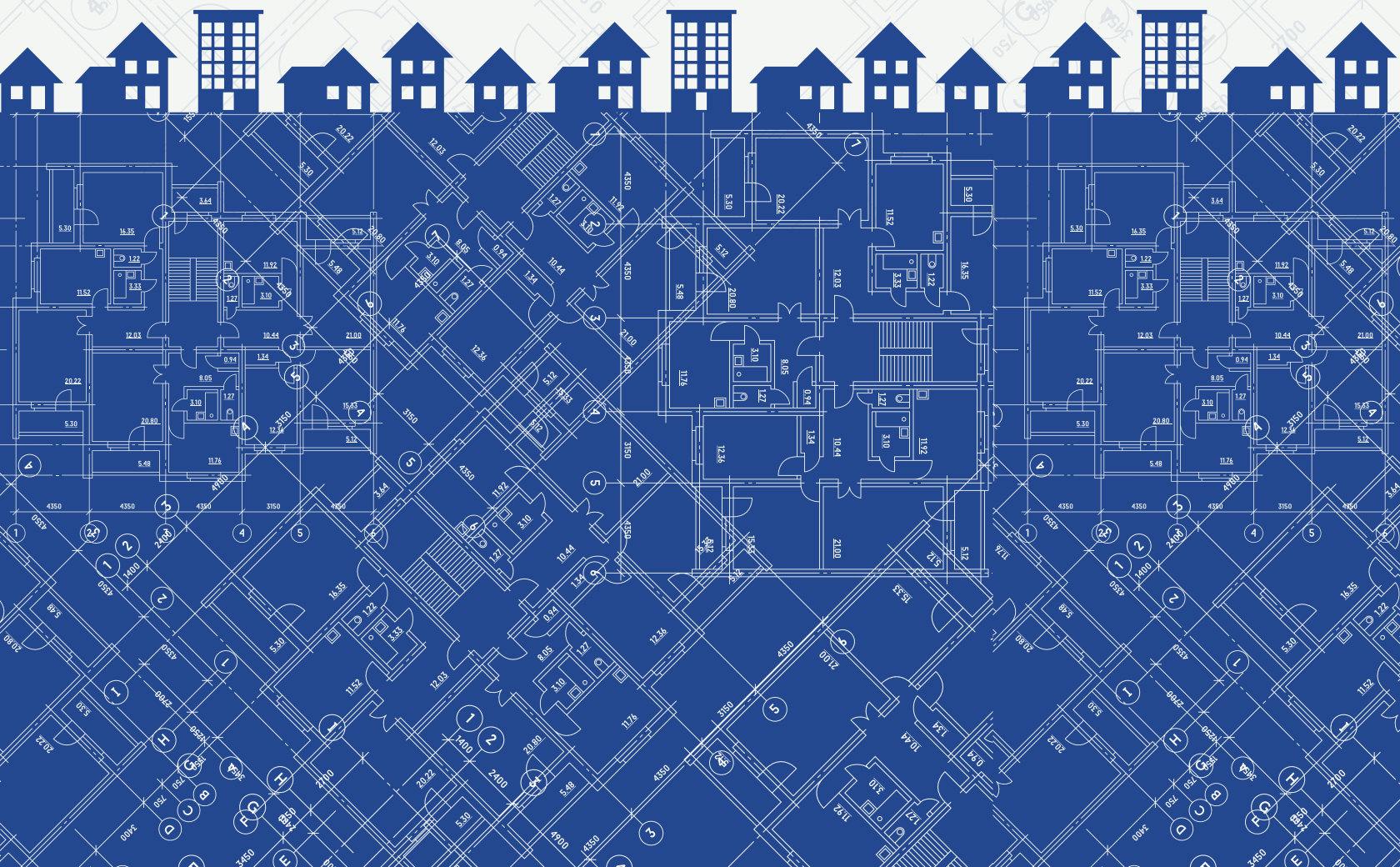
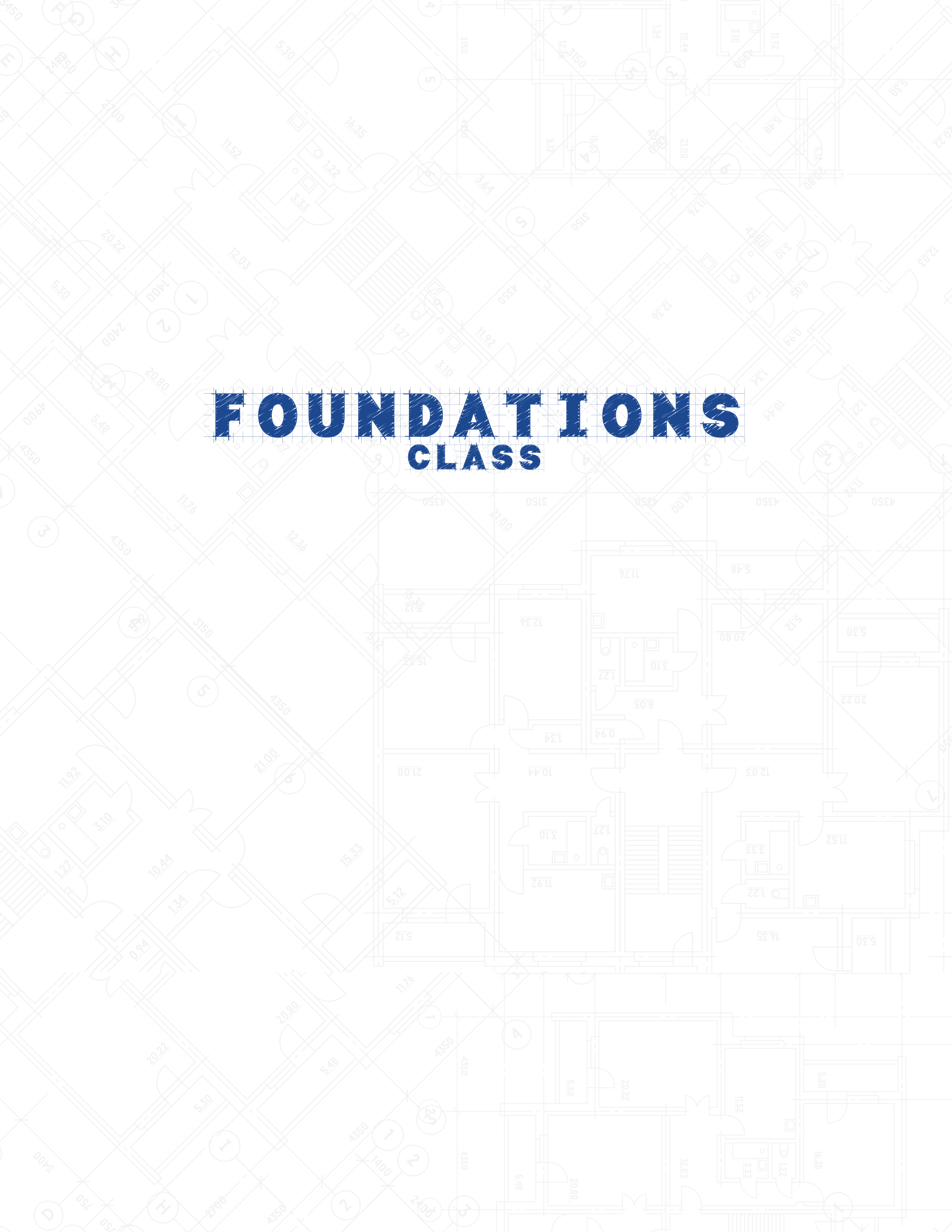


FOUNDATIONS

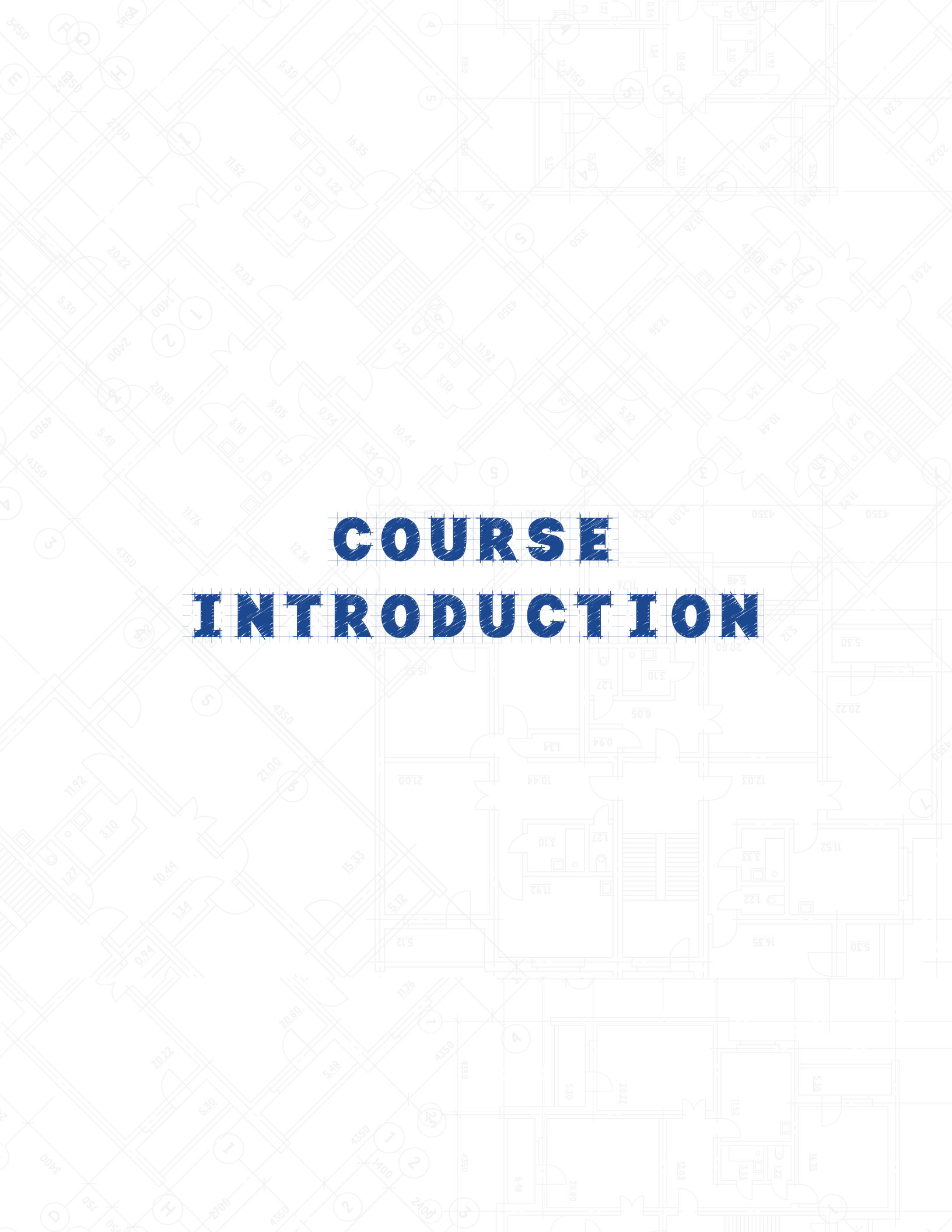
CLASS



The background of the entire page is a detailed, light gray architectural floor plan. It shows a complex layout of rooms, corridors, and structural elements. Numerous numerical values, likely representing dimensions or measurements, are scattered throughout the plan. Some numbers are enclosed in small circles, and others are placed near specific architectural features like doors or windows. The overall style is technical and precise, typical of a professional architectural drawing.

FOUNDATIONS

CLASS



COURSE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Foundations! Participating in this class shows that you are a learner. As a learner, you know that there is always more to know, always another perspective or challenging idea. In this class you will have the opportunity to hear the Bible's timeless truth explored in ways that you may not have considered before. While the Bible and its God do not change, we change when we come prepared to better know Him.

As a learner, you also know that you will get out of a class what you put into it. Consider your time in this class an investment rather than merely a cost. Make the effort to read, reflect, memorize verses, do your homework, and discuss. You will be setting and moving toward your personal learning goals. This is a long class so make it worth the time as you invest in understanding for your benefit and the benefit of others.

This class is not intended to be a comprehensive course on biblical doctrine. It is a topic-by-topic introduction intended to give you a thoughtful and organized foundation. The goal is for you to be able to articulate the gospel and begin to understand the Bible's teaching and potentially address gaps in your understanding. To help you learn more, you will be directed to resources for further study.

May God bless you as you proceed through the class and may you know God more closely.

Our goals for this class:

- To have an overall understanding of the Bible's message and what it means for us
- To develop a basic biblical worldview
- To be able to articulate the gospel message
- To be equipped to share this message with someone you know
- To move toward an answer to a question you have about biblical teaching
- To be able to articulate the gospel message
- To have the tools to learn more on our own
- To have an assurance of salvation
- To become familiar with Calvary Murrieta's statement of faith

Before we get started, keep in mind:

- We all have different experiences but the same Jesus.
- We have different education levels but the same Truth.
- We have different priorities but the same Kingdom.
- We have different questions but the same Answer.

If you are new to the teachings of the Bible, this course may be difficult for you. If you find yourself struggling, consider starting with the Fresh Faith class and returning to Foundations later.

Student Agreement

Considering these things, please read and sign this student commitment. It will be our standard for learning together.

- I agree to participate to the best of my ability.
- I agree to esteem others before myself. I will not force my viewpoint on others or monopolize discussion time. I will respectfully discuss any disagreement.
- I agree to go to Scripture as the highest authority.
- I agree to accept challenges in order to grow.

Signed: _____

More direction on these learning goals will be given in the introduction video. A list of sample learning questions is available to help you. **Set your goals before beginning Lesson One.**

• The question I will be working on is: _____



Course Structure

For in-person sessions, you will need to read the lesson before coming to class. In class, you will discuss, ask questions, and expand on what you read.

The **SECTIONS** that you will be:



Reflection questions are for you to think about but be sure to actually write an answer down.



These topics will be discussed in the classroom or online.



Each lesson includes a suggested memory verse. You will not be tested on these. They are there for your benefit and are encouraged. Each one corresponds to the lesson and if you were to memorize all of them, you would have a body of biblical knowledge to turn to on a variety of subjects.



“Do” items will ask you to experience or accomplish something for the week.



At certain points throughout the class, “Aim” items will prompt you to move toward the personal learning goals you set in the beginning of class.



These are summary statements from the lesson, the things you should make sure to remember.

The background of the entire page is a detailed, light gray architectural floor plan. It shows various rooms, corridors, and structural elements with numerous dimension lines and numerical values (e.g., 11.52, 20.22, 5.30, 12.03, 16.35, 3.10, 8.05, 0.94, 1.27, 1.34, 21.00, 10.44, 5.12, 16.35, 5.30, 11.52, 12.03, 20.22, 5.48, 14.00, 24.00, 34.50, 7.50, 29.42, 0.50, 43.50, 4.00, 1.00, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00, 5.00, 6.00, 7.00, 8.00, 9.00, 10.00, 11.00, 12.00, 13.00, 14.00, 15.00, 16.00, 17.00, 18.00, 19.00, 20.00, 21.00, 22.00, 23.00, 24.00, 25.00, 26.00, 27.00, 28.00, 29.00, 30.00, 31.00, 32.00, 33.00, 34.00, 35.00, 36.00, 37.00, 38.00, 39.00, 40.00, 41.00, 42.00, 43.00, 44.00, 45.00, 46.00, 47.00, 48.00, 49.00, 50.00, 51.00, 52.00, 53.00, 54.00, 55.00, 56.00, 57.00, 58.00, 59.00, 60.00, 61.00, 62.00, 63.00, 64.00, 65.00, 66.00, 67.00, 68.00, 69.00, 70.00, 71.00, 72.00, 73.00, 74.00, 75.00, 76.00, 77.00, 78.00, 79.00, 80.00, 81.00, 82.00, 83.00, 84.00, 85.00, 86.00, 87.00, 88.00, 89.00, 90.00, 91.00, 92.00, 93.00, 94.00, 95.00, 96.00, 97.00, 98.00, 99.00, 100.00).

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCING THE BIBLE

In this lesson we will look at the Bible as God's Word: where it came from, how it is structured, and what its general story is. In the next lesson we will discuss how to read the Bible.

REVELATION

In a later lesson we will learn how God communicates to some extent through nature. We call that "general revelation". The Bible is called God's "special revelation" because it communicates specifics about God to those who receive it.

Our most full revelation comes through Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-3) since He lived as one of us, showing us and teaching us who God is (John 14:9). But we learn about Jesus through the Bible, God's revelation to the writers of Scripture. Both Jesus and the Bible are referred to as God's Word because they reveal God to the world (John 1:1-2; Heb. 4:12).

If God's identity and purposes are seen in the Bible, we ought to become very familiar with it.

INSPIRATION

Definition: God speaking to all people for all time through chosen writers carried by the Holy Spirit as He worked through them as individuals so that what is written is from God through man.

Inspiration means that the Holy Spirit led the writers of the biblical books in what to write, while allowing for their own personalities, cultures, and writing style to remain. They were not overtaken by God and writing under His control in some sort of trance state. Rather, they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, guided in what to write.

If you are new to the teachings of the Bible, this course may be difficult for you. If you find yourself struggling, consider starting with the Fresh Faith class and returning to Foundations later.

II Peter 1:20-21

"Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

II Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

The phrase "breathed out by God" in II Timothy 3:16 is perhaps a clearer way to say how God gave us the Scriptures than to say they are "inspired". By "inspired" we do not mean that the words were a stroke of genius (like an "inspired work of art") or that God motivated the writers (like an inspirational speech). We mean that the Holy Spirit moved through the biblical authors. Because God inspired the writers of the biblical books, they did not always understand all that they

NOTES:

The Bible is both human and divine.

were writing or the full implications of what they were saying. In I Peter 1:10-12, Peter tells us that the prophets of the Old Testament longed to know what their own prophecies about Jesus meant, but they knew that their writings would be for the benefit of those who came after them and they would understand what the prophecies meant.

The Bible is both human and divine. The writers are not erased; rather, God used who they were. One example is to look at the four Gospel accounts: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each is telling the story of Jesus' life and the first three are very similar in content. But each has a unique "personality" in the tone and focus of the writer.

Because He inspired the Scriptures, God is the Author of Scripture but we still refer to the writers (and it is ok to refer to the author of a book of the Bible) of Scripture. The Bible, therefore, is both human and divine.

The process of inspiration is mysterious to us but its evidence is apparent when we look at the nature of scripture. We can get to know any other book, but only the Bible knows us. We can come to it again and again and see new shades of meaning in sections we've read many times before.



Why is the Bible important to you?

CANONICITY: WHY ARE THESE BOOKS "BIBLICAL"?

Canon is a term for the proper, inspired books to be included as Scripture. When the early Church and believers today ask if we have included the correct books these questions have served as a litmus test:

Was the book written by a prophet or apostle (one who had been part of Jesus' ministry and was commissioned by Him)?

- Does the book tell the truth about God, with no falsehood or contradiction?
- Does the book have a divine capacity to transform lives?

NOTES:

- Was the book accepted as God's Word by the people to whom it was first delivered?
- Was the book written around the same time as the other New Testament books?
- Does the book align with the rest of Scripture?

It is often said that the Church simply decided which books were inspired (or even that the Church granted the status of inspiration on certain books). The Church discovered which books were inspired.

INCORRECT VIEW	ORTHODOX VIEW
The Church is <i>determiner</i> of the canon.	The Church is <i>discoverer</i> of the canon.
The Church is <i>regulator</i> of the canon.	The Church is <i>recognizer</i> of the canon.
The Church is <i>judge</i> of the canon.	The Church is <i>witness</i> of the canon.
The Church is <i>master</i> of the canon.	The Church is <i>servant</i> of the canon.
The Church is <i>mother</i> of the canon.	The Church is <i>child</i> of the canon.

From Norman L. Geisler, "Bible, Canonicity Of," Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 81.

DISPUTED AUTHORSHIP

If you continue in your study of the canon of the Bible, you will come across arguments from some that certain books were not written by who they claim to be. Without getting into the details here, you should be aware of several things:

NOTES:

- Not all the books of the Bible specify who wrote them. The earliest church leaders often said who the author was (e.g. the Gospel of John), but sometimes we are making educated guesses regarding the authorship. Anonymity doesn't negate inspiration.
- Some Old Testament books (e.g. Isaiah) change in tone, content, and use different names for God but this doesn't mean there is more than one author, as some claim. Likewise, some are different from an author's usual style but that doesn't mean they are by an imposter (e.g. Ephesians or Titus).
- Some books make no secret about being written by more than one person (e.g. Philippians or Deuteronomy 34).

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

The Catholic and Orthodox Bibles have books that Protestant Bibles do not. These books are called the "apocrypha" from a word meaning "secret" or "hidden". The content of some of these books is referred to in the New Testament but they have never been considered God's Word.

The Catholic Church did not call these books Scripture until 1546 and they were long argued against by the earliest Church fathers and later Protestant and Catholic scholars alike. Before the Protestant Reformation, both Protestants and Catholics placed apocryphal books in their own section of the Bible, and they were not given the same level of respect. Eventually the Protestants removed them altogether.

It must be noted that all the apocryphal books in the Catholic Bible are Old Testament books. None of the apocryphal New Testament books were ever admitted by Catholics, Orthodox, or Protestants and they are much more blatantly unbiblical in their teaching.

The Old Testament apocryphal books were written in the times between the return of the Jews from exile and the birth of Jesus (called the intertestamental period) but Jesus Himself refers to the Old Testament canon being what it is today. This is an implication of Jesus's comments in:

- Luke 24:44 - Jesus mentions the sections of literature of our Old Testament today
- John 10:31-36 - He agrees with the Pharisees' books
- Luke 11:51 - He refers to the first person killed in Genesis and the last person killed in II Chronicles, the book describing the end of the "Old Testament" period.

Norm Geisler has summarized why these books are not part of the Bible:

- Some of their teaching is unbiblical or heretical.
- Some of their stories are extrabiblical or fanciful.

NOTES:

- Much of their teaching is sub-biblical, at times even immoral.
- Most of the Apocrypha was written in the postbiblical or intertestamental period.
- Finally, all of the Apocrypha is nonbiblical or uncanonical, because it was not received by the people of God.

Norman Geisler and William Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, Rev. and expanded. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 275.

EVIDENCES FOR THE BIBLE BEING THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

Adapted from Campbell, Charlie. "10 Reasons You Can Trust the Bible: Archaeology, Prophecies + More!" Always Be Ready, December 11, 2022. <https://alwaysbeready.com/can-we-trust-the-bible/>.

Fulfilled prophecy

The Bible contains predictions fulfilled hundreds of years before the events they prophesy.

Archaeology

Archaeological discoveries have consistently proved the biblical accounts to be historically accurate.

Internal consistency

Although compiled of 66 books by approximately 40 authors in three languages over 3 continents and 1500 years and addressing the key questions of life and meaning, there is a miraculously consistent message and overall storyline in the Bible.

Extrabiblical writings

Writers who lived at the same time as the Bible's writers refer to events described in the Bible as being historical. The early church leaders also consistently quoted large portions of the New Testament in their commentaries and letters.

Scientific accuracy

The Bible contains scientifically accurate information long before those facts were discovered.

Manuscripts

With 25,000 handwritten portions of the New Testament and thousands of the Old Testament, there is more manuscript evidence for the accuracy and consistency of the Bible than of most ancient writings.

Honesty about the authors and subjects

The Bible makes no attempt to ignore the sins of its writers and characters.

Accuracy about human nature

The Bible shows an amazing level of understanding and explanation of the workings of human hearts and relationships.

Testimony of Jesus

NOTES:

Jesus referred to the Bible as given by God and as God's revelation to people.

Persecution of the early believers

The earliest Christians, some who even penned the biblical books, went to violent deaths professing the truth of the Scriptures.

Power to transform lives

We are evidence for the divine inspiration of the Bible in that we see our lives changed by its message of who God is.

WITHOUT ERROR

Having seen reasons to believe that the Bible is reliably given by God, we believe that the Bible is without error ("inerrant") in its original manuscripts, but what does that mean?

- All the Bible is God's divine Word to us; it does not only contain divine portions.

We believe that the Bible is without error; but what does that mean?

- The Bible claims to be God's Word and God does not make errors.
- The Bible is "unbroken" as Jesus said (John 10:35), and therefore not compromised. While we do not have the original, handwritten portions of the Bible we trust Jesus' words. He also said that the Holy Spirit would bring what He had said and done to the apostles' remembrance (Jn. 15:26-27).
- God is powerful enough to have preserved the Bible through many copies.

- There are errors that came in through people copying the Bible but we know where they are (because of differing manuscripts) and they are not on matters that change our doctrine.
- The Bible being copied is not like a game of "telephone" but rather a careful process by people who either did the work as a vocational ministry (Jewish scribes and Christian monks) or who risked safety to carry scriptures throughout the Roman Empire. They were copying written Scripture and treating the process dearly.
- There are grammatical oddities but these are not errors.
- The Bible was written in a different culture from ours and that can cause many misunderstandings, especially in dealing with chronology as well as literal vs. figurative language.

"For most practical purposes, then, the current published scholarly texts of the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament are the same as the original manuscripts. Thus, when we say that the original manuscripts were inerrant, we are also implying that over 99 percent of the words in our present manuscripts are also inerrant, for they are exact copies of the originals. Furthermore, we

NOTES:

know where the uncertain readings are (for where there are no textual variants we have no reason to expect faulty copying of the original). Thus, our present manuscripts are for most purposes the same as the original manuscripts, and the doctrine of inerrancy therefore directly concerns our present manuscripts as well. [...] Thus, if we have mistakes in the copies (as we do), then these are only the mistakes of men. But if we have mistakes in the original manuscripts, then we are forced to say not only that men made mistakes, but that God himself made a mistake and spoke falsely." This we cannot do." Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 92-93.



How does the person you want to share with perceive the Bible? Would anything we've learned be helpful to them? Would they believe it?

ORGANIZATION OF THE BIBLE

The Bible contains 66 books: 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Jewish Old Testament had the same content as ours but the organization was different.

The Bible books are organized according to type and are roughly chronological.

Old Testament:

- **Law "Pentateuch": 5 books**
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- **Historical Books: 12 books**
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- **Poetic/Wisdom Books: 5 books**
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- **Prophetic books: 17 books**
Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

NOTES:

Note: the "major prophets" are called that simply because their books are longer than the minor prophets.

New Testament:

- **Gospels: 4 books**
Matthew, Mark, Luke, John - *Accounts of Jesus' life*
- **History: 1 book**
Acts - *Account of the early expansion of the Church*
- **Pauline Letters ("Epistles"): 13 books**
Romans, I, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I, II Thessalonians; I, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon - *Letters from Paul to various churches and individuals*
- **General Letters ("Epistles"): 7 books**
Hebrews, James, I, II Peter; I, II, III John, Jude - *Letters from others to various churches*
- **Prophecy: 1 book**
Revelation - *An account of a vision of what God will do in the future.*

The books are sometimes grouped a little differently but always appear in the same order in the Bible. However, the particular organization is not really important.

ABBREVIATIONS

Working with Bible references (which function like the address of a verse in the Bible, which helps us to find it) is easier when we are familiar with common abbreviations for Bible books. If you are new to the Bible, these will become like second nature over time. There is a comprehensive chart available online if you would like one.

First, Second, or Third book
by this name (if applicable)

Chapter
Verse

1 Samuel 2:1a

Book

Sentence, phrase, or
part of verse

NOTES:

CHAPTER AND VERSE

The books of the Bible were written as entire books or letters and did not originally contain chapter and verse designations. These were added later to help readers find their place. Current chapters were added in 1205. Current verses were added in the mid-sixteenth century.

While chapters and verses help us find our place within a long text, they can also become a hindrance to how we approach the Bible. We can begin to focus on small pieces of Scripture and miss the bigger picture. Remember that it was originally intended to be read in large portions.

PERICOPES

Pericopes (pronounced “per-ick-oh-peas”) are sections of text usually marked by section headings in your Bible. They are more of a naturally packaged section than a chapter since they encompass a complete story or teaching. There is usually more than one pericope in a chapter. You may find reading a pericope a happy medium between reading a few verses and reading a whole chapter at a time.

TRANSLATION

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew with portions in Aramaic (in Ezra, Daniel, and Jeremiah). The New Testament was originally written in Greek. Anything else is a translation.

Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1

בְּרֵאשִׁית תִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

Greek Text of John 17:17

ἁγιάσον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν

Translation includes subtle cultural meanings and figures of speech.

NOTES:

Some things are translated for understanding rather than for precise wording. For example Ps. 16:7 in the English Standard Version says:

**"I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me."**

But in the original Hebrew the word here translated as "heart" is "kidneys". The Hebrew mentality was that the gut/kidneys was the center of feeling and personhood whereas we use "heart" to mean the same thing. We can always refer back to the Hebrew and are not changing the Bible by translating it this way, it simply makes the idea make sense to our ears.

We do not always need to know the Hebrew or Greek words but sometimes they carry fuller or more specific meanings than a single English word may. This is why Bible teachers occasionally take time to cover a word from the original languages. The first readers would have understood the shades of meaning but, without careful study and teaching, these get "lost in translation". Understanding this dynamic lets us understand not only the riches of the biblical text and why some dedicate themselves to studying the original languages but also the painstaking task that Bible translators meet finding the right words in the languages of cultures around the world.

One who understands more than one language knows that most things may be translated more than one way, depending on the languages involved. Because of this, we can have the same Greek or Hebrew verse translated slightly differently without any one being unbiblical.

TRANSLATION OPTIONS

Translations run a spectrum from those attempting to be very close ("word-for-word") to the original language, to those written "thought-for-thought", which attempt to communicate the idea of the scripture in words more easily understood.

"Word-for-word" translations may also be known as "literal translations". "Thought-for-thought" translations may also be known as "paraphrases".

