

DISCIPLE



BECOMING
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THROUGH
BIBLE STUDY

DVD Segment Summaries

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Host: Zan W. Holmes, Jr.

Segment 1: The Biblical Word

Presenters: Albert C. Outler and
Richard B. Wilke

The Bible contains many kinds of literature but has an integrated vision simple and clear enough for anyone to understand. People read the Bible because they sense that within it they will hear the word of God. Its consistent message points to the wholeness of the Bible, to the sovereign grace of the one God and the radical contrast between the power syndrome and the rule of grace. The Bible is a story to which every human being can relate, and that is the source of its authority.

Segment 2: The Creating God

Presenter: B. Davie Napier

The Creation story differs from ancient myth or scientific theory. Genesis's concern is theological—

who we are and why we are here. Life is a gift of God and is meaningless except in relation to God's purpose. Creation faith includes these ideas: The one God called creation out of chaos by word alone; creation is good; human beings are God's creatures; the most outward, obvious expression of Israel's faith is the sabbath. The two Creation accounts taken together express Israel's creation faith and our inherited faith.

Segment 3: The Rebel People

Presenter: William J. A. Power

The story of the temptation of Adam and Eve points out human vulnerability. Human beings are buck-passers, fearful and filled with guilt because we are not what we ought to be or could be. We trust ourselves rather than God and are isolated from God and others. Adam and Eve's story tells us how much we need God.

Segment 4: The Called People

Presenter: Randall M. Falk

God's call and God's covenant always go together. The rainbow is the sign of God's universal covenant for the preservation of life. The twofold covenant with Abraham, the covenant of circumcision and of land, bound the people to God in service and enabled them to live in peace and freedom. The covenant of Torah provided the way of living in service to God and fellow human beings through the moral and ethical law. Jews understand they are a people chosen not for special privilege but to transmit God's moral law to future generations.

Segment 5: God Hears the Cry

Presenter: Randall M. Falk

Passover has both agricultural and historical significance. Coming at the season of wheat harvest, it is a thanksgiving for the gifts of the earth. Historically, it commemorates the liberation of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land. Passover is celebrated with a ritual dinner called the *Seder*, a family time in which questions are used to tell children of this historical event: Why is this night different from all other nights? The Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples may have been the Seder meal.

Segment 6: God Sends the Law

Presenter: Randall M. Falk

The Ten Commandments continue to speak with freshness and integrity. Most of the commandments start with a no because they describe kinds of conduct that will destroy life in community. In their negative statements, the Ten Commandments show aspects of life that ruin our lives if we do them. As a collection, they are without parallel. We need both the guidance stated as negatives in the Ten Commandments and the positive counsel of the New Testament.

Segment 7: When God Draws Near

Presenter: Bernhard W. Anderson

The acts of sacrifice to God as depicted in Exodus and Leviticus must be read in the context of the whole Torah. God chooses to draw near and dwell in the midst of a worshipping people. Our reaction to God's drawing near usually is an overwhelming awareness of unworthiness. Sacrifices express God's readiness to forgive, to cleanse, to restore. God provides the means of "at-one-ment" so that a sinful people may be accepted in the presence of the holy God. Christ's sacrifice on the cross fulfills and completes the meaning of the priestly sacrificial

system of the Old Testament. In the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, the Christian community acts out its conviction that Jesus' sacrifice offers cleansing and at-one-ment with God.

Segment 8: The People Without a King

Presenters: Albert C. Outler
and Richard B. Wilke

The books of Joshua and Judges describe two stages in the history of the covenant: Joshua describes the conquest, and Judges describes the settling of the land and the building of a covenant community under God's will and rule. The judges were deliverers, not lawgivers. They brought the people back to an understanding of the covenant way of life with God as king and ruler of Israel. Israel's desire for a king symbolized their false belief that they could be like other people and keep the Law as well.

Segment 9: The People With a King

Presenter: Kathleen A. Farmer

Because of the military threat of the Philistines, the people of Israel wanted a king like other nations. Saul, the first king, failed in his calling. David, the second king, consolidated the tribes into a single

political unit that held together only through the reign of his son Solomon. The kingdom split in two—the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Both kingdoms were overrun by foreign powers and their people carried into exile. The biblical historians, writing from the perspective of the Exile, show the kings of Israel and Judah were at times both faithful and faithless in carrying out their call.

