The Ten Capsule

The Ten Capsule is a program that guides you through the main points of the Bible. If you have little or no earlier experience with the Bible, [click here](http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/bible-faqs/what-is-the-bible/) for an explanation of what the Bible is and why it is important. In other words, it gives a “capsule view” of the Bible’s message. You will read ten sections of the Bible and an interpretation of the passage in each “capsule” which is a set of lessons. You can always work through the capsules on your own time.

Before you begin, I recommend you have a physical Bible with you or that you can access a Bible website like [BibleGateway](https://www.biblegateway.com/). Certain capsules will have the Bible excerpt on the webpage. In that case, the verses may be in many different versions due to copyright requirements. I recommend the NIV or NIrV for readability.

My disclaimer is this: The Bible is written by God and every chapter, verse, word, and letter is important. These capsules could never explain every point in the Bible. These capsules help you to understand the Bible’s main purpose: to tell the world about how God deeply loves us.

# Capsule 3: Twenty Chapters – Covers the history of the Ancient Israelites from Abraham to Nehemiah

Welcome to the third capsule! You should have a basic knowledge of the Bible – including Creation, the Fall, the 10 Commandments, Jesus, and the New Heaven and Earth – before you begin this capsule. This capsule will need you to read twenty chapters of the Bible, and I will help you understand the passage through a brief explanation. Thousands of years ago, God chose a certain man named Abraham and called Abraham to follow God. God promised Abraham fertile land and a great nation from his offspring; God would reveal Himself to the world and save everyone from their sins though that nation. However, the nation would go through many difficulties in their relationship with God.

### Genesis 12 + 22

[Go to Genesis 12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+12&version=NIV)

#### Genesis 12

Abram is living the high life. He is surrounded by family, wealth, and luxury. He is safe and comfortable at age 75. Anyone would need a radical reason to abandon that to wander through the wilderness. God appeared to Abram and promised him everything he could want: prime land, fame, and a magnificent nation from His children. Abram and his wife did lack one thing: children. This had weighty consequences for him in ancient times. Having a child would raise his social status and keep his legacy alive. Abram now must choose to live an easy, self-centered life or be a blessing to the whole earth. In a comparable way, God offers us a choice between following Him into *eternal life* or abandoning Him for our own ways in this life.

Abram does follow God, but this is no easy feat. Since having a baby at 75 is miraculous, Abram must trust God to deliver on His promises. God explains that Abram’s descendants would take over the land of Canaan in the modern-day Middle East. The people in Canaan at that time were evil and dishonored God, so He was turning a corrupt place into His holy, or set apart, land. Abram devotes himself to God, giving Him worship and thanks. But when a famine forces Abram to go to Egypt to get food, he does not trust in God. Fearing for His life, he lies and ignores God’s promises. Yet, God does not give up on Abram; He continues to provide for Abram. These back-to-back events show God’s mercy – that is, not giving us the punishment we deserve – and foreshadows what will happen with both the nation God has promised and all Christians: We all go through times when we are devoted to God and when we ignore God, but He stays with us and gives us mercy.

[Go to Genesis 22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gen+22&version=NIV)

#### Genesis 22

It was twenty-five years before the son God promised to Abram/Abraham arrived. Abraham endured long journeys, having to leave a family member, failures to trust God, and a name change by God Himself. Now, Isaac – Abraham’s son – is growing up, and God has a final test for Abraham. Finally, Abraham seems to have learned that God’s solution is the perfect one. His faith – confident trust in what cannot be seen – has been fully developed by tough times and seeking God. This test also proves Isaac’s faith as he *willingly and knowingly* allows Abraham to follow God’s plan. As a teenager, he would have known what was going on but trusted his father and God to have his best interests in mind. This lays the foundation for our salvation. Redemption (being accepted by God again) needs sacrifice and faith. God is willing to offer a substitute as He does in this story. Abraham’s faith has rewards: God blesses Abraham with a promise of countless offspring and considers Abraham to be an example of solid faith. Our faith allows us to have eternal life in paradise. Abraham and Isaac’s faith mirror the greater sacrifice of God and Jesus. Both fathers send their only son to be sacrificed, both sons willingly go, and God gives a substitute in both instances. We should be the sacrifice, just like Isaac, but God provides a different option.