Examples of more **literal translations** include the New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and English Standard Version (ESV).

Examples of more **paraphrased translations** include the New International Version (NIV) and New Living Translation (NLT).

Notice the differences in this example: John 1:10

(ESV) He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

(NIV) He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

(KJV) He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

NOTES:

(NLT) He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

(The Message) He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn't even notice.

The meaning remains the same even if the words are related a little differently.



What are some of the strengths of using more literal translations? What are some of the strengths of using paraphrases?

Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on Scripture

The Bible was written by men, given by the Holy Spirit to human writers, and is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, truth without any mixture of error in its original texts, and salvation for its end. All Scripture is totally true and trustworthy, and pertains to all things regarding life and godliness. Ps. 19:7-11 | 2 Tim. 3:15-17 | 2 Pt. 1:3



What sorts of things does our culture believe about the Bible?

NOTES:

THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE

Having learned a little about how the Bible is structured, we will turn to a brief description of the overall story told by Scripture. Some knowledge of this is crucial to learning the Bible.

Scripture tells us a complete story and we shouldn't miss it by focusing only on the details.

When we approach the Bible we should ask:

- **Who is God?**
- **Who are we?**
- **What is God doing in our world?**
- **Where do I fit into His plan?**

We will learn about how to read the Bible in the next lesson, but for now know that understanding the story of the Bible helps us answer these key questions.

WHERE'D THE STORY GO?

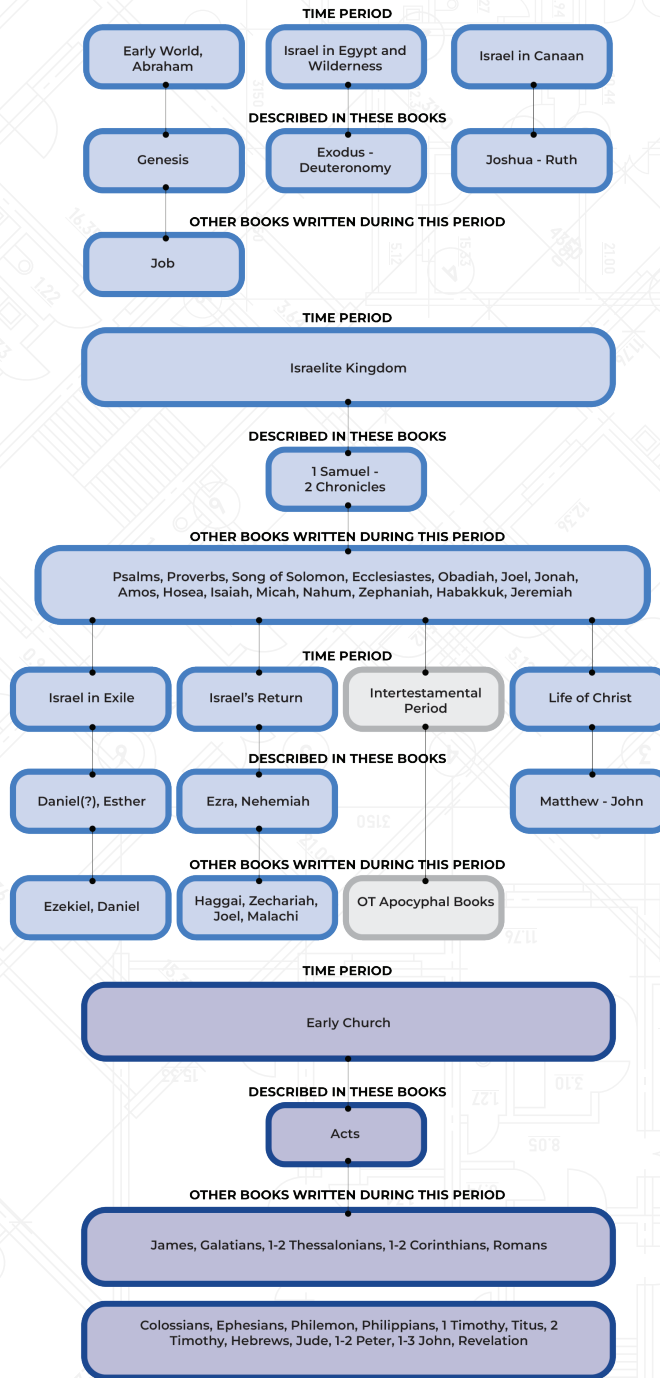
Some portions of the Bible are more story-based than others. The Law, History books, and Gospels are the most clearly narrative portions of the Bible. Poetry and prophecy may not seem like narrative themselves but they are all part of the Bible's big story.

Keep in mind that while the historical books tell us the bigger story more directly than other books, the books of poetry and prophecy were written during the time described in the historical books. Thus, they reveal other dimensions to God's story.

The chart on the following page shows how some types of books (Law, History, and Gospels) show the events of God's story while others (Poetry, Prophecy, and Letters) fill in details of the message in the story.

NOTES:

INTRODUCING THE BIBLE



NOTES:

In each section of the Bible's story, we will see how God has worked throughout history to rescue us individually from sin and redeem (or fix/bring back) the things that are broken in our world. This is a way of looking at the gospel that is not common for most people, so don't be frustrated if it's difficult to grasp. It is also a very brief overview of the Bible story and there are other threads and aspects of the story that are not included but that you may continue to discover through further study.

Layers in each section of the story:

Event: Biblical historical events telling God's story.

Redemption of the World: How God has moved in events toward redeeming the broken world and revealing who He is to all the peoples of the world.

Individual salvation: How God has revealed His plan to save each person from their rebellion against Him.

Creation (Genesis 1-2)

Event: God creates a good world with mankind made in God's image but gives mankind the ability to choose to obey God's commands.

Redemption of the World: God created a good world for man's safety, enjoyment, and dominion.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Individual salvation: Jesus, who, along with the Father, created all things, creates us anew when we believe in Him.

John 1:3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

II Corinthians 2:16-17 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

The Fall of Man (Genesis 3)

Event: The first people, Adam and Eve, choose to disobey God.

Redemption of the World: A curse comes over Man and nature, with consequences throughout history. God's command to begin filling the earth with children is still in effect for Adam and Eve.

Individual salvation: Desiring to be like God, Man rebels against God, becoming separated and more unlike God than ever before. Shame, guilt, and fear immediately set in. As an act of mercy, God bars Adam and Eve from living forever in their broken, fallen state. Immediately upon pronouncing the curse, God hints at the coming of one who will defeat the devil who tempted Eve.

NOTES:

Genesis 3:15 And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

Romans 5:1 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

The Flood (Genesis 6-8)

Event: After the people of the world increasingly reject God's ways in favor of corruption and violence, God floods the earth, saving only one family.

Redemption of the World: God purges the world of those who rebel against His holiness and starts afresh. After the flood, God told Noah's family to fill the earth with children again. He promises to not flood the world again, knowing it is not a permanent solution.

Genesis 6:17-19 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.

Genesis 9:1 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth."

Individual salvation: God did not withhold His mercy, rescuing Noah for his faith in God. God saved one righteous man and destroyed the wicked world. When Jesus comes, the one righteous man will be destroyed to save the wicked world.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Tower of Babel (Genesis 11)

Event: As the population grows, the people decide to stay in one location and become a great people who have made a name for themselves. The people begin building a great tower to display their power and God separates their languages in order to stop their work and spread them out.

Redemption of the World: God desired an earth filled with people who knew that only God is worthy of glory. Instead of being fruitful and multiplying and spreading out across the world, filling it with people who would glorify God, these people try to stay in one place and glorify themselves. Rather than destroying again, God created confusion but also a colorful diversity of cultures. One day He would have a cultural tapestry of worship from all people groups.

Rev. 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the

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Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Individual Salvation: The bent of the human soul is toward seeking our own glory. Instead of immediate judgment, God came humbly to bring us back to His purpose. He allows us to know Him and thus glorify Him. He went humbly to the cross in order to glorify us eternally.

Phil. 2:8-11 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

II Cor. 4:17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison

Abraham (Genesis 12-25)

Event: God commands one man, Abraham, to go to a new land and promises to make his descendants a great nation through whom all the world will be blessed.

Redemption of the World: God blessed Abraham in order for him to be a blessing to all the nations of the world because his descendants would bring the world both God's scripture and Jesus, the Savior.

Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Individual salvation: God makes promises to Abraham and seeks only Abraham's trust. Abraham believed God and simply for that was called "righteous" by God. We are given the same offer of a righteous standing with God based on our trust in Him. Later, Abraham is told to sacrifice his only son to God but God stops him at the last moment and provides a ram for sacrifice. This happened at a place called Mount Moriah, later the scene of Christ's crucifixion, the sacrifice of God's only Son for us.

Genesis 22:12-14 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12-25)

Event: The population of Abraham's descendants (now called Hebrews or Israelites) has been

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subjugated under the Egyptians but through a series of punishments on the Egyptians, God releases His people in order that they may worship God freely.

Redemption of the World: God uses His people, specifically Joseph, to store enough food to rescue Egypt and nearby nations from a devastating famine. Later, God shows His power and love to His people by leading them out of Egypt and shows His glory and power over Egypt and her gods. People from various ethnicities leave Egypt along with the Israelites.

Exodus 9:13-17 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go.

Individual salvation: In the last of the ten punishments (called "plagues"), God responds to the Egyptians refusal to release the Israelites by killing each firstborn in the land. The Hebrews are told they can put the blood of a sacrificial lamb over their doors to spare their families. Later, Jesus (called God's "Firstborn Son") will die as the Sacrificial Lamb so that God will spare us from punishment for having refused Him.

Exodus 12:27 you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' " And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

The Israelites in the Wilderness (Exodus 20, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)

Event: After escaping Egypt, the Israelites are given God's law for how to have a proper relationship of worship with Him, as well as how to treat their fellow Israelites and those outside their people. The Israelites quickly desire tangible idols to worship rather than God.

Redemption of the World: God gives His law to show His ways to His people. He also gives instructions on allowing other peoples to join the Israelites in worshiping the one true God as well as instructions on refusing to allow the other peoples to draw Israel into worshiping their false idols.

Leviticus 22:18 "Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD,

Exodus 20:4-5 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,

Individual salvation: God gives a set of laws to his people which can teach them how to behave

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according to what is important to God but the people can never fully keep the point of the laws: loving God and their neighbors from the heart.

Galatians 3:24-26 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Conquering the Promised Land (Joshua-Ruth)

Event: The Israelites enter the land God had originally promised to Abraham. First, they had to drive out the peoples that were worshiping false gods using violence and sexual immorality. Once established in the land, the people went through cycles of obeying the Lord and then worshiping false gods and becoming enslaved to the local peoples.

Redemption of the World: God had promised land and descendants to Abraham so that they would bless all the peoples. Some peoples were so far in rebellion against the Lord they had to be removed to keep Israel's worship pure but even then the people of God often worshiped idols.

Deuteronomy 12:1-5 These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go,

Individual salvation: A woman named Ruth is an example of one foreigner who committed to following the true God and became part of the Israelite community. She was brought in by a man named Boaz who fulfilled a legal role called "redeemer" by marrying her, a picture of Christ redeeming us from our sin. She is even listed in Matthew as an ancestor of Jesus. Hebrews speaks of entering God's greater Promised Land prepared for us eternally.

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

Hebrews 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

United Kingdom (I Samuel 10-I Kings 11)

Event: The Israelites decide they want a king like other nations have. During the reign of the third king, Solomon, a temple to God is built in Jerusalem.

Redemption of the World: The temple is planned by God to be the place for his people to approach Him in worship. It is also built for all the peoples of the world to be able to come worship the true

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God. David and Solomon rule well on God's behalf and His people, Israel are a light of who God is for a short time.

II Chronicles 6:32-33 "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for the sake of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm, when he comes and prays toward this house, hear from heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

I Kings 8:41-43 "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

Individual salvation: The temple was eventually destroyed but Jesus calls his body the temple and Paul calls our church body the temple. This means that while the Israelites had a place to go to meet with God, we have God the Holy Spirit living in us so we take "the temple" wherever we go and can pray to God anywhere. It also means that we live everyday sacrificing ourselves to God, rather than making animal sacrifices.

John 2:19-22 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Divided Kingdom (I Kings 12-II Kings 25; II Chronicles 10-36)

Event: The kingdom of Israel splits into two: the northern part is still called Israel and the southern part is called Judah. The majority of the kings of this time, except a few from Judah, lead their people to worship idols instead of the true God.

Redemption of the World: God waits patiently for His people to repent and return to Him. He uses prophets to speak to the people for Him. God tells Israel that, because of their rejection of Him, He will reject them as His people and exile them from their land but that one day He will bring them back. He is saying that He will take away the blessing promised to Abraham: many descendants and

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a promised land, and then return it to them later.

Hosea 1:10–11 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Individual salvation: One prophet during this time, Isaiah, foretold that a Chosen One would come who would suffer for His people to release them from their sins. This prophecy is of Jesus and is found in Isaiah 52-53.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Exile and Return (II Kings and II Chronicles, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)

Event: God allows the foreign empires of Assyria and Babylon to take the Israelites captive and remove them from their land. The temple is destroyed. Those from the southern kingdom of Judah are allowed to return after 70 years and rebuild the city walls and temple in Jerusalem.

Redemption of the World: God preserved his people from being spread to the point of oblivion while at the same time moving them all over the world, taking knowledge of Him with them.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Individual salvation: God punishes His people for not keeping His law but promises that a day is coming when His true people will know His law inside them and know Him intimately. God begins to show Himself through His people to the very nations that have captured His people.

Jeremiah 31:33–34 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

The Life of Jesus (Matthew-John)

Event: Jesus is born in Israel, teaches the true meaning of the scriptures, performs many miracles of healing and help, leads a small band of disciples, is executed, rises from the dead, and later ascends to heaven.

Redemption of the World: Jesus obeys the law as well as the true point of the law: to fully love God and others. He is the “second Adam” who never falls from grace. He is the sacrifice made at Mount Moriah where God provided a sacrifice in place of Abraham’s son. He is the sacrificial “Passover

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lamb", killed at the same time as the literal lamb of the Jewish ritual. He defeats death. He is the truest temple where we meet God among us. He is the promised Suffering Servant who would die for the people. He gathers people to himself to worship the true God, fulfilling God's purpose for us in the world. He brings God's offer of entrance into God's Kingdom to all the peoples outside Israel.

Luke 2:27-33 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

John 12:24-32 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Individual salvation: Jesus takes all our guilt, shame, and fear on Himself and gives us instead His position of innocence, honor, and power before the Father. All that He requires is our trusting belief. Jesus offers us a new life but this requires that we let go of our current life. The new life He gives is abundant and eternal.

II Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

John 6:28–29 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Matthew 16:25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

John 10:10–11 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

I John 2:25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

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Early Church Expansion (Acts for narrative, Romans-III John for teachings and practices)

Event: After Jesus ascends to heaven, God the Holy Spirit comes to live in the disciples. The disciples of Jesus, now called apostles ("sent ones"), begin expanding the message of Jesus's salvation and establishing communities of Jewish followers of Jesus. Eventually, the followers of Jesus realize God wants them to go and bring new disciples from all peoples, not only the Jews.

Redemption of the World: God reveals a mystery to His people, that He is making a new people of all the followers of Jesus Christ, no longer only of the Jews. God promised that through a descendent of Abraham, all families of the world would be blessed. That descendant was Jesus and His Church is comprised of all peoples. The church is to do what Israel never fully did: go to all the peoples of the world and make disciples of Jesus.

Matthew 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Ephesians 3:6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Individual salvation: As the Holy Spirit works in us, we become more like Christ. As we live as the sacred community of the church; we live a life of discipleship, being disciples of Christ and godly leaders and discipling others as well. Christ died for all of us together and works on all of us together, and we are to recognize our unity.

Ephesians 5:25–27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Return and Reign of Christ (Revelation and various other passages)

Event: While it hasn't happened yet, the Bible predicts Jesus's return to earth to collect His people (all who believe in Him) to Himself. This is followed by a time of great troubles for those who have not believed in Christ. This is followed by Jesus returning with the believers to finally conquer and judge the world. Eventually a new heaven and earth are created afresh.

Redemption of the World: All that was broken by the curse of man's sin: nature, man's soul, the world's system of relationships, are made right and new. God's original design for the world was to have an earth full of people who glorified Him because they knew Him and His love. Having judged those who refused this relationship, God will have His perfect design. His long-term desire to have some of all the world's peoples as part of His kingdom and worship Him in their own unique language and culture will be fulfilled.

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Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Revelation 21:3, 22-26 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

Revelation 22:3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

Individual salvation: Mankind first sinned against God in order to become like God but instead became separated from God. God allowed us to die in order to not lock us in a separation from God forever. During our life here following Christ we become more and more like Christ, but, in our eternity with God, we will become like God because we will see Him clearly and intimately. We will live with Him and each other eternally.

1 John 3:1–2 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

2 Corinthians 5:1–5 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

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The Bible tells us a singular story in which God creates a good world and makes people like Him to act as His representatives. But the world is corrupted by people who continually try to take God's place. God made a relationship with one people, all descended from a single man, who were given the task of representing Him among all other peoples. But when they failed in their purpose, God came into the world to take their place of judgment so they can have a place with Him. Along with this one people, God invited all peoples into the same special relationship. By taking our place, He made a way for us to be welcomed into His place forever. We still live in a corrupted world in which we live as His representatives, inviting others into the same special relationship. One day, He will make our world right again and be with us in it forever.

Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on The Return of Jesus

The second coming of Jesus is the hope and reminder that God is faithful, and that He has ultimate control over all things. Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. We believe that God will fulfill all future promises and prophecies regarding the second coming of Jesus. Rev. 19:11-16 | Jn. 14:3 | Zech. 14:4



How is looking at the gospel as a story helpful?



How does the teaching that the Bible is God's wholly true revelation to us affect your personal learning question? Does it cause confusion or bring help?

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REFLECT

If someone asked me what the Bible is, could I answer them confidently? What would you say?



DISCUSS

What is the Bible about?



MEMORIZE

II Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to us.
- The Bible is a collection of individual writings which fit together in a network of truth.
- The Bible tells the story of how God redeems the world.

Resources for further study:

An Introduction to the Gospel: Revised and Expanded, Geisler and Nix

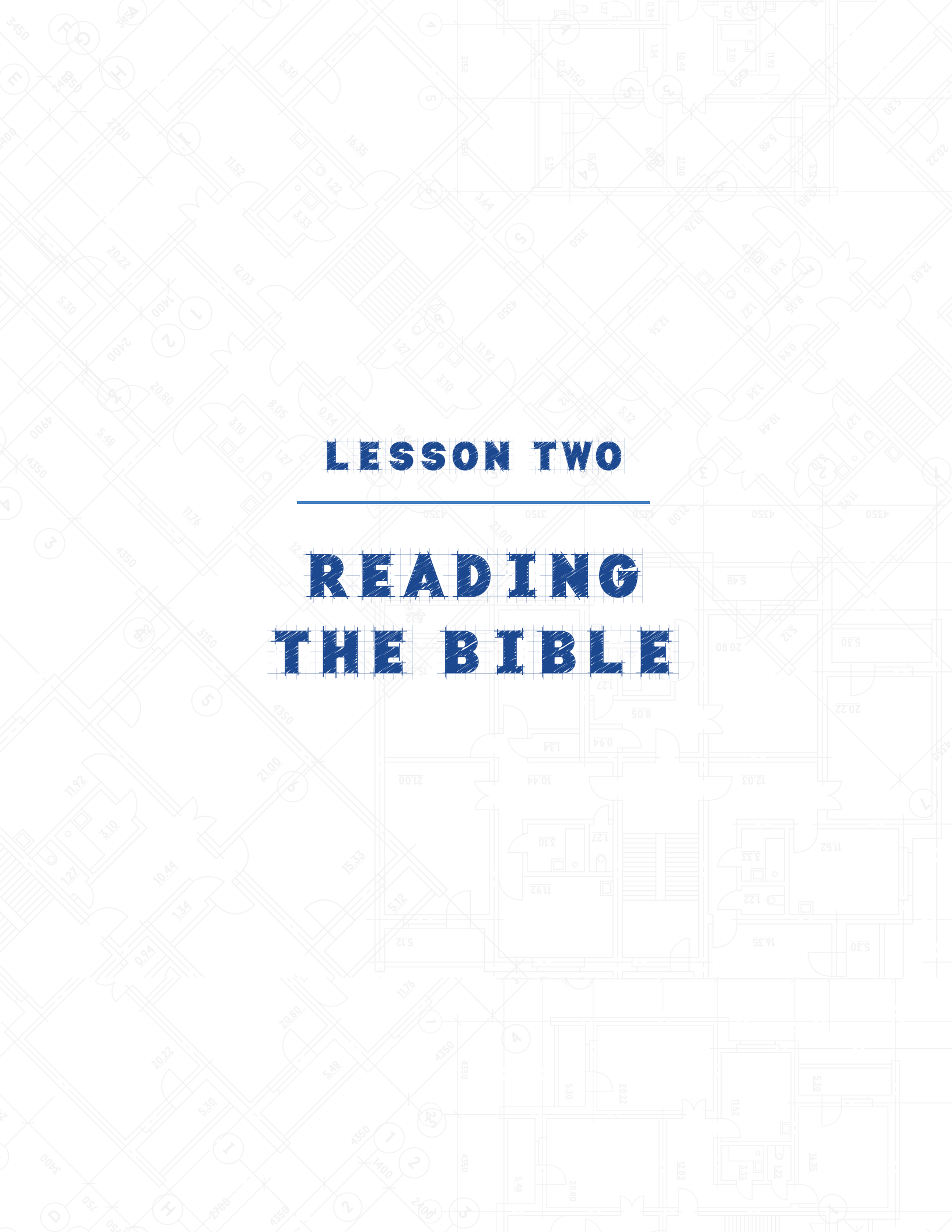
Ultimate Bible Guide (Holman)

A Visual Theology Guide to the Bible: Seeing and Knowing God's Word, Challies and Byers

Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible: A Guide to Reading the Bible Well, Grudem, Collins, and Schriner

Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ, Hunter and Wellum

NOTES:

The background of the entire page is a detailed, light gray architectural floor plan. It features various rooms, corridors, and structural elements, with numerous numerical dimensions (e.g., 11.92, 12.03, 10.44, 5.30, 20.22) and circular callouts with numbers (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) scattered throughout. The plan is oriented with a grid of lines.

LESSON TWO

READING THE BIBLE

In the last lesson we saw how the Bible is God's inspired revelation of Himself to us. It reveals His heart and tells of His Son who redeems fallen humanity. We saw the Bible's structure of 66 books united in one Scripture. In this lesson we will discuss how we go about reading the Bible and wisely finding what it says to us.

Effectively reading the Bible does not require any special degrees or really any theological education at all. You have the same Bible that any theologian or pastor has. They don't have any more access to Scripture than you do. What they may have that you might not is:

Effectively reading the Bible does not require any special degrees or really any theological education at all.

- Access to helpful resources to understand the language or cultural context of the Bible
- A great amount of time spent studying the Bible and hearing how others interpret it
- A gift/calling of knowledge and teaching the Bible

Psalms 119:99-100

**I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.**

In Psalms 119:99-100 we see that truly learning God's word (even above experienced teachers) requires meditation and obedience. We learn the Bible best by allowing it to saturate our lives.

While we still need teachers (as the Bible itself tells us) we can come to the Bible and learn from it on our own.



How confident do I feel in studying the Bible on my own? Why?

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE BIBLE

A. Scripture forms our worldview by answering our biggest questions:

- Who is God?

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- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- What is important in life?
- What is wrong with the world?
- How should we live?
- What does the future hold?

B. Through knowing the Word we can know God's revealed will.

The Bible does not answer all our questions about specific circumstances. It is not a magic eight-ball. It is also not a cookbook, telling us the recipe for getting what we want. Instead, the Bible reveals the character, purposes, and ways of God. We take these to form principles which God gives us wisdom to apply in specific areas.



DISCUSS

How do we go about finding God's will in His Word?

C. The Scripture presents God's standards

- In our moral choices
- In our relationships
- In our interpretation of other Scripture

D. We have the unchanging message of an unchanging God.

- We have God's promises in black and white.
- We see through God's eyes.
- We have a whole cohesive document which interprets itself.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE BIBLE ON YOUR OWN

Reading on our own allows us to:

- Go at our own pace
- Focus and learn first-hand
- Accompany the Bible with prayer
- Have a time of personally approaching God in His Word



Would I rather study the Bible alone or with others? Why?

EIGHT BLESSINGS OF STUDYING THE BIBLE

1. **God Consciousness:** the constant reminder that God exists.
2. **Self-Awareness:** the constant reminder of how I am and my need for God.
3. **Knowledge of God's Plan:** "God works to rescue us from the claustrophobic confines of our little kingdoms of self and deliver us to His big Kingdom of glory and grace."
4. **Personal Transformation:** seeing God's grace work to change each one of us
5. **Gospel Worldview:** understanding God, yourself, and your world in order to make decisions.
6. **Street-Level Guidance:** knowing how to respond to everyday issues and conversations.
7. **Commitment to Ministry:** reminding us of our call to and defining our methods of redemptive ministry in the lives of others.
8. **A Deeper Love for Jesus:** reminding us of Jesus' presence, plan, power, and promises.

Adapted from "8 Blessings of Studying Your Bible" by Paul Tripp. www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/8-blessings-of-studying-your-bible. Published 1/22/19.

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WHEN YOU STUDY THE BIBLE

When we open our Bibles , we can use a four-stage approach:

- 1) Preparation: am I ready to hear from the Lord?
- 2) Observation: what does it say?
- 3) Interpretation: what does it mean?
- 4) Application: what does it say I am and need to do?

PREPARATION: THE DANGERS OF BIBLE STUDY

When we study the Bible, we risk focusing on knowing its words more than its subject: Jesus. Jesus rebuked a group called the Pharisees, who were a “back-to-the-Bible” movement, by saying:

John 5:39

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,



Am I guilty of ignoring Jesus in the Bible?

We are held accountable for what we know of God’s will. Anyone desiring to study the Bible without an intent to live by it is gathering judgment for themselves.

Luke 12:47–49

“And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn’t prepared and doesn’t carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.”

The Bible, when followed, will change your life in ways that are difficult, addressing your sin and need for Jesus, as well as the trials and sacrifice into which He calls you to follow Him.

NOTES:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Bible will also be your guide into a life and world you could never have dreamed of. Are you willing to go?

Ask yourself:

- ***Am I ready to hear whatever it has to say?***
- ***Will I let my assumptions be challenged?***
- ***Can I refrain from manipulating Scripture for my comfort?***
- ***Am I willing to find where my life fits into God's story?***
- ***What am I looking for?***

***Wisdom? A checklist? God's perspective? Encouragement? Ammunition?
Comfort? God's heart?***

**What do I tend to look for in the Bible?**

After preparing our heart to approach the Bible, we go through a process of observation, interpretation, and application.

OBSERVATION

During the observation phase of Bible study you are looking only for the facts. You don't need to look for meanings yet. **Ask:**

Who?

- ***Who wrote this? Whom did they originally write to?***

NOTES:

- Whom is it talking about? Who are the key players?

What?

- Was going on at the time?
- Is the scriptural context?

Where?

- Did this take place?
- What else in the Bible happened there?

When?

- Was this in history?
- Is this in the story of redemption?

"Why?" is to be answered in the interpretation phase and "How?" is to be answered in the application phase. Remember that in observation, you are trying to take a fresh look at what the Bible says. Over time, you will become familiar with certain passages and individual verses. Like quotes and scenes from a movie you have seen many times, you may find yourself assuming you remember them correctly until you come back again. You also may hear people tell you what the Bible says but you should not rely on them. Going to the Scripture yourself allows you to come back to what it does and does not say.

Other things you might observe:

- **Genre:** What type of literature is this? History is different from poetry or prophecy.
- **Words:** Are there key, connector, title, or repeated words?
- **Grammar:** What parts of speech are the words in the passage? Focus especially on subjects, verbs, and objects. You don't have to know Hebrew, Greek, or even English grammar perfectly well to see the basic set-up of a sentence. Look for who is doing or saying something, about what, and to whom.
- **Repetition:** Does this passage sound familiar from somewhere else in the Bible? Over time you will find yourself making connections more easily.
- **Structure:** Are ideas repeated? Is there a comparison and contrast? Is there a reference to another part of the Bible?

NOTES:

- **Mood:** What is the tone or emotion of the people speaking? What is the implied attitude toward the events or ideas described?

You may not be able to answer all these questions in a given passage but do your best.

INTERPRETATION

After we have looked at the facts of what we are reading we begin to interpret what we've read. We are now looking for what it means. However, we are still asking questions, not jumping to making statements.

Four Basic Questions to Ask of Scripture

Don't overcomplicate what you are looking for when you approach the Bible. Keep these big-picture questions in mind and use the observation and interpretations listed below as tools to answering these four basic questions:

- 1) ***What does this say about God? (Ultimately, look for this!)***
- 2) ***What does this say about me?***
- 3) ***What does this say about my world?***
- 4) ***What does this say about what happens when any of the above meet?***

These are big questions and you may not know how to answer them right away or in all passages. Think of them as "target questions" you are looking for. Interpreting the Bible is not about having the perfect questions to ask: basic questions are fine, but they should be meaningful ones. You can only find what you are looking for. If you ask small questions, you will get small answers – if you ask for deeper meanings, you will find more from the Bible.



How are these questions different from what I or my culture tend to look for in the Bible?

NOTES:

PUTTING CHRIST AT THE CENTER OF HIS STORY

The Bible tells us the story of God redeeming the fallen world through Jesus Christ so that God would live eternally with His children. Jesus says that the Old Testament ultimately points us to Him. We saw a little of this in the previous lesson.

