

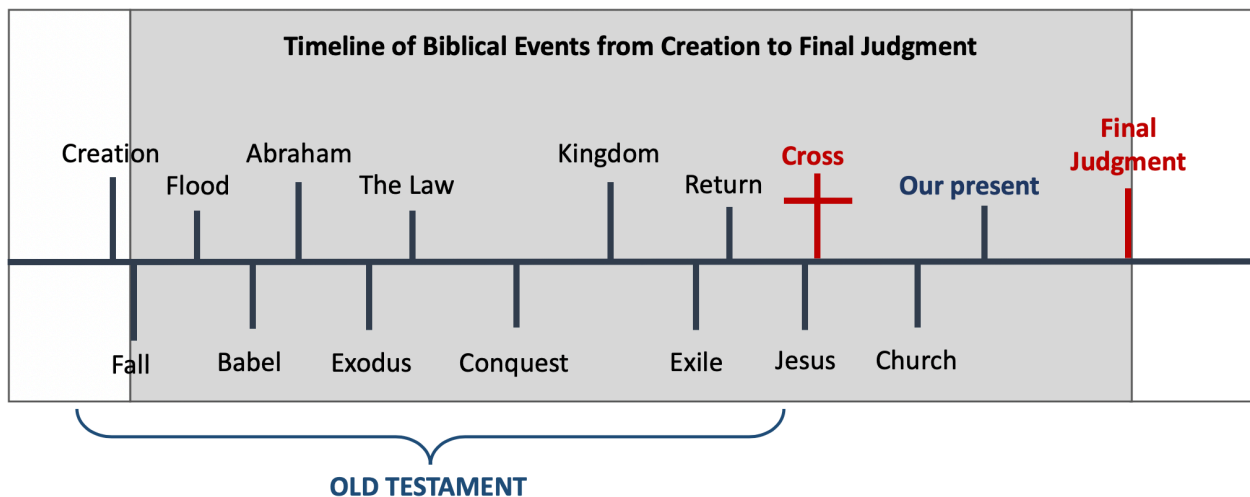
Lesson 31: Faith in Action III – Making Sense of the Situations in Our Lives

(Note: This Faith in Action exercise works best as a workshop. Please allow more time for meaningful discussion. Recommended time: three hours.)

Truths We Have Learnt from the Old Testament

In the lessons so far, we've completed a quick study of the Old Testament. For over 2000 years, God taught Abraham's descendants His counterculture and they preserved His words and actions from creation to a few centuries before Jesus.

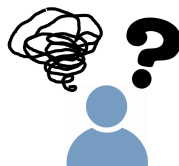
God's revelation in the Old Testament is the powerful foundation that Jesus and the New Testament writers build upon. Early Christians did not invent Christianity out of other pagan "mystery religions". The Creator-God of the universe Himself revealed His truths to mankind.



With the foundations we have learnt in the Old Testament, we are now more prepared to appreciate and understand truths that the New Testament teaches.

However, before we proceed into the New Testament, we will review some of these truths using the "Faith in Action" drill.

FAITH IN ACTION DRILL



When do we use this drill?

We use it when the troubles of life overwhelm us, or when a question or issue confuses us.

What is the first thing we should do?

Our first response should be to go to God's Word and ask ourselves:

1 "Which events in God's Word help me find the biblical perspective on this concern that I have?"



How do we do this?

- Mentally, we go through the events in the Bible, quickly reviewing the truths that each event teaches to see which is relevant to the question that is bothering us.
- Then we use those events to provide truths we need to help give us perspective on the problem.

Why do we do this?

The Bible is a record of history told to us by Yahweh, the Creator-God of the universe. The accounts in the Bible are not random.

God very specifically chose to put into Scripture events that would help us build an interlocked framework to better understand Him and mankind. The framework helps us interpret the world and live faithfully to Him.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

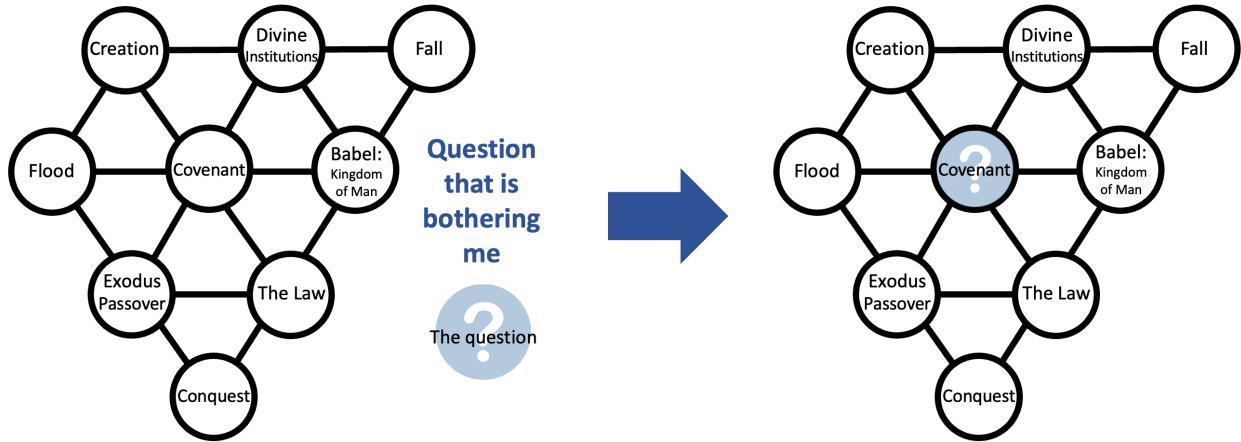
Deuteronomy 29:29

"The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions.

Next comes the second step.

We need to check if the way we applied that piece of truth to our problem is consistent with what the rest of the Bible teaches. In other words, are we using the Bible’s framework to guide our application of the truth from a particular event?

- 2 “Does this fit into everything else I know about God and is it consistent with the rest of the Bible?”



Faith in Action Drill

We will attempt this exercise in three parts.

Part 1: Review Old Testament lessons

Instructions

1. On page 5 is a table of biblical events that we have studied. The left column is the name of the event. The middle column (which are all blank) are the truths from these events. The right column has notes about these truths. For example:

Event	What did God teach man?	Notes
Creation		Yahweh, the Creator-God of the universe. There is a Creator-creature distinction.

2. On page 7 are the truths that go into the middle column. They are written as questions. For example:













10 Who is God?	11 What is inspiration?	12 What is suffering?
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3. Each event teaches us one or more truths. For example, from the **Creation** event, we learnt about **Yahweh**, the Creator-God. So "**Who is God?**" is a truth that Creation teaches.

Event	What did God teach man?	Notes
Creation	Who is God?	Yahweh, the Creator-God of the universe. There is a Creator-creature distinction.

4. Fill in the middle column on page 5 with the list of truths found on page 7.
5. The completed table will give you a summary of the key lessons we have learnt from the Old Testament.
6. For purposes of this review, each option on page 7 fits into only one event on page 5.

Lessons from the Old Testament

Event	What did God teach man?	Notes	
	Creation	Who is God?	
			Yahweh, the Creator-God of the universe. There is a Creator-creature distinction.
			Under-lords representing Yahweh.
	Fall	This is under the authority of man.	
			Rebellion against God.
	Flood	Living with evil.	
			Separation of evil and good.
	Call of Abraham	God extending kindness to undeserving people.	
			God chooses to work through certain people.
			God declares people right in His eyes through their faith in Him.
	Exodus	Believing Yahweh's words.	
			The innocent shedding blood and dying in place of the guilty.
	Mount Sinai	God revealing Himself to man using language.	
			What God chooses to record as Scripture.
			What passes the standard to become Scripture.
	Conquest	Learning obedience to God and pushing out sin.	
	David	A believer in God being convinced of sin, then confessing and trusting God for forgiveness and restoration.	
	Solomon	God's idea of what is truly right and wrong.	
			Word of God and biblical wisdom as the foundation of culture.
	Decline of the Kingdom	God uses punishment to encourage repentance.	
	Exile	How to live by faith while in the pagan world.	
			Relating to God while focusing on His faithfulness, glory and grace.
	Partial Return	Trusting in the apocalyptic literature about God's final restoration.	

This page is intentionally left blank to allow the entire lesson to be printed double-sided without the answers appearing on the back of the exercise.

Instructions

First hand out pages 1–5 (stapled) and page 7 (loose) to the group so they can do Part 1 of the review.

The answer key on page 9 can be handed out loose after the exercise is completed so the class can review the key against their question sheet.

Use these options to fill in the blanks on Page 5.

1
What is repentance?

2
What is sin?

3
What is hope?

4
Who is man?

5
What is faith?

6
What is godly culture?

7
What is grace?

8
What is divine discipline?

9
What is election?

10
Who is God?

11
What is inspiration?

12
What is suffering?

13
What is endurance?

14
What is canonicity?

15
What is prayer?

16
What is nature?

17
What is biblical wisdom?

18
What is sanctification?

19
What is revelation?

20
What is judgment and salvation?

21
What is substitutionary atonement?

22
What is justification?

This page is intentionally left blank to allow the entire lesson to be printed double-sided without the answers appearing on the back of the exercise.

Instructions

First hand out pages 1–5 (stapled) and page 7 (loose) to the group so they can do Part 1 of the review.

The answer key on page 9 can be handed out loose after the exercise is completed so the class can review the key against their question sheet.

