



St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church

Heliopolis, Cairo - Egypt

Methods of Studying the Holy Bible

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*His Holiness Pope Tawadros the 2nd
Pope of Alexandria
& Patriarch of St. Mark's Diocese*

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Introduction

Our Holy Bible is our weapon and our way of salvation. It is spirit and life, it is our food and drink during our estrangement upon the earth.

Our Holy Bible is the breaths of God... moving His Spirit in us and filling us with heavenly riches so that we may be fruitful and produce thirty, sixty and a hundred fold.

Our Holy Bible is the lamp lighting our way that we may not divert from the straight path and lose our eternal life.

Our Holy Bible is the life of the church. We cannot understand it away from the church and there is no church life away from the Word of God.

Our Holy Bible is the sword of the Spirit. With it we cut the ropes of our bad thoughts and desires as well as any strange teaching or satanic heresies.

Our Holy Bible is our treasure. It is the field where our Christ is hidden so we go and sell everything to own that field.

Our Holy Bible is what gave grace to our saintly fathers when they loved its words, lived by it, taught it, explained it and became a living Bible readable by all men.

Our Holy Bible is the factory of saints from generation to generation. It is a book that never gets old. ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*** (Lk 21:33)

This study guide between your hands is a simple trial to show some methods suitable for meditation and Bible study. These methods can work for individual meditation, retreats, preparation for Bible study meetings (for all stages of Church education), youth meetings, and women meetings...etc

This study guide does not contain all methods of study for it is innumerable and also does not include all the practical exercises on the verses for that will need huge volumes. Also it does not cover the Church Fathers' commentaries which are indispensable for whoever wants to discover the deep meaning and mysteries of the Holy Bible.

It's necessary for anyone preparing a bible study to know first the fathers' sayings and explanations about the part of study before offering and explaining it using any methods of the ones discussed in this guide.

May our Lord Jesus Christ – to Whom is all the glory- who by His Spirit has left for us these rich words which are able to save our souls, make this simple guide a way and an entrance for all the children of the orthodox church to love and live by the Holy Bible and its different books.

Through the prayers of our holy father Pope Tawadros the second... May God keep for us his life for many years and peaceful times.

Pray for my weakness

Fr. Daoud Lamei



The First Method

A Title and a Verse

The first method is probably the simplest way to read and study the bible. It can be used for the first years of education and also for the elders or the beginners.

Explanation

- The reader chooses a title in a few words (preferably not more than 4 words) for the whole chapter or for every passage of the chapter. So the chapter is divided to parts (preferably not more than 5 parts) and then a title is chosen for each of them.
- The reader then chooses a suitable verse that goes with the title from the whole chapter or from every part of the chapter. The verse does not have to be a whole verse (i.e. from verse 12 to 13) but can be any short sentence that carry the meaning and is easy to memorize.
- The reader then writes this verse (or verses) at least twice. He would try to make sure he/she memorized it by mentally repeating it, rewriting it in the next few days or writing it on an index card and placing it in a visible place all day.

Benefits

1. This method helps the reader to search the Bible “*You search the Scripture*” (Jn 5:39) looking for the main idea of the chapter or part of the chapter.

2. This method helps the reader to remember the contents of the chapter and the book generally and helps in memorizing the verse references.
3. It also helps encouraging the reader to gather treasures of verses through memorization so he would have a spiritual treasure as saint Paul the apostle said ***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”*** (Col 3:16)

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1:

Read Chapter 1 of the Gospel according to St. John (John 1)

- The chapter as a whole can be named “The Word became flesh” or “the True Light”
- The chapter can be divided as follows:
 - Verses 1 – 14 : the Light comes to the world
 - Verses 15 – 34 : John testifying of Christ
 - Verses 35 – 51 : “come and see”
- One verse can be chosen for the whole chapter such as “And of His fullness we have all received” (Jn 1:16)
- Or a verse for each part of the chapter can be chosen as follows:

- Verses 1 – 14 : “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (Jn 1:5)
- Verses 15 – 34 : “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29)
- Verses 35 – 51 : “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi”, “where are You staying?” (Jn 1:38)

Exercise 2 :

Read chapter 4 of the second book of Kings (2Kings 4)

- The chapter can be named “Miracles of Elisha the prophet”
- The chapter can be divided as follows:
 - Verses 1 - 7 : miracle of the little oil
 - Verses 8 – 37 : miracle of raising up the son of the Shunammite woman from the dead
 - Verses 38 – 44 : two miracles about providing food.
- One verse can be chosen for the chapter such as “Is it well with the child?” And she answered, “It is well.” (2 Kings 4:26)
- A verse can be chosen for each part of the chapter as follows:
 - Verses 1 – 7 : “when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you” (2 Kg 4:4)

- Verses 8 – 37 : “He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord.” (2 Kg 4:33)
- Verses 38 – 44 : “thus says the Lord: ‘They shall eat and have some left over.’” (2 Kg 4:43)

Remark

There are copies of the Bible (which have references), that have the main titles of the chapter in smaller font before the chapter. Also there are many copies in other languages that adopt that organization but it is better for the reader not to limit himself with that and try choosing the title and verse by himself.

A Title and a verse

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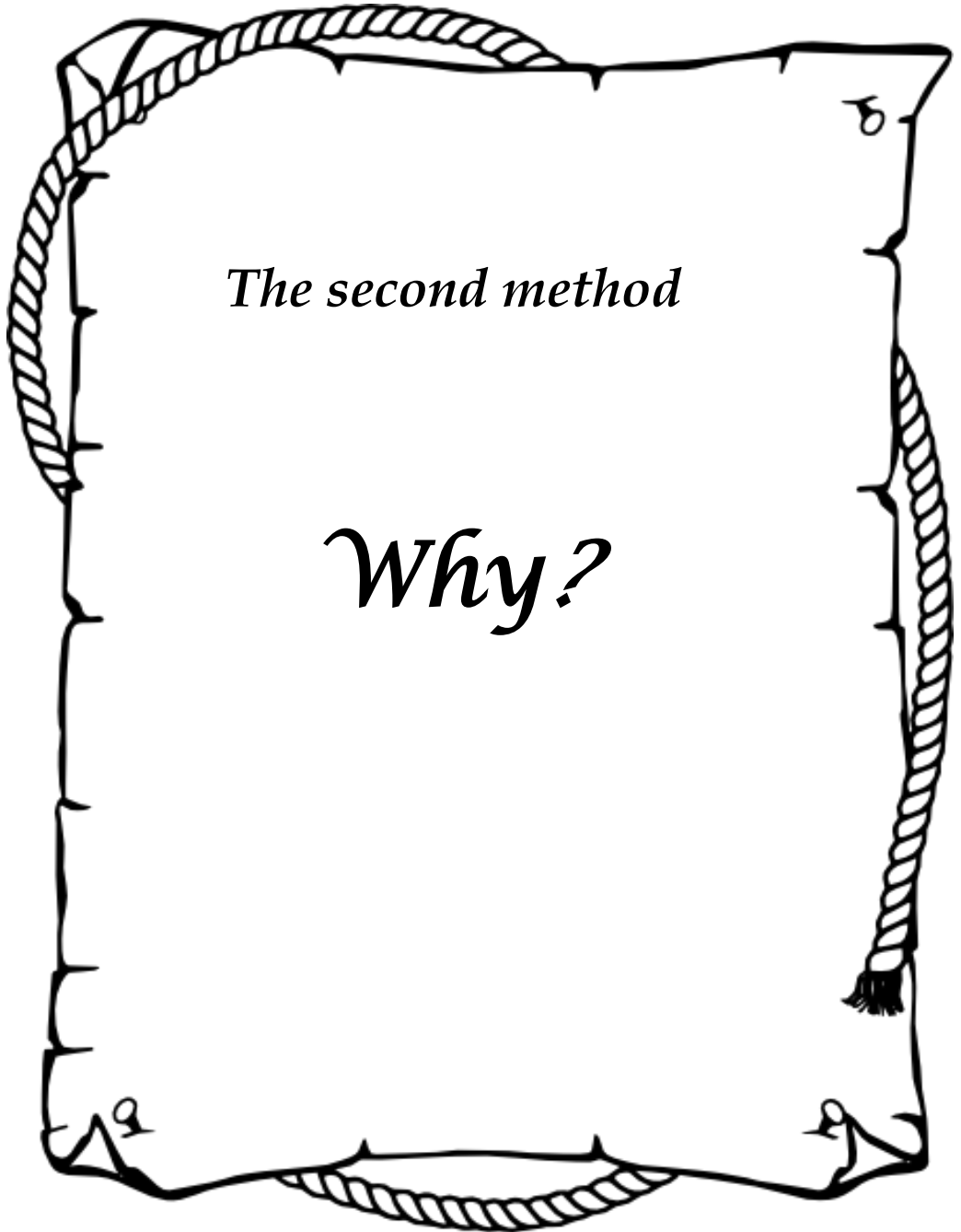
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This method is more suitable for the stories recorded in the Holy Bible. Stories constitute almost 40% of the contents of the books of the Bible. Also there are whole books that are closer to being long stories such as: Esther, Ruth, Judith, Tobit and the four gospels.

Explanation

- The reader starts by placing a group of questions about the story that start with “Why”, no less than 3 questions for the short stories and 5 for the long ones.
- The reader try to find by himself answers to these questions, preferably more than one answer to a question.

Benefits

1. The “Why?” question usually uncovers a logic behind the story’s events and answering it shows deep meanings that add a lot to the benefit, meditation and practical exercises.
2. The “Why?” method urges the reader to delve deeper in the story, reading it many times to find the question and the answer. This helps concentration and fixing of the meanings in mind.
3. The “Why?” questions opens doors of communication among the readers, being a family, a group of church servants, Sunday school or youth meeting. This communication makes everyone joins in thinking and

expressing their thoughts, as well as giving a message to all of the simplicity and practicality of the Bible.

4. The “Why?” questions makes the reader imagine the events of the story and himself part of it. This imagination fixes the mental picture in heart and gives the meanings more depth and effect.
5. The “Why?” questions uncovers many of God’s characteristics behind the events of the story as well as many weaknesses, sins and desires of humans- both in word and deed. This helps the reader to better know God and his own soul’s depth and motives.

Practical Exercises

Story of the two spies and Rahab the harlot (Joshua 2):

“Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. ² And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.” ³ So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.”

⁴ Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. ⁵ And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men

went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” 6 (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)

7 Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. 8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9 and said to the men: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11 And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12 Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token, 13 and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”

14 So the men answered her, “Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the Lord has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.” 15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. 16 And she said to them, “Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way.” 17 So the men said to her: “We will be blameless of this oath of yours

which you have made us swear, 18 unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's household to your own home. 19 So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. 20 And if you tell this business of ours, then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear." 21 Then she said, "According to your words, so be it." And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window. 22 They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them.

23 So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. 24 And they said to Joshua, "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us."

Examples of questions that start with "Why?"

1. Why did Joshua send the two spies?
2. Why did the two spies enter the harlot's house?
3. Why would God use a sinful woman to save His people?
4. Why did Rahab say "I know that the Lord has given you the land"?

5. Why did Rahab hide the two spies among the stalks of flax?
6. Why did Rahab ask to save her whole house?
7. Why did the two spies choose the scarlet rope as a sign?
8. Why did the spies vowed this oath (Joshua 2:18-20) without deferring back to Joshua?
9. Why did the spies stay 3 days in the mountain? (22)
10. Why did the spies say to Joshua “Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands”?

Now let's try to answer these questions:

1. Why did Joshua send the two spies?

- Maybe he was acting as Moses did, when he later sent Joshua and Caleb with others to spy the land at the beginning of the exodus trip.
- Or maybe he sent only two because he remembered that the 10 spies sent before had spread a spirit of fear, grumbling and worry but the two (Caleb and Joshua) spread trust and hope during the entrance to Canaan.
- Maybe he wanted to discover the secrets of the strong city Jericho and see what God had prepared for its destruction. Or because spying was the natural way of nations – Old and current – before any army ventures into any land.

2. Why did the two spies enter the harlot's house?

- Maybe because her house is in the city wall and they didn't need to enter deeper into the city lest they be exposed.
- It's natural for the harlot to deal with strangers but any other normal person will refuse to deal with them.
- Maybe God wanted to reveal His plan in using the sinful woman for the salvation of His people.
- Maybe they paid her at first to let them come in then they revealed their secret.

3. Why would God use a sinful woman to save His people?

- Because God wanted to reveal a very important fact..."all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"... and that He is able to get sweet out of the strong and those whom we think are evil may repent, serve and save others.
- Because God in his foreknowledge knew that this woman has more faith than his people and deserves to be saved because of her trust in the God of Israel.
- Because God prepared that this woman – regardless of her past – becomes a great grandmother of Christ and a witness that God accepts sinners and gentiles through faith.

4. Why did Rahab say “I know that the Lord has given you the land”?

- For her great faith in the God of the Hebrews because of the many miracles she heard, as she said “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.” (Joshua 2:10)
- Because she trustfully testified “for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:11)
- Because faith makes her (and us) trusts in what’s going to happen in the future

5. Why did Rahab hide the two spies among the stalks of flax?

- Here I couldn’t find any better answer than Saint Jerome’s answer on this question which ascertain that the saints used questions in the meditation and commentaries. Saint Jerome says: “the flax (linen) becomes extremely white after a lot of work and effort. For you know it’s planted in the ground which is black and without any beauty but then first it grows above the ground then it’s broken, braided, washed, hammered down and at last combed. With great care and hard toil it becomes

at last white. Here we find the meaning for this harlot took the spies, covered them with her linen so these two workers may change her linen to the bright white.

- That's from the symbolic meditation but as for the direct practical side, maybe the linen stalks were the best hiding place and the farthest from anyone's search.

6. Why did Rahab ask to save her whole house?

- Because she, having good ethics, felt responsible on her family, though a harlot in time when fornication was not uncommon.
- Maybe her feeling of responsibility is what made her live in fornication to be able to pay the expenses of her family because she said "you in turn will show kindness to my family. Give me a reliable sign 13 that you will allow my father and mother, brothers and sisters, and my whole family to live, and that you will deliver us from death"
- Because she is offering a good picture on salvation by faith and works. Of her deeds, she asked the salvation of her family. That's why Saint James said of her "And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route?" (Jm 2:25)

7. *Why did the two spies choose the scarlet rope as a sign?*

- Because the scarlet rope would be clear from far away, being tied from the window and different from the wall color.
- Because the scarlet color is a symbol of Christ's blood with which only is our redemption and salvation.
- Because no one will suspect of this sign as it's usual to have ropes from the window to carry the house's demands.
- Because Rahab originally led them down with a rope through the window (Vs. 15) and it is preferable to have it in a distinctive color so as not to be mixed with another house.

8. *Why did the spies vowed this oath (Joshua 2:18-20) without deferring to Joshua?*

- Because they cannot go back again to make the agreement for the seriousness of the situation. The spies trusted Rahab because she saved them from the king's men.
- Because they are certain of Joshua's trust in them for which he chose them for this difficult task. For it's natural for any responsible person to have some warranties. Also as this vow does not cost them anything other than saving one family so it does

not contradict with the vision and the plan to invade Jericho.

9. *Why did the spies stay 3 days in the mountain? (22)*

- Because that was Rahab's advice as she is more aware of the circumstances and politics of her country. "Go up into the hill country," she said, "that your pursuers may not come upon you. Hide there for three days, until they return; then you may go on your way." (Joshua 2:16)
- This might include a reference to meditation, prayer and depending on God. The three days are a symbol of the resurrection which is always a mark of God's work in the salvation of men. Saint Origen says: "the sinful soul in us cries out "I will lift up my eyes to the hills from whence comes my help" (Ps 120 in the Agpeya)

10. *Why did the spies say to Joshua "Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands"?*

- Rahab's trust reflected on the spies so they became certain of the final outcome because faith transfers as an infection because she previously said "I know that the Lord has given you the land" (Joshua 2:9)
- The spies' deliverance, even though the king's men looked for them, increased their faith that God has planned to give all the earth into their hands.

