

SAMPLE PAPER

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES MODULE

The module on biblical perspectives was a very interesting, thought provoking course which I enjoyed greatly. It made me aware of how little I knew about the deeply sown religious roots effecting our Western culture, as well as provided me with a foundation of knowledge needed to conduct future research on the subject of Western religion. I can now view the Bible not as a book of rules but more from the perspective of a literary, historical document. The module provided me with a better understanding of the evolution of Judaism and Christianity through studies of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, the organization and creation of the Bible, as well as an opportunity to share and learn experiences with others with which I work and live.

As background information, I think of myself as a religious person because I have accepted Jesus Christ as my savior and have a strong belief in the Bible scriptures even though, by some measures, I have a limited religious background. I was raised in the Baptist faith in a family who, as a group, rarely attended church on a regular basis. I learned of the Bible and the stories it contained from my mother, distant family members, and my personal readings. I was raised under the conception that church attendance was not mandatory for salvation but rather that religion is what one feels in their heart and displays in their action.

Based upon my background, my exposure to the Bible, to date, has been fragmented. Until now, I have not been able to fully put my arms around the sequence of events occurring in the Bible. From a historical perspective, the module has helped me visualize and understand the sequence of events and plight of the people which occurred during this era in time. I now have a

better understanding of the chronological order of events from creation, Abraham, the exodus, the united monarchy, the division and fall of Israel, the exile, the return from the exile, and the Messiah. The history revealed during the course provided me not only with an understanding of what occurred when, but also many triggering agents. For example, when Moses was called upon by Yahweh to free the Hebrews from Egypt marked the beginning of the mass exodus, and the many power struggles with neighboring countries experienced by Israel was a result of the country's unfaithful acts against God.

Studies of the Hebrew Bible have helped me understand the evolution of both the Christian and Jewish faith as we know it today. Of particular interest to me was the story of Abraham, the foundation of Judaism and the roles of the prophets, the history of the nation of Israel, and the atrocities performed by notable biblical characters.

Prior to the module, I never fully understood nor appreciated the significance of Abraham. I always understood Abraham to be an important biblical figure and the Jews as a chosen people, but I did not know how they were linked together. I am now aware that through Abraham, Judaism was born along with the chosen nation of Israel, as we know it today. Armed with a better understanding of the promise God made in the covenant with Israel to become a kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation, I can better interpret events transpiring in the middle east.

I have always been intrigued with the nation of Israel. The module readings provided a better understanding of the country's biblical and political history. Not given a handbook describing the specific steps the newly appointed chosen nation was to follow, I can appreciate the struggles the people were able to overcome. Through their turbulent, transitional leadership

struggles during the period of the judges, prophets, kings, and conquerors I have become more aware of the important role the prophets played to guide the nation to its destiny.

The prophets were responsible for the oral and literary preservation of tradition which evolved into Judaism. The true prophets provided a means by which Judaism could survive and even prosper out of national disaster. Their view of history assured a religious future beyond the individual moments of disaster, acknowledging that Yahweh controls all history to accomplish his purpose. If Yahweh were the God of all history, he was also God of all people. The prophet's view helped to move Judaism past a narrow nationalism into the arena of the world religions, and to assure its survival.

Class discussions and readings have brought about a keener awareness of the sufferings the people endured as a result of their unfaithfulness. The sufferings endured by Israel indicates even the chosen people are only human, and all mankind is susceptible to human weaknesses. The nation of Israel can be used as an example for others reflecting the expectations and the unconditional love God has for his children as well as the repercussions of unfaithfulness and of what is yet to come.

During the studies of the Hebrew Bible, I was surprised to discover the immoral acts performed by the famous, respected biblical characters. The acts of murder, incest, and adultery I found particularly alarming. My initial reaction was, "Why did God not chose somebody more worthy to carry out his wishes?" After a more thorough reflection, I realized that up until this point in time there was not a clear and distinct definition for the people to distinguish between right and wrong. In addition, I feel the acts portrayed by the characters also emphasizes the weakness of all mankind and the eternal forgiveness and love of God.

Through class studies and reading of the New Testament, I am able to separate the books into two separate categories; the life and times of Jesus Christ also known as the Gospels, and the letters written to provide encouragement and support to follow the Christian faith during troubling times. I now realize the original purpose of the books written by the apostle Paul. The books, or letters, were written to preserve the new tradition of Christianity, to defend it from distortion, and to share the word with others. Through Paul, Christianity was made available and accepted in the Gentile world outside the borders of Palestine.

Throughout the duration of the course, I found myself sharing thoughts and things that I had learned through readings and class discussions with my husband and daughter, as well as with the people at work. Outside discussions made me more aware of the wide array of opinions people possess and a greater appreciation for the spiritual bonds individuals attach to their faith. Individual's biblical interpretations are based upon one's own personal experiences and exposures to religion and should not be judged as being right or wrong. Without the threat of judgment, people are more free to express their personal beliefs and work and live harmoniously together.

Through the Bible Book reviews and my readings in the text, From Adam to Armageddon, I have a better understanding of the organization of the Bible as well as how the Bible evolved.

The Bible book review paragraphs provided me with a better understanding of the content and purpose of each book in the Bible. My initial reaction of having to write a summary of each book was, "Why?" I knew that not enough time was allowed to read and digest each book thoroughly during the short duration of the course. However as I skimmed through each book, I was surprised to find the book interpretations in the Life Application Bible easy to follow

and understand. I am now more comfortable with location and content of each Bible book, as well with an applied knowledge of how to look up various references in the Bible.

I found the portion of the module containing information regarding the formation of the Jewish and Christian canons of particular interest. It has always been a mystery in my mind as how the Bible evolved. The material on the councils of Jamnia, Hippo, and Carthage helped me understand that the Bible was formed to preserve and protect the religious beliefs of both Jewish and Christians followers. Up until this module, I was not aware there was a specific group formed to determine which books/letters the Bible would contain and the specific criteria required of these documents.

As I entered the course, I was hesitant and my expectations were that of skepticism. I did not understand why a course of this nature would be included in a degree program curriculum. However, after completing the course I now have a greater appreciation of the fabric from which our Western culture is woven along with an understanding of the importance of accepting other individuals regardless of their religious backgrounds. After being exposed to the information presented during the course, I am less critical of other's faiths which differ from my own. I feel this will assist me in professionally and personally leading a more harmonious life style in our religiously diverse world.