

DISCOVERING HOPE

EXPLORING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST

MICAH COLBERT

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PREFACE

A Note from the Author

I'm glad that you've picked up a copy of *Discovering Hope*. This Bible-study handbook was designed for people who might be exploring the good news of Jesus Christ for the first time.

Most of you will be doing this study in a small group with others. Before each meeting, I would encourage you to read the Bible passages for the lesson and answer the questions so that you can be prepared for the discussion. If there's something about the lesson that you don't understand, please ask your group leader for help. Don't be shy. Your questions or comments might be a big help to others as well.

The truths that we are about to explore from God's Word will be hope-giving and life-changing for all who believe. Let's get started.

Your friend,

Micah Colbert
www.rootedthinking.com

INTRODUCTION

The Bible: A Book Like None Other

There is no other book in the world quite like the Bible. It has been the most translated, purchased, downloaded, and widely distributed book ever written. Everything about the Bible is unique. Consider, for example, its composition. The Bible is one book made up of sixty-six books written by more than forty different authors over a period of fifteen hundred years. Despite all this incredible diversity, the Bible is perfectly unified in its message and teachings. Many attempts have been made throughout history to discredit and even destroy the Bible. Nevertheless, God's Word continues to withstand the test of time. Clearly, there's something about this book that is worthy of our time and careful consideration.

If you've never read the Bible before, here's a couple of basic things you need to know to get started. First, the Bible is divided into two main parts: the Old Testament (thirty-nine books) and the New Testament (twenty-seven books). The Old Testament lays the foundation for our understanding of who God is, who we are, and why we need Jesus. The New Testament focuses on the life and teachings of Jesus as well as the spread of Christianity. Each book of the Bible contains chapter and verse divisions so that we can quickly reference where things are found.

The Bible is God's Word

“Your word is truth; and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.” (Psalm 119:160)

“All Scripture [the words of the Bible] is breathed out by God.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

*“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will [it didn't come from people], but **prophets**, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20–21 NIV)*

These verses teach us that the words of the Bible were “breathed out” or given to us by God. The authors didn't simply write down their own ideas or opinions about God. Rather, they were uniquely guided by God Himself to write His exact words. The unity, accuracy, consistency, fulfilled prophecies, historical truthfulness, and life-transforming power of the Bible demonstrate that it is in fact the very Word of God.

Because the Bible is God's Word, it should be the final authority in our lives. What people might think or feel at any given moment is not a dependable source for discovering truth. If we want to know what to believe or how to live, we need to look to the Bible as the only trustworthy, fully reliable, and God-given guide to the truth.

The Bible Gives Good News

God gave us His Word so that we could know Him. The Bible shows us who God is and teaches us how we can have a relationship with Him.

To know God, we need to know the good news about Jesus. The Bible calls this good news the **gospel**. This is the message that we will be exploring over the next few weeks through our study.

Discussion Questions

- What makes the Bible different from other religious books?
- Why was the Bible written?
- Do you think the Bible is important? If so, why?
- How would your life change if you believed that the Bible was God's Word?

Key Word Definitions

- **Prophet:** Someone who received a message from God to tell other people.
- **Gospel:** The good news of how God brings sinful, rebellious people into an everlasting relationship with Himself through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

1

GOD: THE CREATOR AND KING

Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? These are some of the questions people all over the world have been asking for centuries. Thankfully, we don't have to figure out what life is about on our own. God's Word gives us the answers in a true story we call the gospel.

We begin our study of this story where God begins: in the first chapters in the first book of the Bible.

Bible Reading: Genesis 1, 2:15-25

General Questions

- What is happening in these passages?

- What do these passages teach us about God?

- What do these passages teach us about people?
- What do these passages teach us about the relationship between God and people?

Specific Questions

- How did life begin? How is the Bible's account of divine creation different from what you were taught about the origins of life?
- How did God create the heavens and the earth? What does this tell us about the nature of who God is?
- According to Genesis 1:26–27, what makes people different from the rest of God's creation?

- What did God command Adam to do in Genesis 2:16–17? What would happen if Adam did not believe God and obey His command?

Important Explanations

In the beginning, God created: Before the world began, God was there. Psalm 90:2 says, “Even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.” The eternal God who needed nothing made everything. Because He made all things, He alone has the right to rule over all things.

Made in God’s image: In some ways, we are like God. Like God, we have a mind, will, and emotions. We have a **soul** that will live forever. We have a sense of what is right and wrong. Because we are made in God’s image, we can have a relationship with God and with one another.

Additional Reading

“O Lord [King], you are **worthy** to receive glory and honor and power, because you created all things, and for **your will** they are and were created.” (Revelation 4:11 NIV)

- Why did God make everything? Why did God make you?

Conclusion

Life did not begin by chance. The Creator God made the heavens and the earth. On the final day of creation, He made the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. God made people in His image so that we would **glorify** Him and enjoy a relationship with Him. John 17:3 calls this relationship “eternal life.” On the final day of creation, God said that everything He made was good. Everything was exactly the way God planned it to be.

Further Discussion

Read the appendix article at the end of this handbook. How is the one true God of the Bible different from the gods of other religions? Discuss your answers with your study group.