Lessons from the Old Testament (Answers)

Event	What did God teach man?	Notes	
	Creation	Who is God?	Yahweh, the Creator-God of the universe. There is a Creator-creature distinction.
		Who is man?	Under-lords representing Yahweh.
		What is nature?	This is under the authority of man.
	Fall	What is sin?	Rebellion against God.
		What is suffering?	Living with evil.
	Flood	What is judgment and salvation?	Separation of evil and good.
		What is grace?	God extending kindness to undeserving people.
	Call of Abraham	What is election?	God chooses to work through certain people.
		What is justification?	God declares people right in His eyes through their faith in Him.
		What is faith?	Believing Yahweh's words.
	Exodus	What is substitutionary atonement?	The innocent shedding blood and dying in place of the guilty.
	Mount Sinai	What is revelation?	God revealing Himself to man using language.
		What is inspiration?	What God chooses to record as Scripture.
		What is canonicity?	What passes the standard to become Scripture.
	Conquest	What is sanctification?	Learning obedience to God and pushing out sin.
	David	What is repentance?	A believer in God being convinced of sin, then confessing and trusting God for forgiveness and restoration.
	Solomon	What is biblical wisdom?	God's idea of what is truly right and wrong.
		What is godly culture?	Word of God and biblical wisdom as the foundation of culture.
	Decline of the Kingdom	What is divine discipline?	God uses punishment to encourage repentance.
	Exile	What is endurance?	How to live by faith while in the pagan world.
		What is prayer?	Relating to God while focusing on His faithfulness, glory and grace.
	Partial Return	What is hope?	Trusting in the apocalyptic literature about God's final restoration.

Part 2: Review God’s Covenants

Instructions

Read through the descriptions of the covenants listed below. Identify the name of the covenant. Then fill in the diagram at the bottom of the page with the names of the covenants based on when they started.

God’s Covenants

Name of Covenant: _____
 Made with the nation of Israel. Yahweh promised ownership and possession of physical land in the Middle East.

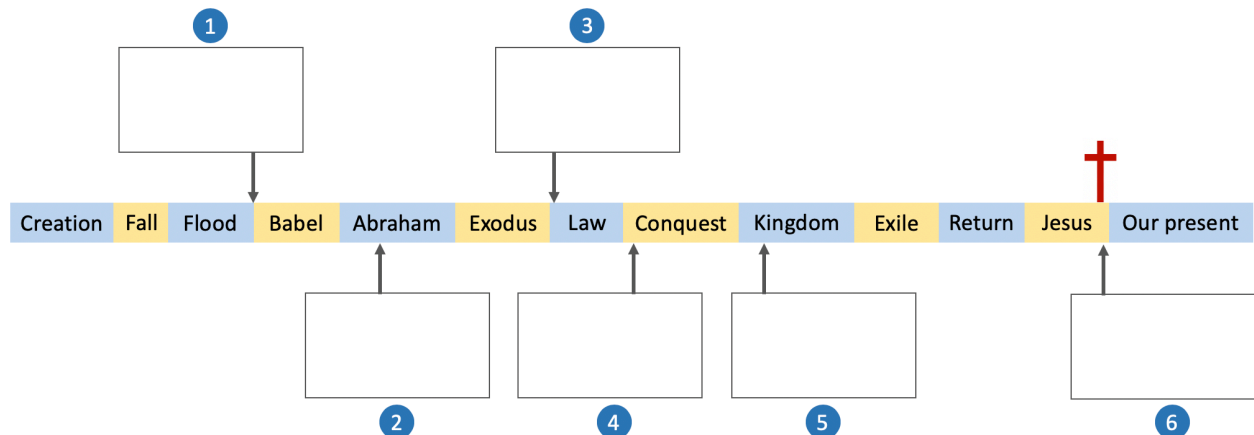
Name of Covenant: _____
 Made with all mankind and nature. Yahweh promised to never again destroy the earth with a global flood.

Name of Covenant: _____
 To be made with Israel and Judah. Yahweh promised forgiveness of sins, new obedient hearts for the people, and a restoration of their land.

Name of Covenant: _____
 Made with Abraham and his descendants. Yahweh promised land, descendants and that they would be a worldwide blessing.

Name of Covenant: _____
 Made with the nation of Israel. Yahweh promised blessings for keeping His 613 laws and cursings for breaking them.

Name of Covenant: _____
 Made with King David and his descendants. Yahweh promised that David’s dynasty will be an eternal one and his kingdom and throne will be in Jerusalem forever.



God's Covenants (Answers)

Land

Made with the nation of Israel. Yahweh promised ownership and possession of physical land in the Middle East.

Noahic or New World

Made with all mankind and nature. Yahweh promised to never again destroy the earth with a global flood.

New

To be made with Israel and Judah. Yahweh promised forgiveness of sins, new obedient hearts for the people, and a restoration of their land.

Abrahamic

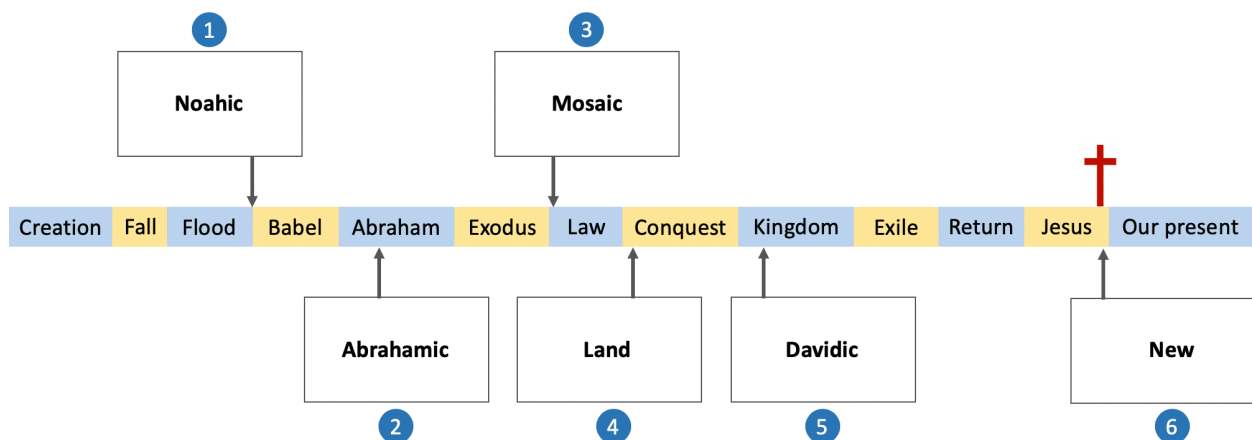
Made with Abraham and his descendants. Yahweh promised land, descendants and that they would be a worldwide blessing.

Mosaic or Sinaitic

Made with the nation of Israel. Yahweh promised blessings for keeping His 613 laws and cursings for breaking them.

Davidic

Made with King David and his descendants. Yahweh promised that David's dynasty will be an eternal one and his kingdom and throne will be in Jerusalem forever.



Part 3: Making Sense of the Situations in Our Lives

Instructions

1. The class will now be divided into smaller groups. Each smaller group will sit together to work on one of the three situations (on pages 17–19) assigned to them.



2. **Read** the selected situation.

Here is an example situation:

You were having a chat with your friend the other day when he said he doesn't think his prayers make any difference at all. He believes that God is in total control of the world and God will do whatever He wants. Nothing he says, does, or prays about will change that. You left the conversation feeling unsettled. Where in the Bible would you go to get the biblical perspective on what he said?



3. Discuss and agree on the **main issue** or what the main problem is.

In this case, you might say that the main difficulties are:

- *understanding the difference between the sovereignty of God and free will and*
- *understanding how God wants us to pray.*



4. **Go to God's Word** to see if there are any events or examples you can draw wisdom from. Specifically, ask yourself:

1 "Which events in God's Word help me find the biblical perspective on this concern that I have?"



Just based on what we have covered in this series (and reviewed in parts 1 and 2 of this exercise), perhaps your mind would go to:

- *how God chose Abraham but Abraham still needed to personally respond to God's call and*
- *Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 at the time of the Exile.*

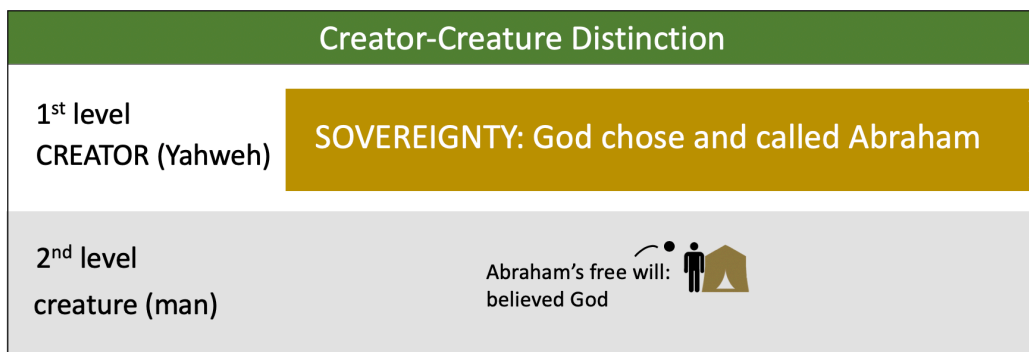
 Call of Abraham What is election?	 Exile What is prayer?
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5. **Think** through and **discuss** what those events taught you and how you can apply it in this situation. **Write down** some comments. For example, you might write:

Issue 1: Sovereignty of God versus free will of man (Genesis 12, 15)

- *In the call of Abraham, God first chose Abraham. God sovereignly decided who He would invite to work with Him.*
- *But Abraham also had a choice to respond. God did not program him to respond in a certain way. Abraham had genuine free will to choose if he wanted to trust in this God or to reject Him. In this case, Abraham chose to believe Yahweh.*
- *We learn that while God is sovereign and in control of everything, He can control without taking away man's personal responsibility in making decisions. As Creator He has ways of controlling His creation that are far beyond what we can imagine. So it is important we remember the Creator-creature distinction.*



