

My Heart Unchained

Book One: Redemption and the Trinity

Helping Disciples of Jesus Connect
Their Hearts to the Savior

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PREFACE

MY HEART UNCHAINED HELPING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CONNECT THEIR HEARTS TO THE SAVIOR.

Current culture applauds following our hearts. And by “heart” it means our feelings. We have been taught and encouraged to pay special attention to our feelings and to trust them. A recent popular social media quotation claims, “You’ll know the truth by the way it feels.” Yet, feelings are fickle, and if we follow them, we will certainly be confused and misled.

It is true that we live from our hearts. Created in the image of God, we have the ability to think, feel, and choose. In Scripture the term “heart” is the center of one’s inner life and represents these three functions. Our intellect, emotions, and will are designed to work together to help us as Christ-followers live a biblically balanced and satisfied life.

A Christian disciple is one who desires to live wholeheartedly for Christ and is eager and involved in making other disciples. Therefore it is essential he is aware of his heart-responses in relationships and circumstances. And as the disciple becomes more discerning, he will be better equipped to align his heart to Truth, obey Christ, and maintain heart-health.

My Heart Unchained is a seven-part discipleship tool designed to help you, a follower of Jesus, understand and discern your heart so that you might live wholeheartedly in Christ by glorifying and enjoying Him.

In *My Heart Unchained* you will learn what it means to entrust your heart to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and His plan to rescue mankind. Also, you will learn tools to evaluate your heart and to establish healthy heart-attitudes and disciplines.

May the Lord bless you and refine you as you work through the lessons and enjoy more fully the Satisfier of your heart.

*Unchained: To be set free from
sin and what the world tells us.*

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Romans 6:18

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Producing the *My Heart Unchained* discipleship tool has been the collective effort of many wonderful individuals. In particular, we are grateful and appreciative of the following individuals and elders of Valley Bible Church, both Pleasanton and Livermore campuses, for their commitment to pray, brainstorm, write, edit, design, test, revise, provide testimonies, and encourage.

Women's Writing Team

Sharon Collard, Imelda Dodgen, Charlene Earle, Connie Johnson, Anna Plummer, Fritzeen Scott, and Shirley Sweetman.

Men's Editing Team

Seeing the value of *My Heart Unveiled*, a group of men undertook the project of editing and arranging the study so that it would resonate with men. George Hampton, Dan Hennes, Jay Scott, and Jason Wong replaced testimonies and biblical examples to make illustrations applicable to men.

In addition, we would like to thank the Elders of Valley Bible Church for their oversight, input, review, and support: Timothy Barley, Gary Darnell, Devon Dodgen, Jim Jahncke, Jay Scott, Gary Stafford, and Randy White.

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Understanding
God's
Plan of
Redemption

Unit 1: Understanding God's Plan of Redemption

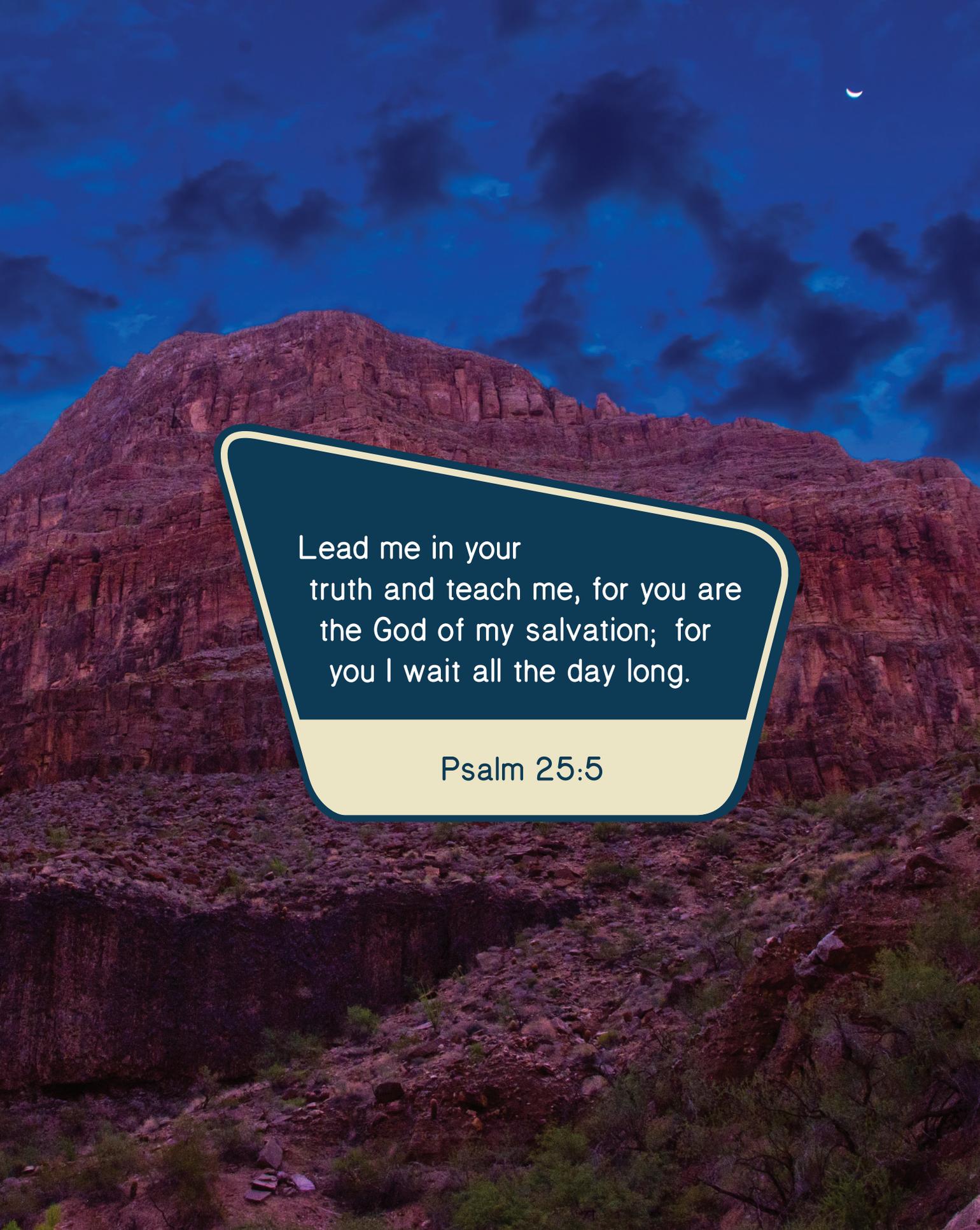
In Unit 1 you will discover God's plan of redemption. Before the universe was made, the Godhead planned that you would be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. From beginning to end, your salvation is a work of divine grace (Ephesians 1:5).