Key Word Definitions

- **Soul:** The words *soul* and *spirit* are often used interchangeably in the Bible to refer to the eternal part of us. When Adam was created, he was given a body, but he wasn't considered alive until God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and ... [he] became a living soul” (see Genesis 2:7). Our bodies will die, but our souls will live somewhere forever. We will either experience life forever with God or death forever apart from Him.
- **Worthy:** God deserves to be admired, loved, and praised by everyone because He is the creator and sustainer of all things.
- **Your will:** God's will refers to His good purpose. Because God made all things for His will, our lives have meaning, value, and purpose.
- **Glorify:** We glorify or honor God by loving Him, joyfully obeying Him, and helping others see how great God is.



2

MAN: THE REBELLIOUS SINNER

In our first lesson, we learned that God made everything. He made people in His image so that we could have a relationship with Him. God placed the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in a beautiful garden where they lived in perfect harmony with God and with one another. They were free to enjoy all of God's good creation. There was only one thing they couldn't do—eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Genesis 2:16–17). God gave them this command as a test. Would they believe in God's goodness and submit to Him as King, or would they rebel against Him?

Bible Reading: Genesis 3:1–24; Romans 5:12.

General Questions

- What is happening in these passages?

- What do these passages teach us about God?
- What do these passages teach us about people?
- What do these passages teach us about the relationship between God and people?

Specific Questions

Verses 1–9

- How did the serpent tempt Eve? What did he tell her?
- Why did Eve eat the fruit? Why did Adam eat the fruit?
- What happened after Adam and Eve disobeyed God (see v. 7)?

Verses 10–13

- Why were Adam and Eve ashamed of being with God (vs. 10-11)?

- What did Adam and Eve do when God questioned them?

Verses 15, 23–24

- What did God promise Adam and Eve (v.15)?

- What happened because of Adam and Eve's disobedience?

- In Genesis 2:17, God said that Adam and Eve would die if they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In what way did they experience death after they disobeyed?



Important Explanations

Serpent: Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 tell us that the serpent was Satan. Satan is a powerful spiritual being who chose to rebel against God as King. Satan's primary mission is to deceive people so that they do not believe God or obey Him (see 2 Corinthians 4:4).

Die/Death: Death is separation. The Bible mentions three kinds of death: physical, spiritual, and eternal death. The death Adam and Eve experienced after their disobedience was spiritual—their relationship with God was broken.

Genesis 3:15: This verse is often referred to as the first mention of the gospel. God promised humanity that He would send a Savior who would suffer but ultimately triumph over Satan. This wounded victor would come from the woman (her “seed”) and make a way for people to be rescued from **sin** and death.



Conclusion

Instead of trusting God and obeying Him as King, Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan's lie and rebel against God. Through their rebellion, sin and death entered the world. The perfect relationship humanity enjoyed with God was now broken. Although God removed Adam and Eve from the garden, He did not leave them (or us) without hope. God promised that one of their descendants would defeat Satan, rescue people from sin, and make a way for people to be brought back into harmony with God again.

Further Discussion

What is sin? How does the Bible describe it? Using an online Bible study tool like www.biblegateway.com, look up the following verses and write your answers on a separate sheet of paper: 2 Samuel 12:9, James 4:17, Romans 3:23, Psalm 51:4, Isaiah 53:6, and I John 3:4. Discuss what you learned with your group leader.

Key Word Definitions

- **Savior:** The one who rescues people from sin and its judgment (spiritual and eternal death).
- **Sin:** To rebel against God's authority. Sin refers not only to actions but even words, thoughts, and attitudes that break God's commands.

3

SIN: THE REBELLION SPREADS

If God is good, then why is there evil and suffering in the world? Why is there so much injustice, pain, corruption, and death? Everywhere we look, we can see the effects of sin. Is there any hope that things can be made right?

Bible Reading: Genesis 4:1-12; 6:5

General Questions

- What is happening in these passages?

- What do these passages teach us about God?

- What do these passages teach us about people?
- What do these passages teach us about the relationship between God and people?

Specific Questions

- Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice (see Hebrews 11:4 on page 21)?
- Why was Cain angry?
- What did Cain do to his brother Abel?
- Do you think Genesis 6:5 describes the hearts of people today? Does this verse describe your heart?

Additional Verses

“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12 NIV)

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way.” (Isaiah 53:6)

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick: who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

“By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous when God spoke well of his offerings.” (Hebrews 11:4 NIV)

