

Basics of the Bible

Taught by Dr. Bill Mounce

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ISBN-

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Printed in the United States of America

<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/basics-bible>

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Overview

Title: Basics of the Bible

Program: Basics

Speaker: Dr. Bill Mounce

Goals

1. To understand the basics of what the Bible is and how to read it for yourself in a meaningful way
2. To understand the basics of what the Bible teaches you about God, yourself and others
3. To introduce you to the main content, themes and theological teachings of the Bible

Requirements

8 sessions

2 hours 50 minutes

Prerequisites

None

Format

Video and Audio

Your Speaker

Dr. Bill Mounce is a writer based in Lone, Washington. He founded and leads BiblicalTraining.org, a non-profit ministry that provides educational resources for discipleship in local churches. He also runs BillMounce.com to help people learn biblical Greek.

Bill previously served as a preaching pastor at a church in Washington. Before that, he taught New Testament and was the Director of the Greek Language Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He also taught at Azusa Pacific University.

Bill wrote the bestselling Greek textbook *Basics of Biblical Greek* along with many other resources. He served as the New Testament chair for the English Standard Version Bible translation and now serves on the NIV translation committee.

Bill and his wife Robin have been married since 1983 and have three children.

Education

Ph.D. 1981, in New Testament. Aberdeen University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

M.A. 1977, in Biblical Studies. Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

B.A. 1974–1975, in Biblical Studies, minor in Greek. Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota; Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 1971–74.

Guidelines

We are pleased that you have chosen to use materials from BiblicalTraining. We trust that you will find them to be of the highest quality and truly helpful in your own spiritual growth and that of your church. Please read through the following guidelines; they will help you make the best use of this Student Guide.

Weekly Schedule

Listen or watch the lesson. The lesson for each chapter is designed to be listened to outside of your meeting. Each lesson lasts about 30 minutes. This is a crucial step. If the meeting time with your fellow students is going to be productive and encouraging, everyone in the group needs to have listened to and wrestled with the lesson.

Take notes. This guide outlines each lesson and provides a summary of the teaching for each major point. If you are unable to take notes while listening to the lesson, please work through the guide beforehand.

Reflection questions. Each chapter closes with a series of questions. Some of the questions are data-based, confirming that you understand the information. Most of the questions are reflective, helping you move beyond the important accumulation of knowledge to challenging you to think through what you are learning about God, yourself, and others, and finally to application. Our encouragement is to think through your answers before your meeting and then use the meeting to share your thoughts and interact with others.

Meeting Together

While some people may need to study on their own, we strongly recommend finding a study group. A group encourages you to finish the class, and interacting with others, their understanding and insight, is the most effective way to sharpen your own thoughts and beliefs. Just as you will need the help of others from time to time, so will they.

Facilitator's Guide

If you are facilitating a group or mentoring an individual, here are some suggestions to help you.

Your role is to facilitate. This is not an opportunity for you to teach. In fact, the less visible role you take, the better. Your role is to listen and bring out the best in other people.

Preparation. Be sure to have done your homework thoroughly. Have listened to the lesson and thought carefully through the questions. Have an answer for each question that will get the conversation going.

Creativity. What works for one person to understand may not work for another. So listen to the conversation and pray that the Lord help you bring out the greatest interaction among all the people.

Correct error. This is difficult. If someone says something that isn't right, you don't want to come down on them, telling them they are wrong and shutting them out. On the other hand, if you let an obvious error pass, the rest of the group may think you agree and that what was said was correct. Look for gracious ways to suggest that the person's comment may have been incorrect.

Focus. Stay focused on Jesus and the Bible, not on church or religious traditions.

Lead the discussion. People don't want to listen to a sharing of common ignorance. Lead by asking questions that will prompt others to think.

Silence. Don't be afraid of silence. It may mean nothing more than people are thinking. But if the conversation lags, ask thought-provoking questions to get the discussion started, then step out of the way.

Discipleship. Be acutely aware of how you can mentor the group members. Meet with them for coffee. Share life with them. Jesus' Great Commission is to teach people to obey, and the only way this happens is in a relationship. One of the best habits you can develop is to ask people at the end of the meeting to come up with one concrete application. Then, start the next meeting by reviewing those applications.