- 02 Lesson 1: God's Majesty Revealed in Creation
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LESSON 1: GOD'S MAJESTY REVEALED IN CREATION

In Lesson 1 you will discover God's beautiful majesty revealed in creation.

As you begin your study, pray the words of David in Psalm 25:5—"Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long."



Lead me in your
truth and teach me, for you are
the God of my salvation; for
you I wait all the day long.

Psalm 25:5

GOD CREATED THE WORLD

The Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the world.

Genesis 1:1-2

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The word “God” in these verses is the Hebrew Elohim. It is a plural noun yet normally represented by a singular pronoun “He.” This is the first evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity—one Creator God functioning as three persons. These verses speak of our time, space, matter, and universe coming into existence. God created out of nothing! “Create” is the Hebrew word bara, meaning “to fashion out of nothing.”

Deuteronomy 32:6

Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Malachi 2:10a

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?

1 Corinthians 8:6

[Y]et for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

JOHN 1:1-5

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:1-3

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Revelation 4:11

"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Each member of the Trinity was involved in creation.

LIFE FLOURISHES IN A PERFECT ENVIRONMENT

Read Genesis 1

Record how God created a perfect environment for sustaining all life on earth. Make a list of God’s character and attributes as demonstrated in the creation account.

God gave man everything he would need to survive and flourish and God and man enjoyed an intimate relationship.

What God did in the creation of the water, land, plants, and animals, He also did in the creation of man (variety, generosity, etc.).

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Looking over your list, what characteristic/attribute most impacts you? Why?

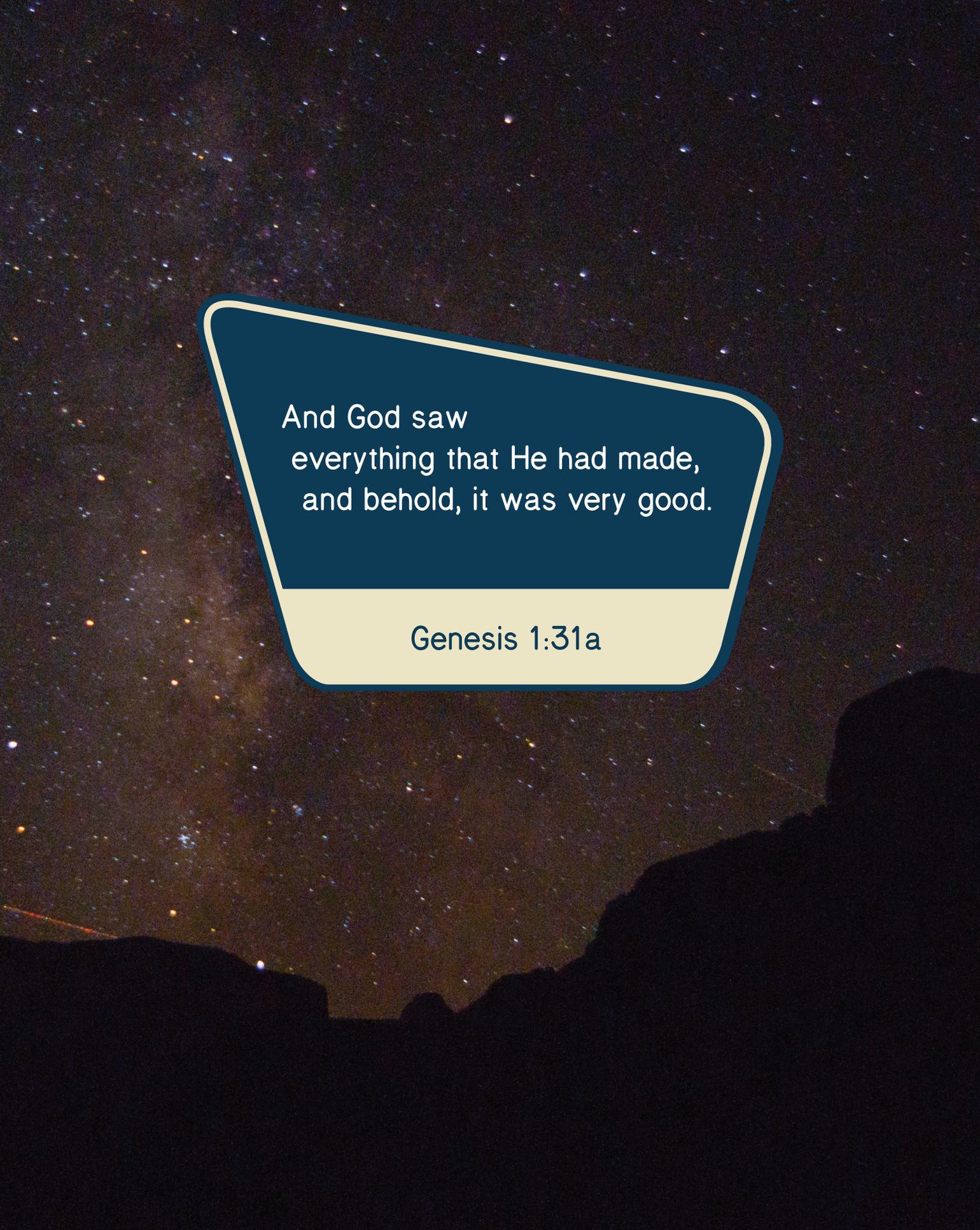
Answer the following questions about the text:

How did God view His creation? How many times does “good” appear in Genesis 1?