Important Explanations

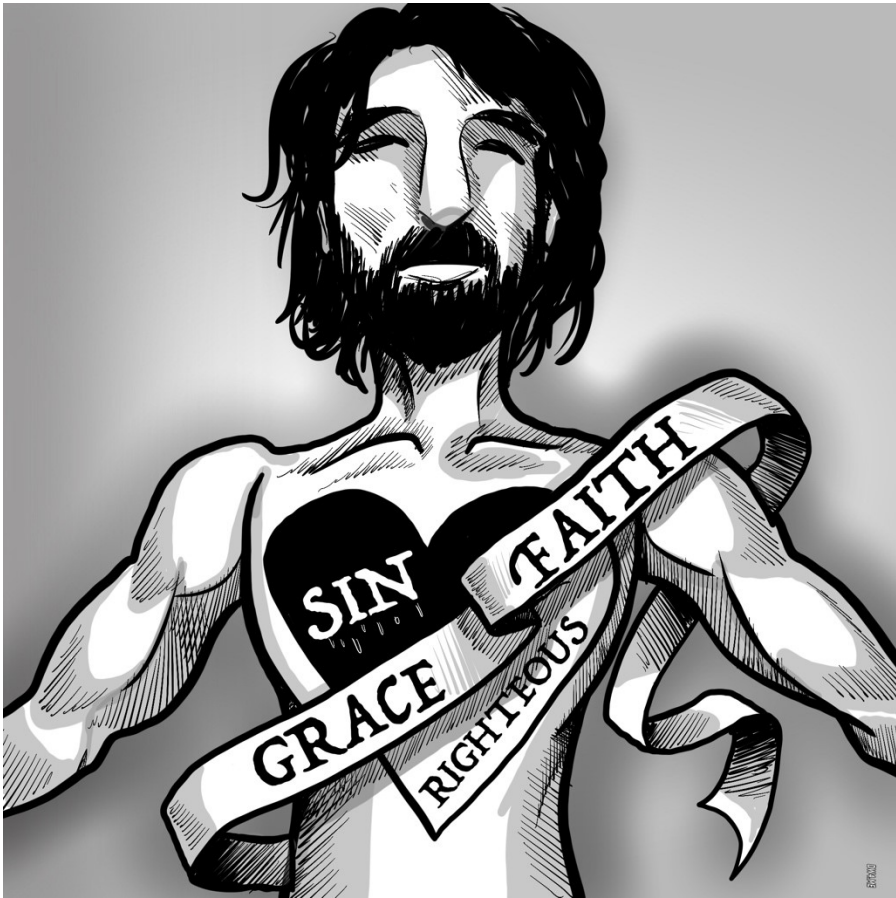
Sin: Sin is rebellion against God’s authority as King. Sin refers not only to actions, but even words, thoughts, attitudes, and motives that break God’s commands. Not only do we commit acts of sin (Romans 3:23), but our hearts are sinful as well (Jeremiah 17:9).

Heart: The heart refers to who we are on the inside. The heart consists of our mind, will, and emotions. When Genesis 6:5 said that people’s hearts were “evil continually,” it meant that their wickedness not only included their actions but went down to the very core of their being (what they thought and the emotions they felt). Everything from their actions to their intentions was sinful.

Cain’s offering: Cain’s offering was rejected because he did not offer it the right way by faith.

Faith: Faith is trust, dependence, and belief in God that results in obedience to God. Unlike Cain, Abel placed his faith in God and received grace—undeserved favor or blessing from God (see Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 2:11). The grace we need to have a right relationship with God is received through faith.

Righteous: God commended Abel as righteous because Abel believed God and trusted in his Word. When God says that someone is righteous, he is not saying that the person is perfect or has no sin. Rather, he is saying that the person’s sins are forgiven so that they are no longer spiritually dead (separated from God). Through faith, they receive a right relationship with God.



Conclusion

Through Adam's rebellion, sin and death came into the world and spread to all people. Even though Cain and Abel were both born with sinful hearts, God considered Abel righteous because he believed God and trusted in His Word. Through faith, Abel received God's grace. He was forgiven and brought into a right relationship with God.



Further Discussion

Look up I John 1:8, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:23, and Mark 7:20-23. According to the Bible, where does sin come from? Do you think it's possible for a person to simply stop sinning? Why or why not? Discuss your answers with your group leader.

4

SEPARATION: SIN KEEPS US FROM GOD

We have learned that God made us in His image so that we could enjoy a relationship with Him. Because of sin, this relationship has been broken.

Sin has affected everything about us. We are **sinner**s by birth and sinners by choice. We are all “dead in sin” (Ephesians 2:1), separated from life with God.

We Have Broken God’s Law

Most people think of sin as something that we do that might hurt others. The Bible, however, tells us that sin is primarily against a **holy** God. To help us understand what sin is, God gave us His Law (see Romans 3:20; 7:7). By looking at God’s commands, we quickly realize the gravity and scope of our sin against God. For example:

Do Not Lie: Lying is not telling the full truth. We lie when we deceive others by making them believe something that isn’t true. Because God is always truthful, He hates lies and will punish those who lie.

Do Not Covet: Coveting is strongly wanting something that isn't ours. We covet because we are not happy with what we have. We might covet someone's things, money, job, or possessions.

Do Not Commit Adultery: Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:27-28 that people who lust are committing adultery in their hearts. Anyone who has sex outside of marriage is also guilty of breaking this command.

Love God with All Your Heart: We break God's commands because we love ourselves more than God. Our hearts are naturally selfish, focused more on pleasing ourselves than God.

Some try to ignore the seriousness of their sin by pointing out the many good things that they have done. They might say something like, "But I'm a nice person. I may have broken a few of God's laws, but I try to live a good life. Compared to others, I'm not that bad."

Read the following verses and answer the questions below:

"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts [good works] are like filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6 NIV)

"Surely there is not a righteous [perfect] man on earth who does good and never sins." (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

"For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of [breaking] all of it." (James 2:10)

- According to the Bible, are there any good people?

