

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions



GodSaidSo Press

Table Of Contents:

Lesson 1: Who Is God?

Lesson 2: Where Are We Going And Why Are We Here?

Lesson 3: What Is The Bible?

Lesson 4: What Is Sin?

Lesson 5: Who Is Jesus?

Lesson 6: What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Lesson 7: What Is The Church?

Lesson 8: What Does God Expect Of Me?

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Written by Eric Krieg

Watch video @ WWW.GODSAIDSO.COM/DGW43

Lesson 1: Who Is God?

There are certain essential questions you must have answered correctly to please God. The purpose of this series is to provide you (no matter your background) with a good spiritual foundation so you can make the necessary decisions relating to your salvation. For this series, picture a ladder with eight rungs, with each one serving to reach the next. You need to evaluate if you have truly believed and obeyed the Bible's answers to each of the questions we'll be considering. In this first lesson, we will consider God. For, to understand anything about life, we must understand something about the one who created it. Although we cannot fully comprehend God, we can understand what He has revealed about Himself (through His creation and through His words in the Bible).

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about the existence of God and His characteristics.

God Was, Is, And Always Will Be (Revelation 4:8)

God was. The Bible begins by asserting the existence of God (Genesis 1:1), as He was always in existence. God is everlasting (Genesis 21:33; Psalm 90:2). He did not have a beginning point and there was no time He did not exist.

God is. God continues to exist today. There has never been a point at which God ceased to exist. For, God exists at every point during our lives, no matter how bad things seem to be in this world. And, God will never leave or abandon us (Hebrews 13:5).

God will always be. God will have no end (Genesis 21:33; Psalm 90:2). This can be a difficult concept to grasp, but one that is true nonetheless. God will never die, cease to exist, be overthrown, or defeated. And, those who serve Him faithfully will spend eternity with Him!

How can we know there is a God? We can know there is a God because God has revealed Himself to His creation! First, He has revealed Himself to His creation *through* His creation (through what He has made, Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-21). Consider the marvelous and complex design of the universe. Consider how large our single galaxy is and how this earth is perfectly designed to support life (with small alterations making life impossible, i.e. the gravitational pull, the atmosphere, the distance to the sun, the tilt on its axis, etc.). Then, consider how

marvelously complex the design of the human body is (from the skeleton, to the organs, to the muscles, to the cartilage, to the vessels and arteries, to the single cell). With all this tremendous design all around us, the question every person must answer is: Could all this design just happen? Could it randomly evolve over millions and billions of years? Ultimately, could it have come from nothing? Scientific laws disprove the idea that this design could come from nothing and spontaneously happen (i.e. the first law of thermodynamics).

What does your own reasoning conclude? Suppose you were walking along the beach and found a computer buried in the sand. How would you suppose it got there? Would you believe it accidentally evolved over many years or would you suppose someone must have designed and made it? Certainly, just as it is unreasonable to conclude a computer could spontaneously come into existence, it is unreasonable that the universe, the earth, and life on it could be the product of chance and originate from nothing! For, just as every design reveals there was a designer, every painting reveals there was a painter, every poem reveals there was a poet, every building reveals there was an architect, every automobile reveals there was an engineer, and every baby reveals there were parents; everything in this universe reveals there is a Designer who is behind it all!

Second, God revealed Himself to His creation through His word (the Bible). The Bible tells us many things about God's nature, His creation, His plan, etc. and is no ordinary book! For one, the Bible is completely accurate in its claims that people did not discover until much later. How can this possibly be explained except that God was behind the words written in it? For example, God said that the life of the flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). Yet, as recently as the 1700s, it was common medical practice to bleed people to try and make them well.

Also, the Bible contains many prophecies that demonstrate God is real. For, while people cannot make hundreds (or thousands) of predictive statements about the future with 100% accuracy, the Bible does exactly that. For example, scholars have estimated there are over 300 prophecies made and fulfilled about Jesus. He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 22). He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1). He would be crucified (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38). His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34). God is the only one who could accurately foretell all these things!

Three Beings possess the nature of being God. These three are often referred to as the "Godhead" or "Trinity." They are: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each one possesses the attributes of being God but has a different role/function. And, these three are one God in that they are all perfectly united (i.e. same purpose, same characteristics). Notice how the Scriptures show these three linked together yet existing as separate Beings (Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew

28:19-20). Then, notice other passages that identify these three as being God (John 1:1; Acts 5:3-4). So, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all possess the characteristics of being God. These characteristics are: Eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present.

Some Characteristics of God

He is all-powerful (omnipotent). There is nothing outside of God's power to do or control (Revelation 19:6; Romans 1:20; Genesis 1:3). This is one of the characteristics that is unique to God. Thankfully, God only uses His power for good.

He is all-knowing (omniscient). There is nothing God cannot know (Isaiah 46:9-10; Romans 11:33-36). This is one of the characteristics that is unique to God. God is even able to foretell future events before they happen and how something will end.

He is ever-present (omnipresent). There is nothing God does not see (Proverbs 15:3; Psalm 139:1-12). This is one of the characteristics that is unique to God. There is no place we can hide ourselves from God's sight.

He is holy. God is completely separated from everything that is evil (Revelation 4:6-8; 1 John 1:5; Habakkuk 1:13). Whenever people sin, they separate themselves from this holy God (Isaiah 59:1-2). And, He expects all people to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

He is loving. Because of sin, people cannot do anything to save themselves. But, thank God that He loved mankind enough to send His Son to save us from sin (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4). This is the greatest love anyone has ever shown us (Romans 5:8)!

He is gracious and merciful. God's grace is seen in that He gives us an opportunity to have eternal life in Heaven (it is God giving us what we do not deserve; Titus 2:11). God's mercy is seen in that He gives us the opportunity to avoid eternal punishment in Hell (it is God not giving us what we do deserve, Ephesians 2:4-7).

He is impartial. One day, we will all be judged by God (2 Corinthians 5:10). Yet, His judgment will be entirely righteous and fair (Romans 2:5-11). He will not be bribed or unjustly swayed by anything or anyone.

He is jealous. God has always demanded to come first (Exodus 20:5). It is unacceptable for anyone to serve and worship any besides the one true and living God. He will not accept second place in your life, nor should He have to (Matthew 6:24).

He is good and severe. Although some say God could never condemn anyone to Hell, God promises to punish those who reject Him. He will only save those who obey Him (Hebrews 10:31; Hebrews 12:29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Romans 11:22).

He is faithful. We can fully trust God, knowing that He will never deceive or mislead us. We can trust Him enough to give our entire lives in His service, knowing He will reward those who do so (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Titus 1:2).

He is patient. Although God could send Jesus to destroy the world the moment we sin, He chooses to wait and endure the wrongs we commit against Him. He does this because He wants us to repent and be saved (2 Peter 3:9-10). Yet, His patience is not endless.

He is unchanging. God is the same today as He has always been and will always be (James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8). And, the word He has spoken endures forever (1 Peter 1:25). This consistency allows us to find stability in a world full of change and fully trust in Him.

Conclusion

This is the God of the universe – the one true and living God! Fulfilling your true purpose in life depends on you having an accurate understanding of who this great and awesome God is!

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 1: Who Is God?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. God Was, Is, And Always Will Be

What does the Bible teach concerning God's existence in the past?

What does the Bible teach concerning God's existence today?

What does the Bible teach concerning God's existence in the future?

How can you know that there is a God?

What three Beings possess the nature of being God?

2. Some Characteristics Of God

What does it mean for God to be all-powerful?

What does it mean for God to be all-knowing?

What does it mean for God to be ever-present?

What does it mean for God to be holy?

What does it mean for God to be loving?

What does it mean for God to be gracious and merciful?

What does it mean for God to be impartial?

What does it mean for God to be jealous?

What does it mean for God to be good and severe?

What does it mean for God to be faithful?

What does it mean for God to be patient?

What does it mean for God to be unchanging?

Lesson 2: Where Are We Going And Why Are We Here?

Have you ever considered what God has to say about the true meaning of life and what happens after death? The Bible is the only way we can know the true answers to these questions. While we can observe that everyone dies physically, it is impossible to observe what (if anything) happens on the other side of death. Since the Bible is the only book that accurately gives the answers, it is also the only book that can accurately describe the true purpose of our earthly lives. This is an essential question, then, because it applies to every person and because it dramatically impacts the way we live on earth.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about the soul, what happens after death, and the purpose of life on earth.