“Good” refers to the absolute best or highest quality and moral excellence.

Nothing in all creation needed to be altered or improved!

How does knowing that God perfectly created all things influence your view of Him?



And God saw
everything that He had made,
and behold, it was very good.

Genesis 1:31a

GOD'S PLAN DEMONSTRATES GOD'S GRACE

What was God's plan from before time (creation) began?

Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

2 Timothy 1:9

[God] who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴[God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will...

SINCE BEFORE TIME BEGAN...

God had a plan to show you His grace, to pour out His forgiveness on a people who do not deserve it. Sending Jesus into the world to die and to rescue you from your sin was not an afterthought. It was God's original plan. God purposed for you to enjoy an amazing relationship with Him. Before the beginning, God knew He would create man and that man would reject Him. He knew you would need a Savior and that the only One who could save you would be His Son.

End Your Study

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Read and meditate (think deeply or carefully about something) on Psalm 104—"O Lord My God, You Are Very Great." Record your thoughts and praise Him for His majesty and His manifold works.

Application

How will you approach this week after reflecting on God's majesty? Become more like Christ?

LESSON 2: GOD'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH MAN

In Lesson 1 you reviewed God's perfect plan in creation. In Lesson 2 you will reflect on God's final act of creation on the sixth day, the creation of man.

God provided man with everything he needed to be satisfied!

GOD GAVE MAN FREE WILL

Genesis 2:16–17 is the first command in the Bible. It implies man has free will—choice.

Why is it significant that God gave man freewill?

GOD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS IMAGE

What does it mean to be “made in the image of God”? How is man like God?

Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Genesis 1:27

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

Genesis 5:1

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.

Is there any part of the image of God that man has not tarnished by sin?

MAN IS UNIQUE IN ALL CREATION

It is a great privilege to be a man. Like God, you are personal, intelligent, creative, relational, and communicative. God has given you His Word and the ability to understand it.

Through His Word you can know and enjoy Him and His world. You have a moral conscience, the ability to choose right from wrong. In addition, unlike the rest of creation, you are eternal (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

LESSON 3: MAN'S FALL INTO SIN

In Lessons 1 and 2 you surveyed the beautiful creation account. When God created the world, He saved the best for last. He created man as His image-bearer, and this is mankind's privileged and unique calling.

In Lesson 3 you will examine what sin is and does and how Adam and Eve fell into Original Sin. Sin promises to be worth it, but take note—sin always lies.

SIN DEFINED

What first comes to mind when you think of sin? Brainstorm your ideas.

How would you define sin? Write out your personal definition of sin.

1 John 5:17a

All wrongdoing is sin[.]

“The emphasis of Scripture, however, is on the godless self-centeredness of sin. Every sin is a breach of what Jesus called “the first and great commandment,” not just by failing to love God with all our being but by actively refusing to acknowledge and obey him as our Creator and Lord. We have rejected the position of dependence that our createdness inevitably involves and made a bid for independence. Worse still, we have dared to proclaim our self-dependence, our autonomy, which is to claim the position occupied by God alone. Sin is not a regrettable lapse from conventional standards; its essence is hostility to God (Romans 8:7), issuing in active rebellion against him. It has been described in terms of “getting rid of the Lord God” in order to put ourselves in his place in a haughty spirit of “God-almightiness.”¹

John Stott

“Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.... A life that is pleasing to God is one that has moral purity not only in its actions, but also in its desires of heart.”²

Wayne Grudem

Who is speaking
in this passage?

— God

— Man

— Woman

— Serpent

Genesis 3:1-24 "The Fall"

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

¹⁶To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

¹⁷And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

²⁰The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

1 Timothy 2:14

Adam wasn't deceived as Eve was. That means Adam knew the truth and waited to see what would happen.

“Sin is not just the doing of bad things, but the making of good things into ultimate things. It is seeking to establish a sense of self by making something else more central to your significance, purpose, and happiness than your relationship to God.”³

Tim Keller

Sin is always a lowering of God and an elevating of self.

THE PATTERN OF SIN

Circle the verbs found in Genesis 3:6.

Genesis 3:6

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

What is the pattern of temptation and sin?



What is the pattern as a result of sin?



1 John 2:15-16

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

ADAM'S ROLE

- Eve ate and offered the fruit to Adam. He took it and ate it.
- Adam realized they were naked. He tried to cover it up and hide.
- God questions Adam and Eve. Adam blames Eve. He doesn't take responsibility and repent. Adam was passive and failed to lead.

What happened as a result of Adam and Eve eating the fruit? What did they experience? How did they respond?

Sometimes you will clearly and immediately experience the consequences of sin, but other times sin is more subversive and the consequences may be less obvious and pronounced. But be aware: sin is always dangerous and destructive.

Reflect on a time when you did not immediately experience the consequences of sin but later were impacted by it. In retrospect, what do you regret?