**Further Reading:** Hebrews 11 – A list of notable examples of faith, including Abraham

### Exodus 11 + 12

[Go to Exodus 11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ex+11&version=NIV)

#### Exodus 11

Radical events are forming the promised nation. Isaac had two children, but only one – Jacob/Israel – followed God and became the head of the promised nation. Jacob’s twelve sons are the twelve tribes of Israel. Because of a famine, they all live and prosper in Egypt for 400 years, growing to around two million people! Their size is seen as a threat to the great nation of (ancient) Egypt. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, decides to enslave and oppress the Israelites to stop their growth, but God raises up a leader named Moses who demands that Pharaoh let the Israelites leave Egypt and establish an independent nation. Pharaoh refuses to give up the slaves, so God sends a little help. A series of ten plagues punish Egypt for hindering God’s people and ignoring the One, True God. Exodus 11 records the last, worst plague.

There are two main reasons that God sent the plagues on Egypt: First, God was showing His power to the Israelites and the Egyptians. He is convincing everyone that He is in total control. If the people of Israel doubt God, why would they follow Him out of Egypt? If the people of Egypt doubt God, why would they let their slaves go free? God swiftly answers these doubts with the ten plagues. Second, God is showing that He is the only real God. Egypt believes in their own set of false gods. The plagues are a direct attack on the gods that Egyptians worship. The God who chose the Israelites is God over everything and has no equal. God will not allow His image to be mocked and ignored. He punishes the Egyptians through death and plunder. All the firstborn children in Egypt die, and the Egyptians give all their valuables away to the Israelites in response to God’s power and influence. Through these punishments, God also provides freedom and resources for the Israelites. The people of Canaan also worship false gods. God will force the evil people of Canaan out of their home and give the land to the Israelites.

[Go to Exodus 12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ex+12&version=NIV)

#### Exodus 12

God is rescuing the Israelites and wants all Israelites present and future to remember His deliverance. Therefore, He creates the holiday of Passover, in which all Jews relive these events through vivid imagery. The cerimony shows how quickly the Israelites had to leave. The Jews eat with their shoes on, are ready to leave, keep no leftovers, and use the fastest ways to cook food. Celebration of the Passover demands the sacrifice of a perfect lamb with no broken bones in obedience to God. Even the bitter herbs remind the Israelites to never forget their bitter life of slavery before God’s deliverance.

About 15 centuries later, Jesus would die during the Passover celebration. God designed Passover to mirror Jesus’s death and support his identity as the Messiah. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that saves us from eternal death. Jesus died more quickly than normal and did not have his bones broken (John 19:33) which was normally done. Finally, Jesus rescues us from the bitterness of hell and delivers us to new life in Heaven. Those outside the Jewish family line could accept Passover and all the Jewish traditions and receive God's promises for the Israelites. God gave outsiders the opportunity to devote their lives to Him and be saved through His promises for the Israelites. God gave plenty of signs to the world that the Jews promised of deliverance from sin’s problems – in other words, salvation. At the same time, He showed that anyone could accept that salvation as their own by following the True God. Jesus’s sacrifice made a way for anyone to be saved by simply trusting Him as God.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### Leviticus 26

[Go to Leviticus 26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev+26&version=NIV)

