

This is a draft Quaker studies document prepared by the Institute of Peace and Law.
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GREAT PEACE HAVE THOSE WHO LOVE YOUR LAW: A CONCISE QUAKER GUIDE TO THE BIBLE

Introduction

On 4 October 2026, Friends will be celebrating World Quaker Day, with “Let Peace Be Among Us” as the theme. On this occasion, the Institute of Peace and Law offers a concise guide for reading the Bible, inspired by Psalm 119:165 – “Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble”. It is crafted through the lens of Quaker Theology and centred on our testimonies of peace, truth, the inward Light, and the continual leading of the Spirit.

To discover an overall narrative of the Bible, it might be helpful to consider the way in which the Old Testament provides examples of how the people of the chosen nation succeeded obeying (2 Chronicles 20:21) and failed when disobeying (1 Kings 22:29) the Lord, while in the New Testament we can read how the teachings of Christ helped His disciples to be more faithful (Matthew 5:17, 5:43–48), become peacemakers and sons of God (Matthew 5:9) transcending national distinctions (Ephesians 2:14), to unite as a universal church in preparation for the new heavenly world to come: a world without war and suffering (Revelation 21:3–4).

As is customary among Friends, we read the Scriptures not as static, terrifying dogma to be understood or obeyed literally, but as a record of spiritual experiences of imperfect people inspired by the Spirit, seeking to discern God’s Presence, and striving for Perfection through the Leading of the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 3:6), modelling ways in which we could discern and follow Divine guidance today in our own lives.

George Fox challenged us in 1652:

“Thou wilt say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say?”

If we discern spiritual wisdom in our reading of the Bible or other treasured texts, we accept the gift while remaining mindful of the advice in the Epistle from the Elders at Balby in 1656:

“...in the light walking and abiding, these things may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not in the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”

The Bible narratives are naturally situated within their own Cultural and Political milieu. Violence, misogyny, prejudice of all kinds, war, enslavement, and genocide, were widespread and normative. And to the sensibility of a modern Reader too glibly directly attributed to the Divine Will or enacted under Divine Command

by Human Agents or Environmental catastrophes. Some things are incompatible with current understanding of human dignity and equal rights in modern society. For any such false interpretations we could find in the Bible a good response, a true account of the Lord's will that always requires the avoidance of violence. Even when ancient people were tempted to think that God leads them to wage war, their conscience still reminded them to offer peace first (Deuteronomy 20:10). Where ancient authors misattributed violence to the Divine will, we test those historical errors against the living Spirit of Christ, who calls us away from violence and toward universal love.

In the 1660 Declaration, Friends wrote:

“Our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace, and ensue it, and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all. All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.”

This Bible study guide explicitly anchors each book in the Bible in at least one key passage of Scripture long dear to Friends – reflecting our Peace Testimony, the Inward Light, silent waiting, Equality, Integrity, and continually seeking the unfolding guidance of the Spirit.

This document includes Biblical references to: Pacifism (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3; Psalm 46:9), personal relation with God through conscience and inward Light, “That of God” in everyone (Genesis 1:27), Divine Guidance and Presence in the life and worship of individuals and the Faith community, the Friends of Christ (John 15:15), His Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Luke 17:21; Matthew 18:20), silent worship (Revelation 8:1; Habakkuk 2:20) with ministries and prophesies (Acts 2:17), and with love, and grace, and joy coming to one accord (Acts 15:25).

I am grateful to Pavel Marusinec, a Czech Friend, for his suggestion that someone starting to read the Bible might be interested where to begin, and for sharing his experience of beginning with Mark because it is a gospel and it is the shortest. I replied to Pavel, that it might be even simpler to start with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) as it is even shorter, and he agreed.

I am also thankful to Catherine Prior for her suggestion that some people use Biblical passages to justify war, so I need to name these passages and offer alternative readings. She kindly offered some examples. Romans 13:2-4 and 1 Peter 2:13-14 might be quoted to assert that earthly rulers hold authority from God, act as agents of His wrath punishing wrongdoers, and therefore believers should submit and participate in their wars. Replying to this, I could remind that Jesus told Peter to put away his sword (Matthew 26:52), did not ask his disciples to fight for His kingdom (John 18:36) and taught them to love enemies (Matthew 5:44). His Apostles called for obeying God rather than human beings (Acts 5:29), not repaying evil with evil and living at peace with everyone (Romans 12:17-18). They also urged testing the spirits to see whether they are from God (1 John 4:1), because earthly powers are frequently corrupted or misguided, and divine guidance overcomes their