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 4: SIN'S CONSEQUENCES

In Lesson 3 you uncovered Satan's strategy that resulted in Adam and Eve choosing to rebel against God—to sin. They chose to believe Satan over God, thus inserting their own authority above God's.

In Lesson 4 you will note how the effects of Adam and Eve's Original Sin spread to all mankind.

When you choose to rebel against God, your response is similar to that of Adam and Eve.

**CONSEQUENCES OF SIN:
THE SERPENT WILL BEAR THE CONSEQUENCE OF HIS REBELLION**

What is God’s curse on the serpent? (14–15)

Romans 16:20a

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

The real battle is between Satan and the offspring of the Woman. The offspring who will bruise (“crush” NIV) the head of the serpent is Christ Himself; Who comes from the Woman (Genesis 3:15). This is the first gospel message. It is termed the protoevangelium.

WOMEN WILL BEAR THE CONSEQUENCE OF EVE’S SIN. (16)

What are God’s consequence on women?

- She will bring forth children in pain (16a)—The literal translation is “causing to be great, I shall cause to be great your sorrow”—an intense statement, repeated for emphasis.
- She will desire to have control over her husband.
- A parallel passage to Genesis 3:16b is found fifteen verses later in Genesis 4:7. Genesis 3:16b—“Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Genesis 4:7—“Sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” The same word for desire is used in both passages (tešûqâ), nom. desire, request, longing, appetite (H9592). “As in Genesis 4:7, there is a struggle in Genesis 3:16 between the one who has the desire (wife) and the one who must/should rule or master (husband). Cain did not win his battle with sin, and the victory of the husband is not necessarily assured by God in Genesis 3:16b. The ‘curse’ here describes the beginning of the battle of the sexes. After the fall, the husband no longer rules easily; he must fight for his headship. The woman’s desire is to control her husband (to usurp divinely appointed headship), and he must master her, if he can. Sin has corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband. And so, the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny, domination, and manipulation.” There will be a fracturing from the equality and complementarity that man and woman enjoyed, to a mutual desire to dominate. “I am placing my desires and my will before yours.”

ADAM'S SIN BECAME YOUR SIN

How do the following verses show that Adam's sin extended to the entire human race?

Read each verse and record your response.

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. .

Romans 5:18-19

¹⁸[O]ne trespass led to condemnation for all men. ¹⁹[and] by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

“The problem with the human race is not most deeply that everybody does various kinds of sins—those sins are real, they are huge and they are enough to condemn us. Paul is very concerned about them. But the deepest problem is that behind all our depravity and all our guilt and all our sinning, there is a deep mysterious connection with Adam whose sin became our sin and whose judgment became our judgment.”¹

John Piper

WITH SIN CAME DEATH

Physical Death

+

Spiritual Death

The separation of the soul from the body.

The separation of the soul from God.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

Genesis 3 offers a message of hope. The gospel is proclaimed in Genesis 3—Jesus is declared a victor over Satan. "He shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

What depiction of the gospel message, God's mercy and grace, do you see?

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 5: JESUS IS THE REMEDY

In Lesson 3 and 4 you examined the devastating fall of man into sin, but in Lesson 5 you will rejoice in the Good News—Jesus is the Remedy!

Ephesians 2:1-3

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

JESUS, THE REMEDY

But God in His utter graciousness provides His Son as the means by which we are reconciled to God and spared from His wrath. Like God provided the first covering for sin, Jesus provides the only lasting payment for sin.

“For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God [Genesis 3:1–7], while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man [2 Corinthians 5:21]. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be.”¹

John Stott

*Only God can provide a garment
that will cover your shame.*

The Robe of Righteousness

We are all born naked, physically and spiritually, because of Adam and Eve's sin and resulting curse. Though physically you learn to clothe yourself, you can never clothe yourself spiritually. Only God through Christ can spiritually clothe you.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened and they realized they stood bare before God. They were ashamed and tried to sew together fig leaves to hide their nakedness. But God responded by clothing them with garments of skin from an animal he had slain (Genesis 3:21). God in His kindness restored their dignity. Fig leaves are fragile and temporary. Animal skin is more durable, longer lasting.

Like Adam and Eve, all your sin is laid bare before God ("Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops." Luke 12:2–3); and none of your "righteous deeds" is sufficient to cover your spiritual nakedness. You cannot restore relationship with God yourself. Though you may try to spiritually clothe yourself by good works, "[w]e have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6a).

Only God can provide a garment that will cover your shame. But instead of the skin of an animal as He did for Adam and Eve, He now clothes you with the ultimate garment—a garment of righteousness that was purchased with the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. ("Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." Hebrews 9:22; "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21)

The blood of Jesus covers your sins, and you are forgiven and made righteous. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Romans 4:7).

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

The parable of the prodigal son is a beautiful picture of how God longs to clothe you in His righteousness. When the father sees his prodigal son from a distance, he runs to him receiving him home. The father instructs his servants to adorn his repentant son with his best robe. ("But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him....'" Luke 15:22)

Jesus told another parable of a wedding feast. When the master finds a man at the wedding banquet without his wedding garment, he throws him out (Matthew 22:1–14). In the same way, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God without the Robe of Righteousness bought by Christ's blood.

Revelation also includes the imagery of a white robe. Unit 6 tells of the martyred saints each being given a white robe to wear until the end. ("Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and

their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” Revelation 6:11) And Revelation 19 reveals that the Church as His Bride will be granted “fine linen, clean and white” (KJV) to wear for The Wedding. (“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.” Revelation 19:7–8)

This is your only access to heaven—the blood of Christ shed on the cross. Without faith in the atoning work of His blood, you are uncovered and laid bare before Him. You cannot clothe yourself; you cannot cover yourself; you cannot save yourself.