Issue 2: Understanding how God wants us to pray (Daniel 9)

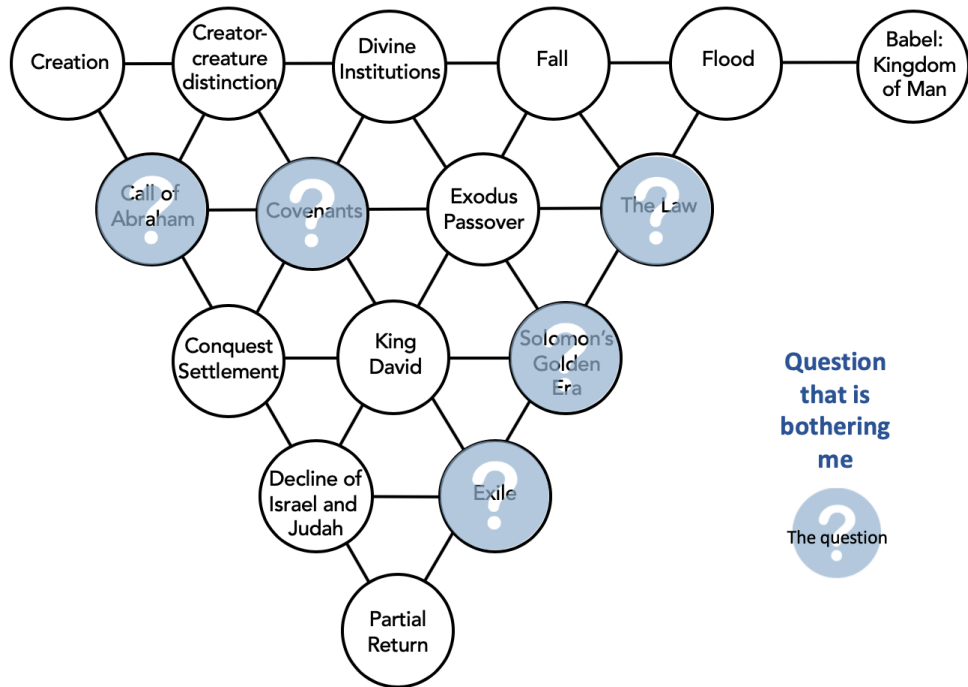
- *Daniel knew it was God who caused Israel to be exiled because they broke the Mosaic Law. Daniel also knew that the exile would last for five Gentile kingdoms.*
- *However, Daniel still prayed for God's mercy and that God would return them to their land.*
- *Even though God didn't fully answer Daniel's prayer, because he prayed, God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel more information. Daniel's prayer mattered! God responded to Daniel's prayer!*
- *We see from this that while God is sovereign, He delights in having believers participate in what He is doing in the world. God doesn't want us to be fatalistic in our attitudes towards prayer!*





6. **Check** if the way you understand the biblical events and the pieces of truth is consistent with what the rest of the Bible teaches.

2 “Does this fit into everything else I know about God and is it consistent with the rest of the Bible?”

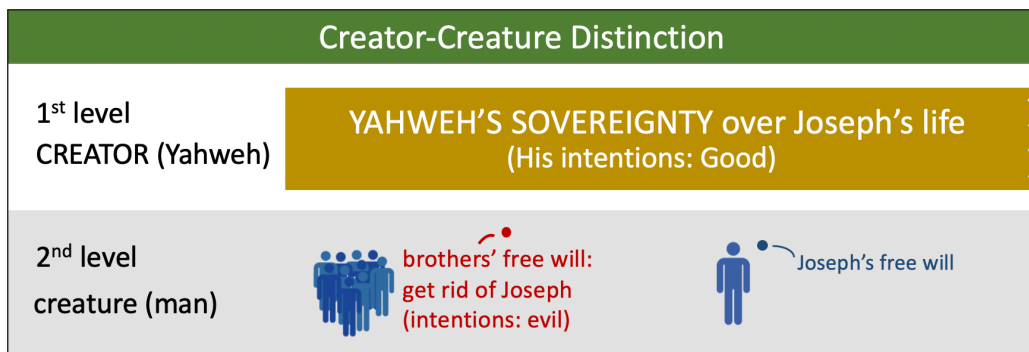


Question that is bothering me

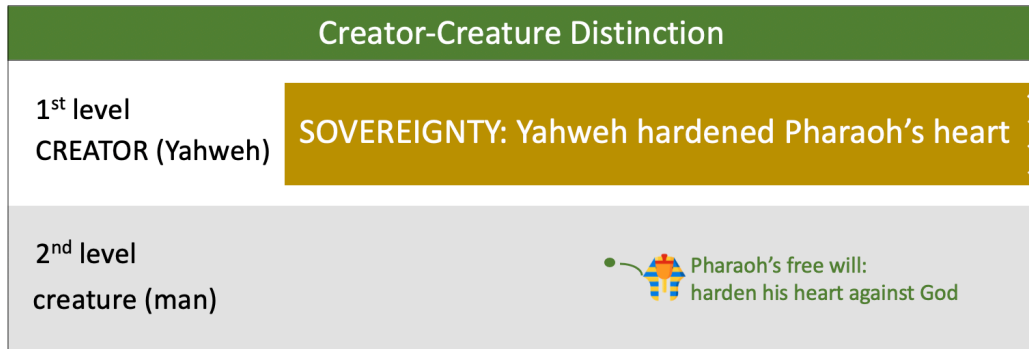


For example:

- On the topic of sovereignty versus free will, other events in the Bible that our minds might have gone to are:
 - (i) Joseph: God sovereignly planned for Joseph to go to Egypt so he could save his family from starvation, but his evil brothers also used their genuine free will to get rid of him which ended up with Joseph being in Egypt or...



- (ii) *Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus: Pharaoh hardened his heart against God but the Bible also says that God sovereignly offered Pharaoh choices that caused him to further harden his own heart.*



- On the topic of prayer, other events where we have learnt about this are:

(i) *Moses: God wanted to destroy all Israel for creating and worshipping the calf idol at Sinai, but Moses interceded for them in prayer and God relented.*



(ii) *Solomon: He prayed for wisdom and God answered his prayer.*



It is important to check our “pieces of truth” against the framework of the Bible. If we cannot find similar lessons anywhere in the Bible, it would be wise to study our Bible more and review it diligently with the help of commentaries, our pastor or other mature believers on how we should be understanding an event or passage. Most importantly, pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance.



7. Finally, **apply the lessons** from these events to the situation.

Your friend has the unbiblical idea that because God is in total control of the world, He disregards mankind’s choices. He has misunderstood God’s character and how He operates.

- *Using the example of Abraham, explain to him how God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will work and the interplay between them.*
- *Also explain to him that God intentionally gave mankind genuine free will to choose to participate in history. This is because God wants a genuine relationship with mankind. Tell him the account of Daniel, how he prayed and what God did in response.*
- *Finally encourage him to investigate God’s character more by studying his Bible more deeply. Assure him that all mankind is important to God (and that includes him). And spur him on to pray and not have a fatalistic attitude towards prayer.*
- *Encourage him by praying with him about these things.*



8. As you attempt the exercise, please note that for every situation, there will be multiple events and lessons in the Bible you can turn to for helpful guidance. Do not feel like you need to cover all of them. However, do discuss as much as your group feels is sufficient to address the situation.
9. Feel free to move on to attempt a second question if time permits.
10. At the end of the time given, we will briefly review what each smaller group has discussed. Each group can select a representative to share the thoughts of their group with the whole class.






Note

- For this situational exercise, divide the class into smaller groups of roughly equal numbers. Either assign or allow each small group to select one of the situations on pages 17, 18 and 19 to discuss.
- Give sufficient time for the groups to discuss the situation.
- At the end of the discussion time, have each group select a representative to summarise and share the thoughts of their group with the whole class.
- Let each small group have enough space to talk together without disturbing the other groups.

Situation 1

You are feeling all out of sorts. Your fellowship with God has been at a bad place recently. You haven't read the Bible in months, you haven't really prayed and you have absolutely no motivation to. You aren't exactly happy. Things in general just don't seem to be going your way—just small things going wrong, people making you upset and general irritations in life. Recently, you also lied to a friend. It was just a “white lie”, but you know it has caused your friend quite a bit of inconvenience. You feel bad but you don't want to bring it up and possibly ruin your friendship.








 <p>a. What is the main issue(s)?</p>	 <p>b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?</p>
 <p>c. Why did you choose those events or lessons? How do they provide perspective on what God might think?</p>	
 <p>d. Is your understanding about the events consistent with the rest of Scripture?</p>	
 <p>e. How do you apply the truths of those events to this situation?</p>	

Situation 2

A believing friend sits down with you for coffee. He is upset with life at his workplace. He works with many unbelievers and sometimes the decisions and choices they make baffle him. Even their lifestyles baffle him. He feels very out of place. He doesn't "fit in". He says he is thinking of changing jobs. He's also thinking that isolating himself or surrounding himself with believers will help him live life more comfortably.








	a. What is the main issue(s)?		b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?
	c. Why did you choose those events or lessons? How do they provide perspective on what God might think?		
	d. Is your understanding about the events consistent with the rest of Scripture?		
	e. How do you apply the truths of those events to this situation?		