Segment 10: God Warns the People

Presenter: B. Davie Napier

Elijah spoke out on the two major issues of Israelite prophecy: corruption of the worship of God by pagan practices and social injustice. In the contest with the prophets of Baal, the two altars show that people want to worship God and pagan local gods as well. The slaughter of the prophets is coherent with the urgency of the command to break totally and radically with false gods. The role of the prophet-minister is to work to see the single altar in the church.

Segment 11: God Punishes the People

Presenter: B. Davie Napier

Jeremiah received his call during the reign of King Josiah, who

instituted extensive religious reform in the restoration of the Temple. When the book of the Law was found in the Temple, Josiah made religious rites conform to the book of the Law. Jeremiah wanted people to hear, accept, and love him but was driven to proclaim God's word of judgment and destruction. With Jerusalem under siege, he demonstrated hope by buying a vineyard.

Segment 12: God Restores the People

Presenter: Walter Brueggemann

The destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and the exile of the Jewish people caused them to ask questions about whether God could be trusted in this crisis. This theological emergency did not lead to despair, but to hope, expressed particularly in three responses in the Old Testament: Jeremiah 30–31, hope in the promise of a new covenant; Ezekiel 37, the metaphor of resurrection to describe the promise of homecoming; Isaiah 40–55, particularly 40, the promise of coming home, and 53, healing through the suffering of others.

Segment 13: Songs of the Heart

Presenter: Walter Harrelson

The Psalms are actual prayers prayed and hymns sung by ancient Israel.

They are not always model prayers; some are prayers for vengeance. The Psalms have value to the people of God today for confession, praise, and thanksgiving during worship; to express our fears and frustration; for comfort and consolation; to express anger at God for not helping us; to express our sense of God's nearness; to draw Jews and Christians together because they share the Psalms. The Psalms are a rich source of Old Testament theology.

Segment 14: The Righteous Are Like a Tree

Presenters: Albert C. Outler and Richard B. Wilke

As the people return from exile, God leads them to witness, not to conquest. As in the original conquest, God is deliverer. But now the destiny of God's people is religious. The renewal of their vow to serve the one God includes the rebuilt Temple, a pure form and spirit of worship, and the reconstitution of the covenant community. Righteous living is symbolized by a tree rooted and nourished in the faith of the God of Israel.

Segment 15: When Trouble Comes

Presenter: B. Davie Napier

One purpose of the Book of Job is to argue against the belief that right

living brings rewards in this life and that wickedness brings misfortune. Some interpreters see a parallel between Israel's story and Job's story. Israel's and Job's fulfillment comes in abandoning pride and accepting the role of servant. Others see the meaning of the Book of Job in Job's face-to-face encounter with God.

Segment 16: People Hope for a Savior

Presenter: Jorge A. González

The author of Daniel sets the story in the period of the Babylonian exile to draw parallels between the story of Daniel and the time in which the book is being written. Apocalypticism, characterized by symbolic language and the division of history into present and future ages, provides the theme and the literary form for the Book of Daniel. The book is structured into six dreams and four visions. It includes the theological ideas of resurrection of the body and hope for a Messiah and the expectation that the present age will soon end.

Segment 17: The Time of Transition

Presenter: Robert Mulholland, Jr.

During the time between the end of the Old Testament and the

beginning of the New Testament, synagogue and Torah instruction became the center of Jewish life. Hellenistic culture influenced the ruling aristocracy of the Jews, resulting in the Maccabean revolt. Three groups emerged during the Hasmonean independence: Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees. By the end of Hasmonean rule, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings had become authoritative for the Jews. Messianic expectations among Jews ran high during the period of Roman rule. Subordination to foreign powers prepared the way for rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.

Segment 18: Radical Discipleship

Presenter: Leander E. Keck

According to Matthew, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament hope. In Matthew the central theme of Jesus' teaching is "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus and Matthew use *repentance* to mean turning around, turning life Godward. John the Baptist called people to repent in order to be ready for the Kingdom. Jesus called people to repent in response to the Kingdom. Jesus used parables to tell a story that could open up some aspect of God's kingdom.

