

# Course Handbook



Welcome to the Online Bible College! You have embarked, together with many other students from around the world, on an exciting journey of discovery – the progressive uncovering of the rich treasures found in God’s Word.

This handbook is your starting point. It will provide a brief orientation on how the OBC program is conducted and what you can expect as you progress through the course content.

## Course Objectives

In the Biblical Studies Course, the Online Bible College has a commitment to you in terms of three principal objectives:

1. To teach you the essential truths of God’s Word.
2. To train you in the study of God’s Word.
3. To equip you to multiply God’s Word in the lives of others.

Our purpose is to meet your needs as a student of God’s Word, but we also see beyond you to those you will lead to the Lord, teach and train. We keep this constantly in mind in the preparation of course materials.

At the Online Bible College, we are seeking, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to make God’s objectives for your life our objectives. These divine objectives are encapsulated in three scriptures which define the OBC course material:

- **The Goal:** “For those God foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...*” (**Romans 8:29**).
- **The Method:** “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind...*” (**Romans 12:2**).
- **The Result:** “If you remain in me and my words remain in you...*you [will] bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*” (**John 15:7-8**).

**Stop for a moment:** Before you read any further, write these three verses down on a slip of paper and tuck them into your Bible, or put them in a prominent place (for example, on your refrigerator door). Rehearse them regularly. Commit them to memory. Resolve to make God’s objectives your objectives.

The main purpose of the OBC Biblical Studies Course is not to train you as a pastor or evangelist or a teacher. These are ministry expressions that will develop as God molds your life in conformity to his unique plan for you, and are *secondary* benefits of your study at OBC. The *primary* purpose of the Biblical Studies Course is to equip you to be an effective minister of the New Covenant (see **2 Corinthians 3:6**), which will then be outworked in many different and unique expressions of ministry. This is not for the select few. *Every* true disciple of the Lord Jesus has the privilege and responsibility of being a minister of the New Covenant.

## Course Emphasis

All Online Bible College materials are life-oriented. That is, we do not take a purely academic approach, focused exclusively on the accumulation and testing of knowledge. Rather we emphasize life application on the basis of a three-fold process in God's Word:

- **Revelation** – the *enlightening* of God's Word by the Holy Spirit.
- **Repentance** – the *aligning* of your thinking and behavior with God's Word.
- **Reality** – the *empowering* by the Holy Spirit to live in line with God's Word.

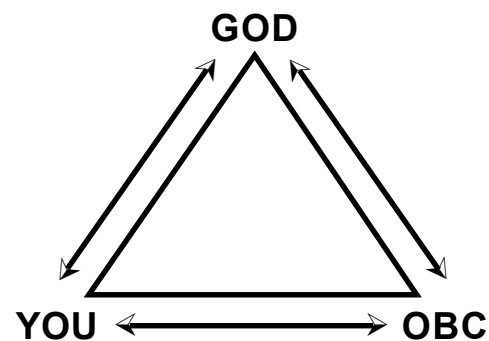
Note the strong emphasis on the work of God's Spirit in this process. Revelation comes by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. We then respond to that revelation by repenting (re-aligning the direction of our lives). On the basis of our response, God's Spirit continues his unique work of grace to conform our lives to the pattern of Christ and make his Word a daily reality for us.

Learning with the Online Bible College is much more than just developing a mental repository of biblical information. As long as you are responding to this work of God's Spirit, you will not just *learn* the Word of God; you will be *shaped* by the Word of God.

## A Three-Way Partnership

The Online Bible College study program is a three-way partnership between OBC, yourself and God. Each has a vital role in the training and equipping process. And for your study program with OBC to be a success, the lines of communication and interaction between these three partners must be cultivated and reinforced on a daily basis.