Situation 3

Your friend is an extremely gifted dancer. In fact, from a young age, she has been exceptional in the performing arts. She would like to be a professional dancer but some believing friends have been very discouraging. They tell her it is not good for her to be involved in secular music and dance. They tell her the performing arts industry is not honouring to God. She comes to you for advice and help.



	a. What is the main issue(s)?		b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?
	c. Why did you choose those events or lessons? How do they provide perspective on what God might think?		
	d. Is your understanding about the events consistent with the rest of Scripture?		
	e. How do you apply the truths of those events to this situation?		






Tackling a Situation Together

We will discuss Situation 4 together as a whole class.

Situation 4

Your school friend just called you and she is all excited. She met and fell in love with an amazing guy. She has been dating him for over a year now and wants to marry him. She asks you to be in her wedding party. Before you can respond, she quickly says that she needs you to know that her fiancé is not a believer even though she is. But she knows that would not be a problem. She says she knows herself and she would be able to keep her faith even if she marries an unbeliever. She asks you to get back to her within a week on whether you can be part of her wedding party.



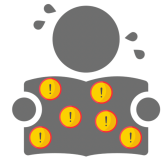
	a. What is the main issue(s)?		b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?
	c. Why did you choose those events or lessons? How do they provide perspective on what God might think?		
	d. Is your understanding about the events consistent with the rest of Scripture?		
	e. How do you apply the truths of those events to this situation?		

Attempting a Situation as Homework

At this point, we have worked through three situations: (i) the worked example (pages 12–16), (ii) the situation you did in your small group (taken from Situations 1–3 on pages 17–19) and (iii) Situation 4 (page 20). Try the following situation on your own at home. It would be best if you did not look at the sample answers until you've attempted this.

Situation 5

Your life is filled with different challenges. Your family and friends also face many difficulties. You look around and see the people you love suffering from sickness and disease, broken relationships and financial troubles. You almost don't want to read the news because it is almost always bad: governments make shocking decisions, refugees with nowhere to go, natural disasters wiping out people and homes, crimes like shootings and human trafficking... You start feeling overwhelmed and even depressed.



	a. What is the main issue(s)?		b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?
	c. Why did you choose those events or lessons? How do they provide perspective on what God might think?		
	d. Is your understanding about the events consistent with the rest of Scripture?		
	e. How do you apply the truths of those events to this situation?		

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Commentary

This section provides some thoughts on how the situations can be addressed based on what we have already learnt in the series.

Please note that the commentary below contains samples and are not exhaustive! There are other biblical events you can go to and lessons you can draw from aside from what is shared here.

Situation 1

You are feeling all out of sorts. Your fellowship with God has been at a bad place recently. You haven't read the Bible in months, you haven't really prayed and you have absolutely no motivation to. You aren't exactly happy. Things in general just don't seem to be going your way—just small things going wrong, people making you upset and general irritations in life. Recently, you also lied to a friend, it was just a “white lie”, but you know it has caused your friend quite a bit of inconvenience. You feel bad but you don't want to bring it up and possibly ruin your friendship.





a. What is the main issue(s)?

- Sanctification
- Repentance



b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?

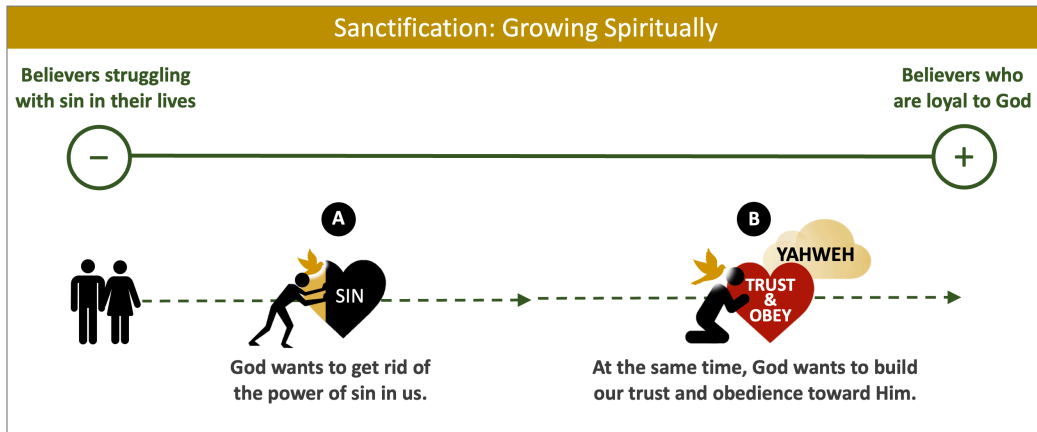
 Conquest What is sanctification?	 David What is repentance?
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c. Comments. d. Consistent with Scripture? e. How to apply to the situation?

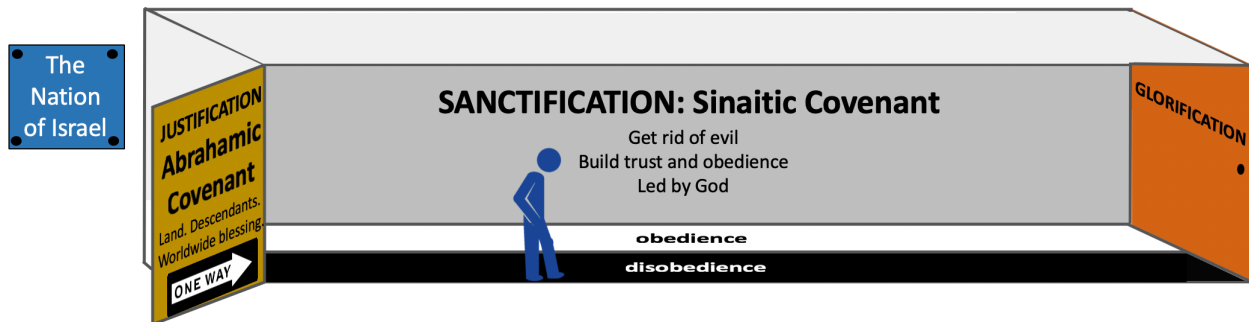
Conquest: Sanctification

We learnt through the history of Israel that even though the Jews were God's people, they were not always obedient. They struggled with sanctification.



Through Abraham’s faith, God started the nation of Israel. As a nation, God assured them of the promises He had made to Abraham of land, descendants and worldwide blessing.

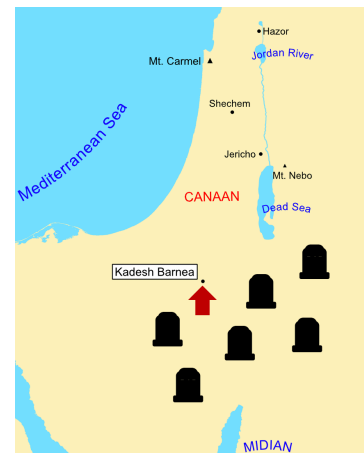
However, even though they were God’s people, they didn’t live sanctified lives. They were not very successful at getting rid of sin in their lives and building trust and obedience towards God. In fact, throughout their history, they chose rebellion over obedience.



Sometimes, when our walk with God isn’t right, we start to wonder if we are really a believer. We start to doubt and lose assurance of our faith. We need to know that once we put our faith in Christ, God secures our justification. However, this doesn’t mean we will always live as obedient believers. It doesn’t mean we are always faithful in our sanctification journey.

For example, the Israelites who crossed the Red Sea during the Exodus all had faith (Hebrews 11:29). However, that generation also died in the desert because they lacked the faith to enter the Promised Land at Kadesh-Barnea, as God had commanded (Deuteronomy 1:19–26, 9:23).

Following the Mosaic Covenant that God made with them, He disciplined them for their rebellion against Him. In this case, all that generation except for Joshua and Caleb, dropped dead in the desert. Yet, the book of Hebrews tell us they are justified.



Just as God disciplines those He loves and who belong to Him (Hebrews 12:1–13), we should expect that sometimes our feelings of misery aren't just because we aren't walking right with God, but He may be disciplining us to get our attention.



In all ways and at all times, God desires that we walk faithfully and in fellowship with Him. As believers, we need to remember that God secures our justification, and our life now is all about sanctification. If we know that we are not walking right with God, we should approach Him with a heart of humility and repentance.

(Note: We have not yet covered the following paragraphs in the lessons. However, these are some additional thoughts that might help us understand: Why does God discipline? What is He trying to accomplish?)

God had used an example in Hebrews to help us understand this: human parents discipline their children so that they would have a better future in this world.

God's Goal in Sanctification: Our Future

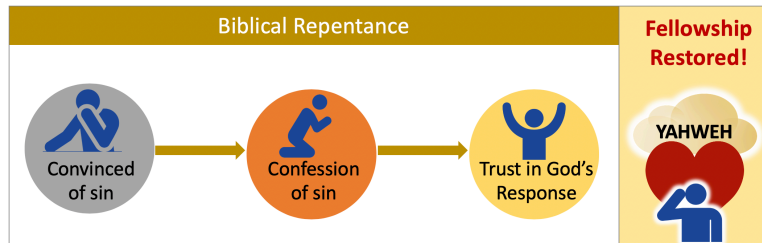
Who	Discipline and work to sanctify...	The goal
Parents 	their children 	Better future in this world
	Israel, His son 	Better future in the Coming Kingdom
	Christians 	Prepared for life in the Eternal State

Likewise, we see that God disciplined Israel, His son. Why? It is because He wants them to know what is required of them when they enter the coming Kingdom of God. (He also did this so that Gentiles reading the Bible would see and understand His standard of sanctification and His purpose in discipline.)

