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## Coptic Binding with Jody Alexander

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### Chapter 1 - Introduction

#### Overview

- I'm gonna teach you how to bind a book in the coptic style. This is a historical structure that dates back to the fourth century. We leave it uncovered so that the sewing remains exposed on the spine and you can see this beautiful chain stitch. It's very elegant. I'll show you how to cover a book board and make really nice neat little corners. I'm gonna show you how to create your signatures, which are the folded sections of paper that will make your binding. And then how to do the chain stitch that creates the coptic binding. This is a great little project if you want a real personalized journal. ^It makes a great gift, it can even be a photo album.

### Chapter 2 - Materials

#### Materials

- I'm gonna go over the tools and materials that you'll need for the Coptic binding. First of all, you'll need a heavy-duty cutting knife, that's to cut the book board. It really needs to be sharp and heavy-duty, because it's a little bit of a tough job. You're also gonna want a lighter cutting knife that you might just have a little more control over. You're going to need a glue brush. Just an inexpensive one is fine, like this. You're gonna need an awl, this is my little sewing awl which is my favorite one, but you can also use other sizes of awls. This is called a needle vice, and a needle is really just held in and screwed into this tool. And it's a little harder to find. But you can get what's called a student awl, that has a thinner shaft here. This, I believe, is a ceramics tool that I think is really inexpensive and would work really well. What you wanna think about is really kind of a needle at the end of a stick, you want it to be really really thin for this one part of the book, book cover. You're gonna want a bone folder, this is my favorite little one, so I always like to have that one on hand. But really, a bone folder this size would be perfect for the whole project, that's really all you'll need. You wanna also have some scissors, that's gonna be for cutting corners. You'll want a measuring tool, a straight-edge ruler works really nicely. You also wanna have a triangle, or something that's gonna help you know if you're square before you cut your paper or your book board. You're gonna want a little bit of sandpaper, and that's to sand down the edges of the book board, so that they just aren't too sharp. You'll also need some binding thread, so this is a linen thread, it's already waxed and colored, it's my favorite kind of binding thread for exposed-bind bindings. And I talk a little bit more about this, as well as the other tools, in *The Anatomy of the Book*. So if you wanna know a little more information about some of these things, you can check in there. And you'll also need a sewing needle, and paper to cover the book board. So this is where you can use paper that maybe you've decorated yourself. This is paper that I've block-printed, and I really like to use paper that I've decorated myself to make my project even a little more personalized. But you can use any paper from an art supply store. It could even just be a solid color, these are just art papers. There's also a number of printed papers out there that are just gorgeous, so look around. You just wanna be able to fold it over, you don't want it to be too thick or you're gonna have trouble making those corners. Book board, and we are going to cut it down to size, and I'll go over that next. Paper for the pages, so this is text paper. I also talk about this a little bit more in *The Anatomy of the Book*, but this is a resume paper that works really nicely. You can use a thicker paper if you're wanting to use this for something a little different. Maybe for drawing, or

painting, so it really kinda depends on what you want. But for your first one, I would recommend using a resume-weight text paper. A little piece of scrap paper is good, because we're just gonna be making this little template here. Setting up your workspace, you're gonna want a cutting mat. And that's to protect your surface, because we are gonna be doing quite a lot of cutting. You'll also need some craft paper, just scratch paper to protect your surface against gluing, because we are gonna be using a lot of glue. I also like to have a paper towel on hand, with a little water on it, just to clean up my hands a little bit when I get gooeey. And glue, PVA. This is PVA, straight PVA. And I also like to have a PVA-methylcellulose mix on hand, it just spreads a little easier and it gives you a little more working time for drawing. And if you want to hear me talk more about that, you can view my chapter in Anatomy of the Book on adhesives, and I talk a little bit more about that. And you'll also need some kind of pressing station. After we glue our covers, we wanna give them a good pressing. And I just use old books that have a nice heft to it, as well as an old iron. You don't need anything fancy for that.