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

**“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.”**

Amazing Grace, John Newton, 1779

God reconciled man to Himself by making Jesus, Who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we could be right with God. The context of 2 Corinthians 5:21 centers on reconciliation to God (18–20). The Greek word for reconciliation in these verses is *katallages*—“the exchange of hostility for a friendly relationship.” Hostility existed between holy God and sinful man which Jesus dealt with on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:14–15; Ephesians 2:13–16).

So there was an extraordinary exchange. Christ died as your substitute. God treated the Son as the object of His judgment and wrath, and Jesus voluntarily received God’s judgment and wrath so that you might be reconciled to God (John 10:17–18).

John Stott states, “He became sin with our sin so that we may become righteous with his righteousness.... What was transferred to Christ was not moral qualities but legal consequences; he voluntarily accepted liability for our sins.”²

God’s punishment administered on Jesus was thorough and complete. Thus God was fully satisfied and has no need to further punish those who put their trust in Christ. In this sense the Father “made” Jesus to be sin (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10).

The implications are far-reaching. For all eternity Christ-followers will marvel at God’s kindness and grace to save us through the sacrifice of His Son (Ephesians 2:7).

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”

THE CROSS IS SUFFICIENT

Though you may always remember with a sense of sorrow and regret the hurt and harm your sin has caused others and yourself, embracing Christ’s completed work on the cross on your behalf will guard you against believing the lie that you must take a further step to forgive yourself.

To “forgive oneself” is not a biblical truth. The idea implies that Christ’s work was incomplete and insufficient and something more is necessary to be truly forgiven.

If you really could forgive yourself, you would have no need for the Savior. It is imperative to understand that the shedding of Christ’s blood paid for your sins once for all—past, present, and future. His forgiveness is complete; there is nothing you can add. This includes doing more or being good enough. Christ came to redeem and restore you, and as you walk in this truth, you will experience greater understanding of and gratitude for God’s grace and the freedom Christ purchased for you.

When have you struggled with shame, guilt, or condemnation?

What does it look like to embrace forgiveness?

When you embrace forgiveness, you are choosing to actually trust, believe in, and lay hold of the finished work of Christ on the cross. You may have regret for your sin after you confess; however, God wants you to walk in freedom from the guilt and shame of your sin. What Christ accomplished on the cross allows you to do that.

If you battle believing you are forgiven, talk to Jesus and consider/pray the following Scriptures: Psalm 103:8–13; Psalm 51:12; Galatians 5:1; Hebrews 10:22.

THE GIFT OF SALVATION

Scripture depicts salvation in three steps:

JUSTIFICATION

I have been made righteous.

Romans 5:18–19

SANCTIFICATION

I am being conformed to the image of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18

GLORIFICATION

I will be perfect in future glory as He is perfect.

1 John 3:2

JUSTIFICATION: THAT WHICH IS PAST

Justification: Being made right with God. The gospel deals with the penalty of sin.

Romans 5:18–19

¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

Psalms 103:10–12

¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Through the shedding of His blood, Christ bore the penalty of your sin. He became your substitute and took upon Himself the full force of God’s wrath that you deserved. God declared you “not guilty” and set you free from the penalty of death. As a result, when God sees you He sees Christ. You stand before God perfect and unblemished because you stand in the righteousness of Christ.

*You are declared righteous at the moment
you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior.*

What are some of the wonderful things that happened to you the moment you trusted Christ and accepted His payment for your sins?

Consider the following verses and record your response.

1 John 4:9-10

⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

How might you use the above verses when you are struggling in sin or struggling to believe Christ has paid the penalty of your sin?

*The main gift in the gospel is God Himself.
Positionally, once for all, you have been set free
from death's penalty and made alive to Christ.*

SANCTIFICATION: THAT WHICH IS PRESENT

Sanctification: The ongoing process of becoming more like Christ each day. The gospel deals with the power of sin.

God is graciously renewing your heart and your character to be more and more like His. You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) and have God's power within you (Ephesians 1:19). As a result you can choose righteousness, and sin is gradually overcome. Day-by-day, you are being set apart for God's purpose and set free from sin's power.

Sanctification is the work of God within you, but it also requires your part.

Philippians 2:12-13

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

What do you learn about your future glorification?

Read the following verses and record your response.

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

FREEDOM FROM SIN IS YOUR FUTURE CERTAINTY

In the coming kingdom you will enjoy “a way of life utterly sinless, integrity untarnished, work and responsibility without fatigue, deep emotions without tears, worship without restraint or disharmony or shame, and best of all the presence of God in an unqualified and unrestricted and personal way.”³

“What is most valuable to you at this point of time? Nothing can be of greater value than the cross of Christ. Without a cross-centered life, you will find yourself in perpetual defeat—not rising above your circumstances, not fulfilling your destiny.”

Tim Barley

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.



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No works cited.

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- 1 Stott, John. *The Cross of Christ*. InterVarsity Press, 1986, pg. 160.
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Understanding
God's
Plan of
Redemption

Unit 2: Knowing God

In Unit 2 you will immerse in God’s nature. Just as you must get to know a person before you begin to trust her, so you must seek to know God (John 1:12-13)—His character, plan, and promises—before you can grow in wholeheartedly trusting Him.

- 52 Lesson 1: God is My Perfect Father
- 64 Lesson 2: My Prodigal God
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LESSON 1: GOD IS MY PERFECT FATHER

In Lesson 1 you will revel in the fact that God is your perfect Abba Father.

1 John 3:1a

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

“The astounding bottom line of sonship is that God now treats us as if we have done everything Jesus has done. We are treated as if we are ‘only sons, like Jesus.’”³

Timothy Keller

How does/did your earthly father influence your view of God?

How would you describe a good dad? What character traits make a good dad?

How are you applying those traits or modeling them in your relationships?

Modeling God’s attributes?

Does your view of God as Father encompass these things?

