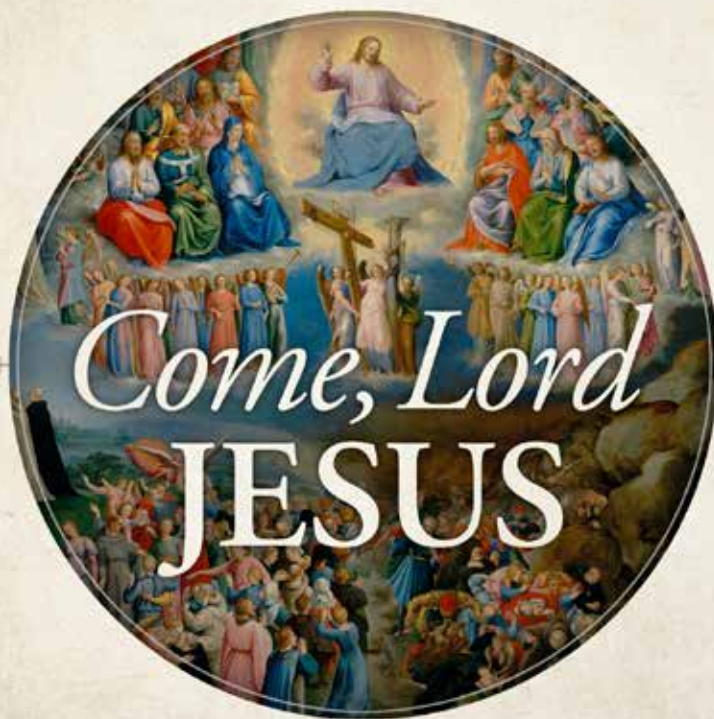


THE GOSPEL PROJECT[®] CHRONOLOGICAL



Come, Lord
JESUS

Volume 12

SUMMER 2018: *Personal Study Guide ESV*
Ed Stetzer & Trevin Wax GENERAL EDITORS
Brian Dembowczyk MANAGING EDITOR

LifeWay | Adults



God's Word to You



A Summary of the Bible

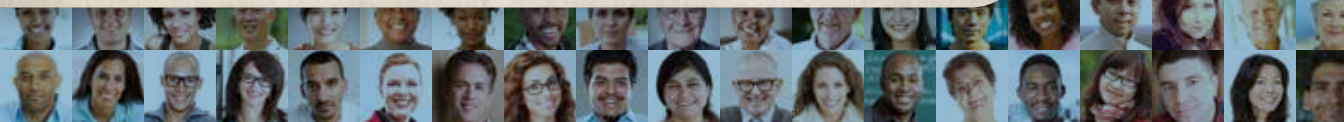
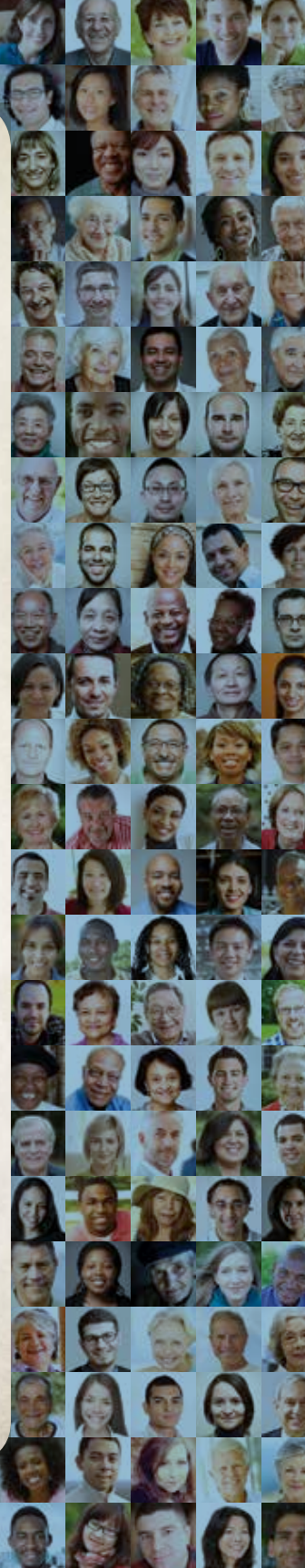
In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.