Different Perspectives. People process information and express themselves in different ways based on their background, previous experience, culture, religion, and other factors. Encourage an atmosphere that allows people to share honestly and respectfully.

Privacy. All discussions are private, not to be shared outside the group unless otherwise specified.

Goal. The goal of this study is not just increased knowledge; it is transformation. Don't be content with people getting the "right" answers. The Pharisees got the "right" answer, and many of them never made it to heaven (Matt 5:20).

Relationships. Share everyone's name, email, and phone number so people can communicate during the week and follow up on prayer requests. You may want to set up a way to share throughout the week using Slack, Teams, or WhatsApp.

Finish well. Encourage the people to make the necessary commitment to do the work, think reflectively over the questions, and complete the class.

Prayer. Begin and end every meeting with prayer. Please don't do the quick "one-prayer-covers-all" approach. Manage the time so that all of you can pray over what you have learned and what you have been challenged by. Pray regularly for each individual in the meeting.

BiblicalTraining.org

BiblicalTraining has a passion to see people learn the Bible and grow in their faith. However, many of the best teachers are behind a paywall. BiblicalTraining mission is to record those teachers and give their Bible classes to the church for free. Our vision is to enable all people to learn everything Jesus taught.

Vision: Where will we be in five years?

We want every Christian around the globe to experience a deep relationship with God by understanding the life-changing truths of what God tells us in Scripture.

Mission: How will we get there?

To lead disciples toward spiritual growth through deep biblical understanding and practice. We do this by providing a comprehensive Biblical education from world-class professors to encourage spiritual growth

Who are We?

BiblicalTraining is a team of distinguished professors, pastors, and authors providing high-quality biblical teaching for free for every Christian, everywhere, forever.

Biblical basis

We are to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, being filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Matt 28:19-20; Col 1:9-10).

Core Beliefs

1. Spiritual growth requires knowledge and understanding of biblical content and theology
2. Education requires both content (head) as well as reflection and integration (heart, hands)
3. All people should have access to high quality Christian education because we are all members of the one body of Christ.

Distinctives

World class. Our professors are among the best academics in the world and know how to teach.

Multi-level. Our classes are in four academic levels so we can teach all people everything Jesus taught.

Comprehensive. We offer comprehensive programs of study, covering a wide range of subjects that are essential for any Christian to know.

Holistic. We want to see students move through content to deep reflection and application.

Configurable. Ministries can use BiblicalTraining lectures as well as their own to design their educational programs.

Accessible. BiblicalTraining is an internet-based ministry whose content is free so we can teach all people regardless of their circumstances.

Community-based. We encourage people to learn together, in small group and mentor/apprentice relationships.

Broadly evangelical. Our materials are broadly and firmly evangelical, governed by our Statement of Faith and therefore trustworthy.

1

What is a Christian?

I. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN

Someone who believes that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he said he would do.

II. TWO DIMENSIONS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

Entering into a relationship with Jesus and living in relationship with Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A. Trusting who Jesus is

When John uses the word believe, he means a personal, active belief that Jesus is God.

B. Trusting what Jesus did

You have a relationship with God because Jesus died for your sins and was raised to life.

C. Repentance and Response

Change your opinion of Jesus to recognize that he is God and be baptized as a public witness.

D. Living as a Christ Follower

When you are a changed person, you will live a changed life.

III. EVIDENCE OF TRUE FAITH

You know you are living in relationship with God if you follow the guidelines for living that he has set.

2

Bibliology

I. INTRODUCTION TO BIBLIOLOGY

There are 66 books, 50 authors, written over a 1500 year time period with 1 consistent message.

II. OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The Old Testament begins with creation and is written mostly in Hebrew. The New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus and is written mostly in Greek.

III. ORAL TEACHING PERIOD

The apostles remembered what Jesus said and the Holy Spirit helped them remember so they could record the life and ministry of Jesus in the written Gospels.

IV. WRITING PERIOD

People in the early church know the writers of the Gospels, the apostle Paul and the writings of the other letters in the New Testament.

V. DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION

God inspired people to write down his message using the vocabulary and cultural examples they were familiar with. The message is consistent in all of them.

VI. CANONICITY

The three tests of canonicity were apostolic authorship, harmony of doctrine and tone and accepted as authoritative by the Church as a whole.

