



## COMING UP:

Journey with **Jeff Cavins** to the **summit of Mount Sinai**, where God met with Moses and where the Word of God was written down for the first time. Then travel to the **Mount of Olives** in Jerusalem, where **Jeff** discusses how the Bible is all centered on Christ. Visit **Alexandria, Egypt**, where the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, providing the world with the first complete copy of the Old Testament.

- > Mount Sinai, Egypt
- > Mount of Olives, Jerusalem
- > The Serapeum, Alexandria, Egypt



Mount Sinai, Egypt



## Mount Sinai, Egypt

### Session One — Introduction to *The Bible Timeline Study*

This first session introduces you to *The Bible Timeline* study and explains its components. The goals for the meeting are to ensure that everyone feels welcome, has the study materials, and knows how the study works. It is shorter than later sessions, but it provides more time for fellowship. Consider providing refreshments and preparing an icebreaker activity to help everyone get to know one another.

Your first meeting might look something like this:

- Welcome everyone with refreshments, group introductions, an icebreaker, and the study materials (~15 min.)
- Present the study overview (~15 min.)
- Watch the video for Session One: Introduction to *The Bible Timeline Study* (50 min.)
- Ask questions and enjoy fellowship (~10 min.)

Pages 6–15 provide a helpful outline of the length, format, and structure of the study. Please read them when you have a chance. This first session focuses on what you will do at home to get ready for future sessions—the essential Home Preparation component of the study. This step consists mainly of reading the Bible and responding to engaging discussion questions about what you’ve read.

For this first session, after making sure everyone has a workbook, the study leader may wish to summarize the Study Overview section below, or you can read it in its entirety.

After the study overview, you will watch the Introduction video together and then have a chance to talk and ask questions before closing with a prayer.

## STUDY OVERVIEW

### *Managing Home Preparation*

*The Bible Timeline* program focuses on the fourteen books of the Bible that present the basic narrative of salvation history. The narrative unfolds across twelve time periods, color-coded in the program to help you remember them.

As you explore *The Bible Timeline* time periods over the next six months, you will learn the biblical accounts of the people, places, and events that tell the remarkable story of our Faith. These periods and their key features are illustrated on *The Bible Timeline* Chart, which is in the back pocket of your workbook.

These are the fourteen narrative books at the heart of the study:

|         |                |                      |
|---------|----------------|----------------------|
| Genesis | Judges         | Nehemiah             |
| Exodus  | 1 and 2 Samuel | 1 Maccabees          |
| Numbers | 1 and 2 Kings  | Luke                 |
| Joshua  | Ezra           | Acts of the Apostles |

Once you've discovered the narrative in these fourteen books, *all* the books of the Bible will come alive in a new way. You will begin to see where each book fits into the big picture, and you will discover unexpected riches as you continue to read and study Scripture.

### UNDERSTAND THE READING ASSIGNMENTS

Because the accounts in the fourteen narrative books are not spread evenly among the biblical time periods, the amount of reading required for each session of the study varies. For example, the events of the first time period, Early World, are told in just eleven chapters of Genesis, but the Royal Kingdom time period spans all of 1 and 2 Samuel and part of 1 Kings.

"Tips for Reading Through the Biblical Narrative" (p. 21) gives you helpful ideas for managing the reading assignments.

## TIPS FOR READING THROUGH THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

Sessions Three through Twenty-Four will take you on a journey through the fourteen narrative books of the Bible—the books that tell the overarching story of salvation history. At times, this will mean a lot of reading. Keep the following tips in mind as you read the biblical texts assigned for each session:

- Keep your eye on the goal, which is to get the gist of the story. Consider speed-reading the first time through. Try to get the big picture of the time period. The study questions will take you back to important passages, and you can always return to the text later for a closer look.
- Break up the reading over several days instead of tackling it all at once.
- Use a small notebook or journal to jot down questions and insights, which you can revisit later. This will help you move on when intriguing or complex passages slow you down.
- Another approach is to listen to the story using an audio Bible and then use a print Bible as you respond to the discussion questions. An audio version of the Bible is available on the Ascension App.
- Plan to save a thorough reading for later. When you have finished this study, we recommend reading the whole Bible while the narrative story is still fresh in your mind. One way is to use *The Bible in a Year (with Fr. Mike Schmitz)* reading plan and podcast, which will take you through the entire Bible in 365 episodes. (For more information, see [AscensionPress.com](https://www.ascensionpress.com).)