Ed Stetzer

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*

PROFESSOR, BILLY GRAHAM DISTINGUISHED CHAIR, WHEATON COLLEGE



When we talk about *hope* in this world, oftentimes we do so in the sense of wishing. But when it comes to *hope* as described and prescribed in the Bible, *hope* takes on a much deeper dimension. No longer is it wishful thinking but a settled belief that something will occur, even if we cannot yet see how that something could happen. It is this hope that runs through the storyline of Scripture and through the biblical stories in this volume of *The Gospel Project*.

A sure hope of fulfilling his mission sustains the apostle Paul through threats, prison, facing his accusers, facing rulers, and even a shipwreck. A sure hope empowers letters to those in need of joy, the truth, hope, and a reminder of grace. And a sure hope reveals in powerful words to suffering, persecuted, and straying

churches what we cannot yet see—that God will one day make all things new.

This God is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (Rev. 21:6; 22:13). Over all and above all, He declares the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10). Faith in this all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and all-good God leads to a sure hope of our future as believers. He sent Jesus just as He promised to rescue us from sin. He sent His Spirit as promised to strengthen us for our mission. He has given us His Word to fuel our sure hope in His promises, and one day He will deliver on them all. So until the Lord Jesus comes, let us live lives in this dark world marked by faith, love, and hope (1 Cor. 13:13).

Trevin Wax

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*

AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING *This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in Light of the Gospel*



As we arrive at the end of the New Testament, we come full circle to the truths that opened the story of the Bible at the very beginning—God’s people in God’s world under God’s gracious rule. But this time, the end turns out to be even better than the beginning. God’s people know His grace and mercy in ways that, apart from redemption through Christ, they never would have experienced. Redemption and full restoration—this is the great hope of the Christian.

As you ponder the truths in these texts of Scripture, I hope you’ll draw courage from the example of the apostle Paul, who clung to hope while in prison. Inspiration from the apostles who commanded us to defend the faith. Hope from the vision of John in Revelation, who lifts high the name of Jesus and points us to

the glorious future that awaits.

Resurrection hope is not passive. It’s active in its waiting. It’s moving forward on mission with our King, knowing that our labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). May this volume of *The Gospel Project* help you along in your journey of trusting Jesus, hoping for His return, and loving God and neighbor as He commands.

The Gospel Project[®]

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Suggested for the week of

Unit 1: God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles)

June 3	10	<i>Session 1</i>	The Plot Against Paul
June 10	19	<i>Session 2</i>	Paul Before Rulers
June 17	28	<i>Session 3</i>	The Shipwreck
June 24	37	<i>Session 4</i>	Paul Expresses Joy in Prison
July 1	46	<i>Session 5</i>	Paul Magnifies Christ in Prison
July 8	55	<i>Session 6</i>	Grace to a Runaway Slave

Unit 2: The God Who Makes All Things New (Epistles, Revelation)

July 15	65	<i>Session 7</i>	The Church That Forgot Its Hope
July 22	74	<i>Session 8</i>	Defending the Faith
July 29	83	<i>Session 9</i>	While We Wait
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August 12	101	<i>Session 11</i>	Seven Words for Seven Churches
August 19	110	<i>Session 12</i>	Heaven's Songs
August 26	119	<i>Session 13</i>	The Return of the King



THE GOSPEL PROJECT CHRONOLOGICAL

A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

Fall 2015

The Story Begins

God the Creator (Genesis 1–11)

God the Covenant-Maker (Genesis 12–50)

Winter 2015–16

God Delivers

God the Redeemer (Exodus)

God the Lawgiver (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy)

Spring 2016

The Promised Land

God the Savior (Numbers, Joshua)

God the Judge (Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel)

Summer 2016

A Kingdom Established

God the King (1–2 Samuel)

God All Wise (1 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)

Fall 2016

Prophets and Kings

God the Revealer (1–2 Kings, Isaiah)

God the Pursuer (Prophets, 2 Chronicles)

Winter 2016-17

Exile and Return

God the Sustainer (Daniel, Ezra)

God the Provider (Esther, Nehemiah, Malachi)

Spring 2017

The Rescue Begins

God the Son (Gospels)

God Among Us (Gospels)

Summer 2017

Stories and Signs

Jesus the Storyteller (Synoptic Gospels)

Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)

Fall 2017

Jesus Saves

Jesus the Savior (Gospels)

Jesus the Risen King (Gospels, Acts)

Winter 2017-18

The Church on Mission

The Spirit Who Empowers (Acts)

The God Who Sends (Acts)

Spring 2018

Letters to God's People

The God Who Directs His People (Epistles)

The God Who Changes Us (Epistles)

Summer 2018

Come, Lord Jesus

God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles)

The God Who Makes All Things New (Epistles, Revelation)



How to Use The Gospel Project

7

Read the session in preparation for group discussion. Record any insights or questions you may want to discuss during the group experience.