violence (Daniel 3:16-18). Sometimes Luke 22:36 is invoked to claim that Jesus literally asked His disciples to fight for Him with swords, selling clothes to buy a weapon if necessary. This, of course, is taken out of context, since the Lord just suggested in another hyperbole that he will be seen, as in prophecy, among transgressors, people with no faith who depend on purse or sword, the earthly things usually associated with sins. He reminded disciples how He had asked them to do God's work without a purse, bag or sandals (Luke 22:35). When His hyperbole was taken literally and He was made aware there were two swords, Jesus clearly asked to end this nonsense (Luke 22:38), later also repeating it to Peter (Luke 22:51; Matthew 26:52; John 18:11). John, giving the most detailed account of Jesus' preaching during the Last Supper, mentions that Jesus said he was speaking in figures of speech and would be misunderstood at the time but understood later (John 16:25).

I am also grateful to Anne Stephens who offered valuable edits for the opening paragraphs and for exchange by email, in which I had opportunity to explain that this is a simple guide for seeking peace in the Bible, seeing a role of the Divine restraining violence. It is recognized many times that when the people disobeyed the Lord, things went badly. But sometimes it was not simply disobedience but even lack of understanding. For one example, when Cain wrongly thought God will be pleased with human sacrifice, he killed his brother (Genesis 4:8); God in His mercy sent an angel to Abraham to save him from the same mistake and sacrificing his only son (Genesis 22:12). For another example, we could question passages attributing to God a command to destroy all Canaanites, or even saying that God is jealous and revengeful. The sins attributed to Canaanites we see also among the chosen people. How God could ask humans to destroy another humans created by His image? Was it the same as with the serpent on the tree in Eden, when the dark force pretended to convey the divine knowledge (Genesis 3:5; 2 Corinthians 11:14)? How to recognize, was it so, and were people in Biblical times prepared to make proper discernment? Perhaps even the common sense could help them to understand that human nature precludes total elimination of whole a nation? The Old Testament tells about times of moral naivety, mistakes and arrogance, though it was also a time of remarkable revelations overcoming imperfect habits and customs. The old violent understanding of law makes people fear to trespass but alienates the people from God and among themselves; it gives to nations only a relative peace poisoned by cruelty, hubris and contempt. And then Jesus comes with new law of love and equality, not alienating God but explaining to people we are all one family and Heavenly Father is among us, we are all equal and beloved children. This new church ruled by the law of love and friendship overcomes nations ruled by the law of fear and servitude.

In the words of another Czech Friend, Hana Druckmulerova, Jesus came to the world of cruel human games to offer better rules with His advice “love your enemies”, playing a different game that changed the world and brought the Earth closer to the heavenly peace.

Thanks also to Artem Denysov for ensuring that the advice to love our neighbours is included into this guide.

Yurii Sheliashenko
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OLD TESTAMENT (39 BOOKS)

The Law / Pentateuch (5 Books)

1. Genesis: God creates the universe, establishes a covenant with humanity, and initiates His chosen nation through Abraham and his descendants. God creates humanity with the divine image in every person (1:27). Though human misunderstanding led to early tragedy (4:8), God calls us to walk faithfully (17:1) and learn to hear the true, non-violent leading of the Spirit (22:12).

2. Exodus: God rescues Israel from Egyptian slavery, makes a covenant with them at Mt. Sinai, and provides His law and Tabernacle. God hears the cries of the oppressed (3:7) and liberates Israel from bondage, showing that the Divine Spirit desires justice and freedom over tyranny. Through the Ten Commandments (20:1-17), including prohibitions to kill and steal, a community begins learning covenantal responsibility, even as their social customs still shadowed their understanding of God's mercy.

3. Leviticus: God establishes laws of holiness, worship, and sacrifice so His redeemed people can dwell safely in His presence. Amid complex ancient ritual laws, the heart of the Spirit breaks through in the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18). It challenges us to cultivate personal holiness so that our daily conduct reflects the inward purity of the Divine.

4. Numbers: Israel wanders in the wilderness for forty years due to their unbelief, experiencing God's discipline and faithful preservation. Israel's wilderness journey reveals the struggle to trust the Inward Light when God promises, "My Presence will go with you" (14:14). It records both the failures of human rebellion and the patient grace of God preserving a seeking people.