- The spies repeated to Joshua what they heard from Rahab in detailed “our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you” (Joshua 2:11)

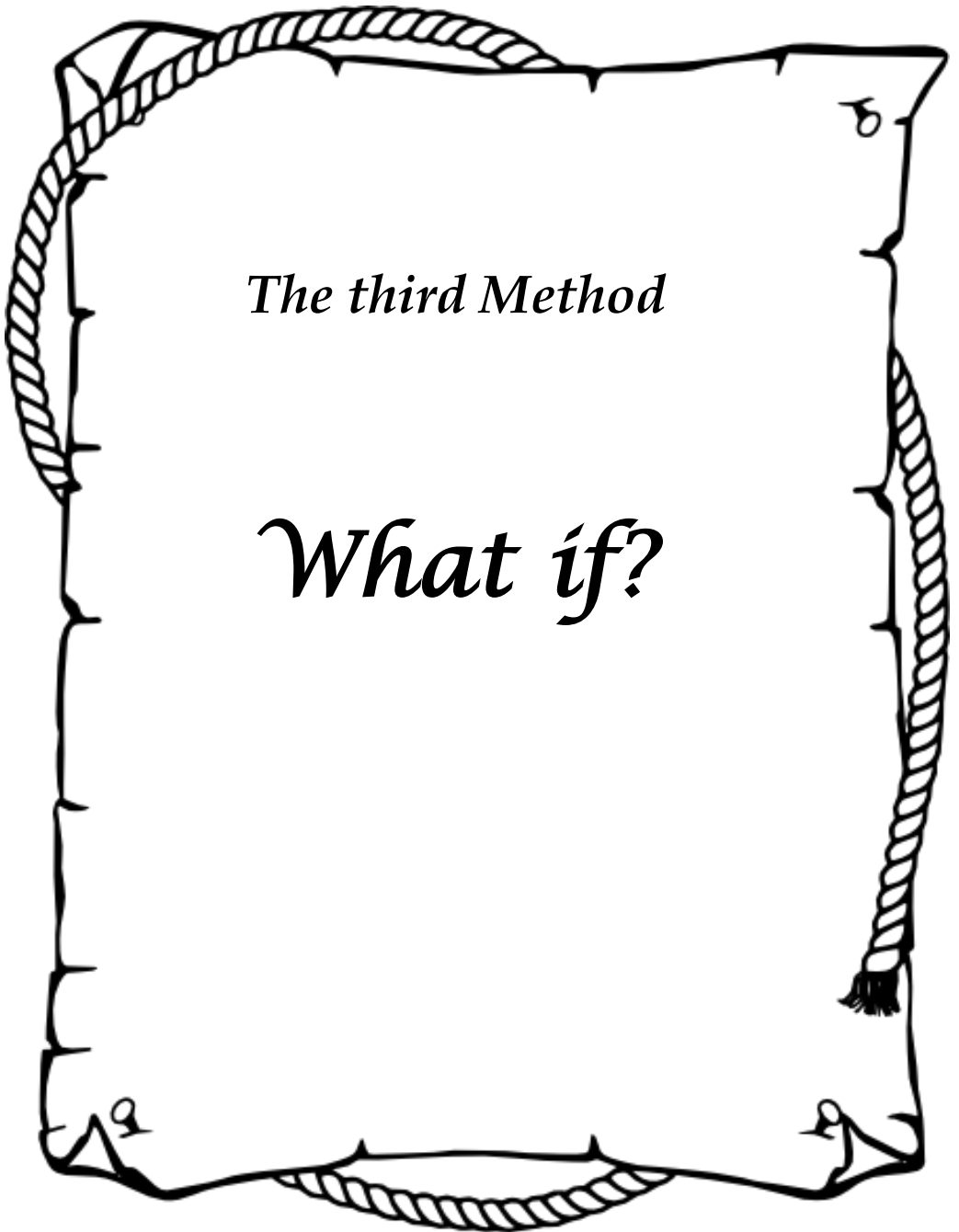
Remark

If you couldn't answer some of the “why?” questions, do not be disturbed. It's more of a chance for you to open the orthodox commentaries or ask someone more knowledgeable of the Bible and Dogma to help you answer the questions. This will help you become more satisfied.

Suggested exercises

Put “Why?” questions on the following stories:

- Story of the healing of the paralytic (Jn 5: 1-18)
- Story of Ruth's attachment to Naomi (Ruth 1:1-22)
- Story of Solomon's wisdom (Ecc 1:1-17)



This method resembles the last one that it is a group of questions in one direction but it is different that the “Why?” method. For wherein “why?” searches the reason and goal, the “What if?” searches of alternatives. This helps the reader to think carefully of the deep meaning of the text.

Thinking of alternatives can work for any age starting from 8 years old and needs a good leader as a servant for his kids or a father for his children.

Explanation

The reader reads the text from the Old or New Testament and asks a few (3 at least) “What if?” questions then tries to answer each of them or open a discussion.

Benefits

1. Expanding the reader’s horizons because he’s going to meditate in different scenarios then go back to what’s written in scripture and by comparing these the meanings and values will be strengthened.
2. Starts an enriching discussion where the things meant by God’s Spirit are revealed. It also reveals some of the hidden points behind the passage.
3. Places the story in a practical sense and shows that what happens today used to happen in the past. Comparing with current facts helps man to easily find the practical exercise intended from the verses.

Practical Exercises

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)

11 Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’”

20 “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

25 “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

28 “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’

31 “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’

Suggestions of questions that start with “What if?”

1. What if... the father refused to give the younger son what he asked for?
2. What if... the son stayed at home even after he received his share?
3. What if... the son didn't spend all his money and there was no famine?
4. What if... the father refused to meet and/or receive his son back in the house?
5. What if... the father didn't give any gifts to his son (i.e. the first robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf)?

6. What if... the father refused to go out and meet the older son?
7. What if... the father gave the older son a goat to make merry with his friends?
8. What if... the father didn't bear the older son's harsh words?
9. What if... the father was not able to convince his older son to enter the party?
10. What if... the older son has gone out from the beginning to search for his younger brother?

Now let us try and answer these suggested questions:

1. What if... the father was refused to give the younger son what he asked for?

- The son would have probably left the house going after his bad friends and probably would have never come back home because of his mistrust in his father's love
- He would probably have stayed home with a strong feeling of resentment, hate and slavery
- The gap between the older and younger son would be bigger because both of them wanted to be the heir.

2. What if... the son stayed at home even after he received his share?

- Maybe he would have felt his mistake and crime and would have returned the money to his father.
- Maybe the envy and jealous feelings would have increased between the brothers
- The younger son would probably have become more controlling and prideful because of the money he has.

3. What if... the son didn't spend all his money and there was no famine?

- He would have probably stayed in the far country with no thought of return.
- He would have probably missed his father even after his success
- He probably have become more evil because of his success and easiness of life

4. What if... the father refused to meet and/or receive his son back in the house?

- Maybe he, with no further hope, would have returned back to the swine
- The scribes would have sentenced him to stoning because he insulted his father.

- He would probably have stayed all his life resenting his dad, only to remember his rejection.
- He would probably have become very depressed or in great despair.
- The older son would have gained more power and richness

5. What if... the father didn't give any gifts to his son (i.e. the first robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf)?

- The younger son would have always felt enslaved, rejected or shameful
- The younger son would have felt despised by the slaves and that he does not have any rights or powers.
- He would have doubted his father's love and forgiveness and would have gone back to the far country.

6. What if... the father refused to go out and meet the older son?

- The older son would have suspected his father's injustice, discrimination and his unlove for him.
- The house would have divided on itself and the joy turned to sadness and the older brother lost.

- The older brother would have hated the younger even more and would have become like Cain to Abel.
- It would have spoiled the father's joy of the son's return because of his brother's anger.

7. What if... the father gave the older son a goat to make merry with his friends?

- The older son might have turned more greedy and materialistic
- The older son might have felt like a hired servant waiting for his pay (the goat) in compensation for his work and that would make him lose all sense of sonship.
- The older son might have separated himself from all the house's affairs and sadness (because of the younger son's leave) and he would be living in his separate world not feeling for his father's sadness
- The older son's friends might have caused him too to depart from the house and go astray.

8. What if... the father didn't bear the older son's humiliation and harsh words?

- The father might have kicked the older son out of the house or not give him any inheritance, which may have made the older son feel that he was destroyed because of his younger brother.

- If the father didn't bear his son, the son would have never entered the house nor shared in the party. Also this may have made the son more angry and more liable to sin.
- The party might have been cancelled, turned to sadness or enmity created between the brothers.

9. What if... the father were not able to convince his older son to enter the party?

- That son might have perished, which is a symbol of how believers might perish if they failed to love everyone.
- The father might have stayed sad as before because of the older son, not the younger one.
- The younger brother might have felt guilty because his return made his brother leave the house and perish.
- The younger brother might try to apologize for his brother and plead him to enter.

10. What if... the older son has gone out from the beginning to search for his younger brother?

- He would have been the happiest of all of his brother's return and would not have taken that selfish stand.
- It would have made it easier for the younger brother to come back before he reaches the lowly state of wanting the swine's food.

- The father would have been greatly pleased with the true love among his sons and would have greatly rewarded the older brother for the salvation of the younger one.

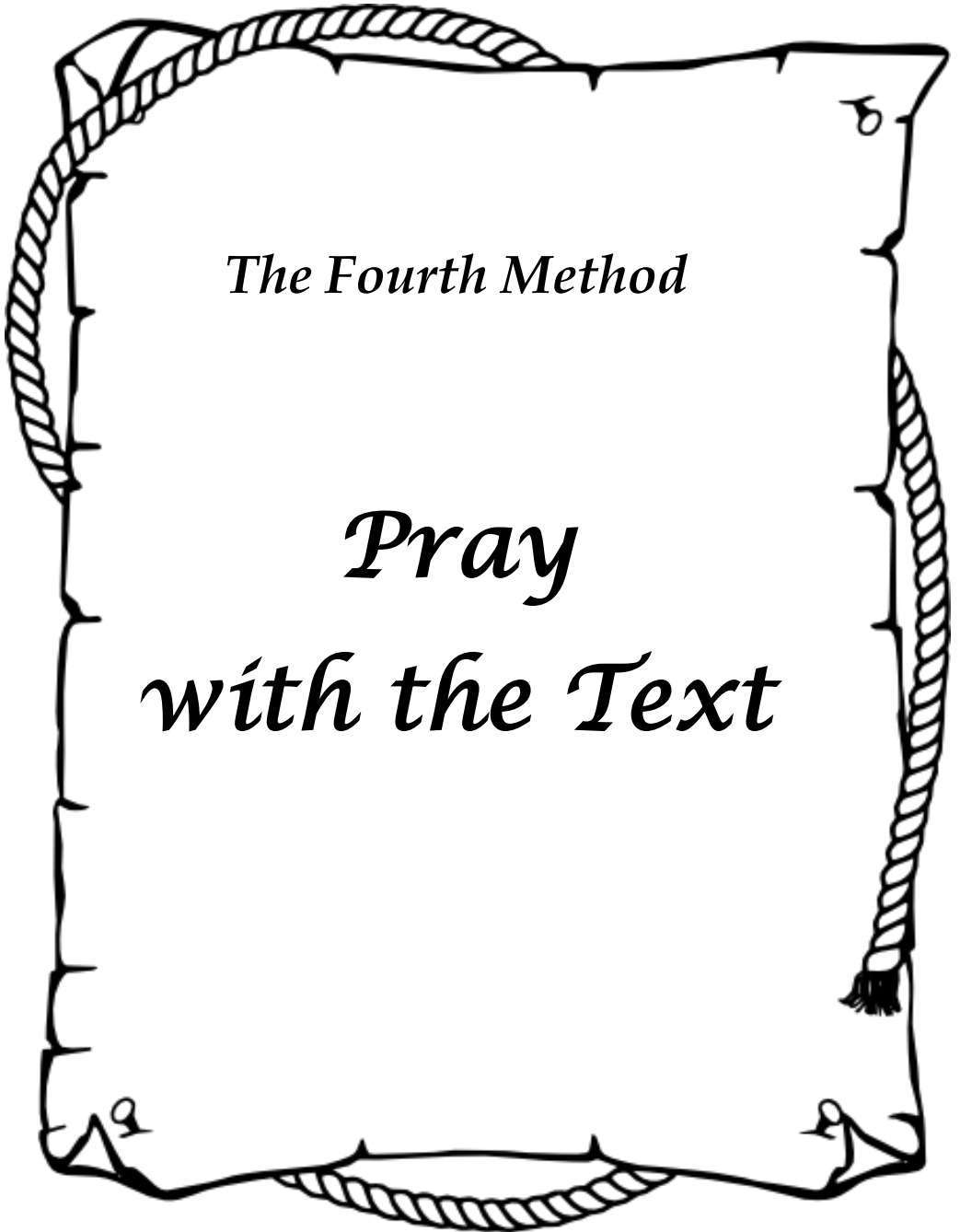
Remark

- This method may cause confusion for those not firm in the Orthodox Christian dogma. That's why there has to be a true spiritual leader when using this method, who can explain the meanings of faith, repentance and God's love
- The sayings of the fathers are a true addition to this story or to the answers that we might reach a deeper and practical meaning.

Suggested exercises

Make "what if?" questions on the following passages:

- The story of Lazarus and the rich man(Lk16:19-31)
- The story of Samson and Delilah (Judges 16: 4-22)
- The story of Jerusalem's siege (Is 37: 1-38)



The Fourth Method

*Pray
with the Text*

This is probably the most important method of studying the bible because the bible is spirit and life and for it to become a Christian way of life it has first to become a material of prayer. Praying with the bible words is the spirit of the Orthodox Church because it applies this method in all liturgical prayers.

Explanation

1. Use the words of the bible – being a story or not- in your prayer. Express the meaning through a short prayer of your own, using some words of the text or using their meaning.
2. The prayer can start with words like: thank you Lord for..., or forgive me God ... or help me ... or teach me....
3. The prayer could be about one of the verses, all the verses, the whole meaning or one point of interest to you.

Benefits

1. This method helps the reader to join reading with prayer and that accomplishes the most interaction with the Word of God, and moves the heart and feelings
2. Praying through verses helps memorize the verse and enforces a deeper understanding of it to make it expressible in prayer.

3. This method helps the reader to spend more time in the presence of God, enjoying his words and changing the encounter to a warm talk...”dine with Him and He with you”
4. Whenever the same words/verses are repeated, the person remembers his last feelings and prayers that moved his heart before and that gives him back his first love and holy zeal.
5. Through “prayer” we ask for help to fulfill the commandments of God and walk according to his will and that gives us feelings of humility and meekness.
6. This method is the one used in the Agpeya prayers
 - For example in the gospel of the first hour we read... “that was the true light that gives light to every man coming into the world” and in the first litany we pray... “O the true light who gives light to every man coming into the world, You came into the world through Your love for mankind”
 - Also in the third hour we read... “when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, has come, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I have said unto you.” And in the first litany we pray ...”Your Holy Spirit, O Lord whom You send forth upon your holy disciples” and in the fourth litany we pray ... “O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, ... graciously come and dwell in us..”

- It's also the method used for gospel responses in Liturgies. For example the gospels of the liturgies of the great lent are generally encouraging people to repent and the response through the great lent is "I have sinned, I have sinned, O My Lord Jesus Christ for there is no servant without sin and no Master without forgiveness."

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: Zacharia 10: 1-3

1 Ask the LORD for rain In the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone.² For the idols speak delusion; The diviners envision lies, And tell false dreams; They comfort in vain. Therefore [the people] wend their way like sheep; They are in trouble because [there is] no shepherd.³ My anger is kindled against the shepherds, And I will punish the goatherds. For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock, The house of Judah, And will make them as His royal horse in the battle.

Suggested prayers:

- Lord, fill me of the rain from your Holy Spirit (Zec 10:1)
- My soul became like a land thirsty for you, O Lord (Zec 10:1)

- Lord give me showers of rain for I became very dry (Zec 10:1)
- Lord protect me from lies and hypocrisy and have mercy on me (Zec 10:2)
- Lord protect me from false comforts and have mercy on me (Zec 10:2)
- Teach me Lord to follow you (Zec 10:2)
- Lord, send shepherds according to your heart (Zec 10:3)
- Grant us with your salvation and protection (Zec 10:3)
- Thank you My Lord because You are Lord of Lords and shepherd of all shepherds (Zec 10:3)

Exercise 2:

The second Epistle to the Corinthians 4: 1-7

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it

is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Suggested Prayers:

- Lord rescue me from feeling a failure (2 Co 4:1)
- Teach me O Lord to renounce all hidden things of shame (2 Co 4:2)
- Teach me O Lord to show the truth in my words and deeds (2 Co 4:2)
- Lord, help me to testify for you to all men (2 Co 4:2)
- Lord do not hide your gospel because of the hardness of my heart (2 Co 4:3)
- Thank you O Lord for enlightening my mind to know you (2 Co 4:4)
- Please enlighten the minds of unbelievers with your Words (2 Co 4:4)
- Teach me Lord to preach You only and forget myself (2 Co 4:5)
- Help me Lord to become a servant to all and to win all (2 Co 4:5)
- Glory be to you Lord because you have placed Your Spirit in my heart (2 Co 4:7)

- Lord teach me to always deny myself and see your grace in all (2 Co 4:7)

Would this method work for the biblical stories?... certainly.