The Soul Of Man

Mankind has a soul that survives physical death. There is more to a person's existence than the physical body. For, there is also a spiritual part to our existence (a "soul"). One reason this is significant is because this soul survives physical death. In fact, physical death occurs whenever the soul departs from the body (James 2:26; Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Created in the image of God. People are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). But, being created in the image of God does not refer to a physical resemblance. Rather, since God is spirit (John 4:24), this means that mankind has also been created as a spiritual being (a soul).

Passages demonstrating this truth. First, consider Luke 16:22-23. Two individuals (the rich man and Lazarus) are each shown to have a continued existence after death.

Second, consider Luke 20:37-38. Whenever God claimed to *be* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (in Exodus 3), the necessary implication is that they

continued to live (even though they had been dead for many years) – because God is not the God of the dead.

Third, consider Luke 23:43. Although Jesus and the thief were both about to die physically, Jesus said they would continue to exist in a place called “paradise” that day.

Fourth, consider 2 Corinthians 5:1-8. Paul speaks of the physical body as a tent (a temporary place to live), whereas he also speaks of having a building from God (a permanent structure). So, there is a spiritual body after this physical one.

Fifth, consider Ecclesiastes 12:7. When the physical body experiences death, it will turn back to dust (Genesis 2:7). But, the spiritual existence will continue.

Where Are We Going?

Many different people living on this earth. Why are there so many people living on earth? Why are we all different? Do we all have the same purpose or do we each have a different purpose? While there are many differences between people, there are two major similarities. First, we have each been given a soul that survives this earth. Second, we will all die, be judged, and spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. All this helps to demonstrate we have the same purpose in living on earth.

Death. We will all die someday. In fact, we each have an appointment with death (only, we do not know when that appointment is, Hebrews 9:27). James put the duration of our lives into perspective by comparing them to a vapor that appears for a short time before vanishing away (James 4:13-16). When you die, all the functions of your physical body that work to sustain your life stop. Plus, this is the point when your physical body and soul separate (James 2:26). And, your physical body begins to turn back into dust (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Hades. Those who die before Jesus comes back will go to Hades. This is the realm of the dead (where those who have died are today). Hades has two sections (Luke 16:23-26). First, there is a section of comfort (referred to as Abraham’s side/bosom and paradise, Luke 23:43). Lazarus, the repentant thief on the cross, and Jesus went to this place when they died (Luke 23:43; Acts 2:31). This is a peaceful place that is free from every kind of suffering. Second, there is a section of torment. The rich man went to this place when he died. This is a place of torment in the flame, where not even a drop of water is given to offer a moment’s relief from the agony. Then, between these two sections is a great chasm so that those in one section cannot go to the other, as their fate has already been sealed at this point (Galatians 6:7-8). If you die before Jesus returns, you will go to one of

these two sections of Hades. There, you will experience a conscious spiritual existence while you wait for the final Judgment at the coming of Christ.

The coming of Christ. Christ is coming again (John 14:3). But, nobody on this earth knows when His coming will be (Matthew 24:36, 42-44; 25:13). Consider three main things that will happen when Jesus comes. First, the dead will rise (John 5:28-29), as those who are in Hades (both comfort and torment) will be brought out (Revelation 20:13). Second, everyone will be judged (John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:13). Third, this earth and everything on it will be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12). You will take part in the return of Christ and this great resurrection! Therefore, you must live preparing for this day!

The Judgment. Everyone will stand before Jesus Christ and be judged when He comes again. The Judgment scene is pictured in Matthew 25:31-33, with verse 34 describing what will be said to those on His right hand and verse 41 to those on His left hand. Nothing you do on this earth will escape God's attention and you will be fairly judged for it all – both good and evil (2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Proverbs 15:3). The standard Jesus will use to judge you is the law He has given in the Bible (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).

Eternity. There are only two options as to where each person will spend eternity, based on the judgment each one receives. One option is eternity in Heaven. This is described as eternal life (Matthew 25:46), a beautiful place that is a true paradise (Revelation 21:1-22:5), a place without pain and death (Revelation 21:4), a place with no evil (Revelation 21:27), and a place where you will forever be with God (John 14:3). The other option is eternity in Hell. This is described as eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46), a place represented by fire and darkness (Revelation 21:8; Matthew 25:30; Mark 9:47-48), and a place where you will be forever separated from God (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Since you will spend eternity in one of these two places, you must seriously evaluate where you want to live (as there is a clear connection between how you live and where you will spend eternity). Therefore, it is important to make up your mind right now to do whatever God says you must to go to Heaven!

Why Are We Here?

Many suggested answers. Most people make life about things on this earth that will not last. But, we should learn from Israel's King Solomon when he wrote about his search for true meaning and happiness in the book of Ecclesiastes. Although Solomon seemed to have all the best this life could offer (wealth, pleasures, knowledge, relationships, etc.), he concluded it was all futile

(meaningless) because he was going to die and everything he worked to accumulate would be left behind (Ecclesiastes 1:2-4; 2:9-11).

Like Solomon, many suggest a variety of things as the true meaning of life – and they are all ultimately meaningless! First, while wealth can be used to do some good things, it will not do you any good when you die (1 Timothy 6:7). Second, while many pursue their own happiness, they are focused on temporary earthly things that don't last (Hebrews 11:24-26). Third, while some live to see the most sights and experience the most pleasures, none of this will benefit you when you die. Fourth, while family is a great blessing, every member of the family is dying (and some may have died already). Fifth, while friends are a great blessing, all your friends are also dying (and some may have died already). Surely, if there is no greater meaning to your earthly life than these, your life is meaningless!

Our magnificent purpose. Our magnificent purpose is to devote ourselves entirely to God so we will bring glory to Him! Consider the two-fold purpose Solomon expressed in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. First, you must fear God. This is a deep, reverential fear for God that is coupled with being afraid of disobeying Him. For, your life is about honoring and glorifying God in everything you do (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Second, you must keep God's commandments. Keeping God's commandments in the Bible is essential to showing your deep respect for God and glorifying Him in your life. For, God has given you free will so you can either choose to live for Him or not (Matthew 7:13-14; 1 John 5:3). So, are you living according to this magnificent purpose? Only those who live according to this purpose will spend eternity in Heaven!

Conclusion

In recognition of where you are going, you should determine to live according to your magnificent purpose! Prepare yourself today for what is waiting for you after your earthly life ends.

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 2: Where Are We Going And Why Are We Here?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. The Soul Of Man

Does mankind have a soul that survives physical death?

What does it mean for mankind to have been created in the image of God?

Briefly explain the following passages which demonstrate the truth that mankind has a soul that survives physical death.

1. Luke 16:22-23 –

2. Luke 20:37-38 –

3. Luke 23:43 –

4. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 –

2. Where Are We Going?

Does everyone on earth have a different purpose? What are some similarities between those who live on earth? What is the significance of these similarities?

What does the Bible teach about death?

What does the Bible teach about Hades?

What does the Bible teach about the coming of Christ?

What does the Bible teach about the Judgment?

What does the Bible teach about eternity?

3. Why Are We Here?

List and discuss some commonly *suggested* answers to this question:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What is mankind's magnificent purpose in life? Discuss each one of the following points.

1. Fear God –

2. Keep His commandments –

Are you living your life according to this magnificent purpose?

Lesson 3: What Is The Bible?

You see a copy of the Bible many places you go. You may even own one (or more). But, what is so special about the Bible and makes it different from other books? Is it important and relevant to your purpose in life and to others? If so, how? There is something special about the Bible that makes it different from every other book. In fact, it is essential because it is fully authoritative to tell people what is absolutely right and wrong!

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about the Bible, how it is relevant to our lives, and how to establish Bible authority.

Some Basic Facts About The Bible

“Bible.” The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by approximately 40 different human authors that claims to be Divinely inspired. Each book has then been subdivided into chapters and verses (i.e. Acts 2:38). The 66 books of the Bible are divided into two major sections – the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament contains 39 individual books (Genesis to Malachi), representing a period covering the beginning of the world through about 400 years prior to the birth of Jesus. This law has now been taken away and replaced with the law of Christ in the New Testament (Colossians 2:14), though it is still useful for our learning and encouragement (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Hebrews 11:1-12:4). The New Testament contains 27 individual books (Matthew to Revelation), including books about the life of Jesus, the beginning and history of the church of Christ, and letters written to churches and Christians. These books contain the law we live under today and offers forgiveness of sins through Jesus (Hebrews 8:12)!