GOD IS COMMITTED TO YOU

If you are still experiencing a disconnect when thinking of God as your loving and active Father, start renewing your mind daily with the following truths.

God is committed to you in the following ways:

<p>To Love You as His child</p> <p>1 John 3:1</p>	<p>To Be Near to you</p> <p>Lamentations 3:55-57</p>	<p>To Discipline You because He loves you</p> <p>Hebrews 12:5-11</p>
<p>To Know You intimately</p> <p>Psalms 139:1-15</p>	<p>To Hear your prayers</p> <p>Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 6:8-9</p>	<p>To Provide For You in everything you need</p> <p>1 Timothy 6:17; Psalm 37:25; 2 Peter 1:3-4</p>
<p>To Help You at all times</p> <p>Psalm 121:2-4</p>	<p>To Protect You in all circumstances</p> <p>Psalm 23</p>	<p>To Care For You in a tender way</p> <p>Isaiah 40:11</p>
<p>To Fulfill His Purposes for you</p> <p>Psalms 57:1-3; Isaiah 46:8-11; Ephesians 2:10</p>	<p>To Rejoice over you</p> <p>Zephaniah 3:17</p>	<p>To Teach You and lead you</p> <p>Psalms 25:4-5</p>

Which of these do you most relate to or connect to? Which of the remainder would you like to add next?

“A Picture of the Perfect Father” —A Personal Testimony

Growing up I always worked with my Dad in our yard or on our family farm. The work was a lot of physical labor: tractors, quads, etc. I learned a lot from my Dad as I worked beside him. The expectations he set for me as we worked together were those of an adult, and he always expected me to perform as such, even though I was a child. I had very little room for error and every weekend I would get yelled at, often more than once, for making one. Even though I was yelled at, I still enjoyed working with my Dad because of the things I got to experience and learn.

Although it was difficult growing up with the “perfection” of an adult expected of a child, I have come to appreciate it in adulthood. It prepared me to handle almost any work situation with a client or boss, and very few things rattle me. It has taught me to work hard, do it right the first time, and grind it out when the situation would typically make it tough to have that mindset.

Even though they were unrealistic expectations, I watched my Dad set a great example for me. He worked hard every day whether it was at home or his job. He was the most consistent person I have ever known; he was amazingly disciplined with daily Bible studies and spending time reading the Word, he showed me how to take care of my family through his example, and I watched God work on and soften him as he got older.

Over the years I have realized how my Dad’s extreme expectations actually displayed God’s love and discipline for us. When God calls us to unexpected and difficult situations, they often seem unrealistic or overwhelming, and even though we cannot see the future, we can trust God’s promise to work everything for our good. He equips us to handle problems and issues that may arise in our lives, that without the difficult circumstances, we may not have been able to. There are growing pains during the process of trusting God in the midst of hardship, but those circumstances create confidence to handle situations in the future.

How Treat the Father's Love For Us

The Father's great love for us is powerfully displayed in the sacrifice of His Son. As we look through the lens of the story of Abraham and Isaac, the Father and Son's sacrifice becomes all the more precious and meaningful.

In obedience to God and because he loved God supremely and believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead, Abraham was willing to sacrifice on the altar his most precious possession on earth, his son. But his faith and knowledge did not make it easy for Abraham to obey God. What he was about to do to Isaac with his own hands must have been excruciating for him during their three days' journey to Mount Moriah.

But what God the Father had planned to do to His only Son for our sake "before the foundation of the world" (see Ephesians 1:4-10) must also have been excruciating for the Father.

“Abraham had three days in which to think upon, and consider the death of his son; three days in which to look into that beloved face, and to anticipate the hour in which it would wear the icy pallor of death. But the Eternal Father foreknew and foreordained the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son, not three days, nor three years, nor 3,000 years, but before the earth was, Jesus was to His Father, ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ Long before His birth at Bethlehem it was foretold...”

Charles Spurgeon

Romans 8:32a

And unlike Abraham, who was stopped just in time from slaying his son, God the Father did not "spare His own son but gave Him up for us all."

In fact, it was in the hands of the Father that Christ suffered.

Isaiah 53:10a

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.

Isaiah 53:4-5

⁴Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

2 Corinthians 5:21

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

How deep the Father's love for us, How vast beyond all measure, That He should give His only Son To make a wretch His treasure. How great the pain of searing loss – The Father turns His face away, As wounds which mar the Chosen One, Bring many sons to glory.

Stuart Townend

[Adapted from Charles Spurgeon's sermon found on www.spurgeongems.org/vols13-15/chs869.pdf.]

LESSON 2: MY PRODIGAL GOD

In Lesson 1 you pondered the beautiful truth that God is your Abba Father and you are His adopted child. This is marvelous beyond description! In Lesson 2 you will see what kind of extravagant love your Father has for you. A poignant example of the Father's love is found in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

MY PRODIGAL GOD

Define “Prodigal”

Look up and write out the definition of “prodigal.”

God your Father is a prodigal God because He lavishes His love on you (Ephesians 1:7-8), His prodigal child. All of us are prodigals by nature. Left to ourselves, we would expend all our efforts and love on things that do not ultimately satisfy.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Read Luke 15:11-32.

¹¹And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²²“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of

yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’³¹And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.³²It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

THE YOUNGER SON

What did the younger son demand?

What was the father’s initial reaction to his son’s request? How does this illustrate God’s love?

How did the son manage his inheritance? What was the result?

When the lost son returned home to his father, what did he say and what does it model for you?

The younger son’s petition, “Give me my share” (Luke 15:12), was a rebellious demand that led to disastrous consequences. The son was left poor and destitute. His later confession, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21), demonstrates a repentant and humble heart.