Exercise 3:

The story of Anointing David a King (1 Sam 16:1-13)

1 Now the Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.”² And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.” But the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’”³ Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.”⁴ So Samuel did what the Lord said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, “Do you come peaceably?”⁵ And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him!”⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”⁸ So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he

said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.” 11 And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all the young men here?” Then he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.”

And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.” 12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!” 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

Suggested Prayers:

- Do not reject me O Lord and have mercy on me (1 Sam 16:1)
- Lord please accept the prayers of your saints on my behalf (1 Sam 16:1)
- Lord remove from me all fear and teach me to do your will (1 Sam 16:2)
- Lord help me to clearly hear your voice and not follow my thoughts (1 Sam 16:7)
- Protect me Lord from caring about outward appearances with no depth (1 Sam 16:7)
- Purify my heart Lord and accept me in your service (1 Sam 16:12)

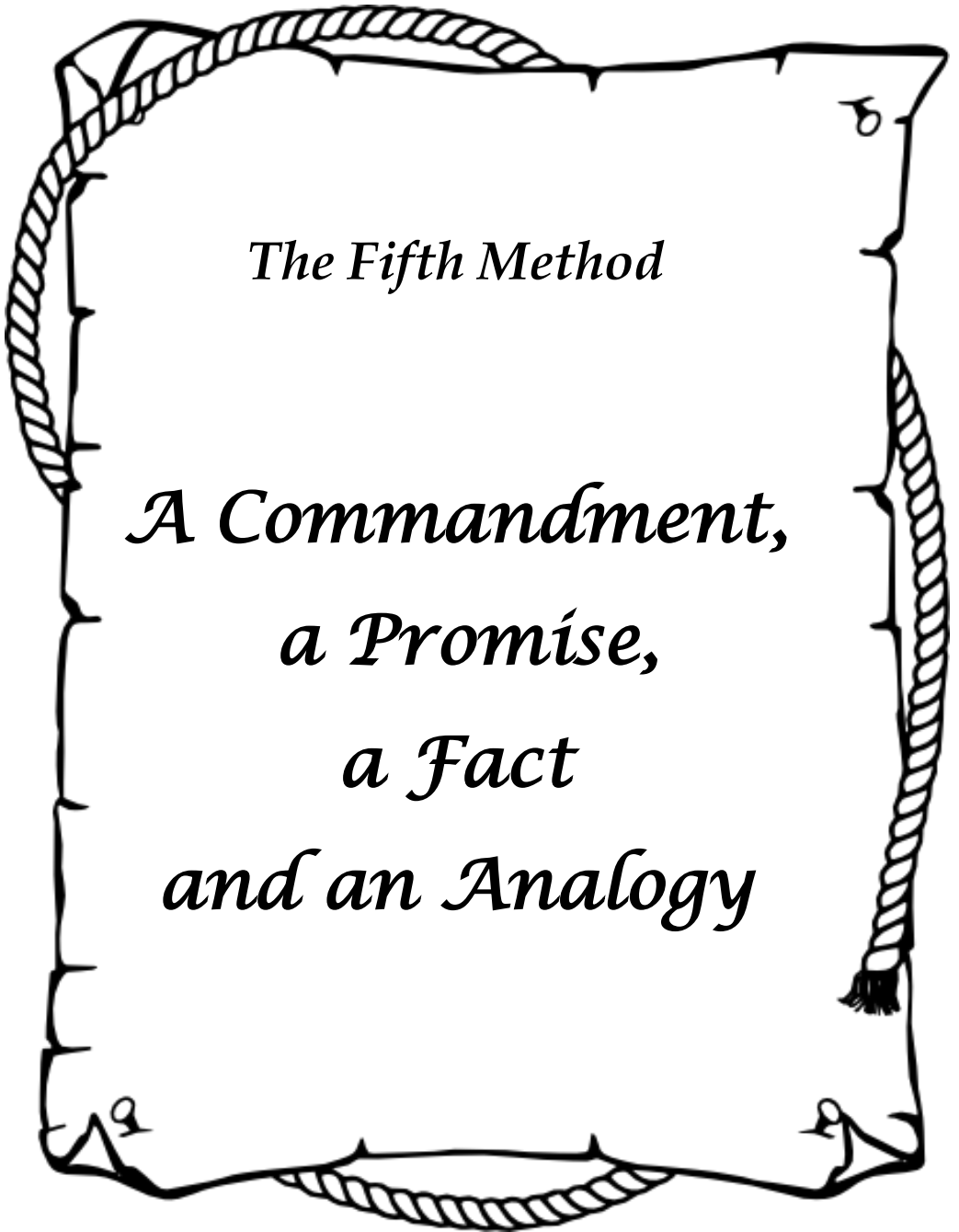
- Consider me always small but acceptable in your sight (1 Sam 16:12)
- Lord, fill me with your Spirit as you filled your servant David (1 Sam 16:13)
- Teach me Lord not to look to the eyes but to the heart just as You do (1 Sam 16:7)

Remark

- This method works well for all ages leaving a space for every person to express his feelings. Also every Bible study can be concluded with a short prayer meeting using the meanings discussed.
- It's better to use the short prayers when others are present and leaving the long ones when you're alone in your room, having this personal secret relation with God.
- A study can be made searching for the connections of the church's prayers with their readings to deepen the Orthodox faith.

Suggested exercises

- Think of prayers with these passages:
- The story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num 16)
- Proverbs 4:1-12
- Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 26: 1-23)



The Fifth Method

*A Commandment,
a Promise,
a Fact
and an Analogy*

This simple way is based on analyzing the text through the following questions:

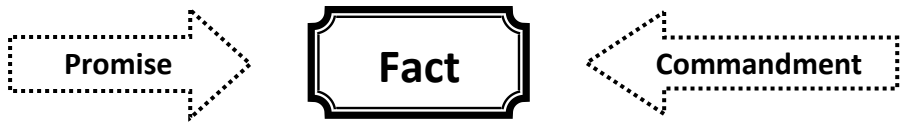
- Where is the commandment? ... to act according to it
- Where is God's promise? ... to live by
- Where is the fact? ... to believe it and preach it
- Where is the analogy? ... to always remember the facts with

This can be applied more on the sermons texts such as the Sermon on the Mount or the epistles of the New Testament or the prophetic books in the Old Testament.

Explanation

- Read the text slowly two or three times, and in a clear voice if it is a bible study group.
- Then find out the commandments in the passage which usually starts with an imperative verb such as "Look.... Remember.... Love", with a prohibition verb such as "Do not steal... Do not lie" or a commanding verb such as "Let everyone be quick to listen"
- Find out the promises in the text which are usually associated with God in the Old Testament and Christ in the New Testament where God/Christ is the subject (who promises). The promise may turn to a warning when it is associated with "or else.."

- You may add two points to your search:
 1. The analogy if any, as almost all of Christ's teachings are full of illustrations and parables that explain the meaning.
 2. The fact/truth which is not a commandment nor a promise in itself but according to it the commandments and promises are based.



For example....

- "I Am the Bread of Life"
→ *is a fact*
 - "Take eat this is My Body" (Eat the bread of life)
→ *is a commandment*
 - "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (Become established in eternal life)
→ *is the promise*
- Lastly the reader can write down all the promises, commandments, facts and analogies

Benefits

1. Focusing on the commandment help to focus on of its fulfillment and praying for help to act upon it.

2. Discussion can be started around the practical meanings and applications of each commandment
3. Review of God's promises can be a material for prayer, either as a thanksgiving material or as a prayer asking for increasing trust in His promises.
4. Discussing the illustrations or parables help you to easily remember the meaning and recall the promise and the commandment to mind whenever you're met with similar situations in life.
5. Review of biblical facts which constitutes the Christian Orthodox dogma, clarifying their correct meaning and comparing them with other text or verses.
6. The text analysis helps to remember and understand these –not-story- passages and makes them easier to explain to all ages.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: Matthew 7:7-20

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those

who ask Him! 12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Pull out from the text the commandments, the promises, the facts and the analogies.

Commandments:

- Ask
- Enter from the narrow gate
- Seek
- Do also to them
- Knock
- Beware of false

Promises:

- Receives
- Finds
- Will be opened
- Your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him

Facts:

- Everyone who asks receives
- He who seeks finds
- To him who knocks it will be opened
- You, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children
- This is the Law and the prophets (the summary of all commandments) that you do to men what you want them to do to you
- Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life and there are few who find it.
- You will know them by their fruits. Every good tree bears good fruit and every bad tree bears bad fruit
- Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Analogies:

- Prayer is like knocking on God's door
- The relation with God is like the relation of a son to his father
- The spiritual life is like a narrow door and a difficult road
- The false prophets are like the ravenous wolves wearing lambs' clothes

- The false prophets or superficial religion is like a bad tree that bears bad fruits

Exercise 2: Isaiah 1: 15-20

15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil.,17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.18 Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land.;20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Pull out from the text the commandments, the promises, the facts and the analogies

Commandments:

- Wash
- Make yourselves clean
- Put away the evil of your doings
- Cease to do evil
- Learn to do good
- Seek justice

- Rebuke the oppressor
- Defend the fatherless
- Plead for the widow
- Let us now reason together, says the Lord

Promises:

- Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow
- Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool
- You shall eat the good of the land

Facts:

- Your hands are full of blood
- If you refuse and rebel you shall be devoured by the sword (considered a warning)
- All conditional verses that starts with the word “if” usually fit to be facts

Analogies:

- Likening repentance with washing and cleansing
- Sin is likened to scarlet.. purity to snow
- Sin is likened to crimson (old wine) and purity to pure wool
- Sword is likened to a ravenous animal that eats.

Remark

In some parts we find the commandments are more than the promises and in other parts, the facts take most of the passage. Also not every promise is related to a commandment but ever promise and commandment is related to an established fact.

Suggested Exercises

- Ezekiel 3: 1-10
- Gospel of Luke 6: 27-42
- Epistle to the Hebrew 13: 1- 16

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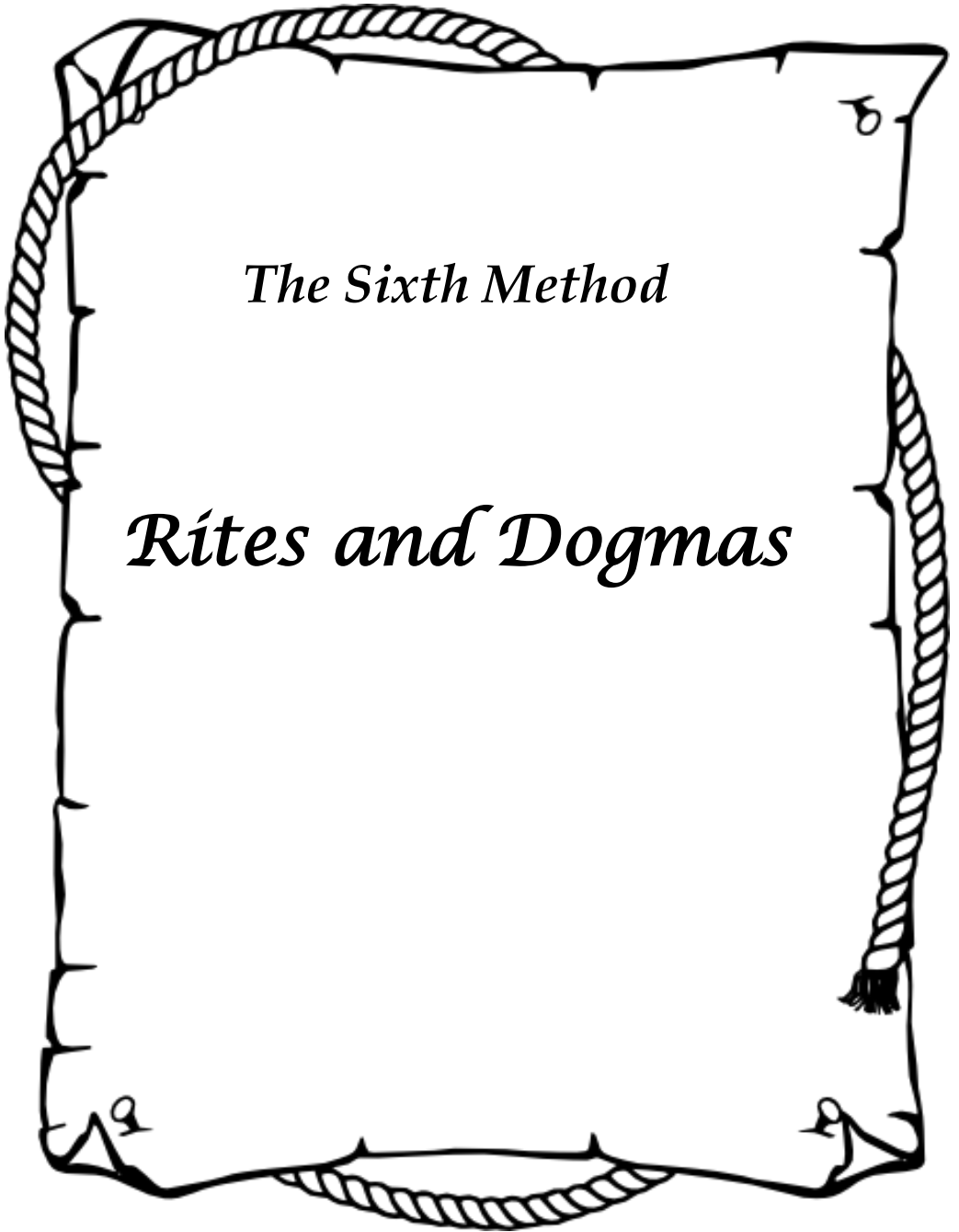
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The Sixth Method

Rites and Dogmas

This method links the Bible readings to the rites of the church and to its Christian Orthodox dogmas. It builds up man to be biblical in his church practices and church-minded in his Bible readings..

Explanation

- After a thorough slow and repeated reading of the text, the reader starts searching for anything related to the dogma such as: the existence of God, characteristics of God, creation and fall, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, salvation and resurrection, oneness of the church, sacraments, eternal life, judgment and angels.
- From the same text, the reader searches for anything related to the church rites such as: the sign of the cross, the Jesus Christ prayer, the Agpeya, the Liturgy, the priest's movements during prayers, icons, candles, liturgical readings, synaxarion, church history and stories of the saints, metanias (prostrations), the church building ... etc.
- This method is more related to the text without stories though it can be applied to some of the Bible stories.

Benefits

It helps the reader enjoy practicing the church rites in any liturgical prayer because his thoughts are rich with related biblical contemplations.

1. It helps strength
2. It strengthens the faith by having biblical answers on every Orthodox dogma.
3. It explains the church as being a living bible as meant by the Spirit of God.
4. It protects the reader from deviation in explanations and prevents heresies.
5. This method is the one that the early fathers have used to dig in the biblical treasures. This in turn makes the reader a disciple to the fathers walking in the same orthodox line of thought and life.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: Matthew 16: 13-24

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"¹⁴ So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on

earth will be loosed in heaven.”²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Search the passage above for dogma...

- Mt 16:13 → Son of Man ... declaration of the humanity of Christ
- Mt 16:14 → Church dogma of believing the prophets sent by God
- Mt 16:16,17 → Jesus the Christ the son of the living God ... declaration of the divinity of Christ
- Mt 16:17 → the Divine revelation is a work of God ... that man may accept or reject according to his own will
- Mt 16:18 → the orthodox faith of the divinity of Christ as the Son of God ... is the stone on which the church is built and nothing can overcome it.

