

The Church: Our Past & Present

TEACHING NOTES

I will build my church (Matthew 16:18)

What the Church is supposed to look like (Acts 2:42-47)

KEY VERSES

Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:42-47;
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

KEY THEMES

God is always working
God is growing His Church
God uses flawed people

INTRODUCTION

INNOCENCE

CONSCIENCE

HUMAN GOVT.

PROMISE

LAW

GRACE

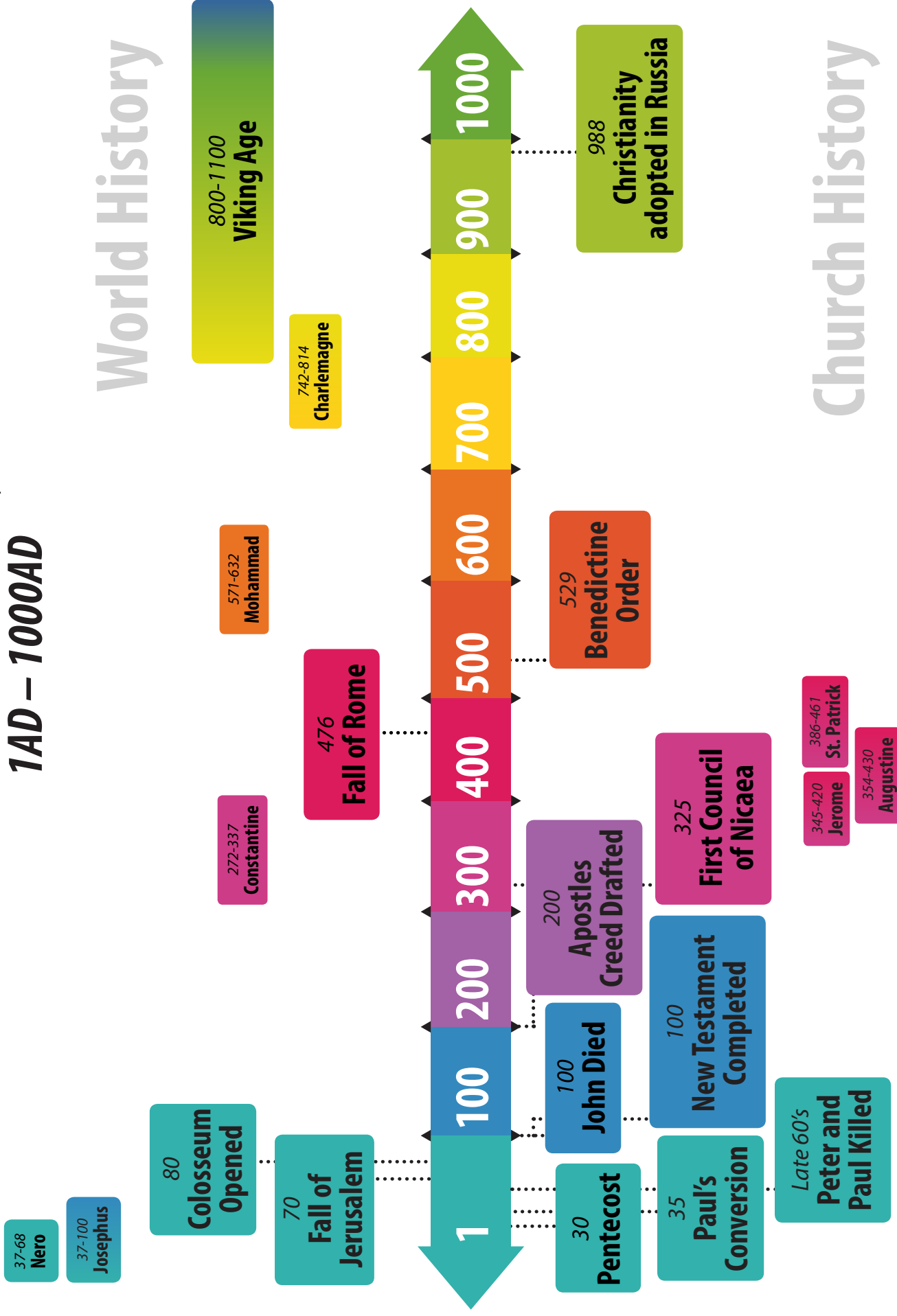
Looking back

The church is the hope of the world (Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16)

Lesson objective: *To see ourselves as connected to the Church universal, both historically and currently.*