“Elder brothers expect their goodness to pay off, and if it doesn’t, there is confusion and rage.... Elder brothers base their self-images on being hardworking, or moral, or members of an elite clan, or extremely smart and savvy.... In fact, competitive comparison is the main way elder brothers achieve a sense of their own significance.”³

Timothy Keller

What does the older son’s response demonstrate?

“If you have not grasped the gospel fully and deeply, you will return to being condescending, condemning, anxious, insecure, joyless, and angry all the time.”⁴

Timothy Keller

While the younger son recognized his need, returned to his father, and repented of his foolishness, the older son remained self-righteous and stubborn. He refused his father’s entreaties.

What do their responses demonstrate about their respective spiritual conditions?

In what ways do you identify as a prodigal son and/or as an older brother? What does this reveal regarding your heart? Explain.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Think about the ways you have hurt the Father as a prodigal son or older brother. Confess and repent to the Lord and receive His forgiveness. How does this picture of the prodigal Father encourage you?

Application

(For married with children) In what ways are you responsibly extravagant with your wife and children?

How will your being an heir of the eternal God affect how you walk this week?

LESSON 3: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

In Lesson 1 and 2 you learned how God, your perfect Father, is committed to you as His precious child.

In Lesson 3 you will explore what it means that your Father is in control over every detail of your life. He holds you in His hands, so you can trust Him with your whole heart.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD ; he turns it wherever he will.

Daniel 4:35

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Isaiah 46:8-11

⁸"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ⁹remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' ¹¹calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it."

Acts 17:26

"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live." (NIV84)

Additional references—2 Chronicles 20:6; James 4:13-15.

Joseph was sold to a high ranking Egyptian named Potiphar. Potiphar's wife tried on multiple occasions to seduce Joseph. One day, after Joseph fled from one of her advances, Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of attempted rape. As a result, Potiphar had Joseph put into prison. (Genesis 39:7–20). Years later, Joseph encounters two other prisoners, the royal baker and cupbearer, who were troubled by their dreams. With God's wisdom, Joseph accurately interprets both dreams with the cupbearer later being released from prison and restored to his position (Genesis 40:1–23).

Two years later, Pharaoh is troubled by dreams that no one can interpret. The cupbearer remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh. Joseph tells Pharaoh that his dreams predict seven years of famine, as well as advises Pharaoh on how to prepare for the famine. Pharaoh rewards Joseph by making him the second highest ranking ruler in Egypt (Genesis 41:1–37).

When the famine struck, Canaan was affected including Jacob and his family. Jacob sends his ten oldest sons to trade for food. Joseph's brothers do not recognize him, and Joseph doesn't reveal his identity. Instead, Joseph tests his brothers several times. Finally, Joseph reveals his identity as their brother whom they sold into slavery. His brothers are immediately struck with fear and anticipate repercussions for their actions. Instead, Joseph reassured them, saying that God had sent him to Egypt in order to preserve them (Genesis 45:1–8). When Jacob dies years later, Joseph's brothers are again afraid that Joseph may have held off punishing them for the sake of their father. Joseph again reaffirms his forgiveness saying "...Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:19b–20). Joseph looked back at all the trials and circumstances of his life and saw God's plan to save his people.

GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS SOVEREIGNTY

1. Joseph receives strange dreams (Genesis 37:2–11)
2. Joseph is sold into slavery (Genesis 37:12–36)
3. Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him and he is imprisoned (Genesis 39:1–23)
4. Joseph correctly interprets the baker's and cupbearer's dreams (Genesis 40:1–23)
5. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and is appointed 2nd in command (Genesis 41:1–43)
6. Joseph's brothers seek food during the famine and bow down to him—fulfilling Joseph's childhood (Genesis 42:6)
7. Joseph brings his Jacob and his family, saving the nation of Israel from the famine (Genesis 47:12)

DIFFICULT YET IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The topic of God’s sovereignty brings us to difficult yet important questions.

If God is sovereign, is He also the author of evil? Why does He allow evil and suffering in the world and in our lives?

God is not the author of evil. God does not sin and He performs no evil (James 1:13). There is, however, apparent tension in the Bible between God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. Scriptures teach that God is absolutely in control over every detail and yet man has the freedom to choose between good and evil. God permits people to act contrary to and in defiance of His moral code as revealed in Scripture. Though you are responsible for your choice to do good or to sin, you cannot act apart from His sovereign will. And the fact that people’s sinful intents and actions serve the sovereign purpose of God does not make God the author of their sin nor make them any less culpable for their actions.

See John 9:1-3; Proverbs 16:9

How does your free will interact with God’s sovereignty?

The Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and the free moral choices of men with equal emphasis, but it never attempts to explain or minimize this great mystery. Much of what God does will remain a mystery to man.

See Galatians 5:13, John 7:17

Deuteronomy 29:29

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Acts 4:27-28

²⁷“[F]or truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER NATURAL DISASTERS AND OTHER TRAGEDIES

Moreover, God, in His sovereignty and goodness, allows natural disasters and other tragedies to occur that are not necessarily a result of human sin. Why? We know that Satan is the prince of this world and is bent on our destruction, and he is able to bring tragedies and natural disasters into our lives (see Job 1-2). Nevertheless, God limits Satan in what he is allowed to do (see Job 1:6-12; Luke 22:31-32—“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat....”). Again, why God allows Satan to have destructive powers over our lives is also a great mystery. But we know that we still live in a fallen world, and our hope is in His ultimate salvation and in the coming age when all things will be renewed and made right.

YOUR FUTURE HOPE

In God's sovereign plan, there will be an end to sin and suffering. He will make all things new.

Revelation 21:1-4

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

When Christ returns and makes all things new, which God will bring about in His own time (1 Timothy 6:14-15), you will be free at last! This is your hope. Until then you must live your life with your hands open, releasing your grip on people and circumstances, knowing that God is sovereign and good.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Meditate on the following Psalm and ask the Lord to align your heart to the Psalmist's heart as expressed.