John 5:39

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

Luke 24:27

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Jesus is clear that the Bible is centered on Him. We instead tend to be focused first on ourselves and look for ways the Bible is focused on us. While it is good that we want to see how the Bible speaks to our lives, we need to realize that we only find what it means for us when we see what it says about Jesus. Likewise, if we look for only ourselves in the Bible, that will be all we find – we should first look for who God is and find ourselves in Him.

We often read the Bible like this:
Because *[Insert Story]*, I *[Insert Application]*.

Example: "Because Abraham believed God and was counted, righteous, I should have more faith."

While not necessarily wrong, this reading is limited because it:

- Tends to ignore the bigger story and puts the person in the Bible as a hero. Biblical people are not always to be imitated, even if they can be learned from.
- Fails to look beyond myself at my world.
- Places me as the central actor in charge of changing myself. Notice that you are the subject of the sentence.
- Ignores what God may be revealing about Himself, looking only for what is revealed about myself.

When we look for immediate application, we may be well-intentioned, but we are missing the key piece of the puzzle: God.

NOTES:

***"Go to the Bible looking for God. Find Him, and application will follow.
But go looking for application, and you may miss both." - Trevin Wax***

A much fuller reading would be framed like this:

[Insert Story or Statement] because God [Insert Theology]. Therefore I [Insert Application].

Example: "Abraham believed God and was counted righteous because God is faithful and is glorified when we trust Him. He is worthy to call us righteous. He is sacrificial enough to take our punishment on Himself. Therefore I am accounted wholly righteous and will eagerly await all God's further promises. I am blessed by Christ so that I take part in the blessing to Abraham."

This framework:

- Keeps the story in context by asking why it happened.
- Does not need to emulate the Bible character as a hero, leaving room for Christ to be the hero.
- Places God as the central actor, making Him responsible to change me.
- Finds who God is as revealed in the story and looks at oneself in the light of God's nature.

This is a framework and not a formula. Not every passage neatly works this way. The point is to look primarily for God and your life as a response to what He is and does.

CHRIST-CENTERED BIBLE STUDY

In order to train ourselves to keep Christ at the center of scripture, here are several questions to ask of a passage:

Does this passage show a need for Jesus?

- Through the characters' failings
- Through the fallen world
- Through showing my corrupt heart
- Through showing a problem only Jesus can deal with

Does this passage show a problem Jesus suffered under?

- Can He identify with your pain?
- How did He handle it?
- How can He empower you?

NOTES:

Is Jesus redeeming or overcoming the fallen world here?

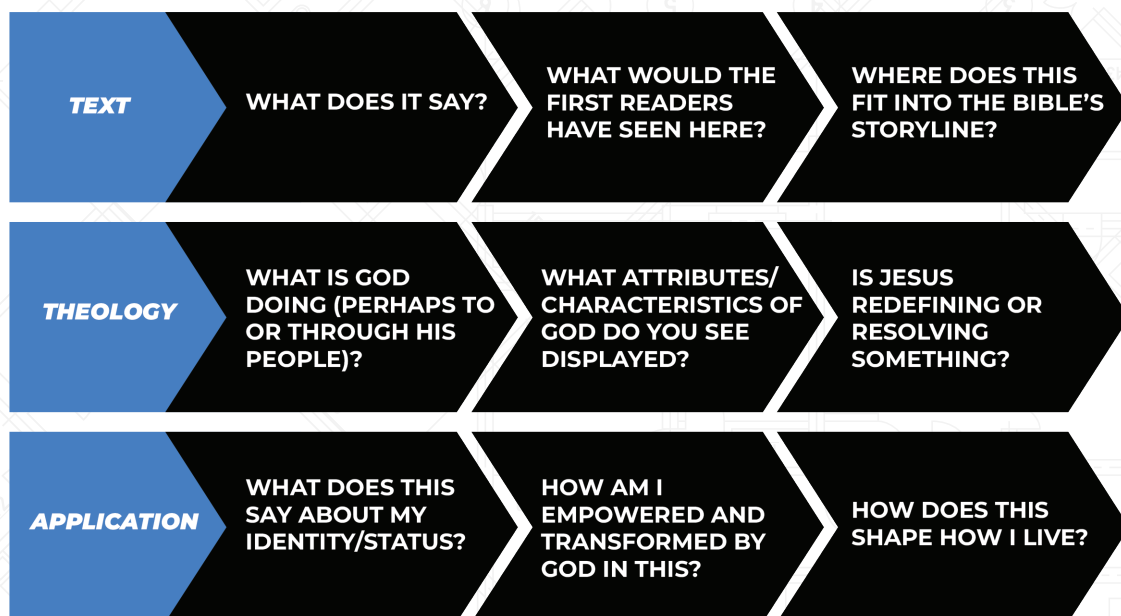
- Is He showing what things will be like when redeemed?
- Is He redefining or re-teaching anything?
- Is He taking on anyone's place with a new outcome?

Does this passage directly refer to Jesus in the Old Testament?

- Does it show Jesus literally appearing in the Old Testament?
- Is there a prophecy about Jesus here?
- Is there a person, event, or institution that points to Jesus?

Handling these questions takes time and study. Don't expect to quickly and easily answer them. It is recommended you take the Unfolding Gospel course to help you start seeing Christ across all of Scripture and connecting your life into His story. The priority before learning to handle Christ-centered questions is to begin asking the big picture/target questions. All of this is a process so don't give up!

These supplementary questions may help you think through a passage:



NOTES:



REFLECT

How different is the set of questions proposed here from the things I usually look for in the Bible?



AIM

Could looking for God in the Bible rather than for yourself factor into how you've been trying to answer your personal learning question?

How would looking to Christ in Scripture rather than looking for a set of behaviors change the way you approach the person you are trying to reach with the gospel?

Good Ways to Misinterpret Scripture:

- Expect to hear only what you want to hear
- Expect the God of Scripture to look like you
- Expect everything you read to directly involve you
- Expect the Scripture to always support your decisions
- Look for secret meanings only you have discovered
- Accept only the interpretation you have always been comfortable with
- Never study together with others

NOTES:

APPLICATION

Once we have looked at what the Bible says (observation) and asked what it means (interpretation) we can move to what we should do as a response (application).



What can happen when we jump to application without proper observation and interpretation?

When we look in the Bible for who God is, who we are, and who our world is, we will naturally be led to what we do. But we are not looking for biblical behaviors to apply; we are looking for an identity to live. We should first ask how the passage applies to us before we ask how to apply it. That is, we ask what it means about us, about our status with the Lord, our blessedness, or our identity.

Remember to apply the Bible to yourself first! Don't use it as ammunition for everyone around you who is not living well enough. But for Christ, you are no better than they are. However, Jesus does say that we should use what God has taught us and empowered us to change to then minister to others with the same needs. We don't read the Bible for self-improvement, nor do we read it to fix everyone in our life. We read it to find the Redeemer who redeems us and makes us a redemptive force in our fallen world.

Matthew 7:5

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Try using this model to ask questions for applying what you see in Scripture:

This passage reveals that God _____, which means _____ about me.

Seeing that God is _____, I should respond by _____.

This passage shows that God commands _____ so needs to change in my life.

I can do _____ and will ask God to _____ in my life.

NOTES:

WHAT ABOUT THE PASSAGES THAT DON'T SEEM TO APPLY IN MY LIFE?

Many times we arrive at passages that simply seem to have nothing to do with us. This doesn't necessarily mean that we can get nothing from them, however, because all of Scripture is God's revelation to us. Some passages do have more immediate or direct bearing on our lives today but there is no useless fluff in the Bible. Not all passages in the Bible are directly about you and that is a very good thing. We would be in trouble if everything applied to us. However, everything is meaningful to us. When you aren't sure what to do with a passage ask questions like these:

Does this describe my current experience?

Before assuming this passage has nothing to do with you, have you thought about how maybe it does? Just because you're not sure what it means doesn't mean it has nothing to do with you. Will I experience this in the future?

Storing up wisdom on something you may experience some day is as important (if not more so) than learning for today. You may not be married, a parent, persecuted, tempted, depressed, poor, sick or anything else now, but you may be later.

Is someone else experiencing this?

What you see in the Bible may relate to someone you know more directly than it relates to you. You might encourage, pray for, or guide someone using a passage that relates more directly to them.

Does this passage speak to my culture?

You may not find a picture of yourself in a passage, but the values of your culture may be challenged there. Being able to dialogue with your world using the Bible's truth is a valuable outcome of studying Scripture.

Who would you be in the story?

You may not see a story as relating to you until you find who you are most like in the story. You are probably unlike the "hero" of the story and more like those around watching or receiving God's grace through the "hero". This may change how you read. Likewise, if the passage is warning unbelievers, you do not need to apply it to yourself (if you believe) but it should inform how you see the unbelievers around you.

What does this tell you about the bigger picture/story?

A hard-to-apply passage may make more sense when you "zoom out" and see how it is building the big story of Scripture and Christ's redemption. That story will relate much more directly and fully to you and your world than a single piece might.

Is this passage actually not telling me to do anything?

Have you ever asked yourself how you would know if a passage is actually telling you what to do? Some don't tell us to do anything and yet we assume the best practice would be to see some command there anyway.

NOTES:

Remember to ask what the passage says about who you are before looking for what to do. The one leads to the other, anyway. Also look for what it implies rather than how to apply it. The implied meaning will include how you should live, but will expand beyond that to meanings about how you understand God and your world.

Am I trying to apply a principle or a practice?

Sometimes we see something done in the Bible and assume we should do the same. But there is a difference (discussed in Lesson Seven) between a principle (e.g. generosity) and a practice (e.g. when the first church in Jerusalem shared all possessions in common).

Some of these questions take us back to interpretation to make sure we have the understanding we need to apply Scripture correctly. This is not an easy task. Over time you will become more adept at wisely applying what you read in the Bible but seeking guidance from resources, friends, and Bible teachers will help with the interpretive challenges and set you up to be able to hear from the Lord on your particular life application.

Please remember to read the Bible to find who God is. If you walk away knowing your God better, that is more important than finding the right "to-do". Responding to who God is may be as simply profound as thanking and praising Him, sitting in awe of the God revealed in His Word. Getting to know God and yourself will lead to knowing what to do.

A "RAFT" FOR LEARNING THE BIBLE

We do not rely on any one method of learning the Bible. It is more like a raft made of various connected planks of wood rather than a single carved-out canoe. We combine these methods together to best get to know Scripture.

Remember that getting to know the Bible takes time, consistency, and obedience. We are always growing in our understanding. **We learn the Bible through:**

- Preaching
- Factual study (i.e. commentaries)
- Solo reading
- Memorization
- Devotional reading
- Discussion with others in the church
- Living according to the text

NOTES:



Which of these could I begin to incorporate into my learning?

Some Methods of Reading the Bible

- **Journaling:** Writing your thoughts or prayers on a passage
- **Books:** (see the recommended resources at the end of this lesson).
- **Devotionals:** these help you look at a small portion of Scripture. These are guides to learning from and praying in response to the passage. Look for devotionals with substance and that focus on Christ rather than only your needs.
- **Verse memorization**
- **Cross Referencing:** noting connections across the Bible
- **Hand Copying**
- **Quick Overview** (maybe *One Year Bible*)
- **Audio Bible**
- **Chapter or pericope/paragraph a day** (or maybe a couple times a day)



What is most difficult for me about reading the Bible? What is one thing I can do to begin addressing that difficulty?

NOTES:



Look at one of these passages using the framework from this lesson: [Insert Story or Statement] because God [Insert Theology]. Therefore I [Insert Application].

• Mark 5:21-43

• Philippians 2:1-11

• Psalms 24

• Leviticus 19:9-18



Psalms 119:15-16

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.



- When we study the Bible, we should prepare, observe, interpret, and apply.
- The Bible reveals God to us and we look for Him first.
- Getting to know God in the Bible takes time and practice. The more time you spend, the more you will see in Scripture.

Recommended Resources:

How to Read the Bible for all it's Worth, Fee and Stuart

Learn to Study the Bible: 40 Different Step-by-Step methods to Help You Discover, Apply, and Enjoy God, Deane

Search the Scriptures: A Three-year daily Devotional Guide to the Whole Bible, Stibbs

NOTES:

The background of the entire page is a detailed, light gray architectural floor plan. It shows various rooms, corridors, and structural elements with numerous numerical dimensions and small circular markers containing numbers. The plan is oriented diagonally across the page.

LESSON THREE

WHO IS GOD?

HARD THINGS FIRST

Because, as will become clearer throughout this class, all things find their root in who God is and all we believe and do comes from our view of God, we will begin this study by looking at God's nature. We cannot describe God's nature without talking about the Trinity. This will likely be the most intellectually challenging part of this class because it is not something we can understand. In fact, our goal in this lesson is not to understand the nature of God but to be introduced to a God greater than we realize, whether we have just met Him or have known Him for years.

Many teachers have tried to use metaphors to describe the trinitarian nature of God. However, there is nothing we know that can accurately serve as a picture of the Trinity and at some point we must come to terms with not fully understanding God as three-in-one.

We should realize that the concept of the Trinity is so unnatural to our thinking that it is evidence of our God being the true God: if we had invented a God on our own, we never would have come up with something like a Trinity.

But Wait...

The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible but that doesn't mean the Bible doesn't teach it to us. We learn about the Trinity by putting together various scriptures from around the Bible which add up to give us this teaching about the nature of God.

It is like if someone gave you clues about what color light they were talking about.



If they said:

Clue #1: It's red light. Clue #2: It's green light. Clue #3: It's blue light. Clue #4: All three colors are perfectly equal.

The only answer is that it's white light. We were never told the word "white" but by putting the parts together we saw the whole picture if we understand that white light is made up of these.

At various places in the Bible God refers to God as "we" or "us". One Hebrew word for God, Elohim, is plural. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all referred to as God in the Bible. From this, the early Church discovered the doctrine of the Trinity.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "TRINITY"?

When we talk about God being "triune" we mean:

God is three persons

- God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- We say "persons" because God is a person, not a cosmic force or all of the universe, or an idea

NOTES:

God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

- While God is not a human (which is why we do not say “three people of the Trinity”), God is a person. He has a will, rationality, emotion, and relationships.
- God relates to Himself and to His creation.

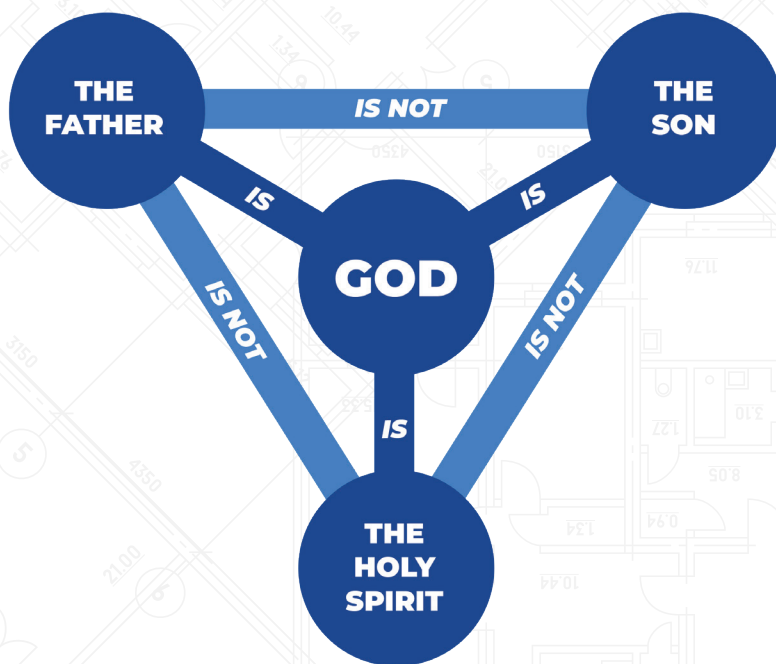
Each person is fully God

- When we say only “God” we are often referring specifically to God the Father, but all are equally God.
- Each person is not a part of God but God.

All are equal in nature and divinity. The Bible does describe a difference in activities among the person of the Trinity. However, because God is one, in another sense all persons are part of all works of God.

There is one God

- There are not three Gods.
- God cannot be divided up. The Trinity is not three “members” making up a team, but three persons who are one.



NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?



If each person of God is equal in nature and value but different in role and authority, what does that mean for how we see our roles, value, and authority in relationship with others?

The Trinity shows that God is:

Beyond human understanding

One in nature and activities, even when one person is described more prominently in a particular divine action.

One whose nature calls us to unity in diversity (I Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:16).

Relational (God even relates to Himself!)

One who both gives and receives glory (we see in the Bible that the Father gives glory to the Son, the Son gives glory to the Father, the Holy Spirit gives glory to both).

Able to love Himself more than we love Him and more than we love ourselves. While our culture tells us to love ourselves, we can't have a relationship with ourselves like God can. The God who is the source of all relationship loves us and offers us loving, unified relationship with Himself and others, reflecting the unity of the Trinity (Eph. 2:14-16; Jn. 17:21; Mt. 19:6).

Shared Characteristics of the Trinity

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God but each person of the Trinity has roles and characteristics. Many of these characteristics are shared among the persons. The chart below shows how we find the description of the Trinity's characteristics all through the Bible.

NOTES:

	FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
Called God	Phil. 1:2	John 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9	Acts 5:3-4
Creator	Isaiah 64:8	John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17	Job 33:4, 26:13
Resurrects	1 Thess. 1:10	John 2:19, 10:17	Rom. 8:11
Indwells	2 Cor. 6:16	Col. 1:27	John 14:17
Everywhere	1 Kings 8:27	Matt. 28:20	Psalms 139:7-10
All Knowing	1 John 3:20	John 16:30, 21:17	1 Cor. 2:10-11
Sanctifies	1 Thess. 5:23	Heb. 2:11	1 Pet. 1:2
Life Giver	Gen. 2:7; John 5:21	John 1:3; 5:21	2 Cor. 3:6, 8
Fellowship	1 John 1:3	1 Cor. 1:9	2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1
Eternal	Psalms 90:2	Micah 5:1-2	Rom. 8:11; Heb. 9:14
Has a Will	Luke 22:42	Luke 22:42	1 Cor. 12:11
Speaks	Matt. 3:17; Luke 9:25	Luke 5:20; 7:48	Acts 8:29; 11:12; 13:2
Love	John 3:16	Eph. 5:25	Rom. 15:30
Searches Hearts	Jer. 17:10	Rev. 2:23	1 Cor. 2:10
We Belong To	John 17:9	John 17:6	
Savior	1 Tim. 1:1, 2:3, 4:10	2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:4, 3:6	
We Serve	Matt. 4:10	Col. 3:24	
Believe In	John 14:1	John 14:1	
Gives Joy	Romans 15:13	John 15:11	
Judges	John 8:50	John 5:21, 30	

Matt Slick, "Trinity Chart," Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, July 16, 2022, <https://carm.org/doctrine-and-theology/trinity-chart/>.



DISCUSS

If each person of God is equal in nature, how do we tend to mistakenly see them as fundamentally different?

NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?

GOD THE FATHER

In some sense, it is easier to study the Son and Holy Spirit in the Bible than it is to study the Father. The Bible tells us that while no one has ever seen the Father, Jesus (the Son) shows Him to us (Jn. 1:18). The Bible also says that no one knows the things of God unless the Holy Spirit reveals them (1 Cor. 2:11-14).

While the Son was on earth as Jesus Christ, He was always in submission to the Father, obeying on our behalf and modeling obedience to us. There is some mystery and controversy around what extent if any the Son is always in submission to the Father since both persons are fully God. However, we can be certain that in His humanity, Jesus always submitted to the Father, as we must as well.

The Father glorifies the Son who, in turn, glorifies the Father. The Holy Spirit glorifies both.

Because His very nature is that of a father we see that God:

- Is love
- Desires to protect and provide
- Is the ultimate authority



Our experience with our earthly fathers affects the way we view the heavenly Father. For you, does this play into your personal learning question? How might it play into how the person or group you will share the gospel with?

GOD THE SON

God the Son is often called “the Second Person of the Trinity”, but this term shouldn’t be allowed to confuse the fact that each person is fully and equally God in nature as we have already said. His role is that of Son in relationship to the Father. Because this is the person of the Trinity who came to be born on earth as a human we know Him as Jesus.

Jesus was a man who lived about 2,000 years ago. He is a historical figure. But He is more than a man. The Bible says that He existed forever (John 1:2) before He took the form of a man. He was not created; rather, He created the world (John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17).

NOTES:

Philippians 2:5-11 says that Jesus, who is God, let go of His glorious position and came to earth for your sake, to save you from sin.

In fact, it was prophesied that Jesus would come. You can go online and see the amazing prophecies from the Old Testament that were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

Jesus was not just a man or a good teacher or a skillful magician. The Bible says that He is both fully God and fully a man. This is fundamental to our belief as Christians.

GOD	MAN
He is worshiped. (Matt. 2:2, 11; 14:33)	He worshiped the Father. (John 17)
He was called God. (John 20:28; Heb. 1:8)	He was called man (Mark 15:39; John 19:5)
He was called Son of God (Mark 1:1)	He was called Son of Man (John 9:35-37)
He is prayed to (Acts 7:59)	He prayed to the Father (John 17)
He is sinless (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15)	He was tempted (Matt. 4:1)
He knows all things (John 21:17)	He grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52)
He gives eternal life (John 10:28)	He died (Rom. 5:8)
All the fullness of deity dwells in Him (Col. 2:9)	He has a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39)

From Matt Slick, "Jesus' Two Natures: God and Man", Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, November 24, 2008, <https://carm.org/doctrine-and-theology/jesus-two-natures-god-and-man/>.

NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?

What Does it Mean that He is Both God and Man?

- He understands us and can help us because He's both completely powerful and able to relate to us.
- God works in the cosmic as well as the concrete, both outside of time and in the world He created.
- He lived as the only sinless man, thus fulfilling the law and having no sins of His own to pay for. Therefore, He was a worthy sacrifice for us.
- He could actually die as a sacrifice for our sin. A spirit cannot be nailed to a cross.
- Humans, being made in God's image (more on this later) are by nature not completely unlike God. Jesus is made like us (Phil. 2:7) and we will be made like God. (1 Jn. 3:2).

After rising from the dead, Jesus was given a glorified, resurrected body. While we cannot understand exactly how this works or where He is, we understand that He continues to have a body eternally. Jesus remains divine and human and is in the presence of the Father for all time. One day we He will dwell with us on a new earth (1 Pt. 3:22; Rev. 21:3; 22:4).



Why is Jesus being God and man so core to our faith?

What Did Jesus Come to Do?

- To reveal the Father (Matt. 11:27)
- To be a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28)
- To serve (Matt. 20:28)
- To preach the good news of God's Kingdom (Luke 4:43)
- To bring division (Luke 12:51)
- To testify to the truth (John 18:37)

NOTES:

- To fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17)
- To call sinners (Mark 2:17)
- To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:19)
- To do the will of the Father (John 6:38)
- To preach (Mark 1:38)
- To proclaim freedom for believers (Luke 4:18)
- To atone for sin (Heb. 2:17)
- To save the world (John 3:17; Luke 19:10)
- To give life (John 10:10,28)
- To take away sin (1 John 3:5)
- To destroy the devil's works (1 John 3:8)
- To call Israel to her original purpose (Matt. 23:37)
- To give the Father's words (John 17:8)

Adapted from Matt Slick, "What Did Jesus Come to Do?", Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, November 28, 2008, <https://carm.org/about-jesus/what-did-jesus-come-to-do/>.

The Bible is the story of Jesus coming to redeem the world. We will see more of this as our course proceeds but here are some basic points of who Jesus is and what He did:

- Jesus is God. He said He was God, the prophecies and miracles proved it, and this is what Christians believe.
- Jesus is the Messiah, the one prophesied throughout the Old Testament to come rescue Israel.
- Jesus came to earth for us. He was born as a human to go through all that you go through and ultimately to die in our place. Hebrews 10:10 explains that a sacrifice needed to be made to satisfy God's justice and so He had to have a body in order to die for us.
- Jesus rose from the dead. This was witnessed by hundreds of people. Jesus had satisfied the requirement that sin must lead to death (He wouldn't be truly just if He just ignored wrong) and made it so that death isn't the end for us.
- He did this because He loves you (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8).
- Jesus taught us that we can be one with Him and how we should live. We should continually trust in Him and love one another, sharing about Him, as we wait for His return.
- Jesus will reign on earth one day. The Bible that prophesied of His coming tells of His coming again. Then all the evil things that have been allowed will be judged and He will be gloriously in charge.

NOTES:



Do you know what the person or group you want to connect the gospel with believes about Jesus? If you do, write it here. If not, what is a step you could take to find out?



REFLECT

Does what I believe about Jesus align with what the Bible teaches?

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The "Third Person" of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person just as the Father and Son are. The Holy Spirit grieves (Is. 63:10; Eph. 4:30), loves (Rom. 15:30); can be insulted (Heb. 10:29), and wills and chooses (I Cor. 12:11).

The Holy Spirit is first mentioned during the account of creation in Genesis 1:2. He is present in the events of the Old Testament, coming upon people at times. Soon after Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit began to dwell in those who had been made new (more on this in a later lesson).

But Not Least

The Holy Spirit is mysterious to us. We often relegate the Spirit to a lesser level of deity or think of the Spirit as an impersonal force. This is incorrect since the Spirit is as much God as the Father and Son. His role, though, is one of pointing to the Son and the Father. The Spirit moves in the believers to give God glory.

NOTES:

The Bible Shows that the Holy Spirit is God

The Holy Spirit is called:

- God (Acts 5:3-4)
- Eternal (Heb. 9:14)
- Creator (Gen. 1:26-27; Job 33:4)
- Equal to and one with the Father (Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)
- Omnipresent (everywhere) (Psa. 139:7-13)
- Omniscient (all-knowing) (I Cor. 2:10)
- Omnipotent (all-powerful) (Lk. 1:35; Rom. 15:19)
- We are baptized in His name along with the Father and Son (Mt. 28:19)



Do I have a reduced view of the Holy Spirit?

What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

- Anoints Jesus for Ministry (Lk. 4:18)
- Accesses to the Father (Eph. 2:18)
- Assures the believer (Rom. 8:16)
- Baptizes (John 1:23-34; 1 Cor. 12:13-14)
- Believers Born of (John 3:3-6)
- Convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:9-10)
- Cleanses (1 Thess. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:2)
- Calls and Commissions (Acts 13:24; 20:28)
- Guides in truth (John 16:13)
- Empowers (Lk. 24:49; 1 Thess. 1:5)
- Helps our weakness, intercedes (Rom. 8:26)
- Strengthens (Eph. 3:16; Acts 1:8, 2:4; 1 Cor. 2:4)

NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?

- Inspires prayer (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20)
- Gives gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-11)
- Glorifies Christ (John 16:14)
- Testifies of Jesus (John 15:26)
- Creates (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4)
- Raises from the dead (Rom. 8:11)
- Indwells believers (I Cor. 3:16)
- Leads (Rom. 8:14)
- Teaches (John 14:26)
- Liberates (Rom. 8:2)
- Interprets Scripture (1 Cor. 2:1,14; Eph. 1:17)
- Molds character (Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 15:16)
- Fills (Acts 2:4; 4:29-31)
- Seals (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30)

Adapted from Matt Slick, "The Holy Spirit," Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, November 24, 2008, <https://carm.org/doctrine-and-theology/the-holy-spirit/>.

GOD IN US

When Jesus was on the earth, He was God Himself with us. One of His names (Immanuel) even means "God with us." But before Jesus ascended into heaven He had told His followers that it was actually better for them that He went away because then the Holy Spirit would come to help them (John 16:7). The last thing Jesus said involved the Holy Spirit: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit lives in and guides the Church.

There is controversy in the Church over the Holy Spirit, not mainly over who the Spirit is but over how He works in us. Specifically, there is disagreement on whether the Spirit gives abilities (called "gifts") and speaks directly to believers today, like He did in the early Church. When we look at the Holy Spirit working in people, we need to remember that God does not fit into our mental boxes and is mysterious to us, God is personal and relational and has interacted with people since He created us, and the Bible is clear that He lives in the believers. If we can affirm those things we will be better equipped to discuss how the Holy Spirit works in us today.

The Spirit's Work in Us

Most of the time we try very hard to be good and do the right thing. But only when we first give up and let the old self die does God begin a new life in us. We are not able to do what He wants

NOTES:

all by ourselves but with this new life of the Holy Spirit in us we get to be God's children and live accordingly (Galatians 4:6; I John 3:2).

Likewise, since spiritual things are only known with the Holy Spirit's power, we do not have an expectation that those who do not have the Holy Spirit will understand spiritual things or have a new life (I Cor. 2:14).

While in a sense, since the Trinity cannot be separated, all of God lives in us. However, the Bible highlights the Holy Spirit living and working in us and highlights the Son living among us as the man Jesus. While discussions of God go beyond our full understanding, we can rely on the fact that God is always in and with us.



If we cannot fully understand God, how can we answer our questions about Him or help others to know Him?

What is the greatest disconnect between a biblical view of God and the view held by the person you want to connect with the gospel? If you don't know, how can you find out?



Take time to pray and worship God for who He is. If prayer is new for you, we will discuss prayer in a later lesson. If you need a little guidance, take one attribute of God over the next pages and thank and praise God for it. Ask yourself what you need from a God like that and request it from Him.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

In the first part of the lesson, we looked at the triune nature of God and saw a brief description of what the Bible says about each person of the Trinity. In this part of the lesson we will look at attributes of our God to better know who He is.

Attribute: something attributed as belonging to a person, thing, group, etc.; a quality, character, characteristic, or property.

NOTES:

God does not fit in our human mental boxes and cannot be easily or fully described in human terms.

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However, we will look at the aspects of His character as described in the Bible. We begin with what may be called the "incommunicable" attributes.