- Mt 16:18 → there is eternal hell for the souls of the evil men ... but everyone who holds to the faith and to the one orthodox church will not perish.
- Mt 16:18 → no salvation outside the church
- Mt 16:19 → priesthood is linked to the orthodox faith and is a continuation of the work of Christ in his church ... as shown in the authority of binding and loosening the sins.
- Mt 16:21 → faith in the death and resurrection of Christ on the third day.
- Mt 16:23 → Satan exists and he tries to make believes doubt and distorts the faith.
- Mt 16:24 → man has to struggle and carry the cross following Christ to be saved (no salvation without struggle)

From that same passage you can also find points related to the rites of the church such as:

- Mt 16:15 → the creed (confessing the faith) is the bases of worship and relation with God.
- Mt 16:19 → the rite of giving absolution during the sacrament of repentance and confession ... and in the other liturgical prayers.

- Mt 16: 13,15 —→ the Son of Man is the Son of God ... symbolized by the coal in the censer because we believe that his divinity didn't part from his humanity.
- Mt 16:15, 23, 24) —→ teaching and discipleship ... in the church are to teach the true faith and help with the strife and repentance.

Exercise 2: (Judges 6: 11-24)

The story of the appearance of Christ to Gideon

11 Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!" 13 Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." 14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" 15 So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." 16 And the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." 17 Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. 18 Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You

and bring out my offering and set it before You.”And He said, “I will wait until you come back.”

19 So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them. 20 The Angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. 21 Then the Angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. 22 Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face.” 23 Then the Lord said to him, “Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.” 24 So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Search the text for dogma...

- Judg 6:11 → the Father cannot be seen ... but the Son, the Word of God, appeared to testify “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”(Jn 1:18)
- Judg 6:12 → the title of the Angel of God ... means a messenger of God and Christ has been sent to us from the Father but He is of the same essence as the Father.

- Judg 6:14 → God is the one who chose the judges ... (the prophets and the apostles) and He works through them regardless of their weaknesses.
- God speaks in different ways and everyone has a mission in life that has to be discovered and fulfilled.
- God accepts sacrifices and offerings if offered in love and humility.

From the same text find the points related to church rites such as...

- Judg 6:11 → preparation of the bread (korban) for the sacraments
- Reciting the psalms during the bread preparation → is a way of seeing Christ.
- The rite of offering of the Lamb → is a time of thanksgiving and asking for help.
- Judg 6:17 → the sign reminds us of the sign of the cross
- Judg 6:24 → the altar has always been the bases of the relation between God and man.

Remark

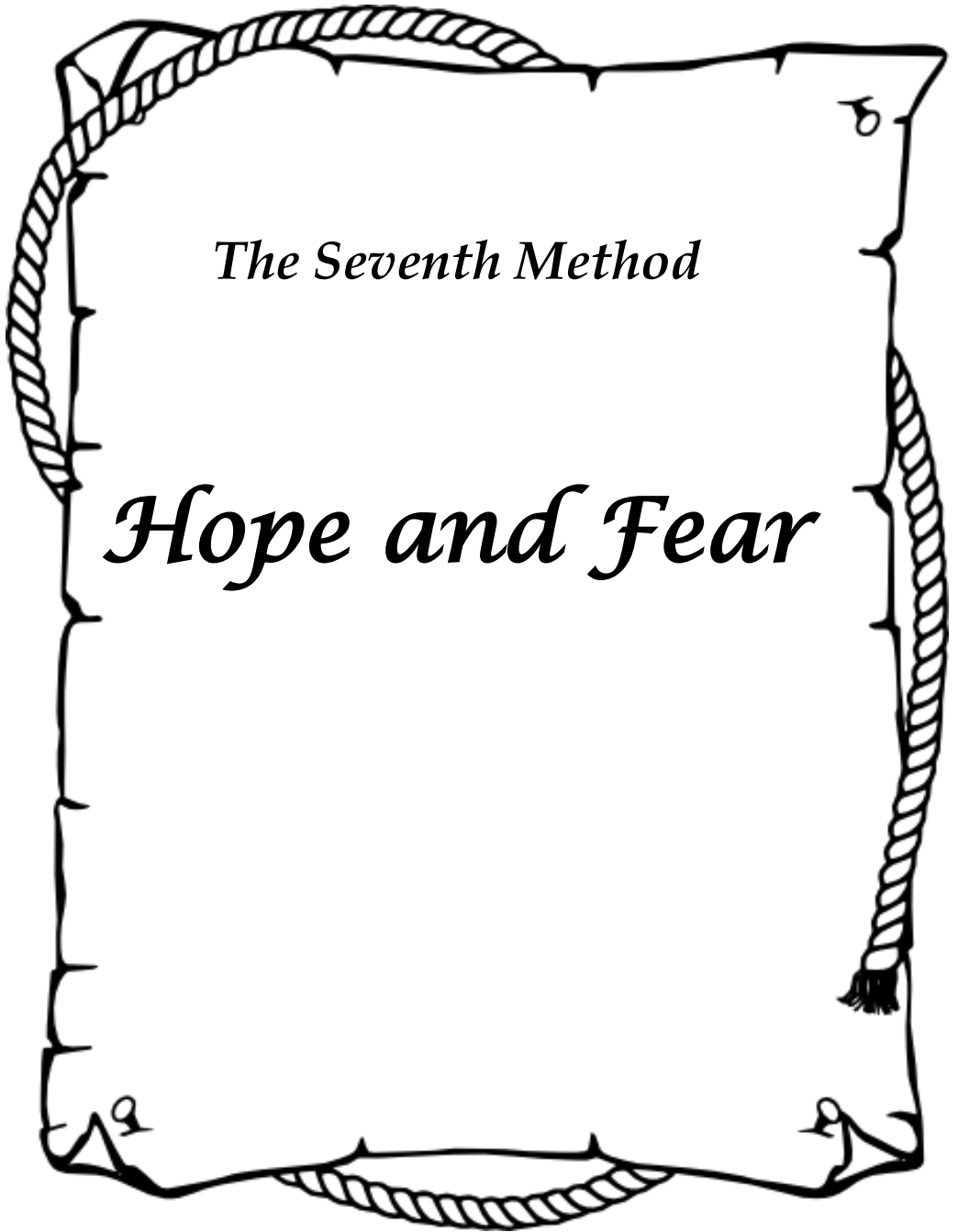
1. There is no reason to place on the biblical meaning more than it means nor to the rites meditation than it deserves.

2. It's better to review and understand the dogma first to be able to read the bible in an orthodox way as it is also better to understand the rites and practices to be able to link them easily with the bible verses.

Suggested exercises

- Psalm 93 "The Lord reigns..."
- Isaiah 41: 1-14
- John 3: 1-14
- Epistle of James 5: 13-20

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The Seventh Method

Hope and Fear

This method can be applied on all passages of the Holy bible in both Testaments, stories ... prophecies ... epistles and prayers.

The goal of this method is to discover the messages of hope (good news) as well as the meanings that induce holy fear (warnings) from the passage.

Explanation

Carefully and repeatedly read the passage (a story or part of a chapter), search for....:

- All verses or meanings that give hope.
- All verses, meanings or situations that induce holy fear such as fear from the judgment... from sin... or fear from God Himself.

Benefits

1. The holy Bible is the good news and these have to be discovered, to be enjoyed and awaited for.
2. This method raises the reader from despair. It corrects the low self-esteem with thoughts of hope. It also protects from false hope which makes the reader have unspiritual trust that weakens his strife, his caution and his faithfulness and that is through the holy fear.
3. This method can easily be placed in an open discussion format, keeping in mind to end up with at

least one thought for hope and one for the holy fear to be applied.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: Luke 5: 1-11

1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, 2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. 3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." 6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. 7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." 11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Search the passage above, first for hope... (i.e. find the joyful meanings and express it in your own language)

- Jesus the Christ cares for each and every soul (my soul) even when he's surrounded by many people.
- The day may start with frustration but ends with many joys.
- Christ is able to use my simple abilities (the boat) in His service even if I'm not worthy.
- My obedience to a simple commandment can open for me the doors of heaven and unmeasured blessings.
- God gives much more than what we think, expect or ask for.
- God refuses to step out of my life because of my sin but insists on changing me to become a servant
- God gladdens our hearts with what we wish for so we can follow him whole heartedly.
- There is real enjoyment and wondrous experiences when we spend time alone with God in the depth.

Search the passage, second for holy fear(i.e. find the meanings that induces holy fear)

- *I'm afraid* to refuse God's request when He asks me to "launch into the deep"

- *I'm afraid* to listen only to my logic, my sadness and surrender to my soul's complaints when it says "I've toiled all night"
- *I'm afraid* I will not listen to Christ's commandment and does not enjoy the miracle.
- *I'm afraid* to become occupied with the lots of fish and forget to kneel down and thank God nor kneel in repentance, busying myself with the joys of this world and forgetting the Lord's gifts or even worse forgetting the Lord Himself.
- *I'm afraid* that I won't respond when someone asks me to help or save him when his net is breaking.
- *I'm afraid* from my fears and low self-esteem to stop me from leaving everything and following Christ.
- *I'm afraid* to become one of those who listens to Christ's sermon and leave Him and not like Peter who followed Him.

Exercise 2: Jeremiah 17:1-11

1 "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars, 2 While their children remember Their altars and their wooden images By the green trees on the high hills.3 O My mountain in the field, I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, And your high places of sin within all your borders. 4 And you, even yourself, Shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; And I will

cause you to serve your enemies In the land which you do not know; For you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever.” 5 Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the Lord. 6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. 7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. 11 “As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool.”

Search the passage above for ideas of hope...

- *I have hope* that however great my sin is, God is able to erase it.
- *I have hope* that by depending on God I receive a great blessing and I become like a tree planted by the water streams.
- *I have hope* that even if drought comes the leaves will not fall neither the fruits cease with the grace of God.

- *I have hope* that God will look to my toil and simple works and rewards me.

Second, ideas of holy fear:

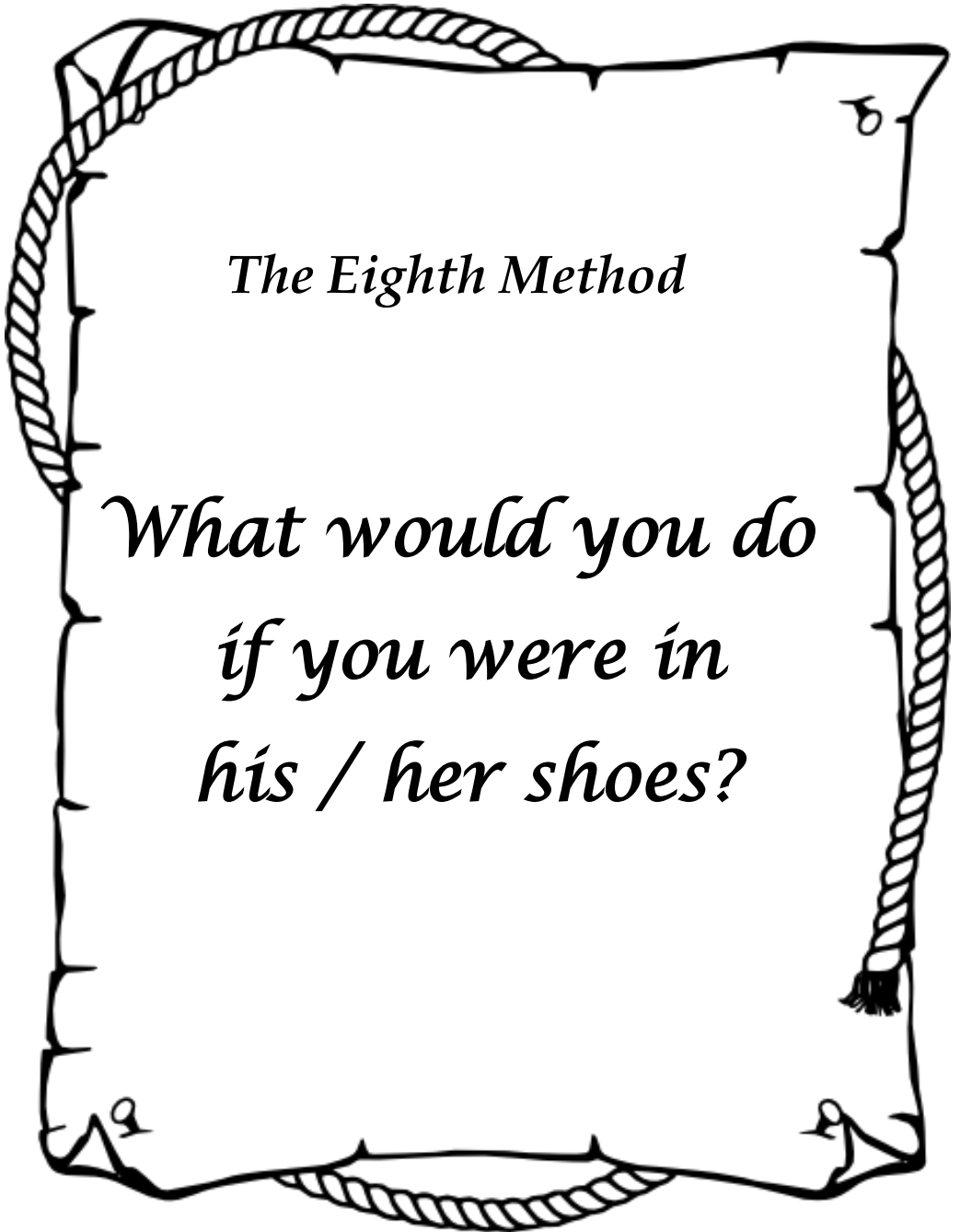
- *I'm afraid* I won't have forgiveness for my sins because of my stubbornness and insistence to sin and not change.
- *I'm afraid* of God's wrath because I don't worship Him as befits Him and there are lots of idols and altars in my heart.
- *I'm afraid* from being cursed because I depend so many times on men.
- *I'm afraid* my heart will turn away from God's commandments and follow the words of men.
- *I'm afraid* to trust my deceiving heart that I fall in greed, lust, judging or complaining.
- *I'm afraid* that I have gathered richness with no right and I would hear in the last day "you have received your rewards"
- *I'm afraid* to be honored today but appear as fool in the end because I was not honest with God and men.

Remarks

- There might be some passages that are mostly filled with the spirit of hope and others with the spirit of the holy fear.
- Hope is suitable for the reader that struggle with despair and low self-esteem where holy fear is suitable for him who is struggling with slackness and negligence.
- The balance of hope and fear is a spiritual orthodox bases for life that protects man from falling in pride and self-righteousness as well as from despair and losing hope.

Suggested exercises

- Exodus 34:1-10
- Psalm 54 (Bible): 1 – 7
- The First epistle to the Corinthians 6: 1- 11



The Eighth Method

*What would you do
if you were in
his / her shoes?*

This method is suitable for all age groups and all educational levels. It helps to imagine the stories of the Bible and makes exercises more practical. This method is used mainly for stories.

Explanation

- Read the Bible story and find out the characters included, including our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Imagine yourself in the position of each of these characters and ask yourself what you would do if you were in his/her place.
- Try to make your answers spontaneous and not idealistic.
- Listen to others' opinions as they imagine themselves in the shoes of those characters.
- Try to imagine real life situations similar to the bible story to make it more practical.

Benefits

1. This method helps you to carefully read the story to be able to imagine it.
2. Placing yourself in one of the characters' shoes helps you think of the surrounding circumstances and challenges.

3. Listening to other people's imagination and answers enriches the meeting, broadening the perspectives and makes everyone more involved in the story.
4. When you're faced with a similar situation in life, it's easy to remember the discussion and base your actions according to the message of the gospel.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: John 8: 2-11

2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. 3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one

condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

First point out the different characters of the story:

1. Jesus Christ, to Him is all glory
2. The sinful woman
3. The Scribes and Pharisees
4. The gathered congregation
5. Lord Jesus' disciples

Second, ask yourself ...

What would you do if you were in Lord Jesus' shoes?

- I would probably have been afraid from the people and the accusation of breaking the Law and I would join them in saying she deserves to be stoned
- I might have tried to pull away from the whole case and tell them to judge on whatever the Law says.
- I would have questioned them about the man who sinned with her or the witnesses to her sin?
- I might have said that I only came to teach and not to judge anyone.

What would you do if you were in the sinful woman's shoes?