The theme of the Bible. In the beginning of the Bible story, God creates man and woman and places them in the garden of Eden (a paradise on earth). However, as they sin and are cast out of the garden, the story shifts to the need

for a Savior. “Christ is coming” is the message of the Old Testament. Then, in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the message shifts to “Christ is here,” as Jesus Christ is born into the world and lives on earth. Finally, after Jesus’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven, the message (Acts through Revelation) becomes “Christ is coming again to judge the world and take His people to Heaven with Him,” giving instructions about following Jesus Christ and being saved from sin. John 3:16 is an appropriate verse that summarizes the theme of the Bible.

The Bible Contains The Revelation Of God’s Will To Mankind

No ordinary book. Everything we know about the Bible indicates that it is no ordinary book! For example, the Bible was written by approximately 40 different human authors, over a period of approximately 1,500 years, in three different languages, on multiple continents, and has been greatly preserved from the first day of writing until now. Yet, it only has one message and no errors or contradictions! Written between approximately 2,000 and 3,500 years ago, only God could have accomplished what the words of the Bible have accomplished. The fact that God’s word has no contradictions and errors demonstrate it has a Divine origin.

It contains the words of God. God has communicated with people in different ways throughout history (i.e. directly, through visions and dreams, through Jesus on earth, through the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit). However, God does *not* communicate these ways with us today. Instead, God speaks to us through His written word – the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). These words are literally breathed-out by the all-powerful and all-wise God!

How the Bible was written. God inspired the men who wrote the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit revealed God’s message to the apostles and prophets so we can read and understand it (Ephesians 3:3-5). The Holy Spirit was uniquely qualified to do this work of revealing God’s will since He knows the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11, 16).

The word of God is complete. There will not be a new message from God that reveals what is in His mind and His word is not evolving or changing (Jude 1:3; Galatians 1:6-9). Since God’s revelation is perfect, people must not add to or take away from it (Revelation 22:18-19)! For, the Bible is from God, contains His words, and will endure forever (1 Peter 1:24-25)!

The Bible Provides Us With All We Need For Living Righteous Lives

It tells us about Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection. The message of the New Testament is called the "gospel" (good news) of Jesus Christ and revolves around Jesus's life, death, burial, and resurrection. For, it is only through Jesus that we are capable of a righteous life after we have sinned and have eternal life with God in Heaven.

It tells us all we need to know in order to become Christians. The gospel is God's power to salvation (Romans 1:16-17). The Bible (specifically the New Testament) tells us what God has commanded us to do to be saved from our sins (Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

It tells us all that we need to live faithful Christian lives. Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again. The Bible provides us with all the instruction we need to live in the way that pleases God – in every aspect of our lives (i.e. our character, habits, marriage, parenting, local church membership, national citizenship, employment, struggles, temptations, etc.).

The Bible Will Be The Criteria Used To Judge Us

We will be judged. Although we have free will and God does not force us to obey Him, there are severe consequences if we do not follow Him. God will judge the world through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who had done what is good will spend eternity in Heaven, while those who had done evil will spend eternity in Hell. Thankfully, God is impartial and fair (Romans 2:5-11) and has given us the standard so we can prepare for this Day!

God has said that His word is the standard. Our lives will be compared to what is taught in the Bible (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Specifically, we will be judged by all the words written in the New Testament law, not just the things Jesus spoke while He was on the earth (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). These are all Jesus's words, revealed through the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15).

The danger of rejecting His word while we live. If you reject Jesus's words, you reject the words that will judge you (John 12:48). So, will must choose whether you will obey God's word or will you disobey God's word. Severe consequences wait those who reject His word and great reward wait those who obey His word!

Establishing Bible Authority

The Bible is the only sufficient guide in religion. Human teachings, opinions, traditions, family members, friends, peers, majority opinion, etc. are all insufficient standards to guide our lives. Colossians 3:17 instructs us to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. This requires doing everything by His authority. We find this authority from Jesus in the New Testament. So, you must determine to cling to this pattern in everything (2 Timothy 1:13)!

How to establish Bible authority. First, we can establish Bible authority through a direct command or statement in the New Testament. For example, baptism is commanded in Acts 2:38; so we can know God is pleased with such. Second, we can establish Bible authority through an approved example in the New Testament. For example, God shows His approval of an Ethiopian man being baptized in Acts 8:38-39; so we can know God is pleased with such. Third, we can establish Bible authority through a forced conclusion in the New Testament. For example, we are forced to the unmistakable conclusion that the Ethiopian man was immersed in water in Acts 8:38-39; so we can know God is pleased with such. We must have one of these to know God is pleased with something. We do not have Bible authority any other way!

Generic and specific authority. Whenever you establish authority, you must consider whether it is generic or specific. Generic authority is authority for a thing without specifying how it must be accomplished. Consider: A parent instructs a child to “go to the store and buy something for dinner.” Authority is given through a direct command, but it is general in nature (since how to go and what to buy are not specified and are subject to the child’s discretion). A New Testament example is found in Mark 16:15. Authority is given by a direct command to go and preach the gospel but is generic because how to go was not specified.

Specific authority is authority for a thing that is specific in how it must be accomplished. Consider: A parent instructs a child to “walk to the store and buy hot dogs and macaroni and cheese for dinner.” Authority is given through a direct command, but it is specific in nature (since how to go and what to buy are both specified). A New Testament example is found in Ephesians 5:19. The specific action authorized is singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Therefore, it violates God’s authority to add a mechanical instrument to the worship or to sing popular culture songs in worship.

Conclusion

If you want to go to Heaven and fulfill your true purpose of bringing glory to God, you will demand Bible authority for everything you do and obey what God says! This is the only way to know God is pleased with you.

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 3: What Is The Bible?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. Some Basic Facts About The Bible

What does the word "Bible" mean? Discuss some basic facts about the books of the Bible.

What is the theme of the Bible? How is John 3:16 a wonderful summary of this theme?

2. The Bible Contains The Revelation Of God's Will To Mankind

Discuss some facts that indicate the Bible is no ordinary book.

What does the Bible contain? Why is this significant?

How was the Bible written?

Is the word of God complete?

3. The Bible Provides Us With All That We Need For Living Righteous Lives

What does the Bible tell about Christ? How is this significant?

What does the Bible tell about becoming a Christian? How is this significant?

What does the Bible tell about living a faithful Christian life? How is this significant?

4. The Bible Will Be The Criteria Used To Judge Us

Will there be a day upon which you will be judged? What will happen on that Day?

What will criteria for judgment? How do you know?

What is the danger of rejecting God's word while you live?

5. Establishing Bible Authority

Why is it important to establish *Bible* authority for everything that you do in life?

How can you establish Bible authority?

What is the difference between generic and specific authority?

Lesson 4: What Is Sin?

Perhaps you have heard about sin. But, maybe you do not fully understand what sin is. Where did sin come from? What makes something a “sin”? And, why is sin so bad? In fact, of all the diseases and illnesses that have plagued people throughout history (i.e. leprosy, cancer, smallpox, tuberculosis, diabetes, dementia, etc.), there is nothing that has been as widespread or deadly as sin! Therefore, you must make two determinations about sin: To stay away from sin in the future and to seek forgiveness of your past sins.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about sin, some examples of sin, and why sin is so dangerous.

The Introduction Of Sin To The World

God did not create mankind in sin. God created the world (Genesis 1:1). Then, He created people in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). After this, He declared that everything was very good (Genesis 1:31). But, how could a holy God create people in sin and then declare His creation to be very good? He could not – and He did not! In fact, Genesis 2 shows God created a true paradise on earth and did not create evil. Rather, mankind was sinless.

God gave mankind a law. God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). The law and its consequence (death) were not too difficult for them to understand. But, they both had free will to either obey God or disobey God.