### **Chapter 3 - Start Making Book**

#### Cut book boards

- We're gonna cut the book board. This is the book board that I'm using. It's a scrap that's already been cut down a few times. It does have a grain to it, I see, and you want to make sure that the grain of your book board, as well as your pages, run along the spine of the book. I also talk about that in the anatomy of the book. So if you wanna hear a little bit more about that, watch that chapter. But I can see that there is a grain there. Sometimes book board is plied so on one side, (light scratching) the grain's running in one direction, and on the other side, it's running (light scratching) in the counter direction. This, I can see, isn't the case with this. So I'm gonna make sure that I'm orienting my cut so that the spine of the book is in this direction. So I'm gonna start with measuring how big the book cover's gonna be, which is  $5 \frac{5}{8}$  by  $4 \frac{3}{8}$ . The reason I've chosen that dimension is because the signatures, or the sections, are torn down or cut down from an  $8 \frac{1}{2}$  by 11 piece of paper. So it's halved. And then I wanna give just a little bit of wiggle room around that, you know, so you don't have to bind it so, so perfectly. So I'm gonna just give it a sixteenth of an inch or so around there. And if you tear the paper, that gives your signature a little bit of dimension, so keep that in mind. You just want a little bit of room around your signature size. So  $5 \frac{5}{8}$  by  $4 \frac{3}{8}$ , that's what we're gonna do. And I'm gonna start with making marks (clattering) First, though, I'm gonna make sure this scrap is square, and that I have some good edges to start from. So I'm gonna take my triangle, and that's looking pretty good. So I know that I can start measuring from this edge and from that edge, and I'm probably gonna be okay. But I'm gonna keep checking as I go along. I'm gonna take my straightedge ruler and I'm gonna make a mark at the width dimension, which is  $4 \frac{3}{8}$ . And I'm gonna make three marks. The reason I make three marks is because two marks are always gonna line up. Three marks will not line up if one of 'em is not right. I'm lining up my ruler on those three marks. I'm gonna take my triangle and make sure. That's looking pretty good! It's looking really nice and square. I always do that as a final check before I start cutting. Now I'm gonna take (clicking) my cutting knife. Book board is not easy to cut through. And rather than doing (light scraping) the hardest cut you possibly can, do a number of lighter cuts. And that way, you avoid the risk of hurting yourself. If you skip the ruler with this blade, you are gonna do some damage, so you really wanna be careful. I try to keep my fingers out of the way as much as possible, but that is difficult (light scraping) (chuckling) as you're holding it in place. Got it. (rustling) I've got a  $4 \frac{3}{8}$  dimension cut, and I'm gonna get the  $5 \frac{5}{8}$  dimension cut. So again, I'm gonna make three marks.

Three. I'm gonna line up my ruler. And I wanna mention, too, if you really want it to be obvious where you're lining up your ruler, you can get those marks squared away. Make sure you're squared first, and do a pencil line if that makes you more comfortable. Some of my students do that. I'm fine with just lining up my three marks. Again, take your triangle and make sure you're square. Oh, I'm a little off there! Sure how I'm doin' here. Yeah, I can see I'm a little off there, so I'm seeing where I'm off. I may just have not lined 'em up really well. Okay, look at that. That's lookin' much better. Hold it firm, (light scraping) start cutting. (tapping) Alright. K, and almost there, although I can still feel one little piece. There we go! There's one cover. I have one cover already prepared. We wanna do one more thing though, and that's take a little piece of sandpaper. And we wanna sand off these rough edges. You can see how cutting it has created a little bur, and you wanna cut that off, and also these sharp corners. So I'm just gonna show you briefly how to do this, because you're gonna want to do it outside. Because the book board dust really flies around, and you don't wanna be breathing that in. (scraping) And just lightly sand, and just take that edge off, and just take the sharp corner off. Not rounding it. I'm not rounding it, I'm just taking the edge off. Okay, I'm not gonna do too much more, 'cause I don't want dust flying around in here, but you can see the difference here in my sanded board and my board that I haven't quite gotten to yet. You can see that I've taken off the sharp edges, but not necessarily rounded it. And now this piece is ready to be covered.

#### Cover book boards

- Our first step is covering our book-boards. We wanna do that first so that they'll have time to press weighted down and dry before we start binding, so that's what we're gonna do first. This is the piece of paper that I'm gonna be using. This is my piece of book-board that I cut out, sanded it - it's five and five eighths by four and three eighths. I want to leave about a half an inch. I never measure it, I kind of eyeball it, but it's about a half an inch to five eighths of an inch around the edge, and that's what we're gonna turn in. I usually just position my board right here and I take my ruler - I'm using my little ruler here just 'cause it's kind of handy - and I just make a cut. I don't do any marks, I don't do any measuring, but you can if you want if that's what's more comfortable for you, please do. You could take this, measure out half of an inch, five eighths of an inch, and make little marks and then cut. Turn. That looks pretty good and cut. And I wanna mention that I did take note of my pattern and how it's gonna match up with my back cover. This is my back cover that I already prepared. This is a pretty bold pattern; it has very strong horizontals and vertical lines. I'm not gonna be able to match up these floral patterns exactly, but at least I can make it so that the lines will kind of match up, you know have a, a nice strong line that way. We're gonna bring in some craft paper to protect our surface. I wanna use straight PVA glue 'cause I want it to dry fairly quickly so that we can get binding. So I have my surface here, PVA glue, got a little paper towel with some water on it so that when I get a little goopy in the fingers I can clean up quickly. You can see I had a little note here just kind of reminding me of how I wanted to orient my paper - that's fine to do but you don't have to do that. I'm gonna start gluing up with my PVA. You wanna take some glue on your brush, start in the middle, and start radiating out with your glue. You can see I'm brushing in one direction. I'm not going like this - that will catch glue on the corners and really make a mess out of your book, but we're wanting to get binding pretty quickly here. You can see I don't put a lot on my glue brush; just a little bit at a time. I'm holding down the paper just with my fingernails so that I don't, you know get my fingers too much in it but I'm moving them around a little bit. Now we're ready to put our book-board down and I'm gonna center it as closely as I can here. Okay and press down. And really, really press down there. Alright. Now my glue surface is getting a little messy, so

