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a church you can call home

- **Helpful Bible Messages**

learn what the Bible means and why it is important for your life

- **Refreshing Music**

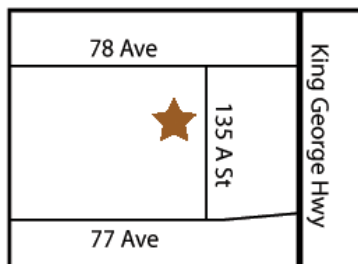
uplifting, Christ-honouring hymns that will encourage your heart

- **Family, Friends, and Fun**

a church family of friends who really love each other

- **Loving Child Care and Classes**

a fun, clean, and memorable experience for your children



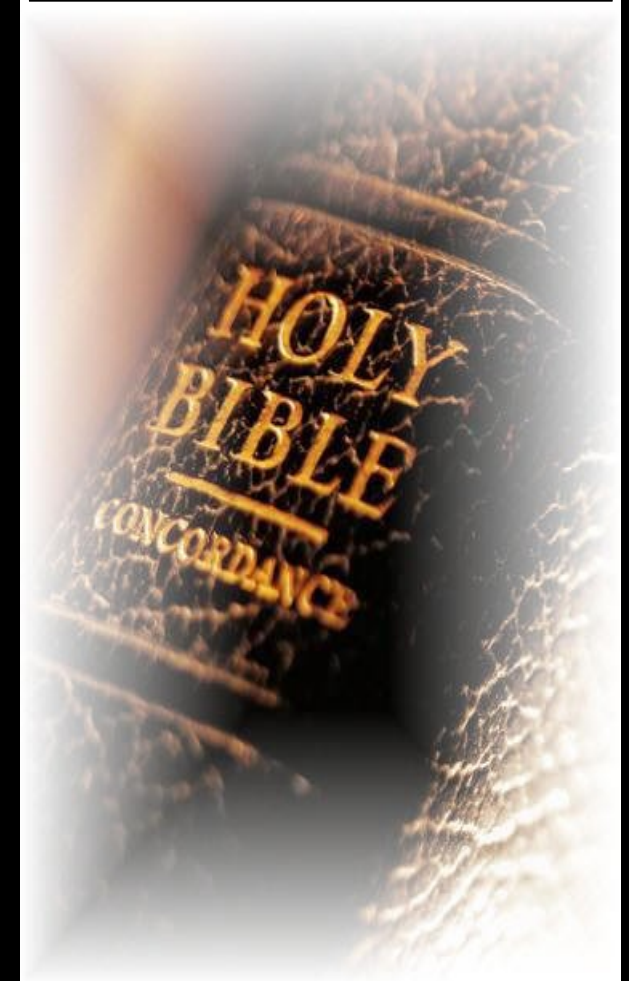
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What is the Bible?

Lesson
One

A Basic Bible Study on the Christian Faith



This Bible Study Belongs To

Grace Baptist Church Contact

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A Letter from Pastor Steven White



Welcome to the Grace Baptist Church Bible Study. I am so glad that you have chosen to devote some time to exploring the truths of the Bible and Christianity. You will find the time you invest will be rewarding and helpful, and if there is anything that I, or someone in our church can do to help along the way, please feel free to contact us.

This course was designed for three reasons:

1. to introduce people to the Bible
2. to help them understand much more about the Bible
3. and, most important, to help them understand more about who God is and how we can actually know Him directly and personally, through what the Bible clearly teaches.

Remember, there is no cost whatsoever for this Bible Study, nor for the Bible we give you. You are under no obligation to continue and you may drop out at any time for whatever reason you choose, and you may **keep the Bible** as our gift to you. You are completely in control at all times. Our only reason for giving you all this is so that we can obey the words of the Saviour Jesus Christ, who said, "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (the gospel of Mark 16:15, page 1054.)

In the first Lesson, you will discover several important reasons why the Bible is the greatest Book ever written, and why you can trust what it says. Learning to properly understand the Bible, and believing what it says, is the foundation for getting to know God Himself.