These attributes are things that, for the most part, God does not share (or "communicate") with us. The technical term is "incommunicable" attributes. We may share these attributes to some extent, but they are "less-shared" than others below.

This section is largely taken from Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine, 1994.

In each of the attribute descriptions in this lesson we will see a brief description of the attribute of God's nature, one key verse showing the attribute, other references in the Bible, and a description of this attribute's implications for us and our relationship with God. You will see a blank line where you have the option to write in an implication you thought of that isn't listed. These are not required.

Unity

In God's nature there are attributes that seem to be opposites (e.g. mercy and truth, justice and grace, wrath and love, glory and humility, invisibility and beauty). Just as God is three persons united, God can be described with multiple attributes, but He is all these things in equal measure at one time. Keep in mind that our tendency will be to think of God as being partially one thing and partially another or that He changes or that each person of the trinity has different attributes. But God is all these things.

The Church also reflects this in that we are made up of a multitude of people, cultures, and experiences but can still be unified.

GOD'S UNSHARED ATTRIBUTES

Independence ("self-existence")

This means: God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, yet we and the rest of creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy.

We see this in the Bible in: Acts 17:24-25 "He is the God who made the world and everything in it.

NOTES:

Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need."

As well as in: Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10-12

For us this means:

- We can do things out of worship to God but He doesn't need us to help Him.
- We learn to receive from God.
- God is our definition of good; He is not good because He obeys someone else.
- Only God is autonomous – we are dependent.
- _____

Unchanging ("immutability")

This means: God is unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

We see this in the Bible in: Psalms 102:25-27

*"Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth
and made the heavens with your hands.*

*They will perish, but you remain forever;
they will wear out like old clothing.*

You will change them like a garment and discard them.

But you are always the same; you will live forever."

As well as in: James 1:17; Ex. 3:14

For us this means:

- We can always trust God.
- We have a relationship with the same God every other believer does, including the people in the Old Testament.
- _____

NOTES:

Eternality

This means: God has no beginning or end, and He sees all time equally, yet God sees events in time and acts in time.

We see this in the Bible in: Psalms 90:2

"Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God."

As well as in: Ex. 3:14; Jn. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:8

For us this means:

- God, being outside time, is not limited like we are.
- God sees all time's events and we can trust Him.
- We can live eternally with Him.
- _____

Omnipresence

This means: God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God may act differently in different places.

We see this in the Bible in: Psalms 139:7-10

*"I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!
If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave, you are there.
and your strength will support me.
If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
even there your hand will guide me"*

As well as in: Jer. 23:24

For us this means:

- We can never escape God.

NOTES:

- We can commune with God anywhere.
- God is with us everywhere.
- _____

Omnipotence (power, sovereignty)

This means: God is able to do all His holy will. God (and God alone) is all-powerful.

We see this in the Bible in: Mark 10:27: "Jesus looked at them intently and said, 'Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God.'"

As well as in: Is. 59:1; Jer. 32:7; Eph. 3:20; Gen. 18:14; II Cor. 6:8

For us this means:

- God can do anything, even more than we can ask (Eph. 3:20)
- We can rely on His power.
- The only thing God "can't" do is something against who He is.
- _____

We reflect this attribute of God to some extent when we:

- Exercise self-control
- Influence our world

Omniscience

This means: God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible.

We see this in the Bible in: Heb. 4:13: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable."

As well as in: Job 37:16; I Jn. 3:20; Is. 46:9-10; Mt. 10:30; Ps. 139:1-6

NOTES:

For us this means:

- God is never surprised
- God knows us better than we know ourselves.
- God knows what He has done for us
- _____

We reflect this attribute to some extent when we:

- Learn
- Use our reason and insight
- Exercise wisdom

GOD'S SHARED ATTRIBUTES

The above attributes are those that we do not share with God and those below are ones we do share since we are made in His image. However, the breakdown is not really as simple as that. We may partially share the attributes above (for example, we are not omniscient, but we do have knowledge and wisdom). We share the attributes below to a greater degree, but God is still all these things completely. This is because only God is God, yet we are made in His image.

Spirituality

This means: God exists as a being that is not made of any matter, has no parts or dimensions, is unable to be perceived by our bodily senses, and is more excellent than any other kind of existence.

We see this in the Bible in: Jn. 4:24: "For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

As well as in: II Cor. 3:17

For us this means we:

- Worship Him in our spirit (Jn 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:14; Phil. 3:3)
- Are united with God in spirit (I Cor. 6:17) and are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16)
- Know internally that we are part of His family (Rom. 8:16)
- Get to be with God after we die (Lk. 23:46; Ecc. 12:7; Heb. 12:23;
- We are not a body only, since we have a spirit
- _____

NOTES:

We reflect this attribute in that:

- Our inner self is our spirit/soul which is why when our body dies we are not destroyed.

Invisibility

This means: God's total essence, all of His spiritual being, will never be able to be seen by us, yet God still shows Himself to us through visible, created things.

We see this in the Bible in: Jn. 1:18: "No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us."

As well as in: Ex. 33:20; 6:46; I Tim. 1:17, 6:16; I Jn. 4:12

For us this means:

- The pure in heart will see God (Matt. 5:8), spiritually now and literally in eternity (I Jn. 3:2; Rev. 22:4).
- We do not need to see Him to have a relationship with Him.
- _____

We reflect this attribute in that:

- No one but the invisible One will ever fully know our invisible soul (Ps. 139:1-4).

Truthfulness

This means: He is the true God, and that all His knowledge and words are both true and the final standard of truth.

We see this in the Bible in: Jn. 17:17: "Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth."

As well as in: Jn. 16:13; 17:3; Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Prov. 30:5; Heb. 6:18.

NOTES:

For us this means:

- God is our source of Truth.
- We can trust Him.
- His voice will be the most unflinchingly honest voice in our lives.
- _____

We reflect this attribute when:

- We speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), becoming a Church built on truth.
- We receive God's truth in our lives.

Goodness

This means: God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.

We see this in the Bible in: Ps. 119:68: "You are good and do only good; teach me your decrees."

As well as in: Ps. 34:8; James 1:17; Matt. 7:11

For us this means:

- God is our standard of morality
- God is our highest good and reward
- _____

We reflect this attribute when we:

- Act like Him (Gal. 5:22)
- Declare His goodness.
- Enjoy Him (Ps. 34:8)

NOTES:

Love

This means: God eternally gives of Himself to others

We see this in the Bible in: I John 4:8: "But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

As well as in: John 17:24; Rom. 5:8

For us this means:

- Love is not God (and therefore the highest good) but God is love, so we are the people who best know what love is (I Jn. 4:7-8).
- God loves us.
- _____

We reflect this attribute when we:

- Love Him.
- Accept His love for us.
- Sacrificially love others based on who God is, not on who they are or who we are (Mt. 5:43-45, 22:37-39; Eph. 5:29).



How does the person you want to share the gospel with view the concept of love?

NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?

Mercy/Grace/Patience

This means: God is good toward those in misery and distress and toward those who deserve only punishment. God withholds punishment for a long period of time.

We see this in the Bible in: Ex. 34:6: "The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, 'Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.'"

As well as in: Ps. 103:8; Eph. 4:7; II Pt. 3:9, and many other verses.

For us this means:

- God takes away our punishment but also gives us great undeserved blessings.
- He waits for people to be saved (II Pt. 3:9).
- _____

We reflect this attribute when we:

- Have mercy, grace, and patience for others (Matt. 5:7, James 1:19).

Holiness

This means: God is separated from sin and devoted to His purpose of being glorified by His creation.

We see this in the Bible in: Is. 6:3: They were calling out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

As well as in: Ex. 15:1; Lev 20:26; Ps. 99:9; Mt. 5:48

For us this means:

- God is separate from us yet calls us to separate ourselves to Him.
- Purpose is central to who God is and who we are.
- We are called to perfection (more on this in the lesson on salvation).
- _____

NOTES:

We reflect this attribute in that:

- We are called to be holy (Lev. 19:2; I Pt. 1:15-16) by being separated to the purpose of glorifying God.

Peace/Order

This means: God's nature and His actions are not confused or chaotic even when He does many things at once.

We see this in the Bible in: I Cor. 14:33: "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people."

As well as in: Gen. 1-2; Mk. 6:39-40; Rom. 14:17.

For us this means:

- God will not try to confuse us
- Our peace does not depend on a peaceful environment
- Our eternity with Him is called our "rest".
- _____

We reflect this attribute when we:

- View His world and order our lives according to God's order
- Maintain good relationships
- Rest in His peace, ultimately in eternity with Him (Phil. 4:7; Heb. 4:1).

RIGHTEOUSNESS/JUSTICE/WRATH

This means: God always acts in accordance with what is right and just and He hates sin.

We see this in the Bible in: Ps. 145:17: "The Lord is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness."

As well as in: Ps. 11:7; 90:11; Is. 61:8; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Ps. 90:11.

For us this means:

- God is both merciful and just.
- God cares about those who are wronged.

NOTES:

- God will judge everyone.

- _____

We reflect this attribute when we:

- Seek to implement righteousness in our own life and justice in our world (Micah 6:8).
- Are angry at our sin and the sinful world system.

Freedom/Will/Sovereignty

This means: God determines what will be as He sees fit, whether He chooses to reveal all His will to us or not.

We see this in the Bible in: Ps. 115:3: "Our God is in the heavens, and He does as He wishes."

As well as in: Dt. 29:29; Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:35; Acts 4:27-28; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:20; James 4:13-15.

For us this means:

- We submit ourselves to God's plan
- We trust God's plan even when we don't know all of its details
- While God can do as He pleases; He allows Himself to be hurt by our rebellion in things that are not His will.
- _____

We reflect this attribute in that:

- We can make free choices and should choose His ways (Josh. 24:15; Phil. 2:13).

Blessedness/Joy

This means: God delights in Himself and all that reflects His character. He rejoices over His children.

NOTES:

We see this in the Bible in: I Tim. 6:15: "For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords."

As well as in: Gen. 1:31-2:3; Is. 62:5; : I Tim. 1:11.

For us this means:

- We make God happy. The believer should picture a smile on God's face.
- God desires us to have fullness of joy (Jn. 15:11; Phil. 4:4).
- Our true joy comes only from God.
- The Lord's joy is our strength (Neh. 8:10)
- _____

We reflect this attribute in that:

- We delight in what He delights in, especially in Him (Ps. 16:3, 37:4, 119:174; Is. 58:14).
- We learn to enjoy things large and small as they are seen as God's gifts (James 1:17).

Beauty

This means: God is the sum of all desirable qualities. He defines beauty and creates beauty in our world for us to enjoy with Him.

We see this in the Bible in: Ps. 27:4: "The one thing I ask of the Lord— the thing I seek most— is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple."

As well as in: Ps. 50:2, 73:25; Is. 33:17, 60:3.

For us this means:

- We are handcrafted by God (Ps. 139:14; Eph. 2:10).
- We can enjoy the beauty of God's creation (Ps. 19:1).
- We will find beauty in God (Ps. 73:25).
- God cares about art and beauty (Ex. 31:1-5).
- _____

NOTES:

We reflect this attribute in that:

- We are beautiful creations made to look more like Christ.
- We can appreciate true beauty in our world.

Glory

This means: God is surrounded by light and is worthy of all honor. He is awesome and of the weightiest importance.

We see this in the Bible in: Isaiah 6:3: "They were calling out to each other, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!'"

As well as in: Jn. 1:14, 17:5; Heb. 1:3; Is. 43:7; Ps. 108:5; Rev. 21:23.

For us this means:

- We are made for God's glory (Is. 43:7; I Cor. 10:31).
- We reflect His light in our world (Prov. 4:18; Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43).
- We seek God's glory and not our own (Phil. 2:3-5; Rom. 12:3).
- _____

We reflect this attribute in that:

- We are made above the rest of creation.
- He gives the believers glory alongside Christ (Rom. 5:2, 8:17; II Cor. 3:18; II Pt. 1:4).



Do I tend to "compartmentalize" God, seeing Him not as all His attributes?

NOTES:



What happens when we have an inaccurate view of God?

What does it mean to "know God"?



Which of these attributes involves your personal learning question? Do you see your question any differently in the light of God's attributes?

How could you connect a biblical picture of who God is with the person or group you desire to share with?

NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?

CALVARY MURRIETA'S STATEMENT OF FAITH ON GOD

God

There is one and only one living and true God who is sovereign, and the creator of all things. He eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each of these persons is fully God and are united as one. Gen. 1:26 | Dt. 6:4 | Mt. 28:19 | Ps. 45:6-7

God the Father

God is called Father because He is the Father over all creation. He is also Father by intimate relationship. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the Father of all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Eph. 3:14, 15 | Ps. 103:13 | Eph. 1:3 | Jn. 1:12

God the Son

Jesus Christ has always been fully God, and became fully man in one person, and will be so forever. He created all things with the Father and has existed always. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He perfectly fulfilled the divine law by His obedience to it, and in His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. In His bodily, historical resurrection, He overcame death and sin for all who believe. Lk. 1:35 | Jn. 1:1 | Jn. 1:14 | Jn. 3:16 | Jn. 3:34, 35 | Jn. 14:31 | Jn. 11:25

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, a fully divine person of the Trinity. He exalts Christ. He manifests the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He indwells the believer and leads the church in worship, discipleship, and service. Is. 59:21 | Jn. 14:17 | Jn. 14:26 | Jn. 16:8



Do something this week to help you enjoy God and something to reflect one of His attributes.

NOTES:



Exodus 15:11

Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?



Key Takeaways:

- God is three persons in one being, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God is mysterious and while we cannot comprehend Him, we can know Him.
- We are made in God's image and are like Him in many ways.
- In order to describe God, we use many terms but He is all of these things all the time.

NOTES:

WHO IS GOD?



LESSON FOUR

MAN AND OUR SIN

In this lesson we will look at who we are in our nature. When we look at mankind, we see both great darkness as well as hope in God's redemption. Knowing what the Bible teaches about our human nature is crucial to understanding the gospel.

ORIGINS

We see so much about the nature of humanity in just the first three chapters of the Bible. Genesis tells us that God created the first man and later from him made the first woman. God spoke all creation into existence and out of the soil of creation He formed Man.

Looking at Genesis 2:7, what do you see as unique about the creation of Man?

God said all He created was good except what? (Gen. 2:18)

What does this tell you about human nature?

What is part of God's design for Man as seen in Gen. 2:15?

What is part of God's design for Man as seen in Gen. 2:19?

Note that Man was created fully formed and intelligent. He does not evolve or become what God desired him to be, but begins that way, later to fall away from this perfect state.

In God's Image

God breathed life into Adam but also crafted him in the image of God Himself. No other being in creation is created this way.

What does it mean that we are made in God's image?

- We are above animals and are given "dominion" of the earth.
- We are body, soul (or spirit), and mind.
- We have inherent value.
- We are relational.

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- We can relate to God.
- God can become human; a human can have divine nature.
- We can be represented by God.
- We can represent God.
- We carry God's identity with us.

Being made in God's image does not imply that God has a physical body (Jesus says that God is spirit). In fact, when we try to make God physical and make Him look like us, act like us, and we make Him small enough to understand and control we call that idolatry.



How would your chosen person answer why it is wrong to harm people? How do they view human nature?

CALVARY MURRIETA'S STATEMENT OF FAITH ON MAN

God created human beings, male and female, as His unique and crowning work of creation. By mankind's own choosing, he rebelled against God and brought sin into the human race. The value, worth, and sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, we believe that every person possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. Gen. 1:26, 27 | Rom. 5:12 | Jn. 3:16

Male and Female

Genesis says that God created people male and female. When God knew that it was not good for Adam to be alone, He created a woman from Adam because she would be a perfect "helper" for him. The Hebrew word helper is also used of the Holy Spirit's role in our lives. In being Adam's helper "fit for him" we see that men and women are crafted to complement one another. God gave them a noble purpose of bearing His image as the crown of creation, cultivating the garden and producing generations of people to know and glorify God. In order to achieve their purpose together God created them complementary in design and roles. One is not better than the other, nor are they the same. Being different, they become one. God designed difference into gender and there is beauty in the difference.

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Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on Gender

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female and that gender is determined by one's biological makeup at birth. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological gender or gender identity is a rejection of the image of God within that person

Gen. 1:26-27 | Romans 1:26-32 | 1 Corinthians 6:9-11



How does God's design for men and women being one reflect His nature in the Trinity?



What are some ways men and women are complementary?

Marriage

In the account in Genesis two of the creation of man and woman, we also have the origin of marriage. Genesis 2:23-24 teach that men and women are made of one flesh and in marriage they become one flesh. That is, the two are made to become one. This speaks to a sacred, physical-spiritual bond in the covenant of marriage.

Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on Family

We believe the family is unique in its ability to communicate many of the attributes of God. The family was created by God for the benefit of man and communicates the intimacy, nurturing, obedience, and permanency of the relationship that we have with God. Man was given stewardship

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over it and is the essential building block of human society. Gen. 2:24 | Is. 54:5 | Eph. 1:5

Marriage is the union of one man and one woman who will live bound not by contract alone, but by a commitment in His love that should not be broken. We believe that men and women are opposite and equal to each other, and that marriage is before God, your family and all the main institutions of society, with a promise from each other to be loving, faithful, and true. The marriage union is a permanent promise that extends into the future. Gen. 2:18 | Gen. 2:24 | Mt. 19:8 | Eph. 5:31

Purpose

People are designed to serve a purpose. We are created to work, make things, extend God's kingdom authority in His world, and live in relationship with each other and Him. The Westminster Catechism of 1647 sums up our purpose by saying, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever."

Isaiah 43:7

everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.



How would your chosen person for sharing the gospel perceive the idea that our purpose is to glorify God? What is their idea of purpose?

Body and Soul

As God breathed life into humankind, we are created not with a body only but with an invisible soul. The Bible speaks of soul and spirit but seems to use the words interchangeably. We also speak of the mind and emotions, while Christians differ on their interpretation of how human nature is organized. What is important for us to know is that we are not only physical and not only spiritual but both.

Know that our body and soul and mind are inextricably linked and will affect each other.

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What are some implications of body and soul being connected?

SIN

In the next part of this lesson, we will explore the doctrine of sin. Sin is bound up in the nature of Man, as we shall see, so it has been placed here in our class.

Sin is something that we need a foundational understanding of because it is something that we deal with, are surrounded by, and are corrupted by.

We act out sin, we think and feel sinful things, and we are sinful beings. It is important that we understand sin as more than a certain kind of act. Sin is our status unless we are forgiven by God. We are like rebels against the One Good King. Sin is also our inherited nature from Adam. Wayne Grudem gives this definition for sin: "Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature."

Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, Second Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 619.

The definition of sin will become clearer as we proceed.

Broken Purpose

Adam was given rule and reign ("dominion") over the world. He was given authority over all of creation. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered the world. This is where we must begin because it is in this very moment that life as God intended it ended. When God did His magnificent work of creation, He examined all that He did and declared that it was good. We can use the language that "everything was doing as it was created to do."

Everything was under Adam, he was the "head of the household" of all physically created things. When the head of the household made the decision to disobey God and rebel against Him, his decision affected all of those within the household. Adam's purpose was to reign as God's image-bearer, producing a world full of people in worshipful relationship with God.

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When sin entered the world, everything stopped doing what it was supposed to do; it all became corrupted. Where things once glorified God, they blasphemed Him; were once whole, they are now broken; were once clean, are now dirty; were once for God, are now against God.

God breathed life into humankind. Sin leads to death, and God promised that the day Adam and Eve ate of the tree they would die. Yet they didn't physically die that day, Adam ended up living for over 900 years! So what did God mean? In the very moment that they ate the fruit they became spiritually dead. Adam, who was not created with a sin nature, gained one and it has been passed to all of those after him.

So what is this sin nature? Sin nature is hard to define but easy to understand. It is the reason that, as Christians, even if we know something is wrong we are still drawn to or tempted by it. It is the innate desire within us against God and for ourselves.

The key to understanding sin nature is within the lies of the serpent in Eden: that Adam and Eve would "be like God." God does say that they would become like Him when they chose to obey Him, but only in the sense that they knew good and evil. But sin seeks not to become like God but to overthrow Him and steal His throne. The chief purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But when sin entered the world, this aspect of our very nature was twisted and changed into glorifying and enjoying ourselves. We have a choice between worshiping God and worshiping ourselves. Sin is the choosing of ourselves over God. It is our attempt to remove Him from His throne because we think we would make a better God.

Cause and Effect

Again, sin is the status and bent of our soul, not simply specific things we quibble over looking for loopholes, easy forgiveness, and ways we are not as bad as the people we've harmed.

Sometimes we think that something is wrong if it causes some harm. The world's moral standard is often that one should do what makes one happy as long as no one is hurt. We may believe so-called "victimless crimes" are not crimes at all. In our legal system, if someone attempts to kill another person and the person does not die, the perpetrator can be charged with only attempted murder. If the victim were to die from injuries even days later, the charge is upgraded to murder. This is because of a focus on the results of an action rather than on the source of an action.

However, Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) that God looks not at the results of a sinful heart but at the heart itself. He says that not only is adultery a sinful act, the lust that precedes it is. Not only is murder a sin, the hate that leads to it is (1 Jn. 3:15).

NOTES:

Again, sin is the status and bent of our soul, not simply specific things we quibble over looking for loopholes, easy forgiveness, and ways we are not as bad as the people we've harmed.

Genesis 6:5

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Note: the word translated here as "intention" can mean "frame" or "form" so that the idea is of people being foundationally crooked.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Slaves to Sin

One of the terms that the Bible uses to describe those who are not yet saved is as a "slave to sin". This term perfectly describes our sin nature as one of bondage. Oftentimes people use the excuse that they don't want to become Christian because they like having freedom, but in actuality they have never known freedom. They do not have the strength to resist sin or temptation, they cannot do good. The heart's core motivation is for themselves. We see the true depth in this sinful perversion as we truly desired to be like God, for His very nature and core motivation is for Himself. It can be said that an unsaved person is like a wild animal. They may be able to be trained to a limited degree. They may become domesticated given enough time. But their instincts don't change. They are slaves to their desires. The only thing we can do apart from God is to indulge in our own passions and desires. One's desires may look good on the outside – such as desiring to make the world a better place or to please God. But being a slave to needing to feel like a good person or to being seen a certain way is still just slavery. Freedom from sin means that we are submitted to God's will and ways. There is no freedom in sin, for the only option is sin.

Freedom from sin means that we are submitted to God's will and ways. There is no freedom in sin, for the only option is sin.

John 8:34

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."

Romans 6:20

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

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Broken People, Culture, and Society

In Genesis 3:1-13 we see the profound change in human nature due to sin. Before they rebel against God, Adam and Eve are in perfect relationship with God and each other. After they rebel they immediately experience shame in that they know they are naked and seek to cover themselves. This drives a wedge between Adam and Eve. They experience fear for the first time when they hear God coming and try to hide. They experience guilt for the first time, realizing they have done something wrong and seeking to shift the blame onto others.

World cultures can be categorized according to these three struggles of the human soul. While any culture has a mix of all three, one struggle will stand out.

Honor/Shame

- Identity comes from the group.
- An individual belongs to their group, especially the family.
- Group goals are what is important.
- Honor can be bestowed but not taken on oneself.
- Social norms and rules are taught in environment, not written down.
- One must hide what is shameful and not get caught.
- Shame must be deflected or distracted from, or, if this is impossible, one must face the full consequence of dishonor (up to exile or death).
- Sees Jesus as taking our shame and giving us honor.
- Common in Asia, including the Middle East, and in the military.

Power/Fear

- Those in power determine social rules, but the rules do not necessarily apply to them.
- Those in power seek to stay in power but the rules change if the person in power changes.
- One must align with the most powerful person.
- One seeks to instill fear over others in order to gain power.
- There is a tendency to abuse those below since one cannot exert power over those above.
- May involve the idea of a "benevolent dictator" who is totalitarian but seen as protecting and providing for the people.
- Sees Jesus as taking our fear and giving us power.
- Common in sub-Saharan Africa, communist and post-communist cultures, large corporations, gangs, and authoritarian countries.

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Innocence/Guilt

- Rules and laws are very important and should be written down.
- The needs of the individual outweigh the needs of the group.
- Identity is individually formed.
- Legal rights, fairness, and consistency are highly valued.
- Legal penalties deter bad behavior.
- One desires to be found innocent at all costs.
- Thinking tends to be critical, analytical, and cause-effect.
- One may separate legality from morality.
- Sees Jesus as taking our guilt and giving us innocence.
- Common in North America and Western Europe.

Adapted in part from "Three Colors of Worldview" workshop, 2018 © N-Culture.

What is most important to understand here is that sin affected the whole of society. It broke us as individuals and a society of fallen individuals is a broken society. A culture will be concerned with avoiding shame, fear, or guilt but only Jesus actually solves these issues. We will discuss the world more in a later lesson, but we must understand that sin is at the core of what is wrong, not only with each of us, but with our society.

A Broken Normal

This viewpoint on sin shows us something uniquely different and vastly more important than what we may normally assume. We can reason that if the world's natural state is sinful then bad things will naturally happen. In fact, we can ask a seemingly odd question: "If the world is evil and people are evil, why do good things happen at all?" The answer is that good can only happen because of God. Good things can happen because it is part of His very nature.

We are continually surprised at how flawed we and everyone else are because our original design is to live in a good world. The fact that our broken existence is both very normal to us and yet always seems contrary to what God intends shows that we all know that things are not how they are supposed to be. Even other worldviews believe that our existence is inherently flawed. Hindus believe that we are in the worst of a cycle of cosmic ages.

The world is fallen and therefore the natural state is now a sinful state. Our reasoning also proves to be true if we take a look outside of the Bible and into our very world. People suffer and life is unfair. When we acknowledge the world for what it is: fallen away from God's goodness into an evil state, we are in line with what Scripture teaches and we can better make sense of our world.

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We sometimes ask, "If God is real, why don't we see Him work?" The answer is simple: God is working far more than we could ever think or comprehend. The fact that any good thing can happen is because of the grace and work of God. The fact that worse things don't happen is because of the grace and work of God. Our very existence proves two things, that God is actively working in our world, and that God has power and authority over evil.

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DISCUSS

What happens if we don't acknowledge the extent of brokenness in our world?

Common Grace

We are not good but God is. In this lesson people are described in bleak terms. We may wonder then about the good that people do. Most people are not roaming around day and night committing acts of mayhem. They band together in crisis, give generously, and act kindly. How are we to understand these seemingly contradictory things about Mankind?

First, God created people in His image and we can do amazing things. We have intellectual capacity, emotional depth, and physical strength all given by God. He did not create us as horrendous zombies and in His grace He did not allow us to become so when we fell away from Him. We should see all people's capacity for good deeds as a grace from God. We call this "common grace."

Common grace

Grace given by God to all people in how He designed them and in how He orchestrates things out of undeserved care for them.

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However, we should not see those good deeds as redeeming souls. We cannot attempt to take away God's throne and then redeem ourselves by using our reign to help others or to politely invite them to sit on the throne as well. Good deeds do indeed help society but are often done out of a self-serving, self-saving, or self-governing heart.

The doctrine of common grace takes nothing away from the doctrine of sin. Instead, it shows that even the good in our society is due to the goodness of God and not us.



What evidence of common grace do you see in your chosen person or group? What do you think their motive for doing good is?

Sin is not something that is equally as powerful as God or His holiness. Sin is actually powerless in the presence of God. God did not create sin and He does not cause it to happen. God cannot be tempted by sin, has not sinned and will not sin. A helpful analogy for sin and holiness is light and darkness. Light does not create darkness, rather it casts it out. Light also defines darkness. Darkness is simply the lack of light as sin is the lack of God's nature. A shadow is not formed because light is there, a shadow is formed because of an absence of light.

This is a heavy topic and you may be feeling the weight and the heaviness of sin. That is actually a good thing. Don't undermine the gravity of sin because making light of sin takes away the glory of God in what He had to do on the cross." Do not minimize sin because by doing so you directly minimize the grace of God. Yet do not focus only on sin because by doing so you insult the victory of Christ over sin. Only with an understanding of sin can we understand ourselves, our world, and the incredible grace of our God.

In a future lesson we will see that because sin has marred our very nature and enslaved us, we need the only Free One who is divine and human, yet without sin, to come and trade natures with us, giving us a divine nature (II Peter 1:4) alongside our human one.

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AIM

How does seeing the brokenness in our hearts and our society inform your personal learning question?



REFLECT

How do I respond to being told I am sinful?



MEMORIZE

Genesis 1:27

So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

KEY
TAKEAWAYS

Key Takeaways:

- We are created in God's image.
- We rejected God's purpose and authority when we sinned against Him.
- Sin is defined in our status, nature, and acts.

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LESSON FIVE

SALVATION

In this lesson we will look at what it is to have Jesus as our Savior. Our salvation is not something we can get by ourselves; Jesus gets it for us. Our salvation happens all at once when we come to trust Christ, but it also plays out over our lifetime. We will look at salvation in three stages: justification, sanctification, and glorification.

JUSTIFICATION: SAVED FROM SIN'S PENALTY

Accounted Righteous

When God justifies us, He calls us right with Him.

When God justifies us, He calls us right with Him. He puts righteousness in our account and views us as though we were always obedient. While He still works on the problems in our character (more on this in the sanctification section), the person who puts their total trust in Jesus is given a status of being right with God that never changes. The first example of this is Abraham but the same arrangement goes for us today: trusting belief is what God requires to make our account say "righteous." On the cross, Jesus said "It is finished," using a term meaning "paid in full." Not only is the penalty of our sin paid for by Jesus' sacrifice of Himself, He calls us righteous forever.

Galatians 3:6

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Isaiah 53:11

As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.

II Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Not of Us

The Bible repeatedly makes clear that our salvation is a gift from God and not something we can gain for ourselves. The Bible describes us as being dead before Christ gave us spiritual life. Nothing about our salvation is anything we can do for ourselves. A dead person cannot will themselves to life.