- What does God say our good works are like?

- How many laws does a person break before he or she becomes guilty of breaking the whole law?

Sin makes us guilty before God. The good things we do, compared to how holy God is, are like dirty rags. They don't have the power to make us pure or righteous before God.

We are not basically good people who occasionally “mess up.” We have broken God's law and are therefore guilty before God. The law is like a chain. If one link is broken, the whole chain is destroyed. God's Word is clear—because of sin, we cannot be righteous before God through our good works (see also Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:20).

Our Hearts are Sinful

Read the following verses and answer the questions below.

*“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery ... All these evil things come from within, and they **defile** a person.” (Mark 7:20–23)*

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

- Where does sin come from?

- How does the Bible describe our hearts?

Sin has not only affected what we do, but who we are. Think about it—did anyone teach us how to be selfish, get angry with other people, or lie? Of course not! We do these things because our hearts are naturally inclined to rebel against God.

We Deserve Death

Sin makes it impossible for us to earn a right relationship with a holy God. There is nothing good enough that we could possibly do to save ourselves from sin and its punishment.

Read the following verses and answer the questions below.

“For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23)

“But your iniquities [sins] have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

- What have we earned for our sin?

- What separates people from God?

Because God is holy, He must judge sin. The punishment of sin is death, separation from God both in this life and forever. Eternal death is also referred to as hell in the Bible. The Bible describes hell as a real place where real people experience real punishment for their sin forever (see Matthew 13:42, 25:41; Mark 9:43; Jude 1:7; Revelation 21:8).

Someone might ask, “But how could a loving God send anyone to hell?” God is loving, but He is also a holy Judge. He will punish those who have broken His law.

Our sin is so serious that the only just punishment for sin is eternal death.

Conclusion

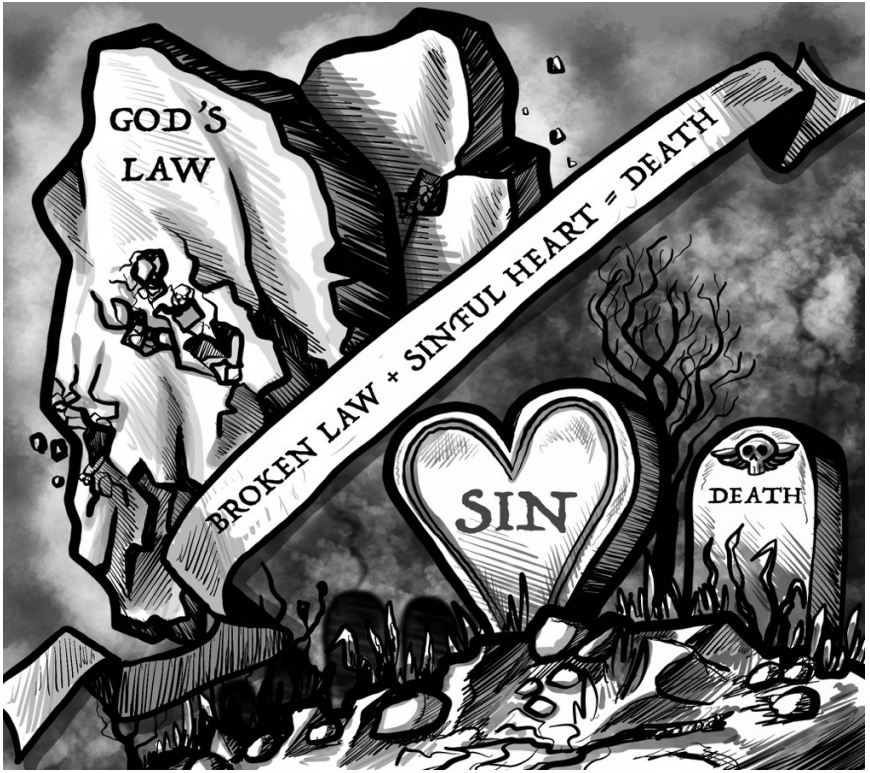
There is nothing that we can do to change our sinful hearts or take away our sinful actions. We are guilty before God and deserve judgment. But there is hope. In our next lessons, we will look at the good news of what God has done for us so that we can be forgiven and have a relationship with Him.

Further Discussion

What does John 8:34 say about those who practice sin? Based on what we’ve learned from God’s Word, how do you think people can have a relationship with God if they are “dead in sin” (Ephesians 2:1)?

Key Word Definitions

- **Sinners:** People who sin. We are all sinners because we are born with sinful hearts and have chosen to rebel against God.
- **Holy:** God is perfect and set apart from all that is sinful.
- **Defile:** To make dirty. Sin makes us unclean or impure in the sight of a holy God.
- **Wages:** What someone earns for his or her work. Because of our sin, we deserve to be separated from God forever in hell.



TRANSITION

In the first four lessons, we have learned the following:

- The world is not here by chance. God made everything. Because He is the Creator, He is Lord over His creation.
- God made us in His image so that we could have a relationship with Him. The Bible calls this relationship “eternal life” (John 17:3).
- Instead of believing God and obeying Him, we have chosen to rebel against Him. Because of sin, our relationship with God is dead. We are born with sinful hearts and reject God’s rule over our lives.
- God shows us how holy He is through His law. We have all broken His law and deserve judgment. The judgment of sin is death—separation from God both now and forever in hell.
- There is nothing we can do on our own to change our sinful hearts or earn a relationship with God.