At the Online Bible College, those responsible for both the writing of course material and the daily communication with students are committed to waiting on God each day. In the same way, throughout the course, we will be encouraging you to maintain two points of daily communication:



A three-way partnership

- ☞ **With the Lord** - through prayer
- ☞ **With OBC** - through email, online discussions at the Virtual Campus, and through live chat (see <http://www.online-bible-college.com/services.htm>).

At the Online Bible College, we constantly seek to stress the importance of these two points of daily contact. Your study with OBC will only be as effective as the strength of this daily communication.

## Your Role in the Partnership

As a partner in the training and equipping process, you bring a number of vital ingredients to the party:

### **Vision**

Having a personal vision is probably the most vital element you bring to the OBC course. It has been said that vision is the key to self-discipline. A young person studying at medical school will often forgo parties and outings with friends in order to complete his or her studies. Why? Because he (or she) has a vision. The vision of becoming a doctor has outworked itself practically in the form of self-discipline.

As Jonathan Swift put it, "Vision is the art of seeing the invisible." What is your vision, your reason for studying at OBC? If you have a vision of being used by God (even if the details haven't yet been worked out), that vision will begin to define your life and order your priorities. The more powerful and defining your vision, the easier it is to discipline yourself to spend time with God and study his Word.

### **Determination**

Success, it has been said, is a factor not so much of intelligence but of determination. Jesus, when describing the qualifications of those who would be his disciples, said: "...No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (**Luke 9:62**). Be determined before God to finish what you have begun.

### **Application**

Your study program at OBC has one principal aim: to see God's Word applied practically and consistently in and through your life. A wise man once said:

**I hear, I forget  
I see, I remember  
I do, I understand**

An even wiser man said in **James 1:22**:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

In the words of Eugene Paterson's introduction to *The Message*, "everything, quite literally everything, [has] to be re-centered, re-imagined and re-thought" in the light of God's Word and his purpose for your life. By consistently applying

the truth of God's Word to your life, through the power of God's Spirit, Paul's prayer for the Colossian Christians in **Colossians 1:9-10** will become a reality in your life:

*"...we have not stopped...asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding...that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."*

### **Multiplication**

You have only truly learnt what you are able to share with others. In fact, it is often in the teaching of others that you learn the most yourself. For this reason, every lesson in the Biblical Studies program is designed to be not just learned but also taught. We give you full permission to teach what you learn to others.

The dramatic growth of the first-century Church is described in **Acts 12:24** in a very unusual way:

"But the word of God continued to increase and spread."

The *King James Version* renders it this way:

"And the word of God grew and multiplied."

Church growth was not just described as an addition of new commitments to Christ, but as a multiplication effect that came from the very power of God's Word itself. The Word of God was established in the hearts of the early Christians (see **James 1:21; Romans 16:25-27**) and, through them, that Word multiplied in its effect, setting off a chain reaction of growth.

This is, in its essence, the vision of the Online Bible College. As you effectively apply God's Word to your life on a personal basis, the Holy Spirit will multiply that Word's effect through you to touch many other lives. And as you teach and train those people to apply the Word of God to their lives, that multiplication effect will begin to increase. Who knows how many people you can touch, both directly and indirectly, simply by being personally obedient to God's Word!

## **Course Content**

The Online Bible College course is divided into two daily components:

### **Morning Study**

Your morning program focuses on an hour of personal devotion and the study of God's Word. Here is a suggested breakdown of your morning study time:

- ☞ Personal devotions – 20 minutes
- ☞ Memory verse – 10 minutes
- ☞ Bible study – 30 minutes

The emphasis of the morning component is to help you develop a daily intimacy with God through prayer and the study of his Word.

### ***Evening Study***

Your evening program focuses on two hours plus of study, focusing on the key truths in God's Word. Here is a possible breakdown of your evening study time:

- Topical Study – 2-3 hours
- Online Test – ½ hour

Note that the above times are indicative only. For example, while you are online, you may want to take more time to participate in the Online Bible College's Virtual Campus at <http://online-bible-college.infopop.net>.