what I usually do I usually always start out with a folded piece and I just fold it back, and get myself really easily and quickly a nice new surface. I'm gonna check the other side to see how I did just to make sure that there's no bubbles or creases, and this looks fine. If there are you could take your bone folder and bone this down a little bit more. You might wanna put a piece of paper or wax paper over it so that you don't burnish it; you don't wanna, which is a shine, you don't want a, a shine on your paper. But I think it looks fine. This usually should be enough. We're gonna cut the corners and this is a really nice technique to know how to do. We're gonna remove as much material as possible so that when we fold it over, we don't get lumpy corners. We're gonna cut a diagonal line right here and the distance from this corner to the cut is, it's hard to measure and it's approximately... What you wanna do is make that approximately a book-board and a half or so distance. I always just kind of eyeball it. You can do this and mark it with a pencil if that's what you're comfortable with. I just eyeball it and I make sure I have more rather than less. I'm gonna cut all four corners and you can see I'm just doing cutting off these little triangles, keeping myself you know, maybe approximately an eighth of an inch, maybe just shy of an eighth of an inch from that corner. From my diagonal cut here, I'm gonna cut straight into that corner and I'm gonna cut it as if I'm cutting just right along the line of the head and the tail of my book, and I'm gonna do that in all four corners. You're gonna want nice sharp scissors. All four corners are cut, we're gonna glue the head and the tail over first. It's very important that those cuts are made along the line of the head and along the line of the tail, and then you turn in the head and the tail before you turn in the spine and the fore-edge. I'm gonna switch over to the PVA methyl cellulose just 'cause it spreads a little bit easier, and I have a little bit more working time. Glue up this end. I'm getting a little glue on the edge of the board and then I'm gonna take my bone folder and use my bone folder fold over that piece. And you can see I'm wiping my bone folder every time I do that because I'm squiging out a little bit of glue and I don't want that to get all over the place. Now we're gonna take this little piece right here and just scoot it around the corner and then pinch up a little triangle between my bone folder and my finger. And you're just gonna leave that little piece up there for now; we're eventually gonna cut it off. I'm gonna do the same thing on this side. Get that around the corner. This is starting to stick a little bit. There we go. Gonna do the same thing on this side and around the corner, and on this side around the corner. That was the hard part. We're gonna cut off those triangles now 'cause we're gonna try to remove as much material as we can before we finish off. So I'm gonna take my scissors, cut that triangle flush with the board. That's a real small one. And one more. This one's really small too. It has to do with how I cut that diagonal cut. Gluing the final two flaps. I'm sticking with my PVA methyl cellulose 'cause it's just spreading a little nicer, giving me a little more time to work. And the last side. The paper's all folded around, the corner's are nice and neat. The last thing I want to do though because it is hard to press the corners, I like to take my bone folder and tap. This is done. I have one cover already completed, this one I just covered but I do need to give it some press, pressing under a weighted book or something with a little bit of heft. I'm putting some wax paper down so that my recently glued book-board doesn't stick to my book, and it also will absorb some of the moisture. So I'm gonna tuck two pieces and then this book is rather heavy, and an iron on top. We'll weight that while we prepare our signatures.

#### Prepare the signatures

- We're going to prepare the signatures now. The signatures are the folded sections of the text block that will create the book. I'm using eight and a half by 11 paper. I always teach with this size paper because it's so readily available and if you tear it in half, and then fold those pieces in half,

you have this really, really nice size that creates this great size book. So I really recommend that you use these sizes at least for your first few times making this book. Make it easy on yourself while you're, you're learning. Take your eight and a half by 11 piece of paper, fold it in half by meeting up your corners, using your bone folder to bone down that edge. What your doing is breaking the fibers which will make it easier to tear. I love to tear my paper because I get that nice fuzzy edge. I'm going to start a nice, neat pile in front of me. I show you a few ways to tear your paper in the anatomy of the books, so refer to that if you'd like to see different ways of tearing paper. These four sheets that I just tore will make up one signature. Fold them at the same time, meet up those corners, and bone down. That's one signature. You're going to want 10 signatures for this binding and remember that the grain of the paper needs to go along the spine of the, of the book so that it will open with ease and again read about that in anatomy of the book.