- I would be terrified from people, from death and from the disgrace.
- I would have screamed that I'm innocent, nothing happened.
- I would have tried to escape in anyway.
- I would have hated everyone, maybe even God who created me and certainly hated myself
- I would have never imagined this happy ending and would have followed Christ all my life.

What would you do if you were in the Scribes and Pharisees' shoes?

- I might have stoned her without asking Lord Jesus
- I would have thrown the stones without waiting for Lord Jesus' answer
- I might have continued in my stubbornness even after he said that "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."
- I would have withdrew from the beginning because I don't like punishment and blood.

- I would have done as they did and left right when I remembered my sin.

What would you have done if you were in the public's shoes?

- I would have felt compassion for her but in silence as I'm a sinner too.
- I would have been scared for Christ because I know the Pharisees' plot against him
- I would have taken the Scribes and Pharisees' side and said that the Law cannot be broken
- I would have left the whole scene because I cannot bear it.
- I would have followed Christ and loved Him more.

What would you do if you were in the disciples' shoes?

- I would have advised the Teacher to listen to them as they have the right and otherwise they would stone Him too.
- I would have been frightened seeing him kneel beside her as if ready to be stoned, I would have probably have ran and knelt beside Him too.
- I would have defended Christ saying that He didn't see anything and has nothing to do with it or tell them, since

when do you take someone else's opinion in applying the Law?

- I would have felt relieved that they left with no harm done and that Jesus the Christ saved the poor woman and warned her.
- I'll try to learn to cover for others, give excuses, and defend everyone.

Exercise 2: Genesis 3: 1-10

1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

First, point out the different characters of the story:

1. Adam
2. Eve
3. God... to whom is all glory
4. The serpent (no need to try and take its place)

Second, ask yourself....

What would you do if you were in Adam's shoes?

- I would have tried to attend the discussion between Eve and the serpent and share in it.
- I would have refused the fruit that Eve gave me and prevented her to eat from it.
- I would have reviewed with Eve the only commandment to stay in paradise
- I would make sure Eve is constantly filled so she won't think of that tree anymore.
- I would have ran to God asking Him to help me because I ate from the forbidden tree.

What would you do if you were if Eve's shoes?

- I would have done the same as she did.
- I would have been scared from these words and would have asked God or at least ask Adam

- I would have told the serpent “you’re lying” because God said we’ll die if we eat.
- I would have quickly turned to any other tree and ate from it to stop the desire.
- I would have quickly felt guilty and would not encourage Adam to eat of it.

What would you do if you were in God's shoes?

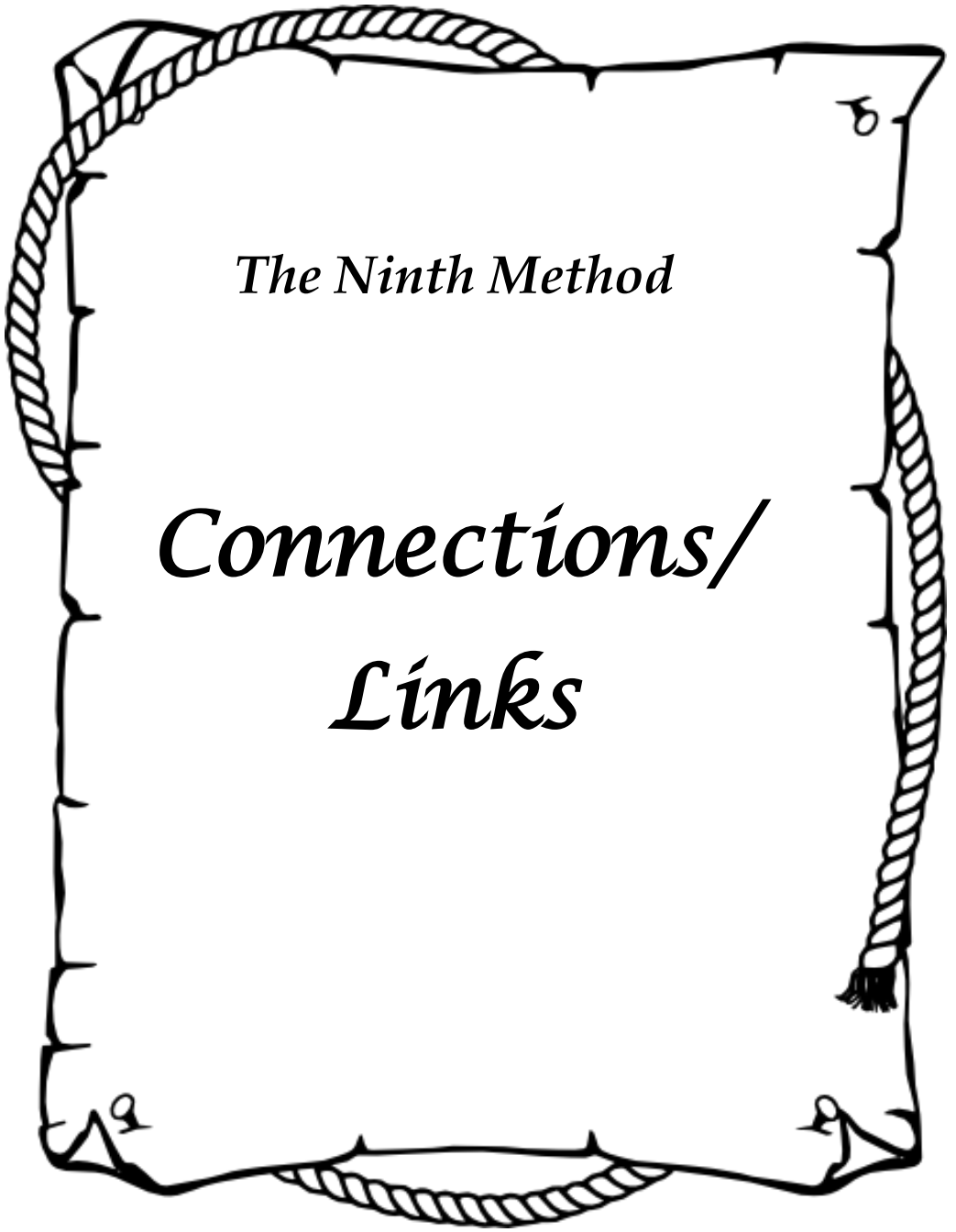
- I might have not placed this tree, knowing the weakness of man (this contradicts with man’s free will and God’s love for him)
- I might have quickly interfered to prevent them from eating.
- I would have sentenced them to death at once and would have created new human beings.
- I would have at least left them to taste nakedness and disgrace for a while to feel guilty.

Remark

This method opens discussion that helps us understand the characteristics and nature of God as well as the weakness of our human nature but not necessarily all the answers are correct, that’s why there has to be a leader to stir the discussion.

Suggested exercises

- Genesis 43: 1-14
- Gospel of Mark 4: 25-34
- Acts 10: 1-34



The Ninth Method

*Connections/
Links*

This method is based on the fact that the Bible is one whole unity, inspired by God and interrelated through its books, in the same book as well as one book to the other.

Explanation

- Thoroughly read the passage or the chapter pointing out the important events and/or meanings
- Look at the parts before and after the one you're reading and ask yourself what's the connection between that event and the other or that thought and the other.

Benefits

1. This method helps to clearly view the sequence of events.
2. Looking before and after the assigned text helps complete the picture and prevents thoughts from straying away from biblical purpose.
3. It fixes the meanings and helps remembering the contents of every chapter and every book with an overall picture.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: Col 3:5-10

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and

covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

What are the important ideas in the passage above?

- Put to death your lusts, in all kinds (strife against sin)
- The corruption of the old man
- Putting on the new man (Baptism) and holding to the new life where all believers are equal.

Now, let us read the part before that passage (Col 3:1-4):

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

What are the main ideas of this part?

- You are raised with Christ according to your faith and baptism

- You have died with Christ and are waiting His second coming to live with Him eternally.

What's the relation between these two parts?

- As you have died in the sacrament of baptism (Col 3:3) then continue to put to death all that's related to the old man.
- As you were raised with Christ in baptism (Col3:1) then you have to be constantly renewed to resemble Christ in everything that He may become all in all. (Col 3:10,11)

Let us then read the part following the first passage (Col 3:12-15):

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

What are the main ideas in this part?

- Put on virtues
- Over all things put on love
- Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

What's the relation between this part and the first passage?

- As you have put off the old man (Col 3:9), you then have to put the new man (Col 3:10) in which all the virtues of Christ appear (Col 3:12)
- As all the listed sins (Col 3:5) (Col 3:8) are against love then put on love which is the basis of peace and the oneness of the body.

Exercise 2: Luke 9: 1-6

1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. 4 "Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. 5 And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." 6 So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

The idea behind the passage:

- Choosing the twelve disciples, explaining their mission and giving them some advices regarding the service

The ideas of the part before the assigned passage (Lk 8:40-56) :

- Miracle of healing the woman with the flow of blood
- Miracle of raising Jairus' daughter.

The link between both passages:

The disciples have watched Lord Jesus doing miracles, the way He deals with people, His compassion, longsuffering and encouragement to them. Sending them to serve, to heal, to teach and preach, Lord Jesus expected them to do the same as they saw.

The ideas of the part after the assigned passage (Lk 9:7-13)

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. 9 Herod said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" So he sought to see Him.

10 And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11 But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. 12 When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding

towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.” 13 But He said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.”

- Herod hears of Jesus the Christ and the different people’s view of Him (Elijah, John, a prophet)
- The disciples come back reporting all what they did.
- The crowd gathers to hear Jesus the Christ and the miracle of the five loaves.

The links appear in:

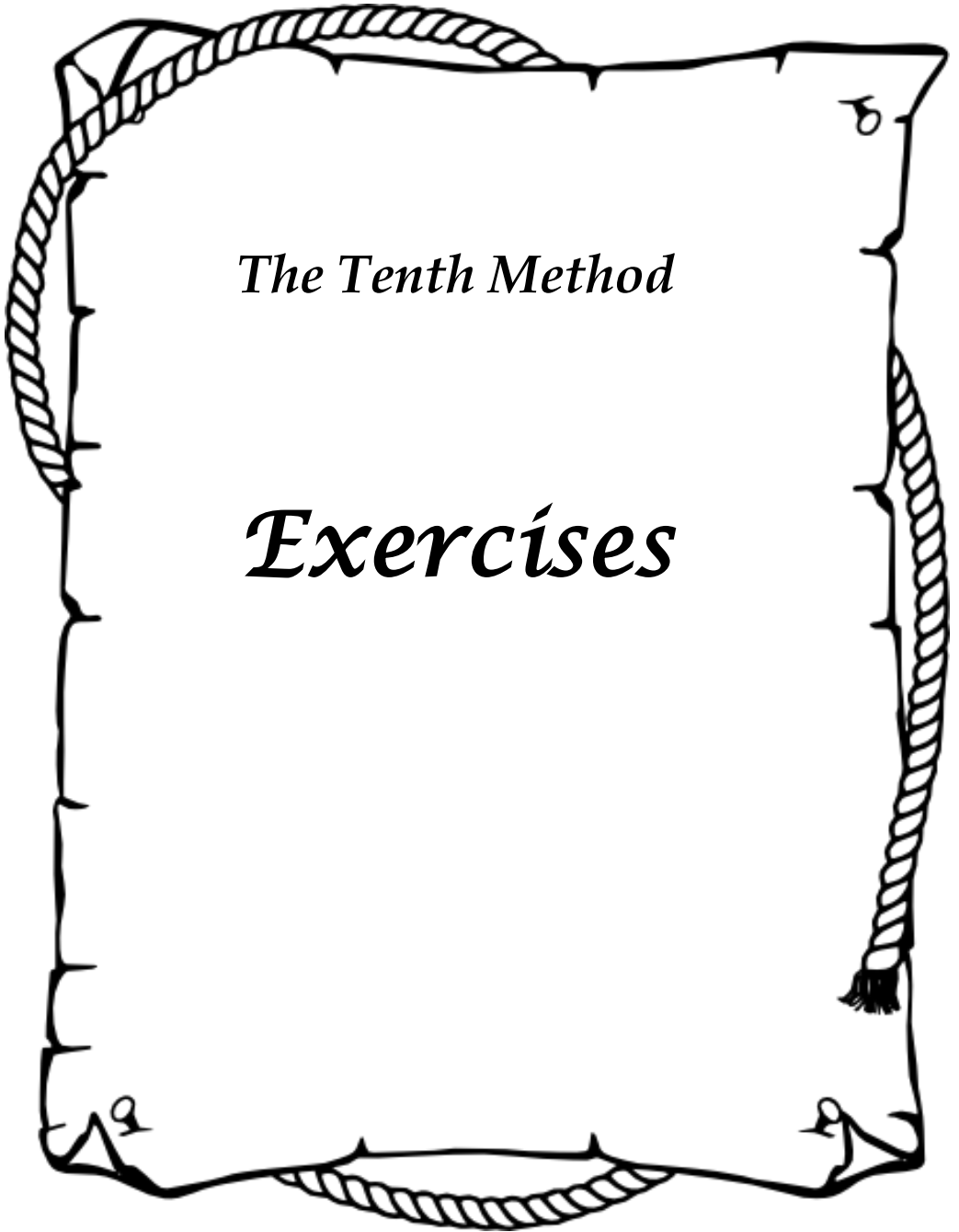
- The disciples preached about Lord Jesus in the villages and that’s how Herod heard of Him and also how the crowd gathered to hear Him.
- The disciples came back to Christ telling Him everything so as to continue to be His disciples and that He might follow their service and growth.
- The discipleship of the disciples continued even after they were chosen as appears in their role in the miracle of the five loaves.

Remark

The links can be made within chapters, or passages in the same chapter, or between a book and another book as in the case of the books of First and Second Kings, seeing them as a continuous history.

Suggested exercises

- First Samuel 6: 1 – 9, link with what's before and what's after.
- Jonah 3:1-10, link with what's before and what's after.
- Hebrews 4:1-7, link with what's before and what's after.



The Tenth Method

Exercises

This straightforward simple method works for all ages and can be for personal or group bible study.

Explanation

- Read the passage or chapter carefully and then ask yourself one simple question: what I would do then?
- From the passage, take out one exercise to do which has to be practical and doable and cannot be just a virtue or a spiritual idea. For examples, the exercise cannot be “love others” but can specifically be “I’ll visit a sick person this week” or “tomorrow I’ll do a good thing with an unbeliever”

Benefits

1. This method is a direct application of the commandment “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22) and also “But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.” (Lk 6:49)
2. Applying a specific exercise for a period of time, days, month or more, will change the reader and gradually print the image of Christ on him.

3. Exercises make the Bible readable from all who saw how the reader is trying to apply these exercises.
4. The exchange of exercise ideas among the study groups helps people to recognize how vast and diversified the application of Christ's commandment is.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: the story of the Paralytic – Mark 2: 1-12

1 And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. 2 Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. 3 Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. 4 And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." 6 And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." 12 Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so

that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

Suggested Exercises

- Not rushing to judge others
- Daily prayer for a sick person
- Visiting a sick person this week and giving him a spiritual book or a comforting message.
- Determining to attend church on time however crowded it is and however busy or lazy I might feel
- Accepting to help whoever asks even if not in my advantage.