VII. TRANSMISSION

We do not have original autographs of the New Testament documents, but more than 5,000 copies of part or all of the New Testament have been preserved.

VIII. TRANSLATIONS

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Translation philosophies typically focus either on the meaning of phrases or a word-for-word approach to deal with the ambiguity of translating from one language to another.

For Review

1. The Bible contains 66 books, written by 50 authors, over a period of about 1500 years and has a single theme.
2. The Bible is trustworthy.
3. Translations of the Bible are trustworthy.

Reflection Questions

1. How many different books are there in the Bible? How many different authors are represented? How many years was it from the first book being written till the last book being written?

3

Old Testament

I. INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament tells you that you are created for a relationship with God, sin damaged creation and separated you from God and obedience brings blessing.

II. FOUNDATIONAL (PENTATEUCH)

The books in the Pentateuch are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

III. HISTORICAL

This covers the events of the people of Israel entering the promised land, the monarchy during the united and divided kingdom and the period of exile.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL

This section includes the poetical books and the messages of the prophets.

V. CONCLUSION

The message of the Old Testament is that God is faithful and the Messiah, who will be Jesus, is coming.

For Review

1. The Old Testament covers the period of time from creation to about 400 BC.
2. The Old Testament Books can be divided into the foundational, historical and instructional sections.
3. The message of the Old Testament is that God is faithful and the Messiah is coming.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the basic idea of the Old Testament?
2. What is the main theme that frames all the books of the Old Testament? Give an example of how this theme continues in the New Testament.
3. How did the sin of Adam and Eve affect their relationship to God? How did it affect your relationship to God?
4. What are the Foundational books in the Old Testament? What is a word that is often used to refer to these five books?
5. What is described in the first three chapters of Genesis? Why does Dr. Mounce say that these may be the most important chapters in the Bible?

19. Which books describe the events during the time of the Divided Monarchy? Which empire took the Northern 10 tribes into captivity? Which empire took the Southern two tribes into captivity? Why were they taken into exile? Why did God allow them to return?

20. What books were written during the time of the exile and return from exile?

21. What are the five books in the Poetry section? What is the theme of each one?

22. How many books are there in the Prophets section? What are the three time periods in which the prophets are giving their messages? Give an example of each one and a sample of their message.

4

New Testament

I. INTRODUCTION

The New Testament focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus and what it means to believe in him and live your life in relationship with him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

II. FOUNDATIONAL (FOUR GOSPELS)

The four Gospels that record the life and ministry of Jesus are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

III. HISTORICAL (ACTS)

The book of Acts records the founding and spread of the early church. The three phases, organized by geographical regions in Acts 1:8, are Jerusalem, Judea and the ends of the earth.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL (LETTERS)

The instructional section is composed of Paul's letters to congregations and individuals, general epistles and Revelation.

V. CONCLUSION

Entrust your life to Jesus and live in relationship to God by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For Review

1. The New Testament focuses on the life and Ministry of Jesus and the history of the early church.
2. The books of the New Testament are divided into foundational, historical and instructional books.
3. The message of the New Testament is entrust your life to Jesus and live in relationship with God.

Reflection Questions

1. How are the covenants in the Old Testament and the New Covenant similar? What is the fundamental difference?

2. Which of the gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus are referred to as the "synoptics?" What does that mean?

3. Who was Matthew? What is the primary theme of his gospel account? What are some of the distinctives of his content?

4. What is the Great Commission? Why is it important in the history of the expansion of the Church?

5. When was the Gospel of Mark likely written? What is his primary theme? In chapter 8, how does Mark describe what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?

6. How did Luke get the information he needed to write his Gospel account? What are some ways that he shows his emphasis on historicity? What are some examples of his concern for social outcasts?

7. What are some of the reasons that the Gospel of John is different from the other three Gospels? How is this Gospel structured? What is the scope of the Gospel of John?

13. What characterizes the content of the letter to the church at Rome?

14. Why are the Prison Epistles given that title? Which books are they?

15. Why are the Pastoral Epistles given that name? Which books are they?

16. Why are the General Epistles given that name? What are the books in this section and their major themes?

17. What is the primary subject matter of the book of Revelation? What is the message of the book?

5

How to Read the Bible

I. WHAT IT MEANT IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Find the beginning and ending of a passage so you can read the verses in context, then identify the main point.