If the story of the Bible stopped here, we wouldn’t call it good news. But it doesn’t. Thankfully, there’s hope.

5

JESUS: GOD'S PROMISED SAVIOR

Before God removed Adam and Eve from the garden, He promised them that He would send a Savior—someone who would rescue people from sin and its punishment. The story of the Old Testament shows us how God sovereignly prepared the way for this promised Deliverer. But who would this person be? Who could possibly be qualified to rescue people from sin?

Jesus' Miraculous Birth

Read the verses and answer the questions below:

“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah [the promised Savior] came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and he did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).’ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:18–25 NIV)

“And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’” (Luke 2:10–11)

- Who is the promised Savior?

- What makes Jesus’s birth such a miracle?

- How did Jesus’s birth fulfill prophecy?

- Why did the angel tell Joseph to name the baby Jesus?

- What would Jesus save people from?

- Why was the coming of Jesus considered “good news of great joy”?

- What do these verses tell us about Jesus?

There is a lot of confusion today about Jesus. Many say that He was merely a prophet, teacher, religious leader, or good man. But the Bible makes it clear that Jesus is more than a spiritual guru—He is Immanuel, God with us. He is the Savior God promised to Adam, Eve, and the rest of humanity. He is the One who came to rescue people from sin and bring them into a right relationship with God.

Fully God, Fully Man

Read the verses and answer the questions below:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made... and the Word became flesh and dwelt [lived] among us. And we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” (John 1:1,3,14)

“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

- Who is the Word?

- Who made the world?

- What did the Word become?

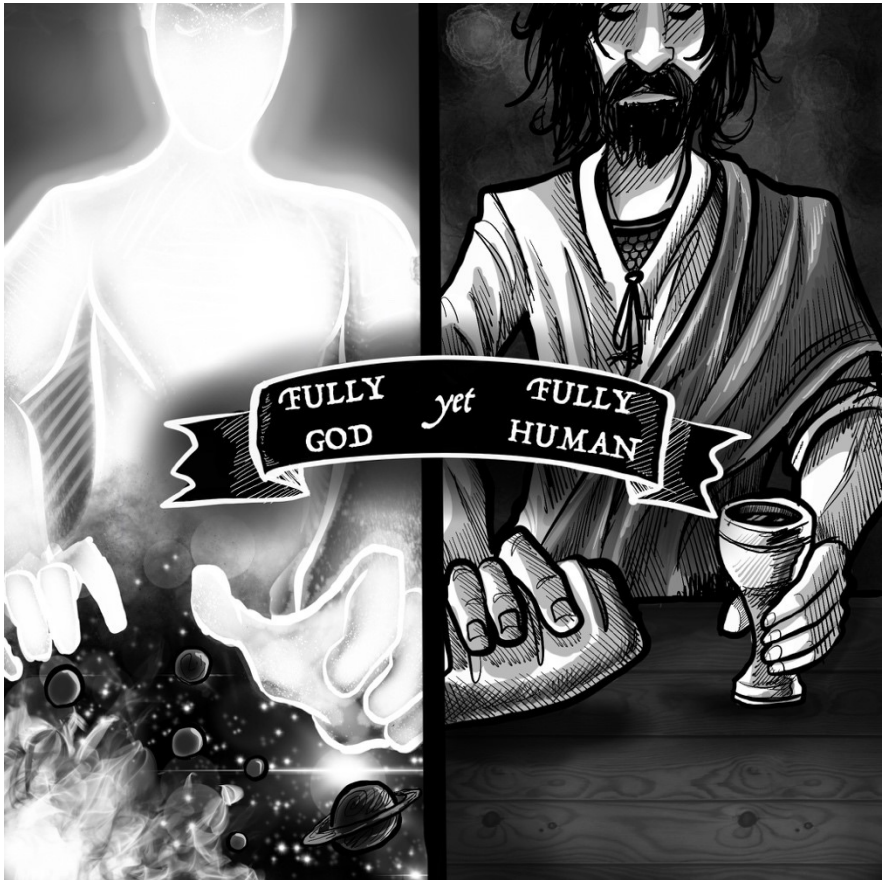
- What does the last sentence of 1 John 5:20 tell us about Jesus?

Jesus is more than just a good man or religious teacher. He is God. The God who made all things became a man so that we could know Him. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus experienced the same struggles, difficulties, and troubles that we do, yet did so without sin. Jesus, fully God and truly man, is the Savior we need to bring us to God.

The Mediator Between God and Man

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5)

A mediator is someone who restores a broken relationship between two people. Because of sin, our relationship with God is broken. We can't make this relationship right because we are sinners who have rebelled against God. But Jesus isn't a sinner. He is God. Only Jesus, the perfect Savior, can bring sinful people into a right relationship with a holy God.



Important Explanations

Jesus the Messiah: The word Messiah means the “anointed / chosen one.” The titles Messiah (Hebrew etymology) and Christ (Greek etymology) are synonymous. Jesus is the Messiah sent from God to save people from their sin (see John 4:25–26).

