HEBREWS LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION

A few thoughts about studying the Bible:

- **Why do we study the Bible?**
  The Bible reveals God’s character, desires, plans, abilities, powers, and love for us. We read it to know, believe, love, worship, and listen to our God. Additionally, we study the Bible to know Truth. The Bible is the only source of unchanging, eternal truth and is applicable in all cultures, languages, and time periods past, present, and future. It tells us the purpose of living now and the hope we have in the future. Because God Himself is the source of the Bible and reveals truth to us, it is the final authority for all things in life and teaches us how to live in this world according to God’s best way.

- **The Bible seems overwhelmingly long and complicated...how should I start?**
  We approach God’s Word understanding that it is living and powerful and will speak truth to us about everyone and everything. Though many of the ideas, stories, and concepts may be simple, it is not always easy to understand, nor is it meant to be. The Bible is meant to be considered, meditated on, re-visited, and savored. God’s word is living and is His spiritual food to feed and grow us. His word speaks to us at different levels — being milk when we are infants and solid food as we mature. It does not require us to attain to a certain level but requires us to hunger for it so He will fill us. We approach it interactively and repeatedly, with questions, prayer, and both heart and mind that want to learn. The exciting and amazing thing about Bible study is that God really, really desires to reveal Himself to us through it. He is not giving us marks for how much we memorize; He is speaking to us directly by His Spirit and sharing His own awesome wisdom and guidance. It’s not an exam...it’s an exhilarating exploration of and with the True and Living God!

- **What is the best way to study the Bible?**
  There are various methods to study the Bible and each has advantages. You benefit from studying in different ways at different times. Regardless of which type of study you choose, there are a few things that are constant and essential to get the most from your time with God and His Word:
  
  i. **Start and end in prayer.** Ask the Lord to teach you by His Spirit and reveal what He wants you to know. Ask Him to show you specific things you are trying to understand.
  
  ii. **Don’t fear or give up when you don’t understand something.** Write down both things you learn and things you don’t understand and re-visit those you don’t understand later. When you hit a verse or story or idea that seems strange or confusing, keep reading! Often those are explained in the next few verses or chapters. Often the things we don’t understand at first are the very things God wants us to pay attention to.
  
  iii. **Look at different people in the stories and identify successes and failures.** Notice how the stories and principles apply to our lives today, even though they are in a different time and culture. The principles are eternal, though the settings may be different.
  
  iv. **Use a Bible dictionary and/or concordance for words that are new to you.** These are often free online, for example: [https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewEntries.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewEntries.cfm) and [https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/](https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/)
  The dictionary will explain the word and the concordance will help you to find that word used in other places in the Bible so you have more examples of how it is used. (Caution! Not all online resources are reliable or accurate.)
  
  v. **Be aware that there are different writing styles in the Bible that are to be read in different ways.**
  Different books in the Bible are written in different genres. For example, some are about history and told in a narrative fashion; others are poetic; and still others are personal letters written from individuals to others. Just as you wouldn’t read a newspaper the same way you read a book of poetry, you wouldn’t read the letters from Peter in the same way you read the poetry in the Psalms. Learn about the different genres and read accordingly.
  
  vi. **Be consistent and persistent!** Once you know and accept that the Bible is not a simple novel to be read in one sitting, you can approach it systematically and methodically and discover the wonders bit by bit, bite by bite. Just as you develop relationships with people over time by talking and interacting, you’ll also get to know your Bible and relate to the Lord more and more through His Word comfortably and intimately. This marvelous Book contains truths we can see and live today and more that we can discover over time. It is bottomless, priceless, and timeless. The more you explore, the more you will be rewarded and enriched eternally.
  
  vii. **Expect to be changed.** Though God’s Word is unchanging, it has the amazing effect of changing us to be more like our Lord as we know it and live it. His Spirit works through the Bible and in us in an amazing cooperative partnership. God’s Word, God’s power, God’s Spirit, and my willing and open heart leads to living a life in God’s kingdom while I’m on this earth.
  
  viii. **Look for Jesus in every story.** This Book is all about Him, His love for us, and how He has saved us.
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1. The genres of the Old Testament are: Law; History (of God’s people Israel - narrative); Poetry & Wisdom; Major & Minor Prophets. Read the following passages and tell what genre you think each might be.
   - Psalm 144
   - Ezra chapter 1
   - Exodus 20
   - Daniel Chapter 10
   - Obadiah

2. The genres of the New Testament are: Gospels; History (of God’s people the Church – narrative); Epistles (letters of wisdom to the Church); Prophecy. Read the following passages and tell what genre you think each might be.
   - 2 Thessalonians 1
   - Acts 1:1-11
   - John 3:16
   - Revelation 1:1-3

3. What role does the Bible play in your life?

4. What sources do you go to, other than the Bible, for answers about life? Why?

5. Share a time you looked for answers about life in the Bible and found them or didn’t find them. What happened?

6. Do you believe the Bible can change your life? Why or why not?

7. The Bible used by Protestant Christians consists of 2 sections, the Old Testament (meaning covenant or promise) and the New Testament. One way of understanding this is in terms of the old promise and new promise, which refers to God’s promise to save His people. The old way was through the Mosaic Law while the new way is through Jesus Christ, God’s own Son. Is it possible to understand the New Testament if we don’t know or understand the Old Testament? Why or why not?
8. Read the chapter titles for Hebrews chapters 1-13. Briefly describe what you think this epistle (letter) is about.

9. The Book of Hebrews (written after Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected to return to heaven) includes many references and quotations to the Old Testament (OT) (written before Jesus was born). Why do you think the writer refers so often to OT Books?

10. What would you ask the Lord to change in your life as you study the Epistle to the Hebrews?