## PLAN YOUR HOME PREPARATION

We recommend allowing at least ninety minutes a week for each session's home preparation. Many people find it most rewarding to do some of the work each day instead of trying to fit it in all at once. For example, setting aside fifteen minutes a day over six days keeps each day's workload light. This also has the benefit of helping you form a daily habit of Bible reading and reflection. Over time, you may find yourself looking forward to the time you spend each day in God's Word.

## COMPLETE THE READINGS AND RESPONSES

For Sessions Three through Twenty-Four, your home preparation will consist of three parts, which we have labeled Overview, Read, and Respond. These parts are summarized here and explained in more detail in “About *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation*” on pages 11–12.

**Overview.** At the beginning of each session, you will prepare for the Bible readings by reviewing the previous session and putting the new session into the context of the broader biblical narrative. A good way to review is to revisit the responses to the last session’s discussion questions, which will remind you where that session left off. You can find these responses in the back of the workbook, starting on page 358. Then turn to the start of the new session and read the text under Overview. This provides the foundation for the Bible readings that follow.

**Read.** The second step of home preparation is to read the assigned passages from the Bible, which tell the stories of the time period you are studying. Sometimes an entire period is addressed in a single session. More often, though, a single period is covered over two or three sessions. Ideally, you will be able to read the entire biblical narrative for each period. This is given in the *Going Deeper* reading, which is optional but rewarding.

The goal of the Bible reading is to grasp the general tone and outline of the events it describes. You do not need to understand every detail. Many things will become clearer as you proceed through the study. Imagine that you are looking at the map of a country where you have never been before. For now, you just want to get the lay of the land so that you have some sense of where you’ll be going.

**Respond.** The third step of home preparation is to reflect on the discussion questions and write your responses. The first time you visit a foreign country, you will probably tour just a few important landmarks in a few major cities rather than try to see everything of interest. Similarly, on this visit to the “foreign country” of the Bible, you will focus on just a few important people and events in each time period.

The discussion questions will help you understand the readings and see how they fit into the overall narrative. Some questions will establish the main themes and events of the time period, while others will make connections to the *Catechism* or other books of the Bible to give you a more complete understanding.

As you respond to the questions, do not expect to learn all there is to know about the reading. If you do not understand a question or if new questions come to mind while you are completing your responses, write down your questions so you can ask them during your small group discussion. If you are wondering about something, others probably are too.

### **WRAP UP YOUR HOME PREPARATION**

After you have responded to the discussion questions, you will have an opportunity to think about ways to apply what you've learned. One or two Application questions ask you to think about ways the Bible texts might apply to the present day, to our society, or to you personally. After giving it some thought, you are invited to respond to God with a brief written prayer.

Finally, when you have completed a time period, a Wrap-Up section will help you fix it in your mind. Do not skip this brief but important step.

### **JOIN THE OTHERS**

When you have completed your home preparation, you will be ready to meet with your group for discussion and fellowship. There you will review your responses, questions, and insights together as a group and watch the video presentation.

What you are learning together is important. Be sure to allow everyone the opportunity to speak up and connect with what the others have to say. For more details about small group discussions, see “Small Group Meeting: Discuss, Watch, Review” on pages 12–14.