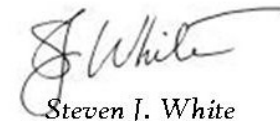
We suggest you take your time and not rush. Set aside an hour to properly work your way through each Lesson. We also suggest you pause a moment and pray, asking God to help you to understand the lesson, then start right in. You can easily look up the Bible verses using the page numbers of the Bible we have given you. Bible verses are provided by book, chapter, verse and page number, and are written like this example... 'Genesis 10:1 (page 10)'. This means the book of Genesis, chapter 10, verse 1, and it is found on page ten. When you

are at the proper book and chapter, further verses may be given, such as 'verse 12'. Occasionally, we may want to draw your attention to a part of a verse, in which case the verse will be written with a letter. For example, 'verse 10a' would refer to only the first part of verse ten. Please be careful not to confuse this with the Topic Headings, which are often marked with an alphanumeric reference (for example: 1a, or 1b), simply so that we can easily refer back to them in future lessons.

Work at your own pace, fill in the blanks and answer the questions the best you can. Don't worry if you are slow at finding the verses, or you can't pronounce some of the words in the Bible. Put a question mark (?) beside anything you do not understand, and when you next see the person who gave you this study, ask them to explain to you what it means. If they don't have the answer, they will get it for you.

Thank you again for choosing to study the Bible with us. Bible study is both rich and rewarding, and our prayer for you is that you become wealthy in the knowledge of Almighty God!

Your Friend,



Steven J. White
Senior Pastor

Lesson One—What is the Bible?

Introduction

The English word ‘Bible’ comes from the French word ‘Bible’, which came from the Latin ‘biblia’ (which is a plural word meaning ‘the Scriptures’, or in today’s language, ‘the many sacred writings that make up what we know as the Bible’. The Latin word came from the Greek Language ‘biblia’, meaning ‘books’, which came from ‘biblos’, which means ‘book’.

However, the book we know as ‘The Holy Bible’ is the number one best selling Book in the world, year after year. The number of current copies are estimated in the billions. It has been translated into more than 2,000 different languages (more than any other book) and time spent reading the Bible is time well invested. No other book has had such a positive effect on people, families and nations, than the Holy Bible.

At the same time, the Bible has faced great opposition from powerful kings, politicians and religious leaders. It has been banned, burned and belittled more times than anyone can count, yet down through the ages men, women and even children have willingly given up their lives for the ‘crime’ of simply owning a Bible or reading it. What unique, life-changing power does this Book possess? Let’s find out! (Remember to look up the Bible verses and read them aloud to yourself.)

When you are ready to begin Lesson One, pause for a moment of prayer. If you are unsure how or what to pray, here is a suggested prayer. *“Dear God, I thank you for the opportunity to study the Bible. Please give me wisdom and help me understand what it is all about, and please help me to understand who You are. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”*

When was the Bible written? (1a)

While other religious books were written by one man, or perhaps two or three, over a period of a few years, the Holy Bible

stands in a class of its own. It was written with the help of almost 40 different godly men (most of whom had never even met each other); over a time period of almost 1500 years (from approximately 1400 BC – 100 AD).

However, the truly amazing fact is that the flow of the Bible is consistent and harmonious. It’s as if each author had read the writings of the others (which most did not, nor could not), then added the next building-block of truth to the overall Book. This alone makes the Bible unique over all other books ever written!

What is the Bible made up of? (1b)

The Bible speaks accurately on a variety of subjects including history, geography, science, health and medicine, sanitation, prophecy, marriage relationships, raising children, wisdom, music, poetry, business, God, heaven, hell, eternity, sin, and perhaps most important, Salvation, which we will explain later.

Now, take the Bible we gave you, and open it at the beginning. The first few pages are a handy Bible Reading Guide, giving you 3 ways to read the Bible. Method number 1 will help you to easily read through the Bible in just 12 months – that’s about 3 chapters each day. However, at normal reading speed, it only takes about 72 hours to read through the entire Bible.