Ephesians 2:1–2

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

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Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Hebrews 12:2a

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.

Society and Individuals are Not Good

When we learned about people and their sinfulness, we saw that all individuals and all of society are wickedly bent against God and His ways. We saw that the reason society as a whole has so many problems is because it is made up of sinful individuals. We can even see mankind's evil show itself in the lives of the people described in the Bible. There are countless stories of people doing horrible things and refusing to follow God's ways with their whole hearts. When we examine our own hearts, we come to see that we are prideful toward God—trying to have our way rather than His, and selfish toward others—trying to make sure we are taken care of and making life about us.

What We are Saved From**Damnation, Death, Separation from God**

When the Old Testament talks about being saved it tends to mean being rescued from danger in this world. But when the New Testament talks about being saved (e.g. Matthew 1:21; Acts 2:21, 47) it means being rescued from spiritual death and punishment. While we still die when our bodies wear out, we are not doomed to punishment or to eternal death.

Sin's Penalty, Power, and Presence

Another way to look at what we are saved from is to say that we are first saved from sin's penalty, then throughout our lives from its power over us, and when we die and enter God's presence, we are saved from sin's presence as it will no longer be a factor in our existence.

Self

We can also say that when we follow Christ we are saved from ourselves. Our natural inclination is to set ourselves up as the authority in our lives. We seek to have our way and to get glory for ourselves. But we will find that no one but God can fill that role. We will rule our lives and seek to rule in other people's lives in a tyrannical way. We even tyrannize ourselves! To be saved by Jesus is to be saved from our own brokenness in exchange for His perfect rule in our lives.

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**Would my understanding of your need for salvation differ from this in some way?
How much has my culture fed into my idea of salvation?**

The Great Exchange

God is holy and His nature defines good and evil (Is. 6:3; Ps. 19:7-9; 116:15; 119:137). We try to define right and wrong according to what we think and want but we are not God. When Adam and Eve originally disobeyed God it was to try to take on His role and be like Him. But after rebelling against Him they become separated from Him and had a marred relationship with God and each other. Our sin separates us from a holy God (Rom. 5:10). Since we failed to be like God through taking His place, God came from His place to take ours (Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus lived the life of a man but did it better than any of us, being sinless and loving others completely. He represents God the Father to us and also represents us before the Father (I Jn. 2:11). Jesus went to the cross not only for us but as us. He represented us on the cross. Jesus takes on our identity as sinners to give us His identity as the Righteous One (II Cor. 5:21). We are given the righteous status of Christ, a standing of grace (Rom. 5:2).

When we learned about our broken nature, we saw that world cultures fall into categories of one of three emphases: Honor/Shame, Innocence/Guilt, and Power/Fear. Each has a human difficulty that we see enter our nature at the Fall.

Jesus, on the cross, exchanges our shame for His honor (Mt. 27:27-31; Rom 2:10; I Pt. 2:7), our fear for His power (Mt. 26:36-46; Lk. 22:44; Acts 1:8; I Cor. 2:4), our guilt for His innocence (II Cor. 5:21). He exchanges His position for ours.

II Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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What Do We Do to Be Saved?

As we saw above in this lesson, there is a sense in which we don't do anything to be saved, God does the saving. However, we are responsible to respond. The Bible talks about "obeying the gospel" (Rom. 10:16; II Thess. 1:8; I Pt. 4:17). How do you obey "good news"? You believe it and respond with action. Our belief of the gospel message becomes an action response when we:

- **Believe (John 6:29)** Believing in Christ is putting a desperate trust in Him to save us. For someone to be saved they do not need to understand everything about the Bible, but to believe that Jesus is all of who He says He is (John 6:29). We trust God first for salvation but still continue to be called to trust Him with all areas of our lives.
- **Repent (Rom. 10:9-10)** Repentance is the act of turning from my own way to follow the way of Christ. Our salvation comes when we first repent, but we also will have times throughout our life following Christ when we will need to turn back toward Him after straying away, whether in small or large ways.
- **Confess (Rom. 10:9-10)** Confession is declaring your faith in Christ openly, agreeing with God that you need His salvation, and letting others know of your new allegiance to Him. This does not mean that someone is not saved until they share with others about Jesus. Instead, it means that we acknowledge to the Lord our need for and faith in Him and are saved right away. Later, we do share with others also.

Like belief and repentance, we confess our need for Christ the first time to be saved but will also continue to confess sin issues in our heart to God and trusted people in the church as our walk with Christ continues.



Have you ever cast yourself at Jesus' feet with a desperate trust in Him?

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How Do We Show Our Salvation?

• Baptism

Baptism is a way to show others that the old us is dead and gone and God has made us new and that we want to tell the world we follow Christ now. Baptism is a form of confession since it tells others of our new life in Christ. We are baptized not to be saved but to publicly proclaim how Christ has made us new creations (Rom. 6:4).

• Works

Good works do not lead to salvation but salvation does lead to good works (Eph. 2:10). We live a life of response to what God did for us and in us (Phil. 2:12; Col. 1:10; Matt. 3:8).

• Words

Our words show what is in our hearts (Matt. 15:18). Our words should be gracious (Col. 4:6) as we speak the truth with love (Eph. 4:15).

• Character

Those who are saved are transformed into a new person (Rom. 12:2) and God develops our character so that we are more and more like Christ (Gal. 5:22-23). More on this in the section on sanctification.

Judge Not

Only you and God know the state of your heart and sometimes we can even get confused ourselves and need God to show us where we stand. The matter of someone's salvation is not for us to judge. In fact, we are not judges; there is only One Judge.

However, we do look for "fruit" in the lives of those claiming to be true followers of Christ. "Fruit" is the outcome of who we are. A truly transformed person will show love and gratitude for God's forgiveness by forgiving and loving others. They will serve others genuinely, without needing to be praised and thanked. They will look more and more like Jesus. Someone can go to church and live a good life and not have given their life to follow and be transformed by Jesus. Jesus says that a good tree does not bear bad fruit and a bad tree does not bear good fruit (Mt. 7:17). While we all have bad days and even some longer times when we are not as in line with Christ, someone who really does not show the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23) may not be a true follower of Jesus. Just remember that ultimately it is not our place to judge their soul – God knows who is His.

James 4:12

God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?

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See also Matt. 7:1; 15:11,16-20



Would others say you are a true believer? Do you believe you are?

Assurance of Salvation

One of the most difficult things that many Christians grapple with is how we know if we are truly saved. When we talk about those who go through the motions and yet do not have a true saving faith in Jesus, we can become concerned that this may describe us as well. There are several ways we can be assured of our salvation. Our assurance of salvation should be a mix of these things, rather than relying on only one.

• By the Spirit

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." This means that God the Holy Spirit lives in us and assures us that we are indeed God's children because He has grace for us. As we live with the Lord, we get to know His voice which affirms our relationship with Him. If you are in doubt about your salvation, ask the Lord to speak to you.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

• By trust

In one way, we have assurance of salvation by stepping back and believing what the Bible says. Jesus tells us that we must believe in Him (John 6:29, 14:6). Do you trust Christ and His promise of salvation to the point that you have stopped trying to be acceptable to Him and simply believed what He says? If you are still holding onto your doubt, your ways, your own goodness, or even what you can see, you are not fully committed in faith in Christ. Trusting what the Bible says is extremely simple and extremely difficult. But we can rest assured in what is written in the black and white for us in Scripture.

• By our lives

God is a person and when we get to know Him more and more we are changed. Our mind, words, and actions are transformed. When we are renewed by God we will see His work in our lives and others should see it as well. The longer we follow Him, the more we will see His

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faithfulness, answers to prayer, and changing of our character and perspective. If no one else sees the change Christ has made in your life, you should consider why.

- **By the resurrection**

The Bible never asks for empty belief. Jesus' resurrection is proof to us that we also will not be demolished by death but have eternal life with God to look forward to. The resurrection is our way of seeing that "salvation works". Otherwise, Jesus would simply have died and we would have no hope when we look at our own death. There is solid historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:20

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

SANCTIFICATION: SAVED FROM SIN'S POWER

The word "sanctification" means to set something aside for a special purpose. Part of God's sanctifying of us is giving us new purpose in Him.

What We Are Saved For

- **Relationship with God**

We are saved to have a relationship with God. The Bible classifies people as either in rebellion against God and trying to have their own way (even if their way appears well-behaved) or children of God. While anyone who knows children knows that they are not always obedient, we are given a relational status with God the Father. We are made to be His children who can always approach Him and get to know Him more and more.

Romans 5:11

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

- **Unity with the Church**

By becoming God's children, we are siblings with each other in the church. All of us have been forgiven and must forgive one another. All of us have a special design and purpose and we must serve one another in love. We will discuss these things further in the lesson on the church.

Ephesians 4:1-7

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

NOTES:

Part of God's sanctifying of us is giving us new purpose in Him.

• Good Works

Part of God's sanctifying of us is giving us new purpose in Him. God will use your personality and experiences along with His Spirit empowering you to have a purpose for the good of others. This is also a way that we get to know God better: by living a life of sacrificial love like Christ lived, we experience Christ's heart more clearly and become more like Him.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Sanctification is the ongoing process in a believer of becoming more like Christ. It is the constant deepening of our relationship with God and our knowledge of Him. Because we have already become like Christ in our standing of righteousness, we go through a process of being made like Him in our character.

Sanctification is our calling (1 Thess. 4:3; Eph. 2:10). If you want to know God's will for your life, do not begin asking about specifics – who you should marry or what career you should pursue. Start with a pursuit of sanctification because you know for certain that it is His will for your life. Specifics will follow.

We participate in our sanctification process by responding to what the Holy Spirit is doing in us. While there is no place for our effort in justification, there is a place for effort in sanctification.

II Peter 1:5

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge



DISCUSS

What is the role of effort/works in sanctification?

NOTES:



Do I tend to be overly active in my sanctification by not letting God do His work or overly passive, failing to be part of the process?

New Creation

When we are saved, we are saved from being who we were. We are made a new creation and the old us is dead and gone. This is why Jesus says we must be “born again” (John 3:3, see also I Pt. 1:3). We begin to love a new, full life that will last forever, but we don’t wait until we die (John 10:10). We become human in a whole new way, by having a divine nature alongside our human nature (II Pt. 1:4). God takes our personality and gives us a new purpose, making us a new version of ourselves. So being redeemed by Jesus means that we are made new in ways beyond our own power.

II Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

“Lord and Savior”

Throughout the Bible, God is called our “Lord and Savior” (Is. 43:11; 45:21; 49:26; 60:16; Hos. 13:4; Lk. 2:11; Phil. 3:20; II Pt. 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18). When we are saved we will relate to Him as both of these things in our lives. Without Christ, we will try to make someone or something else our lord and Savior, giving it authority over us and looking for our wholeness in it.



What does it mean to have Jesus as our Lord and Savior?

The Kingdom

Jesus often speaks of the gospel (the good news) in terms of the Kingdom. But what does that mean?

NOTES:

Throughout the Bible's storyline, God is working to establish godly leadership over His people. The problem is that human rulers are only human, and therefore are flawed by sin. Ultimately, the King we need is God Himself (Ps. 5:1-2; 11:4). Part of the good news of the gospel is the announcement that a righteous King has come, and we can live under His loving rule.

When Jesus talks about His Kingdom, it means two things:

In the present: Living under the way of Jesus and helping others find and live under His loving authority.

In the future: Jesus will come again and rule completely over all the world, making it new and perfect again.

Putting our trust in Him as Lord and Savior allows us into His Kingdom now and also in the future.

II Peter 1:11

For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Suffering in the believer's life is not from God's anger and punishment

Redemptive Suffering

For the person who does not follow Christ, suffering may teach some life lessons and the Lord may use it to show them their need for Him. But for the believer, suffering is to be expected (John 16:33), rejoiced over (James 1:2), and endured (I Cor. 13:7). Trials produce Christlike character and are a part of our sanctification process (James 1:3-4; Rom. 5:3-4).

It is important to remember that for the believer, God will allow sometimes allow suffering in our lives to discipline us as a loving Father must (Heb. 12:7). Suffering in the believer's life is not from God's anger and punishment, which is poured on Christ and ours is only for our good (John 9:1-3; Luke 13:4; Is. 53:5; Rom. 8:28).

As followers of Christ, we can expect to follow Him in suffering (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 8:17). We are a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1), so that we suffer but always for a purpose – never for our destruction.

NOTES:



What are some ways God has used suffering to mold you?



How does suffering play a role in our sanctification process?

Healing

We all have pain in our lives. Part of being sanctified is that God begins to heal our emotional wounds. He helps us forgive those who have hurt us, gain new perspectives on our troubles, and use our experiences to better connect with and help others. God transforms our pain by making it part of His meaningful purposes in our lives.

Need for Community

Justification happens between you and God alone. It is an individual matter. But sanctification happens in the church community. You need the Church, and the Church needs you. What part does the community play in our sanctification process?

- **Reflection:** we get to know ourselves most fully when we know how we reflect God and affect others.
- **Accountability:** We find healing as the church speaks the truth in love.
- **Learning:** We can experience and obey God's Word only in relationship.
- **Opportunity:** We are molded by the community when we use our gifts to serve the church.
- **Identity:** We identify with Christ when we identify with His church body. We live out our identity in Christ together.

NOTES:

"We know all too well that maturity takes time. We know less well that it also takes our sisters and brothers in Christ. It's a process that is revealed in the 'each other' language of the New Testament: Love one another, forgive each other, regard each other more highly than yourselves. Teach and correct each other, encourage each other, pray for each other, and bear each other's burdens. Be friends with one another, kind, compassionate, and generous in hospitality. Serve one another and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This list just scratches the surface, but it is enough to remind us that we need the community of faith to grow up in Christ."

Howard Macy, "Community: God's Design for Growth," *Community: God's Design For Growth*, Bible.org (NavPress), <https://bible.org/article/community-god%E2%80%99s-design-growth>.



Who in my life do I have fellowship with to the extent that they play a role in my sanctification? If I don't have a relationship like that, what is a step I could take toward forming one?

We will discuss the role of community further when we talk about the Church.

Keys to Sanctification

Humility and submission are two of the most important attributes that a Christian must have.

Humility recognizes that we need a Savior; submission puts us under His care and training.

NOTES:

Having a spirit of humility comes from acknowledging that God is who He says He is.

• Humility

We can act humble without having a true spirit of humility, but we can never have a spirit of humility that does not lead to humble action.

Having a spirit of humility comes from acknowledging that God is who He says He is. It grows by having a personal relationship with God. Having a spirit of humility comes from being confident in our identity in Christ. When we come to know our identity in Christ, we are humble without being humiliated (Ps. 34:5). We learn to carry ourselves as children of God Himself which allows us the confidence that comes from knowing our value and royal status.

John 13:14

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Philippians 2:5-8

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

"Knowing whose you are, who you are, and what you are for, settles basic issues about how you live."

***– Sinclair B. Ferguson
(1948-)***

Submission

True obedience is a matter of the heart which is submitted to Christ. Anyone can make an outward show of obedience, but it must come from a place of submission to be genuine. Having a spirit of submission can only come after having a spirit of humility. It requires acknowledging that we need God, and then handing over our life to Him.

Submission is dying to yourself. It requires submission to:

- Rely on the Spirit instead of yourself for strength
- Allow God to be in control of your life
- Accept the promises of God such as "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:30)

Changing in Christ flows from humility and submission. It is something we have to strive to keep at

NOTES:

the forefront of our minds. The more we say no to the Holy Spirit, the easier it becomes. Likewise, the more we say yes to Him, the easier that becomes

Part of submission is the fact that we worship and obey God even when we do not feel like it. Do not wait for your emotions to motivate you to pursue the Lord. Also, we do not need to be afraid of structure and discipline in our relationship with the Lord. Structure may be part of how you submit to God. For example, you might commit to spending time in prayer every day or to being part of a group Bible study even if you do not always feel like doing these things. Do not give your emotions control over your spiritual growth.



How surrendered am I to God? What is something I am holding back?

Once a Sinner...?

One of the greatest difficulties the follower of Christ faces is the question of what it means that we still sin after salvation. Some say that if we would only try hard enough, we can live without any sin. In Romans 7:13-25 Paul expresses his inner turmoil over his sinful tendency to rebel against what he knows God would have him do. We will be imperfect, struggling with sin in some form or another until Jesus comes back (Phil. 1:6) and makes us like Him (1 Jn. 3:1-2).

While we are already saved from the penalty of sin when we are justified and are being saved from the power of sin as we are sanctified, it will not be until we are glorified that we are saved from the very presence of sin.

The Bible does not call the follower of Christ a sinner, but rather a saint. While this does not mean that we no longer commit acts of rebellion against God, it means that we have been given a status as holy, righteous children of God. But as saints, we live separated to God's purposes which do not include sin. We still struggle against sin. Every Christian will have a different set of sins that are particularly difficult. Yours may not be the same as someone else's. The point should be that we strive to be like Christ and participate in His work to change us from the inside out, but our status is always one of grace (Rom. 5:2).

NOTES:

Keep in mind that because of the believer's justification, our sins do not mean that we are at risk of God's wrath (Rom. 5:9), although He may discipline us (Heb. 12:6). While the Bible instructs us in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16), Jesus defends us when we sin (I Jn. 2:1).



What areas of sin have been the most prevalent in my life? How am I struggling for obedience in these areas?

How Can I Grow as a Christian?

Growing in Christ is a lifelong journey. There is no magic button to grow spiritually; it takes hard work, painful sacrifice, multiple disciplines, and the transforming work of God. Here are general ways we can grow—you will need to seek out the specifics for your life:

- Connect with church community, both in receiving and in serving.
- Get to know God in the Bible.
- Spend time in prayer.
- Serve others.
- Endure suffering.
- Take in Christian teaching.

Remember that these are ways to grow, not ways to be more accepted by God, which is taken care of already by Jesus.



How much can we do in our lives to become more like Christ? Are there other things you would add to this list?

NOTES:



What is most difficult for you to understand or accept about what we've learned about sanctification?



Do you tend to try to change the behavior of the person or group you want to reach with the gospel? Why or why not?

GLORIFICATION: SAVED FROM SIN'S PRESENCE

God gives us a status of honor when we are justified. We are welcomed into His presence and His family. Subsequently, in our sanctification, we are made more like Jesus and therefore more honorable and glorious. Our glory, like Jesus' while He was on earth, does not come in the form of making ourselves look great but in humble service. After we die, our souls enter God's presence and we receive the glory God has waiting for us. This comes in the form of a further change to our nature (1 Jn. 3:2).

Seeing God as He is

Our salvation has come as we believed Jesus is who He says He is and we became righteous children of God.

Our sanctification comes as we more clearly see who He is and become like Him.

Our glorification will come as we see Him as He is and are made like Him (1 John 3:2).

NOTES:

We could say that justification is the initial coming to know or meet God, believing He is who He says He is and responding in trust. Sanctification is getting to know God as we see Him work throughout our souls, lives, relationships, and world. Glorification is knowing God more intimately than we ever imagined.

I John 3:2

Dear friends, we are already God's children, but He has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is.

I Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

II Corinthians 3:18

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Coming Alive

We are dead in our sins until we are "born again" (Jn. 3:3), "regenerated" by God (Titus 3:5), made alive in Christ (Eph. 2:5). This happens at our justification. Christ gives us fullness of life (Jn. 10:10), allowing us to come alive and live a more and more meaningful life. We should consider our old self dead since we are a new creation (II Cor. 5:17). Now we are "dead to sin and alive to God" (Rom. 6:11). In fact, we are given a divine nature alongside our human nature (II Pt. 1:4). We look to Jesus' resurrection to show us that we, like Him, can live again (I Cor. 15:20). When we die our soul will continue to live with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8) and one day when He will return He will resurrect our bodies to be joined again with our souls so that we live again on a renewed earth (I Cor. 15:42). We could say that we are dead before Christ makes us spiritually alive; we live more fully in this life until we are made to live again forever. See I Cor. 15 and I Thess. 4.



What are some things about me that have changed since I began following Jesus?

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What is something in my life right now that I am capable of changing to be more like Christ? What is something in my character that I need God to change in me?

CALVARY MURRIETA'S STATEMENT OF FAITH ON THE GOSPEL AND SALVATION

The Gospel

We believe that the essence of the gospel is an understanding that we are more rebellious against God than we can ever know and also more loved by God than we can ever comprehend. We also believe that the gospel of Jesus is demonstrated through His life, death, burial, resurrection, and teachings. He taught that He will redeem us, He will renew us, bring us into obedience, and ultimately He will restore us to His eternal dwelling place. And He chooses us to join Him in inviting all others to follow this same pattern that He set forth. Mk. 16:15 | Jn. 12:32 | Jn. 14:6 | 1 Cor. 15:1-4

Salvation

The resulting work of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross brought salvation to the world, and is a gift of God redeeming us from our sin and reconciling us to our God. Jesus came to earth and accomplished salvation for all who would believe. All who turn from their sin and believe in Jesus receive this gift of salvation. As a result of this faith, all His followers will seek to be like Jesus, live like Jesus, and love like Jesus. Jn. 5:24 | Jn. 8:31 | Rom. 5:9, 10 | Eph. 2:9, 10



Romans 8:16-18

For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.



Key Takeaways:

- We need salvation from sin and cannot save ourselves.
- We are given a permanent right standing with God when we put our trust in Jesus to take away our sin.
- We start a new life of following Jesus. Our character is transformed over the course of our lives.
- We will one day be with God for eternity, free from all sin.

NOTES:

The background of the entire page is a detailed, light gray architectural floor plan of a building. It shows various rooms, corridors, and structural elements with dimensions and labels. The plan is oriented diagonally, with the top-left corner of the page showing the top-left of the building's footprint. The text 'LESSON SIX' is centered horizontally and vertically on the page, overlaid on the floor plan. A thin blue horizontal line is positioned directly below the text 'LESSON SIX'.

LESSON SIX

THE CHURCH

In this lesson we will look at what the Bible teaches about the Church. We will discuss the dynamics of applying biblical principles in different church contexts and learn about Calvary Murrieta's mission, vision, and values as a local church.

The Beginning of the Church

Although we learn much from the lives and events described in the Old Testament, it is important to understand that the Church did not exist during this time. Likewise, while Jesus spoke at times about the Church before it really was in place, the Church was founded on a Day called Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples of Jesus. They quickly began forming church communities. The Church's story began with the Holy Spirit empowering and guiding believers to, as a family, reach global cultures with the gospel and this continues to be your mission today.

The book of Acts gives the story of the early church expanding from Jews to Gentiles (non-Jews), and from Jerusalem to Rome.

Definitions:

Church: The community of all true believers around the world and throughout time.

Local church: A faith filled community of worshipers who are united as an intentional community of disciples under the headship of Christ and godly servant-leaders.

Denomination: A collective of local churches sharing doctrine and leadership authority.

**Note: When "Church" is capitalized, we mean the whole Church around the world and throughout history. When it is not capitalized, we are referring to a local church community.*

The Spiritual Definition of the Church

- A spiritual community (Matthew 16:18). "Church" in Greek is ekklesia, meaning "assembly".
- Family or Household of Faith (Galatians 6:10)
- Body of Christ (Romans 12:5): Jesus' representatives on earth.
- Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:7): Jesus' beloved.
- Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19): The place where God and humans meet and God is worshiped.

NOTES:

Principles vs. Practices

The Bible gives us much of the principles of God's church but little in terms of practice. There is much freedom given in how to apply the principles given to us in scripture.

Church transcends/crosses time and place (culture). The principles of a biblical church will be and have been practiced differently depending on time and place but the principles should always line up with the Bible. The Bible gives plenty of opportunity for the Gospel to be lived in different ways, so that churches can express it in their own cultures.

We must learn to ask, "Is this practice wrong or just different?" and, "How would someone from a different culture apply this?"

We look to Jesus to see how He lives out and teaches a principle rather than assuming we understand it or looking to our culture to define it for us.



What is an example of a biblical principle that may be applied in various practices?

What is an example of a principle that Jesus would define very differently from our culture's definition?

Variety in the Church

The Church, globally as well as locally, has a variety of:

- Styles
- Strengths and weaknesses

NOTES:

- Passions and priorities
- People and cultures
- Ministries and spiritual giftings

There is not one single legitimate version of church. Variety is part of God's design for the Church and we should find things to celebrate in other churches as well as our own.

The Body of Christ

The Church is often called "the body of Christ" or just "the body". This is because each individual has a function as part of the whole - like parts of a body (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12). Also, Jesus is not on earth anymore, but He lives in the Church, and we are His "hands and feet" to the world. In fact, when Jesus' time on earth was coming to an end, He said that it is better that He goes away because the Holy Spirit will come to the Church (Jn. 16:7) and they will do even greater things than Jesus did (Jn. 14:12).



Is there something I am particularly passionate about in the church? Do I appreciate other people's passions as well?

Because the local church is a community it must serve the needs of the whole body. A local church cannot serve only a certain type of person or a highly specific need (e.g. homelessness, education, or missions). Ministries that exist to serve one particular group or need of the Church are called "parachurch organizations". A church can partner with a parachurch organization for mutual help, but a church is a community and cannot be limited to serving one specific need.



What is the role of the church as a community?

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Major and Minor

Remember that we are all one Church, but we will disagree on certain interpretations of things the Bible says. Some things are so important we all must agree on them in order to remain one church while others may be seen differently and shouldn't divide us. Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith should be taken as our church's description of major teachings we ask all in ministry servant-leadership to agree upon.



DISCUSS

What is an example of a major issue upon which we must agree? What is an example of a minor issue we can disagree on?

What Makes a Healthy Church?

- Proper doctrinal teaching
- Proper use of sacraments
- Proper use of discipline
- Genuine worship
- Effective prayer
- Effective witness
- Effective fellowship
- Spiritual power
- Biblical church government
- Holy lives of members
- Care for the poor
- Love for Christ

Adapted from Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology

Sacraments

Sometimes called "ordinances", these are outward representations of inner grace (represent and show changes God made in our lives because of a change in status with Him). While the Catholic and Orthodox churches hold to seven sacraments and see them as ways of receiving grace, the Protestant church holds to two and sees them as representative of grace received.

NOTES:

Communion

- Commemorates Christ's sacrifice for us and making a new covenant of faithfulness with us.
- Identifies us with Christ.
- Symbolizes receiving Christ as our Bread of Life (spiritual food that truly sustains and satisfies).
- Reminds us of our spiritual blessings in Christ.
- Done over and over.

1 Corinthians 11:26

For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

Baptism

- Represents our figurative death with Christ and rising as a new creation.
- Represents our being washed of our sins.
- Identifies us with Christ and the Church.
- Done once.

Matt. 28:19

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on Baptism and Communion

Baptism is the public declaration of a believer's faith, pursuing obedience to the teachings of Jesus, and sharing in Christ's burial and resurrection. We believe it symbolizes death to your old life and announces your new life in Christ, which celebrates your inclusion into God's family. Mt. 28:19 | Acts 8:36-38 | Rom. 6:3, 4

The bread and cup of Communion remembers and celebrates Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection, instituting a New Covenant with all believers. We look inward by examining our own heart in light of the cross, and look forward to drinking the cup new with Him in His Father's Kingdom. 1 Cor. 11:23-26 | Lk. 22:17-19 | Mt. 26:29

NOTES:

Spiritual Gifts

Christ's people are driven by the Holy Spirit. While all people have talents, abilities, and skills, and you had these before you came to Christ, God gives spiritual abilities to His Church. These may change in a person, be short or long-term, and different people will have different ones. They are mysterious even to those who have them. We should ask God to give us whatever gift He will. Remember that they are always for the purpose of serving the Church.

Gifts described in the Bible:

- **Apostleship** (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11): Originally meaning "sent ones". Refers to the special ministry of founding the church given to the 12 apostles from Jesus. Sometimes used of missionaries.
- **Prophecy** (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1–40; Eph. 4:11): the ability to speak from God on the future or present.
- **Miracles** (1 Cor. 12:28) and **Healings** (vv. 9, 28, 30): abilities to do things otherwise impossible, especially healing the sick.
- **Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues** (1 Cor. 12:10): The ability to speak in or interpret a language one has not learned in order to either communicate with God in a special manner or to speak things to the church, showing God's power.
- **Evangelism** (Eph. 4:11): Ability to connect the message of God with those who do not have the Spirit of God in them.
- **Lead/Shepherd/Pastor** (Eph. 4:11): The ability to disciple others to follow Christ in their lives.
- **Serving** (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12): The ability to help others in a broad sense.
- **Teaching** (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11): The ability to connect the things of God to those who lack understanding of Him.
- **Faith** (1 Cor. 12:9): The ability over and above the measure of faith held by all believers to trust God.
- **Exhortation** (Rom. 12:8): The ability to encourage, stir, comfort, or admonish the Church.
- **Distinguishing Spirits** (1 Cor. 12:10): The ability to discern between true and false spiritual messages.
- **Showing Mercy** (Rom. 12:8): The ability to comfort and care for those in need.
- **Giving** (Rom. 12:8): The ability to give selflessly and generously.
- **Administration** (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28): The ability to bring order to God's work.
- **Wisdom and Knowledge** (1 Cor. 12:8): The ability to understand spiritual or biblical truth apart from learning.

Differing Views

As with some other areas of biblical teaching, the subject of spiritual gifts is one of some

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disagreement within the Church. Part of this is due to the fact that the Bible does not give us a great amount of information on spiritual gifts. Part of it is because anything to do with the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be difficult for us to neatly organize and understand. Also, because some churches have gone so far to one side that they believe that while the Spirit may indwell believers, it is the Scripture alone that God uses to shape our lives and give us wisdom and power. Others on the other end of the spectrum will trade in biblical teaching for an “experience of the Holy Spirit” that may be only subjective, emotional, or against biblical teaching.