Exercise 2: Deuteronomy 6: 1-9

1 “Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I

command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Suggested exercises

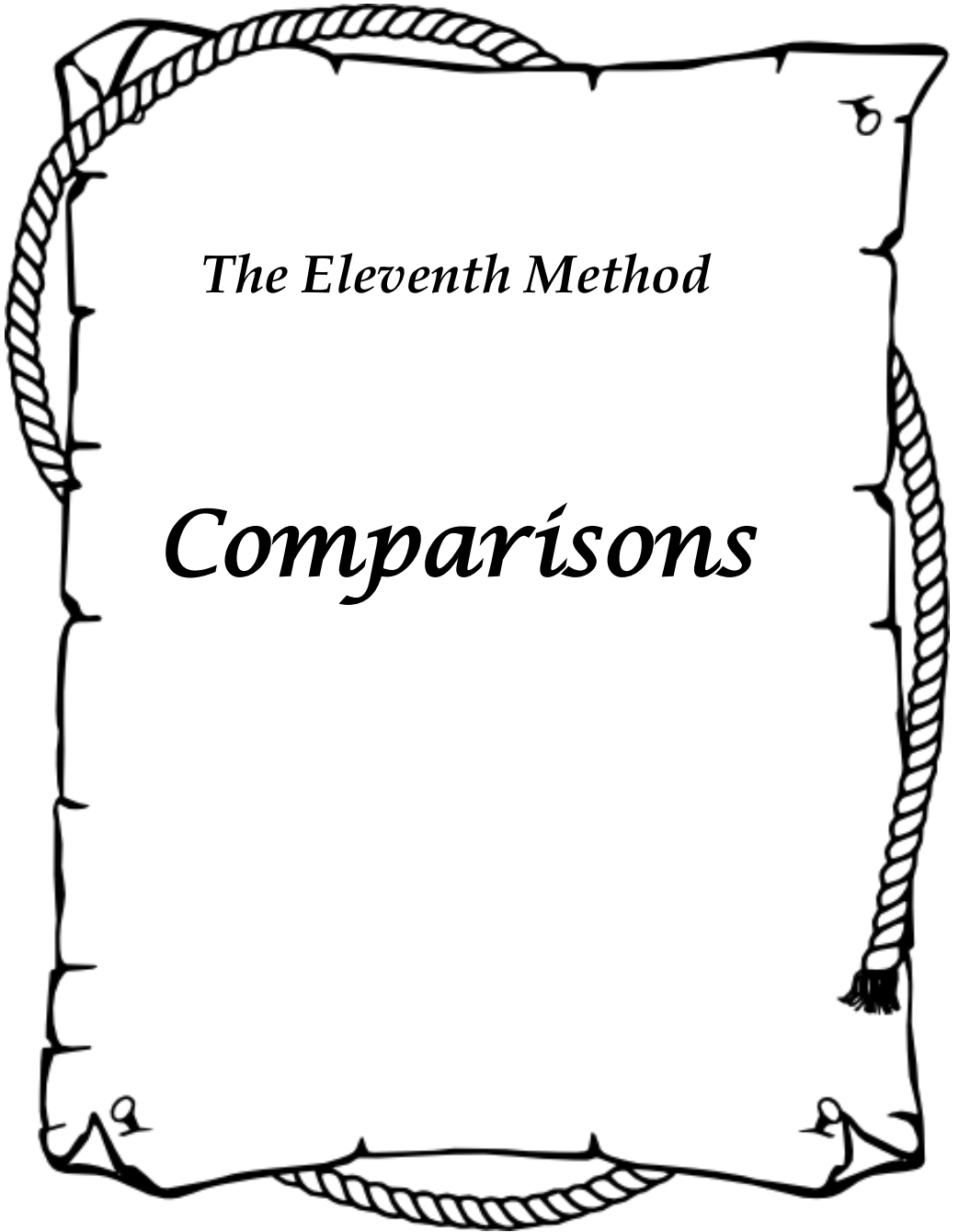
- Holding a family prayer meeting for 15 minutes at least once a week.
- Daily reading of one Bible chapter before going to work in the morning.
- Memorizing a verse daily and writing it in a visible place.

Remarks

- A person may have agreed with his father of confession on an exercise for several months or a year, then these reading exercises would be in addition to his yearly ones.
- Memorizing the related exercise's verse is considered the most encouraging way to remember the verse and use it regularly.
- The whole family can agree to do one exercise and review it weekly.

*Suggested readings for
the “exercise” method:*

- Philippians 4: 1-10
- Psalm 8
- Nehemiah 1:1-11



The Eleventh Method

Comparisons

This method is based on the bible being a comprehensive unit declaring who God is, His relationship with man, victory of good over evil and the unity of the Christian teachings. This differs from the method of “links” because in the later reader correlates successive parts together but in comparisons the reader compares different parts of the bible to compare ideas and events and not to clarify the sequence of ideas.

Explanation

- After a careful reading, the reader starts to compare a chapter with another, a word with another, a character with another or a book with another.
- The reader first has to find the points of resemblance before finding the differences and review these differences against the bases of faith to make sure they don't contradict but make up the whole picture.
- There could be an overlap between the “links” method, the “comparisons” method and the “searching the references” method. All methods contribute to the complete picture of the Bible according to what Christ commanded us “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” (Jn 5:39)

Benefits

1. Comparisons in general fix and explain the meanings like the comparison of good with evil or the sons of God and the song of Satan.
2. To complete the picture, the reader will search the bible – sometimes using the references- to find the comparisons
3. This method is a great way for initiating discussion in study groups.
4. Comparisons complete the meanings and prevent the problem of the use of “one verse”

Practical exercises

1

Comparing a verse with another

Exercise 1:

(**John 1:1**)... “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

(**Gen 1:1**)... “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Comparison:

- “In the beginning” in the gospel of John points to the eternal and the timeless

- “In the beginning” in the book of Genesis points to the beginning of time.
- But in both verses, God says He is the Self-Existing Being

Exercise 2:

(1 Jn 2:15)... “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

(Jn 3:16)... “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Comparison:

- The “world” in the first verse means material things and the lust for them
- The “world” in the second verse means people
- Thus God doesn’t love the first “world” because it means evil but the second is beloved of God, meaning man.

Exercise 3: (left for the reader)

(Ga 5:17)... “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

(1 Co 6:20)... ” For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Comparison:

The word “flesh” in the first verse means

.....
.....

The word “flesh” in the second verse means

.....
.....

2

Comparing a bible character with another

- John the Baptist vs. Elijah the prophet
- Herod the king vs. Ahab the king
- Our Lord Jesus Christ against the characters of Joseph, Isaac, Joshua

(Remember, you need to point out first the similarities then the differences and not the similarities only)

3

**Comparing a Character with another
in the same story**

- Martha and Mariam in the story of Lord Jesus’ visit to their house (Lk 10:38-42)

- The prayer of the Pharisee and the prayer of the tax collector (Lk 18:9-14)
- The wise virgins and the foolish virgins (Mt 25: 1-13)
- The faithful and the unfaithful servants in the parable of the talents (Mt 24:14-30)
- Mordechai and Haman in the story of Queen Esther

4

Comparing a biblical passage with another

- Compare the following passages for instructions to the husband:
 - Colossians 3:18-22
 - Ephesians 5:22-33
 - 1 Peter 3:1-8
- Compare the following passages of the Sermon on the Mount:
 - Matthew 6
 - Luke 6
- Compare the following passages for the difference between the Sermon on the Mount and the Law of Moses:
 - Exodus 20: 1-17
 - Matthew 5:20-48

- Compare the following prayers:
 - The prayer of Jonah the prophet (Jonah 2)
 - Psalm 119 (from the Agpeya) “In my distress I cried to the Lord”

5

Comparing the events of Resurrection from the four gospels

- Matthew 28
- Mark 16
- Luke 24
- John 20, 21

6

Comparing a book with another

- The book of Ezekiel with the book of Revelation
- The epistle of Ephesians with the first epistle of Peter

There are also comparisons within the same chapter. For example in...

Hebrews 12: 18-27

“18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.”) 21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.” 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” 27 Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Or comparisons within the same verse as in...

- Proverbs 13: comparing the wise with the mocker, the lazy with the hard-working, the righteous with the evil doer or the wise men with the foolish men.

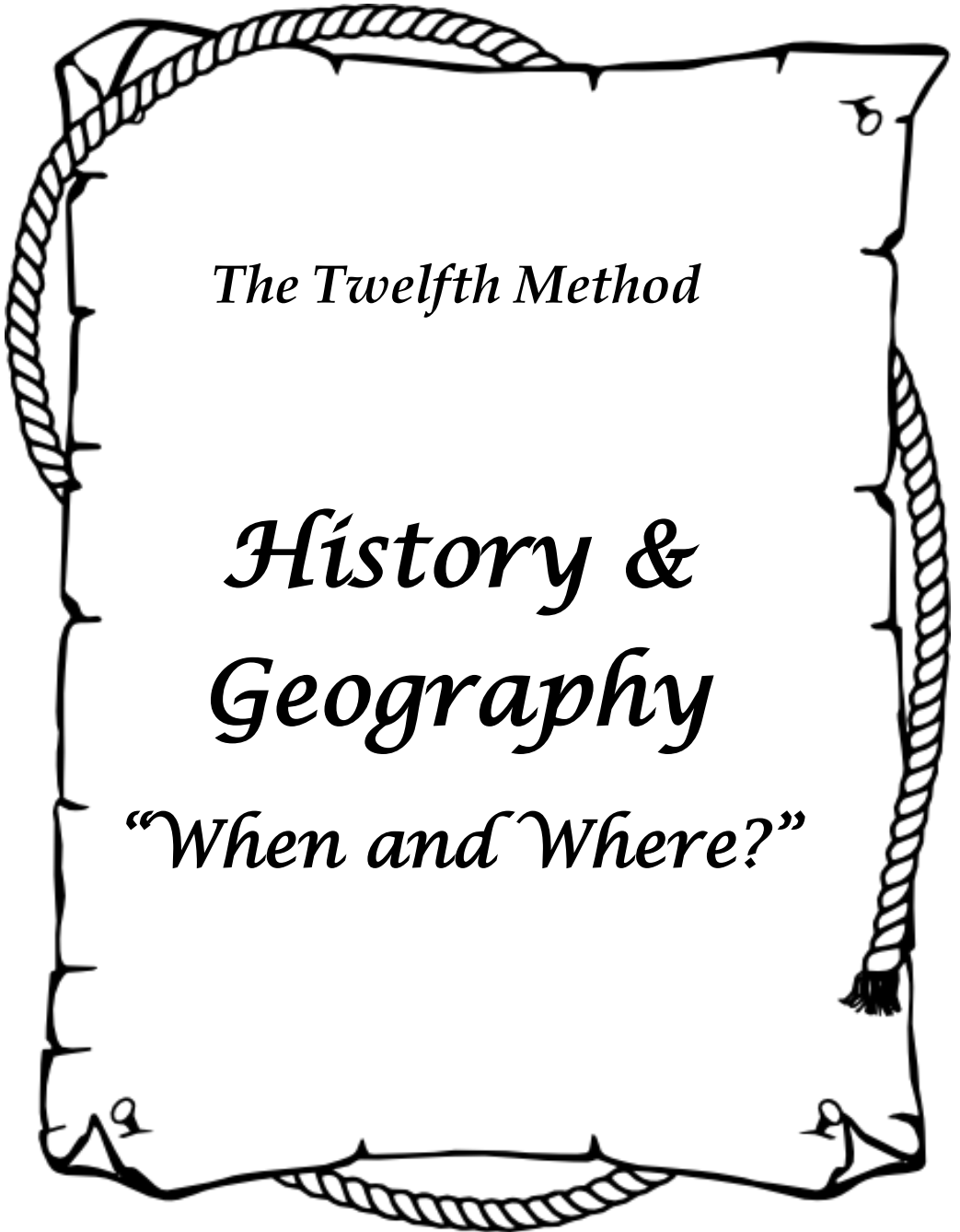
- *“Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the **poor** of this world to be **rich** in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (Jam 2:5)*
- *“And this is the condemnation, that the **light** has come into the world, and men loved **darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (Jn 3:19)*

Remarks

Comparisons can strengthen or complete a meaning. For example, in the events of the birth of Lord Jesus there is a stress on His birth from the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem and also there is a completion of the story with the shepherds' visit (in the gospel of Luke) and with the Wise men's visit (in the gospel of Matthew)

Suggested Exercises

- Compare the miracle of the five loaves in the four gospels: Matthew 14:13-23, Mark 6: 30-46, Luke 9: 10-17 and John 6:1-15
- Compare the story of raising the son of the Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24) with the story of raising the son of the Shunammite woman.



The Twelfth Method

*History &
Geography*

“When and Where?”

This academic method helps imagining the situations and events and linking them to the world history and the places where these events happened.

The Holy Bible is the Word of God written through His prophets and apostles and thus contains real history with real people in real places.

Explanation

- Read the passage, chapter or book and ask yourself two precise questions: When and where?
- “When?” points to the timeline of the story or prophecy, not necessarily in context of AD or BC, but in comparison to other important historical events or characters, such as saying before Moses or after Abraham
- “Where?” points to the place and the geographical route of the events on the old World’s map.
- The reader can get help from other books such as the geography of the Bible, the History of the Bible or introductions to the books of Bible...etc.

Benefits

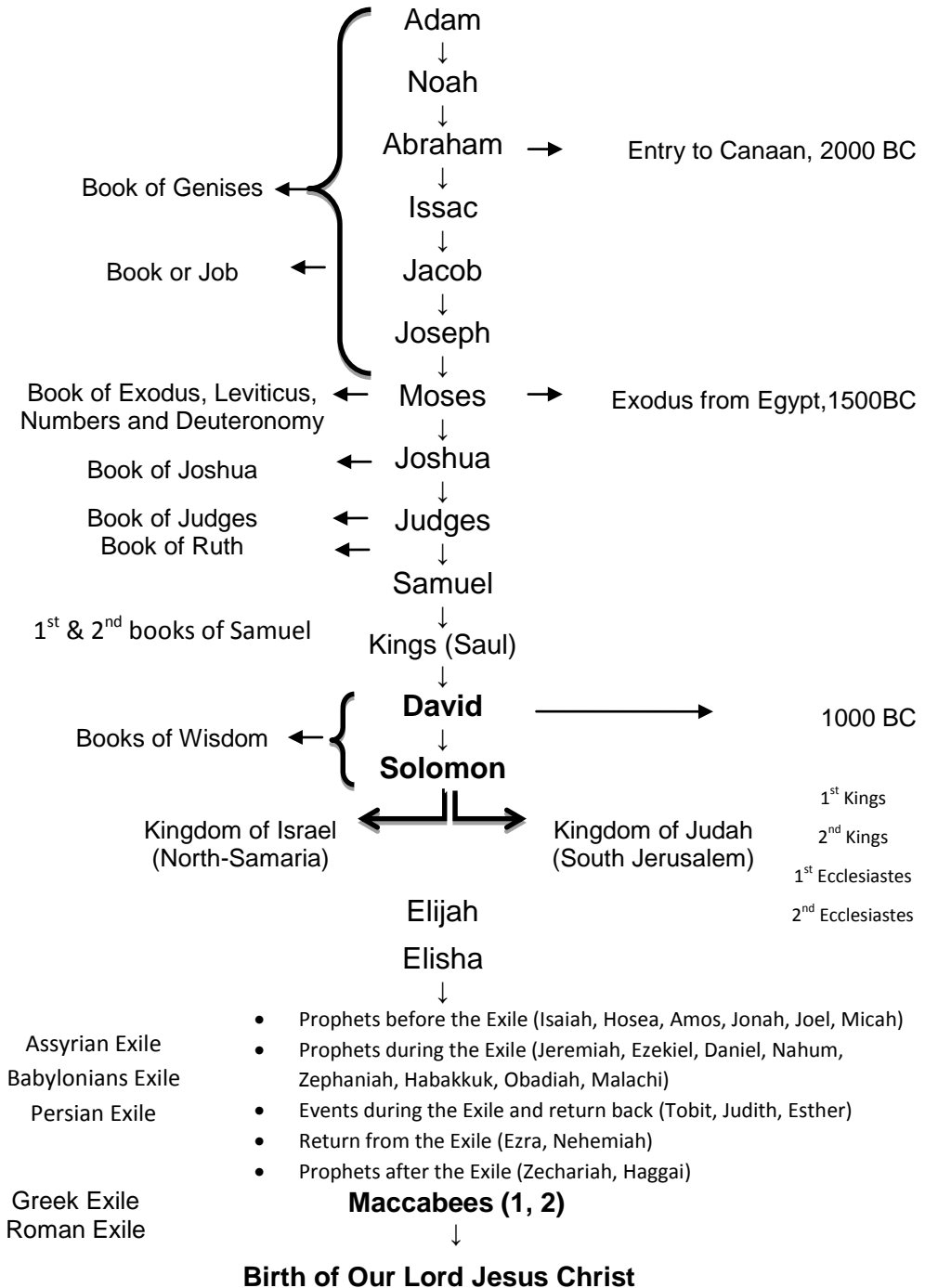
1. Understanding the place and timing of the events helps the reader to live through the events and prevents any extreme explanation that does not take into consideration the place and time.

2. The reality of timeline and sequence of events in the life of the prophets, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and the lives of our fathers the apostles makes it necessary to place them in their respective times and answers the heresies that say that some books of the bible are mythical stories.