Segment 19: Mounting Controversy

Presenter: Leander E. Keck

After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the leaders of the Pharisees began to consolidate Judaism in the synagogues. Jewish Christians emphasized Jesus' own tensions with the Pharisees in order to find their identity apart from the synagogues. The church's tension with the synagogue was stronger than the tension between the Pharisees and Jesus had been. Two factors separated Jesus and the Pharisees: Jesus was concerned about whether an act was right or just, not whether a law had been violated, which meant going behind the law to God's will. And Jesus acted as if he knew what God's will was.

Segment 20: The Hidden Messiah

Presenter: Dal Joon Won

The faith journey of the disciples from their call to their final understanding of Jesus as Messiah included three stages: trying but failing to understand the real mission of Messiah; realizing that Jesus is the Messiah but continuing to misunderstand the nature of his messiahship as the suffering Son of Man; and seeing the cost of following a suffering Messiah as too high. The hidden Messiah was revealed in God's true

power and glory to the women who went to the tomb. Discipleship happens only when one accepts the suffering nature of the hidden Messiah.

Segment 21: God Seeks the Least, the Last, the Lost

Presenter: Fred B. Craddock

The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as prophet, teacher, preacher, and healer and records some of his stories that are preserved nowhere else. Luke sets Jesus' life within the Judaism of his day and states his mission in the Old Testament terms of Isaiah. Luke chronicles Jesus' prayer life; his calls for justice, mercy, and fairness; his concern for the poor, the halt, the lame, and the blind as Kingdom people; and his inclusion of women as helpers and disciples alongside the men. According to Luke, the word that the risen Christ wants preached to all people everywhere is both a call for repentance and an offer of forgiveness.

Segment 22: Lifegiver

Presenter: Fernando F. Segovia

John 1–12 presents the role of Jesus as the giver of life. A pattern of descent and ascent is established in the Prologue and used throughout the Gospel to develop its portrayal of Jesus: The Word of

God descends, comes from glory, reveals his glory in and to the world, and returns to glory. The world above and the world below are opposed to each other. Truth, light, grace, and life are contrasted with falsehood, darkness, sin, and death. The “life” that Jesus proclaims and makes available includes a new way of relating to God and to one another. It is life born from above, life in union with the Father, life “not of this world.”

Segment 23: Advocate

Presenter: Gail R. O’Day

The Gospel of John addresses the problem of Jesus’ absence from the faith community. In the Farewell Discourse (John 14–17) Jesus promises his followers the Holy Spirit to keep the resurrected Christ present in the faith community. The Spirit will function to teach the faith community, to bear witness to Jesus and help communities bear witness, to help the community declare what comes from Jesus and glorify him, and finally to be present to communities of faith. The Spirit will ensure that in whatever adversity believers find themselves, the words of Jesus will be freshly declared and freshly available.

Segment 24: The Explosive Power of the Spirit

Presenter: J. Ellsworth Kalas

Acts may be thought of as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. The human characters in Acts all act in relation to God’s Spirit, the lead character. Wherever the early Christians went, they spoke with the authority of Jesus because they possessed and were possessed by the Spirit of Jesus.

Segment 25: The Gospel Penetrates the World

Presenter: J. Ellsworth Kalas

The task of the first-generation Christians was difficult. Most of them had not been outside their own village, and the message they carried was hard to believe. They went first to major cities and began their ministry there in the synagogues among Jews. Ephesians enlarges the definition of *world* to mean the world of power and prejudice, the world of hate and divisions, the world of ideas and culture patterns, the world of intellectual struggle and spiritual conflict.

Segment 26: Put Right With God Through Faith

Presenter: Richard B. Hays

Can God be trusted? In Romans Paul addresses the problem of God’s

universal justice, God's faithfulness to Israel, and how the death and resurrection of Jesus are to be understood as the fulfillment of all that God had promised Israel. Romans is Paul's defense of the gospel and his appeal for support of his work. He concludes that no human unfaithfulness is more powerful than the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and that the God who has chosen us freely in love can be trusted.