### Create sewing stations

- Creating the sewing stations. The sewing stations are where the needle and the thread are gonna be coming in and out of the signatures, or sections, to hold the text block together. So I wanna make a template. A little piece of scratch paper. You want it to be exactly the height of your text block. So I usually just, if I've ripped a paper wrong, I made a mistake or one of my students have, I hang on to those pieces of paper. I just cut little pieces of paper for my template. The width does not matter. This is where we're going to make marks on the template, which you can see I've already done. This is a very simple template, though. And then we're gonna transfer those marks. They're gonna be our holes in our signature. We want the sewing stations to be about an inch in from the head and from the tail. You can vary that a little bit, but you have to keep in mind, this is what's holding the book together. So you don't want it to be too close to the head or the tail, or too far into the center. What I've done with this book is about an inch and 1/8. Which I think just looks kind of nice and balanced. You wanna take it into consideration how it looks, too. So you need to consider function as well as how it looks. So this template just has, you can see I've already made the marks, but I'll show you how I would go about doing that. It just has a pencil mark at 1 1/8 from the head, and 1 1/8 from the tail. I made marks on both sides of my template, too. That's gonna come in handy when we go and make the holes in the covers, and the holes in the signatures, because we might be switching sides depending on how we work. And then I always, always mark an h, for head, at the top. And that way, I know when I'm creating my holes to keep that pile really organized, so I know that that's the head and I match that up with the head of the cover. And that way, even though I think I did an inch and 1/8 from the head and the tail, I may have been off just a little bit on one of those measurements. And if I start flipping my paper up and down, over and not paying attention to what's head, what's tail, I might have a really uneven text block with pages sticking up here or there. So neatness counts. (laughs) Making the sewing stations. Gonna open up that folded signature. I'm gonna place my template in here. Make sure everything's nice and neat. Gonna take my awl and make a hole right where that line is, and right along the fold. This one's done. Make sure to make 10 of these, so you'll have a nice text block for your Coptic binding. We're gonna make the holes in the covers now. And this is the cover that I was weighting down. Let me show you the sample, so you see what we're gonna be doing. You can see that the sewing goes in a hole that's on the edge of the book board here. And then there's a hole on the cover about 1/8 of an inch from the spine edge. And then again about 1/2 an inch from that hole. We're gonna be making all of those holes now. So the template's a little smaller than the book cover, because remember we made the cover a little larger than our signatures, so that we had a little wiggle room there. So I'm

gonna center this template in the height of the cover. And about 1/8 of an inch in, gonna make a mark with my pencil. And that's where I'm gonna make a hole. And then again, 1/2 inch from there, I'm gonna make another mark. You can either eyeball it, 'cause it's really not important that this is exact. It's really more of a strength thing, but as far as how far away it is, it's also an aesthetic thing. But you could do just a little check right here. Oh, pretty good. I'm about 1/2 an inch from that other mark. Really be sure to line that up. Another mark. Okay. I'm gonna make those holes with my awl. Starting with the one that's about 1/8 of an inch from the spine edge. I'm gonna turn the board over. And you can see where my holes are, but they're really not very big. And you wanna make these holes really nice and wide, because you're gonna be taking your thread through them twice. And the second time you take your thread through, there's gonna be a width of thread in there. Make nice, healthy-sized holes there. I just kinda work them from both sides. I wanna make sure that these holes, though, are really nice and parallel. Because once you have a piece of thread in there, if that piece of thread is crooked, you really see that. So I'm gonna take my triangle here, and that looks pretty good there. Take that around. That one looks pretty good, too. And this hole. Alright, we need to work those ones from the back now also, so that they're a good width. Those holes are complete. And now you're gonna make the holes on the edge of the board. We're gonna go back to the template to make sure that we're making those in the right place. They wanna be right along that same line. And you can do a couple different things. You can put your template on the back here. It's hard to balance your template here. (laughs) So I kind of place it on the back side, just so I can kinda see it. And then I'm looking at the holes I made on the cover, lining those up. I'm gonna make a mark first. What's most important is that this mark and what's gonna be a hole there is lined up with that mark and that hole. So I've got two marks on the edge of the board now. This is where I use my pin vise. Or you can use another tool that just resembles a needle on the end of some kind of handle. We're gonna make a hole starting at this mark that's on the edge of our board, and it's gonna come out of that hole. It's a diagonal hole. I'm just gonna get my hole started. And then I'm gonna start pushing in a diagonal. And you can see my needle coming out. It sounds a lot harder than it is. And it's really not that difficult, but it's an important part of the design of this binding. Because as you can see, the thread is gonna be buried in this little hole and it's gonna be protected there. And that's what's gonna keep it from fraying. And the whole book from falling apart. Because you're having one piece of thread holding the boards and the signatures together. You wanna be very careful that you don't rip through between this diagonal hole and this hole. If you do, it's not the end of the world. You could glue with some PVA, the material back down. Because this is an area that's not gonna receive stress once the book is bound. We're ready to start binding.

## **Chapter 4 - Finish Making Book**

### Set up for binding

- We're ready to start binding. I like to line everything up like this so that it's looking like a book, I know everything's in order, everything's in line and I'm ready to bind. And I also like to put it in front of me really nice and neatly and that's what I'm going to be pulling from. I'm going to cut my thread. This is a waxed linen thread that's colored. I really like this for the coptic binding because it shows off that beautiful chain stitch. For this binding you need two wing spans, usually the rule of thumb is you take one wing span, because that's as much thread that you can physically handle and then you add on a weaver's knot if you need more. For this binding adding on a weaver's knot is very difficult and you want to avoid it so I take a little extra. I'm 5'8" so if I do two wing spans and then a little extra to grow on, I always do, I'm probably going to end up with somewhere around 11 or 12 feet

