them has come back and said the book is amazing. It's very easy to read, very understandable. I really hope you will find something like that to help along the way.

We'll talk more about this next week when we are going to be flying through the rest of the Old Testament in one session! Thank you very much.

*End Script*****

Tough questions prep:

Here are some potential questions you might receive and answers

What happened to the Law? Can it be ignored now? Some of laws dealt with the society at that time and may be less relevant today. Others were sacrifices for sin, which is no longer necessary because the sacrifice of Jesus is great enough to cover all sins. Several were moral laws (e.g. the Ten Commandments) and they are no less important today. God spoke through Jeremiah and said that with the new covenant “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33); thus God gave us the new covenant through Jesus, and he declared that he came to fulfil (not abolish) the law. (Matt. 5:17-20)

Is there a right way to read the creation story? What about evolution? There are different opinions on how to read the creation story. The main two ways are a literal reading (God created the world in six days (24-hour days) and rested on the seventh, and an allegorical reading (God is the creator of all things and the days are an example of how, but do not need to be literal days). The third option is often that creation occurred over six days, but we do not know how long a day is for God (who is outside time). The literal reading does not mesh with evolution; whereas the allegorical reading does not require conflict with any scientific theories.

Class Timeline:

	Estimated time
1. Introductions	15 min
2. Teaching Video	Pastor Shawn Allen, 22 min
3. Discussion Questions	20 min
4. Takeaways	1 min
5. Prayer	1 min
6. Invitation for next week	1 min

1. Introduce the content and video for this class (in your own words):

One of the discussions from the first week was how the Bible is one complete story. Trying to understand Christianity by only reading the NT is like starting a book in the middle. Among other things it is important to understand the creation, and God’s original plan; his covenant with Abraham and the Israelites; and the Passover story and its relationship to God’s sacrifice of his own son. This week takes a look at the very beginning: the period from God’s creation of the world through the Israelites preparing to enter into the promised lands. Parts of the story seem inapplicable because it is another time, another culture, and another people. Yet, all of this leads to Christ. Their story is our story, just as their failings are our failings. The Torah sets the stage for all that follows.

2. Play the teaching video.

3. Discussion questions (See pages 18 & 19):

1. Despite the cultural differences, how do you see our own lives, actions, and faith in the lives of the Israelites?
2. How does God’s covenants with Abraham relate to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and our role as disciples?
3. How does the Mosaic covenant at Mt. Sinai relate to the new covenant through Jesus (See Jeremiah 31:31-34, Matthew 26:27-28)

4. Closing / takeaways in your own words:

The Bible is one story; and all people are God’s people. To understand Jesus and his message, we must understand the past. The names we know from stories (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses) are not just the past. They are a part of the whole story of God; including Jesus and ourselves.

5. Close in prayer Use the PRAY model as we teach them to pray:

P = praise – praise God for who He is and what he has done. Use attributes to describe Him.

R = Repent – helps us confess any sins and change the way we think or feel

A = Ask – petition your request for this group to our Father in Heaven including any doubt they may have

Y = Yield – Submit to God’s will and let go of our will

PRAISE	Matthew 6:9	"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.'"
REPENT	Matthew 6:12	"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
ASK	Matthew 6:11&13	"Give us this day our daily bread." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]"
YIELD	Matthew 6:10	"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

6. Invite them back next week to learn about

In Week 3 of Connect to the Bible we will be talking about history, poetry, and prophecy! Join

us next week to learn about Biblical narratives, the foretelling of the Messiah, and poetic text like Psalms or Proverbs