The Promised Nation is born, and presents them with a choice. They can follow Him and gain blessings of abundance, safety, peace, and a relationship with God, making their world very much like the Garden of Eden in Gen 1 and 2. If they turn away from God, they will be vulnerable to anxiety, fear, and invasion. At that point, they are given the choice to turn back to God and get a second chance. If they continue to disobey, famine and drought will come upon them. The third wave will bring animal attacks and severe shortage of food, and the fourth wave will see the Israelites oppressed, controlled by foreigners, consumed by chaos, resorting to cannibalism, and with their cities destroyed. No matter how much the Israelites sin and disobey, God is still willing to restore the blessings if the nation turns back to Him. In any case, God may scatter the Israelites, but will never totally destroy them.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### Joshua 11 & Judges 1

[Go to Joshua 11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+11&version=NIV)

#### Joshua 11

We all love the underdog. Countless stories are based on the success of some person who had no hope. God loves that, too. Israel, who is puny and irrelevant, is about to conquer all the great nations of Canaan. Nobody would predict that a throng of wandering people would destroy such grand armies. They are right about Israel, but wrong about God. A sizable army would quickly eliminate the Israelites if Israel were fighting alone. God is the driving force that allows them to win against horrible odds. God will use Israel the underdog to punish the nations of Canaan for their disgusting lack of morals. Soon, Israel destroys the huge army that had been heavily favored. Finally, God’s people have arrived in the land which God promised to give them. He is the only one responsible for the victory. Canaan is His gift to Israel.

[Go to Judges 1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+1&version=NIV)

#### Judges 1

Israel is doing well. God has used His power to clear the way for His people to enter Canaan and prosper. The Israelites decide to quit while their ahead and take the remaining fearful people in a forced labor. It sounds like a sensible plan, but God commanded the Israelites to wipe out all the people who did not worship Him. The entire book of Judges tells how the natives tempt the Israelites to turn away from God. Unfortunately, they succeed in making the Israelites give up their whole belief system. “Everyone did as they saw fit.” Judges delivers this poignant assessment twice (17:6 and 21:25) and records how this causes everything in Israel to fall apart. The blessings of the promise are lost, and Israel is plunged into a dark time.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### 1 Samuel 10, 15

[Go to 1 Samuel 10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Sam+10&version=NIV)

#### 1 Samuel 10

Since everything has fallen apart, the people want a king. God wanted Israel to be different with Him as their only ruler. No human could be perfect like God is, and an imperfect king would lead to an imperfect country. Nevertheless, God is willing to use a monarchy for His plan. He had known that Israel would eventually want a king and had planned to give them one [INSERT DEUT. REF]. God has been using Samuel to lead Israel since the people do not want to communicate directly with God. A boy named Saul is looking for lost donkeys, and goes to see Samuel for help. Saul is naturally fit to be king since he is tall, imposing, and strong. God decides that Saul should be the first king, so Samuel blesses Saul. God’s Spirit enters Saul and makes him a different person, so Saul suddenly becomes able to prophesy. In fact, anybody who has God’s Spirit in them becomes a new person. Samuel writes out God’s conditions for the king’s authority under God. This acts as a constitution (it limits the king’s power) and makes it clear that God is the true ruler.

[Go to 1 Samuel 15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Sam+15&version=NIV)

#### 1 Samuel 15

God intends to punish the Amalekites for their evil. Israel will destroy the whole nation by God’s command and might just like Joshua’s military campaigns. Saul is leading the military, and God gives Saul strict instructions. Israel is victorious, but Saul does not completely follow God’s instructions. God cannot have a leader who compromises instructions since the people of Israel follow the king. God rejects and revokes the kingship of Saul. Due to Saul’s continued failures, the nation of Israel becomes dominated by the military of the Philistines.