depending on how much I really took there and that's what you want is 11 or 12 feet. This binding eats up thread like crazy. We're going to use two needles. This is a two needle coptic binding. I'm going to use binding needles that have fairly small eyes and that's because I'm going to be taking that needle and that thread through those cover holes and I don't want it to be too bulky, that's just going to give me a harder time. So I'm going to put a needle on both ends of this very long piece of thread. And this thread is a little thick but it is wax so if you give it a little, here just a little scrunch at the end you should be able to get it through. And also since it's waxed it really holds on to that eye so you only need a few inches of a tail there. You're using a lot of thread here so you really want to do yourself a favor and clear off your workspace. I always like to bind on my cutting mat, there's really no reason to it it's not protecting my surface anymore but I just like to do it so I neaten up my cutting mat, I put away all of my materials except for my bone folder, and my needle, my thread and what I'm binding so I'm going to put my scissors away here. Definitely put scissors away, rulers, anything that can get caught in your thread will get caught in your thread. I'm really clearing away my surface. Now binding posture is the way you want to sit while you bind and it's a way that will make binding easier and also it's easier on your body because I'm going to be binding like this with my materials on the edge of the table and if I need to look inside the table which I am going to have to do occasionally I can just kind of rock back and forth instead of doing this, and you can see how this, is hard on your body. Especially after an hour or two of binding, that's really going to be hard on your body. So if you're right handed you want to sit with your legs parallel to the table and so that your left elbow, arm and hand are resting. And then you bind with your right hand and your right hand is nice and free.

Attach cover to first signature

- All right, so the first step is to attach the cover to the first signature. So I'm gonna put the cover aside for just a second. I'm gonna take the first signature, you're gonna take your needles, take one needle through one of those sewing stations. I'm just gonna pull a little bit through. And then you can see how things can get tangled really easily. So whenever you have an opportunity to untangle things and make sure that a knot's not forming, you want to do that. And it looks like I'm okay. Just wanted to make sure. I'm gonna take this one, this needle, through the other sewing station. And pull that through just a little bit. Now I'm gonna take hold of that first needle and I'm gonna start pulling them together because I want to even out these pieces of thread so that they're the same length when I start binding. Okay, so I think that's pretty good. And you want that to be nice and taut inside. Now we're ready to attach the cover. Got to line things up there. The first thing we're gonna do is go through that diagonal hole. Make sure you have the right, the correct piece of thread and needle. For that side. Gonna push that through. Start pulling it. Okay, be sure to pull in the direction of the hole there, so that you don't accidentally rip out that hole. You can patch it up, so it's not the end of the world, but you do want to avoid it. Okay, let's do the other one, just so that things are a little more secure while we work. Okay. Real steady. Can see how it's just pulling real steady but strong. All right, make sure that everything is taut. Not too, too tight but no slack, that's for sure. Now we're gonna go through this hole. Again, make sure you have the right needle and thread. There's so much thread that sometimes, you get mixed up and grab the wrong one. We're gonna go through this hole all the way to the back. Pull it through. Make sure that's taut. And then, through this hole. It's really the only place we can go. There's no other hole to go into. All right, things are starting to be attached. I'm gonna use this opportunity to tighten things up a little bit. Now we're gonna do one more lap here. You want a double length of thread there. But you don't

want to split that thread that's already in there. So I'm gonna just scooch that over a little bit. Come through again. Make sure I'm not splitting the thread. There's a line down right next to each other. That's good. Again through here. Okay, I'm gonna put this needle aside so I can work on this side and catch up. Always make sure that you haven't created a knot while these long pieces of thread have been sitting there. It's very easy to do. So I'm gonna do the exact same thing that I just did on that side. Now if you're having trouble pulling the needle through, like I am right now, a good trick is getting a little piece of dish glove, or another piece of rubber, and just, see how much easier that was? It came right through. All right, now we're ready to go back through that diagonal. I'm gonna rotate the book around, because I'm just gonna get a better angle that way. Be careful when moving your thread that you're not knotting things up. Okay, now this is a little bit tricky, only because you already have a piece of thread in there. And going in that diagonal just makes it a little trickier. So every once in awhile, I'm gonna see how I do. I may have trouble getting it through. And if you do, I'm doing okay, but I want to show you what I do if I'm really having trouble getting it through and not splitting the thread that's there. I put my needle through this way and just kind of clear a path. It's just gonna really kind of help you. Okay, and you can see how that just came through really nicely. I'm gonna get my little dish glove and I'm gonna pull this really strong and firmly through. And pull in the direction of that diagonal, and you should be okay. You shouldn't rip out that piece of material. It really rarely, rarely happens. Okay, we can do it on the other side. Succeeding here. Go through that diagonal. Pulling strong and firm. That one was pretty easy. Think we're okay. We just got a temporary tangle, not a knot, let's hope. No, just some twists. All right. So the front cover is attached. I want to show you how to clean things up a little bit though. Taking all of that thread and needles through those holes, you can see how it's kind of blown out the holes a little bit and this material is flayed up and not looking really pretty. So you can take your bone folder and just kind of move that material back over. Look how much nicer that looks already. You can, of course, save that for the every end if you want. I like to do it right away so that I don't forget. Now that front cover is attached and we want to go back in to that first signature. So I'm gonna remember my binding posture at this point and you want to have the spine, or what's going to be the spine of the book right along the edge where you're gonna be binding. And try not to move your book around too much. You want to keep all of your material on your surface as you can, and use that as support. And definitely don't start lifting up the book and moving it around because your thread will get tangled. So, I will do my best to do that as well. I'm gonna open up my signature. Let's see where I'm going there. Take my needle in. This hole. Pull it all the way through. I'm gonna take my other needle and thread from the other side. Take that back in. Always looking to see that you're not piercing the piece of thread that's already in there. It's gonna be the case unless every stitch from now on. Now we're gonna switch places with our needles. I just took this needle and thread through this hole and it's gonna go into this other hole. So, I'm gonna pull this piece of thread kind of taut, so it's more or less staying out of my way. I'm taking this needle through. Gonna take this other needle and thread through this side. You're gonna have three lengths of thread in this first signature, which is unique. All of the subsequent signatures are gonna have two lengths of thread in it. So it's perfectly fine that there's three in there. All right, we're gonna close that signature. I'm gonna tighten up my thread a little bit. And then I'm gonna bone the signature down. It's very important that you bone each signature down before you add the next one. And what you're doing in this case, since this is a pretty hard paper, is you're squishing down the thread. If you had a softer paper, sometimes you can actually embed the paper with your thread. And yet, you're trying to create a compact binding, so that there's not too much bulk here where all of this thread is. We're ready to add our next