2

Gather with your group to discuss and learn together what God has to say. Contribute to the conversation and activities.

3

Apply the truths of the session by working through “His Mission, Your Mission” with your group or by yourself.

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Visit GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content related to the study.
Visit GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources for links to podcasts, articles,
and blog posts related to each session.

Unit 1

GOD'S PRISONER

Acts, Epistles

Memory Verses

[I]t is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

—PHILIPPIANS 1:20-21

The Plot Against Paul

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Resurrection hope is the source of Christian courage.

God's people are no strangers to prison. Think of Joseph in the Egyptian jail, Daniel in a den of lions, John the Baptist in Herod's palace, the apostle John on Patmos, and the persecuted church throughout history, even up to today. Following God often leads to prison.



Voices from Church History

"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."¹

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer
(1906-1945)



What good has or could come from God's people being in prison?

In this session, we will trace Paul's experience in Jerusalem, when he was judged for his resurrection hope, strengthened by Christ's presence in prison, and preserved through a surprising plot twist. We will see that even in prison, God was faithful to provide for Paul and to lead His servant to be used where and how He desired. We will be encouraged to imitate the apostle's boldness, courage, and conviction as we ask God to give us the same faith and fortitude to surrender our lives to the Christ who surrendered His life for us. Like Paul, we will see that resurrection hope gives God's people confidence to share the gospel no matter the consequences.

1. Paul is judged for his resurrection hope (Acts 23:1-10).



¹ And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” ² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” ⁴ Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?”

⁵ And Paul said, “I did not know,

brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

⁶ Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.” ⁷ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. ⁹ Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees’ party stood up and contended sharply, “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?” ¹⁰ And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

In a narrative, it is often easy to focus on what happens *to* someone and miss what happens *in* someone. Before we examine what Paul did, let’s first look at five characteristics Paul demonstrated as he stood on trial before the Sanhedrin:

- Paul was **honest** (v. 1).
- Paul was **prophetic** (v. 3).
- Paul was **respectful** of Scripture (v. 5).
- Paul was **strategic** (v. 6a).
- Paul was **confessional** (v. 6b).

These five characteristics give us a glimpse into what Jesus was doing in the life of Paul. The man who once attacked Jesus (9:4) and supported putting His followers to death now stood before the Sanhedrin and boldly and unashamedly proclaimed Jesus even at the risk of his own life. Paul no longer *resisted* Jesus; he now *rested* in Jesus. And just as Jesus had promised, He gave Paul wisdom to speak the words needed in that moment—honest, prophetic, and strategic words anchored in Scripture and in his faith in Christ.



How do the characteristics Paul demonstrated in his trial help us as we share the gospel in our culture today?

As Paul stood there staring down a gathering of Sadducees and Pharisees, he succinctly proclaimed the core reason for his arrest and trial—hope in the resurrection. And with that, a wedge was driven into the assembly, separating Pharisee from Sadducee, and a dispute erupted.

We should not confuse Paul’s shrewdness in this moment with deceit. The core issue of Paul’s trial was indeed the resurrection of the dead, but it wasn’t a theoretical doctrine for Paul. The reason Paul was arrested and stood on trial was his firm belief, his unwavering hope, that Christ was resurrected and that he and all others who trust in Him would one day be raised to life as well. It was this resurrection hope that fueled Paul’s confidence in Jesus and gave him strength to face persecution, beatings, shipwreck, starvation, and opposition.

But the resurrection of Jesus also fuels division. Jesus promised as much. One day, He will divide sheep from goats, wheat from chaff, saved from lost (Matt. 3:12; 25:32). Those who have placed their hope in Jesus Christ will spend eternity with Him, but those who reject Christ’s free offer of salvation will be thrown into the fiery furnace of hell: “In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:42).