5. Deuteronomy: Moses delivers final sermons to the new generation of Israelites, urging them to love and obey God as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. Moses urges the people to write God's words upon their hearts (6:6) rather than relying solely on external rituals. It sets before us the fundamental spiritual choice: "I have set before you life and death... therefore choose life" (30:19).

Historical Books (12 Books)

6. Joshua: God leads Israel to enter and settle the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership, fulfilling His ancient promise. This narrative reflects an early human understanding that wrongly attributed conquest and war to God (6:21), while despite this error, it testifies to God's and the people's desire for peace (11:22; 23:1) and explains that the causes of war as mass murder are greed and unrealistic self-confidence (7:1-5). As Friends faithful to the Peace Testimony, we clearly see the mistake in discerning God's will that people made in ancient times and often still

make today, yet we value Joshua's spiritual resolve to serve the Lord (24:15) and show mercy (6:25, 9:25-27).

7. Judges: Israel cycles through sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance through God-raised leaders during a dark era of moral chaos. A turbulent record of a society caught in cyclic violence when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). It starkly illustrates the tragic consequences when individuals ignore the inward whisper of conscience and divine guidance.

8. Ruth: A faithful Moabite woman chooses the God of Israel, finding redemption and becoming a key ancestor of King David and Jesus Christ. A radiant witness to love and inclusion that transcends national boundaries, as Ruth declares, "Where you go I will go, and your people shall be my people" (1:16). Her story shows how divine grace operates through quiet acts of faithful relationship.

9. 1 Samuel: Israel transitions from a loose tribal confederation under judges to a monarchy under its first two kings, Saul and David. Israel demands an earthly king, turning away from direct divine governance (8:7). The text highlights the tension between worldly power and the quiet voice of divine leading heard by the child Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears" (3:10).

10. 2 Samuel: King David reigns over a unified Israel, experiencing great spiritual victories as well as devastating personal and political fallout from his sin. King David's life shows both deep spiritual sensitivity (22:2-3) and catastrophic moral failure when power overrides conscience. Nathan's prophetic confrontation – "You are the man!" (12:7) – reminds us that no leader is above the inward promptings of truth and repentance.

11. 1 Kings: Israel reaches its peak of splendor under Solomon, split into two kingdoms after his death, and declines as idolatry spreads. Israel experiences external splendor and deep division, culminating in Elijah discovering that God was not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the "still, small voice" (19:12). Here we learn the foundation of silent waiting upon the Lord.

12. 2 Kings: Both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms collapse under persistent rebellion, ending in destruction and exile by foreign empires. The tragic collapse of both kingdoms demonstrates the futility of relying on military alliances and political violence rather than spiritual faithfulness (17:7-18). It echoes Elisha's vision of spiritual protection beyond physical weapons, when the Lord opening eyes to the people and commanding not to kill prevail over the armies (6:14-22).

13. 1 Chronicles: A retelling of David's reign focused on the spiritual foundation, worship, and temple prep to encourage exiles returning home. A reflective re-telling of Israel's story that emphasizes spiritual worship and communal praise (16:11). It invites us to "seek the Lord and His strength" as we build a worshipping community.

14. 2 Chronicles: A spiritual history of the kings of Judah, emphasizing that obedience brings God's blessing while rebellion leads to ruin. This record highlights how trust brings spiritual peace (20:20-21), while warmongering leads to ruin

(22:29). It affirms the promise of communal humility: "If My people... will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face... I will heal their land" (7:14).

15. Ezra: God providentially returns Jewish exiles to Jerusalem to rebuild the destroyed Temple and restore faithful worship. Returned exiles seek to rebuild their worshipping community and restore faithful practice (3:11). While it reflects the legalistic exclusivity of its era, it calls us to focus on rebuilding spaces where the truth of God can be faithfully lived.

16. Nehemiah: Nehemiah leads the returned exiles to rebuild Jerusalem's walls in the face of intense opposition, renewing their covenant with God. A story of practical ministry and community restoration accomplished through prayer, persistence, and shared labor: "The cup of the Lord is our strength" (8:10). Nehemiah's work shows how spiritual leading translates into tangible care for community.

17. Esther: God providentially preserves His people living under Persian rule from total annihilation through a brave Jewish queen. Set in a foreign empire, this book reveals divine providence working quietly through non-violent courage without ever mentioning God's name explicitly: "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:14).