Segment 27: A Congregation in Ferment

Presenter: PHEME PERKINS

Corinth was a city of social, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Paul constantly had to deal with quarrels and misunderstanding in the church there. In the Corinthian correspondence, Paul returns repeatedly to two simple principles: Since Jesus died for all people, no one can claim to be better than any fellow Christian; and love is the standard by which we determine how we treat others in all situations. Despite all the controversies with the Corinthians, Paul never let the Corinthians forget that they had to make that love a reality in their lives.

Segment 28: The Son Shall Set Us Free

Presenter: THOMAS L. HOYT, JR.

Galatians addresses two major

problems: the nature and authenticity of Paul's apostleship and the relationship of Christian freedom to the Mosaic law. On the question of the terms on which Gentiles could be admitted to the church, Paul argues that all persons who have faith are in fact blessed as they share Abraham's faith based on God's promises. The Law was a kind of guardian until persons were mature enough to receive the faith in Christ. The Galatians were now free to live by the guidance of the Spirit. But freedom is not license. Whoever lives by the Spirit does what the Law intended.

Segment 29: A Pastor Gives Guidance

Presenter: LEANDER E. KECK

The letters to Timothy and Titus are called the Pastoral Epistles. They are concerned with pastoral problems from the standpoint of leadership. Most scholars think a follower of Paul wrote these letters in Paul's name. They take for granted a church structure with clearly defined responsibilities and a society and family structure different from our own. The summaries of essentials of Christian belief found in these letters are probably early Christian confessions or creeds.

Segment 30: Our Great High Priest

Presenter: William L. Lane

Hebrews takes the form of a sermon, a “word of exhortation.” Hebrews is an insistent call to listen to the word that God has spoken. It was prepared for a specific local congregation whose members had become weary with the constant struggle they faced as Christians. The pastor urged them to fix their gaze on Jesus so they would not grow weary. The people of the new covenant were consecrated to the service of God through Jesus’ sacrificial death. Consecration to God implies committed discipleship. The task of the disciple is to emulate Jesus, who faithfully did the will of God, regardless of the cost.

Segment 31: A People Set Apart

Presenter: William H. Willimon

Baptism attaches one to a community, the body of Christ. Baptism means all that water means: deliverance, sustenance, new life. Water is a symbol of death but also of salvation. Baptism is a communal act, a prophetic act, a revolutionary act. Because of the peculiarity baptism calls for, we must be prepared for the pain of changing and growing and for the pain of letting go and trusting God. New life begins at the

instant of baptism. Baptism is a “dress rehearsal for death”—training in letting go in faith—and promises the hope of resurrection.

Segment 32: We Never Lose Hope

Presenter: Jorge A. González

The Book of Revelation was written for Christians suffering bitter persecution. Addressed to seven churches, Revelation offered hope to inspire courage, a call to return to faithfulness, and the message that only faith in Christ would sustain them in persecution. The message of Revelation is threefold: Jesus Christ gained an ultimate victory over evil, the powers of evil are still active in the world, and the faithful must struggle in the face of evil. Underlying these themes is the conviction that God is in charge of human history.

Segment 33: Gifts of Each Disciple

Presenter: Maxie Dunnam

Every Christian is a minister. In baptism and confirmation, all of us are ordained to the general ministry of the church. We have been claimed and commissioned by Christ. Jesus’ style defines our style: He calls us to be servants. When we choose Jesus’ style, we give up the

right to be in charge. We become available and vulnerable. We lose our fear of being taken advantage of. We experience freedom.

Segment 34: A Last Supper Together

Presenter: David Lowes Watson

The word *covenant* means binding in relation to God. The covenant with God is always at God's initiative; we respond to God's grace. Jeremiah prophesied a new

covenant in which God's law would be written on every heart. Jesus Christ embodied this new covenant. We have to let God be God by being obedient. To be obedient, we have to be disciplined. The early Puritan movement used the word *covenant* as a watchword for obedient discipleship. Christians through the centuries have found that the best way to keep their covenant with God is to make an agreement with one another to that end.

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