Next, after the Reading Guide, is a section on ‘How The Bible Came To Us’. This will give you even more information on the history of the Bible, should you like to read it. After this section, there are 2 pages listing the various books of the Bible. From now on, we will call this the ‘Table of Contents’, and we suggest you place a book-mark here so you can quickly get to it.

Notice the Bible consists of 66 separate books. Further notice there are 39 books in the Old Testament, which are the first installment of an exciting true story. This story begins with

creation, and takes us up till about 400 BC. Let's take a moment now and look at this. Remember to look up the verses and read them aloud.

The Bible begins this true story by teaching that God created us
(Genesis 1:1, page 1, and Genesis 1:27, page 2).

It explains how sin and its consequences first came into the world
(Genesis 3:1-8, page 3)

It explains how God promised He would send a Saviour to help us
(Genesis 3:15, page 3)

To do this, God first chose a man named Abram
(Genesis 12:1-3, page 12) -later called 'Abraham'

- God used him to build a nation from which the Saviour of the world would come.

When this nation was formed and ready, God gave them a system of Law to obey. It is often referred to as the 'Law of Moses', because God used Moses to deliver these laws to the nation of Israel
(Leviticus 26:46, page 149)

Why is the first part of the Bible called the Old Testament? (1c)

A 'testament' is a 'will' that comes into effect after the death of the one who made it. So, when Moses died, the Jewish people began following Moses' Law*, which is why we call it the 'Old Testament' (we will call this the 'OT'). The 34 OT books that follow the first 5 (39 in total), trace what happened to the Jewish nation over approximately the next 1,000 years, up until about 400 BC.

*It is important for you to know that Salvation is a separate issue from the Law. The Law began with Moses until the time when the Saviour, Jesus, died on the cross. During this time, God wanted to have His everyday dealings with His people on the basis of Law; but after Jesus' death, until today, God's dealings are on the basis of Grace. We will explain this more fully in future Lessons.

Now, let's turn back to the Table of Contents at the front of the Bible and look again at the lists.

Notice the New Testament (we will call this the 'NT') consists of 27 separate books, which cover a time period of about 65 years, from 30 A.D. till about 95 A.D.

The NT tells about how the promised Saviour (Jesus Christ) was God in the flesh
(John 1:1, page 1097).

It tells how He came to earth
(Luke 2:11, page 1058).

It tells how He died for our sins
(1 Corinthians 15:3, page 1197. We will explain this more in future Lessons).

However, before the Saviour Jesus died on the cross, He instituted a new testament
(Hebrews 9:15, page 1249)

The NT is largely about God's everyday dealings with people, now based on Grace rather than Law.

This is why these 27 books are called the 'New' Testament.

Who wrote the Bible? (1d)

This is a good question, and one that you will need a reasonable answer to, before you can properly benefit from the future Lessons of this Study. So, it's important that you take your time, look up the Bible verses and think things through carefully.

Some people say that man wrote the Bible, while others say it was written by the devil, and still others claim it was written by God. Is it possible for us to know the answer? We believe it is.

First, let's determine if man invented and wrote the Bible. Logically, it is not in the nature of man to humble himself and openly confess his sin and wickedness, yet the Bible exposes man's sin and openly condemns it again and again.

Look up Ezekiel 18:4 (page 876), and fill in the blank.

“The soul that _____, it shall die.”

Look up Romans 3:23 (page 1171), “For all have _____, and come short of the glory of God;”

Look up Jeremiah 17:9 (page 804). The Bible here teaches that man’s heart is desperately “_____”.

If men wrote the Bible, then we must ask how it was possible for them to know what was said in secret? Psalm 44:21 (page 629), “Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the _____ of the heart.”

Or how could man accurately predict the future? Isaiah 46:10 (page 767), “Declaring the _____ from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not _____, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

Furthermore, how could mortal men reveal a consistent picture

Does the Bible Contain Errors? of who God is, and how mankind can be righteous with Him? Man could not do this without making ghastly errors and contradictions. Proverbs 19:3 (page 700), “The foolishness of man perverteth his _____: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.”

