



*ADVENTURING  
THROUGH THE  
BIBLE*



## Discovery House Publishers

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*ADVENTURING  
THROUGH THE  
BIBLE*

*A Comprehensive Guide  
TO THE ENTIRE BIBLE*

*Ray C. Stedman*  
*with James D. Denney*

*Adventuring through the Bible*  
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## Key to Icons

*Adventuring through the Bible* is designed to be an easy-to-use guide to every book of the Bible. The icons shown here are used throughout the book to help you find key themes, personalities, verses, and applications.



**Theme** Identify the important ideas in all sixty-six books of the Bible.



**Personality** Find a closeup view of key people.



**Verse** Discover the Scripture verse or passage that summarizes and explains, brings hope and comfort.



**Application** Learn how to turn biblical principles into life-changing reality.

*PART One*

*A Panorama  
of the  
SCRIPTURES*





# The Goal of God's Word

**A**nonbeliever once asked a Christian, “Will your God give me a hundred dollars?”

The Christian's reply: “He will if you know Him well enough.”

Of course, the riches that God has already made available to us are the riches of His kingdom, the riches of His Word, the riches of His eternal life in a never-ending relationship with Him. But God will indeed give anyone hundreds, thousands, and even millions of dollars—if it serves His purpose and if that person knows Him well enough.

George Müller, as one example among thousands, was a well-known man of prayer and the founder of the world-famous Bristol Orphanages in England. Müller knew God so well that God gave him millions of dollars—money which that good and faithful servant wisely invested in young lives and in building the kingdom of God.

Knowing God is the key. He wants to be your friend. He wants to pour out the riches of heaven upon your life—“good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over,” as Luke 6:38 tells us. But you must get to know Him. And the way you get to know Him is through the pages of Scripture, as interpreted to us by the Holy Spirit.

Notice that all-important linkage: the Scriptures *and* the Spirit—you can't separate the two. The Bible without the Spirit leads to dullness, boredom, and dead, institutional Christianity. The Spirit without the Bible leads to fanaticism and wildfire. We need both the Spirit *and* the Word.

Knowing God is the key, and the way you get to know Him is through the pages of Scripture, as interpreted to us by the Holy Spirit

## ADVENTURING THROUGH THE BIBLE

The importance of  
the *entire* Bible

Moreover, we need the *entire* Bible. For example, the story of humanity before the Fall is necessary that we might know what God made the human race to be and that we might understand the kind of relationship God had in mind when He created the first man and the first woman. The pure, pristine relationship that existed before sin entered the world is precisely the kind of relationship He wants to restore us to now!

We also need to know the lives of the men and women of faith throughout the Bible in order to see how God works in specific situations. What an encouragement these lives are to us! As we read these stories, we see that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Ruth, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Mary, Peter, Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, John, and all the others went through the same experiences we do—and they drew upon the same supernatural strength and power that is available to us! We learn that God placed these people in the crossroads of their own times, recording their actions and reactions, so that we might see God’s purpose in our own time and so that our actions and reactions might be guided by the lessons of those who went before us. Viewed in this way, the Bible becomes not merely a “religious book,” but a practical, relevant guidebook for daily living!

The history and  
people of the Bible

The Prophets

We need to understand the Prophets in order to see how God is working through human history, from beginning to end. As we study what Paul calls “God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began” (1 Cor. 2:7), we begin to know God’s thoughts, which are not our thoughts, and God’s ways, which are far higher than our ways. As our Lord put it, “You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Matt. 11:25).

The Gospels

We need to know the Gospels in order to see the perfect life of Jesus Christ—His unique wisdom, His divine power, His human pain, His extraordinary personality, His unparalleled character, and His extravagant love for people. In the Scriptures, we discover the many-faceted richness and depth in the human being who was uniquely the Son of God and the Son of Man.

The Epistles

We need to know the Epistles in order to apply the great truths we learn in the Gospels. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writers of the New Testament letters have translated His truths into principles for the most practical daily situations.

Revelation

Finally, we need to know the book of Revelation, because this world is approaching the hour of crisis. As individuals and as a believing community, we need the assurance that this present darkness shall pass, that the futility and the horrors will be ended, that our bondage will cease, and that Jesus Christ will be manifested in this universe, and He shall reign.