Wisdom & Poetry (5 Books)

18. Job: A righteous man suffers unimaginable hardship, confronting deep questions about human suffering and divine sovereignty. A profound wrestling with human suffering that rejects simplistic religious dogmas. Job moves beyond hearsay about God to an immediate, transformative experience of the Living Presence: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (42:5).

19. Psalms: A rich collection of 150 prayers, praises, and songs reflecting the full range of human emotion in relationship with God. Among them are timeless visions of absolute peace, where God "makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two" (46:9).

20. Proverbs: Practical, divine wisdom for navigating everyday choices, relationships, and moral living in the fear of the Lord. Practical guidance for living a life of simplicity, integrity, and quiet discernment: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding" (3:5).

21. Ecclesiastes: An honest exploration of life's meaninglessness when lived purely from a human perspective, concluding that fearing God is what truly matters. A candid meditation stripping away the illusions of worldly ambition: "To everything there is a season..." (3:1). It directs us toward a simple, present-centered life of reverence, concluding that "God requires an account of what is past" (3:15).

22. Song of Solomon: A poetic celebration of love, desire, and commitment within marriage. An unashamed celebration of human love and mutual delight: "Set me as a seal upon your heart... for love is as strong as death" (8:6). Friends recognize

here both the goodness of affection and an allegory of the soul's communion with the Divine.

Major Prophets (5 Books)

23. Isaiah: A powerful vision of God's holiness, warnings of judgment, and glorious promises of a coming Messiah and new creation. A magnificent prophetic vision anticipating the Gospel of Peace, declaring that nations shall "beat their swords into plowshares... neither shall they learn war anymore" (2:4).

24. Jeremiah: Known as the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah warns rebellious Judah of impending judgment while promising a coming New Covenant. Jeremiah confronts corrupt power and foretells a New Covenant written not on stone, but directly upon human hearts: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (31:33). It grounds our conviction that divine law is inwardly known by every seeker.

25. Lamentations: A heartbreaking poem mourning the destruction of Jerusalem, while holding fast to God's steadfast love and mercy. A poignant, silent grieving over the trauma of war. Even in heartbreak, it holds fast to the quiet assurance that "the Lord's mercies are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (3:22-23).

26. Ezekiel: Apocalyptic visions of God's departure from Jerusalem's corrupt temple, followed by promises of ultimate spiritual restoration and renewal. Apocalyptic imagery promising a spiritual rebirth where God says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh" (36:26).

27. Daniel: A story of faithful believer and his friends in Babylonian captivity, prophetic visions of God's ultimate kingdom overcoming all earthly powers. Serving the Most High God, these people of faith practiced quiet, non-violent resistance (3:17-18), and Daniel persevered detention in lions' den for praying to God, not to a king (6:22). Daniel's visions assure us that earthly force will yield to God's eternal reign: "the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people" (7:27).

Minor Prophets (12 Books)

28. Hosea: God commands a prophet to marry an unfaithful woman as a vivid picture of His persistent love for His unfaithful people. God's enduring love frames divine justice as redemptive mercy rather than punishment, declaring, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (6:6).

29. Joel: Devastating locust plagues serve as a warning of the coming "Day of the Lord," accompanied by a call to repentance and a promise of God's Spirit. A promise that God will pour out the Spirit upon all flesh—sons, daughters, young,

and old alike (2:28). This grounds our Quaker conviction that prophetic ministry is given freely to everyone.

30. Amos: A fiery critique of Israel's social injustice and hypocritical religion, calling for righteousness to flow like a river. A passionate critique of religious hypocrisy that ignores social inequality, insisting that true worship means letting "justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (5:24).

31. Obadiah: A short prophecy condemning the nation of Edom for its pride and cruelty toward Israel. A brief warning against pride, violence, and taking advantage of a neighbor's downfall: "As you have done, it shall be done to you" (1:15).

32. Jonah: A reluctant prophet tries to run from God's command to preach to his enemy city, highlighting God's universal mercy. A story challenging nationalist prejudice and religious narrowness, revealing God's universal mercy extended even to enemies: "Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city?" (4:11).

33. Micah: A call for true justice and humility, coupled with the prophecy that the promised ruler will be born in Bethlehem. A stirring call to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8), echoing the vision where every person sits safely under their own vine and fig tree, free from fear (4:3-4).

34. Nahum: A prophecy predicting the ultimate fall and judgment of Nineveh, the brutal capital of Assyria. A reflection on the collapse of militaristic empires, reminding us that systems built on bloodshed contain their own ruin: "Woe to the bloody city!" (3:1).