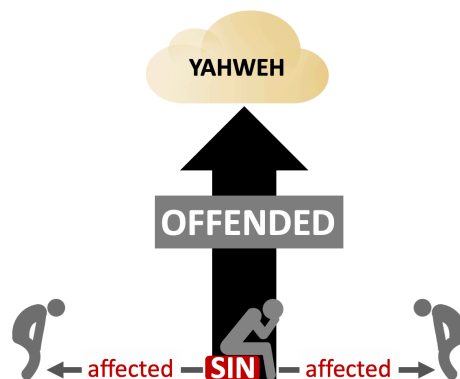
God disciplines believers so that we will grow in sanctification and be prepared for our future roles in our life in the Eternal State. At this stage, it would be good to understand that there are good reasons why God works with us and in us: He wants to sanctify us, not just for living better lives now, but also for our future! We will study these in future lessons.)

David: Repentance

King David is the best picture of repentance in the Bible. Through his sin and repentance, we see how we can be restored to God again after we sin, fall and fail.



1. **Convinced of sin.** We need to remember that when we sin, we are offending Yahweh first and foremost. It is true that our sin affects the people in our lives, but God is our Creator, Owner and Saviour. And He is the One who gave laws. He is the One we have truly offended by our sins (Psalm 51:4).



If we know we have sinned against a friend, while we feel bad for our friend, we should feel worse that we have offended God. It doesn't matter if we think the "size" of our sin is big or small. We need to be convinced that what we have done is against God. All sin stands in the way of our fellowship with God.

2. **Confession.** David confessed his sins without excuse. He did not rationalise his sin away, nor blame his circumstances or anyone else (2 Samuel 12:13a, Psalm 51:3).



Once we are convinced we have sinned against God, we need to come before Him with a humble heart and confess.

3. **Trust in God's response.** After David confessed, God forgave him immediately (2 Samuel 12:13b) and David trusted fully in God's forgiveness and ability to change him (Psalm 51:7, 10). David knew he couldn't change himself and he desperately needed God's help. So he pleaded for God's mercy to take away his sin.



Importantly, David also humbly submitted to God and accepted all the consequences of his sin. He didn't grumble, complain or get angry when Nathan announced God's discipline for him (2 Samuel 12:14).



As children of God, if we know that we have sinned, we must repent of it. The Holy Spirit in us is reminding us of our sin and keeping it at the forefront of our minds to urge us to make peace with God. We must not ignore His gentle promptings.



And we should also seek forgiveness from the friend we hurt. We may be afraid of the consequences but we should pray and ask God for courage to do the right thing. We should also pray for God's mercy. He can soften the hearts of the ones we hurt and help prevent us from ruining our relationship with them (James 5:16).

It is not uncommon to "feel out of sorts" when we have unconfessed sins. We often want to hide from God, hoping He doesn't notice us. We shy away from praying and reading the Bible because that might expose what we are hiding from. However, it is common that when we do deal with the sins the Holy Spirit is bringing to our attention, we will then get a sense of peace. And often it leads to restored fellowship with God. We will "stop hiding" from our holy God, as Adam and Eve did.

If after we have made peace with God over our known sins and we still feel out of sorts, we should ask God to reveal the possible reasons why we are feeling this way. Ask Him to reveal if there are other areas in our lives that He is trying to highlight to us for growth and change.

Or perhaps He is giving us small difficulties so we would turn to Him, seek Him and be motivated to spend more time getting to know Him. Ask Him. Know that it is His will that we grow in holiness each day.



Situation 2

A believing friend sits down with you for coffee. He is upset with life at his workplace. He works with many unbelievers and sometimes the decisions and choices they make baffle him. Even their lifestyles baffle him. He feels very out of place. He doesn't "fit in". He says he is thinking of changing jobs. He's also thinking that isolating himself or surrounding himself with believers will help him live life more comfortably.



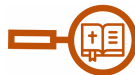
a. What is the main issue(s)?

- The Fall and grace in a time of sin
- Separation from the pagan world
- God's will for all believers



b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?

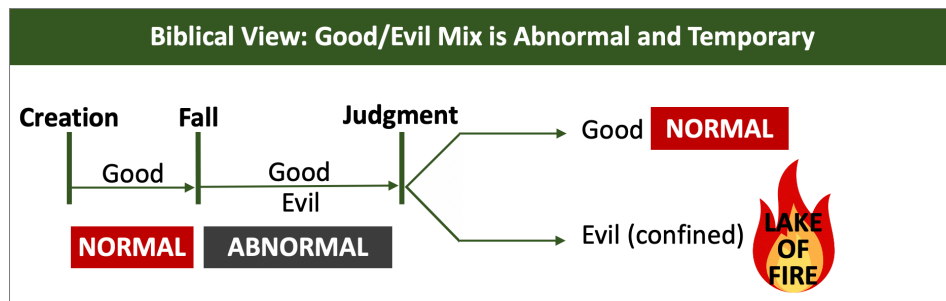
 Fall What is sin?	 Flood What is grace?	 Call of Abraham What is election?	 Exile What is endurance?
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c. Comments. d. Consistent with Scripture? e. How to apply to the situation?

Fall: Sin

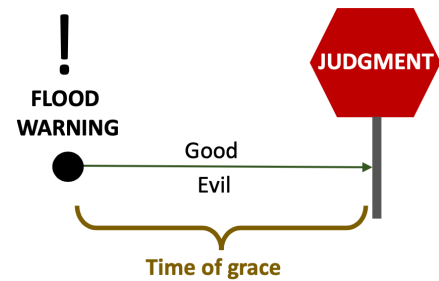
The mix of good and evil that we now live in is temporary. God created the world perfect, but the Fall brought sin and rebellion into the world.



Today, all mankind is affected by sin, both believers and unbelievers. This includes us and our colleagues (Romans 5:17).

Flood: Grace

God offers a time of grace before the judgment where He will separate good and evil. In Noah’s time, the grace period was 120 years. God gave people time to acknowledge Him as the Creator-God of the universe and to turn to Him in belief.



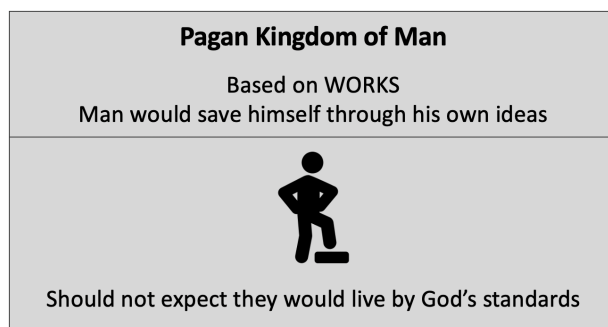
The Bible says that it is God’s desire that all people be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Just as He offered people in Noah’s time a grace period, we know the grace period that God offers people today is the span of their lifetimes (Luke 16:19–31).

But what does God require of all believers during this “grace period”? Just as Noah and Enoch warned the people of the coming judgment, we are to tell people about the way to be saved, to make disciples of Christ and teach them about Him (Matthew 28:18–19).

This means that being among unbelievers is exactly where many believers need to be. This includes being their co-workers. This is where we can get to know them, befriend them and learn to love them as Jesus wants us to. Most importantly, we need to pray for them and eventually with the Holy Spirit’s help, have them come to trust us so we are allowed to share the life-saving message of the gospel with them.



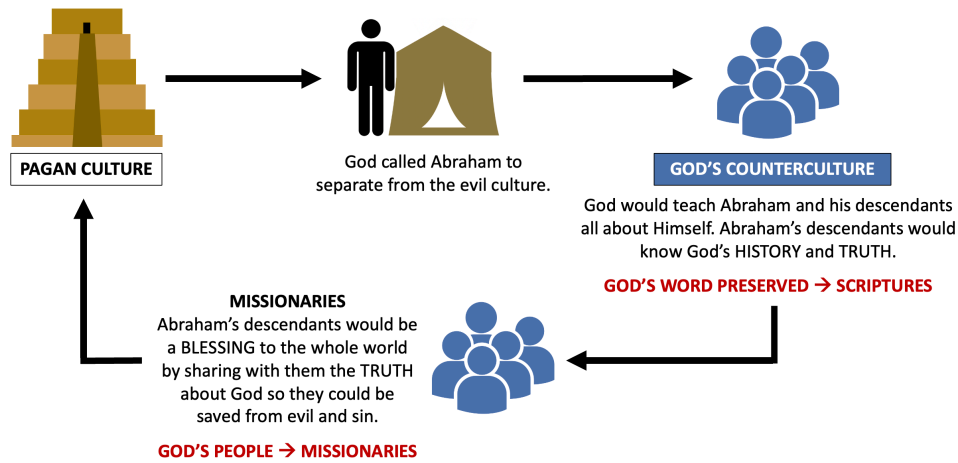
While we await the opportunity to share the gospel with them, we need to recognise that people without God will obviously not live by any biblical standards (Romans 1:18–32). Why would they? They are in rebellion against their Creator-God! The Bible is not their final authority. The Bible has already told us that mankind without God will always make up their own rules. So it would be illogical of us to demand or expect them to live by the Bible’s standards.



Call of Abraham: Election

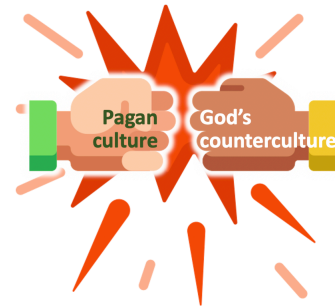
God planned all along that Israel would be a counterculture to the pagan culture of the world. They would live by God’s righteous laws rather than the law of any other ruler or nation (Deuteronomy 4:5–7).

In this way, the other nations would be drawn to Israel and Israel’s God, just as Rahab and Ruth were drawn.