God did not choose the wrong person to be king. He is omniscient, which means He knows everything, and makes the perfect choice in all situations. His plan is the best one overall, even when it seems like He was dead wrong. The tragedy of King Saul makes it obvious that – when we are making decisions – the obvious choice is not always the right choice. God created us the way we are even though He knew we were going to fail and would need Him to save us. He is God, and His creation shows His glory and greatness. We are in no position to accuse God of being wrong. However, when things go wrong, God is willing to listen to our questions and will answer them if He chooses to do so.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### 1 Samuel 16, 17

[Go to 1 Samuel 16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Sam+16&version=NIV)

#### 1 Samuel 16

Because Saul proved to be an ungodly king, a new king will replace Saul. Samuel will select the king that God wants. You will notice that God chooses differently than a human would. He does not care about how you look outside. He cares if you want to have a relationship with Him. Saul may have been intimidating, but David sought God and humbled himself to focus on the ultimate King. David’s own family excluded him, but God pursued the one who stays true to Him. Again, we see God’s spirit changing and blessing David when it enters him. Now, God allows an evil spirit to torment Saul as punishment. God’s gifts put David in a position where the king and kingdom favor David. The work of God’s Spirit always carries out His plan.

[Go to 1 Samuel 17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Sam+17&version=NIV)

#### 1 Samuel 17

The Philistines are at war with Israel. Saul is still the official king but is trying to rule without God. This causes a problem since Israel is reliant on God to survive. Apart from God, they cannot protect themselves. The Philistines do not trust God but have an intimidating weapon named Goliath. Goliath is terrifying. He is over nine feet tall, has top-of-the-line equipment, and can strike fear with his jeering words. Goliath is already champion since nobody is willing to fight him. With fear as his weapon, he immobilizes the Israelite army and their inadequate leader. All seems hopeless until David. God has promised Israel protection if they trust God and David that he will live to be king. David even has seen God’s protection when David fights wild animals to save his sheep. Goliath has mocked God, and God will show up again to prove His mighty presence.

God has a perfect plan. If you just trust Him, you can live with joy, peace, and confidence. David was seen as just another untalented teenager. He was a lowly shepherd, yet God made David influential, a warrior, and the ruler of the most important nation in ancient history. Soon, Saul will die in battle, and David will take His place.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### 2 Kings 17, 25

[Go to 2 Kings 17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+17&version=NIV)

#### 2 Kings 17

David ended up being an excellent king over the entire nation of Israel. He trusted God, so the Israelites followed God. Even when he made huge mistakes, he came back to God and humbly asked for forgiveness, which God gave David. God blessed David’s reign and made it a great time to be an Israelite. After David ruled his son Solomon, who was noble enough to turn down worldly blessings from God for wisdom. But Solomon eventually turned back on that character and ignored God. The consequences were civil war and a divided nation. The whole nation of Israel split into two countries. The northern kingdom was named Israel. The southern kingdom was named Judah. This is obnoxiously confusing. When reading the Bible, you should use context to decide if ‘Israel’ refers to the people group (including both the kingdom Israel and the kingdom Judah, based on family lines) or the kingdom (just the kingdom Israel, based on political boundaries). You also have to determine if ‘Judah’ refers to the family line of Jacob’s fourth son – named Judah – or to the kingdom of Judah

The kingdom of Israel was ruled by bad kings for its entire history. The kings’ leadership led the people to break God’s commandments and worship false gods. The people group of Israel had only been successful because God took a tiny group and made it great. Without God, that large group was back to being tiny. When the tiny nation went up against a big nation, the tiny nation would be conquered. So, when the kingdom of Israel turned away from God, they were doomed. Assyria destroyed the kingdom as God’s punishment for their sins. God’s people are now in exile, and foreigners are in most of the Promised Land. All that is left of the Promised Nation is the kingdom of Judah.

[Go to 2 Kings 25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+25&version=NIV)

#### 2 Kings 25

Judah had a mix of good and bad kings. (i.e. Some followed God, many did not.) They watched the kingdom of Israel be punished, yet continued to do evil. In the end, Babylon would deliver God’s punishment on Judah. By no means were Assyria or Babylon chosen by God, holy, or better than Israel. They did not even worship God, but He used those nations to keep His plan going. The whole Jewish people are now in exile – living with and under the control of foreign powers. Their cities are plundered and burned. The consequences of not following God are always horrible. You understand what it was for Israel. For us, they are worse: eternal separation from God which means all things good are taken out of your life.