signatures.

Continue binding

- We're ready to add our next signature, so I'm gonna take from my pile. Alright, so I always open it up, so I know where the center is. I'm gonna try to get a pattern and start with my right hand first. I'm gonna go right into this next signature. I'm gonna pull it all the way through, and then take my second needle, pull that all the way through. Okay, I'm gonna line my signature back up because it moved a little bit, and then while this needle is still in my hand, this is the one I'm gonna take and crossover, and we're gonna start to do this every single time. We're gonna come through the signatures, and then we're gonna switch places. So I'm holding the thread that's already in the hole taut, and coming through with my needle and thread on this side. And then take this into this side. And you can see now, there's two lengths of thread in that signature, and that's normal. Alright. We're now ready to do our first link stitch or chain stitch that creates that beautiful chain on the spine of the Coptic binding. Now what we're gonna do, is take the needle and thread, in between the first signature and the cover. And then as we add more signatures, we're gonna be moving that up. So eventually we will be going between signatures, but for this first one, that's as low as we can go, so we have to go between the first signature, and the cover. I'm gonna just kind of push my needle in there, and I'm always gonna come out, because it's just easier than going into the book. And I'm gonna do the same thing every single time, so I have a nice even stitch. And I'm just gonna lay the thread in that chain pattern. Okay, let's do it on the other side. Again, right between that first signature and the front cover. Gently pull it. And then I just lay that chain stitch down. I'm not pulling at that point. I try to do my pulling before I lay that chain stitch down. Alright. Let's bone down. Kind of square up. I try to always square all my materials up here, and that will really help with a nice even binding in the end. I'm ready for my third signature. Gonna start with the right hand side again. Pull that through. Pull this next one through. And again we're gonna switch places, and while this needle is already in my hand, I'm just gonna scoot on over to this other hole. Get that through there, making sure you're not piercing the thread. I can usually feel it if I've pierced it. About your two lengths in there, that's fine. We're ready for our second chain stitch. So I wanna mention that you want to tighten up now, not after you've done that chain stitch, and that will help you have a really nice even tension. So I'm pulling now. You can see how I'm pulling out. So each thread is being pulled, kind of in the direction that it was sewn in. Let's see which one I have here. Okay. So, you have the option in Coptic to drop down one, and have a thinner chain stitch, or drop down two, and have a much thicker chain stitch. And that's what I prefer to do. So let me just show you that, if we were gonna be dropping down one, I consider this zero, right here, where my needle is. And this is where I count from. If I was dropping down one, I would just go down here. And go through these two signatures. I like to drop down two, because it makes a much nicer chain stitch. So again, for the second time, I'm gonna be going between that first signature and the cover. But that's also the last time I'm gonna be doing that. On this signature anyway. Ooh, thought I was caught there. Okay and again, see how I'm just laying my chain stitch down. I'm not pulling at this point. I've already pulled everything nice and taut. I'm just laying down that chain stitch. Okay, there's zero. One, two. And just laying down that chain stitch. Okay. So let me show you one more. This is signature four. And lay that down. Again I'm gonna start on this side. You know you don't have to start on one side or another, but I think it's nice to do the same thing every time. You get into a sort of a rhythm. And I think that will help with your tension, and how your binding looks in the end, if you keep things organized while you're binding. So again, same thing. Taking my needle

and thread through. Switching places. Alright, square things up. Tighten up. Could do another chain stitch. So I'm gonna put my needle here. That's zero. One, two. And this time I get to go through, or in between two signatures. And you can see how thick and beautiful that chain stitch is becoming. One, two. And I always physically put my needle there and count. I think there's something about physically feeling the signatures, and not just seeing them. Okay. And look how beautiful that's getting. I always kind of neaten things up as I go along too. Make sure that things are square. The spine is square with the cover. The signatures are nice and neat. Bone down. And now you're ready to attach the fifth signature. You're gonna sew in the same manner from the fifth through the ninth signature, where you're gonna be dropping down two. You're gonna be tightening up, before you do the chain stitch. And then I'll be ready to show you how to attach the 10th signature, and the back cover.