Satan tempted Eve. Satan enters the Bible story (in the form of a serpent) and tempts Eve in Genesis 3:1-5. Of course, Satan lied about what would happen if they ate from the tree. Then, he made it look appealing by saying their eyes would be opened and they would become like God in knowing good and evil. This made it sound like God was trying to keep something away from Adam and Eve that was beneficial to them rather than something that was harmful. Eve responded by giving in to the temptation and satisfying her own desires (thereby disobeying God, Genesis 3:6). She also gave some of the fruit to her husband, who also ate.

They suffered the consequences for sinning against God. Since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), God meant what He said and said what He meant! Genesis

3:14-24 records the punishments God gave to Adam and Eve. These included labor pains in childbirth, painful labor in working the ground, being driven out of the garden, and being separated from the tree of life (which would result in physical death). So, this earth would no longer be a blissful paradise that was free from evil, suffering and death (Genesis 5:5). But, more than physical consequences, Adam and Eve experienced a change in their relationship with the holy God. This separation from God (spiritual death) occurred the day they ate the forbidden fruit and was the worst consequence of all! Therefore, sin entered the world through Adam and Eve and has continued ever since. And, there is much we can learn from this. Furthermore, we continue to experience evil, suffering, and death in this world because of sin.

Understanding Sin

Definition of sin. The Greek word for “sin” is an archery term. Whenever an archer would miss the target with the arrow, the arrow would be said to have “sinned.” So, sin is missing the mark God has set for how we should live in the New Testament scriptures. Remember that God is perfectly holy, and we must be holy to be in fellowship with Him (1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 1:5-7). So, missing the mark is extremely consequential!

Sin is lawlessness. The Bible defines sin as “lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). To be “lawless” is to act against the law, as if there is no law to govern that area of your life (i.e. like it is lawless to exceed a speed limit). So, sin results when you act like God has not given you a law to live by. For example, Adam and Eve acted as if God had not given them a law when they ate of the forbidden fruit. So, when an individual commits murder, he/she sins because God has given a law to forbid such. When an individual has sexual relations with someone other than his/her spouse, he/she sins because it breaks God’s law regulating sexual relations. When an individual hates his/her enemy, he/she sins because God has given a command to love one’s enemy. Therefore, everything outside of God’s standard of right is sin (1 John 5:17; James 4:17).

Two categories of sin. God has given two kinds of laws. He has told us things He does *not* want us to do and some things He *does* want us to do. We can sin regarding each, and they are equally devastating. Sins of “commission” occur whenever we do what God has said we must not do. This includes having unlawful sexual relations, lying, stealing, coveting, gossiping, using profanity, etc. Then, sins of “omission” occur whenever we fail to do what God has said we must do. This includes failing to teach the gospel, failing to do good to those we have opportunity to help, failing to pray for our enemies, failing to love our spouses or children, etc.

Examples of sin. There is no single passage in the Bible that lists every sin that can be committed. But, there are some non-exhaustive lists (particularly with sins of commission) that should be considered seriously (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:28-32). Consider each word in these lists carefully to understand what is taught. Then, continue learning more about God's law so you can be sure you avoid sin!

How sin works. Satan works to lure people into sin. For example, Adam and Eve appeared to have no interest in violating God's law concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil until Satan told them some things that were not true and made the tree look good. The Bible continues to warn us about Satan's work today (1 Peter 5:8). Although Satan will not literally stand in front of you or whisper in your ear, he works in many ways throughout this world. In everything, he should be viewed as your enemy who wants to destroy you spiritually – tempting you to fulfill your physical desires rather than obey God's laws.

James 1:14-15 gives the picture of how temptation relates to sin. Temptation occurs whenever the physical part of your person is drawn away from what is right and enticed by the desire to do something that goes against God's laws (just as Satan did with Eve). But, just being enticed is not sin. Temptation is like a fisherman's lure – luring the fish away from what is safe and enticing it so it will act on its desires and bite the hook. If temptation is answered correctly, there is no sin. For, Satan can only tempt you; he cannot make you sin! If Eve had refused to disobey God, she would not have sinned. And, if you resist the devil's temptation by refocusing yourself on God's law and choose to obey God rather than fulfill your own desires, you will not sin. However, when you allow your desire to conceive, sin is the result. Whenever Eve chose to please her own physical desires rather than obey God, she sinned. And, when you choose to please yourself rather than obey God, you sin.

Sin's Devastating Effects

All people continue to sin. Sin did not stop with Adam and Eve. You can read about people sinning throughout the Old and New Testaments. And, people continue sinning today, as Satan continues luring people away from God (1 Peter 5:8). In fact, we are all fighting a war for our souls between living to please our fleshly desires and our souls. Satan wants us to please ourselves so we will be destroyed, while God wants us to listen to Him so we can be saved. Sadly, Romans 3:23 teaches that we have all been guilty of sinning against God. Not a single person has reached a point of spiritual accountability and has not sinned.

That said, we do *not* inherit our sin from Adam or our parents. Although many religious organizations teach this as part of their beliefs, this is *not* Bible doctrine (Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 18:1-4; Romans 5:12)! Each person is responsible for his/her own sin. We are born sinless. Then, we reach a point of accountability. At this point, we have all committed sin (Romans 3:23), except for Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:15)!

Physical consequences. All the horrible things about this world have direct ties to sin. Certainly, this is not the way God originally designed the world. Consider some physical consequences of sin: Premature death, jail time, diseases, health problems, losing your job, breaking trust, ruining your reputation, destroying relationships, hurting people, etc.

Spiritual consequences. The physical consequences of sin pale in comparison to the spiritual consequences! For, sin results in spiritual death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15). Death simply refers to a separation. Physical death is a separation between body and spirit (James 2:26). Spiritual death is a separation between the sinner and God (Isaiah 59:1-2). This is how the Bible speaks of being dead while alive spiritually (1 Timothy 5:6). Then, if you die physically while you are in sin, you will experience eternal spiritual death (eternal separation from God in Hell, Revelation 21:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 25:41, 46; Mark 9:47-48).

The Problem Of Sin

We deserve spiritual death since we have chosen to violate God's law. God doesn't leave us. Rather, we leave God whenever we sin! We leave His ways of holiness and righteousness to fulfill our own selfish ambitions and desires, demonstrating we would rather fulfill our own fleshly desires than be in fellowship with Him and receive His blessings. Romans 6:23 describes the punishment of spiritual death as being our wages (what we earn) for sinning against God. And, every sin is equally deserving of this punishment (no matter how *big* or *small* it may seem to us, Romans 1:28-32)!

We can do nothing to justify ourselves. When you understand the devastating spiritual consequences of sin, you should desire to be justified (made just-as-if-I'd never sinned). However, there is nothing you can do to remove the consequences of your past sins by yourself (even if you never sinned again and did every good thing God wants you to do). You would be hopelessly lost and headed for eternal punishment in Hell – if you had nothing else to provide you with hope. Thankfully, God has provided a Savior so you do not have to be hopelessly lost in sin. His name is Jesus!

Conclusion

Sin is a devastating problem for mankind. It is far greater than any other problem we could ever face! This problem deals with the soul and will condemn us to eternal punishment in Hell unless we can be saved.

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 4: What Is Sin?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. The Introduction Of Sin To The World

Did God create mankind in sin?

What law did God give Adam and Eve? Did they understand it? Did they have the freedom to choose either obedience or disobedience?

How did Satan tempt Eve? How did Eve respond?

What were the consequences for sinning against God?

2. Understanding Sin

What is the definition of sin?

How is sin lawlessness?

What are two categories of sin?

What are some examples of sin?

How and why do people sin?

3. Sin's Devastating Effects

Does sin continue today? Are people born in sin or born sinless? Have you sinned?

Identify some physical consequences of sin.

What are the spiritual consequences of sin?

4. The Problem Of Sin

What do you deserve because of sin?

Can you do anything to justify yourself? What do you need?

Lesson 5: Who Is Jesus?

Jesus is the most prominent figure in Christianity. Even the name “Christian” contains the name of Christ. But, why is Jesus so important? What is so special about Him? What has He done for us? And, is He important to everyone or just to a few? Because of sin, we would all be hopelessly lost and were in need of a Savior. Thankfully, that Savior has been provided. His name is Jesus, and He is the answer to the problem of sin (Romans 6:23)! In fact, four books of the Bible are especially focused on Jesus’s life (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about who Jesus is, what He did, and why He is so important.