God, however, does not break His promises. Some Jews still follow God during the exile as we will see in Daniel. From this faithful remenant, that is, small group following God, He will restore Israel. Instead of dying off, the nation of Israel will be reformed. They will come back as a group devoted to God’s commands and will never turn away from God. They will, however, develop a different problem. Instead of focusing on God, they begin to focus only on the Law, missing its true purpose of revealing Him. Consequently, Israel will not escape domination by other countries until after the Messiah comes. The nation of Israel will be destroyed and the people scattered when Romans crush a Jewish rebellion against the Roman empire, but not before Jesus comes to fulfill the role of the Promised Savior. Considering modern events, God’s chosen people have come together again in the modern nation of Israel. Sadly, many have missed the fact that the Promised Messiah has already come and promises deliverance from the problems of the world and sin.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### Daniel 1, 3, 6

[Go to Daniel 1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV)

#### Daniel 1

The Babylonians specialize in brainwashing. They take the smartest, most attractive teenage boys from Israel and force feeds them Babylonian names, food, teachings, and religion. It now seems like God has abandoned the Israelites, and Daniel is surrounded by a culture soaked in false religion. He is immediately presented with a critical choice that tests his faith in God. The ‘choice food’ offered to Daniel has been sacrificed to idols but, frankly, is delicious. Refusing to eat the food could mean Daniel would be punished by the king. Daniel and His friends decide to humbly ask to be given other food. Their confidence persuades their boss to give them vegetables as an experiment. God honors the dedication of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah by improving their health and talents past all the other officials in Babylon. The theme here is that remaining true to God will result in Him providing for your needs even when it does not seem possible. Daniel and his friends became healthier and smarter than everyone else because of God.

[Go to Daniel 3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Dan+3&version=NIV)

#### Daniel 3

This story is widely known among Christians, just so you know. It is often called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and/or the Fiery Furnace. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, is prideful and pompous and wants to be worshipped. Nobody is going to oppose the king of the most powerful empire of the time. Think of someone threatening to kill you and demanding you worship them. Exccept the followers of the One True God. Daniel is not here for some reason; he may have been on an extended business trip. His friends pick up the slack. So, it goes that King Nebuchadnezzar hears that he has rebellious subjects, gets mad, throws the three into a blazing furnace, and… God *really* provides, saving the three from a fiery demise. In fact, God still miraculously saves and provides for people who stay strong in their faith when they are persecuted for it. An important note to put here is that God does not always save followers from death and suffering for their faith. He does promise that those who do suffer for their faith will receive extra rewards in heaven. I will discuss this more later in our study of Jesus and Christian living.

In a way, the four devoted exiles – Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – are the opposite of the many bad kings. Both had a position in govenemtn. One group was in a God-centered society and decided to ignore God and turn to a false religion. The other group was in a society that mocked God but followed God at all costs. We have to remember that God reaches out to everybody and is not limited by circumstances. He controls the circumstances. We will not be able to use our bad situations as excuses for not following God. In a world that is continuing to collectively walk away form God, Christians must be more willing to follow God no matter what the penalty may be.

[Go to Daniel 6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Dan+6&version=NIV)

#### Daniel 6

Daniel now gets his opportunity to show his dedication to God. Daniel continues to suvveed because God is with him. Others who don’t know God are jealous of the success Daniel has. They are forced to be manipulative since Daniel has done nothing wrong that he could be convicted of. Condsider that. If somebody were to examine the way you live, whould they find nothing to get you in trouyble for? Through the manipulation, Daniel’s prayer to God is no longer tolerated. The king is rash in his lawmaking, and gets Daniel in trouble even though he doesn’t want to. Daniek is, regardlessm more concerned aboyt what God thinks than the government or anyone else, and God keeps Daniel from harm because of his faithfulness. For us, God may provide a rescue or not. Either way, following God should be out top priority.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### Ezra 1, 3