## MORE INFORMATION ON THE BIBLE AND SCRIPTURE STUDY

*The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation* focuses on reading and gaining a basic understanding of the narrative thread that runs through Scripture, helping us make sense of it and of our Faith. A more detailed presentation of the biblical narrative, which follows the time periods presented in *The Bible Timeline*, can be found in *Walking With God: A Journey Through the Bible* by Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins.

Those who want to delve deeper into such topics as biblical authorship, inspiration, principles of interpretation, differences between Protestant and Catholic versions of the Bible, and biblical terms and practices may find the following resources helpful:

- *A Catholic Guide to the Old Testament* by Jeff Cavins, Jeffrey Morrow, Biff Rocha, and Andrew Swafford (Ascension, 2023)
- *A Catholic Guide to the New Testament* by Jeff Cavins, Jeffrey Morrow, Biff Rocha, and Andrew Swafford (Ascension, 2025)
- *The Bible Compass: A Catholic's Guide to Navigating the Scriptures* by Edward Sri (Ascension, 2009)
- *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, edited by Scott Hahn (Image, 2009)

Church documents are especially rich resources for examining the scriptural foundations of our Faith:

- Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (September 30, 2010)
- Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (November 18, 1965)

## WATCH

Watch the Session One video, and write your notes and questions in the space provided on the video outline (pp. 26–29).

## REVIEW AND CLOSING

The rest of this session's meeting is for discussion and fellowship. What stood out for you in this introduction to the study? What aspect of the study are you most looking forward to? What concerns do you have? Share your thoughts and questions with your group.

Some home preparation is required for Session Two. Spend a minute or two looking it over to get an idea of how much time you'll need to complete it.

End by praying the Our Father together.



*Moses with the Tablets of the Law* by  
José Juan Camarón y Meliá

## Introduction to *The Bible Timeline Study*



- NO



### Mount of Olives, Jerusalem

See where Christ often traveled as he approached the city of Jerusalem.

## IV. The Bible Is Centered on Christ ▶

A. All Scripture finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ

B. Two senses of Scripture

1. The literal sense: what the human authors intended to convey
2. The spiritual sense
  - a. Allegorical sense: how the text relates to Jesus
  - b. Moral sense: how the text applies to our lives
  - c. Anagogical sense: how the text relates to the future and the end of time

## V. Bible Study Tools ▶

- A. *The Bible Timeline Workbook*: the anchor of the study
- B. *The Bible Timeline Chart*: a helpful “cheat sheet”
- C. *The Bible Timeline Bookmark*: a handy reference for your Bible

- D. A Catholic Bible: *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible* is recommended, a Bible you can live in and study with
- E. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: This goes hand in hand with Bible study (the color-coded Ascension Edition is recommended)

### The Serapeum, Alexandria, Egypt



It was in this city that the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language.



## VI. Some Bible Basics with Jeff Cavins

- A. Pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus has the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek, creating the Greek Septuagint (LXX) Old Testament used by the first Christians
- B. Two Testaments, Old and New
  - 1. 46 books of the Old Testament
  - 2. 27 books of the New Testament
  - 3. Various literary genres: historical, prophetic, wisdom, Gospels, epistles (letters), and apocalyptic literature

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**VII. Where We Got the Bible with Jeffrey Morrow** ▶

- A.** Canon: a rule or standard of faith
- B.** The books of the Greek Septuagint (LXX) were adopted as the Old Testament
- C.** Three criteria for determining if a New Testament book is inspired:
  - 1.** Was the book written under the authority of an apostle?
  - 2.** Is the text faithful to apostolic tradition?
  - 3.** Is the text used in the liturgical readings?
- D.** The Councils of Rome (AD 382), Hippo (AD 393), Carthage (AD 397), and the Ecumenical Council of Trent (AD 1545–1563) all affirmed the 73-book canon of the Catholic Bible

**VIII. How *The Bible Timeline* Study Works with Jeff Cavins** ▶

- A.** Home Preparation: Overview, Read, Respond
- B.** Small Group Meeting: Discuss, Watch, Review