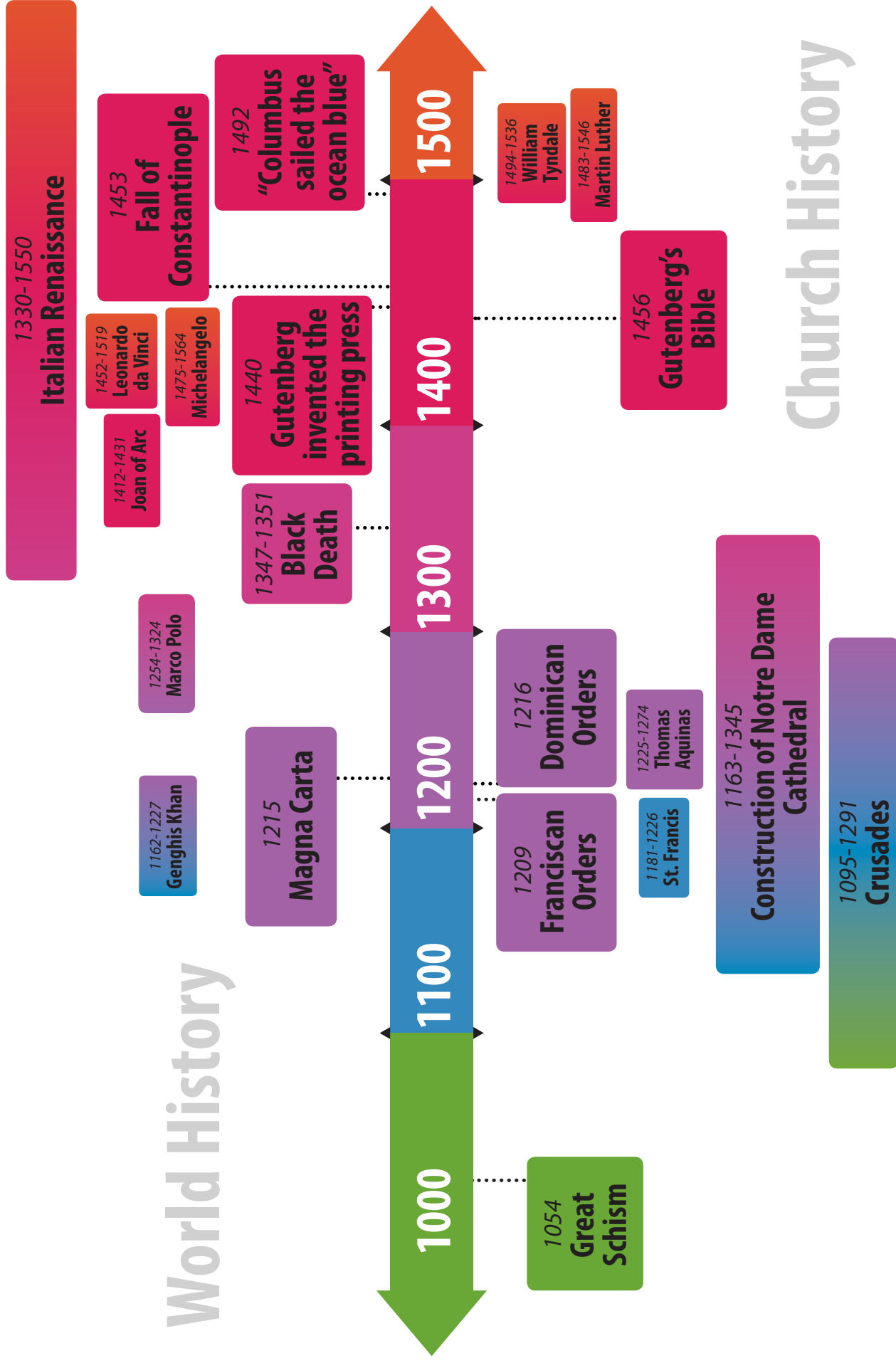
Church and World History Timeline

1AD – 1000AD



Church and World History Timeline

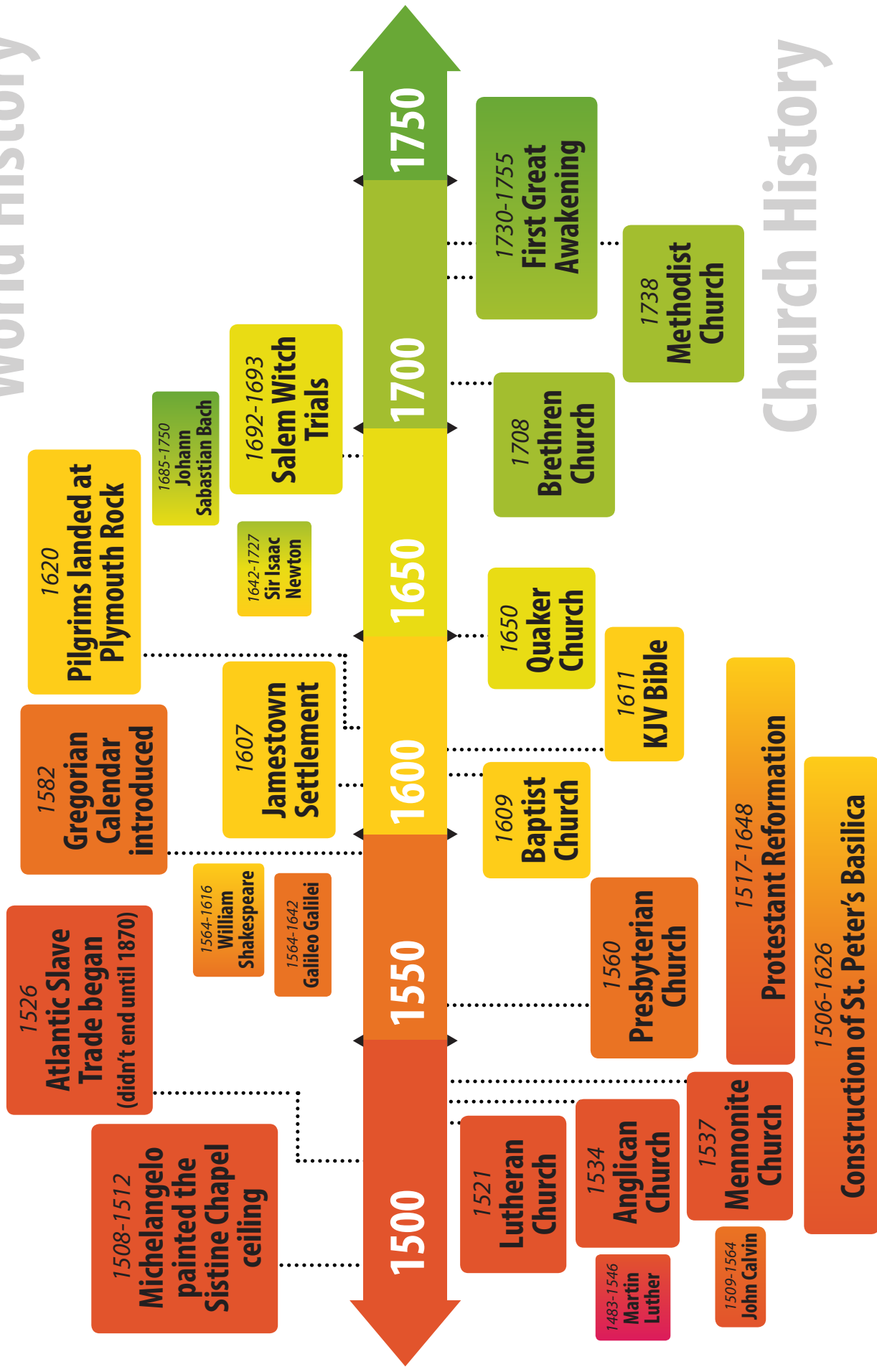
1000AD – 1500AD



Church and World History Timeline

1500AD – 1750AD

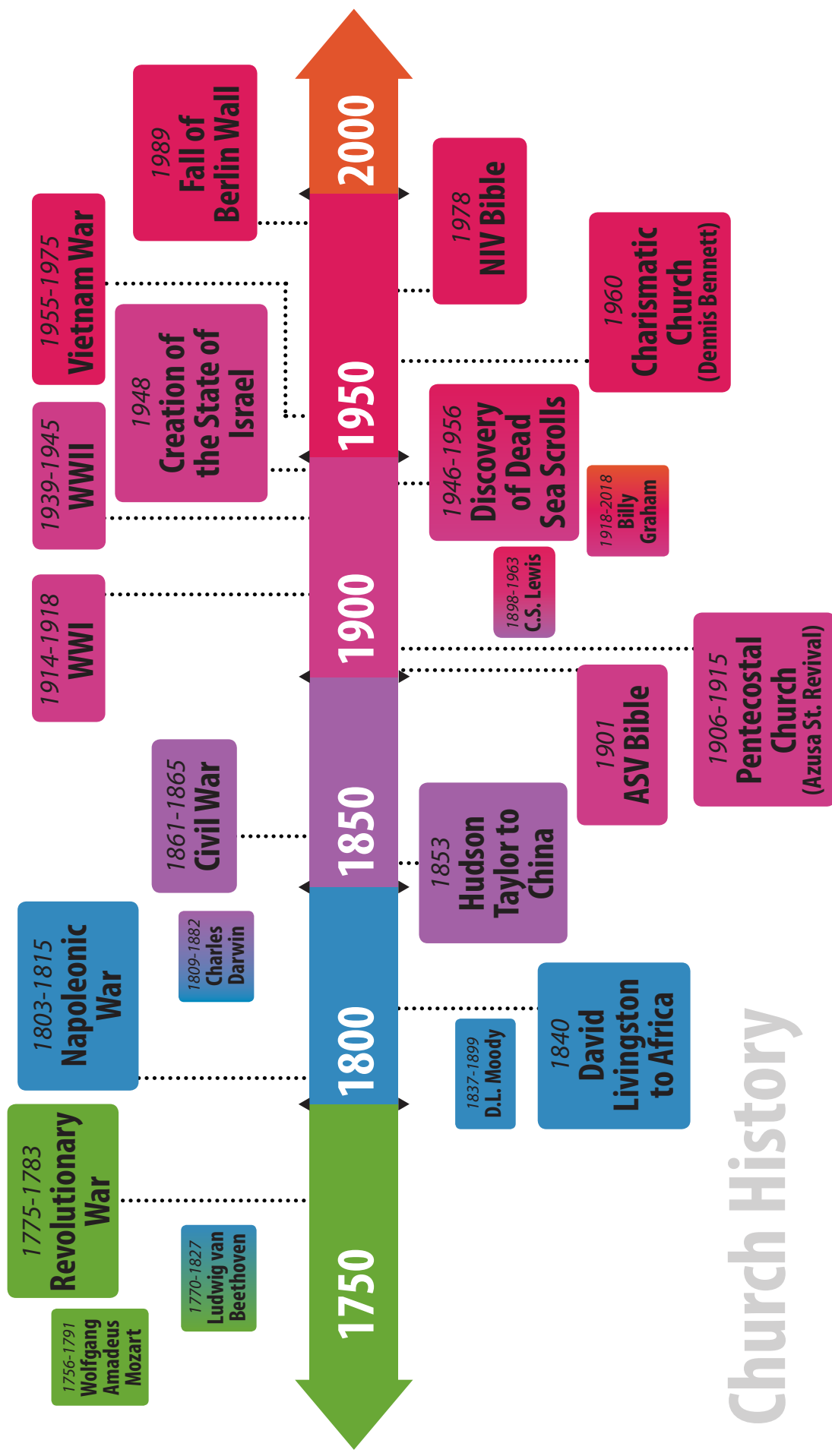
World History



Church and World History Timeline

1750AD – 2000AD

World History



Church History

PERSONAL STUDY**Session 1****Prepare your heart and mind**

Take time to focus on God and what He has for you during this intentional time with Him. Ask Him to help you block out distractions and prepare you to learn what He wants to teach you.

"I will build my church"

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised to build His Church. And in the past 2,000+ years, that's exactly what's happened. God has been at work building His Church. This study will provide you with an opportunity to look back at the start of the Church and what God has done in, through, and sometimes even in spite of people as He built His Church throughout the years.

Read Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Use the *Inductive Study Method* prompts below to work through the passage and learn more about what the Church is supposed to look like.

Observation

(Who? When? Where? Why? What does it say? What do I notice?)

Interpretation

