

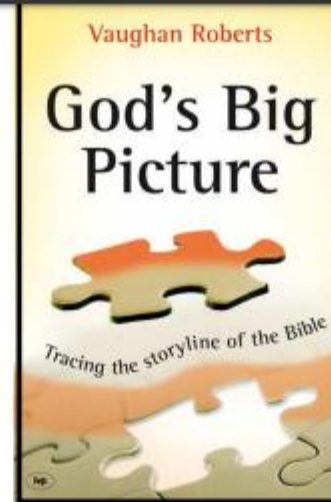
**BE AN EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD,
IMITATING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE!**

Overview of the New Testament

- 25th August - Meditating, praying, declaring and reading the Bible
- 18th August - John Stephenson - Revelation
- **11th August - Hyungjin Yoon - Other Letters**
- 4th August - Jan and Dudley - Paul's Letters to Individuals
- 28th July - John Stephenson - Paul Letters to Churches
- 21st July - Kirabo Nnanyumba - The Acts of the Apostles
- [14th July](#) - John Stephenson - The Four Gospels
- [7th July](#) - Paul Wood - The 400 Years

GENERAL LETTERS

- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude



God's Big Picture, Vaughan Roberts (2007)

Sixty six books, forty authors and written over 2000 years. Vaughan Roberts in his book *God's Big Picture* guides us how to read the Bible as one book, written by one author with one supreme subject. He uses a theme of "The Kingdom of God" to track God's unfolding plan to restore this from Genesis through to Revelation.

The book is divided into 8 chapters, each one representing a timeframe within the big picture. Chapter one for example, "The Pattern of the Kingdom" covers Genesis 1-2, describing God's perfect creation and a vision of how the world is meant to be. The writing style is clear and concise without being too technical, concepts are presented with the occasional diagram and each chapter ends with bible study questions and suggestions for further bible reading.

The prophetic period from Isaiah to Malachi was always puzzling for me, but put into the context of a divided nation, defeat and exile into Babylon, the prophesied themes of judgement and hope make sense. The author warns against squeezing the Bible into a mould rather than letting each part speak individually but I also believe that by understanding the greater narrative this book presents, I am now able to understand each part better by knowing the context behind it.

As a new Christian, this book has helped my understanding of the Bible but I also think there is something for the seasoned believer. It is definitely





Hebrews

New Testament β 58th book of the Bible (out of 66)
β 0.97% of the verses in the Bible
β It's not known who wrote this Letter.

A lot of people memorise Scripture and there are some cracking verses to commit to memory in this Book, which focuses a great deal on how Jesus fulfilled what was written about in the Old Testament. (Both the author and the readers would have used the Septuagint in their devotions.) Jesus is the Son of God and the perfect High Priest. (He both dealt with sin finally and fully and is also a merciful and empathetic intercessor.) Jesus is God's Last Word and our Messiah. The author encourages to remember these things and to put our trust fully in God - as sufferings will continue.

Chapter 11, which briefly describes many adventurers in faith, is a turning point in the book. Now the readers are challenged to remember the myriads of people that have followed God wholeheartedly in previous generations. Both the original readers and ourselves in 2019, are called to run our own race with dedication, enthusiasm and perseverance. We do this as we fix our focus on Jesus and not the spectators or other runners.

Facts: Jesus is the Messiah. The author interprets Jewish history and religious symbolism to prove this. It was written to Jewish Christians in Rome before 70AD when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.

There are several possibilities as to the author. Barnabas, Apollos and Luke have all been suggested by different scholars.

Aim to read the whole book over the next two weeks.



James

New Testament β 59th book of the Bible (out of 66)
β 0.35% of the verses in the Bible
β Written by James

Sometimes you meet people who have lots to say, but don't really seem to believe what they say because their actions suggest something else. James' letter was written to groups of Jewish converts outside of Israel. It clearly shows the characteristics of two types of people - those that follow God and those that don't. James says that it is impossible to say that you are following God and then not to act as though you are. We can't just talk about our Christian faith to others - we must live it out for all to see. Christians must also be a great example to others with regard to living in harmony with fellow believers. This book is written with an emphasis on behaviour rather than on doctrine. It is easy to understand, but much more difficult to put into action.