As you can see, studying at the default pace of one lesson per day (each lesson having a morning and evening study) requires a solid commitment of time each day. While some students will have no trouble with this pace of study, others will find such a pace too intensive. If you would like to slow down the pace of your study, to suit your particular schedule, you will find instructions on page 7.

## **How the Course Works**

Study at OBC works in the following way:

### ***Receiving your lessons***

You will receive each day's lesson (both morning and evening study components) by email attachment. If you would like to work out the approximate mailout time of your lesson, go to <http://www.online-bible-college.com/mailout.htm>.

### ***Completing your lessons***

We recommend that you divide your study time into morning and evening periods, as suggested by the terms "morning study" and "evening study." You may study at any time of the day, or even spread your studies out over a couple of days. You are in complete charge of your study schedule.

### ***Submitting your answers***

There are three ways that OBC assesses your progress in study:

- **Lesson tests** – Each lesson test has 10 questions and should be taken after you have finished your study of the relevant lesson (and preferably before going on to the next lesson).

## **Terms to Know**

At this point it would be helpful to know a few computer terms as used in the OBC courseware:

**Online:** To be connected to the Internet, and specifically to the OBC website.

**Upload:** To transfer data from your computer to the OBC website.

**Download:** a) To transfer data from the OBC website to your computer; b) To collect your email.

**AMS:** This is an OBC term, which stands for Automated Mailout System (the system through which your lessons are automatically emailed to you).

**OTS:** This is another OBC term, which stands for Online Test Server (the system through which you take your tests).

- **Module tests** – Each module test has 20 questions and is completed at the end of the relevant module, before going on to the next module.
- **Module assignments** – At the end of each module, you will be assigned two short essays or life assignments. These are typed into a text document (and attached to an email), or typed directly into the body of the email, which is then sent to [registrar@online-bible-college.com](mailto:registrar@online-bible-college.com).

All tests and assignments play an important part in the OBC assessment process. Your grade point average (GPA) will be based upon the grades you receive for each lesson test, module test and module assignment.

## Doing Your Tests

After completing each lesson, we recommend that you connect to the Internet and go to the OBC Student Area at <http://obc.ipera.com.au/student/>, where you can complete the online test for that day. All you need to do is login with your OBC Student Number and password, then click on the link called “Take Next Test.”

**Please note:** If you don't know your Student Number, or can't remember your password, you can request this to be mailed out to you by clicking on the link at the bottom of the login page. The AMS (Automated Mailout System) will then send you an email, with your student number and password, to the address you supplied us on your enrollment form.

OBC tests and assignments perform three very important functions:

- **They are a teaching tool:** The questions reinforce the content of the lesson, helping you to remember and absorb the principles of God's Word. You will note that there is nothing stopping you from looking back over the lesson to find the answer. If you don't remember the answer to the question, then looking back over the lesson is an important reinforcement to your learning experience.
- **They are a mentoring tool:** Your answers provide the OBC team a window on how you are progressing. If we see points of difficulty or gaps in your understanding, we can follow these up specifically with you. In this way, we are able to assist you to leap the hurdles of understanding so vital to a comprehensive understanding of God's Word.
- **An assessment tool:** Your answers are assessed by OBC graders in order to provide you with a grade point. This grade point assessment is a valuable feedback mechanism, and is incorporated into the grade transcript you will receive at the end of the course.

All OBC tests are “open book” tests. This means that you are allowed to read your Bible and your lesson to answer questions in the test. Straight copy-and-paste from your lesson, however, is not allowed. Everything should be in your own words, unless you are quoting from the Bible. If you quote from another source, it is also important to cite the author and reference.

Because all tests at the Online Bible College are “open book,” you are allowed to print out the test beforehand (you can do this by clicking “View Test Templates” at <http://obc.ipera.com.au/student/> and selecting the test you want to print out), and jot down your answers as you study your lesson. Many students find this to be is a time-effective way of study at OBC.

