

**American Baptist Churches of New York State
Lay Study Program**

NEW TESTAMENT

STUDENT GUIDE

Curriculum Committee
of the
ABC/NYS Lay Study Team

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Course Description

The New Testament course is constructed with a duality of organization. The readings from the Holy Scripture and whatever textbook the instructor selects will more or less follow the traditional method of New Testament study. The lecture and discussion parts of the actual class sessions will be based on a more topical approach.

Course Goals

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." (II Timothy 3: 16 & 17.) The entire document that God has inspired for our use contains both the New and the Old Testaments.

The New Testament Course is offered so that a student by the completion of the course will: Have a basic understanding of the message that God has revealed to us through the various authors that have formed under God's divine guidance the books of the New Testament. Each book will be studied for its unique place and role in spreading the message that God wishes his people to hear and bring into their lives. The student will know of the circumstances under which the various books were written, the authors, the prospective audiences for the books and how we are to use in our lives what God is telling us through his word. The key to the study of God's word is not solely the information or data that we gain from such a study but rather the increased awareness of the love of Christ, his majesty and Godhood and his tremendous sacrifice for all of us. If our study has not led the student to a closer personal relationship with our Lord, I'm afraid our study has been lacking.

In addition to gaining the knowledge and understanding mentioned above for the student's edification and spiritual growth, the student should be able to use this material where appropriate in carrying out his/her personal ministry as a member of God's Christian Church.

The author of this course is: Dr. Joseph O. Perry from the Curriculum Committee of the ABC/NYS Lay Study Team.

LESSON SCHEDULE, OBJECTIVES, ASSIGNMENTS & ACTIVITIES

General Course Objectives

Student Requirements and Assessment

The students are expected to read the material as assigned. Each student will complete as scheduled one project from the list of projects included in the session-by-session schedule. It is important that the student receive feedback (both positive and any constructive suggestions for improvement) from the instructor (and possibly the other students) as close to the end of the presentation as is possible. The instructor's assessment of the student's work in the class will consist of his/her evaluation of the student's oral or presentation, and

the quality and degree of the student's participation in the class discussions. An instructor may also choose to use "take home" quizzes. The final grade will be either pass or not pass.

Session One

Premise

Many things have happened during the 400 or so years from where the Old Testament writings ended and the first New Testament recording of events. The change over from the Persian Empire, to the Greek and finally the Romans was of major significance to the Israeli people of those days. These prior occurrences affected their personal lives, the political system under which they lived and their relationship to their God. The view of the people in our current age as to what exactly forms the New Testament Canon as well as our current views of scripture needs also to be discussed.

Specific Goals for the First Session

The student will learn of the events and major figures in the 400 years that chronologically precedes the opening of the New Testament. The student will also learn of the history of the establishment of our current New Testament Canon and also learn of the various ways in which people today hold the sacred writings of God.

Assignments for First Session

The student should complete the reading assignment as given by the instructor prior to the first class.

Student Project Possibilities

1. Antiochus Epiphanes
2. Judas Maccabeus
3. Origen

It is expected that in these papers or presentations that the student will research beyond the Scriptures and their class text(s).

Session Two

Premise

Even though the account of the Gospel of Christ as initially told by Matthew, begins the New Testament, scholars agree that the Book of Mark was the earliest written gospel. The other synoptic gospels derive from the Gospel of Mark, the Q sources, the author's eyewitness and their relationships with the various apostles. Each telling of the story of Christ is different, meant for a different audience and fulfills quite a different role in presenting the truth about our savior.

Specific Goals for the Second Session

The student will learn of the authorship, dating, and potential sources for the books of Matthew and Mark. They also will learn of the intended audiences for these books, chronological scope of events depicted in these books and also the purposes that each book was specifically written for.

Assignment for Second Session

Prior to the class please read the gospels of Matthew and Mark and also the material in the recommended text that is assigned by the instructor.

Suggested Student Projects

1. Herod Antipas
2. Joseph
3. Mary
4. The Wise Men
5. John the Baptist
6. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any short section of the books of Mark or Matthew.

Session Three

Premise

Dr. Luke continues the synoptic gospels in the third book of the New Testament. Luke is tremendously detailed and gives elements of the life and teachings of Christ that are not found in Matthew or Mark

Specific Goals for the Third Session

The student is to learn of the unique approach to telling of the life and teachings of Christ by Luke the physician. The student will learn of Luke's intended audience, the scope of his writings and the unique purpose for which he composed his gospel.

Assignment for Third Session

Prior to the third session the students are to have read the Book of Luke and the other reading material assigned by the instructor.

Suggested Student Projects

1. Peter
2. Simeon
3. Mary Magdalene
4. Martha, sister of Lazarus
5. Mary, sister of Lazarus
6. Pilate

7. Zacchaeus

8. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any short section of the book of Luke

Session Four

Premise

The Gospel according to John is so unique in its treatment of the message of Christ that it is not included among the “synoptic” gospels. What is the unique message and view of Christ that God has revealed to John in his book?

Specific Goals for the Fourth Session

The students should understand what sets apart the Gospel as told by John from the other gospels. The students will know of the various signs, discourses and “I am” statements that are included in this gospel.