The story of how the Bible came into being is the fascinating story of a miracle of God. In 2 Peter 1:21, the apostle Peter tells us that the Bible was written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit:

*Prophesy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The Bible clearly transcends all human documents; it is far greater than anything human beings could produce. Despite the tremendous diversity of human authorship and the vast span of time over which it was written, this Book has one message, tells one story, moves to one point, and directs our attention to one Person. It would simply be impossible to take at random any collection of books from literature, put them together under one cover, and have any remotely related theme develop. Such a collection is possible only if behind its many human authors there is one transcendent Author. As Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:16–17):

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The Bible is not only the story of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. It is also the story of your life and of my life, as well as the story of our race. The Bible explains what we are and how we came to be this way. It illuminates the human condition. It instructs us, exhorts us, admonishes us, corrects us, strengthens us, and teaches us. In this book, God has incorporated all the truths we need to know about ourselves.

How did ordinary human beings—some from the most common callings of life—capture the thoughts and attitudes of God? How did the Holy Spirit lead them in recording the Word of God rather than the mere opinions of human beings? It is a miracle beyond our understanding.

But this we do know: The more we study the truth of the Bible, the more thrilling and compelling it becomes. Like a scientist with a passion for uncovering the secrets of the universe, I am captivated by an intense drive to unfold the wonders of God's Word. After decades of study, I have found that increasing familiarity with this book has only caused it to grow more fascinating, more mysterious, more profound, and more marvelous in its implications and applications to my life.

This book has survived countless attempts to suppress it and destroy it. It has been preserved and defended for us through the centuries in ways that can only be called providential. Again and again its pages have

**GENESIS  
THROUGH  
REVELATION**

**God's eternal  
purpose in  
our lives**



The more we study the truth of the Bible, the more thrilling and compelling it becomes

**ADVENTURING  
THROUGH THE  
BIBLE**

What does God want to accomplish by giving us this Book and by sending the Holy Spirit to interpret it and make it real in our lives?

been stained by the blood, sweat, and tears of martyrs who have spent their very lives to save this book for later generations.

Why has this book been so important to God and His people? What is the Bible's ultimate purpose? What does God want to accomplish by giving us this Book and by sending the Holy Spirit to interpret it and make it real in our lives? The Bible itself gives us the answer. In Ephesians 1:9–12, one of God's human writers, the apostle Paul, makes this amazing Spirit-inspired statement about God's revelation to us in Scripture:

*He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.*

Astounding! The Creator of the universe, the Lord of space and time, the great starsmith who has fashioned a billion galaxies and thousands of billions of stars, has a purpose for your life and mine, and He has unveiled that purpose in His Word, the Bible! In Ephesians 3:8–12, Paul extends this soul-stirring thought:

*Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

Probably the clearest declaration of God's eternal purpose for our lives is found in Ephesians 4:11–13, where Paul states that the Lord Jesus, having finished His work on earth through the cross and the resurrection, ascended to heaven and gave gifts to human beings:

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

God's purpose:  
to bring us to  
maturity. God  
wants us to become  
mature by becoming  
*like Christ*

**The human  
ideal**

*That* is God's purpose: to bring us to maturity. God wants us to become mature by becoming *like Christ*. All that God has done in human history, all of His works recorded in Scripture, and the entire universe in its physical and moral dimensions have occurred so that you and I might become mature in Jesus Christ. God's purpose for the human race is not some vague, distant, far-off, impersonal goal; it is here, it is now, it is personal, it is clear, and it is profoundly intertwined with our everyday lives. Everything that exists has been brought into being so that you and I might fulfill God's amazing potential and possibilities for us.

And the measure of that humanity is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ.

I used to meet regularly with five high-school-age men. On one occasion I asked them, "Fellows, what is your image of a real he-man?"

"A guy who's really pumped up," said one. "A guy with a lot of muscles."

I knew of one athlete at this young man's school, a fellow with lots of rippling muscles on his body—plus a fair amount of muscle between his ears! "Oh," I said, "you mean like So-and-so?"

Startled, this young man said, "No, of course not! He spends a lot of time on the weight machine, and he has arms and legs like tree trunks—but he's not much of a man."

"Okay," I said, "then I guess muscles aren't a very reliable standard of manhood. So what is it? What do the rest of you think it takes to be a man? Let's make a list."

They all thought some more, then another replied, "Well, I think a real he-man is a guy with guts."