As you take your tests, we recommend that you do the following:

- Use the spellchecker, whenever appropriate, by clicking on the “Spellcheck” button beneath each question. You will not be marked down for spelling and grammatical errors, but as you progress in more advanced study at OBC, we will be encouraging you to aim for a high standard in spelling and grammar.
- Save your test regularly. In fact, we recommend that you save your test every 5 minutes or so, to ensure that none of your work is lost due to a computer crash or server error. You can save your test by clicking on the “Save” button at the end of your test. This will take you to a confirmation page, which will then provide you with a link back to your test.
- You may type in your answers offline. But you must be online in order to save the test, or use the spellchecker, or submit your test.

Remember: If you have an questions or are experiencing any difficulties, please don’t hesitate to ask us. Once you have become familiar with the test process, however, you will find it easy to use.

OBC graders will mark your tests and return them, together with your grade and any comments relevant to your studies. We endeavor to have your test results turned around in 2-3 days, but on occasions this may extend up to a week.

## Changing Your Pace of Study

When your course mailout is activated, the Online Bible College sends you out lessons at the default pace of five lessons per week (one per weekday). You can change this pace any time you wish. Just login to the OBC Student Area at <http://obc.ipera.com.au/student/> and click on the link called “Change Pace.” This will take you to a page called “OBC PaceSetter,” where you can make changes to the frequency and pace of your lesson mailouts.

## Taking a Break

At the Online Bible College, you are also able to take breaks from study as you need them. There are several types of study breaks you may want to take:

- **A catch-up break** (if you need to catch up on your lessons)
- **A vacation break** (if you are going way on vacation)
- **A relief break** (if your extracurricular schedule has changed, or if an emergency has come up)

- **A semester break** (if you have completed a number of modules and feel you need to take a short break from study).

If you want to take a break, all you need to do is login at <http://obc.ipera.com.au/student/>, and click on the link called “Take a Break.” This will direct you to a page called “OBC Break Scheduler.” Select a start and end date for your break, then select the reason you are taking a break. After you submit your break request, the AMS (Automated Mailout System) is automatically notified of your break time, and emails a notice to the Dean of Students so that the OBC team is aware that you are on break.

## Understanding Graceware

All OBC courses are completely free of charge. There are no course fees, which means there is absolutely no financial obligation to you as you study at the Online Bible College. This is based on the ministry principle of **Matthew 10:8**, which states:

“...Freely you have received, freely give.”

We call this “graceware.” God’s grace is free – without charge or cost – since it was paid 100% by Jesus upon the Cross. In ministry, we also have the privilege of offering teaching in God’s Word on the same basis – totally free of charge.

In the computer programming world, there is a term called “shareware.” Unlike ordinary computer programs, shareware programs are distributed free of charge. However, if a person finds the program useful, he can send a payment to the writer of the program, to encourage the programmer to continue producing new software.

Graceware works in a similar way. As you study at OBC, you do not need to worry about course fees. In fact, you can study every course without paying a single cent. But if you are blessed by the course, and would like others to experience the same life-changing training, then there are two ways you can be more actively involved in the missionary vision of OBC.

### ***Become an Online Missionary***

The operations of the Online Bible College are run through the volunteer participation of many students, just like you. This is why we are able to provide the Biblical Studies Course to you free of charge.

If you would like to become an “online missionary” and member of the OBC student team, let us know by filling out the form at [https://crons.turboweb.net.au/churchlink/volunteer\\_form.htm](https://crons.turboweb.net.au/churchlink/volunteer_form.htm).

### ***Send a Missionary Gift***

Even though you can study at OBC free of charge, we encourage you to give a missionary gift (either a one-time gift or regular support) to the Online Bible College. You can do this anytime by filling out the online form at [https://crons.turboweb.net.au/churchlink/partner\\_form.htm](https://crons.turboweb.net.au/churchlink/partner_form.htm).