The Promise

To Satan. After Adam and Eve sinned, God punished Satan (who was using the serpent, Genesis 3:14-15). Although Satan would score a momentary victory against Jesus (the offspring of woman) by putting Him to death (like a serpent would bite someone’s heel), Jesus would crush Satan by providing a way for people to be saved (like a person crushing the head of a serpent). So, God was not caught unprepared to deal with sin whenever Adam and Eve sinned. Instead, God had a plan to redeem people from sin – even before He created the world (Acts 2:23; Ephesians 3:11; 1 Peter 1:20)! Genesis 3:14-15 is the first insight into this plan in the Scriptures.

To Abraham. God gave three main promises to Abram (Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3): To make a great a great nation from his descendants (the Israelites), to give his descendants a special land (the Canaan land), and to bless all people through his offspring (Jesus). Jesus would come through the physical lineage of Abraham and be the greatest blessing ever to the entire world by providing the opportunity to be forgiven of sin!

Early in the Old Testament, the storyline for the entire Bible is set! People had sinned and needed a Savior. Now, we have seen that one is coming who would defeat Satan and be a blessing to the entire world! The remainder of the Old Testament continues to reveal this story and gives many specific prophecies about Jesus. Then, the story hits its climax with the birth of Jesus and His life on this earth in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Jesus Is The Son Of God

Passages demonstrating this truth. Jesus is the one and only Son of God (only of His kind). None other has this same relationship with the Father (John 3:16; Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5).

Jesus is God. Three Beings possess the characteristics of being God: The Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Jesus's Deity (nature of being God) is implied in Jesus being the Son of God (i.e. that He has the same nature as His Father). John 1:1-2 also declares Jesus is God (also see John 20:28; Romans 9:1-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8).

Jesus was with God in creation. Jesus is eternal and was with God whenever all things were created. He was *not* created by the Father. In fact, Jesus created all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). You can see Jesus involved in the Genesis record of creation when you notice the plural pronouns in reference to God (Genesis 1:26-27).

Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb. Jesus was sent from Heaven by the Father, knowing forgiveness of sin required a sacrifice (Hebrews 9:22). But, not just any sacrifice would do (Hebrews 10:4). John 3:16 describes God's solution to the problem of sin! For this reason, Jesus is called Lamb of God (John 1:29) – as God knew only Jesus could make the sacrifice necessary to take away sin (Romans 5:6-11). Without Jesus, you would have no hope.

Jesus Lived On Earth

Christ left Heaven to come to earth. Jesus willingly left Heaven (the place we all desire to go, where there is no crying, sorrow, mourning, pain, death, or evil, Revelation 21) to come to earth and accomplish God's eternal plan of redemption! So, as you consider what Jesus endured on earth, realize He chose to leave Heaven and come to earth so we can be forgiven and live in Heaven (2 Corinthians 8:9)!

God is with us. Jesus was miraculously born of a virgin according to prophecy (Matthew 1:23). His name was to be Immanuel, which meant, "God is with us." So, Jesus did not give up His Deity when He came to earth (Colossians 2:9). He was God on earth!

Jesus's mission on earth. First, Jesus came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the prophecies and brought the new covenant into effect (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8-10). Second, Jesus came to preach the coming of His kingdom, which would be established during the lifetime of many who were living at the time (Luke 9:27). Third, Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Jesus performed many miracles. Jesus healed the sick, caused the blind to see, made the paralyzed walk, cast out demons, walked on water, raised the dead, and performed many signs and miracles. The purpose of all these was to demonstrate He really is the Son of God when we read what He accomplished (John 20:30-31)!

Jesus's sinless life was hated by the world. Although Jesus lived in human form and had physical desires, He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15) – even though Satan tempted Him (Matthew 4:1-11). Because of this, Jesus was able to be the perfect sacrifice to take away sin. And, since Jesus did not sin, the world hated Him (John 15:18-19). For, His sinlessness exposed the world's wickedness and made them angry with Jesus, so that they wanted to kill Him.

Jesus's Death

Jesus knew He would die. Jesus was (and is) God and knew He was going to die – and how He would die (Matthew 16:21). Yet, He came to earth and went through it all anyways (Philippians 2:5-11)! As His betrayal and death drew near, Jesus felt the weight of these things as He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42-44).

Jesus was betrayed and denied by His apostles. After Jesus finished praying, Judas (one of His apostles) betrayed Him with a kiss for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). Jesus was then arrested by the multitude (Matthew 26:47-56). As Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested, all His disciples fled (Matthew 26:56). Then, Peter denied his association with or knowledge of Jesus three times (Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75).

Jesus was mocked, beaten, unfairly tried, spat on, and scourged. Jesus was put on trial by the highest Jewish council (the Sanhedrin, Matthew 26:57-68). They sought false testimony against Jesus and accused Him of blasphemy for saying He was the Son of God. Then, they spat in His face, hit Him, and mocked Him. When Jesus faced the Roman governor, Jesus did not defend Himself (Matthew 27:1-2, 11-31). The crowd of Jews demanded that a known prisoner and murder named Barabbas be released rather than Jesus. Then, Jesus was flogged (a severe beating that mutilated the flesh) and sentenced to death. After this, Jesus was taken by the soldiers and was severely mocked and mistreated (Matthew 27:27-31) – including having a scarlet robe put on Him, a crown of thorns, and a reed, while mocking Him as King of the Jews, spitting on Him, and hitting Him on the head with the reed.

Jesus was delivered over to be crucified. After all this, Jesus was led away to be crucified (Matthew 27:31). This was considered the most horrible form of

death and was reserved for the worst criminals – with a person being stripped of clothing, laid upon the cross, and fastened to it with nail-like spikes through the hands and feet. Jesus’s crucifixion and death are recorded in Matthew 27:32-56 (as well as in Mark, Luke, and John). Jesus’s last words (John 19:30) indicate Jesus had been obedient to the Father and finished God’s eternal plan of salvation by giving Himself as the ransom sacrifice for the sins of the world!

Jesus’s burial. Jesus’s body was taken off the cross and buried in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb (Matthew 27:57-60) and a large stone was rolled in front of it. The tomb was sealed and a guard was placed so His body would not be stolen (Matthew 27:62-66). At this point, we ask: Has God been defeated? Has Satan just won by putting Jesus to death?

Jesus’s Resurrection

“He has risen.” Matthew 28:1-10 describes the miraculous event of Jesus’s resurrection on the first day of the week, as there was a great earthquake and the stone was rolled away from the door of the tomb. The angel told the women at the tomb that Jesus had risen from the death! Later, the risen Jesus appeared to many (1 Corinthians 15:3-9). Then, those who had been guarding the tomb accepted a large bribe to say Jesus’s body was stolen (Matthew 28:11-15). Yet, Jesus’s resurrection is essential to our salvations and resurrections from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

Jesus ascended back into Heaven. After remaining on earth for a time, Acts 1:9-11 records Jesus being taken back to Heaven and that He will come again. Today, Jesus is at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Conclus ion

Jesus Christ is the answer to the problem of sin! Because of Jesus, we can be saved from our sins, avoid the wrath of God, and spend eternity in Heaven. But, we must believe and obey Him.

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 5: Who Is Jesus?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. The Promise

What was the promise made to Satan? Did God have a plan in place to redeem man from his sin?

What was the promise made to Abraham?

Explain how the storyline for the entire Bible is set early in the Old Testament.

2. Jesus Is The Son Of God

Identify some passages that show Jesus Christ as God's Son.

Is Jesus God?

Was Jesus with God (the Father) in creation?

How was Jesus a sacrificial Lamb? Why is this so important?

3. Jesus Lived On Earth

What is the significance of Christ leaving Heaven to come to earth?

What was special about Jesus' birth and His name?

What was Jesus' mission on earth?

What was the purpose of the miracles Jesus performed?

How did the world treat Jesus? Why did this happen?

4. Jesus' Death

Did Jesus have any foreknowledge concerning His death?

What did Jesus' apostles do to Him?

What did Jesus endure prior to His death?

How did Jesus die? What was now finished?

Where was Jesus buried? What was done to His tomb?

5. Jesus' Resurrection

What happened in Matthew 28:1-10? Why is this so important?

Where is Jesus today? What is He waiting to do?

Lesson 6: What Must I Do To Be Saved?