Facts: Jesus had several half brothers and sisters - James was one of them (Matt 13:55). He became a Follower of Jesus after His resurrection. He is mentioned quite a few times in Acts and became the leader of the Jerusalem Church. He was martyred it is thought in 62AD.

Church tradition says that James had a nickname: 'Old Camel Knees.' He is said to have had thick calluses on his knees, built up from many years of determined prayer whilst kneeling. The great wisdom that he shows in his letter was gained by spending large amounts of time with God interceding for his family, friends and Church members. That challenges me and perhaps you. What does our posture in prayer say about us?

Aim to read the whole book over the next two weeks.



1 Peter

New Testament β 60th book of the Bible (out of 66)
β 0.34% of the verses in the Bible
β Written by Peter

The Church began explosively. Jesus had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven. Now the Holy Spirit had come to dwell within those who followed God. Multitudes of people were realising the condition of their lives and accepting Jesus as their Saviour. Suddenly persecution broke out against those who followed The Way. Several Roman Emperors, as well as the Jewish authorities, ensured that oppression against Christians was widespread, vicious and continuous.

It is in this time of hostility and suffering that Peter wrote to several groups of Christians in northern Turkey in c.65AD. It is thought that one letter would have been taken via a 'courier' to these different churches. Their ordeal was real. Their anguish wasn't going to go away quickly. Peter wrote to encourage them to persevere in following Jesus.

Facts: Peter saw much of what Jesus did during the three years he followed Him around Galilee and Jerusalem. After Pentecost he was a changed man. He had become 'a rock.'

He was telling them to be revolutionary - to turn the other cheek and to go the extra mile in spite of the persecution they were facing. We too are called to act the same way. Christ's own suffering is a pattern for us to live by and His resurrection gives us hope for the future. Followers of Jesus (both then and now) are pilgrims. We should live the life of heaven whilst here on earth.

Silas (a friend and companion of Paul) helped Peter to write the letter (Greek is 'epistle'). It was perhaps written in Rome.

Aim to read the whole book over the next two weeks.

REMINDERS...

Why?

- God could have given us totally clear, very difficult to misinterpret commands
 - but he did not
- Two dangers
 - Implying a certainty (sometimes) that does not belong
 - Trying to make it say what we want it to say

How?

We must understand scripture in the
light of these two guides

- The guidance of the Holy Spirit
- The rest of scripture
 - Context is everything

FIRST, PRAY!

Before starting your study time, please ask God to help you in your study. Develop a dependency on the Holy Spirit.

- Ps 119:18; Eph 1:17-18; 1 Cor 2:6-13

If we believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible by proxy, then it is important to engage with the Holy Spirit in reading and interpreting the Word. In prayer we should seek to lay aside all of our own preconceived ideas and ask God for His guidance whilst studying.

The Epistles

Book	Author	Date	Recipients	Place of Writing
James	James	40–45	Jewish Christians in or near Palestine	Jerusalem?
Galatians	Paul	48	South Galatian churches	Syrian Antioch
1 Thessalonians	Paul	49–51	Church in Thessalonica	Corinth
2 Thessalonians	Paul	49–51	Church in Thessalonica	Corinth
1 Corinthians	Paul	53–55	Church in Corinth	Ephesus
2 Corinthians	Paul	55–56	Church in Corinth	Macedonia
Romans	Paul	57	Church in Rome	Corinth
Philippians	Paul	62	Church in Philippi	Rome
Colossians	Paul	62	Church in Colossae	Rome
Philemon	Paul	62	Philemon	Rome
Ephesians	Paul	62	Churches in Asia Minor (circular letter?)	Rome
1 Timothy	Paul	62–64	Timothy	Macedonia?
Titus	Paul	62–64	Titus	Nicopolis
1 Peter	Peter	62–63	Churches in Roman provinces in Asia Minor	Rome
2 Peter	Peter	64–67	Churches in Roman provinces in Asia Minor?	Rome
2 Timothy	Paul	64–67	Timothy	Rome
Jude	Jude	Mid–60s	Jewish Christians in Egypt? Asia Minor? Antioch?	Unknown
Hebrews	Unknown	60–70	Jewish Christians in Rome or in or near Palestine	Unknown
1 John	John	85–95	Churches near Ephesus?	Ephesus
2 John	John	85–95	Church or churches near Ephesus	Ephesus
3 John	John	85–95	Gaius	Ephesus