However, counterculture, by its very nature, goes against the culture of evil mankind and the culture that Satan is building. There will always be tension between them.

Understanding this, we acknowledge that there are very good reasons why we as believers will never really “fit in” with the unbelieving culture or lifestyles of our co-workers. In fact, to be the counterculture, we must not “fit in”. We can still be very good friends with our colleagues, but God doesn’t want us to “fit in”. Why? Because “fitting in” means we will be no different from the unbelievers and we will fail to attract them to God. Instead, we need to remember that God wants us to “stand out” in a good way. Stand out with our counterculture by being God’s representative among unbelievers.



Tension faced by Christians	
<p>Called to be light in a spiritually dark world... but it can be lonely.</p>	<p>Wanting to be light but also wanting to “fit in” with our peers and be like them</p>



The Bible and God will never “fit in” with the world. So we as believers need to train ourselves on how to live and work in a pagan setting, yet remain separated by having our identity rooted in Christ.

We need to stop basing our identity on how popular we are or how much we fit in with the “in group”. Again, we need God’s perspective before we set our own expectations or make demands that contradict God’s will for believers.

Exile: Endurance

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are excellent examples of how to live as believers in a pagan society. At the time of the exile, God gave clear instructions to the exiled Jews through Jeremiah on how they should live (Jeremiah 29:1, 4–7). God told the Jews to pray for the pagan society and actively work for the peace and prosperity of the land. This means that they are to participate and contribute to society.

All four men did just that. They didn't fight God's will. They didn't physically separate or isolate themselves. They lived among their Babylonian captors and worked very hard. Even as students, they topped their classes (Daniel 1:17–20)!

As believers, we must not isolate ourselves from unbelievers. We will never be able to make disciples if we live as hermits. As believers, our aim in life must not be to live comfortably. Rather, we need to seek God's will first and God Himself will provide us with what we need (Matthew 6:31–33).

Very importantly, Daniel worked very hard to ensure he had endurance and would be able to stand strong in God.

- Daniel knew the Scriptures well and read God's Word diligently (Daniel 9:1–2).
- He had a habit of praying three times a day and praying earnestly (Daniel 6:10, Daniel 9).
- God told him how the future would end and he held onto that hope and persevered in faith.

If we as believers are to be a consistent blessing to our friends and co-workers, it will not be by our own strength. We have to ask God for His resources, provision and help. We need the Holy Spirit. And we need other believers to help us stand.

In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 10:19–25) says that three important steps to persevering in faith are:

- (1) *Being in God's presence,*
- (2) *Holding tightly to the hope God gave us, and*
- (3) *Motivating one another! Hebrews is saying that persevering in the faith is a community effort!*



We should regularly meet with other believers with the specific intention of praying for each other, encouraging each other and motivating each other to acts of love and good works. If we don't, we need to remind ourselves that God's will for us is to be encouraged by other believers (1 Thessalonians 5:11). God does not want us to struggle alone.

We need to ensure we have a few godly, wise and faithful believers to journey with us and to keep us focused and accountable to live as salt and light in the secular workplace that God has placed us in.

And we must remind ourselves not to grow weary. God knows that daily living in a pagan world is not easy, so He has recorded much encouragement in the Bible to help us grow and mature in Him. Spending time daily in God's Word is very beneficial for us.

Situation 3

Your friend is an extremely gifted dancer. In fact, from a young age, she has been exceptional in the performing arts. She would like to be a professional dancer but some believing friends have been very discouraging. They tell her it is not good for her to be involved in secular music and dance. They tell her the performing arts industry is not honouring to God. She comes to you for advice and help.



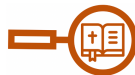
a. What is the main issue(s)?

- What’s right and what’s wrong for believers
- Godly culture
- Living in a pagan world



b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?

 Solomon What is biblical wisdom?	 Solomon What is godly culture?	 Exile What is endurance?
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c. Comments. d. Consistent with Scripture? e. How to apply to the situation?

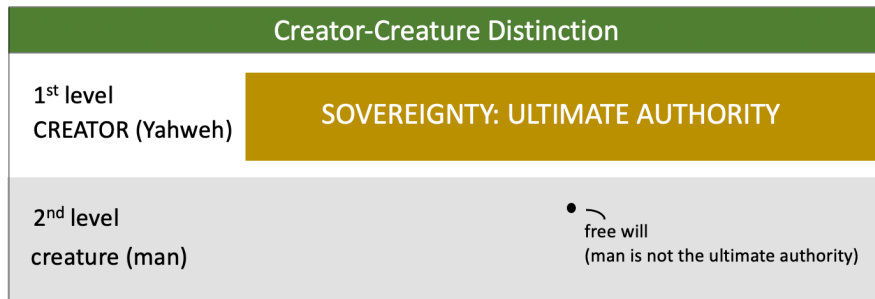
Solomon: Biblical Wisdom and Godly Culture

Here are some important information we learnt about wisdom and culture.

- God gave the nation of Israel His Mosaic Law so they would know what is good and bad, right and wrong. These laws taught them how to relate to Him and to each other. God also gave Israel’s kings strict instructions on how to be godly kings (Deuteronomy 17:14–20). Later on in the New Testament, believers were also taught the right ways (and told what were the wrong ways) to live. We follow the “Law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:19–21).

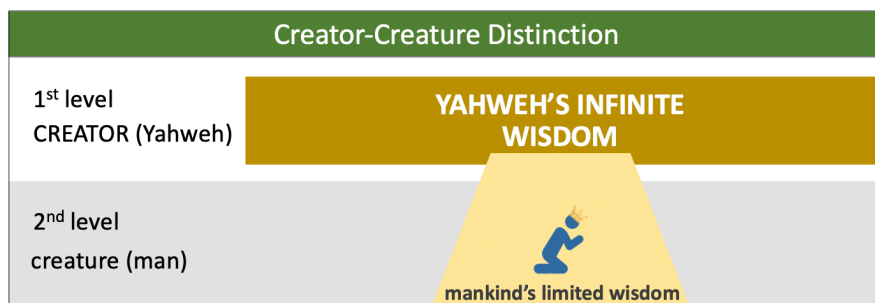
<p>God taught Israel His standards through:</p>  The Book of the Law	 The Ten Commandments	<p>God gave us His standards in:</p>  The Holy Bible
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The reason why Yahweh can do all this is because He is the Creator-God of the universe and the ultimate authority on right and wrong.



So biblical wisdom is obeying the words of God because He is the final authority.

- Even though Solomon was the wisest man on earth, his wisdom was finite human wisdom. It was nothing compared to God's infinite wisdom. So Solomon only displayed biblical wisdom when he obeyed God's Word.



Solomon can display biblical wisdom only when He submits himself to God

- When God gave Solomon wisdom, He also gave him skills, abilities and appreciation of many different aspects of culture. Solomon was an excellent musician, composer, poet, botanist and zoologist.

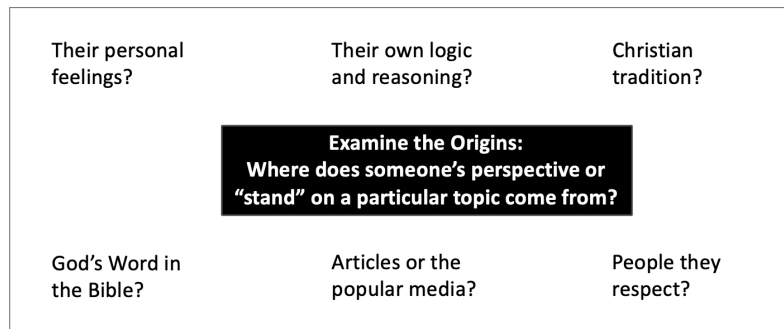
What's more, Solomon had no problems working with unbelievers because he knew their great skill and wisdom were given by God. In fact, he used craftsmen from Tyre to construct the Temple (1 Kings 5), Gentile seamen to run his navy (1 Kings 9:26–28) and he bought cedar logs from the Sidonians (1 Kings 5:6).

- Importantly, right from the start of the nation of Israel, the Jewish people were called to be a counterculture, rather than to have no culture. Music and dance were given by God. We see poetry and music throughout the Bible and even David pleased Yahweh by dancing before Him.

In tackling this situation, the first question we have to ask is what is "secular" music and dance? Is it music not composed by believers? Music that is not sung in church? What is secular dance? Anything that is not choreographed by believers? Does the Bible say anything about this?

In the Bible, the wisdom literature (for example, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.) gives many principles and guidelines on what is wise and unwise living and behaviour. From these, we do not see God prohibiting any music and dance that do not violate His Word, regardless of who composed or created it.

Therefore, in this case, believers who say that Christians should not be involved in any secular music and dance will need to show which passages or events in the Bible they are referring to that says all secular music and dance are dishonouring to God. We need to distinguish between something that the Bible teaches versus ideas coming from Christian tradition, assumptions, personal convictions or cultural beliefs that aren't actually biblical. Of course we can see lots of music and dance that dishonours God but music and dance themselves are neutral. They can be used in God-honouring ways.



Also, some believers have the idea that anything not created by believers should not be enjoyed by believers, because they are "secular". Yet, we don't see God demanding this of His people. Unbelievers are also made in the image of God. And many have been given the ability to discover and create work that doesn't dishonour God.

Importantly, we need to remember that to be called to be a counterculture means believers should not kill or hide their God-given abilities and talents. When we as believers know the Word of God well, we can participate in the life and culture of the community and be a positive influence. We should not think that being loyal to God means suppressing our God-given talents of cultural expression (Deuteronomy 6:5).