A Savior, who is Christ the Lord: This phrase tells us a lot about who Jesus is. First, He is a Savior. He rescues people from sin and its punishment. He is also the Christ (Messiah), the promised Deliver who would restore the broken relationship between sinners and God. Finally, He is Lord. He is the great King over all creation.

The Word: This is a title for Jesus. As the Word, Jesus shows us exactly what God is like.

The Word became flesh: Jesus, who is the eternal God, became a man. When He became a man, He did not stop being God. He was fully God and fully man at the same time.

He is the true God and eternal life: God’s Word makes it clear that Jesus is not just another man. He is God. He became a man so that He could be the Savior we need to bring us to God.

Conclusion

The Bible is clear about who Jesus is. He is the only Lord and Savior. Being fully God and perfect man, He is the only one qualified and able to save us from sin. What He did to save us is what we will discover in our next lesson.

Further Discussion

In our lesson today, we learned that Jesus is fully God yet fully man. Look up the following verses and discuss ways in which Jesus' names and actions reveal to us that He is God: Titus 2:13, Colossians 1:16, Mark 2:1-12, and John 5:21. If you are interested in a more in-depth study of the life of Jesus, consider reading the New Testament book of Mark.

6

JESUS: THE WAY TO GOD

Because God is holy and **just**, He must punish sin. Because He is love, He has provided a way for guilty sinners who deserve punishment to be forgiven and made right with Him.

Read the verses and answer the questions below:

“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18)

- How does God show sinners His love?

- Who did Jesus die for?

Jesus in My Place

Read the verses and answer the questions.

“The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23a)

“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

- What do we deserve because of our sin?

- Why did Jesus do so that our sins can be forgiven?

In His love, God sent Jesus to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. We've broken God's Law. Jesus kept it. We are not good. He is. We deserve death for our sin. He died in the place of sinners so that we can be forgiven and have eternal life with God. The good news of the gospel can be summarized in these four words: “Jesus in my place.”



The Risen Savior

“He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” (Matthew 28:6)

“Christ has been raised from the dead. For as by a man [Adam] came death, by a man [Jesus] has come also the resurrection of the dead [life forever with God].” (1 Corinthians 15:20–21)

The resurrection of Jesus is the most important event in history. It authenticated the Bible’s claims that Jesus is God and Lord over all the earth.

The resurrection also demonstrates that Jesus had power over death and that His **sacrifice** was an acceptable payment for sin's punishment. Because Jesus is alive, those who trust in Him can also experience life forever with God.

The Only Way to God

Read the following verses and answer the questions.

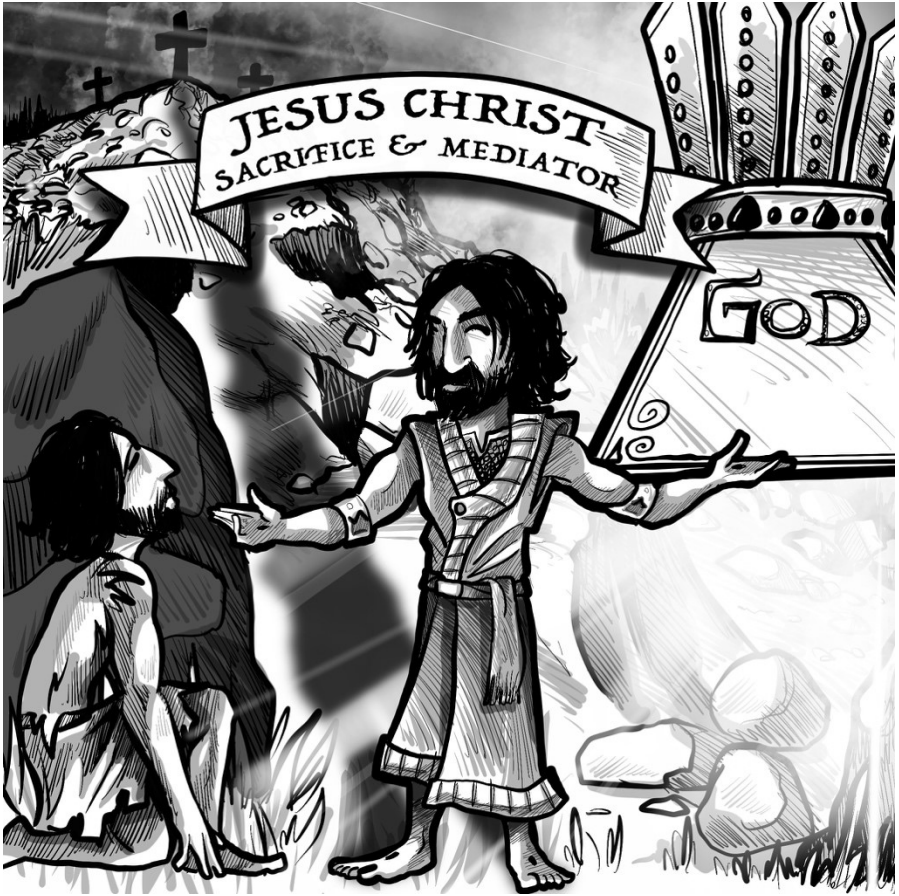
"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved [from sin] ... I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father [God] except through Me [Jesus]." (John 10:9, 14:6)

- In what way is Jesus the "door"?