This was what the Sanhedrin was *truly* arguing about, even if they didn't realize it. The doctrine of the resurrection, broadly of people and narrowly of Christ, condemned both the Pharisees and the Sadducees.



What are some ways we can reveal the reality and power of the resurrection to others?



Voices from the Church

"We don't need a prosperity gospel. We need an adversity gospel."²

—Robert Smith Jr.

2. Paul is strengthened through the Lord's presence (Acts 23:11).

¹¹ *The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."*

Jesus knew *exactly* what Paul was experiencing, for He too had stood before the Sanhedrin and was accused, beaten, and condemned by them (Matt. 26:57-67). So when Jesus visited Paul in prison that night, He encouraged His apostle as one who empathized with his suffering.

Nothing could have encouraged Paul more in that prison cell than the resurrected Christ. Earlier that day, Paul had stood up for Jesus. The promised presence of Jesus had given him the hope and confidence he needed as he stood before the Sanhedrin as their captive. Now Paul would experience that presence in a powerful way as Jesus stood by him.



How has Christ's presence comforted and encouraged you in difficult seasons of your life?

Notice the proximity. Jesus didn't reveal Himself above Paul's head in the sky as He had in Acts 9:3. Neither did Jesus catch Paul up to "the third heaven" as we read in 2 Corinthians 12:2. No, Christ came down and "stood by him." The Son of God's presence was near. It was real and inescapable—even in a prison cell. As the psalmist once observed, "If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!" (Ps. 139:8). Jesus comforted Paul up close and personally and promised to protect him, not only in Jerusalem but all the way to Rome.

Jesus doesn't always save us from prison. Even though we might *think* that would be best, He does something better: He enters through the bars of our cell and suffers with us, for us, and through us. Isn't that encouraging? You don't have to conjure up your own courage to get through a desperate situation. Jesus supplies all the courage you need.

Like Paul, we are never alone in our suffering. And also like Paul, our suffering is never pointless. God never wastes our suffering, and neither should we.



How can Christ's presence provide you with the courage you need to handle the trials you presently face or may face in the future?



How have you seen God use your suffering for His glory and the good of both you and others?

3. Paul is preserved through surprising circumstances (Acts 23:12-24).

¹² When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now therefore you, along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near.”

Paul may not have been able to get himself out of this desperate situation, but Jesus could. The Jews had once plotted against *Him* too. When Jesus claimed, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem tried to stone Him. But Jesus “escaped from their hands” because the timing and the manner of His death weren’t right (v. 39). The Jews would put Jesus to death, but Christ would be *crucified*—not stoned—for our sins (see Deut. 21:23; Isa. 53:5; Zech. 12:10).

Isn’t that comforting? You are bulletproof until you’ve accomplished your mission in this world. Jesus not only saves and sustains us, He also runs *beside* us and preserves us, often in surprising ways. Look at how God causes this seemingly foolproof plan against Paul to unravel at the seams.

¹⁶ Now the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the tribune, for he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸ So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, “Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you.” ¹⁹ The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?”

99 Essential Christian Doctrines

16. God Is Faithful

God’s faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God’s faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of “faithful” to God’s coming through on His word: “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

²⁰ And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him.

²¹ But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent.” ²² So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, “Tell no one that you have informed me of these things.”

Who was Paul’s nephew? Luke doesn’t tell us. What we do know is that God often uses unlikely characters to change the course of history. Think of Moses, who was a murderer and could not speak well. Or the boy-shepherd David, who would become an adulterer and murderer. Or youthful Jeremiah. Think of Rahab, Ruth, and Esther. God often chooses “what is foolish in the world to shame the wise” and “what is weak in the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27).

Paul himself was an unlikely character—a religious fanatic turned evangelical missionary. God loves using misfits, outcasts, and anonymous people, like Paul’s nephew, to accomplish extraordinary tasks for His glory. And in the same way, He delights in using us.



What kinds of people has God used to change the course of your life?



In what ways is God using you, or might He be able to use you, to influence the lives of others?

²³ Then he called two of the centurions and said, “Get ready two hundred soldiers, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea at the third hour of the night. ²⁴ Also provide mounts for Paul to ride and bring him safely to Felix the governor.”