So we wrote down *courage* on our list. The young men did some more thinking and came up with some additional qualities that we added to our list: *consideration, kindness, integrity, purpose*, and so on. Soon, we had quite a long list.

Finally, I said, "You know, fellows, this is amazing! Think of it! You could go anywhere in the world and ask any man, and it wouldn't matter whether he was rich or poor, high or low, black or white or any shade in between. Ask him, 'What does it mean to be a man?' and you would get the same answers you have given on this list! Because all men everywhere want to be men. All women want to be women. The ideal they hold in their hearts is largely the same. There may be small variations in detail but not in the general form. The virtues we have listed are admired everywhere."

The young men nodded thoughtfully, and I continued, "Now, can you name one person who has fulfilled this list of ideals? How about you? Are you fulfilling these ideals?"

## ADVENTURING THROUGH THE BIBLE

There are two steps toward becoming mature, “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13)

### 1. Faith

### 2. Knowledge

“I think I make it about thirty percent of the time,” said one.

“No way!” said another. “You wouldn’t even make it five percent—and neither do I!”

“Do you know anybody who has accomplished these ideals a hundred percent of the time?” I asked.

Silence and blank expressions. Suddenly, their faces lit up and they said, “Of course! Jesus!”

And they were right. Jesus is God’s perfect man, the most flawless and complete expression of manhood and humanity ever to walk the face of the earth.

That is God’s ideal for our lives! That is what Ephesians 4:13 tells us: God has planned for us to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” The steps toward that goal are twofold.

The first step that brings us to this goal is found in the phrase “until we all reach unity in the faith” (Eph. 4:13). *Faith* is the operative word. Faith is always the way by which we actually experience all that God has made available.

The second step that brings us to this goal is “the knowledge of the Son of God”—the *accurate* and *full* knowledge of the Son of God. We cannot achieve maturity in Christ as God intended if we don’t know His Son. By knowledge, God does not only mean biblical information, but *personal experience* of Jesus Christ. It is faith, the first step, that leads to knowledge, the second step.

The apostle is careful to make clear that it isn’t just my faith or your faith but *our* faith—what he calls “*unity* in the faith”—that brings us to this knowledge. In Ephesians 3, Paul prays that we may come to know with all the saints how high and broad and long and deep is the love of Christ. This means that unless you are in touch with other saints you can’t possibly develop as you ought to as a Christian. It is impossible to move to maturity unless we are ready to share truth with each other. We need each other in the body of Christ, and as we fellowship together, share together, worship together, and study God’s Word together, we *grow together* in maturity and in the experiential knowledge of the Son of God.

We will investigate this Book, the Bible, together to learn what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As we shall see, the Bible is not merely a collection of sixty-six books written by more than forty human authors over a span of fifteen centuries. It is a single book with a unified theme, a coherent message, and an astonishing relevance to our everyday lives here at the end of the twentieth century.

This one-volume “divine library” is a book of wonderful variety. Its beautiful love stories reflect the tenderest and most delicate of human passions. Its stories of political intrigue and maneuvering rival anything we might read about in today’s headlines. Its stories of violence and gore

almost make the blood run cold. Its poetic passages soar to the very heights of artistic and emotional expression. It has narratives of intense human drama. Its strange and cryptic passages filled with weird symbols and allegories are difficult to penetrate and comprehend.

Yet one subject dominates and permeates this book: Jesus Christ—Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. We first meet Him as one of the voices at Creation who says, “Let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26). His coming is symbolized and foretold throughout the span of the Old Testament. His life is detailed in quadruplicate through the Gospels, and His character is instilled in us throughout the New Testament epistles. Finally, His kingdom is pictured for us and His second coming is described in the book of Revelation: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is a book about Jesus Christ. In symbol, in story, in marvelous prophetic vision, in simple narrative account, in history, in poetry, in every aspect and dimension of the book, the focus is always on God’s Son. He is the secret, the thesis, the unifying thread of the book. In learning about Him, we learn God’s plan and pattern for our own lives. We understand our problems and find the solution to those problems reflected in Him. We understand our needs and find the satisfaction of our needs in Him.

One of the most transforming truths found in this book is the truth Jesus spoke in John 10:10, where He said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” This is not just “good news,” it is *great* news! Jesus wants us to know that not only are our sins forgiven by His shed blood, not only are we as Christians on our way to heaven, but we can experience fulfillment, joy, peace, and satisfaction, right here and right now! We don’t have to merely struggle through this life making the best of a bad situation, muddling through, falling and failing, doubting and despairing, discouraged and defeated, barely hanging on through life until we finally cross over to the other side and find the release we crave. That’s not good news!