(What are the key themes or truths? What is the writer's intended meaning? What is the context? What questions do I have?)

Application

(How do I apply it? What does this mean for me?)

2,000+ years

God has been at work in the Church for over 2,000 years. That's a lot of history to attempt to understand – a lot of events and people to process. Take some time now to look through the four pages of the Church History Timeline. As you study it, consider the following:

What events and people in Church history are you familiar with?

What events and people in Church history are you unfamiliar with?

Think about some times during world history when life would have been hard. How might the Church have struggled during that time?

How did God work regardless of what was going on in the world?

What Church history events or people are you most thankful for?

Now think about your own faith history. If you were to make a timeline of your life, what would it include? Think about the life events and spiritual events you would highlight. Use the space below to jot down some of the events and relationships you'd include. If you'd like to get a bit more creative, grab some paper, markers, etc. and make your own version of a timeline of your past.

Life history

Spiritual history

You don't have 2,000 years to sort through, but take some time to reflect on your past as you did with the Church History Timeline. Here are some of those prompts again:

Think of times you went through difficult circumstances. What was happening in your spiritual life at that time?

How has God worked regardless of what was going on in your life?

What events or people from your spiritual history are you most thankful for?

Feel free to take some additional time to research anything on the Church History Timeline you're unfamiliar with. There are a lot of people and events listed there – plenty to unpack. Enjoy the process of researching, learning, growing, and being encouraged by what you uncover about the history of the Church.

Read Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16 and pray

To conclude this week's Personal Study, spend some time reading, studying, reflecting on, and praying through this Ephesians passage. As you pray, thank God for how He has been at work all this time. Thank Him for the way He worked through the flawed people of the past and how He works through the flawed people of today – us. Pray for unity and love in the Church. Ask God to show you how you fit within the body of Christ and reveal ways you can be growing and maturing.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it...

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.