The core of the controversy is the question of whether or not the Holy Spirit still acts in these ways in our day or if the Bible is merely describing a way He acted in believers at the time of the Bible’s writing. At Calvary Murrieta we teach the gifts as still active today but we see a great need to interpret them only in the light of what the Bible teaches about them, to not see something as coming from the Holy Spirit that disagrees with the Bible, harms the church community, glorifies ourselves, is done for profit, implies we direct God’s power or sovereignty, or does not exhibit the fruit of the Spirit outlined in Galatians.

Natural or Supernatural

Some spiritual giftings are more practical or “down-to-earth” and some more miraculous. However, the Bible consistently speaks of ways the divine and human meet, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit overlap in their natural and supernatural character.

- Spiritual gifts are different from talents, abilities, or skills.
- While all people have natural abilities, only all believers have spiritual gifts.
- Spiritual gifts do not depend on specific circumstances or a job or role.
- All are for the blessing of the Church.
- There is a variety of gifts in the Church.
- No one believer has all the gifts.
- We need each other’s gifts and should celebrate them without jealousy or insecurity.

Spiritual Gifts

Holy Spirit-given abilities for communing with God and serving the Church.
E.G. Speaking in tongues

Natural Gifts or Strengths

Broad ways you tend to function best in your world; capabilities you will apply in any given situation in which you find yourself.
E.G. Learning

NOTES:

Abilities

General talents you are born with.

E.G. Learning languages

Skills

Specific capabilities that must be learned and practiced.

E.G. Speaking French

Unity in the Church

The Bible constantly teaches that we must strive for unity in the Church. This applies both within a local church and among the universal Church of true believers.

Preferences and priorities differ. Your personal styles and passions will not be the same as others' in the church. If there is an area you find yourself desiring to change, God may be putting that area on your heart to get involved in service. While everyone should find their place in serving their church community, not all should serve in the same way—do not let this be a block to unity.

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

Some things to keep in mind:

- Every Christian is at a different place in a "race" or journey.
- Every Christian is different.
- Followers of Christ are not Christ, therefore we are all imperfect.
- Some who attend church are not true believers.
- Unity must be fought for.
- Jesus gives us His plan for church conflict resolution in Matthew 18.

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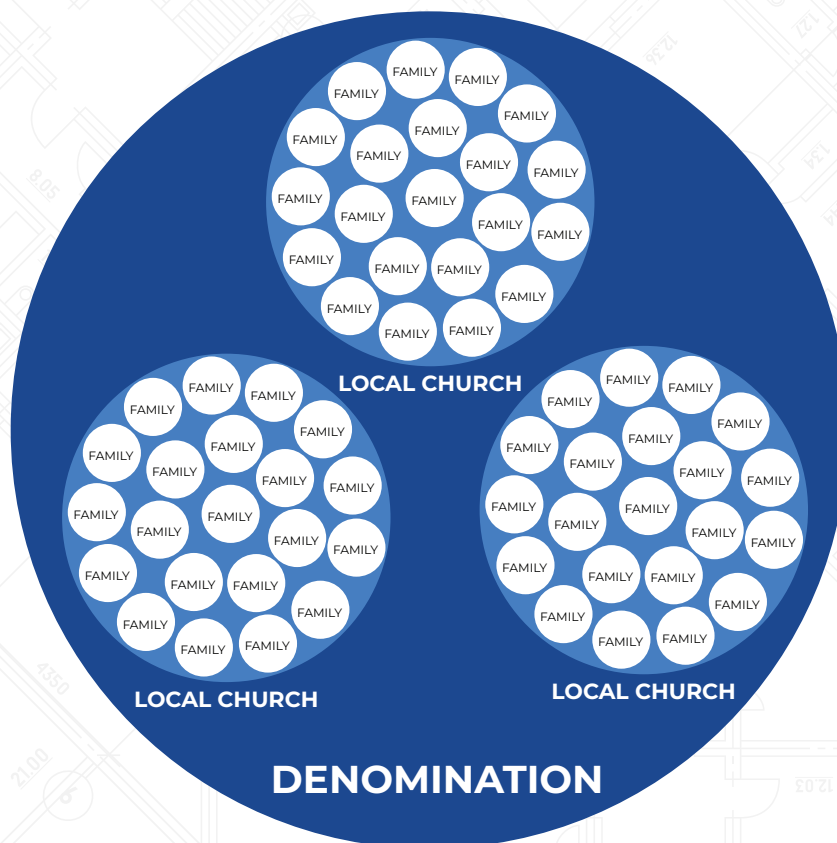
The Household of Faith: The Church as Family

The model the Bible uses for the church is not one of a business, social club, government, school, or other institution. The family is the model of the Church, and it may be said to be a family of families or an extended “clan”.

Galatians 6:10

Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Think of the “household” as a large group of people living together. This imagery is part of why the church is a community.



NOTES:



What is the difference between finding community and fellowship in church?

Servant Leadership in the Church

The Bible describes two primary divisions of authority in a church. These are defined and operate differently based on the particular structure of any given denomination or local church. These responsibilities usually function in more complex ways than two distinct categories. The bottom line is that every local church should have godly, biblical leaders who take responsibility for the needs of the church community.

Elder: responsible to provide oversight. Teaches and guides the church spiritually. Some churches consider a pastor to be an elder, other churches see elders as spiritual leaders who come alongside pastors but who are not themselves ordained.

Deacon: responsible to provide spiritual service. Generally, assists elders in practical care for people through ministries.

It is important to understand that organized leadership is a key part of what makes a church a church rather than an informal gathering of fellow believers.

Servant leadership is Christ's model for the church. But the leaders are not the only ones who serve. We all are part of the family and we should:

Receive what we need:

You are responsible for making your needs known or to take advantage of what your church offers you.

Give what we have:

You have something to offer your church community and being part of it means participating in serving in some way.

NOTES:

"Basic to Christian life, whether of leaders or other Christians, is service. To be a Christian is to minister, and that means 'to serve'.

-James Boyce (1938-2000)



What can I do for my church?

The "One-Anothers"

These are some simple things the Bible tells us to do to or for one another in the church:

Love (Jn. 13:34-35)

Serve (Gal. 5:13)

Bear burdens of (Gal. 6:2)

Forgive (Eph. 4:31-32)

Confess to (Jam. 5:16)

Comfort (I Thess. 4:18)

Pray for (Eph. 6:18)

Give to (I Jn. 3:17)

While each has many sub-divisions, the largest church designations are Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox.

The Global Church

While each has many sub-divisions, the largest church designations are Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. Each of these types of churches contributes certain things to the global Church and our understanding of the Gospel, however, each type of church may present certain barriers to people having faith in Christ. Each of the three main churches see themselves as the closest inheritor of the earliest church in Acts. But the goal of the Church is not to go back to the first century but to go out to the world. Each of these forms of church includes true and false believers.

NOTES:

Marks of Evangelicalism

A church like ours is an “evangelical” church. This term is used in different ways, but we will define it along the following lines:

- Belief that the Bible is God’s inspired Word to us.
- Belief that God invites us to have a personal relationship with Him.
- Belief that each person must have their own faith in Christ for salvation.
- Belief that the Church must share the gospel so that others may be saved.
- Belief that every believer can and should learn the Bible for themselves.

Perhaps the two summary differences between evangelicals and other Christians are:

- Belief in the priesthood of all believers (only Jesus makes us able to approach the Father - we do not need a human intercessor).
- Belief in the authority of Scripture over tradition (we look to the Bible as our unchanging guide rather than to historical church leaders).

The Invisible Church

How are we to make sense of the idea that the global Church is one church and yet we sometimes discuss other churches almost as though they are of a different faith? How do we make sense of people we meet in our own local church that may not show any fruit of a relationship with Christ?

Remember that our definition of the Church is all true believers for all time. As we learned in a previous lesson that we are saved through faith in Christ, anyone in any church who has faith in Christ is part of the global Church.

We use the term “invisible church” which means the true believers in Christ inside any given church organization or version of Christianity.

- Not all who attend a church truly have faith in Christ and not all in a given church do not.
- Which church one belongs to is not the definition of salvation - faith in Christ is.
- We cannot judge individual souls.

Ephesians 4:5–6

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

NOTES:

Hebrews 12:23

You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect.

Matthew 7:1

Judge not, that you be not judged.

Matthew 7:21

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

The Global, Persecuted Church

The Church has been persecuted since its inception and continues to be persecuted around the world today. Persecution includes not being allowed to meet together, get jobs, own a Bible, and suffering threats, harassment, vandalism, ostracism, lawsuits, false imprisonment, forced labor, sexual violence, torture, and execution. Since these are our brothers and sisters, we need to know about and pray for them.

Some facts:

- More Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in all other centuries combined [christianity.com]
- It is claimed that 105,000 Christians are martyred for their faith each year [Deseret News, 2011]
- Currently over 100 million Christians are being persecuted worldwide [Reuters, 2013]

You can learn about your persecuted family members from:

- Voice of the Martyrs: persecution.com
- International Christian Concern: persecution.org
- Open Doors International: opendoors.org

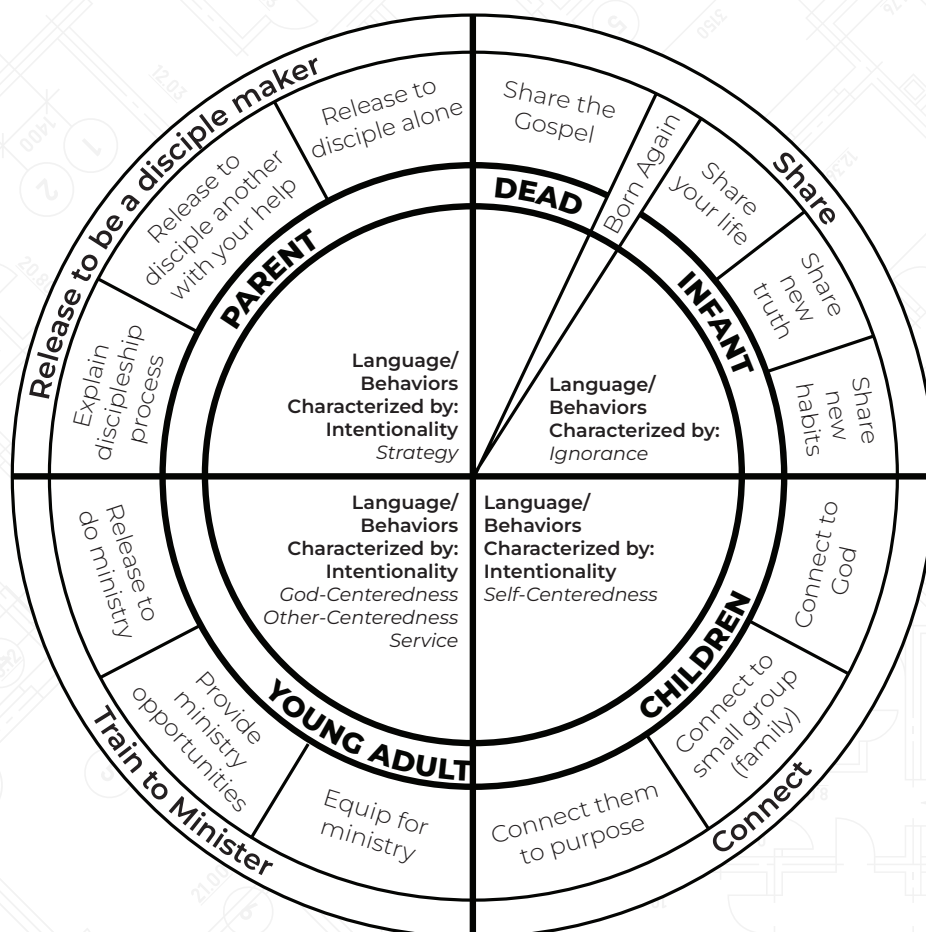
Hebrews 13:3

Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.

NOTES:

Discipleship

As a believer, we need to be helping others move forward in their walk with Christ, teaching them to look to Him and, in turn, training others to follow Christ. This functions on an individual, group, and even national level (Titus 2:3-6; Mt. 28:19). As we've seen in the Great Commission lesson, a believer can disciple a non-believer toward Christ or disciple a believer to follow Christ more fully. When we begin our walk with Christ we tend to focus primarily on ourselves and our wants and needs. But as we grow in Christ we become ready to help another person in their walk with Christ. Discipling another person is a mark of maturity as a Christian.



Taken from *Discipleshift Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* Copyright © 2013 by Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Emerson Coleman. Used by permission of HarperCollins Christian Publishing.
www.harpercollinschristian.com

NOTES:

Our church's definition of Discipleship is: Entering into relationships with the purpose of developing disciples who trust and follow Jesus through the pursuit of an intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ. The chief end of disciple making is to worship God and enjoy Him forever. A disciple is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus.

A shorter version is to say that discipleship is helping others follow Jesus along with us.



How might I go about discipling someone? Is there someone I have an opportunity to disciple?

Our Local Church

As part of Calvary Murrieta, you should know what we are about.

To know us, you need to know our heart. You must understand our mission, which is who we aim to be, and our motto, which are a simplified set of rules we aspire to live by.

You also need to know our vision which looks out into the future and defines what we want to be; it's our aspiration and goals. And finally you must know what we value, which is how we desire to live; things we'll be intentional about; our principles and standards; it's our DNA.

Mission

- To love God completely
- To love people authentically
- To make disciples globally

Motto

- To live the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-34)
- To fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

Vision

- We see a united body of worshipers enjoying God, loving unconditionally, giving freely, and attracting their neighbors to Jesus.
- We see disciples making disciples in sustainable national churches around the world.
- We see the Father enjoying the passionate worship of His people.

NOTES:

Values

- Instruction: Experiencing God as we believe, read, share and live His Word.
- Participation: Encouraging all believers to discover and use their unique ministry gifts.
- Character: Honoring God as our character is transformed resulting in genuine fruit.
- Stewardship: Serving God with generous hearts as we invest our time, talent, and treasure in building His kingdom.
- Relationship: Encountering God as we center our affections on Christ, sharing His grace and mercy with all people.



Which part of our church Mission, Vision, Motto, and Values am I most passionate about and/or capable of moving us forward in? Which part is hardest for me to get behind and/or help with?

What do I expect from my church? What do I think it expects of me?



What should we do when our church doesn't meet our expectations?

NOTES:

Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on the Church

The church is both local and Universal. The Universal Church is the community of all true believers for all time. The local church is a faith filled community of worshipers who are united as an intentional community of disciples under the headship of Christ and godly servant-leaders. Acts 2:42 | Heb. 10:25 | Eph. 5:25 | Rev. 5:9, 10 | Heb. 12:23



AIM

How does the person you want to share with perceive the Church? What would help them connect to a church?

Does your experience with church factor in to your personal learning question? How?



DO

Go to any of the websites on listed in the persecuted church section and pray for one need this week. Or download the Voice of the Martyrs "Pray Today" app and use it this week to pray for the daily listed need.

NOTES:



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- There is only one Church, and all true believers are part of it.
- Everyone in a church has different strengths and we need one another.
- The Church represents Jesus in the world.

NOTES:

The background of the entire page is a detailed, light gray architectural floor plan. It features a complex grid of lines, circles, and rectangles, with various numerical dimensions (e.g., 11.52, 12.03, 13.4, 15.63, 20.22, 21.00, 21.09, 21.92, 24.00, 24.02, 24.04, 24.06, 24.08, 24.10, 24.12, 24.14, 24.16, 24.18, 24.20, 24.22, 24.24, 24.26, 24.28, 24.30, 24.32, 24.34, 24.36, 24.38, 24.40, 24.42, 24.44, 24.46, 24.48, 24.50, 24.52, 24.54, 24.56, 24.58, 24.60, 24.62, 24.64, 24.66, 24.68, 24.70, 24.72, 24.74, 24.76, 24.78, 24.80, 24.82, 24.84, 24.86, 24.88, 24.90, 24.92, 24.94, 24.96, 24.98, 25.00) and letters (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z) scattered throughout, suggesting a technical drawing or blueprint.

LESSON SEVEN

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

In Lesson Six we studied the Church. In the first part of this lesson, we will look closer at an aspect of the life of the Church: worship. We often think of worship as only the act of singing praise to God but it is much broader than that.

Worship is all the activities of the Church community, anything we organize ourselves to do to glorify God. Ultimately, the life we live following and serving Christ is a life of worship. We can and should live in such a way that we are worshiping God every day.

Worship is an encounter with the living and holy God (Ex. 3:1-6).

Worship is reserved for God alone (Ex. 34:14).

In worship, we ascribe to the Lord the glory due him (Ps. 29:1-2).

We can worship because of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf (Heb. 10:1-10).

We should worship with reverence for God (Heb. 12:28).

When we draw near to God, he draws near to us (James 4:8).

Worship honors God for who He is and what He does (Dt. 10:21).

Worship brings us to God's presence (Ps. 100:2,4).

Worship takes us outside ourselves (I Pt. 4:10).

Worship brings us together (Ps. 122:1).

"The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ." -John Piper (1946-)

Worship in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God told the people where, when, and how He expected them to relate to Him in worship. He did this through the Law given to the Jews through Moses (in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

The reason the Old Testament Law for Israel covered life in sometimes exacting detail is that all aspects of one's life are a response to who God is.

Worship is the proper response to who God is, therefore, all aspects of life involve worship. The Law

NOTES:

described what worship was proper, therefore the Law involved all aspects of one's life. The heart of the Law was to spell out how love for God and one another should play out in everyday situations. The Law was given in the Wilderness as God took His people out of Egypt to begin forming them from being only His chosen people to being the people who reflected Him to all other peoples. God's people were to show the nature of their God through the lives they lived and the organization of their community. Their worship was their witness.

The Old Testament commands are summarized in the Ten Commandments. These can be divided into commands about a proper relationship with God and with others.

In the New Testament, Jesus and Paul say that all the commandments (and even all the Old Testament) can be summarized in these two:

- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37).
- Love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Rom. 13:8-10).

The core of the Law of God is to rightly relate to Him by rightly relating to others. This is the meeting place of Law and worship.

All areas of our lives as followers of Christ can be brought under the banner of worship to our Lord. Because we do not follow the structure of the Old Testament Law that outlines each area our lives for us, we are moved by the Holy Spirit and guided by the New Testament to live lives of worshipful obedience. But the principle that every aspect of our lives can be worship remains the same.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

If we looked at the context of this verse, we would see that it isn't talking only about doing all small things as an act of worship to God, but to worry less about fleeing the effects of the world and more about making choices based on faith for the good of the Christian community.

In the Old Testament, when Israel's king Saul made a sacrifice to God that was outside the way God had prescribed, the prophet Samuel confronted Saul, saying,

1 Samuel 15:22

"What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams."

NOTES:

Likewise, Jesus tells His then Jewish listeners that they should wait to bring an offering to the Lord if they had a broken relationship with someone. Seeking restoration is key to worship.

Matthew 5:23–24

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Worship is a matter of relationship, and our relationship with God is bound to our relationship with others.

"[I]f you are right with Him you will inevitably be right with all your fellow-creatures, just as if all the spokes of a wheel are fitted rightly into the hub and the rim they are bound to be in the right positions to one another."

-C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)



How are my relationships? What does how I handle them say about how I think about God?

A Matter of the Heart

The first and tenth of the Ten Commandments (to have no other gods and to not covet) are like bookends to the others because they show that worship is an internal matter of the heart.

When Jesus was speaking to a woman asking His opinion on the correct location of worship, He responds that worship is not a matter of proper locations (or any other rule) but a matter of the spirit (Jn. 4).

Many religions have sacred places where worship is to be conducted (this was the perception of the Samaritan woman in John 4). But for followers of Christ, we collectively (as the Church) are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are the proper place of worship and we do so in our souls, in community, and wherever we go.

NOTES:

John 4:24

For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.

We worship in spirit as opposed to worshipping only physically, emotionally, or intellectually. We worship from our souls.

We also worship in truth. Our view of God must be accurate in order to worship Him for who He really is. We also worship in truth when we worship genuinely and not to try to convince ourselves, God, or others how spiritual we are.

"Right worship, good worship, pleasing worship depends on a right mental grasp of the way God really is."

- John Piper (1946-)



Is my worship to God primarily emotional, intellectual, physical, or is it really a mixture of these from the soul?

Worship is Our Purpose

Throughout the Bible we see that God calls all people to worship Him. We are built for worship and all people find something to worship. Ultimately, we worship either God or ourselves because to choose to worship anything else is to say that we will have our way over God's way.

"There can only be two basic loves... the love of God unto the forgetfulness of self, or the love of self unto the forgetfulness and denial of God."

-Augustine (354-430)

Our fallen nature is a corrupted version of how God made us. Idolatry is making God (or gods) in our image, thus putting ourselves at the highest place of worship. But God who made us in His image desires to make us more like Christ, the only unfallen man.

NOTES:

We become like what we worship. We will become either a distortion of how God created us or we will be conformed to the image of Christ (Col. 3:10).

How do you know what you worship? Ask yourself:

- What guides your choices?
- What do you most fear?
- What do you most cling to?
- Whose opinion is most important to you?
- What do you most enjoy?
- What happens when you are wronged?
- What happens when you are wrong?

When we find what has the place of ultimate authority in our lives we have found our god. When we are that god, we see anyone who comes against us as committing a kind of blasphemy against us. We then, seeing ourselves as God, choose to either bring our judgment on them or, in what we see as our incredible magnanimity and mercy, dole out grace as we see fit. When we see ourselves in the place of God, we try to solve all problems and do not know what to do when we find ourselves to be wrong (it is confusing and debilitating when your god fails you, even if that god is you).



If I can answer the above questions, what or who is my god/God?

The Bible tells us that we become like what we worship. So, if we worship God, we will become more like Him.

Psalm 115:3–8 (NLT)

***Our God is in the heavens,
and he does as he wishes.
Their idols are merely things of silver and gold,
shaped by human hands.
They have mouths but cannot speak,
and eyes but cannot see.***

NOTES:

***They have ears but cannot hear,
and mouths but cannot breathe.
They have hands but cannot feel,
and feet but cannot walk,
and throats but cannot make a sound.
And those who make idols are just like them,
as are all who trust in them.***

"What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or for restoration."

-G.K Beale (1949-)

Our world tells us to be more like other people and to be ourselves (yes, this is a contradictory message). When we seek to conform to our world or to be our "true self" we dishonor God by not conforming to Him. We will also find ourselves gravely disappointed. If we want to find our life, we find it only in trading our life for one with the Life-giver (Matt. 16:25). After all, He traded His life for ours.

Our world tells us to be ourselves yet implies that we should be like others. we seek to conform to our world or to be our "true self" we dishonor God by not conforming to Him. We will also find ourselves gravely disappointed. If we want to find our life, we find it only in trading our life for one with the Life-giver (Matt. 16:25). After all, He traded His life for ours.

Worship ought to encompass not only all of our individual lives but also the collective life of the Church. One definition of worship is all the activities of the Church community, anything we organize ourselves to do in order to glorify God.

Ultimately, the life we live together following and serving Christ is a life of worship, involving:

Enjoyment (Neh. 8)
Obedience (I Sam. 15:22-23)
Singing (Ps. 100:2)
Service (Heb. 13:16)
Giving (II Cor. 9:7)
Learning (Ps. 19:7-11)
Prayer (Ps. 16:2)
Fellowship (Neh. 8:10; Acts 2:42)

NOTES:

Function and Form

The particular practices (forms) of worship are not to take precedence over the heart (function) behind the worship. The life of the Church looks differently across time and culture, but the standard of worship remains the heart's response to God.

Because worship can come in many forms, we shouldn't be afraid of rituals or programmed worship if they do not distract us from a true heart of worship. After all, God commanded the Israelites to worship in ritualistic ways.



Are any of these "modes of worship" surprising and/or challenging to me?



Looking back at the list of questions to find who our God is, how would you answer on behalf of the person or group you are seeking to reach out to?

If you are able at this point to answer those same questions for yourself, does that answer inform your personal learning question? How?

NOTES:



Choose a mode of worship from the list above and use it this week in glorifying God. If you can't decide, consider how you can do enjoy something God has given you and thank and praise Him through that experience.

PRAYER

In this part of the lesson, we will learn about prayer. Prayer is a part of worship, but we will look at it on its own. Prayer is not complicated but it is difficult. Most of us wish we spent more time in prayer, knew what to say when we pray, or saw clearer answers to our requests.



What is most difficult for me about prayer?

What is Prayer?

Prayer is simple to define. It is communicating with God. We can do this with our thoughts, with our words, or even in a wordless groan through the Holy Spirit.

We say, "communicating with" rather than "talking to" God because, as we will see, prayer is a two-way conversation between God and people.

When we pray, we are exercising a privilege granted to us to speak directly with the God of all the universe; the same God we read about in the Bible, and He desires to commune with us. This should set the stage for a discussion of prayer.

Why Do We Pray?

We pray for a number of reasons that all revolve around a core element of the Bible's message: God desires to commune with His people.

NOTES:

So, we pray because:

- **We can.** We have an invitation into God's presence and we have the ear of the Almighty. We must not take the gift of prayer for granted.
- **Jesus did.** We read in the Gospels that Jesus was constantly praying to the Father and He regularly did so during long nights alone. Jesus said that He did nothing but what He heard from the Father. As we saw in Lesson Three, the persons of the Trinity have relationship with one another. If even the Son of God prays, we who have been brought into relationship with God pray also.
- **We must:** not in the sense that we grudgingly obey a biblical command to pray but in the sense that anyone who has been redeemed and has the Holy Spirit in them have had our very nature changed. We "must" pray in the sense that we "must" breath or "must" spend time with one we love. We have a beautiful need for communicating with our Beloved.
- **God desires to answer.** Jesus teaches that God, our good Father, actually desires to give gifts to His children and wants us to come ask Him for what we need. God is actually glorified when we go to Him as our Provider and Parent.
- **God delights when His children are in His presence.** He welcomes you to spend time with Him.

Something that we should note when studying the Bible's teaching on prayer is that, unlike what we may assume, the Bible doesn't so much tell us to pray as it assumes we pray. Teachings on prayer usually begin with phrases like, "when you pray..." or "if you pray...". These imply that people are praying but need to be instructed on how to pray and what the effect of their prayers will be. Even a "prayer command" like "pray without ceasing" is really assuming we do pray and need to be encouraged on the "how" and "why" of prayer.



DISCUSS

What makes prayer difficult?

Modes of Prayer

There are several general ways, or "modes" of praying. Each is for a somewhat different purpose. We may use any or all of these modes in a time of prayer. Modes are different from methods, which are specific ways of praying and will be discussed later. Think of modes as different postures of the heart.

NOTES:

- **Adoration**

Adoration is a prayer of worship to God. This is speaking the truth about who God is, enjoying Him and reminding yourself of the nature of your God.

Psalms 71:23

*My lips will shout for joy,
when I sing praises to you;
my soul also, which you have redeemed.*

- **Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving is telling the truth about what God has done. It is key for healing and re-orienting ourselves and our view of our circumstances.

Philippians 4:6

do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Why would Philippians tell me to thank God when I'm anxious?



- **Confession**

Confession is bringing our sin to God. It is telling the truth about our heart's condition. Confession should be specific and honest: God already knows the state of our heart and the acts of rebellion against Him we commit so when we come before Him we shouldn't hide. Remember that we are new creations in Christ and need never hide from God like Adam and Eve did. In confession we come to God for healing and help.

Psalms 38:17-18

*For I am ready to fall,
and my pain is ever before me.
I confess my iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin*

NOTES:

- **Supplication**

Supplication is bringing our requests to God. It is telling the truth about your need. Remember that we are told to ask God for what we need and that we honor Him when we come to Him as our source. We need not be concerned that we are being selfish in asking for our own needs. We should pray for ourselves more, not less.

Matthew 7:11

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

- **Intercession**

Intercession is really a subset of supplication. It is praying alongside or in the place of another person. It is telling the truth about what someone else needs. Intercession requires wisdom because sometimes what people request prayer for is not biblical or necessarily wise or helpful.

Intercessory prayer also requires great persistence since we tend to be more motivated to pray for our own personal needs. We also can be less patient with others' lack of change or improvement that we are with our own.

Intercessory prayer is a serious task and we should not tell people lightly that we are going to pray for them.

1 Timothy 2:1

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them.

- **Listening**

A listening prayer is quieting the soul to hear from the Holy Spirit. In this mode of prayer you are not telling any truth but rather being ready to hear the truth. This is probably the most difficult mode of prayer. It is difficult to quiet our minds and souls to be ready to hear from God. It is difficult to delineate God's voice from our own. For this reason, listening prayer is not only difficult but dangerous. We can believe the Holy Spirit said something to us that may be only our own inner voice. Remember that God speaks to us primarily through His word in Scripture and nothing we believe He says to our heart will contradict Scripture. Also, God will not always speak to us internally during prayer. More often He will move us through understanding His word, listening to godly advice, and orchestrating our circumstances after we've prayed for guidance. God will move us over time as we pray over time more often than give us specific words of direction during prayer, however, a prayer of listening is pausing long enough to listen if He does choose to speak to our hearts.

NOTES:

Psalms 38:15

*For I am waiting for you, O Lord.
You must answer for me, O Lord my God.*



How can we know if we are hearing from the Holy Spirit?

We should note that these “modes of prayer” are not necessarily outlined in the Bible the way they are in this lesson. You may think of others and some may be combined or may overlap (like petition and intercession or adoration and thanksgiving). Prayer should not always consist of the just one mode. We can use all of these modes of prayer when we communicate with God.



Which of these modes do I most often use in prayer? Which could I use more?

Types or Times of Prayer

- **Corporate**

Corporate prayer is prayer together as the church community. Jesus says that wherever two or more are gathered in His name He is there with them (Matt. 18:20). Corporate prayer is often intimidating to newer believers but it is an excellent way to learn to pray and to connect with the church.

NOTES:

- **Daily/standard prayer**

We have the opportunity to spend time with the Lord in prayer each day. Don't concern yourself with a specific amount of time but rather with having a focused time where you can fully be in prayer.