Finish and add second cover

- I've just attached signature nine, and I'm ready to attach the 10th and last signature. This is done in exactly the same manner. I'm gonna take my one thread through the hole. See my thread is much shorter now, isn't that nice? A little easier to manage. Do our switching of places here. Okay, squaring up. And you can see how nice that chain stitch is now. I'm gonna tighten up. And do my last link. One, two. One, two. All right. The sewing is complete. You wanna bone down one last time. And we're ready to attach the back cover. This is just the same process as attaching the front cover, so we're gonna be going through these diagonal holes again. Carefully. Pulling in the direction of the hole. I'm gonna get both of them through that diagonal hole just so it'll hold it a little more secure for me while I work. Okay. Right. Okay now we're gonna go through this hole. Through this one. Careful not to pierce the thread. I feel like I'm piercing the thread. Let's move that over. Let's bind this, take your time, make sure you're not piercing the thread, because on that, gosh, felt like I was, but I wasn't. I guess the hole's just maybe a little tight. Okay, tighten that up, whoops. All right. Let's keep going, second lap around. Let's move this over a little bit. Move that thread over. Make sure I'm not piercing it, cuz it does feel really tight but I think I'm okay. Okay. All right, that one's looking pretty good. I'm gonna leave that to the side while I work on the other end. I'm already through the diagonal. Make sure I haven't pierced, I'm okay. Tighten up a little bit. Move the thread over. Almost there. Make sure I'm not piercing it. I'm okay. I've gotten lucky. Make sure those threads are lined down next to each other nicely. Tighten up a little bit. Okay, now we're ready to go through those diagonals again. I'm gonna turn it around just cuz the angle is a little easier for me going in this direction. So remember if you wanna kinda forge the way a little bit with your needle, it's a good idea. Make things easier for you. Really carefully. I'm gonna take my... Tear it out, may get this through. Things are a little tight there. (chuckles) This will happen, but it's okay, just pull it firm, there we go. Got it. And it looks okay. All right, let's go through this one. Can forge the hole a little bit, so you know where you're going. I make these ones a little close to the edge, I think, too, these holes. Okay. Really carefully. Then give it a pull. Okay. We're gonna make one more chain stitch, and then go back into that 10th and last signature and in this way, we're making this real seamless end to this binding where you can't really tell where it's finished off. So we're gonna behave as if the cover that I just added is another signature. Start with, this is zero. One, two. One more chain stitch here. Pull it through. And then, we're gonna take our needle right in the middle of that chain stitch there and back through that hole. So, and it, again, this is one of those things that it sounds a little harder than it is, but it's not, and it's what makes everything look so nice and seamless. So I'm gonna open up my signature just so I know where I'm going. I'm gonna take my needle and I'm gonna aim

for right between those two pieces of thread. And through to the middle of the signature. Okay, I'm just gonna leave that there for now and do the other side so you'll get to see it one more time. Again, we need to do our chain stitch, so zero, one, two. Right, and again, we're gonna aim for right in the middle of that chain stitch and into the hole of that last section. And opening up the book so you know where you're going and just kind of opening up your path a little bit, or right through that hole. There it is. Okay, I'm gonna take a look at my chain stitch before I tie off. Looks pretty good, pretty nice and neat. Pull on that a little more. All right, looks pretty good. I'm gonna tie off now. So whenever you're in this situation where you don't really have another end to tie off of and you could tie those two ends together, but that's just another length of thread in there, I do the hitch stitch where we go underneath the existing sewing there, making a loop and through the loop. Underneath the thread, through the loop. Since this is wax thread, one is probably enough, but if that makes you a little nervous, you can do one more right on top. Before I do that though, I just wanna check my tension again, cuz I can still tighten up if I've got some loose thread there, but it's looking pretty good, so I'm gonna leave that tension as is and just do one more, one more hitch. Just to keep things secure. All right, now I'm gonna cut off my ends. I like to leave about a half inch, you really don't want that to start unraveling. This is holding your whole book together. I'm gonna cut this there and again, about half inch, maybe a little more is what I'm leaving. All right, let's take a look at our hard work. Okay, every once in awhile, it seems to me, the first and the last signature kinda wanna pull out a little bit. I feel like I have a little bit of a tension problem there. You can see how I'm really even through all of these signatures, and then this last one is pulled in just a little bit. That was probably when I tied the knot. And if your binding is looking really uneven in here or just a little uneven in here, it's probably your tension. And you really want to just try to pull more uniformly when you're binding. Tension is something really hard to teach, it's a feel, and just practicing, practicing, practicing, and before you know it, your binding is gonna look a lot nicer with this nice, beautiful even chain stitch. So what I'm gonna do to kinda work on that tension a little bit, cuz of course it's bothering me. I'm just gonna take my end signature and give it a little bit of a pull. And the cover a little bit of a pull, and try to even things out a little bit. So you can manipulate the book a little bit to get it to look a little neater if you want. All right, so our coptic binding, the stitching is done. You can see how flexible and beautiful it is. Such a nice binding. One more step, though, and that is to glue down this end sheet. And then we'll be done. That will stabilize the binding a little more, and cover up our book board here.