II. MEANS

Determine what the passage means to you by identifying the cultural and non-cultural aspects of the text so you can find the “eternal” principle.

III. REFLECTION

Look for what you can learn about God, yourself and others.

IV. APPLICATION

Apply what you learn in a way that changes how you live in the context of your relationships and activities.

For Review

1. Begin reading a passage in the Bible by determining what it mean in its original context.
2. Determine what the passage means in your context.
3. Reflect on what the passage teaches you about God and others in a way that changes how you live.

Reflection Questions

1. How does Dr. Mounce define "exegesis" when it comes to studying your Bible?

2. What is the first step in the process of exegesis? In order to do this, why is it important to understand who the original audience was?

3. What is the first step in understanding the historical meaning of a passage? What does it mean to determine the context of a passage? What is the danger of determining the meaning of a passage without understanding the context?

4. In the parable of the sower, what were the different kinds of soil that the seeds fell into? Why are these details secondary to the importance of sowing seeds and getting a crop? How will this affect the way you apply the meaning of this passage to your life?

5. What is the genre of the passage in Mark 2:1-12? What are some other elements of the context that will help you understand the meaning and application of this passage?

6. What is the main point in this passage? What are some of the details that help to emphasize this point?

6

Theology

I. SCRIPTURE

Everything flows from what you believe about the trustworthiness of the Bible and how well you know it, understand it and apply it to your life.

II. GOD

God is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, love, divine, trinitarian and deserving of respect and honor.

III. GOD THE SON (JESUS)

Jesus is fully God and fully human, His death on the cross and resurrection makes it possible for you to live in relationship with God.

IV. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is fully God and distinct from God the Father and God the Son. He regenerates you and empowers you to live in relationship with God.

V. ANTHROPOLOGY (HUMAN BEINGS)

Humans are created with the image of God implanted in them and are distinct from animals. They rebelled against God but God made a way to restore the relationship.

VI. SOTERIOLOGY

You are saved by believing that Jesus is who he says he is and did what he said he would do.

VII. SANCTIFICATION

Choosing to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit so you live your life more and more like Jesus.

VIII. ECCLESIOLOGY

You are meant to live in relationship with other followers of Jesus. Participating in baptism and communion are the two signs of belonging to the body of Christ.

IX. ESCHATOLOGY

You can look forward to the end of time when Jesus will return and create a new heaven and a new earth for you to live in eternity with him.

X. CONCLUSION

Good theology unites. Learn to emphasize the core teachings of the Bible and be gracious when discussing issues where the Bible is not as clear.

9. What is the doctrine of the incarnation? What does John 1:1 and 1:18 say about Jesus being fully God? What does Hebrews 2:17 say about Jesus being fully human and why that is important?

10. What did Jesus do on the cross that allows you to have a relationship with God? What is the name for this theological doctrine?

11. When we respond to God and become "born-again," what is the role of the Holy Spirit before, during and after that process?

12. How does Dr. Mounce describe the "division of labor" of the Godhead to explain the roles of each person of the Trinity?

13. What is the doctrine of “anthropology” about? In what ways do humans share characteristics with God and animals and in what ways are humans qualitatively different from both God and animals?

14. How did sin come into the world? What affect did it have on the relationship between humans and God?

15. What theological doctrine does “soteriology” refer to? What role does God play in the process? What role do humans play in the process?

16. What is the process of sanctification? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this process?

17. What does the doctrine of ecclesiology refer to? What does the Bible teach about it?

7

Statement of Faith

I. INTRODUCTION

Review what you learned so you know and remember what the Bible teaches you about God and your relationship with him.

II. SCRIPTURE

The Bible is the revelation of God and you can trust what it teaches you about God and your relationship to him.

III. DOCTRINE OF GOD

There is one God that exists in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He has existed eternally and created and sustains everything.

IV. GOD THE SON

Jesus is fully human and fully God. He died and resurrected from the dead to make it possible for you live in relationship with God.

V. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit indwells you as a follower of Jesus to seal your relationship with God and to guide and empower you to live more like Jesus.