- **Quick/emergency**

Sometimes we have only a second to quickly call out to God for help. This doesn't need to be in the midst of crisis; it may be before an unexpected conversation or confusion.

- **Extended/dedicated**

At times we feel drawn to pray for an extended period. We may need to get away and pray for an hour or part of a day. Sometimes we wake up at night and the Lord may be beckoning us to pray. Sometimes we plan to have times like this but have no daily habit of prayer. Extended times of prayer should be in conjunction with daily prayer but not replace it.

Methods of Prayer

Methods of prayer are different from modes of prayer. Modes of prayer are kinds of prayer or postures of prayer. Methods are ways we pray. You may resonate with certain methods and not others. These are not a matter of right and wrong but of preference and practicality. We can be creative with prayer methods. **Methods of prayer are things like:**

- **Prayer journals:** Recording or writing out prayers and then keeping track of results.
- **Prayer walks:** Walking around a certain area and praying silently for the people/area.
- **Apps:** There are several apps such as Echo and Prayer Cards to help you keep on track with prayer needs. There are also apps to help you pray for specific needs like the persecuted church (Voice of the Martyrs' "Pray Today") or unreached people groups (Joshua Project's "Unreached of the Day").
- **Calendars:** Ministries will often put together prayer calendars – usually for 30 days – to pray daily for something. You can also make your own.
- **Lists:** You can keep lists of prayer needs so you don't forget.
- **Fasting:** More on fasting below.
- **Get creative!** There is no wrong method for prayer. Consider something like praying through your contact list or coming up with "prayer triggers" such as praying for people when you hear an ambulance or for the poor when you eat.

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What are some prayer methods I could use?

Fasting

The one method of prayer we will look at specifically is fasting. Some are confused or uncomfortable with the idea of fasting, yet we see it as a common practice in the Bible. Jesus Himself fasted and prayed.

Fasting is the act of denying ourselves something in order to focus on God in prayer. Typically and traditionally this is the denial of food. Fasting is not magical or a mystical secret formula for more successful prayer. **So what does fasting do?**

- Sets aside our flesh for a time so we can to focus the spirit. This may be for the sake of having focused time but – such as using your lunch break to pray instead of eat - but is more so about exercising rule over our flesh so that our appetite doesn't direct us. We walk a spiritual and not a physical walk and fasting is a way to remind ourselves of that. Fasting may make someone feel physically weak and tired which can draw us into a humble place. We stay conscious of our need for the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, the Father who gives us our daily bread, and the Spirit who sustains our life.
- Creates a constant reminder to pray. When we fast we feel constantly hungry, it's like a ribbon tied to your finger to help you remember your purpose of praying, no matter how busy you may be.
- Serves as a spiritual mourning over a situation. At times of sin or sorrow (whether our own or someone else's) we might fast as an act of mourning and seeking God. We are not wallowing or despairing in this act of mourning but are being honest about a difficulty and are setting aside life-giving food to prayerfully address a situation that has spiritually or physically brought death in order to speak with the Life-giver.

Fasting should not be done to show how spiritual you are, to show off, or seek sympathy (Matt. 6:16-18).

It should not be done to the risk of your health. If you have a medical reason to eat a certain way, consider fasting in a way other than with food. Also, going without water for an extended time is dangerous and many people drink water during a fast.

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We can fast from things other than food such as TV, social media, music, sleep, or anything that we may need to disentangle ourselves from in order to be more free to seek God.

There is not a correct amount of time for a fast, however it should be long enough to make you miss the thing you are fasting from and give you time to pray. 24 hours is a good rule-of-thumb.

If you have made a decision to fast for a time, don't force that decision on others. Allow them to choose whether or not to fast along with you.

Remember that fasting is a temporary break from something that is not morally wrong but that you are exercising mastery over. Sinful activities are not to be fasted from temporarily but permanently removed from our lives.

Prayer Without Ceasing

The Bible talks about praying without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17). Some Christians have taken this to mean that they should ideally spend time on nothing but prayer. However, God wants us to live and think and none of us can actually pray every waking moment. Praying without ceasing really means to continue to pray about things without giving up. Keep praying and see what God may do in your situation and your heart.



DISCUSS

Are there "right" and "wrong" ways to pray? How so?

Praying in Jesus's Name

Jesus tells us that if we pray in His name, He will do it (John 14:13–14). What does it mean to pray in Jesus's name? It is much more than tacking a spiritual flourish onto the end of our prayers.

Remember that we are given full and confident access to God's presence in prayer because Jesus has granted us His status as Children of the Father by trading identities with us at the cross (II Cor. 5:21, Eph. 3:12; I Jn. 3:1). We bear not only the image of God but the name (identity) of Christ. To pray in His name, then, is to pray what He would pray, according to His will (I Jn. 5:14–15). We pray to the Father the same way Jesus would, submissively and obediently (Mk. 14:36; Jn. 8:28). His requests are

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for things that are within the Father's will (Jn. 17).

We have a custom of saying, "In Jesus' name I pray" at the end of a prayer and there is nothing wrong with that, but we need to realize that it is not a magic phrase to make our prayer "work" or just the proper way to "sign off". Praying in the name of Jesus is actually a great grace in our lives since we are welcomed in to God's presence with all the rights Jesus Himself has to pray to the Father. We should remember as we enter into prayer that we are praying in Jesus's name and we should make our requests as we see Jesus doing.

What the Bible Tells Us to Pray for:

- Our daily needs (Matt. 6:11)
- Thankfulness to God (Phil 4:6)
- The sick (James 5:14)
- Continued health (III John 2)
- For opportunities to share the gospel (Col. 4:3)
- Boldness to share the faith (Eph. 6:19)
- Those in sin (James 5:16; I John 5:16)
- Missionaries/evangelists (Matt 9:38)
- Those in authority (I Tim. 2:2)
- Defense against temptation (Matt. 6:13)
- Godly character and conduct (I Cor. 15:7)
- The spiritual completion of the saints (I Cor. 13:9)
- For all the saints (Eph. 6:18)
- That love would abound in the church (Phil. 1:9)
- For knowledge of God's will (Col. 1:9)
- For help in our suffering (James 5:13)
- Health (III John 2)
- Wisdom (James 1:5)
- Your enemies (Matt. 5:44)
- God's Kingdom and will to be done on earth (Matt. 6:10)
- Forgiveness (Matt. 6:12)
- Those in prison/persecuted believers (Heb. 13:3)

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Choose seven of these and pray for one each day this week.

What about Our Prayers that do not Seem to be Answered?

- This does not mean we or God are doing something wrong. No one is exempt from hard answers to prayer.
- Sometimes we wait a long time but God still answers (Lk. 8:41-56).
- God may be showing us that His grace is enough (II Cor. 12:7-10).
- Even Jesus got a “no” to a request but submitted to the Father’s perfect will (Mark 14:36).
- God is doing more than we see (Jer. 29:1-23).
- Persistent prayer keeps us looking to God (I Chron. 16:11; Lk. 18:1-8).
- Ask if you are praying for something in God’s will (I Jn. 5:14–15; Mk. 14:36).
- Some things we pray for God to do can be done by us.
- God may be answering “no” or “wait” but those are still answers.
- Sometimes God answers yes and we never notice or remember.
- Prayer changes us.

Meditation

The Bible speaks about meditation in addition to prayer. Prayer and meditation are different in that prayer is direct communication with God while meditation is focused and deep thinking about the truths of God’s word, His commands and promises (Ps. 119:48, 148), and His works (Ps. 77:12). Our meditations are to be righteous ponderings on godly things (Ps. 19:14; Phil. 4:8).

Meditation in a Christian sense is not to empty the mind but rather to fix it on God, not to center our minds on ourselves but on God, not to erase the self but focus it on Another. Meditation may be the simple act of thinking about God and His ways or it may be a very deep spiritual-mental focusing on what we know to be true and right. It is not to be something odd but pure and God-focused.

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Does the person or group you are aiming the gospel at pray? Why or why not? If so, to whom and how?

Has your personal learning question become a hindrance to praying? Have you prayed about your question?



If you have never attended a prayer meeting (corporate prayer) visit one in the next two months. If you have never prayed out loud in corporate prayer do so even once.

Pray three times a day (even briefly) for a week. Try incorporating new modes or methods and feel free to experiment. Reflect on your experience and share with your table next time.



MEMORIZE

John 4:24

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Colossians 4:2

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

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- **Worship is our response to God and comes in many forms.**
- **Worship encompasses all activities of a church.**
- **We are designed to worship God but are prone to worship ourselves.**
- **Prayer is not complicated but is difficult.**
- **God desires to hear from and answer us.**

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LESSON EIGHT

OUR WORLD

We have looked at the nature of God who created the world and His creation of people in His image. In this lesson we will look at the rest of God's creation and explore two meanings of "world" in the Bible.

The word cosmos in the Greek New Testament translates in English as "world" but has several meanings in Greek. We will use these meanings to discuss the Bible's teaching on the world. In this lesson we will examine two and discuss a third meaning in a later lesson.

The First Meaning of "Cosmos"

The first meaning of "cosmos" (world) refers to the created, ordered, natural world around us. This is the earth and can include the entire created universe.

God is creative and He is a God of order, as we saw in Lesson Two. He made the world out of nothing and organized it and made it beautiful. He created the whole universe and all life.

The Bible tells us that God's creation shows His glory (Ps. 19:1). When we look at what He made we can see that it did not appear by chance. It was made by God and is varied and beautiful. In fact, the earth is clearly designed for us to live upon (scientists refer to this observation as the anthropic principle). Therefore, creation shows His glory in that God is creative as well as loving.

"Each of the things that have been made fulfills its own particular purpose in creation... Not a single one of these things is without worth, not a single thing has been created without a reason... [R]ecognize greatness even in small things, adding continually to your wonder and causing your love for the Creator to grow."

-Basil of Caesarea (330-379 AD)

Cosmic and Concrete

We often emphasize the spiritual over the physical but (like we saw in the nature of man) the physical and the spiritual are always linked in the Bible. The one has a direct impact on the other. For instance, the obedience of Israel to God is constantly linked to their land being blessed. When they are disobedient, God curses their land or removes them from it. This is odd to us because we tend to see the spiritual and the physical as very separate things. The idea that agriculture has anything to do with holiness makes little sense to us.

Remember that Jesus came in the flesh to live a physical life on earth. The Bible tells us that when

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God makes a new heaven and earth for His eternal Kingdom it is a physical place with actual dimensions. Our idea of eternity and heaven often fails to take into account that God has from the beginning used his physical created world to dwell with us and will do so again. A physical world is not a lesser version of God's plan – it is God's plan.

In Greek philosophy the physical world was an imperfect version of a cosmic reality. In the West, we are the descendants of Greek philosophy. That is why we see such a separation between the "physical world" and the "spiritual world". This is not the biblical view of the world.

In Eastern thought the physical world is an illusion, called maya. What we see and interact with is not to be trusted – only the divine is what is really real.

In Christianity the Creator is incarnated in His creation. In the same vein, we who have the Holy Spirit live out our spiritual faith in very real and physical ways. This does not mean that we worship God in primarily physical ways (see Jn. 4:23).



Do I tend to see your world through a more physical or more spiritual lens, or do I bring the two together?

Our Respons(ibility)

The physical world is made by God and is not some separate realm from spiritual things. Therefore, it is important to God and should be important to us.

God cultivates and enjoys His creation. We reflect Him and fulfill a part of His purpose for humankind, when we who are redeemed do the same.

We cultivate creation by tending and using it. We have a responsibility to take care of God's world by:

- Treating animals kindly
- Maintaining healthy environments
- Stewarding environmental resources
- Maintaining order among chaos in nature

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- Feeding people
- Preventing damage or recovering from natural disasters.
- Healing the sick
- Furthering scientific discovery



Does caring for creation seem like a Christian or secular pursuit to me?

Enjoying Creation

God rested on the final day of creation, seeing that all was good. God does not grow tired, so His "rest" was one of satisfied enjoyment. We enjoy creation when we:

- Appreciate its beauty
- Enjoy learning about it
- Marvel at God's glory behind it
- Enjoy food
- Enjoy outdoor activities
- Find joy in the work of cultivation

The Effect of the Fall

Another way that the physical and spiritual are linked is seen in the curse God gave after Adam and Eve rebelled against Him.

When God made the world, He made all things good. Adam and Eve were given the command to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. This first meant having children, naming the animals, and enjoying the fruit of the land.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, He cursed them in direct relation to the original command. Where God told them to be fruitful and multiply, God added pain to childbirth. Where God had told them to be subdue the earth, He added the punishment of weeds, toil, and fruitlessness.

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Likewise, as a direct result of the first sin, there were immediate internal results in Adam and Eve (shame, guilt, fear as discussed in session 3) as well as external results. They turned to nature (fig leaves) to cover their shame and God gave them animal skins to cover themselves further. Thus, Man's sin directly affected nature.

Because God's world was ordered and free of death before the Fall, we can see things like disasters and diseases as a result of sin.

In order to punish the increasing wickedness after Adam and Eve had more children, God eventually responded by bringing creation back to a chaotic state when He flooded the earth.

After the Flood, God repeated His command to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. The original intent of God for us in the earth did not change, but the earth and humankind had.

Jesus, Lord of all the Earth

Jesus, as part of the Trinity, created the world (Jn. 1:3) and holds all things together (Col. 1:17). While Jesus was among us He truly subdued the earth by exercising authority over the sea, sickness, water, food, and death. In this way, His miracles show a glimpse of an unfallen world to come.

After His resurrection, Jesus was among us in a glorified body, free from sickness and death and able to come and go in miraculous ways. He still ate and bore His scars and was not only a spirit.

While Jesus subdued the earth in temporary ways, He did not yet heal it permanently. At the end of time He will first establish His Kingdom in which all will again be good and ordered rightly under Him. Paul says that all creation, not just people, awaits its redemption (Rom. 8:19-23). Eventually Jesus will make all things new, creating a new heaven and earth.

Angels and Demons

Now that we have studied God's creating of the physical world, we will take a moment to look at part of God's non-physical creation: angels and demons.

Angels

- Angels were created by God (Neh. 9:6).
- They curiously observe God working to redeem people and rejoice when a person is saved (Eph. 3:10; 1 Pt. 1:12; Lk. 15:10).
- They are messengers for God (e.g. Lk. 1:11-19; Acts 8:26).

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- They act as “soldiers” bringing punishment or protection (II Sam. 24:16-17; II Chron. 32:21; Rev. 16:1; Gen. 3:24; Dan. 3:13).
- They are invisible but appear visibly to people on a temporary basis.
- Angels can appear as people (strangers) (Gen. 18:2-5; 19:1-3; Heb. 13:2).
- There is at least one “archangel” (Michael) who leads other angels (Jude 9; Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7-8; I Thess. 4:16).
- They are more powerful than people (II Pt. 2:11; Heb. 2:7).
- They do not marry (Matt. 22:30).
- They can be in only one place at a time and are bound by time and place (Dan. 10:12-14; Lk. 1:26).
- There is an unknown but very large number of angels (Dt. 33:2; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11).
- Some people see what the Bible calls “cherubim”, “seraphim”, and “living creatures” as types of angels and some see them as a creation different from angels.
- Angels are sent to protect believers and children but the Bible does not say that we each have a particular “guardian angel”.
- The Bible does not say that we become angels when we die.
- Angels are not to be prayed to or worshiped (Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:10; 22:9).
- We will one day rule over angels (I Cor. 6:3).
- Angels do not receive mercy for sin (II Pt. 2:4).

Demons

- Demons are by nature angels. They are the angels who rebelled against God. This is why they are alternatively referred to as “fallen angels” or “evil spirits”.
- Because demons are by nature angels, we need not go into as lengthy a description of them. We should see them as having the same abilities and inabilities as angels but using those abilities against God’s purpose and people rather than for them, as angels do.
- They can oppress people emotionally and physically (I Sam. 16:14; 18:10; 19:9; Mk. 5:2-5; Matt. 17:14-18; II Cor. 12:7).
- They can control people to the point we called it “possession” but a believer is already indwelt by the Holy Spirit who will not dwell with a demon (Mk. 5:2-5; II Cor. 6:14-16).
- The Bible distinguishes between natural illness and illness caused by demonic attack (Matt. 4:24).
- There are different types and/or powers of demons but we are not given details (Matt. 17:21; Rev. 19:11).
- Demons know God and fear God but hate Him (James 2:19; Mk. 1:24).

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- Idol worship in the Bible is said to be the worship of demons (Dt. 32:16-17; I Cor. 10:20).
- They are bound by space and time (Dan. 10:12-14) and are not all-powerful or all knowing. The Bible does not say that demons read our thoughts. They, like angels can observe our actions.
- Demons can teach people doctrines (I Tim. 4:1).
- Believers are given some measure of authority to rebuke demons in Jesus's name (Lk. 10:19; James 4:7; Jude 9).
- Demons will ultimately be cast into hell forever (II Pt. 2:4; Matt. 8:29; Rev. 20:10).

Satan

- "Satan" means "adversary" and the Bible says that his original name was Lucifer. He is also called "the devil".
- Satan is a real being, not a metaphor for evil.
- The Bible describes Satan as the father of lies and first to sin against God who seeks to tempt and destroy those made in God's image (Jn. 8:44; I Jn. 3:8; I Pt. 5:8).
- Satan tempts people (Eph. 6:11; Mk. 4:1; I Thess. 3:5).
- He masquerades as an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14).
- God allows Satan opportunities to tempt and oppress people. We don't fully understand why, but God is in control (Job 1:6-12; Rev. 20:7-8).
- Satan, being a demon and therefore of angelic nature, is not the equal and opposite of God. He will ultimately be judged along with all demons (Rev. 20:10). He is not all-knowing, all-powerful, or everywhere.



Knowing what the Bible does and doesn't teach, how should we view satanic/demonic activity in our world?

Second Meaning of Cosmos

We have seen the first meaning of cosmos/"world" as God's ordered, physical universe. A second meaning of cosmos is the world system. The world system is corrupted by sin. It is this sense of "world" we refer to when the Bible tells us not to love the world or the things of the world (I Jn. 2:15;

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James 4:4). Just as individual people are corrupted by sin, so the societies they create are corrupted.



What are some things worldly powers and societies pursue? How much are these what I pursue?

As you read the Bible, you may notice how instances of God (often through His people, especially kings, prophets, and Jesus) interacting with the people running the current power structures of the world are very important passages. These interactions may at times involve God's people defeating the worldly powers or being subjugated under them. It may involve a warning of God's judgment or an undeserved blessing. Much of what we think in the Bible is one individual interacting with another individual is actually God, through His people, interacting with an opposing kingdom.

As God uses and arranges His natural world, so He uses the world system for His purposes. The Bible talks about God using Egypt to protect and grow the Israelites and using Pharaoh to show how powerful God is. He used Assyria and Babylon to punish His people, but also to preserve a faithful portion of His people in exile. He used a Persian emperor to bring His people back to their lost land. He uses the Romans to make a system of roads that carried the gospel fast and far. He used Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus for our sins. While corrupt in their humanity, this world's governments and power structures are allowed authority by God (John 19:11).

Not of this World

During Jesus's ministry, various groups, even among His disciples, expected the Messiah (the prophesied rescuer of the world) to come overthrow Rome and establish God's Kingdom on earth. But they were too earthly in their thinking. Jesus said that His Kingdom is not of this world. It would not function like every corrupt world power system. It is not established by force but by martyrdom, the sacrifice of Jesus and His people. In fact, while Jesus's followers thought that He would overthrow Roman power and establish a Jewish Kingdom. His would be a kingdom to overthrow the rule of sin and the devil and welcome all peoples into Christ's good reign.

At the height of His popularity the Jews tried to make Jesus a king but He refused. When faced with the Roman and Jewish powers of the time, He allowed Himself to be overcome by them and be

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crucified but through His sacrifice He redeemed the fallen humanity that put Him on the cross in the first place.

Following Jesus's teaching, we who are subjects of His Kingdom:

- Do not seek to attach ourselves or the Church as a whole to the world system.
- Do not see any human political entity as God's Kingdom.
- Do not fear corrupt power but trust our King.
- Do not look to the world for direction but to our Lord.
- Are not surprised by persecution but expect it.
- Are not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). We do not separate entirely from our world, but exercise a redemptive influence on it.

The Kingdom: Already and Not-Yet

When Jesus arrived as that promised Messiah, He said He was bringing God's Kingdom and called Israel to enter it. When He died, rose, and ascended to heaven without having defeating Rome, Jesus's Kingdom did not seem to have come. However, He established it on earth by His coming, sacrifice, and giving His authority to the Church. He promised to return to establish the Kingdom fully and forever. It may seem that Jesus didn't change things, but He began a whole new way of life, uses us whom He's given new life to so we can be part of changing the world, and He will fully establish His reign in the future.

We live between Christ's first and second coming. Because the Messiah has come, we are redemptive in our world. Because He is coming again, we know we will not ultimately be its redeemers.

"We overcome, not because we're a moral majority or a righteous remnant, but because we're blood-covered sinners who know that if the gospel can change us, it can change anyone."

-Russell D. Moore in Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel

Our society is organized on a political spectrum. A more conservative view of time is to see the past as the "good old days" and the future as dark. Conservatives try to return society to its former ways. A more liberal view of history is to see the past as dark and the future as bright. Liberals try to advance society into new ways. Both of these, however, make unbiblical assumptions. They assume the past or the future is better than the present, while the Bible says that the past has been fallen since the Garden of Eden and the future will be bright only for those who, through faith, will be part of God's Kingdom. This does not mean that we become overly-optimistic or overly jaded, it means that the Bible asks us to adopt a longer and more nuanced view of the story God is writing in human history.

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The God of Justice

God's Law for His people established the rules of a proper relationship with Him and its practical implications for right relationships among all people. In the Bible, peace, charity, and righteousness are all linked in the idea of justice. God continually confronted His people on their lack of justice for the poor and oppressed. As long as we view a human government, political party, or country as the representative of Christ and His Kingdom on earth we will be forced to justify its actions.

When we view Christ as the King of Kings we:

- Do not need to pretend human governments do no wrong.
- Take responsibility to enact God's justice in the world, while leaving judgment to His authority.
- Work alongside worldly governments to establish justice.
- Exercise our legal rights when necessary while we are also able to lay down our rights.

Regardless of the type of government, justice is the hallmark of good governing. But justice is defined by the true God.

The Church ought to be a resource to the governments around her, working within the laws, and serving her community.

The Church is instructed to obey (Rom. 13:1-7) and pray for (I Tim. 2:1-4) civil leaders.

We operate within laws that do not force us to disobey God, but finding the line on this takes wisdom and should be decided as a church body. We must pray for the persecuted believers who deal with this question daily.

Dual Citizens

We are citizens of this world and of our country and we are taught in the Bible to obey our earthly governing authorities (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7).

We are also citizens of heaven, subject ultimately to Christ as King (Phil. 1:27; 3:20; I Tim. 6:15). This creates a tension for the Church that will challenge our worldview, our safety, and our comfortability.

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Who is the greatest authority in my life?

Guarding Ourselves

The world system is not only in the governments of the world but in the value system of the world. The Church must guard herself against any value system that is not from the Bible.

Bear in mind that the unbiblical value systems that are the most dangerous are the ones you are likely the most comfortable and familiar with. American cultural values and church cultural values may or may not align with the biblical Gospel. If, as we learned, the gospel crosses cultural boundaries, it will have something to challenge in any given culture, including our own.

The world system pursues money and power, the subjects of God's Kingdom pursue justice and redemption. The world is cannibalistic, consuming others to feed themselves, while Christ is sacrificial, giving Himself for the good of others.

In the next session we will talk about a third meaning of "cosmos/"world" and how we engage our world with the gospel.



What is an American value that is not a gospel value?

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Do I pursue the same things the world pursues?

"We can learn to be pilgrims again, uneasy in American culture, as we should have been all along. But we are not pilgrims cringing in protective silos, waiting for the sound of trumpets in the sky. We are part of a kingdom, a kingdom we see from afar (Heb. 11:13) and a kingdom we see assembling itself all around us in miniature, in these little outposts of the future called the church."

- Russell D. Moore in *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*

Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on Biblical Justice

God loves justice. He commands His children to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Additionally, He chooses to accomplish His justice through the awareness, advocacy and action of His children, who work for justice in actively loving all vulnerable, marginalized and afflicted people. Is. 61:8 | Prov. 31:8, 9 | Prov. 24:11,12



How do we successfully live as "dual citizens" of heaven and earth (Phil. 3:20)?



How does your chosen person view the world system and role of government?

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Do something this week to care for or enjoy God's creation.

Look up a few officials who represent you in government and pray for them. Pray also for believers and missionaries living under repressive regimes.



I John 2:17

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.



Key Takeaways:

- Creation shows God's glory and we should take care of it.
- The world runs on a corrupt human system so God's people seek justice.
- We function in the world but are citizens of heaven first.

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THE GREAT COMMISSION

In Lesson Eight we saw two biblical meanings of “world”: the created universe and the corrupt world system of power. In Lesson Five we learned what salvation is. In this lesson we will discuss our mission to take that offer of God’s salvation to the whole world.

The third meaning of cosmos (“world”) is the people of the world. The Bible tells us not to love the world or the things of the world and it also tells us that God loved the world (John 3:16). This seems like a contradiction. We are not to love the world system, as we saw in Lesson Eight, but we are to love the people of the world. It is the people that God loves and gives Himself for.

We are commanded to love those who persecute us and use us (Mt. 5:43-48). God loves the world and us because He is love. We might try to love because of who others are, looking for things in them worthy of our love. We might try to love because of who we are – so that we think because we are the better person we will be loving. Rather, we love others because of who God is. We act like His children when we love like He does. A divine nature is born in us when we come to faith, and we cannot unconditionally love the people of the world without the Holy Spirit in us.

Are People Good and Society Bad?

If we are not to love the world system, but the world system is built by corrupt people, how can we then love corrupt people?

It is often said that people are naturally good, but society is bad. However, if you put good people together you don’t get a corrupt society.

We do not separate the world system from the individuals in it to the extent that we see them only as good victims of a bad society. Society is corrupt because it is made up of corrupt individuals who harm one another in various ways. However, those who are captive to, or deceived by, our enemy are not themselves our enemies.

Should We Hate the Sin but Love the Sinner?

Just as it is impossible to really separate the people of the world from the value system of the world, it is impossible to separate sin from people who are sinners.

A small view of sin comes from a small view of God and leads to a small view of His grace.

We tend to look for loopholes for why sin is not such a big deal in God’s eyes. We looked at the sin nature of all Mankind in Lesson Four and we must understand the seriousness of sin.

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"Sin is not an offense against the magistrate, or against the law, or against some conventional standard; sin goes farther and means more and strikes God in the heart, and thus shakes the universe. What it means in all the fullness of its significance we shall know in eternity. Meanwhile, I say of my Saviour, He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him. How, why, I know not: but I feel that it being so the sinner may call upon him too, and thus be saved."
-Joseph Parker (1830-1902)

A God who doesn't mind sin doesn't mind sinners. A God who doesn't mind sinners doesn't actually love sinners. Think of sins committed against you or others. Would you be able to call God good if He didn't care about those things? Would He be good if He didn't care that we all in our own ways have tried to kick Him off His rightful throne and put ourselves there as our own rulers? Could He be truly loving if He didn't care that it will rob our lives if we run our lives and that when we run our own lives, we inevitably find ways to suck the lives out of others without even the self-awareness to notice or care?

If God is good, He cares about sin and is wrathful toward sinners. It would be completely inaccurate and unbiblical to see God as passive about sin or only loving toward sinners.

In fact, Psalms 5:4-5 and 11:5 even use the word "hate" to describe God's wrath toward those whose rebellion against Him makes them arrogantly act like they deserve to stand before God and commit violence against others made in His image. Some of us have a very difficult time seeing God this way but we must understand two things: First, God does not hate irrevocably in the sense that He desires anyone's destruction. When a sinner's purpose is against God, His purpose will be against them. However, He ultimately desires their good, which comes only in their submission to Him.

Second, God does not owe anyone forgiveness and love. In Lesson Four we saw that angels/demons are not granted forgiveness after once rebelling against God. The fact that people do receive an offer of forgiveness is only because God is merciful in His nature. Some of us are surprised by His wrath but we should be much more surprised by His mercy. So, in one sense God's purpose is against sinners. In another sense His purpose is for them. He did not wait until they repented to love and make a sacrifice for them. Let's look at a few verses.

Romans 5:8 (NLT)

But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:20-21 (NLT)

God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

NOTES:

How we see God and His righteousness directly affects how we see ourselves and our world. These, in turn, affect how we will seek to bring the gospel message of salvation to our world.

When I more fully understand the gravity of the world's sin, which includes my own, I am more shocked by the grace of a righteous God who sends redeemed sinners to a sinful world because He desires to redeem them from their sin.

"Love the sinner, hate the sin" is well-meaning motto but while we try to separate a person from their sin in our opinion of them, God seeks to separate the two in actuality. He can see them as an enemy acting against Him as well as someone who He wants to come to repentance (II Pt. 3:9). To not overlook our sin but not destroy us, God the Father poured our sin and His wrath on Jesus.



Is it more difficult for me to come to terms with God's mercy or God's wrath?



Does a full discussion of God's wrath and love help inform your personal learning question?

How can you help give a full view of God's wrath and love to the person you will seek to share the gospel with?

NOTES:

Note: When we say "The Great Commission" we often refer to Matt. 28:19-20 but there are four other instances of Jesus telling His disciples to take the Gospel to the whole world: (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:44-49; Acts 1:8. Sometimes Jn. 17:18 is included).