- How many ways can a person come to God?

- How can a person be saved from sin?

Jesus is the only way to God. He kept God's law and lived the perfect life we couldn't. He died so that we wouldn't have to be separated from God. He rose again so that we might have eternal life. Only through His sinless life and sin-bearing death can we be rescued from sin and brought into a right relationship with God.



Important Explanations

God shows His love: God's love is very different than the "love" we often hear about today. God doesn't love people because they are good, attractive, or lovely. He loves because He is love. He demonstrated the matchless depths of His love by sending His Son, Jesus, to die and take away sin's death penalty for those who would trust in Him.

Died for our sins: Jesus paid the sin debt that we owed God by dying as a substitute in our place. He took the full force of God's just punishment against sin upon Himself so that forgiveness and pardon might be available to us. He rose again, conquering sin and death, so that we could have life forever with God.

Conclusion

Everything we need to be saved from sin is provided for us through Jesus. He alone is the one who can bring us to God. The good news of what Jesus has done, however, demands a response.

Further Discussion

If Jesus is the only way to God, then what about other religions? Do they lead to God as well? Discuss your answers with your group.

Key Word Definitions

- **Just:** Morally right or good. God is a God of justice, always doing what is right. He cannot ignore sin because His law has been broken.
- **Sacrifice:** To die in the place of someone else as a payment for his or her sin. Only Jesus is qualified to die in the place of sinful people because He is sinless.

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RESPONDING TO JESUS: TURN AND TRUST

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we could never live, died in our place to pay sin's penalty for us, and rose again to prove He is Lord over all. So how can this good news be yours?

Rescued by Grace

Read the verses and answer the questions below:

“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.” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

- How are people saved from sin and its penalty?

- Why can't people be saved from sin by their own works?

- Is eternal life a gift or a reward?

Unlike the false gods of the nations who must be appeased through rituals, offerings, and religious performances, the one true God is a God of grace. Grace is God freely giving sinners blessings that we don't deserve and could never earn. Because of God's grace, we can have **salvation** from sin and life forever with Him. So how does this grace become ours?

Receiving Grace: Turn and Trust

Read the verses and answer the questions below:

“Repent and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)

“[God] commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved [from sin].” (Acts 16:31)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son [Jesus], that whoever believes in him should not perish have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

- What does God command all people to do?

- What will happen to the person who truly believes in Jesus?

To receive God's grace, we must repent and believe.

Important Explanations

Repentance

To repent means to decisively turn *from sin to God through* faith in Jesus. When people repent, the following things happen:

- They realize that they are sinners who deserve eternal death because of their sin.
- They hate their sin and have no desire to continue living in it.
- They acknowledge that they are spiritually bankrupt. They know that there is nothing that they can do on their own to take away sin's punishment or earn God's favor.
- They turn from pride, self-reliance, and sin to God, humbly trusting in God's grace to be forgiven and reconciled to Him.

Jesus said in John 3:16-20 that people love sin so much that they would rather have it than God. Sadly, they would rather hold on to their rebellion than turn to God through faith in Christ. We must not let the love of darkness keep us from embracing the light of Christ.

Repentance and faith go together. People can only repent as they turn to God through faith (or belief) in Jesus.

Faith

Believing in Jesus is not simply agreeing with the facts of the gospel. Faith is completely depending upon Jesus alone for **salvation** from sin and eternal life with God. When people place their faith in Jesus, the following things happen:

- They believe that Jesus is the Savior who died and rose again to pay sin's penalty for them.
- They believe that Jesus is the Lord who is worthy of their worship, love, and obedience.
- They stop depending upon their own goodness and self-righteous efforts for a relationship with God. Instead, they place their entire trust and hope in Jesus to be reconciled to God.

What Happens if I Repent and Believe in Jesus?

Read the verse and answer the questions below:

“To all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he [God] gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

“Whoever believes in the Son [Jesus] has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (John 3:36)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my [Jesus'] word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

“I [Jesus] give them [those who believe in Jesus] eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:28)

*“For we hold that one is **justified** by faith apart from the works of the law [their own goodness].” (Romans 3:28)*

- What happens to all who receive Jesus?

- What will happen to those who don’t obey Jesus’s command to repent and believe?

- Is it possible for those who truly believe in Jesus to experience eternal death?

- Who has eternal life? Will those who have eternal life ever perish (die forever in hell)?

All those who repent and trust in Jesus pass from death to life, become God’s children, are declared righteous, receive eternal life, and never experience sin’s eternal judgment. All these amazing gifts of grace are available to anyone who will turn from sin and trust in Jesus.

Conclusion

The truths we have studied from God’s Word demand a response. We will either reject Jesus or trust in Him. We will either continue in rebellion against God or turn to Him in repentance and faith. We cannot remain neutral. We must decide.

“Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Further Discussion

Will you repent and believe in the gospel? What would keep you from turning to Jesus?