We have all sinned against God and deserve to be punished in the eternal fires of Hell. Thankfully, God has loved us enough to provide the sacrifice for sin through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). But, is there anything God has required of us to be in Christ Jesus and access His gift of salvation? Is there anything God has required of us to be forgiven of our sins? If so, what is it? It's like the ground between you and God has been broken because of sin – and there is no way for you to get back to God. But, Jesus has provided the bridge (picture the cross as a bridge). Now, you must consider what (if anything) God requires you to do to be reconciled with God and forgiven of sin (Acts 2:37). While there are certainly many people and churches who answer this question differently (i.e. just believe in Jesus, ask Jesus into your heart, nothing you must do, etc.), we should only be interested in what God says we must do to be saved!

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about what God requires you to do to be forgiven of your sins and have eternal life in Heaven.

Is There Anything You Must Do?

It is impossible to earn salvation. There is nothing you can do to *earn* (deserve) salvation after you have sinned (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-10). Jesus has provided the only avenue for your salvation (Romans 6:23). Yet, since eternal life is “in” Christ Jesus, what is necessary to enter a right relationship with Jesus?

God has required obedience. Although Jesus died for everyone, not everyone will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14). Clearly, there is something God has required of people – or everyone would be saved through Jesus! For example, suppose someone sends you a \$20 check in the mail for your birthday. It is a free gift you did not earn. However, to receive the gift, you must: Go to the mailbox, get the envelop out of the mailbox, open the envelop, take out the check, sign the check, take the check to the bank, and cash the check. Then, you will have your free gift. Although you did not earn it, there were steps to receiving it. The same thing is true concerning salvation. God has provided the free gift of salvation. However, He has commanded you to do certain things to receive the gift. And,

doing these things does not nullify God's grace or earn your salvation. For, there is a difference between works of *merit* (by which you try to earn your salvation) and works of *obedience* (by which you obey the conditions God has placed on your salvation)! When you do what God commands, you are *not* earning salvation (Luke 17:7-10). Instead, you are simply obeying God and demonstrating true faith (James 2:24; Matthew 7:21-23)!

An example of faithful obedience. Consider the example of Noah (Hebrews 11:7). When God determined to destroy people from the earth for their wickedness (Genesis 6:5-7), Noah found favor in God's sight (Genesis 6:8). Then, God gave Noah detailed instructions about how to build an ark and be saved from the flood. Noah chose to trust in God enough to obey. Similarly, you face the same choice today. You are living in a sinful world God will destroy one Day (2 Peter 3:10). And, God has given you the opportunity to be saved through Jesus. But, you must trust in God so much that you obey Him in whatever He says!

Hear God's Word

Hearing God's word is essential for salvation. Hearing the word of God should lead you to saving faith (Romans 10:13-15, 17). You will not develop saving faith by hearing the teaching or opinions of people. So, you must study God's word every day to know what God wants you to know (Acts 17:10-12).

What you must hear. Although God does not require you to have a full knowledge of everything He says in the Bible before you can be saved, He does require you to know some basic things (i.e. the fundamental things we have been studying in this series). Namely, if you don't hear what God has done for you so you can be saved or what He has commanded you to do, you will not be saved (Acts 18:8)!

Believe In Jesus

Belief is essential for salvation. You must be mentally convinced Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth, lived as a man, died a horrible death on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and rose from the dead (John 8:24). Other passages also teach the essential nature of belief (as well as confession and baptism, Mark 16:16; Romans 10:9-10).

You are not saved by faith only. While belief (faith) is essential for salvation, it is not the only thing that is essential. In fact, the Bible speaks of faith in a couple different ways. Sometimes the Bible speaks of belief (faith) in the sense of being mentally convinced something is true (i.e. Jesus is the Son of God). But,

the Bible often speaks of a more comprehensive belief (faith) that couples a mental conviction with obedience. This is real, saving faith (consider the many examples of active, obedient faith in Hebrews 11). However, many religious organizations teach that being mentally convinced Jesus Christ is the Son of God is the *only* requirement for salvation. Yet, we should be concerned about what God teaches! And, God clearly teaches against this idea of “faith only” for salvation (James 2:14-26).

Repent

Repentance is essential for salvation. Repentance is commanded by Jesus (Luke 13:3, 5) and is necessary for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:37-38). In fact, God commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30-31).

Learning true repentance. The Bible teaches that godly grief produces repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Whenever you recognize what your sins have done to your relationship with God, you should mourn over what your sins have done to your relationship with God and want to undo the sins you have committed. So, repentance requires you to hate your past sins and determine to live for God in the future. Repentance takes place in the mind by acknowledging your past sins and determining to put them off from your life, putting the old person of sin to death and making a way for the new person who is patterned after God’s holiness (Colossians 3:1-17; Galatians 2:20). When you repent, you are determining to live *entirely* for Jesus!

Confess Christ

Confession is essential for salvation. Jesus requires people to confess Him (Matthew 10:32-33). Although this is not a one-time only confession, God expects people to confess Christ during their earthly lives. Romans 10:9-10 then specifically commands that a confession be made for salvation.

What you must confess. This is *not* a confession of your sins or that you are a sinner. Rather, it is a confession that acknowledges your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, your dependence on Him for salvation, and your commitment to make Him Lord of your life (Romans 10:9). The Ethiopian man in Acts 8 provides a good example of such a confession (though some Greek manuscripts do not contain v. 37).

Be Baptized

Baptism is essential for salvation. While most churches do *not* teach baptism is necessary (required) for salvation, the Bible teaches it is! Do not let any preconceived ideas or religious teaching hinder your understanding of what God says. For example, Mark 16:16 teaches belief and baptism are necessary for salvation. Acts 2:37-38 teaches repentance and baptism are necessary to being forgiven of sin. Acts 22:16 teaches baptism is essential to having sins washed away and calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13). Galatians 3:27 teaches a person is baptized into Christ (where salvation, all spiritual blessings, and forgiveness are, Romans 6:23; 2 Timothy 2:10; Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 1:7). And, 1 Peter 3:20-21 teaches baptism saves you just as Noah and his family were saved by water. So, don't let anyone tell you baptism does not save you! Everyone in need of what baptism does must be baptized. Those who do not need what baptism does (i.e. infants) do not need to be baptized. As we have seen, baptism is essential for the sinner to be saved, forgiven, and come into Christ! In fact, baptism stands between the old person of sin, with the new life in Christ not starting until you have buried the old person in the waters of baptism (Romans 6:3-4)! And, it is also essential to be baptized for the right reasons. Although you may have been baptized in the past (i.e. as a baby, thinking you were saved prior to being baptized, etc.), you must be baptized correctly.

Baptism is an immersion in water. "Baptism" is practiced in different ways in churches today (immersion, sprinkling, pouring). But, the Greek word for "baptism" means to immerse or overwhelm (requiring one to be completely covered with water). The Bible shows baptism as immersion (Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38-39). And, it is called a "burial" (Romans 6:3-4). Therefore, if you have not been fully immersed in water for the right reasons, you must do so to be saved!

Remain Faithful

Faithfulness is essential for salvation. After baptism, you are a Christian – and your life as a Christian must look different than how you lived prior (Romans 6:3-4). Then, you are expected to be faithful to Christ until you die (Revelation 2:10). To remain a faithful follower of Jesus, you must give Him control of your life, let His will be done in your life rather than your own, keep His commandments, deny yourself, endure hardships for Him, put Him first, don't deny Him, learn from Him, grow in His service, and follow Him wherever He leads through His word in the New Testament.

How Christians can be forgiven of sin. It is possible to sin after becoming a Christian and lose your salvation (Galatians 5:4). When you sin, you must return

to Christ so you can be forgiven. This requires repenting of your sin, confessing your sin to God, and asking Him to forgive you (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).

Conclusion

God has told you exactly what you must do to be saved from your sins. If you have not obeyed His instructions, you are not saved – and should obey Him immediately!

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 6: What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. Is There Anything You Must Do?

Can you earn your salvation after you have sinned?

Has God required you to do anything to be saved?

How is Noah a good example of obedience?

2. Hear God's Word

Is hearing God's word essential for salvation?

What must you hear?

3. Believe In Jesus

Is believing in Jesus essential for salvation?

Are you saved by faith only?

4. Repent

Is repentance essential for salvation?

What is repentance?

5. Confess Christ

Is confession essential for salvation?

What must you confess?

6. Be Baptized

Is baptism essential for salvation?