#### Add end paper and finish

- This last step really helps the stability of this binding. You can see that there's a little movement with the cover and the text block. So, gluing down this last piece of paper will really help with that stability. If you don't wanna do that, 'cause you find that it is a little tricky, you can always just put a little piece of paper, cut out piece of paper or torn piece of paper, on this last page and you could be done. I'm going to show you how to glue down this last sheet and also the front one. Alright. I want to use some newsprint or just scratch paper to protect my text block. It can be positioned like this because what I'm gonna be doing is gluing down this and I don't wanna get the glue on my text block. I'm gonna make sure my signatures are really nice and square and what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna glue this down and then I'm gonna gently lay down the cover. And it is a little tricky because sometimes it doesn't lay perfectly. And there are some fixes to that, though, in case you don't like what has happened. I'm gonna use PVA with a little methyl cellulose in it. Actually, I think it's about 50/50. And that gives me a little more working room, a little more drying time. Again, I start in the

middle and fan out. But here I wanna be careful on my edge. And I'm gonna just use the tips of my fingernails to hold things in place. Glue this down. Alright. Nice layer of glue. I'm gonna take this piece out 'cause I don't want that glue to get on the cover now. I'm gonna pull this end sheet a little bit, make sure everything's squared up and then I'm gonna close my cover. And I'm gonna really hope the things come out right. Let's see how I did. I did okay. You can see it's not all the way glued down here, so you have a little wiggle room if you can get it to move. But what you're aiming for is it to look right, look nice and even around here. So, I wanna take my bone folder and clean this up a little bit because it's a little bubbly. You can use your bone folder and if you have a teflon tool, this is the time to use it. It really slides nicely. You can really get in those corners, sure to get the edges. I can see I have a little bubbles, a little bit of bubbles around the thread, and really work it. The edges, be sure to get those edges down. Little bubbles, bubbles you can always get out with a bone folder, you really, really can. You just have to be patient with yourself and work at it. Well it's looking pretty good to me. I'm gonna press this, but first, I wanna put in wax paper or some scrap paper so that any adhesive that might be on the edge doesn't get stuck to the text block and something to also absorb some of the moisture in there. So, I'll just do the exact same thing on this side and slip in another piece of wax paper and then press it overnight. And you're done with your coptic binding. I wanna show you some samples of what can be done with a coptic binding that vary a little bit from what we've done. This binding is pretty much exactly what we did today but you can see the colors are very, and you can get such a different looking book, depending on what kind of papers you use. These are store-bought papers, decorative papers, different color thread, but pretty much the same thing we did today. This one is a little different yet, in that this is a store-bought book cloth. You can see that there's four sewing stations. This is a little tricky. But after you've done a few of these with the two sewing stations, you should give it a try. It's a really, really nice look. And it works nice if you're going to make a book in a larger format. If you're gonna do four, you'll need two pieces of thread, and four needles. So it gets a little wild but it's doable and it's fun. Once your confident with this binding, I think you're ready for it. The board attachment's a little different, too. So you can just kinda play around with that. And then the pages inside are reused ledger pages that I found at a reuse center. And you can see, too, here, that I wanted to keep these triangles visible here, so I didn't glue down the end sheet. And I just glued a separate little piece here. And with the four sewing stations, it's pretty solid, not too much wiggle there. This is the wood cover. Again, has more historical references to it, which is really nice. Wood covers, you can drill the holes with a hand drill, just a little hand crank drill. That's what I did. These nice little leather pieces as a closure. And for these, for the end sheet, what I did for the end sheet here, it's not glued down. It's just attached with this leather closure. So that's a really nice option. And so it keeps everything a little loose and moves a little nicer. Photo albums, so these two are photo albums that I've made with the coptic style. The coptic binding's really tight, so if you do make a photo album out of it, you want to have a little tab that makes a little room for the photos in here. Otherwise, the photos are gonna start taking up a lot of bulk in this binding and it's gonna put a lot of stress on the binding. But you can make your own book cloth, cover the book boards, and then make this beautiful personalized photo album and coptic, really flexible, beautiful. And lastly, this is another album that I made that just has a few more variations in it. This is a store-bought book cloth. It's so, so, so beautiful. It has some silk in it. I did a window cut out. I did these little, just shallow cuts into the book board before I put the book cloth on it. And then beautiful end papers that someone marbled. The coptic binding is an advanced binding, but as you can see, taken step by step, it's totally doable. Just take your time and be patient with yourself. And then you can have a beautiful book, very personalized that can be a

journal or an album.