The good news God reveals to us in this book is that we don’t have to wait until eternity to find eternal life. The wonderful, abundant, eternal life that burned so brightly within Jesus is in our reach right now! We can have what He had, we can possess what He is, right here, right now! As Ian Thomas once said, “We must have what He is in order to be what He was.” Once we attain that ideal and become mature in our Christlikeness, then God’s purpose for our lives will be fulfilled.

Think of it! Who was this man Jesus? He was the perfect human being. He was God’s ideal for humanity. For thirty-three years He lived among us on this pain-wracked, sin-drenched planet, in the very circumstances and under the same pressures we face every day of our

## GENESIS THROUGH REVELATION

One subject dominates and permeates this Book: Jesus Christ—Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. In learning about Him, we learn God’s plan and pattern for our own lives

## The good news



lives. It was under these adverse circumstances that the godly perfection of His character shone with such brilliance and power.

“But,” you may say, “I can’t do that! I can’t become what He was! I can’t live a perfect life like the one He lived.”

Of course not. But then, in the last analysis, it doesn’t really depend on us. We will be what Jesus was when we allow Him to come live His life again through us, when—by simple faith—we take Him at His Word. If we dare to believe Him, moment by moment and day by day, we can allow Him to be what He is in us and through us. This is the good news!

But to do this, we need the Word of God’s revelation. We don’t come to the knowledge of the Son of God without a learning process, without a conscious commitment to an ever-increasing understanding of His truth. That is why we are adventuring together through this amazing Book.

What is the “right” way to look at the world?

Most of the time, we see the world with the naked eye. Physicists, however, use expensive particle accelerators to see the world one atom or one electron at a time. Astronauts go out into orbit and look down on the world from a distance, seeing the entire sphere of the world with its continents, seas, and swirling weather patterns. Who has the “correct” view of the world: the physicist, the astronaut, or the naked-eye observer?

Answer: They all do. Each sees the world at a different scale, from a different perspective; each view is valid for its own purpose and in its own way.

Now consider this: What is the “right” way to look at the Bible? Should it be examined minutely, phrase by phrase and verse by verse? Or is a book study—an exhaustive examination of Nehemiah or Ephesians, for example—the right way? Or should we step back and take a wider, more panoramic view, the astronaut’s view, surveying the great themes and historical flow of the Bible as if from orbit?

Answer: Each method is equally valid, each offers a different perspective, each serves a different purpose. Our purpose in *Adventuring through the Bible* is to take the wide-angle perspective, the aerial view of the Scriptures. Our survey of the Bible is divided into nine parts:

### **Part One: A Panorama of the Scriptures**

An overview of the Bible, Genesis through Revelation

### **Part Two: Five Steps to Maturity**

The books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy

**Part Three: The Message of History**  
Applying the historical books, Joshua through Esther

**Part Four: Music to Live By**  
Old Testament poetry, Job through the Song of Songs

**Part Five: The Promises of God**  
The prophetic books, Isaiah through Malachi

**Part Six: Jesus: The Focus of Both Testaments**  
Jesus and His Church, Matthew through Acts

**Part Seven: Letters from the Lord**  
Letters to the church, Romans through Philemon

**Part Eight: Keeping the Faith**  
All about faith, Hebrews through Jude

**Part Nine: Signs of the Times**  
The end—and a new beginning, Revelation

With this as our outline, we will journey through all sixty-six books of the Bible, examining its great themes and following the threads of those themes from their beginnings in Genesis to their triumphant conclusion in Revelation. We will probe the grand design of God's revealed Word and discover how each part of the Bible fits together with every other part. We will see the dynamic flow of God's profound revelation to humanity and detect the hand of God's unifying divine authorship behind each book and each human writer.

I encourage you to read through these books of the Bible as we go along. This book is not a substitute for Bible study. In fact, I would rather that you take this book and throw it on a bonfire than use it as a substitute for actually reading and studying God's Word! This book is intended to be opened alongside of, not in place of, the Scriptures.

So join me in the adventure of a lifetime, an adventure of grand discoveries and exciting breakthroughs. Join me as we adventure together through the greatest book of all time!

*An overview of  
Adventuring  
through the  
Bible*