What is baptism?

7. Remain Faithful

Is faithfulness essential for salvation?

How can you be forgiven of your sins after becoming a Christian?

Lesson 7: What Is The Church?

There are tens of thousands of different churches in the world today, all with different doctrinal beliefs and involved in different works. Although it is often suggested that God approves of this, we must allow God's word to challenge our thinking and see whether it really is pleasing to God. Is it important to join a church? Does God approve of all the different churches that exist today? How do I know which church to join? Jesus only established one church (not many different churches, Matthew 16:18) and only one church was established (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). Therefore, you must understand what is involved in being part of Jesus's one church, as many have been deceived into being part of churches that have been created by people rather than Jesus.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about the true identification of Jesus's church and why it is important to be part of it.

What The Church Is Not

Many false views of the church. Can all the thousands of different churches all be right in God's sight? Each one has different beliefs, doctrines, and practices in the name of "Christianity." Clearly, everyone can't be right! Since there is only one Way (John 14:6) and Christ is not divided (1 Corinthians 1:13), it is not okay for churches to be divided in their beliefs, teachings, and practices (1 Corinthians 1:10). In fact, there is only one faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). That is, there is only one system of religious belief, teaching, and practice that is acceptable to God (Ephesians 4:4-6). Then, there is only one body (church, Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41, 47). Unfortunately, while God has only established one church and provided one faith, many people have introduced false ideas as to what the church is and greatly distorted the church in the process.

An earthly organization. Just as people during Jesus's life were looking for Him to establish an earthly kingdom, many people today see the church as nothing more than an earthly organization that accomplishes a physical work to make this world a better place. But, this is not what the Bible teaches about the church!

Sadly, many churches today have characteristics of an earthly organization (i.e. hierarchal systems of organization, business oriented goals, fundraising).

A social club. Many people have misguided views about fellowship that are primarily concerned with physical things. Yet, true Bible fellowship between Christians is based on a mutual relationship with God (1 John 1:7). While Christians should want to be close on a physical level, it is not the role of the church to provide for and organize such social gatherings/events! Sadly, churches today often have the characteristics of a social club (i.e. assemblies that de-emphasize God's word, being involved in sponsoring entertainment, building kitchens, gymnasiums, theaters, etc.).

A political machine. Some churches have stopped speaking God's word and exchanged it for a message that focuses more on social issues and reforms and political issues. Yet, while individuals can be involved politically, this is not the God-given role of the church (except as it may influence individuals and societies through teaching God's word)! Sadly, there are many churches today that have the characteristics of a political machine (i.e. sermons focus on cultural issues, sermons focused on being politically correct, etc.).

A building where religious people meet together. Some people act and talk as if the church is nothing more than a building where religious people come together. However, when Saul was persecuting the church (Acts 8:1-3), he was harming people who belonged to Jesus – not a physical structure! Sadly, churches today often have characteristics of being a meeting place (i.e. members viewing their responsibilities lightly, not being involved in one another's lives, having minimal contact with one another between meetings, etc.).

Christ. Some churches have reversed their role with Christ's role, seeing themselves as the head of the body. Yet, this role only belongs to Christ (Colossians 1:18)! Sadly, churches today often have the characteristics of Christ in this respect (i.e. believe they have the authority to change the law rather than simply uphold Christ's law, become a human organization that submits to people rather than a spiritual kingdom subject only to Christ, teach salvation through a church rather than through Jesus, etc.).

A group of denominations. Many view the church of Christ as being a big umbrella consisting of all the different "Christians" from the many denominational and non-denominational churches (i.e. Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Nazarene, etc.). Sadly, churches today often have characteristics of being part of a group of denominations (i.e. accepting those who believe and practice their faith differently, considering people Christians who have never really been obedient to God's plan of salvation, considering the church to be made up of religious bodies

rather than people, accepting churches that believe, teach, and practice what is contrary to the Bible, etc., 2 John 1:9-11; Galatians 1:6-9).

The “Universal” Church

“Ekklesia. This Greek word can be translated “church,” “congregation,” and “assembly.” The word has an ordinary use referring to a gathering of people (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Then, it is primarily used in a religious sense in the New Testament in reference to the congregation/community of those who have been obedient to the gospel of Christ and have given their lives to the Lord (Matthew 16:18; Acts 8:3; 1 Peter 2:9).

The collection of God’s people. Sometimes the word “church” is used in a “universal” sense in reference to the one (and only) collection of God’s people who are in a saved condition (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4) and has access to all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3, 5, 7; 2 Timothy 2:10). Christ only adds those who are obedient to His plan of salvation to His church (discussed in lesson six, Acts 2:37-47). And, there is no earthly organizational structure, no collective earthly work, and no collective worship.

Other terms used in reference to the church. First, the church is sometimes referred to as the kingdom of God, as those in Christ’s church are kingdom citizens who are devoted to their King, Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:13). Second, the church is sometimes referred to as the body of Christ, wherein Christ is the Head and every member performs an important function in the body (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31). Third, the church is sometimes referred to as the household of God, in which the church enjoys a special relationship with God and with one another as a spiritual family (1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 8:14-17). Fourth, the church is sometimes referred to as the temple of God, as God dwells in Christians through His Spirit-inspired word and glorifies God by keeping His commandments (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). And, fifth, the church is sometimes referred to as the church of Christ, as these are people belonging to Jesus Christ and have been purchased by His blood – who wear Christ’s name alone and reject human names (Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16).

The “Local” Church

A local collection of God’s people. Sometimes the word “church” is used in a “local” sense. This refers to a collection of God’s people (who are members of the one “universal” church) in a local geographic area, who have joined themselves together to work for and worship God. While there are many churches

in this local sense, these are *not* different denominations that hold to different beliefs and practices! So, rather than being different kinds of churches that believe, teach, and practice their faiths differently, true local churches consist of those who have been obedient to the commands of God and hold on to God's pattern!

The Bible teaches that you should join a local church. Throughout the New Testament, the approved example goes as follows: People become Christians, are added by God to His one "universal" church, and then join themselves to Christians in their local geographic area. Acts 9:26, for example, shows the example of Saul doing this after he became a Christian. You see, God does not want His people to be alone and has created the local church to be a base of fellowship and strength that is greater than the individual. However, you should only join yourself to a local church that is following God's pattern (starting one if none exist). For, you do not want to participate in anything that goes against Christ's teaching (2 John 1:9-11)!

The pattern for local churches. God has given a clear blueprint (pattern) for local churches to follow in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:13). For example, God has given a pattern for the organizational structure of the local church (Philippians 1:1) that involves saints (Christians), overseers (elders, shepherds who must meet specific qualifications), and deacons (who must meet specific qualifications). God has also given a pattern for the work of the local church that involves evangelizing the lost (1 Thessalonians 1:8), edifying the saved (1 Corinthians 14:26), and showing benevolence toward needy Christians (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). And, God has given a pattern for the worship of the local church that involves the church assembling together (1 Corinthians 14:23; Hebrews 10:24-25) to pray (1 Corinthians 14:15), sing (1 Corinthians 14:15), preaching (Acts 20:7), partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and taking up the collection on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Conclusion

Christ has only established one church that is composed of all who have been saved by Him (in obedience to His word). God desires all Christians to join themselves to a local church that follows His pattern in all things.

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 7: What Is The Church?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. What The Church Is Not

Can all the different churches in existence today be right in the sight of God?

Is the church an earthly organization? List some characteristics of the church that views itself as an earthly organization.

Is the church a social club? List some characteristics of the church that views itself as a social club.

Is the church a political machine? List some characteristics of the church that views itself as a political machine.

Is the church a building where religious people meet together? List some characteristics of the church that views itself as a building where religious people meet together.

Does the church have the same role as Jesus Christ? List some characteristics of the church that views itself in the role of Christ.

Is the church a group of denominations? List some characteristics of the church that views itself as a group of denominations.

2. The “Universal” Church

What does the Greek word “ekklesia” mean?

What is the “universal” church of Christ? Who is part of this church?

What is the significance of the following terms used in connection with the church?

1. The kingdom of God –
2. The body of Christ –
3. The household of God –
4. The temple of God –
5. The church of Christ –

3. The “Local” Church

What is a “local” church of Christ? Should you join a local church of Christ?

What is the pattern for local churches in each of the following areas?