It is not in the nature of mankind to take 1500 years writing a Book like the Bible. Nor is man able to know all the secrets of the heart; nor can he know the future; nor can he present a consistent, accurate picture of who God is. Without divine help, man can no more comprehend and reveal God than an earthworm can comprehend and reveal a man.

This leads us to the subject of errors. If men wrote the Bible, then it’s reasonable to assume the Bible should be filled with mistakes and errors. But, where are the errors? Most people who claim the Bible has errors have never actually seen the ‘errors’, but simply repeat what they heard someone say, or

what they read somewhere. As you know, in a court of Law, this type of reasoning would not be accepted as true, and would be rejected.

Are there really errors in the Bible? Has the Bible been changed over the years? The answer is no. The Bible has not been changed. There are, in museums today, many thousands of ancient Biblical documents, and they all testify to the unchanged accuracy of the Bible. In fact, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is extremely good proof that the Bible has not been changed.

However, the Bible is not the easiest Book to read, which is why we need to STUDY it. For many people, when they first read the Bible, they may read things that they don’t understand, and these things may appear as errors or even contradictions. Things which contribute to this problem include:

1. a lack of knowledge of the customs of the day;
2. failure to understand the context in which something was said;
3. failure to properly understand the meaning of the words used, the grammar and punctuation;
4. rushing to conclusions without carefully comparing other Bible passages that deal with the similar subject.

The Bible itself says that it contains some difficult things. 2 Peter 3:16 (page 1265) says, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

An important Biblical principle of understanding the Bible is to compare scripture with scripture. It’s like letting the Bible speak for itself. 1 Corinthians 2:13 (page 1186) says, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” When we take the time to carefully get all the facts,

that's when problems become solved. Again, this is one reason why we need to STUDY the Bible.

Personally, over the last 33 years, I have read through the entire Bible dozens and dozens of times, I have studied every so-called 'error' and 'contradiction' that I could find, and I have studied what others call 'errors'. My life's work is to know as much about the Bible as is humanly possible, and I can assure you there is always a logical and good answer for anything that may at first appear confusing.

All this leads us to conclude that man could NOT POSSIBLY have authored the Bible, even if he wanted to. A child may WANT to build a real spacecraft, but all he is ABLE to do is make a 'toy' spaceship, full of things that don't work. So also, a man may WANT to write a Bible, but the best he is ABLE to do is write a 'toy' bible, full of things that are not true or accurate. Man alone did not 'author' the Bible - he needed help!

Is it possible the devil wrote the Bible? While it is true that the devil knows things that man does not, he certainly would not want man to understand who God is, and how to find peace with God, because the devil is a liar. In John 8:44b (page 1109) it says, "... He was a _____ from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a _____, and the father of it."

So, while man COULD NOT have written the Bible, it's logical to assume the devil WOULD NOT have written the Bible.

This brings us to God. Actually, God is the only one who is qualified and able to author the Bible because He is perfect and holy, He fully knows the secrets of men's hearts, and He knows all about the future. We will study this more in Lesson Two.

Logically, God is totally able to write the Bible because He is not affected by time. He easily could have taken 1500 years to write it, and being God, He could easily talk to men and tell them what to write.

Furthermore, God is totally able to preserve what He has written so that it stays intact and complete. Isaiah 40:8 (page 760), "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*" This is one reason we know the Bible has not changed.

The Bible itself claims that God wrote it.

2 Timothy 3:16 (page 1239) "All scripture is given by _____ of God, and is profitable

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (The word 'inspiration' means 'God-breathed'.)

Jeremiah 30:2 (page 819), "Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the _____ that I have spoken unto thee in a book."

Proverbs 30:5-6 (page 710), "Every _____ of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his _____, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

2 Peter 1:21 (page 1264), "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were _____ by the Holy Ghost."

***The Bible Itself
Claims that
God Wrote It!***

So, we conclude that God Himself authored the Bible and that He had certain men write down what He told them to.

But WHY would God want to write the Bible?