35. Habakkuk: A dialogue where a prophet wrestles with God's plan to use wicked Babylon for judgment, ultimately learning to trust in God's sovereignty. A prophet stands upon his watchtower, waiting in silence to hear what the Lord will speak within him (2:1, 2:20). It teaches us that "the just shall live by faith" (2:4).

36. Zephaniah: Urgent warnings of imminent judgment on Judah and surrounding nations, concluding with a promise of joyful salvation for a humble remnant. A call for the humble to seek the Lord, foretelling a peaceful remnant (3:12) and concluding with the beautiful image that God "will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (3:17).

37. Haggai: A call to the returned exiles to stop delaying and prioritize rebuilding God's temple. A challenge to realign our priorities, reminding us that true peace comes from putting spiritual community first: «"The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the Lord of hosts, "And in this place I will grant peace"» (2:9).

38. Zechariah: Apocalyptic visions assuring God's people of future redemption through a humble, victorious Messiah-King. A vision declaring that divine work is accomplished "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (4:6), foretelling a humble King who "will speak peace to the nations" (9:10).

39. Malachi: God's final Old Testament message confronting cold-hearted religion and promising the coming of a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord. Confronting spiritual apathy, it promises a coming messenger of reconciliation: "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" (2:10).

NEW TESTAMENT (27 Books)

The Gospels (4 Books)

40. Matthew: Written for a Jewish audience, this Gospel presents Jesus as the promised Messiah and King who fulfills the Old Testament. Matthew presents Jesus transforming ancient laws through the Sermon on the Mount (5:17). Jesus redefines holiness around active peacemaking, calling us to "love your enemies... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (5:9, 43-45). Through parables of the Kingdom, Christ reveals an inward reality present wherever "two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (18:20).

41. Mark: A fast-paced narrative portraying Jesus as the suffering Servant who gives His life as a ransom for many. A fast-paced narrative portraying Jesus as the suffering Servant who rejects earthly dominance: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (10:45). Mark emphasizes the inward spiritual baptism over outward ritual (1:8) and calls us to servant-leadership: "Whoever desires to be first shall be last of all and servant of all" (9:35).

42. Luke: A detailed historical account highlighting Jesus as the compassionate Son of Man who came to seek and save the lost. Luke highlights Christ's compassionate mission to the poor and marginalized, making clear that "the kingdom of God is within you" (17:21). Jesus rejects retaliatory violence when rejected by a village, rebuking His disciples: "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (9:55-56).

43. John: A deep theological account emphasizing Jesus as the eternal Son of God who gives eternal life to all who believe. John presents Jesus as the Eternal Light that "gives light to every person coming into the world" (1:9). Moving beyond rigid dogmas, Jesus promises the Spirit of Truth who "will guide you into all truth" continually (16:13). He transcends servant roles to call His followers "Friends" (15:15), commanding them: "Love one another as I have loved you" (15:12).

Early Church History (1 Book)

44. Acts: The story of the Holy Spirit's arrival and the explosive spread of the Church from Jerusalem across the Roman Empire. The dynamic history of the early Church as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all people (2:17). It shows believers

coming "to one accord" through Spirit-led consensus (15:25) and affirming that God "from one man made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth" (17:26).

Pauline Epistles (13 Books)

45. Romans: Paul's foundational treatise on salvation by grace through faith, explaining how God makes both Jews and Gentiles righteous. Paul's treatise on grace, explaining that righteousness is an inward reality of the heart (2:29) for those "led by the Spirit of God" (8:14). It provides a foundational guide for living peacefully: "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:18, 21). It also says, "Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God" (6:13), which teaches the faithful not to become instruments of violence, war, and armies, but instead to achieve justice and peace through nonviolent action.

46. 1 Corinthians: Practical instructions addressing spiritual gifts, overcoming division, immorality, and church disorder in a morally chaotic city. Paul stresses that the church is one body made of diverse members, all possessing gifts of the Spirit (12:4-7). It insists that even the most impressive spiritual talents are worthless without patient love (13:1-3) and calls for quiet order in corporate worship: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (14:33).

47. 2 Corinthians: Paul shows spiritual care and wishing not power over the faithful but stewardship to their joy (1:24), and shares how God's power is made perfect in human weakness. Paul speaks of ministry born out of vulnerability, reminding us that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (3:6). He outlines the ministry of reconciliation (5:18), showing that divine power is "made perfect in weakness" (12:9).