## The Virtual Campus

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The Online Bible College has an interactive Virtual Campus (affectionately nicknamed “VC”), which is a large discussion area set aside for OBC students. You will find hundreds of different discussion rooms, set aside for various purposes:

- You can meet other OBC students and enjoy online fellowship.
- You can ask any questions you have regarding your course material – or about anything that has been puzzling you.
- You can read the questions and answers already posted, and participate in online discussions and collaborative projects.

When you first enroll at the Online Bible College, the Registrar’s Team will register you for the participation as a student on the Virtual Campus. This can take up to 2 working days, but if you find that you are not yet registered, or would like to participate immediately at VC, just shoot an email to [registrar@online-bible-college.com](mailto:registrar@online-bible-college.com) and we will prioritize your registration on the Virtual Campus.

You can find the OBC Virtual Campus at <http://online-bible-college.infopop.net>. Come along and fellowship with other OBC students from around the world!

## Reference Tools

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Two things go hand in hand while you study with the Online Bible College – the OBC lessons and a good study Bible. There is no steadfast rule as to which Bible is the best for you, but we would recommend one of the following:

- New International Version
- New King James Version
- King James Version
- New American Standard Bible

Your study Bible should preferably have a good cross-reference system (where the verse you are reading is linked to other verses of similar topic or related meaning in the rest of the Bible). Many study Bibles also have concordances (where you can search for occurrences of a particular word throughout the Bible) and other study helps in the back. There is also excellent Bible software available at most Christian bookstores.

We suggest that you speak with a leader in your church, or someone from your local Christian bookstore, to get advice as to which Bible is the best for you. If you already have a study Bible with which you are familiar, then obviously this is the best Bible for you to use. And if your church requires you to use a particular version of the Bible, we suggest that you stick with that version. Although the Online Bible College uses the New International Version as its base reference Bible, we do not require you to use the NIV. Each OBC student uses the Bible version of his or her choice.

However, we do recommend that you get access to a few other Bible translations and paraphrases for the purpose of comparison and deeper insight into the meaning of God's Word. These excellent auxiliary Bibles are good possibilities:

- Eugene Paterson's *The Message*
- The Amplified Bible
- The Good News Bible
- The New Living Translation

The purpose of these Bibles is to provide you with as broad a spectrum of insight into the original meaning of the Scriptures as possible. They are good supplementary Bibles to be used in parallel with your study Bible.

Other reference tools that we recommend for the serious Bible student are:

- A good concordance – preferably one that explains the original language meanings. If you have Bible software, this usually comes with a computer-based word-search function. Alternatively, you can access an excellent online Bible resource at <http://bible.gospelcom.net/bg/>. Here you will find a multitude of different Bible versions, in different languages, together with a comprehensive word-search capability.
- A Bible dictionary – such as *Unger's Bible Dictionary*.
- A Bible handbook - providing historic background, maps, etc.

Remember: None of these are absolutely vital to Bible study and are not required for study at the Online Bible College. In fact, none of them can substitute for an open heart to God's Word and to the Holy Spirit. But they can be wonderful aids to discovering the deep riches of Scripture often found just beneath the surface.

## Your First Assignment

You're now ready to dive into the OBC program. And what better way than by doing your first assignment! As your first foray into study at the Online Bible College, we ask you to write a short essay. You do this completely online by logging on at <http://obc.iper.com.au/student/> and clicking on "First Assignment Essay."

As soon as we receive your First Assignment, we will put you on the active course mailout and you will receive Lesson 101-01.

This First Assignment helps us to get to know you better, but it also fulfills another important function. The personal and ministry goals you list down in your First Assignment Essay are the yardstick against which we measure your progress in your studies at OBC. As you move through your studies, we at times look back with you at the goals you originally set to see how you are progressing in fulfilling them. After all, this is what studying the Bible is all about – absorbing the truth of God's Word so that it impacts your life and the lives of those around you.

We look forward to partnering with you in an exciting and rewarding time of study. Welcome to the Online Bible College!