1. Because God loves us (Jeremiah 31:3, page 820).
2. Because He wants us to know Him (Jeremiah 24:7, page 812).
3. Because He wants to guide us successfully through life (Psalm 32:8, page 622).

What else can we learn about the Bible?

1. Psalm 119:105 (page 673), “Thy word is a _____ unto my feet, and a _____ unto my path.”
 - **The Bible is like a L_____ or a L_____ to help guide our decisions in life.**
2. 1 Peter 2:2 (page 1260), “As newborn babes, desire the sincere _____ of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”
 - **The Bible is like M_____ (or food) to help us grow and become strong.**
3. Ephesians 6:17 (page 1220), “And take the helmet of salvation, and the _____ of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
 - **The Bible is like a S_____ that can be used in spiritual battles to give us victory over sin and the devil.**

How were the 66 books made into one Bible? (1e)

Down through history there have been hundreds of ancient religious writings made, but only a handful of them came together to make up the Bible. The problem of deciding which religious writings belonged in the Bible (and which ones did not) was a difficult task. Yet remember, because God wrote the Bible, He is able to guide man’s process of thinking, and it seems there were 3 main tests that God’s people used to determine if a religious writing was supposed to be in the Bible.

To begin with, God’s people knew that God would only use righteous, holy men to write the Bible, and so they began by checking into who each human author was. They chose the writings of men who were well known to be godly, holy and righteous. This greatly narrowed down the list of writings to men who were well known to Israel and the New Testament Churches of the first century.

Next, by much prayer and discussion, they examined the writings of each book to make sure it promoted God and righteousness, and that there were not false teachings in it.

Finally, they looked to see if each of the writings had been a

‘blessing’ to God’s people, making their lives more godly, more happy and more victorious over sin.

The 66 books they chose have stood the test of time, and have become a firm foundation upon which you and I may build our lives! The Bible is the word of God in print!

Are all English Bibles Equal? (1f)

(This answer may appear technical, but it’s actually quite simple.)

Not all maps of a city or country are equal – some are rough and sketchy while others are highly detailed and accurate. Not all English dictionaries are the same – some are very simple and basic, while others are far more precise and in-depth. So it is with English Bibles – it all depends on how accurate and precise you want to be with God’s Word. We recommend the King James Bible mainly because of its accuracy to detail. However, some people think the King James Bible is not good for today because it uses words like ‘thee, thou and ye’, yet herein lies an example of its perfect accuracy! The English word ‘you’ can be either singular or plural, but the words ‘thee and thou’ are always singular, and ‘ye’ is always plural.

Which Bible Should I read?

There are hundreds of different English Bibles on the market today, but a careful comparison with these modern versions will reveal that not only are they very different from the King James Bible, but they are also often very different from each other! This is because the modern versions use a different group of Greek manuscripts to translate the New Testament from the original language (Greek) into English.

The Old Testament basically comes from one group of Hebrew manuscripts known as the Masoretic Texts, so called because it was compiled by a group of dedicated Jews called the Masorites. These texts are widely accepted and you will not

find many differences in the Old Testament of modern versions, unlike what you find with the New Testament.

It's like if cooks use different ingredients, then the food they produce will be different. So, how do we know which ingredients are the 'correct' ones?

We know that God used the Apostle Paul to travel throughout Asia minor, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, writing most of the New Testament books and establishing Churches. From this area comes a group of Greek New Testament Texts called the 'Textus Receptus' or TR (meaning 'the Received Text'). It's also called the 'Byzantine Text', because Asia Minor later became part of the Byzantine Empire. It consists of about 10,000 full and partial New Testament manuscripts, which have a 99% similarity to each other. We believe these Greek Texts are the 'correct' ingredients, and were used to make the King James Bible.

The second group of a few hundred full and fragmented copies of the Greek New Testament came from Alexandria in Northern Egypt. (Two thousand years ago, Alexandria was known as the breeding ground of liberal thinking and cult practices.)