Notice how Paul’s status suddenly shifts. Once a threatened prisoner, Paul is now precious cargo. He receives an escort worthy of a prince.

Christ does that—He shifts our status. All of us were once slaves to sin, but Jesus said, “No longer do I call you servants. . . I have called you friends” (John 15:15). We were orphans, but in Christ, we are now adopted coheirs with Him (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:5). We were downcast, but in Christ, God “seated us with him in the heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6). Because of Christ, you and I go from slavery to freedom, isolation to adoption, paupers and beggars to princes and princesses. Perhaps that is the most surprising way God works.



What is the danger of having too low of a view of ourselves? Of having too high of a view of ourselves?

Conclusion

What a difference the resurrection makes! It distinguishes Christians from non-Christians in every culture and context as it refurbishes our life pursuits, changes our old attitudes, and gives us hope to continue running the race even in the midst of despair. Because of the resurrection, Christians are thrice-born creatures: 1) we are born; 2) we are born again (John 3:7); and 3) one day, we will be born again, again.

Our third birth will be just as *physical* as our first. That’s why archeologists will never discover Jesus’ skeleton. As the angel told Mary, “He is not here, but has risen” (Luke 24:6).

And we will rise too (Rom. 8:11). Until then, let the resurrection become a source of courage and confidence as we live knowing one day “we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2), and for all eternity we will see the Savior “face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12).

CHRIST CONNECTION: Paul’s confidence in the midst of trying circumstances came from his belief that the God of his fathers was the God who had revealed His glory in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Paul believed that the faithfulness of God that was shown through the cross and resurrection of Jesus would sustain him through persecution and trial.

HIS MISSION, YOUR MISSION

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to courageously testify to the gospel, even when the cost of telling the truth is high.

1. In what ways will your resurrection hope affect your attitudes, actions, and conversations this week?

2. What steps can your group take to strengthen one another in the midst of suffering and trials?

3. How might God be directing your circumstances in order to open doors for sharing the gospel of Jesus with others?

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PLAYLIST

To download this quarter's recommended playlist of songs, go to LifeWayWorship.com/GospelProject.

Get the following collection of great songs and artists:

- "Songs of the People"—Paul Baloche
- "It Is Well with My Soul"—Watkinsville Worship
- "King of My Heart"—John Mark McMillan
- "Power to Redeem"—Lauren Daigle
- "Perfect Storm"—Evidence
- "When Trials Come"—Keith and Kristyn Getty
- "Glory (Let There Be Peace)"—Matt Maher
- "Nothing Shakes the Hope"—First Worship
- "Speak the Word"—Tommy Walker
- "O Spirit, Lift Our Eyes to Jesus"—Matt Boswell
- "Revelation Song"—Passion
- "Advent Hymn (Watching, Waiting, Longing)"—Rick Lee James
- "On You, My God, I'll Wait"—Tommy Walker

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From Genesis to Revelation, understand how the entire Bible reveals God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ.

3. UNITE EVERY AGE IN CHRIST-CENTERED STUDY

For churches that wish to align all ages, *The Gospel Project* provides Christ-centered study for babies through adults.

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Come, Lord Jesus

The life of a believer is not easy, and for some, it can be deadly. But through all the hardships, struggles, and persecution, Jesus Christ—the Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Savior of the world—is present, powerful, and in control. As a prisoner for preaching Christ, the apostle Paul experienced rejection, false accusations, threats, a long, stressful journey, and a shipwreck. But he also experienced the joy, peace, and grace of God and the fellowship of believers to encourage him.

In these last days since the time of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, there have been difficulties for His church. Some have struggled with hope in the face of death; others have struggled with truth in the face of false teachers. Therefore, the Lord's apostles encouraged the church to hold on to hope and to defend the faith because of what we know from Scripture—Jesus is coming again. Until that time comes, let us repent of sin, share the good news of Jesus with others, praise our God and Savior, and live holy lives while we wait, for when He comes, He will make all things new.

What's Next?

FALL 2018

Volume 1: In the Beginning

Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)

God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)

God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)

The Journey Continues!

WINTER 2018-19

Volume 2: Out of Egypt

God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)

God Provides for His People (Exodus)

God Receives Worship from His People (Exodus; Leviticus)

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