JAMES

- James, Jesus' brother (Gal. 1:19), wrote this letter
- May have been the first NT book to be written
- To whom: the “twelve tribes” (1:1), meaning Jewish Christians, or the church in a symbolic sense – both Jewish and Gentile believers
- Purpose: remind Christians how to live, e.g. perseverance, true faith, controlling one's tongue, submitting to God's will, having patience
- Theological context:
- To the NT Jewish believer, the idea of Jesus being God seemed ludicrous. The development of a Trinitarian theology progressed gradually.

I PETER

- Peter, the apostle, wrote this letter
- To whom: Believers/churches scattered through the regions of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey
- Purpose: Peter wrote to encourage Christians who were bewildered because they were persecuted, offering hope and meaning in the midst of their suffering
- Background: Churches facing persecution

2 PETER

- Purpose: Peter wrote to warn believers about false teachers who had invaded the Christian community. To remind them of 'these qualities' that provided the basis for their faith (1:12-13), that even after his departure they will recall 'these things/qualities'.
- Background: Churches facing persecution & heresy. Christians in Asia Minor were in danger of being led astray by false teachers

JUDE

- Jude, brother of James, wrote this letter
- To whom: perhaps (?) to Jewish Christians
- Purpose: Church/es faced internal problem – those who claimed to be Christians but spread false and filthy ideas. Like 2 Peter, Jude wrote to urge believers to ‘contend for the faith’ (v. 3)
- Background: False teaching in the church by Christian imposters assuming roles of leadership who were arrogant and reasoned incorrectly, teaching that it didn’t really matter how people lived, i.e. sin, obedience, eschatology meant nothing to them

JOHN 15:19-20

We are *in* the world, but not *of*
the world

JOHN 3:16

For God so loved **the world**
He gave His **one and only Son**,
that **whoever** believes in **Him**
Shall not perish but have eternal
life

2 JOHN

- The apostle John wrote this letter, who also wrote the Gospel of John
- To whom: To a group of churches near Ephesus (western half of modern day Turkey)
- Purpose: To instruct believers when to 'close the door'
- Background: Ephesus – meeting pot of cultures and religions

FEELING & COMPROMISE

- E.g. worldly passions and desires (1 Jn 1:15-17)
- E.g. 1 Jn 1:6, 2:4

**How would you describe
the society we live in in 2019?**

Selfish!

Tolerant!

Obsessed!



FAITH & TRUTH

3 JOHN

- The apostle John wrote this letter, who also wrote the Gospel of John
- To whom: To his friend, Gaius
- Purpose: To commend his faithful support of true workers. To counter the actions of a certain leader named Demetrius. To instruct believers when to 'open the door'

1. We are *in* the world,
2. We are not *of* the world

I JOHN

- The apostle John wrote this letter, who also wrote the Gospel of John
- To whom: To a group of churches near Ephesus (western half of modern day Turkey)
- Purpose: To encourage and strengthen the believers
- Theological context: *Christianity* was unusual in its
 - Exclusive claims about Jesus
 - Missionary zeal
 - Effort to connect ethics and life

HEBREWS

- Possible authors: Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Luke
- To whom: probably to Jewish Diaspora (who are already, or not yet, Christians)
- Purpose: To warn Christians of the danger of apostasy, of abandoning Christ. Or to Jews, hesitating between decision for Christ (going on) and returning to their old ways

SOME GOSPEL GEMS

- He always lives to make intercession (*Hebrews 7:25*)
- The Lord...is longsuffering toward us (*2 Peter 3:9*)
- If any of you lacks wisdom...ask of God (*James 1:5*)
- The testing of your faith produces patience (*James 1:3*)
- The worlds were framed by the Word of God (*Hebrews 11:3*)
- He who promised is faithful (*Hebrews 10:23*)
- Redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ (*1 Peter 1:18,19*)