48. Galatians: A passionate defense of Christian freedom, warning against legalism and trusting in human effort over faith. A defense of spiritual freedom against legalism, declaring that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (3:28). It calls us to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (5:22-23).

49. Ephesians: An uplifting letter exploring God's eternal plan to unite all things in Christ and how the Church should walk in that reality. A vision of Christ as our peace, who "has broken down the middle wall of separation" to create one new humanity (2:14). It encourages us to "walk in love" (5:2) and put on the spiritual armor of truth and gospel peace rather than carnal weapons tearing flesh and spilling blood (6:12-15).

50. Philippians: A joy-filled letter written from prison, encouraging believers to find strength and unity through Christ's humble mindset. Written from prison, this letter radiates deep joy and humility: "Let this mind be in you which was also in

Christ Jesus" (2:5). It promises "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds" (4:7).

51. Colossians: A letter uttering Jesus as head of the church and source of all creation, sufficient for every spiritual need. An exaltation of Christ as the image of the invisible God (1:15), in whom all things are reconciled in peace. It instructs believers: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" (3:15).

52. 1 Thessalonians: Encouragement for a young church facing persecution, pointing them toward hope in Christ's return. The young faith community is encouraged to "see that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (5:15). It urges believers to "pray without ceasing" (5:17) and "test all things; hold fast what is good" (5:21).

53. 2 Thessalonians: Clarifying confusion about the Lord's return and urging believers to stay steadfast and work diligently. A call to steadfastness, reminding the community to remain grounded in daily work and peace: "Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way" (3:16).

54. 1 Timothy: Advice to a young evangelist on church organization, sound teaching, and healthy leadership. Advice on nurturing a healthy community centered on "love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1:5). It warns that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (6:10) and urges us to pursue righteousness and gentleness.

55. 2 Timothy: Paul's final letter before his execution, urging Timothy to stay faithful to the gospel at all costs. Paul's final testament, encouraging Timothy to "rekindle the gift of God which is in you" (1:6), reminding us that "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (1:7).

56. Titus: Instructions on establishing healthy stewardship and good works in a challenging culture. Advices on organizing community life around integrity and grace: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all" (2:11). It emphasizes living sober, upright, and peaceful lives.

57. Philemon: A personal plea asking a Christian master to forgive and welcome back his runaway slave as a brother in Christ. A tender letter demonstrating gospel reconciliation as Paul pleads for a runaway slave to be received "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother" (1:16).

General Epistles (8 Books)

58. Hebrews: A call to Jewish Christians to hold fast to Christ, demonstrating that He is superior to the Old Covenant angels, priests, and sacrifices. A meditation on Christ opening direct access to God for every believer, inviting us to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (10:22). It calls us to "pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (12:14).

59. James: Practical wisdom emphasizing that genuine faith naturally produces visible good works and righteous living. Practical wisdom emphasizing that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (2:17). James warns that war and strife stem from selfish inward desires (4:1) and declares that "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (3:18).

60. 1 Peter: Encouragement for exiled believers suffering for their faith, reminding them of their living hope in Christ. Advices for a suffering minority, encouraging them to respond to hostility with non-retaliation: "Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing" (3:9). It reminds us to "seek peace and pursue it" (3:11).

61. 2 Peter: Warnings against false teachers and an assurance that the Lord will return in His own time. A call to grow in divine nature (1:4) and hold fast to God's patience, reminding us that the Lord is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (3:9).

62. 1 John: A warm letter reassuring believers of their salvation through love, obedience, and truth. A warm, luminous letter asserting that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1:5) and "God is love" (4:8). It teaches that "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (4:18).

63. 2 John: A brief reminder to walk in Christian love while remaining vigilant against deceivers. A reminder to walk according to truth and love: "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments" (1:6), exercising wise discernment in community life.

64. 3 John: A note commending hospitality toward true ministers of the gospel while warning against selfish leadership. A note celebrating hospitality and faithful service: "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God" (1:11).

65. Jude: An urgent appeal to contend for the faith against immoral teachers who distort God's grace. An appeal to remain grounded in spiritual love: "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction" (1:21-22).

Apocalyptic / Prophecy (1 Book)

66. Revelation: An apocalyptic vision revealing Jesus' ultimate victory over evil, the end of human suffering, and the establishment of a new heaven and earth. Through vivid imagery, this book unveils the triumph of the Lamb who overcomes not through force, but through faithful love. It includes a dramatic moment of silent waiting in heaven (8:1) and culminates in a vision where God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying" (21:4).