[Go to Ezra 1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ez+1&version=NIV)

#### Ezra 1

Why would a powerful king like Cyrus condescend enough to help the Jewish exiles. It is evident that God prompted Cyrus to do so, but he is not a follower of God or, as far as we know, putting his faith in any religion. Yet, when he responds to God’s promting, Cyrus is used by God through incredible generosity. That sort of activity should be evident in believers’ lives, too. We should be acting with love, caring, kindness, and a spirit of giving. When one takes the time to devlop a relationship with God, he or she will desire to love others like Jesus did. God even uses unbelivers when they act lovingly.

God is delivering on His promise by using His power and influence to work events for the good of the Jews. In the same way, God makes events go in a way that is good for belivers in the end as the Bible says in Romans 8:28. We can be sure that even the hard times will eventually be for our good. The Jews now get another chance to follow God, and – although they will not turn away form Him – they will be far from perfect. That is why Jesus has to come and save humanity form their own sin. (This also relates to a future event called the Milleneum, which will be a second chance for humanity to follow God.) 🡨remove?

[Go to Ezra 3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ez+3&version=NIV)

#### Ezra 3

Finally, the Israelites are unified in Jerusalem. When God’s people come together, they can bring restoration and new life. The Jews rebuilt the temple together. Christians who gather together can further God’s plans. The Jews are fully dedicated to God regardless of everyone around them (Ez. 3:3) and try to follow God’s ordinances. This is another reason Christians gather: to support each other and help each other saty on a path of life that pleases God. Together, they give thanks and worship to God (3:11) as Christian gatherings do today. There is a combination of joy and weeping since there is a new temple being built but it does not match what the old temple was like. We also can weep with each other as we go through hardship, but our circumstances should not consume us. We can have joy since Jesus saved us and works everything for our good. Together, the Jews are noticed by many people as 3:13b explains.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

### Nehemiah 8-9

[Go to Nehemiah 8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+8&version=NIV)

#### Nehemiah 8

The Israelites, dedicated to keeping God’s commands, gather together again to study the Law. When they hear what they need to do, they act upon it immediately (see 8:13-18) by practicing :rev the Festival of Booths. When the people are convicted, they weep with sadness, but God’s mercy comforts them. Their new knowledge of God brings them joy in vs. 10-12. For us, we should also read and study God’s Word. The Holy Spirit will give us wisdom to choose between good and evil. He will also prompt us to change our ways to good, and God will comfort you with His mercy.

As soon as the Israelites return to their home, they celebrate the festival of Booths/Tabernacles. This is fitting since the festival symbolizes the 40 years of wandering that the Israelites were punished with for their sins :rev. The Israelites were in exile for 40 years before being able to return to the promised land again. But at the same time, the Festival of Tabernacles is about God delivering the Israelites through the desert. He Israelites are reminded to trust Him for deliverance at all times. Since no Jew will be able to perfectly follow God, Jesus will eventually come to deliver everybody who will simply trust Him to be their Savior.

[Go to Nehemiah 9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Neh+9&version=NIV)

#### Nehemiah 9

And, we recap everything that has led to this moment. I said at the beginning of this capsule that the Jews would go through crazy ups and downs. Everybody is agreeing to renew their covenant with God and to follow Him. This is the process of confession. First, you have to realize that they cannot solve the problems that sin created. Once they recognize God’s authority and mercy, the people admit their sin, put it behind them, and make changes in their life to try not to repeat their sin. No human can ever follow the Law perfectly, for Adam’s sin is passed down throughout generations. We naturally sin when we are given the choice. Only God could follow His own standard because He is perfect and not like us. God’s biggest promise to Abraham included the promise of a Savior. He would save the world from all the problems sin created. Jesus would not come to earth for another 400 years, but when He did, He would change the world in a way nobody expected.

**Further Reading:** Verse Reference – Description

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