1. The organizational structure of the local church –
2. The work of the local church –
3. The worship of the local church –

Lesson 8: What Does God Expect Of Me?

If you have taken the steps discussed in lesson 6, you are a Christian and part of Christ's church. But, God is not finished with you. In fact, it is possible to sin and fall from God's grace and be lost (Galatians 5:4). Yet, what are my responsibilities as a Christian? What should my life look like now that I am a Christian? Are there things God continues to require of me so that I might be saved? As a Christian, you are a "disciple" of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26). A disciple is a student and imitator of the Master (Jesus). This is not a one-time decision; but an entirely new way of life dedicated to learning from and following the Master! So, Jesus taught people to count the cost of discipleship and make sure you are willing to do what Jesus requires in following Him, realizing the reward of doing so (Luke 14:25-33) Then, since you can fall from God's grace, you must remain faithful to Jesus throughout your life (Revelation 2:10).

The purpose of this lesson is to learn some basics about what God expects of you after you become a Christian.

Fully Trust In God (Proverbs 3:5-6; Jeremiah 10:23)

Trust God in prayer. Satan wants you to be worried about the things of this life (i.e. finances, security, health, etc.) and be distracted away from serving God. Thankfully, God provides you the blessing of taking your concerns to God in prayer (1 Peter 5:7) and says that your prayers are powerful (James 5:16). Still, prayer is only effective when it is accompanied by faith (James 1:5-8) and offered according to God's will (Matthew 6:10).

Trust God to provide. You must not put your focus on chasing after earthly things (Matthew 6:19-34). In fact, Jesus teaches you not to be worried about the things of this life (even the necessities of food, drink, and clothing, Matthew 6:25). Instead, you must seek God first and trust He will provide for those necessities (Matthew 6:33). So, rather than focusing on earthly things, you must focus on the things of God (though this does *not* mean you do not have to work, 2 Thessalonians 3).

Trust that God will save you. No matter what difficulties and temptations you face, God promises everything will work out for you spiritually (Romans 8:28). In fact, Romans 8:37-39 teaches that there is nothing and no one who can separate you from God – no matter how much you are tempted or tried, no matter how severe the persecution you face, no matter how strong the enemy may appear, etc. For, they cannot make you sin! You are the only one who can separate yourself from God by sinning against Him (Jude 1:3). So long as you keep yourself in God's love, nothing and no one is powerful enough to steal your soul away from God!

Completely Devote Yourself To God

Jesus requires complete devotion. You cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). You are either completely with Jesus or you are against Him (Matthew 12:30). You cannot just serve Him when it is easy or convenient to do so. Whenever you commit yourself to following Him, you must not look back (Luke 9:57-62). Sometimes Christians look back by desiring the relationships, riches, pleasures, comforts, or ways of this life rather than focusing on God and His will. Yet, Jesus's point is that nothing and no one can come before Jesus Christ in your life (Luke 14:26-27, 33). There cannot be anything or anyone you love more than Jesus! Your complete commitment to Christ is called a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).

What this will require. First, you must practice self-denial (Galatians 2:20). You cannot live for yourself and for Christ (Luke 9:23). Second, you must love Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). You must let the love of Christ control your life by motivating you to live for Him and keep His commands (John 14:15). Third, you must focus on Christ throughout your life (Hebrews 12:1-2). You must lay aside the weight of sin that hinders you from running the race God would have you run, focusing on God and the prize of eternal life in Heaven and not get distracted by the temporary things of this world.

Walk In Newness Of Life

You have been raised to walk in newness of life. Christians must not continue living in sin, having died to sin, been buried in baptism, and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4)! Now, you are a new creation in Christ Jesus and must not continue living for the old ways of sin (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Walking in newness of life. Walking in newness of life involves three elements (Ephesians 4:22-24): Putting off the old person of sin, being renewed in your mind, and putting on the new person by patterning your life after the

holiness of God (Colossians 3:1-4:1). So, everything is impacted by your decision to become a Christian! Then, since you will work to put every sinful thing in your life to death and pattern your life entirely after God and His holiness, your thoughts, words, conduct, relationships, priorities, etc. will all be different and your focus will be on living according to God's standard of holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16)!

Be Diligent

In Bible study. God expects you to increase in your knowledge of His word (2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:2-3). This is important to know what God expects of you, to keep yourself from sin, and to teach others. Because studying God's word is so important, you should desire to study the Bible every day (Acts 17:11).

In spiritual growth. You are not "full grown" when you become a Christian. Rather, you are a newborn baby (spiritually speaking) and must develop into maturity! 2 Peter 1:5-7 is one passage (of many) that talks about growing, by indicating some qualities that must be added to your faith. So, God expects you to be continually growing stronger in the faith and become more Christ-like.

In good works. You have been created in Christ Jesus *for* good works (Ephesians 2:1-10)! So, you must always work to be fruitful in Christ's service by doing the good things He wants you to do, knowing there is victory in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:58).

In evangelism. God has given His people (including you) the responsibility to teach others the gospel of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). So, just as someone taught you the gospel, you have the responsibility to teach someone else – who, in turn, can teach another (2 Timothy 2:2). This is a work every servant of the Lord (every Christian) must do (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

In church membership. You should join a local church that faithfully follows God's pattern. Then, you have certain responsibilities as a local church member. One responsibility you have as a local church member is to attend the assemblies of the church (not willfully missing any of them – although some things may be outside of your control, i.e. sickness, Hebrews 10:24-25). You must also participate in the work of the church by doing your part and fulfilling your responsibilities toward your brethren and being diligent in all aspects of your membership in the local church.

In keeping God's commandments. God expects you to be diligent in keeping all His commandments. For, God expects more from you than just saying you are His follower (Luke 6:46; James 1:22). And, if you really love Christ, you will keep His commandments (John 14:15)!

Persevere

In persecutions. Persecution is promised to those who follow the Lord. Just as the world hated Jesus, Jesus promised the world will hate those who follow Him (John 15:18; 2 Timothy 3:12). Although persecutions can take many different forms and can be more severe in some places of the world and at different times than others, you must persevere no matter how severe it is! You can look to how Jesus persevered, as well as the apostles. Revelation 2:10 offers encouragement to those who would be persecuted.

In trials. There are going to be times when your faith will be put to the test (i.e. death, sickness, financial hardship, family struggles, etc.). However, you must not allow these trials to weaken you or cause you to lose your faith! Then, the Bible teaches that if you persevere through these trying times, your faith will become stronger and you can actually find joy in trials (James 1:2-4).

In temptations. You will experience temptation (1 Peter 5:8-9). Satan wants to destroy your faith – and he will try to lure you away from God any way he can. But, you can overcome temptation by utilizing the way God provides for you to escape it (1 Corinthians 10:13), following Jesus's perfect example (Hebrews 4:15), and putting on the armor God has given to enable you to be victorious over the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18).

In good works. Satan will try to discourage you from doing good. Yet, you must not lose heart in doing what is right (Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:58)! Always remember that God sees everything you do and be encouraged by the fact that He will not forget your good works (Revelation 14:13)!

Conclusion

God has called you to give your life entirely to Him. So, your focus in life must be completely set on accomplishing His will and offering your life as a living sacrifice to Him! These eight lessons have been intended to help you establish a solid foundation for your faith so you can do two things. First, if your life is not right with God, follow Biblical instruction to get right with Him. Second, continue using this foundation to build on in the future and teach others.

Answers To Life's Most Essential Questions

Lesson 8: What Does God Expect Of Me?

Why is it essential to know the answer to this question?

1. Fully Trust In God

Why is it important to fully trust God in prayer?

Why is it important to fully trust God to provide?

Why is it important to fully trust God to save you?

2. Complete Devote Yourself To God

What kind of devotion does Jesus require from His followers?

What will this kind of devotion require?

3. Walk In Newness Of Life

When and how were you raised to walk in newness of life?

What should your newness of life look like?

4. Be Diligent

Why is it important to be diligent in Bible study?

Why is it important to be diligent in spiritual growth?

Why is it important to be diligent in good works?

Why is it important to be diligent in evangelism?

Why is it important to be diligent in church membership?

Why is it important to be diligent in keeping God's commandments?

5. Persevere

How can you persevere in persecution?

How can you persevere in trials?

How can you persevere in temptations?

How can you persevere in good works?