These Texts were discovered in the 1800's by some explorers who studied them and found them to disagree with each other in numerous places, and disagree with the TR in many more places. This group is known as the Alexandrian Text, and is also called the Critical Text because those who use it feel they must employ a 'critical' (sort of 'mental scientific') approach in their attempt to figure out what is and what is not Scripture. The modern Bibles are translated from this group, which is why they disagree with each other, and some keep coming out with newer 'improved' editions.

The King James Bible was translated in A.D. 1611. It has stood the test of time, enlightened more eyes, been a blessing to more people, helped to establish and govern nations, guided more churches, comforted more souls through the valley of death and encouraged more Christians than any modern translation. It continues to be the best English Bible available today.

How do we Understand or 'Interpret' the Bible? (1g)

Some people think that the Bible is full of ancient symbols and mysteries and that no one can understand it. Nothing could be farther from the truth! God wrote the Bible so that people could understand it. Consider Deuteronomy 29:29 (page 242), "The _____ things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are _____ belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The Bible is God's written Book to us so we can understand and follow Him.

Consider the words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 7:24 (page 998), "Therefore whosoever _____ these sayings of mine, and _____ them, I will liken him unto a _____ man, which



built his house upon a rock:” In order for us to DO what God says, we must be able to UNDERSTAND what He says.

Because God WANTS us to understand, He wrote the Bible according to normal, natural methods of communication. This is often called the ‘literal method’ of understanding (or ‘interpreting’) the Bible. In other words, it means just what it says. Sometimes the Bible uses symbols and figures of speech, which is exactly the same thing we do today in our communications. The ‘literal method’ recognizes these because we always understand what is being said by the CONTEXT. We must ALWAYS be careful to get the WHOLE picture of what is being said.

Therefore, in order to understand something in the Bible, we must FIRST examine the context in which we find it. Look for all the normal information you will need, such as:

- who said it?
- who was it said to?
- what seems to be the reason it was said?
- was such a thing ever said before (or after) within the Bible?
- is there an application to my life?

Don’t expect that within a few days or weeks you will quickly understand everything God has written in the Bible. For, just as genetic engineering and quantum physics require years of study, so also understanding what God has written will take you a long time... but it’s worth it! By following the ‘literal method’ (really, just a common-sense method) of understanding the Bible, you will save yourself from being led astray, and you will find great joy in reading the Bible!

Be careful when someone (or a religious group) tries to tell you can’t understand the Bible. God gave us the Bible to reveal the truth about Himself, man, eternity and so much more. We encourage you to freely read the entire Bible, looking earnestly to

God (in prayer) to guide your understanding.

Conclusion (1h)

Congratulations! You have completed Lesson One and have mastered a few of the basics about the Bible! You are well on your way to understanding the teachings of the world’s greatest Book!

Now, try to memorize 2 Timothy 3:16 “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*”

It may seem difficult at first, but with a little patience and practice you will have it memorized, and you will begin to sense the wonderful life-giving, life-changing power of the Holy Bible!

Now that you have worked your way through this Lesson, you may have thought of some other questions you might want to ask the person who gave you this Bible Study. Write out your questions in the back of this booklet and they will do their best to answer them.

It is reasonable to conclude that the Bible is a trustworthy Book, because it was written by God (God directed certain men to write what He wanted written). Because God wrote the Bible, it is reasonable to conclude He also preserved the Bible so that the Bible we have today is the Bible He wants us to have and read. Furthermore, it is reasonable to conclude that if we read the Bible, then we will begin to know God better and His principles for happy, successful living here on earth, AND for eternity to come.

Making decisions is a combination of fact and faith. Most people who fly in airplanes or use computers do not wait until they know all about them before they decide to start using them.

However, they do require to know certain things in order to exercise faith and start using them. Likewise, you may never know all there is to know about the Bible, but then again, you don't need to know it all. You only need to know enough facts in order to exercise your faith in it.

You may or may not be in a position to make a decision about the Bible, but we hope we have given you enough facts to think about. In any event, we encourage you to continue on to Lesson Two, entitled, **Who Is God?** You will be amazed with what the Bible teaches about Him!

Be sure to meet _____

on _____

to get your next Lesson!