Assignment for Fourth Session

Prior to the fourth session, the student should have read the book of John and whatever reading assignment the instructor will indicate.

Suggested Student Projects

1. John
2. Signs (miracles) and Discourses
3. “I am” statements
4. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any short section of the Gospel of John.

Session Five

Premise

The beginning of the early Christian Church is recounted in the book of Acts. In this book we learn of the scattering of the Apostles to the various ends of the earth to begin to fulfill the Great Commission that Christ gave to his followers in Matthew 28.

Specific Goals for the Fifth Session

The student will learn of the formation of the early church. The student will also learn of the role and importance of the book of Acts in the Christian Canon. The student also will learn of the ministries of Peter and of the conversion and various missionary journeys of Paul.

Assignment for Fifth Session

Read the Book of Acts and other readings as are assigned by the instructor.

Suggested Student Projects

1. Peter
2. Stephen
3. Paul
4. Priscilla and Aquila
5. Cornelius
6. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any short section of the Book of Acts

Session Six

Premise

Paul states his basic theology about Christ, God and the Holy Spirit in his Epistles to the various churches. The Epistle of Paul to the Romans contains the basic doctrine that Paul is trying to impart to the churches that he forms and others that come under his love. Even though this letter is specifically addressed to a specific church prior to Paul's intended visit, its message is quite prescriptive. The specific purposes of I and II Corinthians and Galatians transcend the descriptive and may be called "Apostolic Counsel for Confused Churches." (Cited from *Encountering the New Testament* by Elwell and Yarbrough)

Specific Goals for the Sixth Session

The student will learn of the historical background, importance and Paul's purposes for writing these four epistles. They will also learn the main points of the theology and teachings of Paul as he presents them in these letters.

Assignment for Sixth Session

Students should read Paul's Epistles to the Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians and other readings assigned by the instructor prior to this class.

Suggested Student Projects

1. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any selected verses of Romans, I or II Corinthians or Galatians.
2. Adiaphora
3. City of Corinth
4. Barnabas

Session Seven

Premise

Paul's journeys continue into various areas in the known world of his day. He writes various letters to each of the early Christian churches that were beginning to develop in these lands. He has a specific message for each of these young congregations. He also writes to his various associates in Christ and gives them rather specific instruction on items that they need to be concerned with in their Christian Ministry.

Specific Goals for the Seventh Session

The students will know of Paul's teachings from these epistles about: salvation through grace, roles of men and women, the proper family, spiritual blessings in Christ, Christian obedience, the second coming of Christ, the armor of God, equality of all people in Christ, patience in suffering, prayer instructions, how a Christian leader is to live their lives and many other important building blocks in our quest for progressive sanctification to live as Christ would have us live.

Assignment for Seventh Session

The student should read Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus and any other readings that are assigned by the instructor.

Suggested Student Projects

1. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any selected verses of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, or Titus.

Session Eight

Premise

The book of James has been said to be the "proverbs" of the New Covenant. James gives many practical lessons on how to live the proper life in Christ. The book of Hebrews relates to Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah of the Jews. He is proclaimed as the High Priest and the fulfillment of the Old Testament Laws and Prophecies.

Specific Goals for the Eighth Session

The student will learn of the historical background, possible authorship, importance and purposes of the author of the books of James and Hebrews. They will also learn of the messages that the authors of these books through God's inspiration intend the readers to know and do in Christian lives.

Assignment for Eighth Session

The student will have read Hebrews, James and whatever other readings the instructor assigned.

Suggested Student Projects

1. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any selected verses of James or Hebrews.

Session Nine

Premise

In this section we have the first writings said to be of Peter. We also hear more from the disciple whom Jesus loved, John. A brief but important book by the man said to be Jesus' half brother, Jude is also included. Peter tries to comfort the scattered and often persecuted early churches and speaks of preserving the purity of Christian doctrine. John resumes his teachings of love, avoiding false teachers and answering the Gnostic view of Christ. Jude takes up the cause to fight for the faith against the false teaching that was rampant in his day.

Specific Goals for the Ninth Session

The student will learn of the historical background, possible authorship, importance and purposes of the author of the books of I & II Peter I, II and III John and Jude. They will also learn of the descriptive and prescriptive messages that the authors of these books through God's inspiration intend the readers to know and do in Christian lives.

Assignment for Ninth Session

The student should read I & II Peter, I, II and III John and Jude prior to class and should do any other readings that are assigned by the instructor.

Suggested Student Projects

1. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any selected verses of I & II Peter, I, II or II John or Jude.

Session Ten

Premise

The book of Revelation is one of the most difficult in the New Testament but also one of the most rewarding to study. It is largely apocalyptic and presents many signs, symbols, and other difficult illusions of the days of judgment, the reign of Christ and the eternal confinement of sin and death.

Specific Goals for the Tenth Session

The student will learn of the meanings of the numerous signs and symbols in Revelation as well as what the basic thrust that John has related to us through the revelation of Jesus Christ. The student will also learn of the various views of Christians today on the 1000 Year reign of Christ, and current views on the tribulation.

Assignment for Tenth Session

The student should read the book of Revelation and other readings the instructor may assign before this class session.

Suggested Student Projects

1. The student should prepare a brief sermon (homily) of approximately five minutes length that is based on any selected verses of Revelation.