Before starting to use this method, let us review some of the important historical and geographical facts:

First: History of the Bible can be viewed through the main characters and events

Part 1: History of the Old Testament

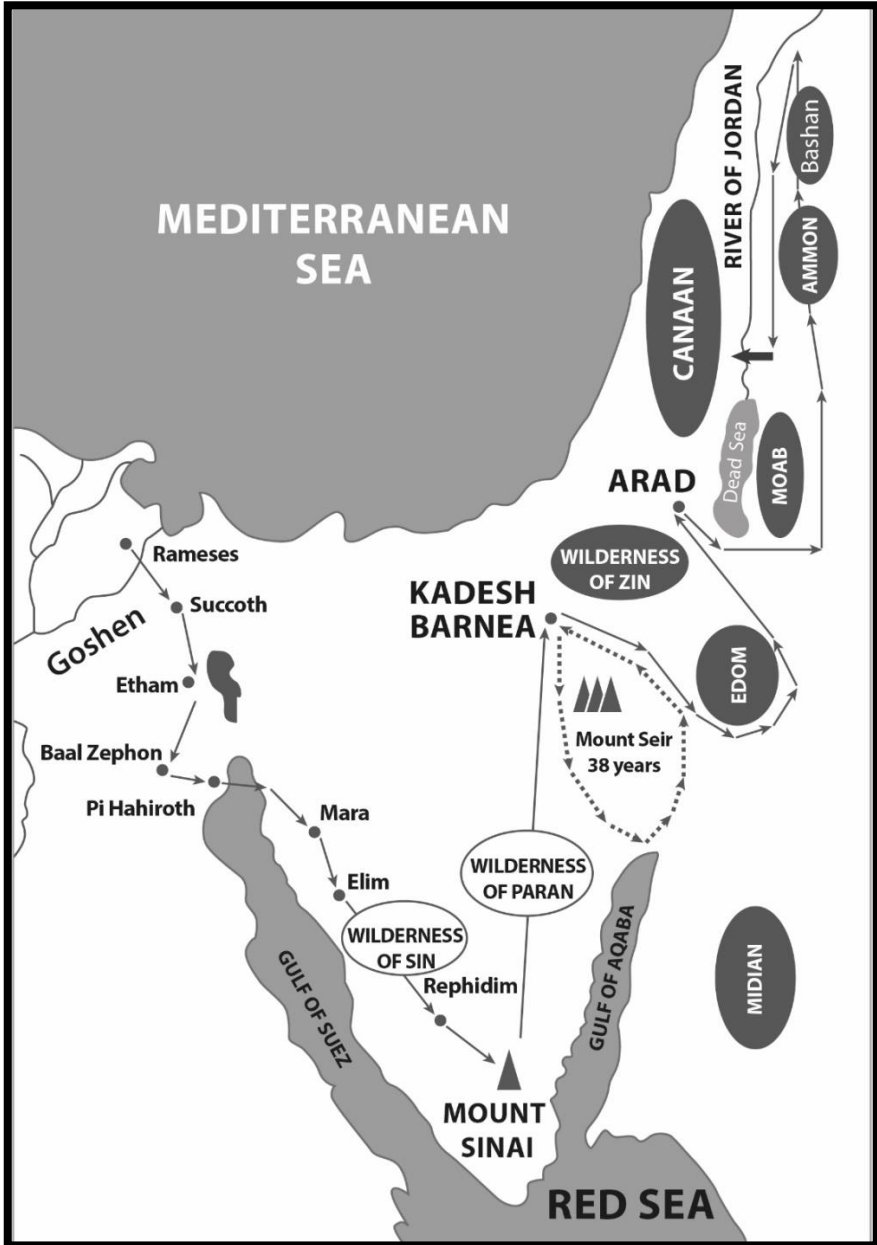


Part 2: History of the New Testament

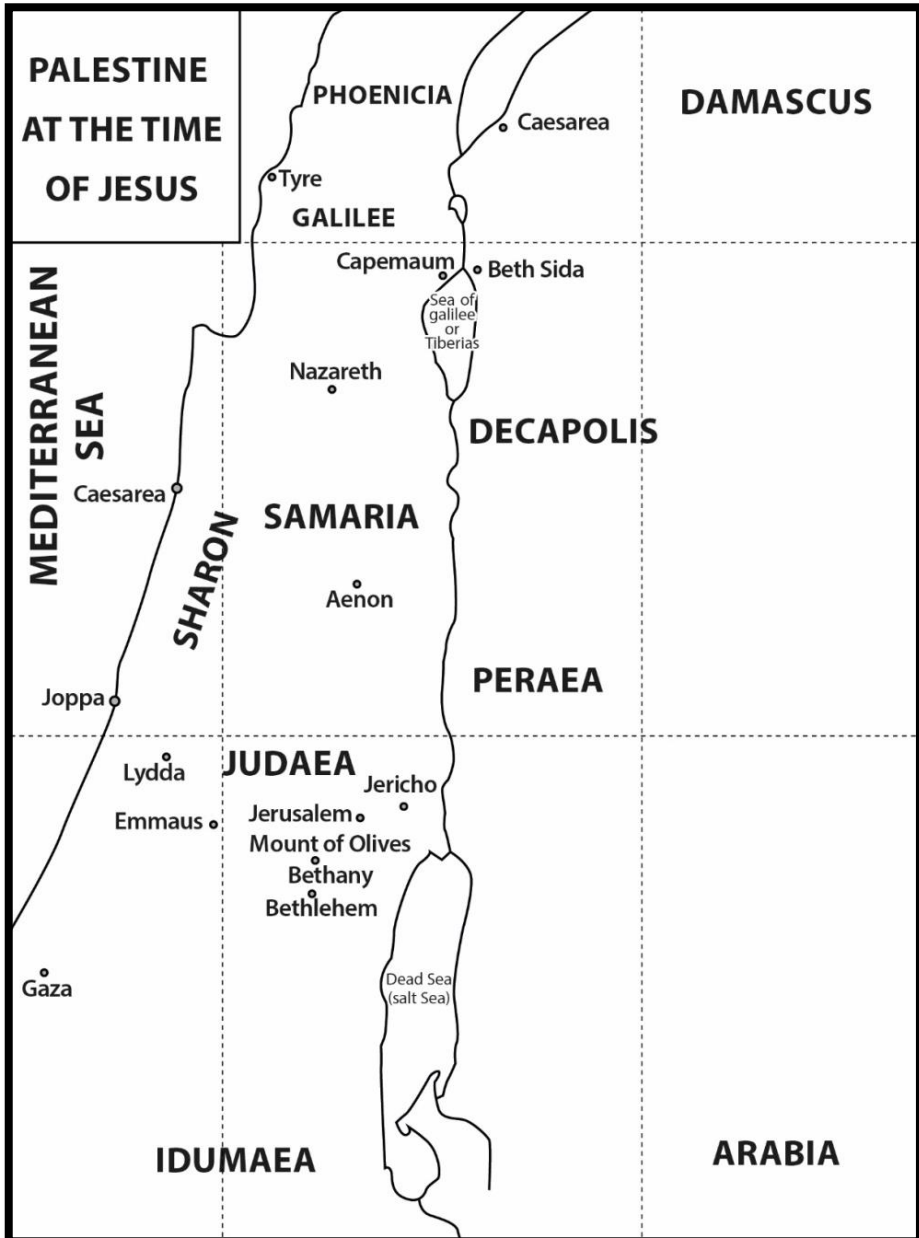
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gospel according to Matthew• Gospel according to Mark• Gospel according to Luke	Life of our Lord Jesus Christ – to Him is the glory- on earth	1 – 33 AD
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acts• Epistles of St. Paul (14)• Epistle of St. James• Epistles of St. Peter (2)• Epistle of Jude	The Early Church	33 – 63 AD
	Fall of Jerusalem and its destruction	70 AD
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gospel according to St. John• Epistles of St. John (3)• Book of Revelation	Writings of St. John the Beloved	90 – 100 AD

Second: For the Biblical geography, it's necessary to know at least 3 main simple maps

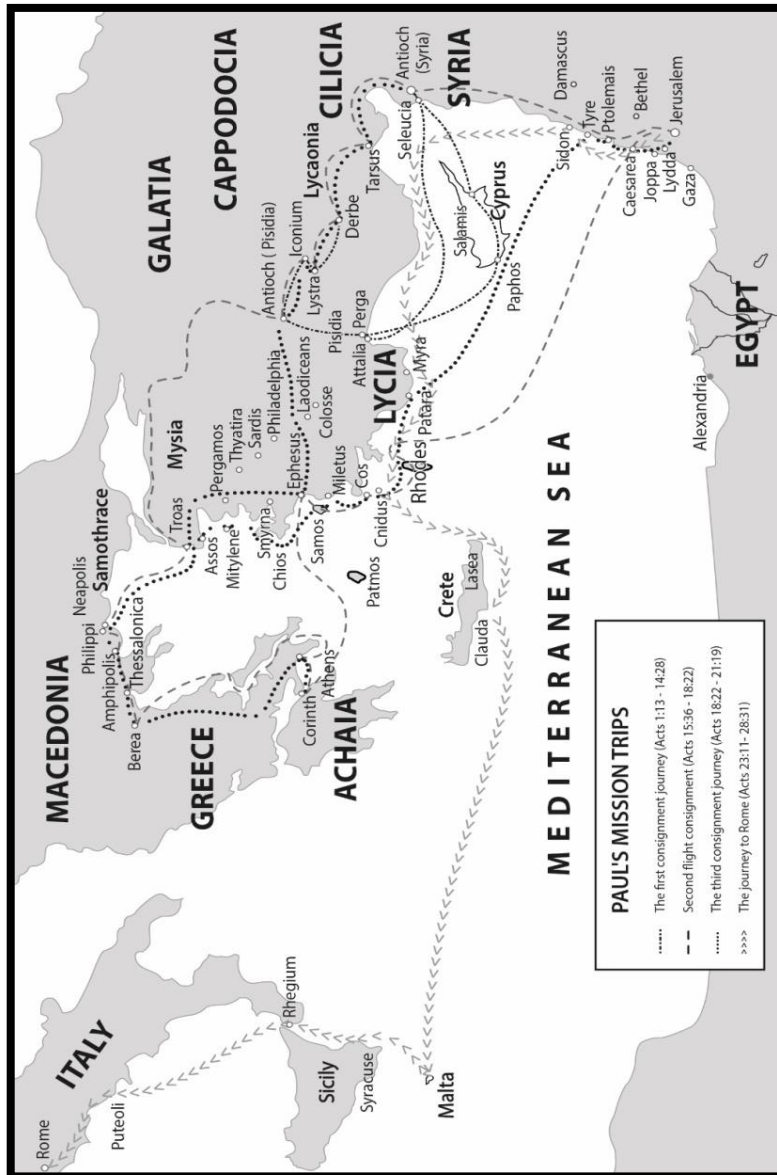
Map 1: of the trip of Exodus of the Israelites from Sinai to Canaan



Map 2: of the land of Palestine during the time of Jesus Christ



Map 3: of Asia Minor and Europe showing the route of Saint Paul's missionary trips and the countries to which his epistles are sent.



Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: The disciples of Emmuas (Lk 24: 13-18)

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. 17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" 18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

When??

- Early Sunday morning (the day of resurrection)
- After the news of resurrection became known
- During the Roman rule when Herod was the governor, i.e. around 33 AD

Where??

The disciples went from the upper room in Jerusalem to the city of Emmuas (map 2) which is around seven miles from Jerusalem, bearing in mind they took the same trip back on the same day.

Exercise 2: Acts 20: 17-19

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews

When??

- At the end of St. Paul's third missionary trip while he was on his way to Jerusalem to meet the disciples
- Before St. Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem after which he was moved to Rome
- Around 62 AD

Where??

Ephesus is the main service center in Asia Minor and Miletus is a port around two hours walking from the city of Ephesus.

Remark

This method may not seem important to some people, especially if reading specific books such as the book of Proverbs. But it's especially important when reading the historical books, the gospels and the book of acts.

Suggested Exercises

"When & Where?"

- Acts 7: 2-6
- John 4:4-6 (find out the history of Samaria and its location)
- Matthew 4:25



The Thirteenth Method

*Church
Readings*

This method depends on the system of the church readings and expands to cover the meanings of the Bible readings as the Spirit of God meant it. So the passages of study are those assigned by the church in its liturgical prayers, including vespers, matins, daily liturgies, liturgies of the fasts and feasts. It also includes a study of the connection between the Agpeya hourly psalms, hourly gospel reading and the events it commemorates, in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ or in our own lives.

Explanation

- We start with the book of “Katamaras” (daily liturgical readings book). The daily readings include the Psalm and gospel reading of vesper prayer, the Psalm and gospel reading of Matins prayer, the Pauline epistle passage, the Catholic Epistle passage (Epistles not written by St. Paul), then the Praxis reading (from the acts of the Apostles) and ending with the Psalm and Gospel reading of the Liturgy.
- We first establish the type of the day whether it is a Sunday, a feast day, a Lenten day or a regular day that follows the daily Synaxarium.
- The readings of the days (all week days except Sundays, Major feast days, Lenten days, Holy Week and the 50 days after Resurrection Feast) are read from the “Katamaras of the days” and connected with the daily Synaxarium.

- The readings of Sundays are read from the “Katamaras of the Sundays” and it focuses on the work of the Holy Trinity in the salvation of humanity and the establishment of the church to receive the coming Christ.
- All days of the Lenten fast have their readings in the “Katamaras of the Lenten season” and these have their special taste which centers on repentance, returning to God and the preparation for Baptism (in case of the Catechumens)
- All days of the holy 50 days after the resurrection have their readings in the “Katamaras of the Holy fifty days” and are centered around the joy of the resurrection, heavenly life, and complete love.
- Each of the Major (and Minor) feast days of the Lord’s has its own reading which is related to that feast and the work of Lord Jesus in our Salvation.
- The readings of the Holy Week of Pascha are gathered in a separate book as the readings follow the events of the last week of our Lord on earth, His crucifixion, His resurrection and the prophecies related to them.

Benefits

1. This method helps the reader to pay close attention during the readings of all church services and thus he’s able to connect the readings and understand the meanings behind them.

2. Transfers to the reader the wisdom of the church fathers in the placement of these passages and the clarity of the message for that day of occasion.
3. This method makes the church live on biblical basis and makes the Bible closely related to all Church prayers and services.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: The Martyrdom of St. Sophia and the Fifty Virgins with her (10th of Hator)

Pauline Epistle from Ephesians 5:8-21

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. 13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. 14 Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the

Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Psalm 45:14,15

She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You.

Gospel from Matthew 25:1-13

1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. 6 “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. 11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Readings Analysis:

- **The Pauline reading...**

specifies who the wise virgin (saint of the day) is by saying “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time” and again explaining the foolish by saying “do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

- **The Psalm...**

points to the wisest virgin our mother Saint Mary by saying “*her companions follow her*” so as to say that whoever follows her is considered a wise virgin, namely the saints of the day. And the part “*Shall be brought to You*” is a clear reference of what the Lord said in the parable “*those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*”

- **The gospel reading...**

points out the virtues of these saints, being watchful and having stored extra oil in their vessel (filled with the Holy Spirit or the inner work of repentance and faithful love)

**Exercise 2: The Departure of St. Abraam Ebn-Zaraa,
62nd Pope of Alexandria**

Catholic Epistle from 1 Peter 2:18-3:7

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Praxis from Acts 20:17-38

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our

Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, And they accompanied him to the ship.

Gospel from John 10:1-16

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers..... and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Readings Analysis:

- Because the saint of the day is a shepherd he is likened to the Good Shepherd with all His virtues mentioned in John 10 and referenced to in the epistle of Peter “*the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*”
- Also in the praxis reading, the virtues of the shepherd as mentioned in St. Paul’s sermon are being applied to the shepherd of the day.

Pull out the shepherd’s virtues from the three passages above

Suggested Exercises

- Study the readings of the liturgy of Christmas and try to link them to the incarnation of Christ.
- Study the readings of the third Sunday of the great lent and link them to repentance and forgiveness
- Study the morning readings of Tuesday of Holy Pascha and link them to the prophecies and the Psalms
- Study the readings of the second Sunday of the holy fifty days and link them to the joy of resurrection and eternal life.