Key Word Definitions

- **Salvation:** To be saved, rescued, or delivered from sin and its penalty.
- **Justified:** To be declared righteous by God. Through faith in Jesus, our sins are forgiven and Christ’s righteousness is credited to us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:21-22; Philippians 3:9). This means that God the judge no longer declares us “guilty,” but “righteous” because of Christ and His work on our behalf. Only those who repent and trust in Jesus are justified.



CONCLUSION

If you have any questions or would like to further research what you've studied from God's Word, please visit www.rootedthinking.com. On our site, you will find a contact page that you can use to get in touch with us. If you repent and believe in Jesus, we would love to know about it. We would be happy to help you take the next steps in your new relationship with God. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

APPENDIX

GOD IN THREE PERSONS: THE TRIUNE GOD OF THE BIBLE

By: Dr. M. R. Conrad

Words fail to adequately describe the one true God. Attempts to convey who He is and what He is like stretch the boundaries of human language. Trying to describe God is like using an abacus to make the calculations for a nuclear reactor. The subject matter is too great for the simple tool.

God is unique and beyond human comprehension. God is the One who made everything, yet He Himself was not made. He is eternal, having no beginning or end. The Bible repeatedly declares that no one is like Him. One example of God's absolute uniqueness is the trinity. The term *trinity* simply means that God is one God who exists as three persons. Let's see what God says about the trinity in the Scriptures.

One God

The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one true God (see Deuteronomy 6:4; Exodus 20:2–3; Psalm 86:10; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:3–6; James 2:19; 1 Timothy 2:5; etc.).

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.” (Isaiah 45:5)

Three Persons

These verses leave no doubt that there is only one God. However, the Bible speaks of three persons who are God. These three persons are God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father is God

God the Father created the world (Genesis 1:1). He designed the plan of salvation for humankind (Titus 1:2). He is in control of all things (Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 46:10; 2 Chronicles 20:6), ruling over His creation as the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.” (Ephesians 4:6)

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:7)

God the Son is God

Jesus Christ is God the Son (Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:8; John 10:30; 1 John 5:20; Titus 2:13). Jesus, the eternal second person of the trinity, was present and active in creation. Over two thousand years ago, he left heaven to become man (John 1:1-14). He has names that only belong to God. He has attributes or characteristics that only God has. Jesus did miracles that only God can do.

He accepted worship as God that only God should accept (Matthew 14:33; 28:9–10; John 9:37–38; Hebrews 1:6). Jesus publicly claimed He was one with God (John 10:30, 17:21). The Bible says Jesus is equal with God (Philippians 2:6). Finally, Jesus rose from the dead, proving He is God (1 Corinthians 15).

“I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30)

“In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word [Jesus Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14)

God the Holy Spirit is God

The Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3–4; I Corinthians 6:11), and He exhibits the attributes of God, including omnipresence (Psalm 139:7) and omniscience (I Corinthians 2:10). He is not an impersonal force used by God the Father, but is a distinct Person with mind, will, and emotions (Romans 8:27; I Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:30). Like the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit participated in the creation of the world (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). The Holy Spirit also performs works that only God can do, like the miracle of the virgin birth (Luke 1:35) and the regeneration [spiritual birth] of those who believe on Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5).

“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. You have not lied to man but to God.’” (Acts 5:3–4)

See also Acts 28:25–27; 2 Corinthians 3:17.

These Three Persons Are One God

Even though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, God is one unified God. Matthew 28:19 lists them as equal under one name (not names). Many other verses in the Bible teach this truth and show the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God working together in unity (Genesis 1:26–27; Matthew 3:16–17, 28:19; Luke 1:35, 24:49; John 14:16–17a; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22, 13:14; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 3:14–19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:1–2; 1 John 5:7; Jude 20–21).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
(Matthew 28:19)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

No Other God Is like the God of the Bible

The trinity is unique to the Bible. The gods of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other non-Christian religions are very different from the one true God of the Bible.

- The god of Islam is Allah. Islam teaches that their god is one god, but it does not teach that their god exists as three persons. The Koran teaches that Jesus was merely a human prophet.
- The first principles or ultimate realities of Buddhism are not the same as the God of the Bible. God is a spirit. Everything came from Him and will return to Him.

However, God also became man to save human beings from sin, which is the real cause of suffering. True enlightenment does not come from inside a person. It does not come through following a path of teaching. True enlightenment can only come from the one true God. He knows everything because He made everything. Through the Bible, God reveals His knowledge to human beings.

- Hinduism teaches that there are many gods with different qualities and abilities, not one almighty God in three persons.

Summary

As you can see, the Bible teaches that God is one Being with three distinct, eternal, coequal Persons. There is only one God, and this one God exists in three persons. The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father. Each person is distinct, yet each is equally and completely God. This truth is hard for our minds to understand and difficult for us to explain. God is greater than we are. We cannot totally understand everything about Him, but we can believe what God has revealed about Himself in His Word.

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Micah Colbert (M. Div. and M. Ed) has been helping people explore the good news of Jesus as a missionary, pastor, and teacher for more than twelve years. Currently, Micah serves as the discipleship and outreach pastor at Community of Grace Church in Buffalo, NY. He also serves as a campus minister to international students at the University at Buffalo. He and his wife, Debbie, live in the Buffalo area with their four children.