Be Fruitful and Multiply

God's original command and intent for people was to fill and subdue the earth. Adam and Eve gave up that privilege when they rebelled against God. Yet God repeated the command after the flood. His intent for us had not changed (we saw this in the context of the earth in the last session). When Jesus gave His disciples the command to make disciples in what we call the Great Commission, there is an echo of the command to be fruitful and multiply, although now we are to multiply disciples of all the nations of the earth teaching them submission to Christ's authority rather than subduing the natural world under our authority.

GENESIS 1:28	MATTHEW 28:18-20
And God blessed them. And God said to them,	And Jesus came and said to them
Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth	Go therefore and make disciples
subdue it, and have dominion	All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you
over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."	of all nations

The Great Commission is not something Jesus came up with at the last minute or something that entered God's plan after Jesus's resurrection. It is woven throughout the entire Bible from Mankind's first rebellion against God to God using His people to be a light to all who didn't know Him to sending Jesus to be that light when God's people failed.

Jesus gave those who follow Him the same mission God has been accomplishing all along: to bring the whole world under His perfect Kingdom rule.

The Great Commission is the part of the Bible's storyline we live in. God is using us, the Church to extend His Kingdom by inviting all people into the truth. That is our mission and opportunity!

NOTES:



Do I consider the Great Commission my commission? Why or why not?

"Make Disciples"

In Lesson Six, we used this short definition of discipleship: helping others follow Jesus along with us. This can mean a believer who is learning to walk with Christ more closely or it can mean the process of using a relationship with a person who doesn't follow Christ to teach them His ways, inviting them to follow Him themselves as they see the Christian walk demonstrated in us.



What strengths and weaknesses do I have in the area of helping others follow Jesus? Is there someone specific I have an opportunity to disciple?



Does seeing discipleship as evangelism change the way you would approach your person with the gospel? Why or why not?

NOTES:

"Of all Nations"

Jesus's command to make disciples does not reference individuals but all the "nations". In Greek, the word is *ethne* (from which we get our word "ethnicity") and refers not to countries but cultures or "people groups". The Bible refers to the nations throughout its story and God desires them to bring their unique forms of worship into His Kingdom.

Revelation 5:9-10

And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth."

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!"

As God called the Jews to enter His Kingdom and only some accepted, He told them to go and call the Gentiles (nations). This purpose is woven from the beginning to the end of the Bible and is our mandate as the Church.

Across Time and Place: Contextualization

Because God desires the worship that each culture brings into the Kingdom, we must strive to preserve the cultures we introduce to the Gospel. Missionaries must help them find how their culture worships God and lives as the Church and also what aspects of their culture need to be changed by the Gospel. This is very difficult and takes great wisdom and care.

The Bible gives us much in the principles of being the Church but very little in the practices (see Lesson Six). In planting churches in other cultures, we should not ask them to adopt our culture or our church style, but find their own way using the principles of Gospel life.

Likewise, other cultures have something to teach us about how to understand the Gospel and be the Church.

There is a great difference between exporting the gospel and exporting culture. We seek to take the gospel message to peoples that do not have it. They will bring a unique vantage point to it and use cultural forms of church life. We do not need to, and should not, make people adopt our culture – rather, the Kingdom of God is adopting all cultures.

NOTES:

Do Missionaries Help or Hurt?

Some have accused missionaries of damaging the places they go. While this can at times be true, the data shows a different overall picture:

- Missionaries have promoted mass education, printing, and medical care.
- Missionaries mobilized reform of unjust colonial practices.
- Missionaries resisted racist views that were deemed scientific.

Missionaries have often received a poor reputation because of the actions of colonial governments, rather than the missionaries themselves. While many missionaries have disregarded the culture of the people they are witnessing to, God uses humans to do His will around the world.

Adapted from Robert Woodberry, "The Social Impact of Christian Missions," in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Fourth Edition, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 286-290.

"If missionaries hurt cultures, we would expect conditions to be worse where they've had more influence; but we find exactly the opposite."

-Robert Woodberry, University of Texas

We should also be aware that not all aid is helpful in the mission field since developing societies through empowerment is a better approach. This is more complicated and slower, however. Practical help should be centered around the needs local people see and in ways that work for them. Practical help is part of loving people with the gospel and can help build relationship as the gospel is being shared.

Evangelism Near and Far

"Missions" and "The Great Commission" are not terms found in the Bible. However, the example of missions in Acts is one of going out cross-culturally with the Gospel message to plant reproducing church communities. The Great Commission passages have Jesus telling his disciples to go to the nations of the world. From this we see that missions is not everything the Church does to be a witness to the world but the focused, strategic effort to reach the nations.

"Evangelism" is a term from the Bible. Evangelism can be anything we do to spread the Gospel message anywhere.

All missions is evangelism but not all evangelism is missions.

We should be evangelizing our nearest neighbors (the "unchurched" but there are people around the world who will never hear the Gospel if no one goes to them (the "unreached").

NOTES:

Calvary Murrieta's Definitions:

- **Evangelism**

Sharing our faith is revealing the good news to all, by specifically sharing the message and teaching of Jesus, and our own lives, for the purpose of salvation.

- **Outreach**

Outreach is reaching out to people both within and outside of your local community to share the love of Christ through connection and service. It is the practice of serving those around you and revealing who Jesus is to those who have not yet made the decision to follow Jesus.

- **Missions**

Missions is the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate to make disciples of all nations, as such it is the purposeful cross-cultural sending to an ethnolinguistic people group. The core of missions is the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate to an unreached people group, where the sound of the Gospel cannot be heard and a lack of access exists.

Some Missions Facts:

- 10% of the world believes Jesus is their savior and share with others.
- 33% identify as Christians but may not have any relationship with Jesus.
- 29% of the world has never heard of Jesus and has no access to the gospel.
- 3% of the world's missionaries go to areas without the gospel.
- Christians give less than 2% of their earnings to Christian causes. Of that, 6.4% is given to missions. 1% of all missions funding (\$450 Million) goes to places without the gospel.

State of the World/The Task Remaining. YouTube. Global Frontier Missions, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtHC7hXNoV8>.

In But Not of The World

Since its earliest days, the Church has struggled with what it means to be among the wider world while maintaining its witness and obedience to Christ.

We must neither become like the world by watering down our message nor hide the message behind a wall of irrelevancy.

We must learn the language, mentality, and needs of the world around us (and adapt as these change over time).

We must also care for others because they are made in God's image and we are His followers, not simply as a means to "getting them saved." We must love authentically, but our greatest act of love is to introduce them to Jesus.

NOTES:



Do I find myself more attached to the world or more in a Christian “bubble”? What could I change?



How well do you understand the language, mentality, and needs of the person you want to reach with the gospel?



How do we engage our world without compromising our faith?

Styles of Evangelism

We are all different, as are the people and situations we find ourselves evangelizing in. If you are sharing the truth in love, there is not necessarily a wrong way to share your faith. Consider trying one of these methods. Remember that it's ideal to build a relationship but this is not always an option. Find your style and fear not!

NOTES:

- **Confrontational** (Acts 2:36-39): sharing possibly uncomfortable spiritual truth directly.
- **Intellectual** (Acts 17:16-34): using logic to compare worldviews
- **Testimonial** (John 9): sharing what Christ has done in your life
- **Relational** (Mark 5:1-20): building friendships with the hope of engaging
- **Invitational** (John 4:29-30, 39-42): offering someone to your home or with you to a church gathering
- **Serving** (Acts 9:36-43): taking care of someone needs to show Jesus's heart.

Adapted from *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Mittenberg, Strobel, and Hybels. Zondervan, 1996.



Which of these sounds most like my style?



Which of these would connect best with the person you are trying to reach? What can you do if it's not your style?

Your Global Reach

As a part of the church, you have opportunities to pray, give, learn, or go globally. Consider taking a missions class offered at our church. Remember, God calls us into His bigger story! Take a step and see what He has in store. You may find yourself giving, praying, encouraging, going, hosting, mobilizing, informing, fundraising, creating, learning, or guiding for the furtherance of the Great Commission.

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Calvary Murrieta's Statement of Faith on Missions

We believe all followers of Jesus will commit to His instructions, by living intentionally in their participation of the mission of Christ to make disciples who in turn make disciples of all nations. We believe Christ sends us primarily to those who have not yet heard the Gospel. God desires the unique worship of all cultures, therefore we believe that authentic relationships that honor culture and customs advance the Kingdom. We believe the Bible instructs Jesus' disciples to model Christ's love, humility, and mercy, which demonstrate the gospel with our words and our lives. Rev. 5:9, 10 | Mt. 28:19, 20 | 1 Thess. 2:8 | Rom. 15:20 | Rom. 10:15



Is my view of evangelism overly global or overly local?



Of Honor/Shame, Innocence/Guilt, and Power/Fear, which best describes the mentality of the person or group you want to share the gospel with?



Go to Calvary Murrieta's Missions page to learn about our heart for missions and our supported missionaries.

Go to Global Frontier Missions' YouTube channel and watch:

- "Biblical Basis of Missions/God's Heart for the Nations"
- "What is a UPG?"
- "State of the World/The Task Remaining"
- "God's Heart for the Foreigner"

NOTES:

**Matthew 28:19**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

**Key Takeaways:**

- We are not to love the corrupt system of the world, but are to love the people of the world.
- Jesus' last command to us was to bring people from all cultures into His Kingdom.
- You have a part to play in the Great Commission.

NOTES:

ESCHATOLOGY

In this lesson we will look at what the Bible teaches about the end times. The study of the end times is properly called "eschatology." It is a difficult topic for several reasons, and its interpretation is highly technical.

Studying eschatology is worthwhile as it is given to encourage us and give shape to our lives as we look forward in hope.

Why Study Eschatology?

It is common for Christians to shy away from this area because of how difficult or even frightening it can be. We may be tempted to throw up our hands and stick to more clear areas in the Bible, but eschatology is there for a reason and we should not miss out on it. On the other hand, we can become so obsessed with discerning every detail of the end times that we miss the point or become distracted from more pressing concerns. We should not sell God short in saying that he cannot help us understand these things nor elevate ourselves too highly in thinking that we can master them all before they have come to pass.

The best purpose in studying eschatology, as with any biblical doctrine, is to know God better and see how he is working in ourselves and our world.

Those in the first century of the Church would have taken these teachings with a great deal of encouragement as they faced persecution, as would persecuted Christians today as well. In these promises, we see God's heart and care over His world and can trust Him as a result. The book of Revelation even says that those who read it will receive a special blessing.

"Eschatology is concerned with "the fulfillment of God's plan for human history." That fulfillment began at Jesus' first coming through the cross and resurrection and will be completed when Jesus returns. All Christians live between these two comings. Therefore the matrix of every Christian life is eschatological. This is why eschatology is potent, highly practical stuff. It provides massively helpful categories for understanding and living the Christian life."
-Stephen Witmer

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Do you lean toward ignoring eschatology or obsessing over it? What have been the results in your life?



What are some blessings of studying the end times?

A Mysterious Patchwork

Any given biblical doctrine is a network of truth built from across the Bible, but the information on the end times more than any other doctrine is spread across the whole of Scripture. That is, we build our understanding of the end times from so many places that give us only a piece of the picture. Because of this, eschatology is one of the most disagreed upon and complex doctrines of the Bible. Putting the elements in a chronological order and making theological sense of them is very difficult. We should have grace on ourselves and those with whom we disagree.



What is it like for you to not have certainty around biblical teaching?

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Difficult Choices In Eschatology

Symbolic vs. Literal Every Christian interpreter of eschatology agrees that some things are described in symbolic language and some are literal. However, there is much disagreement on which and how much material is symbolic. It is important to remember that those who see mostly symbolism in the text agree that the spiritual truths remain.

Israel vs. the Church The majority of biblical prophecy centers around Israel, while much also refers to other nations, as well as the “saints” or Church. It can be difficult at points to know where to focus. See below on dispensationalism and covenant theology for more on this point.

Historical vs. Future All interpreters also agree that some of the end times prophecies have been fulfilled and some are still in our future. However, there is a range from seeing almost everything as being in the past (the preterist reading) to seeing almost everything as being in the future (the futurist reading). See below on “hills and mountains” for more on this point.

Three Main Views

There are three main schools of thought on how to interpret the Bible’s end times material. Each is named for the placing of the millennial kingdom in comparison with the return of Christ. Each has implications for how a believer will live and interact with their world. All three have very long histories and are respectable approaches. None is outside of Christianity or heretical as they all look at the Bible as God’s Word to us and see Christ returning to conquer evil and establish His reign.

We should not divide over these approaches, but should understand them and their implications.

It is also important to know that many individual theologians will differ on interpretations of specific passages and may even pick and choose different items as being fulfilled or still future.



NOTES:

- The earliest school of thought.
- Jesus returns before the millennium and He can return at any time.
- Usually includes a belief in the Rapture, a view not held in other schools of thought.
- Calvary Chapel is Premillennial.
- Motto: "We are preparing for the millennium."

Amillennialism



- Second school of thought historically, dominant after the fourth century
- There is no literal millennial kingdom. Sees the eschatological material as spiritually true but symbolic, describing the Church Age. It does not look for a literal interpretation.
- Motto: "We are experiencing the Millennium."

Postmillennialism



NOTES:

- More modern school of thought.
- Jesus will return after the millennial kingdom period. The Church must establish God's authority on earth which will prepare the way for Christ to return and inherit it.
- Motto: "We are bringing the Millennium."



What are some implications of belief in each of these schools of thought?

Some Definitions

- **Preterism:**

The belief that nearly all prophecies we think about as being for the end times have already been fulfilled, mainly in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

- **Futurism:**

The opposite of preterism, futurism sees almost all end times prophecies as still yet to be fulfilled. Futurists may see a few as having been fulfilled already.

- **Historicism:**

Similar to preterism, historicism sees the end times prophecies as being progressively fulfilled throughout church history. Some are still to be fulfilled. Historicism is something of a middle ground between preterism and futurism.

- **Progressive Fulfillment:**

The idea that prophecies are fulfilled in stages or levels. This reading looks at an earlier and smaller fulfillment leading to a later and final version of the fulfillment.

- **Already-Not-Yet:**

Somewhat similar to progressive fulfillment, this is the idea that a situation can be in place in part

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– and therefore considered officially and spiritually true, while awaiting the full establishment later.



How might we match each of these with tendencies to pre-, post-, and amillennialism?

Contemporary and Future Prophecy

These interpretive views bring up a common issue in dealing with prophetic passages. There is often a question of whether something was spoken for the time it was written (contemporary prophecies), for the future in that time (historical), or still in our future today (future prophecy). Here are some helpful rules:

- “Prophecy” means that God is speaking a specific message through a person. Do not assume that it is always for the distant future.
- Prophecies to people groups only contemporary at the time of writing should be understood as for that time. For example, God sending a message to Moab should be understood as having been fulfilled in the past.
- As stated above, some prophecies are fulfilled in part before they are fulfilled in full.

Progressive Fulfillment

One of the most helpful concepts to understand about biblical prophecy and the end times is what is called “progressive fulfillment.” This is the idea that some prophecies have a more near-term and limited version which builds to the later fuller or final version. One helpful metaphor is to think of nearby hills and distant mountains.

Like a hill being a smaller version of the mountain in the distance behind it, many prophecies are fulfilled in segments which increase in spiritual meaning.

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Similarly, some seem to almost have dual meanings or fulfillments. On one hand, this can make interpreting prophecy very complicated, but also clears up many areas where the Bible gives seemingly different versions of the same prophecy. A related term is “progressive revelation.” This is the concept of God through the Bible adding information to fill in the gaps of a prophecy.

One example is the “Seed.”

Gen. 3:15: God says that a “seed” of Eve will defeat evil.

Gen. 12:3: This blessing will come through Abraham’s descendants.

Gal. 3:16: The fulfillment is Christ, a single descendant of Abraham.

Look up the following verses and see examples of how the prophetic fulfillment comes in stages.

Regathering Israel:

Deut. 30:1-5; Is. 11:11-12; Rom. 11:25-26

Abomination of Desolation:

Daniel 11:31 (speaking of Antiochus Epiphanes IV in between the Old and New Testaments);
Matt. 24:15

The Coming of Elijah:

Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14; Matt. 17:11

Resurrection:

1 Cor. 15:20; Matt. 27:52-53; Eph. 2:4-7; Rev. 20:4-6

Kingdom:

Mark 1:14-15; 2 Tim. 4:18; Rev. 11:15

The initial fulfillment may be more literal and its events may appear greater than the later fulfillment. However, the final fulfillment is always spiritually greater. It is often more mysterious and needs to be explained or revealed to us.

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DISCUSS

What are some ways this idea of progressive fulfilment is helpful in Bible interpretation as well as in growing in Christ?

How much should we watch for or expect prophecy to be fulfilled in our time? In other words, what advice would you give someone who is looking in current world events for the fulfillment of biblical prophecy?

70 Weeks of Daniel

Many are interested in the seventy weeks described in Daniel. In brief, Daniel writes about a series of "weeks" which is laid out in Daniel 9. Daniel says that seventy "weeks" or "sevens" (really meaning sets of years) will pass until the fulfillment of several elements of God bringing righteousness to bear on sin (Dan. 9:24).

First seven weeks = 49 years starting from Jerusalem would be rebuilt.

Next 62 weeks = 434 years until "Messiah shall be cut off" (Jesus crucified).

Last week = 7 years (Dan. 9:27).

There is disagreement on whether there is a gap of time between the first 69 weeks and the final week. Dispensationalists see a gap and interpret the final week as the seven years of the Tribulation with the figure of abomination as being about the Antichrist. Others see no gap and interpret this event as the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Both require explaining a gap in time rather than seeing all the weeks as precisely following one another. Essentially, they are both saying that the "schedule" includes the effects of Jesus' death as a sort of "unlisted" part of the timeline.

NOTES:

The Last Days

While it is simplest to see the “end times” as entirely a future reality, the Bible is clear that we are already in what it calls the “last days” (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2). All the mounting prophecies of the Messiah have been fulfilled in Jesus.

God is working now in a way He had not in all of human history – indwelling His people and allowing them to participate in His purposes like never before. There is nothing we are waiting on but the return of Jesus.

However, the Bible also speaks of the “Last Day” as still in the future for us. This refers to the Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord

The Old Testament uses the term “Day of the Lord” when speaking of the future time in which God judges and conquers evil. “Day” here does not refer to a literal 24-hour day, but is used similarly to our phrase “back in my day.” It means the future time when God fully exercises His rule.

A parallel phrase in the New Testament is “the Day of Christ.” Some see this as different from the more sinister “Day of the Lord”, referring rather to Christ uniting with His Church and weighing our rewards without condemnation. But, as Jesus is the Lord, and both refer to judgment, it is also reasonable to see them as the same thing – the conquest of evil under the reign of Jesus.

Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology

The two major interpretations of the relationship of the Church and Israel are found in dispensationalism and covenantal theology. Calvary Chapel teaches from a dispensational perspective. This school of thought believes that God has dealt with humanity in different modes - or along different lines – throughout history. These are cycles of failure as well as chapters in God's story.

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The classic version is:

DISPENSATION	DESCRIPTION
Innocence (Before the fall, Gen. 1-3)	God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat the forbidden fruit but they did and fell into status of sin.
Conscience (Fall to flood, Gen. 3-8)	Guided only by corrupt human conscience, mankind spirals into wickedness until God brings the flood.
Human Government (Flood to Patriarchs, Gen. 9-11)	God institutes human government after the flood, but this results in the Tower of Babel.
Promise (Patriarchal Period, Gen. 12–Ex. 19)	God promises great blessings to Abraham and his descendants, but they end up captives in Egypt.
Law (Moses to Jesus, Ex. 20–Acts 2)	God describes the way to live in right relationship with Him and all people but Israel disobeys and goes into exile.
Grace (Church Age, Acts 2–Rev. 19)	Jesus' salvation creates the Church Age in which the gospel goes to all nations until Jesus returns.
Kingdom (Millennial reign into eternity, Rev. 20–21)	Christ reigns over a kingdom in which Israel receives His promises and all peoples join in on their blessings.

Note: A more current version of dispensationalism is somewhat less rigid on these, seeing more overlap and a smoother transition along them.

Covenantal theology looks instead to a number of covenants between humanity and God which outline the redemptive story of history. Like dispensationalism, there is a variance among different Christians on how these should be laid out and how many should be included. Generally, the covenants are described like this:

COVENANT	DESCRIPTION
The Covenant of Works (Made at creation)	God promised life and blessing to Adam and humanity on the condition of perfect obedience.
Covenant of Grace (Made at the fall)	After the Fall, God promised salvation by grace through faith in the coming Redeemer rather than through human obedience.
Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12, 15, 17)	God promised land, descendants, and a blessing transferred through Abraham's descendant(s) to all the world..
Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 19–24)	The requirement to relate rightly to God through the Law ultimately reveals the need for grace..
Davidic Covenant (II Samuel 7)	God promises David will have a king always on the throne.
New Covenant (Jer. 31)	God promises to write His law on His people's hearts and that they will all know Him and have their sins forgiven.

Note: The Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants are sometimes described as a further list and sometimes as part of the Covenant of Grace.

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The Church and Israel

The key issue, and key difference, between these two approaches is the question of the relationship of the Church and Israel. To be very brief, covenantal theology sees Israel as replaced by the Church (called “replacement theology”) so that God has made a new people out of all peoples, including Israel. Covenant theology sees all promises to Israel as being fulfilled in the Church and do not believe in a future role for ethnic Israel.

Dispensationalists believe that God is instead forming a kingdom of all peoples with Israel given a special place and role. They see a promise in Rom. 11 of a future revival of a huge number of Jews who will come to faith in Jesus. Dispensationalism is the reason many evangelicals look at the modern state of Israel as highly important.

Dispensationalists believe that:

1. God made specific promises to Israel.
2. Those promises were unconditional.
3. The New Testament speaks of their special blessings and promises as being still in effect and that God has not rejected Israel.
4. Those promises have not yet been completely fulfilled.
5. God always keeps His promises.
6. Therefore, Israel must still have a future role in God’s plan.

It is important to understand that this is a radically oversimplified description given to introduce you to these ideas. The different sub-theories are complex, and it is very common for individual thinkers to mix-and-match pieces of these theories, much like with the preterist, historicist, and futurist frameworks.

Basic Futurist Outline

There is no truly basic way to outline the unfolding events of the end times, or to do so without choosing a school of thought. However, this is a basic premillennial, futurist outline of the events of the end times.

NOTES:

FUTURIST OUTLINE OF ESCHATOLOGY



*This outline represents a basic Futurist view of end-time events.
Scripture references are key passages that support each event.*

Views On The Tribulation

The idea of a future, literal period of Great Tribulation is an idea only within premillennialism. Taken from areas of Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation, it is the period of horrific destruction between the Rapture and Jesus' return. There are three ideas of where the Church will be during this time.

Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory: The Church will be taken up in advance of the Tribulation and will be safely with Jesus throughout it. Many unbelievers will come to faith during this time, be martyred for it, and join their raptured brethren when they die. Calvary Chapel teaches from a pre-tribulational viewpoint.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture Theory:

Half-way through the tribulation (3.5 years), the believers will be rescued in the Rapture.

Post-Tribulation Rapture Theory:

The Church will endure the whole seven years of the Tribulation and many will be martyred. They

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will be rescued when Jesus returns, caught up to meet Him as He descends to earth to defeat His enemies. A similar, but lesser known theory, is “pre-wrath rapture”. This is the idea that the believers will endure the Tribulation but then be raptured just before Jesus exacts punishment on the wicked.

Reasons to believe in a pre-tribulation rapture:

(Taken from “The Case for a Pretribulational Rapture” by Charlie Campbell.)

1. The Bible says that God has not appointed us, His church, to His wrath.
2. Revelation 3:10-11 says the church will be kept from the time of the Tribulation.
3. The church is not mentioned at all in Revelation 6–18, the time of the great Tribulation.
4. Jesus’ promise in John 14 to return and take believers back to His Father’s house supports a pre-tribulational rapture.
5. A post-tribulational rapture makes the rapture completely pointless.
6. The New Testament does not warn of an impending Tribulation for church-age believers.

Resurrection

The resurrection is God’s raising of the dead – the righteous to reward and the unrighteous to judgment.

We can see this in three stages:

1. The resurrection of all current dead at the time of the rapture
2. The resurrection of those who died during the Tribulation at its end.
3. The resurrection of unbelievers after the Millennium, when they will be judged.

The resurrection is often misunderstood or even ignored because we tend to think only of souls going to heaven. Keep in mind that we are talking about the resurrection of bodies. As with everything in this lesson, the different schools of thought have varying views of the resurrection – mainly around how many stages and when they take place.

Millennium

The book of Revelation describes a thousand year reign of Christ on earth. Recall that Christians

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either believe that this is during the Church Age, in the future, or only a metaphor. When the New Testament speaks about the "Kingdom", it is referring primarily to the Millennial reign.

New Earth

Following the Millennium, Revelation describes a period in which, for unrevealed reasons, God allows Satan to create havoc on earth before God creates a new heavens and earth. Some see this as God completely destroying and recreating and others see it as Him restoring or renewing this earth. This is referred to in Isaiah as well. It is important to understand that heaven and eternity is not in a cosmic spiritual realm but on a physical earth with a physical Jesus in glorified resurrected bodies like His forever.

The Bible describes a new Jerusalem, an enormous cube-shaped city, in which all peoples gather in worship to Jesus. The Tree of Life, not seen since the Garden of Eden, gives fruit to heal these nations.

Reimagining Heaven

We have inherited a belief about heaven that comes more from Greek philosophy than from the Bible. Heaven is not a permanent ethereal realm where souls live on after death.

God designed the world that existed before the Fall and will accomplish His original purpose. God's redeemed world is, if anything, a greater version of the pre-fall original.

FIRST CREATION	NEW EARTH
Some natural harmony in a chaotic world	No natural chaos or danger
Whole relationships with God and others	Being like God from knowing Him much more fully, intimacy with others that goes beyond the level of marriage.
Work and Purpose	Nations bringing their glory (culture and work)
Multitude of people	All believers who ever lived, of all peoples
Presence of God occasionally	God present always
Physical bodies	Glorified physical bodies

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The Bible and Jewish thinkers also have three “heavens” in mind. The first is the atmosphere or sky, the second is what we call “space”, and the third is the realm of God. The Bible lays out “heaven” in two stages: a current heaven where God dwells with the souls of those who have died with saving faith and a coming heaven which is God dwelling forever with all resurrected believers embodied on a new, physical earth. We should understand that the second heaven is what is made new along with the earth and God dwells on that new earth with us, effectively making it the heavenly realm.



DISCUSS

What are some ways that considering heaven helps us live well now?

Newspaper Exegesis

Because we are watching for the elements surrounding the End Times, we run the risk of what has been called “newspaper exegesis.” This refers to searching current events and assuming they are the fulfilment of biblical prophecies about the End Times. This has often led to mistaken application such as naming various world leaders as the Antichrist. This is also not a new phenomenon. The early Church saw Rome as the wicked kingdom of Babylon described in Revelation until Emperor Constantine began promoting Christianity. They had to change their eschatology as a result, and most turned to amillennialism.

There are three basic problems that lead to this kind of interpretation:

- Assuming that events must be related to the End Times.
- Reducing the world to the parts we can see and understand.
- Simplifying the complex timeline of the End Times, often looking for things later in the timeline as being in the near future.

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What are some ways that considering heaven helps us live well now?

Prepared but Patient

Jesus tells a parable of ten virgins who must be prepared since they do not know the hour of the Bridegroom's arrival. We should examine our lives concerning whether we have the saving trust in Him that will justify us when we are judged. We should consider if how we are spending our time and effort is contributing to God's Kingdom. We should be observant of trends and events in our world. But we also must be patient.

We do not know how soon Jesus is returning and we are called to advance the gospel around the world, not to obsess over events.

A key part of being prepared is to remember that even believers' lives will be weighed and judged (see Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 1 Pt. 4:5). While believers are justified and will by no means be condemned (Rom. 8:1), we must live our lives now in preparation for the weighing and rewarding of our lives.



Do you need to live with more of an eye toward Jesus' return or do you need to be more patient, focusing on the present? What is one thing you can do to move that direction?

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What are some ways that considering heaven helps us live well now?

An Unexpected Comfort

Studying the End Times is often disconcerting. However, it is meant to be a comfort to us when we see that God has already written the story of history and that He will ultimately triumph over all evil.

Eschatology is important particularly for persecuted Christians who suffer great injustice, but is just as encouraging for any who need to be reminded that God is always on the throne.



What might make people uncomfortable when studying the End Times?



What are your feelings studying eschatology? Have they changed at all after completing this lesson?

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Key Takeaways:

- There are many interpretations of eschatology, but we should agree that Christ is returning and will make all things right.
- Biblical prophecy unfolds in progressive fulfillments.
- We should live in preparation of Jesus' return.
- Heaven will be the physically resurrected believers on a new earth with God forever.



Identify one way that you could live differently in light of this lesson and make one step in that direction this week.



Revelation 22:20

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

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COURSE CONCLUSION

Congratulations on completing Foundations! You have put in a lot of time, work, and thought. Hopefully you have grown in your knowledge of God and, built relationship with someone in class, and moved forward in your personal learning goals.

The following are some concluding questions as you end the class.



What was the most valuable thing I learned?

What do I want to learn more about?

Have there been any changes in my heart or life since the beginning of the class?

What area(s) might God want to change in me?

What relationships in my life can help me grow spiritually going forward?



How have you moved forward in addressing your personal learning question?

What will help you move forward to address this question now that the class is finished?

How have you moved forward in finding how you could connect the gospel to someone in your life?

How can you move forward in this now that the class is finished?

You will not be done discovering who God is and what a life of following Christ is until you live with Him forever. In this life, we live as disciples, finding ourselves more greatly hungering for our God and more greatly trusting Him to satisfy us. You are not done learning, living, being challenged, suffering, and growing. Look for other Calvary Classes in the future and may our God bless you and may you journey on with Him in new and beautiful ways.



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