VI. ANTHROPOLOGY

You are created in the image of God, distinct from animals, to have a relationship with him and to be a steward of creation.

VII. SOTERIOLOGY

The process of putting your trust in Jesus then living in relationship with God.

VIII. SANCTIFICATION

The process of living more like Jesus by being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

IX. ECCLESIOLOGY

The Church is the sum of all true believers. It also refers to living as the body of Christ in your local faith community.

X. ESCHATOLOGY

Jesus will return personally, visibly to all and suddenly so we can live with him forever in the new heaven and new earth.

XI. CONCLUSION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Continue to study to fill in the gaps.

8. What is the goal of sanctification? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this process?

9. What does the doctrine of ecclesiology refer to? What is baptism and what is its purpose in the context of the church? What is communion and what is its purpose in the context of the church?

10. What is eschatology in the context of theology? What are some of the events that will happen in the process? In what ways was it written to motivate and encourage believers in Jesus?

8

Sanctification

I. DEFINITION: BEING "SET APART" FROM SIN

Sanctification is the process of choosing to live more like Jesus.

II. SHOULD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE

Life will be different because you are not the same.

III. CHALLENGES

You will experience trials in your life because of Satan's attacks, difficult circumstances and the consequences of bad decisions you make.

IV. PART OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS RECOGNIZING THAT WE GROW IN COMMUNITY

We were built for relationships. You can benefit from other people in the body of Christ encouraging, motivating and correcting you.

V. PART OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS ALSO LISTENING/TALKING WITH GOD (MATT 6:9-13)

The Lord's Prayer is a model that Jesus gave you for how you can talk to God and listen to him.

VI. CALLS US TO GROW UP INTO SANCTIFICATION

Life with God is like walking on a narrow path. You will experience ups and downs, highs and lows, discouragements and victories. Jesus calls you to finish well.

4. What is the legal term that describes our standing before God as a Jesus follower? In what way does the process of sanctification change the way we live to become more like our standing before God as free and righteous? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this process?

5. When Dr. Mounce says that sanctification is the, "natural, supernatural outworking of what Jesus did for us on the cross," how is that different from a list of unacceptable or acceptable behaviors?

6. What does Dr. Mounce say is one of the challenges that you will face as a child of God? How does 1 Corinthians 10:13 help you deal with temptation when it comes? How does 1 John 1:9 and Psalm 51 help you respond when you give in to temptation?

7. When you experience suffering, pain and difficult circumstances in your life, how does Dr. Mounce encourage you to respond? How do verses like Genesis 50:20, Romans 5:3, James 1:12 and Hebrews 12:7-11 help you learn from your trials and look for ways that God will redeem painful situations and bring something good from them?

8. How does Dr. Mounce describe prayer? Why is it mysterious and sometimes difficult?

9. When the disciples of Jesus asked him how to pray, what did he tell them? In what way is this a model that you can use when you pray?

10. What is the significance of beginning with, "Our father in heaven?"

11. What is a more understandable way to translate, "hallowed be your name?" Why is it helpful for you to understand and spend time thinking about this aspect of God's character?

12. What does it mean to pray, "your kingdom come?" What are some ways that this can happen now and also in the future?

13. In the phrase, "may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," how is God's will done in heaven? When you pray this, how should it make a difference in the way you live?

14. When you say, "Give us this day our daily bread," in what ways are you putting your dependence on God? What are practical ways in which you can live responsibly today while having faith that God will provide for you?

15. What is the meaning of the phrase, “forgive us our debts (trespasses) as we forgive our debtors (those who trespass against us).” What is something in your life for which you need to ask God forgiveness? Who is someone in your life to whom you can show forgiveness and mercy?

16. In the phrase, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from (the) evil (one),” why is it important to remember James 1:13-15? How does Dr. Mounce explain the meaning of this phrase?

17. Since each of these phrases is asking God to help you think and act in specific ways, how do you practice actively listening to the voice of God’s Spirit? What are you doing to read the Bible and write down your thoughts on a regular basis? How do you use the Psalms or other passages in the Bible to help you pray about your daily circumstances?

18. In what ways does Dr. Mounce compare your spiritual life to a journey on a path? When did your journey begin? What is an encouraging memory for you? What is a difficulty you have faced? How are you encouraged in your faith today?