Exile: Endurance

Daniel lived among unbelievers but He was loyal to God. Because of his firm faith, diligent study of the Word and prayer, and his active relationship with God, he was able to even guide the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar to faith in Yahweh (Daniel 4).

Jesus' command to all believers is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). This is God's clear command. To honour Him, we need to obey this instruction. If all believers avoided certain areas and fields of work and society (such as music and dance), who will reach unbelievers in those fields?

But if we pray, ask God for guidance and very diligently and intentionally prepare ourselves to be light and salt in an area of work that is not known for having many believers, we can reach hard-to-reach people. But we need to very intentionally prioritise sticking to God through it all. And submitting our skills and talents to His will and use.



We need to continually ask God to help us be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance and prompting when we are in these areas of work. Ask God to open and close doors of opportunity as He directs our path and puts us where He wants us to be.

And most of all, we need continue building up our faith. If we work among musicians and dancers, we should find a group of believing dancers or musicians with whom we can study the Bible with and pray with. And pray that together, we can mutually encourage each other to stand firm in the faith while joyfully using our God-given talents to glorify Him and be witnesses for Him where He has placed us.

Situation 4

Your school friend just called you and she is all excited. She met and fell in love with an amazing guy. She has been dating him for over a year now and wants to marry him. She asks you to be in her wedding party. Before you can respond, she quickly says that she needs you to know that her fiancé is not a believer even though she is. But she knows that would not be a problem. She says she knows herself and she would be able to keep her faith even if she marries an unbeliever. She asks you to get back to her within a week on whether you can be part of her wedding party.





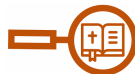
a. What is the main issue(s)?

- Believer marrying an unbeliever
- Balancing truth and grace



b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?

 Solomon What is biblical wisdom?	 Mount Sinai What is rebellion?
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c. Comments. d. Consistent with Scripture? e. How to apply to the situation?

Solomon: Biblical Wisdom

God told the people of Israel that they must not intermarry with the pagans living in the land of Canaan (Exodus 34:11–16) because they would lead them into idol worship. God also told all of Israel’s kings, including Solomon, that they should not take many wives because the wives would turn the king’s heart away from Him (Deuteronomy 17:17a). Israel didn’t obey God. Neither did Solomon.

ISRAELITES MUST NOT...	ISRAEL’S KING MUST NOT...
...have unbelieving wives	...have many wives

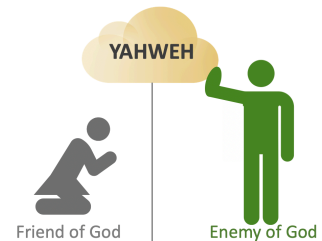
Even though Solomon was the wisest man on earth, he disobeyed God's command. As God had warned, Solomon started worshipping the idols of his wives and committed evil against God (1 Kings 11:1–8).

People often think that they are different and will not fall for the same temptations and problems that others experience. However, here's one important point to consider: if Solomon, as the wisest man on earth, could not stand firm in his faithfulness to God when married to unbelieving wives, do we think we will be more successful than him?

Yahweh is the One who knows best how mankind functions because He created us. And in His infinite wisdom, He warns believers against marrying unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14–16).



A believer is a friend of God. An unbeliever is a self-proclaimed enemy of God. The God behind a believer is Yahweh. The “god” behind an unbeliever is Satan. These two cannot go together. Forcing them together introduces tension into the relationship immediately.



The believer will experience an “emotional conflict of interest”. This is when the believer finds it almost impossible to be objective about the truth for fear of offending the unbeliever or other members of her family.

The only way there can be any “peace” in the relationship is if the believer suppresses her own beliefs and Bible-based convictions. Often, it will be much easier for the believer to just ignore her faith totally.

[Note: Sometimes disobeying God's instructions not to marry unbelievers has consequences that go far beyond the couple. In 2 Chronicles 18, Judah's King Jehoshaphat (who was faithful to God), foolishly allowed his son to marry the daughter of Israel's King Ahab (who was rebellious towards God). Because of this family relationship, King Jehoshaphat was dragged into evil Ahab's plans.]

As a friend, you need to warn your school friend about the implications of her choice. After the honeymoon days are over, her choice will either lead to her walking away from the Lord or there will be constant tension and pressure in her marriage.

Encourage her to consider asking her fiancé to take some time to get to know her and her Heavenly Father better. Because, in a sense, Yahweh will be his “father-in-law”. Tell her that if she truly loves him, she cannot withhold the gospel from him. More important than romance, wedding plans and the honeymoon is the rest of their lives. How will they live as husband and wife? Who will be their authority? What will be the goal of their marriage? How can a believer and unbeliever together obey the divine institutions of responsible dominion, marriage and family?

Tell her that God’s instruction is very clear: do not marry an unbeliever. Ask her to pray that the Holy Spirit will help her share the gospel with him. Pray that the Holy Spirit will soften his heart so he will listen and consider.

If however, she still chooses to marry him while he is still an unbeliever, and she still asks that you be in her wedding party, what do you do?

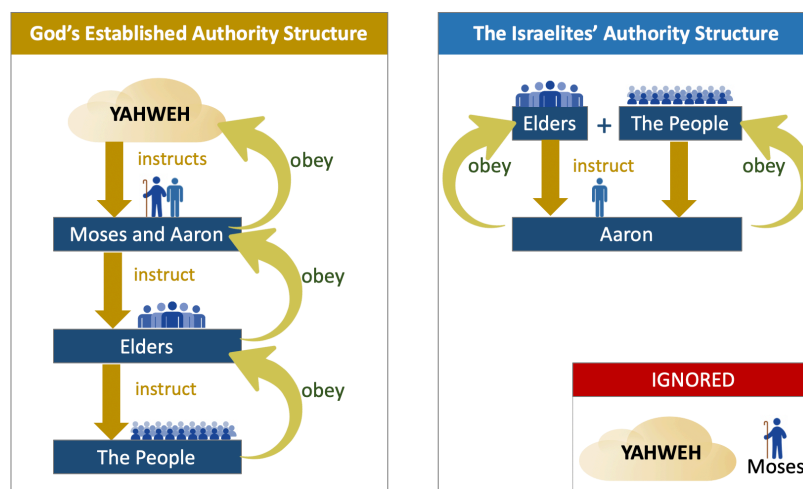
- *Do you show support for her marriage by being in her wedding party?*
- *Do you politely decline to be in the wedding party but still show up for the wedding?*
- *Do you not show up to her wedding at all because she has clearly chosen to defy God?*

What would God want you to do?

Are there any events in the Bible to help you know what God might think?

Mount Sinai: Rebellion

God had given the Israelites a clear authority structure at the time of the Exodus.



However, at Mount Sinai, while Moses was receiving the law from God at the top of the mountain, Aaron and the people broke this authority structure.

The Israelites asked Aaron to build them a god and he crafted them a golden calf and an altar on which they could worship it (Exodus 32:1–10). Aaron should have scolded the people and asked them to stop it. However, he allowed himself to be pressured into doing something he should have known was clearly wrong. God got so angry with him that He wanted to destroy him. If not for Moses' intervention and prayer, God would have utterly destroyed both Aaron and the Israelites for their idol worship.

Aaron knew what was right but allowed himself to be pressured to do evil.

Similarly, we know what God thinks about believer-unbeliever unions but sometimes, when emotions are involved, it is very difficult to make a clear decision.

- *You truly love and care for your school friend, and you want her to know that.*
- *But the way that she wants you to show your love is to support her marriage and wedding.*
- *You know that if you decline to be in her wedding party or attend her wedding, you will face pressure from your other friends and perhaps receive accusations that you are bigoted and unloving. And they may think your faith and your God are harsh and they will want nothing to do with God. Your reputation and God's reputation may be badly affected by your choice.*

What a dilemma! What do you do? How do you balance truth and grace in this situation? What would God want you to do?

You need to pray. It is true that God has given us His Word and truth. But He has also given you the indwelling Holy Spirit as your guide. You need to use God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit, rather than without Him.



- *The Holy Spirit will guide you on how to think about this situation.*
- *The Holy Spirit will point you to the Bible passages that God wants you to meditate on.*
- *The Holy Spirit will teach you how to show real love—the way God defines love—and not the way the world defines love.*
- *The Holy Spirit will give you courage to work through these thoughts and concerns with believing and praying friends.*
- *The Holy Spirit will also give the strength and gentleness you need to discuss this with your school friend in a loving and honest manner.*

You also need to recognise there is no simple “one size fits all” answer. It really depends on what kind of friendship you have with your friend, the depth of your friend's relationship with God, and the others involved in the wedding.

So while we have examined key biblical truths to provide the framework on how to think, you still need the Holy Spirit's guidance to make a wise decision. Paul gave some helpful perspective in 1 Corinthians on wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:1–16

1 When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. **2** For I decided that while I was with you I

would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. ⁴ And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. ⁵ I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

⁶ Yet when I am among mature believers, I do speak with words of wisdom, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world or to the rulers of this world, who are soon forgotten. ⁷ No, the wisdom we speak of is the mystery of God—his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began. ⁸ But the rulers of this world have not understood it; if they had, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord. ⁹ That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no mind has imagined
what God has prepared
for those who love him.”

¹⁰ But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God’s deep secrets. ¹¹ No one can know a person’s thoughts except that person’s own spirit, and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit. ¹² And we have received God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

¹³ When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths. ¹⁴ But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can’t understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. ¹⁶ For,

“Who can know the LORD’S thoughts?
Who knows enough to teach him?”