Church Readings

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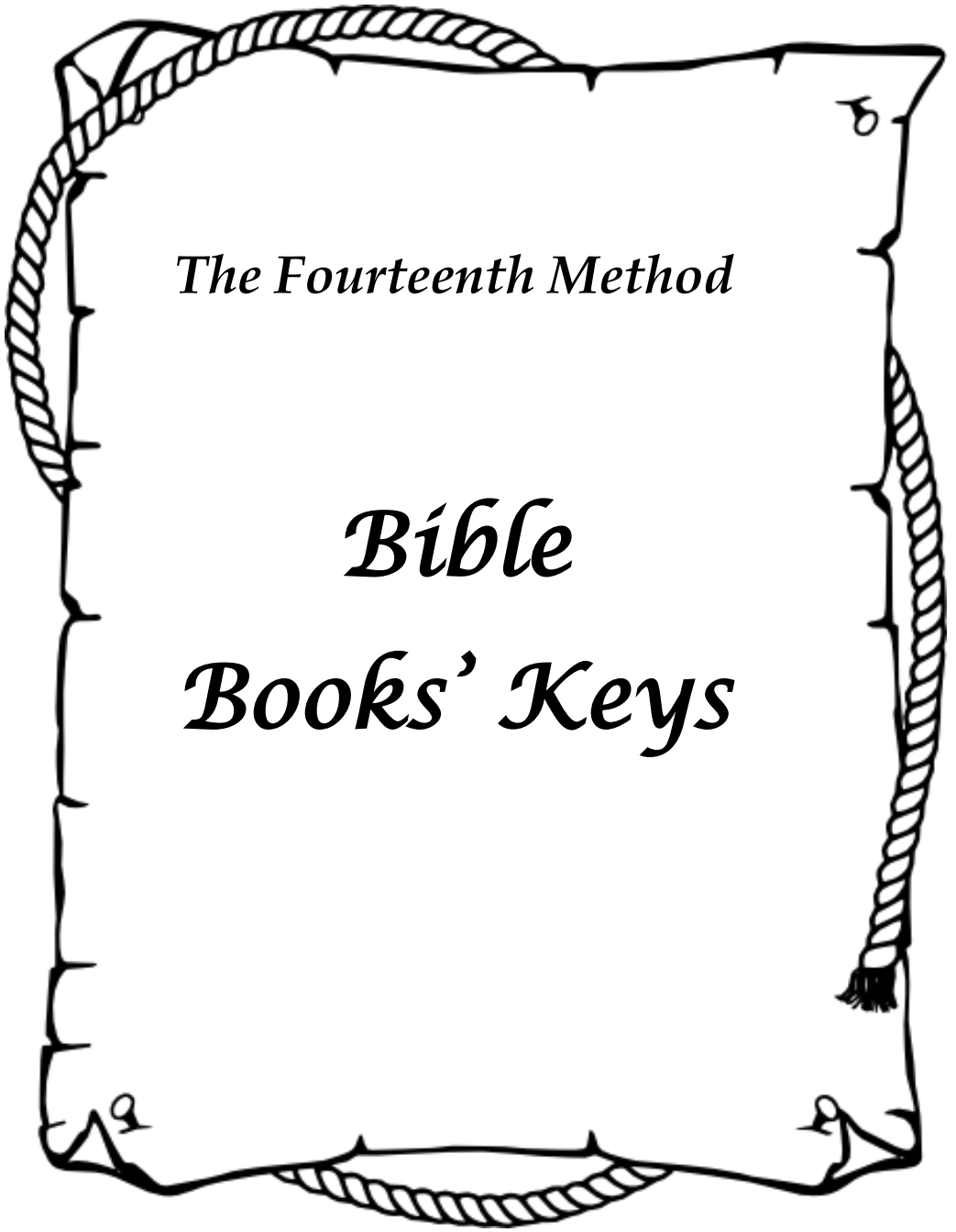
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The Fourteenth Method

*Bible
Books' Keys*

Every book of the bible was written for a certain reason which is the key to understand the book and discovering this goal gives deeper understanding of its meanings. As St. John wrote about his gospel “*these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*” (Jn 20:31)

Explanation

- This method needs an external book or source such as an orthodox study explanation because it depends on other information that it might be hard for the reader to figure out by himself.
- Before starting in any book of the bible, we should answer the questions below:
 - Who is the writer of the book?
 - When was this book written?
 - What was the original language that the book written in?
 - To whom was this book originally written?
 - Where did the events of the book happen?
 - But most importantly, what is the reason or the goal this book was written for?

Benefits

1. It's much easier to understand the book and the relations between its chapters after answering the above questions and reviewing the background information.
2. It's also much easier for the reader to decide the line of thought he's going to be following through the book after understanding the information above.

Practical Exercises

Exercise 1: the Gospel according to St. Matthew

- This gospel was written round 60 AD by St. Matthew (the tax collector) who was one of the twelve disciples.
- It was especially written for the Jews who believed in Christ
- It was originally written in the Hebrew or Aramaic language, then in the Greek language.
- The gospel deals with the birth and life of Jesus Christ on earth till His ascension to heavens.
- It's centered on Christ the king and the invitation to His kingdom.
- This gospel is full of prophecies that have been fulfilled.

Exercise 2: the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians

- The epistle was written by St. Paul in Greek language during his first imprisonment in Rome during the 60th year of the first century.
- It was written to the people of Ephesus, where he served for at least 3 years (Act 20:31) during his third missionary trip but he left the city because of a riot of the makers of idols to get rid of Paul.
- The epistle is centered on the work of Christ in the salvation of humanity and the establishment of the church.
- The first three chapters of the epistle deals with the plan of redemption and salvation and the last three chapters deals with the Christian life and strife of the members of the church.

Exercise 3: the book of Isaiah

- This book was written by Isaiah, one of the Old Testament prophets.
- It was written in Aramaic language during the 8th century BC.
- Isaiah was from a kingly family and lived through the reign of five of Israel's kings, most of whom were evil. Isaiah was martyred by king Manasah before his repentance.

- Isaiah wrote his book to his people in a time when idol worshipping has increased calling them to repentance and return to God and warning them of the coming exile. To the other nations he was prophesying of their destruction because of their evil ways.
- Isaiah has prophesied on the coming Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. He prophesied on His birth, service, passions, death, resurrection, the church of the New Testament, the eternal life and the second coming.

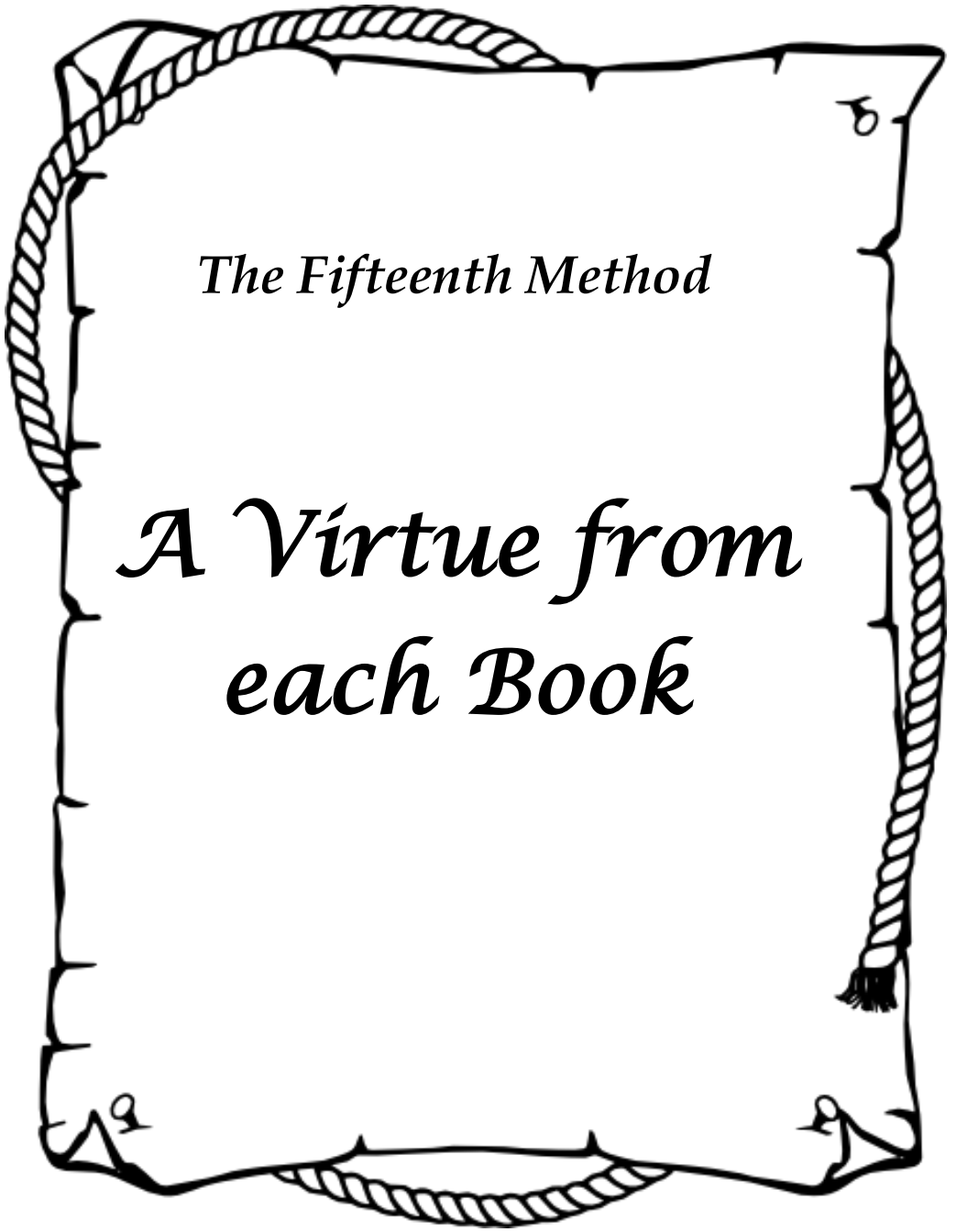
Remark

There might be differences in scholars' writings about the exact date of the writing of certain books but it's more important here to study the meanings and spiritual messages in the book.

Suggested Exercises

Study the introduction of the following:

- The book of Joshua
- The book of Job
- The gospel according to St. Mark
- The book of revelation



The Fifteenth Method

*A Virtue from
each Book*

This method of study helps to focus on one virtue that we want to acquire and we search the books for all the verses that point out to this virtue.

Explanation

- Before you start reading and based on the introductions discussed before, choose for yourself or for your study group one virtue to focus on through all the chapters.
- You can start by answering these questions:
 - What is the meaning of this virtue?
 - How does this virtue practically appear in people?
 - How do we acquire this virtue?
 - What are the blessings of having this virtue?

Benefits

1. This method makes the reader alert during his reading as if he's searching for a treasure among other things.
2. The more verses and situations related to this virtue are encountered through the reading, the more this virtue becomes established in the reader's mind.
3. This initiates a discussion in the group regarding this virtue and helps strengthen the meanings.

Exercises

From the Old Testament:

- Find the virtue of hope in the book of Genesis.
- Find the virtue of faith in the book of Exodus.
- Find the virtue of perseverance in the book of Deuteronomy.
- Find the virtue of tolerance/longsuffering in the book of Jeremiah.

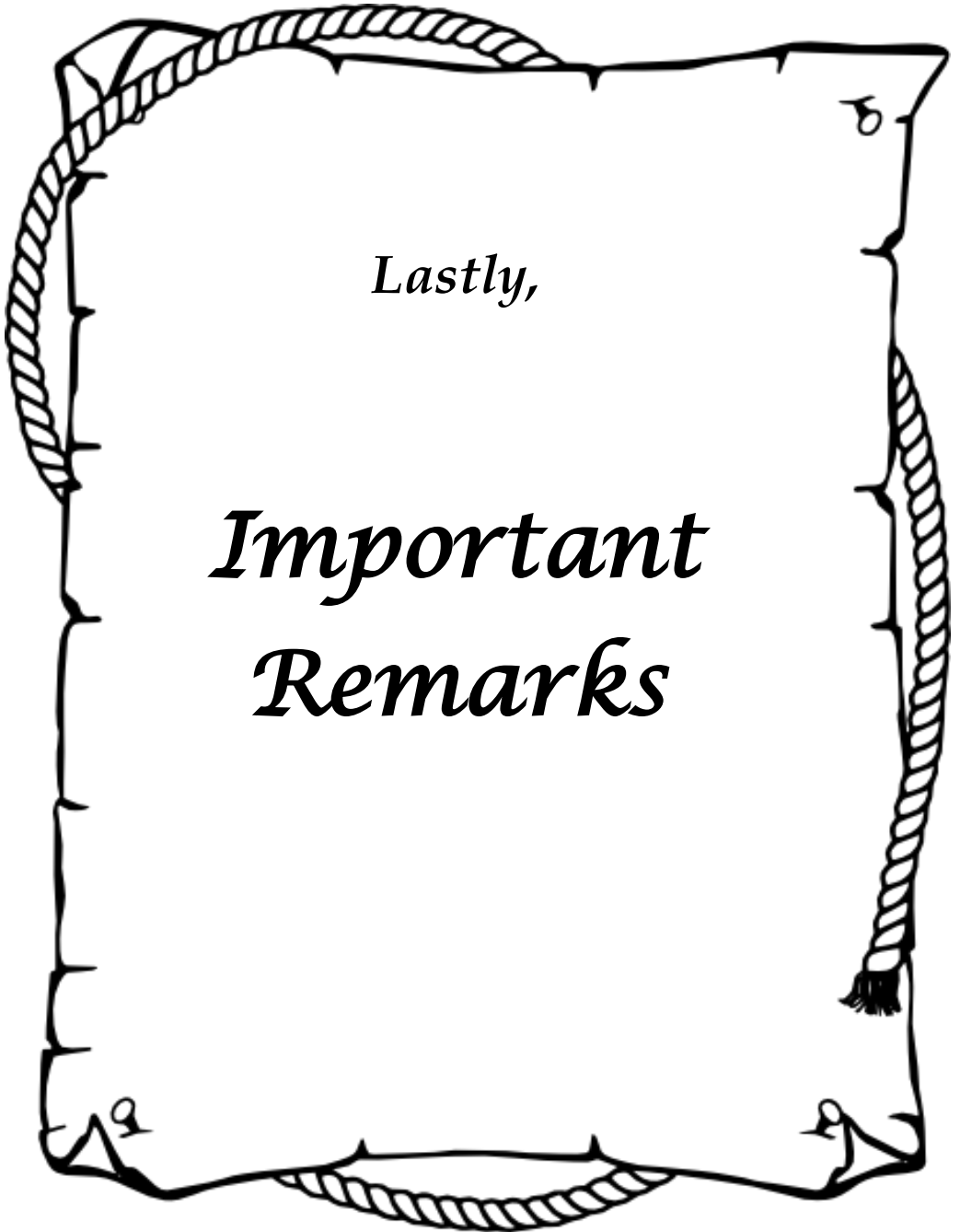
From the New Testament:

- Find the virtue of fervent prayer from the book of Acts.
- Find the virtues of submission and obedience from the first Epistle of Timothy.
- Find the virtues of praise and joy from the book of Revelation.
- (It will not work to answer this method here as it will need books to finish)

Remark

- You can find more than one virtue during reading the book but it's better to read the whole book searching for one specific virtue then read it another time searching for another virtue.

- The virtue might not be mentioned by name but the situation may show it and that's where the wisdom, careful study and search of the reader will help.



Lastly,

*Important
Remarks*

*I have seen the consummation of all
perfection, but Your commandment is
exceedingly broad."*

(Ps 119:96)

There are so many other methods of studying the bible that might appeal to other people, such as:

- Reading the text in a different language, if possible, and preferably in the original languages (Hebrew or Greek). This way clarifies the meanings of the passages.
- Studying the cross references for the passage you're reading to find the whole meaning.
- Finding the same virtue from many books or many bible characters, such as what St. Paul wrote in the Hebrew about Faith (Heb. 11)
- Expressing the passage in your own words, especially in a bible study, to make sure all meanings are clear to all.
- Look at one of the practical everyday situations and search for the verses or biblical events that are related to that situation.

But remember that...

- ❖ “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Ti 3:16)
- ❖ “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pet 1:21)
- ❖ “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Rev 1:3)
- ❖ “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” (Dan 12:3)

