

Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Primary Contribution: to exhort us as to the rewards of covenant obedience and warn us of the discipline of covenant disobedience under the old covenant so that we are challenged to maintain our heart for God and our just treatment of others as we live under the new covenant.

Secondary Contribution: to give us glimpses into the immediate future of God's people or into the distant future of the messianic/new covenant era and the superseding blessing of life in this climactic era.

- **The Gospels:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

Primary Contribution: to teach us about who Jesus the Messiah is and give us the opportunity to be disciples as we observe Him and His disciples. Also, to observe Him modeling life in the kingdom of God and listen to Him about how we should live in the kingdom and be transformed in areas of sinful resistance.

Secondary Contribution: to give us insight into how we may encourage fellow disciples.

- **The Book of Acts**

Primary Contribution: to teach us what God is doing in history at this present time under the kingship of Jesus the Messiah and to model for us what our corresponding purpose is as God's new covenant people; it also explains our roots, as well as some of the fruits of our identity as the church as we fulfill our purpose in the world.

Secondary Contribution: to give us methods and techniques for ministry to others.

- **The Epistles:** Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude.

Primary Contribution: to teach, exhort, and model our identity as the church and how we are to live it in the community of God's people by making godly choices in a myriad of practical areas in order to fulfill our purpose.

- **Revelation**

Primary Contribution: to encourage and exhort us to overcome through continued faith and faithfulness in the difficult times by revealing God's ultimate triumph over Satan in establishing Christ's kingdom and the new heavens and new earth.

Secondary Contribution: to inform us of some of the specific events signaling the end of the age.

This chart is a modified version from *Playing With Fire: How The Bible Ignites Change In Your Soul* by Dr. Walt Russell, pages 271-273.

Where To Begin?

Long Beach Alliance Church • January 28th, 2007 • Pastor Chris Lankford

WITH ALL MY HEART I HAVE SOUGHT YOU; DO NOT LET ME WANDER FROM YOUR COMMANDMENTS. YOUR WORD I HAVE TREASURED IN MY HEART, THAT I MAY NOT SIN AGAINST YOU. BLESSED ARE YOU, O LORD; TEACH ME YOUR STATUTES. WITH MY LIPS I HAVE TOLD OF ALL THE ORDINANCES OF YOUR MOUTH. I HAVE REJOICED IN THE WAY OF YOUR TESTIMONIES, AS MUCH AS IN ALL RICHES. I WILL MEDITATE ON YOUR PRECEPTS AND REGARD YOUR WAYS. I SHALL DELIGHT IN YOUR STATUTES; I SHALL NOT FORGET YOUR WORD.

~PSALM 119:10-16 (NASB)

1) Convinced, But Confused...

- A) Clearly, God's Word (the Bible) is both the "content" for personal transformation (2nd Timothy 3:14-17) and is wholly sufficient for transformation (Romans 12:1-2).
- B) Like the Ethiopian treasurer along the road to Gaza (Acts 8:26-40) who was reading from Isaiah but did not understand what he was reading, many of us pick up the Bible to study it but don't have any idea of where to begin.

C) Choosing where you will begin to study the Bible is often a matter of preference. However, I recommend beginning in the Gospels, Psalms, or Wisdom Literature. These are the "easiest" genre's of biblical literature to understand.

D) The more advanced reader should dive into other genre's of biblical literature, especially those in the Older Testament. With these foundations, books like Romans, Hebrews and Revelation can be wonderful studies.

2) Interpreting The Bible With Sensitivity

A) Bible teacher R.C. Sproul lists the following guidelines for the careful study of God's Word...

- i) Interpret the Bible with the Bible. "What might be obscure in one part of the Bible may be made clear in another." Proper interpretation means interpreting Scripture in light of Scripture, making sure we read the Bible in context!
- ii) Interpret the Bible literally. "We should interpret the Bible as it is written, not reading something into the Bible which is not there or skipping over things for which we have no immediate affection."

Be genre sensitive. Not everything in the Bible is supposed to be taken literally, even though every part of the Bible should be interpreted literally. Follow the rules of genre sensitivity. If it is poetry, or prose, or historical narrative, or apocalyptic literature -- follow the rules which govern that type of literature.

- iii) Interpret the Bible historically, then apply it with passion. Understand what the Bible was saying to its original audience in its original setting -- understand the original context. "Once we know the original intent, only then is the interpreter free to ask what meaning it has for Christians today." Once we understand God's Word, we should not fail to practice it (James 1:22-25).

A SUMMARY OF WHAT EACH BIBLICAL GENRE CONTRIBUTES TO OUR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Each Biblical Genre's Specific Contribution to Our Spiritual Formation

- **O.T. Narratives/Histories:** Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

Primary Contribution: to inform and shape our worldview about the eternal plan God is working out universally in human history and also to underscore our continuity with the children of Israel as the people of God.

Secondary Contribution: to give us positive and negative models of old covenant believers making choices to trust God.

- **The (Mosaic) Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (known as the Pentateuch, or "5 books of the Law." Also commonly known as "The Torah" or "The Law").

Primary Contribution: to explain how God relates to us within a covenantal relationship and how His holiness and Israel's sin could be reconciled through Israel's obedience to the covenant (Law). Within this covenantal relationship, the Law also demonstrates the concrete, practical, multifaceted areas in which God's people should obey and be transformed.

Secondary Contribution: to give us ethical and moral illustrations of godly responses to a wide variety of life's situations.

- **The Psalms**

The Primary Contribution: to model what a God-centered view of life is like, through expressions of worship and prayer, and the way believers may express their deepest needs, pains, and concerns to God in passionate prayer and worship.

Secondary Contribution: to give us models of how we are to worship God.

- **Proverbs/Wisdom Literature:** Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Portions of Psalms (see above for more specific genre identification for Psalms).

Primary Contribution: they directly (for example, Proverbs) or indirectly (for example, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) instruct us how to make wise choices in the nitty-gritty, daily affairs of life and in the difficult, inscrutable events of life.

- **The Major & Minor Prophets:** The Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel. The Minor Prophets: Hosea,