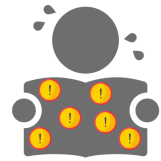
But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

In situations like this, you should pray for the following:

- *For God to give you a spirit of humility and teachability as you seek guidance from Him. And not to allow the fear of man or self-protection of your reputation to be the deciding factors. Rather, that God will give you the courage to do what honours Him.*
- *To be able to show God’s truth balanced with grace so that your school friend can understand the reason for your decision, regardless of what the decision is.*
- *Readiness in your heart, knowing that there will be some who will misunderstand you and accuse you of wrongdoing based on their own standards or on the world’s standards.*
- *For strength and courage so you can stand firm and strong in what you are convinced God wants you to do.*

Situation 5

Your life is filled with different challenges. Your family and friends also face many difficulties. You look around and see the people you love suffering from sickness and disease, broken relationships and financial troubles. You almost don't want to read the news because it is almost always bad: governments make shocking decisions, refugees with nowhere to go, natural disasters wiping out people and homes, crimes like shootings and human trafficking... You start feeling overwhelmed and even depressed.



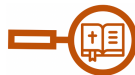
a. What is the main issue(s)?

- Fallenness of the world
- Hopelessness of the world situation



b. Are there biblical events that speak to the issue?

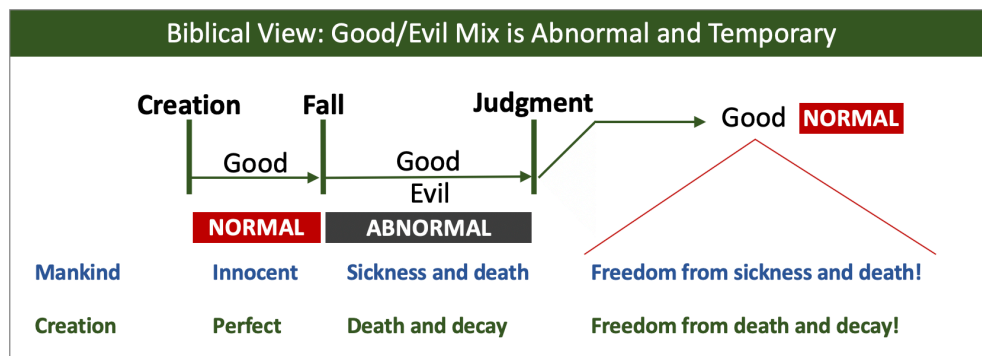
 Fall What is sin? What is suffering?	 Flood What is judgment and salvation?	 Partial Return What is hope?	 Covenants God's promises are yet to be fulfilled
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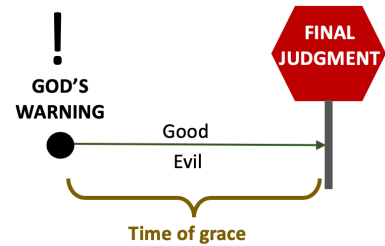
c. Comments. d. Consistent with Scripture? e. How to apply to the situation?

Fall: Sin and suffering / Flood: Judgment and Salvation.

We know that God created the world perfect. Sin, suffering, evil, disease and disasters came about because of the Fall. We cannot blame God for the Fall. The Fall was entirely man's fault and so the state of the world is entirely man's fault.



Thankfully, God shows us that He will make things new. He will save mankind and nature. But first, there will be a time of grace. The grace period is to allow mankind to repent, that is, turn back to God, and trust Him for the solution. So while evil and sin are still in the world, we know it is still a time of grace. This means there is opportunity for our unbelieving family and friends to repent.



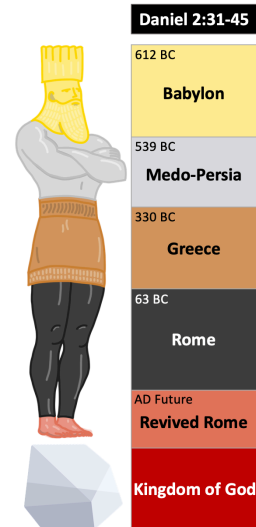
Partial Return: Hope / Covenants: Promises to be fulfilled

We see how God makes covenants with Israel that though they have not yet been fully fulfilled, they surely will be. God is not a contract breaker.

Through the history recorded in the Old Testament, we know how serious God is about His contracts. He will definitely fulfil them. To make sure people know this, God led the prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah, Zechariah and Ezekiel to write very specific prophecies about Him fulfilling all of them in the coming Kingdom of God.

Knowing what the Bible says about the coming Kingdom will strengthen our resolve to endure and persevere because this awful world we now live in is temporary. It will pass. It will come to an end.

And God is the One who will destroy the evil Kingdoms of Man with His crushing rock: Messiah Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ will return to crush the Kingdom of Man, put away all sin and evil, and restart the Kingdom of God.



We have great reason to hope despite the evil days we live in.

- *This season where good and evil are mixed together is because of God's grace.*
- *But God has told us how this will all end. At His timing, He will remove evil completely. We should set our eyes not just on the present, but on His promises.*

Let us therefore not focus on just what our eyes can see. Rather, let us draw hope from God's ultimate plan for history and then ask Him each day what He would like us to do, how we are to be a blessing, and how we are to share the hope that we have with others. Let us make each moment that God gives us count.

Applying the Faith in Action Drill to Our Lives

In this exercise, we demonstrated how to understand and answer life’s questions from the Bible’s perspective.

As we encounter situations every day, we should practise the faith in action drill of taking the new challenge and fitting it into the biblical framework of truth. This will put the problem into the right perspective. This is how we use God’s Word to grow into maturity.

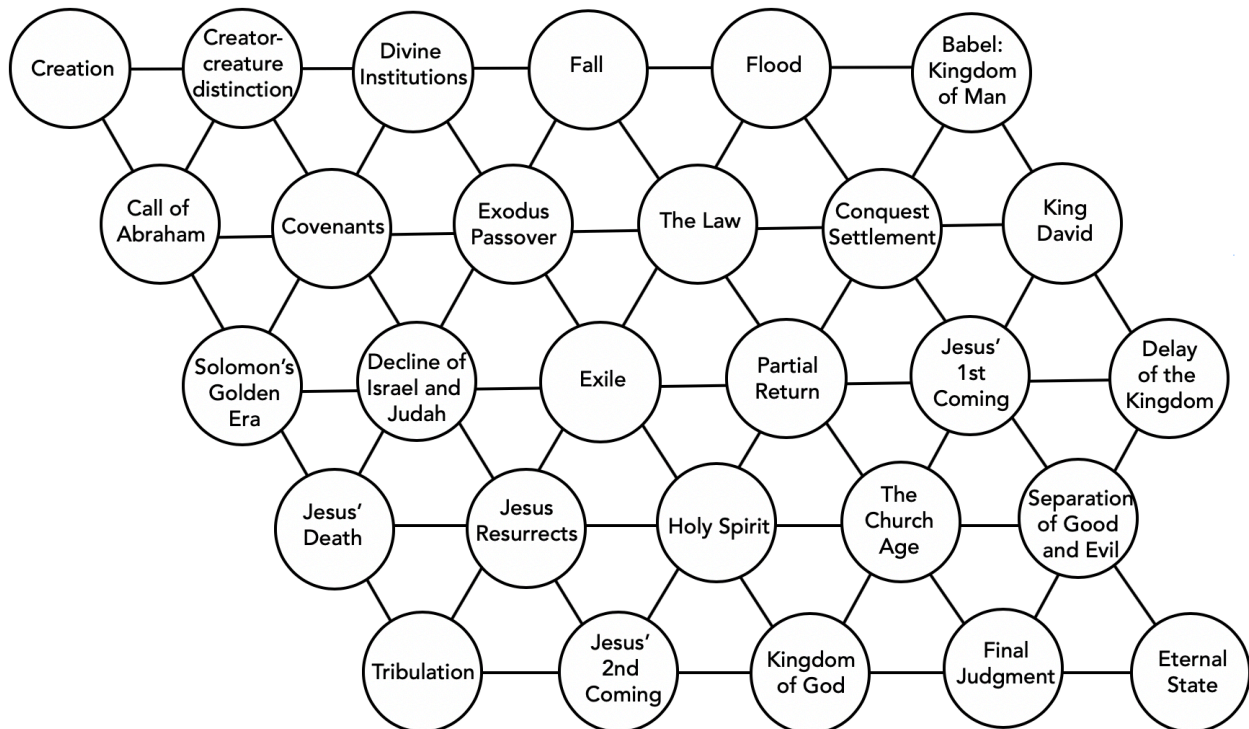
Hebrews 5:14

Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

It is “through training” that we will develop the skills to know right from wrong. It is “through training” that we will learn how to apply God’s truths to our everyday lives.

Is this exercise easy? No, it is hard work. It requires that we be very intentional about setting aside time to study the Bible, think, pray and seek God’s help in each and every difficult situation.

In this exercise, we mainly used what we have learnt in the Old Testament to address the problems. But as we move into the New Testament and diligently study Scripture more and more, we will have more content and the biblical framework in our minds will grow larger. It will become easier to pull out the right events and passages that will help with the problem we are facing.



With a big framework of truth in our minds, the Holy Spirit has a lot more content to work with and can direct us to the right truths to focus on.

And we know that we will become wiser and grow into maturity as we keep at it.

Proverbs 9:10

Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom.

Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

To live well, let's not rely on man's wisdom but on God's. The wiser we become, the more of a blessing we can be to others as we can speak God's words and wisdom into their lives.

As we learn more about the Bible and God, each new biblical event will interlock into our biblical framework, making it bigger and stronger.

Let's continue fitting everything that happens in our lives into this framework so that we see everything in proper biblical perspective. And let's continue asking God to help us live well, respond well and love Him and others well.



Pre-reading for next lesson: John 1–2