Psalm 131

¹O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. ²But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. ³O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

Application

What person or circumstance is difficult for you to release and entrust to God and His sovereign will? This may be a big thing in your life or the mundane things that come up day-to-day.

How will you approach suffering this week?

Father God, I praise You and thank You, for You do as You please and all You please is good. Creator and Sustainer of the universe, You are sovereign over all. Nothing escapes Your attention or Your care, from the greatest to the most insignificant. Help me trust You with the things I do not understand. Calm and quiet my soul, O Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

LESSON 4: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S HOLINESS (AND HIS JUSTICE, WRATH, AND MERCY)

In Lessons 1 and 2 you learned about God's love as demonstrated in God as our loving Father. In Lesson 3 you learned that God is sovereign over every detail of your life.

In Lesson 4 you will explore God's holiness and how His holiness is displayed in His justice, wrath, and mercy. It is from the perspective of God's holiness that you are able to grasp His justice, wrath, and mercy more fully.



For the Lord your God
is a merciful God.

Deuteronomy 4:31

GOD’S HOLINESS REQUIRES JUSTICE—WRATH AGAINST SIN

“God is holy and therefore He cannot overlook sin. If He did He would be denying part of who He is. The anger or wrath of God flows from His holiness. ‘It is not a capricious, arbitrary, bad-tempered and conceited anger which pagans attribute to their gods. It is not the sinful, resentful, malicious, infantile anger which we find among humans. It is a function of that holiness which is expressed in the demands of God’s moral law.’ God’s holy character cannot be compromised, so His response to sin is both necessary and right.”²

J. I. Packer

“God’s anger and wrath must always be seen in relation to his maintaining and defending his attributes of love and holiness, as well as his righteousness and justice. The emotion or passion that moves God to this maintaining and defending is expressed by the terms ‘displeasure,’ ‘indignation,’ ‘anger,’ and ‘wrath.’ A consequence of his wrath is vengeance, punishment, and death.”³

Gerard Van Groningen

God’s perfection and holiness requires that He not overlook or ignore sin. Since all of humanity is sinful (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:23), God is just and right to respond wrathfully toward mankind. God is perfect in all His ways, including His wrath. (Deuteronomy 32:4—“The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”)

GOD’S HOLY WRATH IS REVEALED THROUGHOUT THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 30:23

Behold the storm of the Lord! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked.

Nahum 1:2

The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.

Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

John 3:36b

Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Revelation 19:15

From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Have you thought about God’s wrath? Why is it important to ponder the wrath of God?

HOW DO SINFUL PEOPLE STAND UNDER GOD’S WRATH? THEY STAND BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY!

Although God is right and good to respond wrathfully to sin, He chooses to respond in mercy. What is the mercy of God? According to Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, “mercy” is “that benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; the disposition that tempers justice...to forbear punishment...or inflict less than law or justice will warrant.” God does not punish you as your sins deserve. The Hebrew word for mercy is hesed, and it means “steadfast loyalty; God’s covenant lovingkindness.”

Romans 3:25b says that “in [God’s] divine forbearance he had passed over former sins” until Christ came in “the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4). In other words, before Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, God patiently displayed His mercy by not immediately punishing sin. When Jesus came and died on the cross to take the punishment that you deserved for your sins, He took God’s wrath upon Himself.

“What is mercy? Mercy is God acting patient[ly]. It is God extending patience to those who deserve to be punished. Mercy is not something God owes to us—by definition mercy cannot be owed—but is something God extends in kindness and grace to those who do not deserve it. God does not owe you or anyone else his mercy.”⁴

Tim Challies

God’s wrath is powerful and dreadful (Hebrews 10:31), but God is also merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Exodus 34:6).

GOD'S MERCY IS REVEALED THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT

Read the following Scriptures that show His mercy toward a rebellious people.

Deuteronomy 4:31

"For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them."

Psalm 78:37-38

³⁷[T]heir hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant. ³⁸Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. (NIV)

2 Chronicles 30:9

"For if you return to the LORD your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him."

Nehemiah 9:18-19

¹⁸"Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, ¹⁹you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go."

Jeremiah 3:12b-13a

¹²"Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever. ¹³Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the LORD your God."

Joel 2:12-13

¹²"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

How could David be considered a man after God's own heart?

David is famous because of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, followed by deceit, lying and murder. How can such behavior belong to a man after God's own heart? Only because of God's mercy and grace.

To understand why David was a man after God's own heart, we need to see what characteristics he had to qualify for such an exalted description. In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul speaks of God's feelings about King David: "After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do." (Acts 13:22). The answer to why David was considered a man after God's own heart is found right in the verse: David did whatever God wanted him to do. An obvious question is how God still called David a man after His own heart when David committed such terrible sins, including adultery and murder?

We learn much of David's character in the book of Psalms as he opened up his life for all to examine. David's life was a portrait of success and failure, and the biblical record highlights the fact that David was far from perfect. But what made David a cut above the rest was that his heart was pointed toward God. He had a deep desire to follow God's will and do "everything" God wanted him to do. He was a man after God's own heart. Let's look at some characteristics of David's life to discover what that entails.

Part of why David is called a man after God's own heart is that he had absolute faith in God. Nowhere in Scripture is this point better illustrated than in 1 Samuel 17 where David as a young shepherd boy fearlessly slew the Philistine, Goliath. Shortly before the duel, we see direct evidence of David's faith when David says, "'The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the LORD be with you!'" (verse 37). David was fully aware that God was in control of his life, and he had faith that God would deliver him from impending danger. How else would one venture into a potentially fatal situation with such calm and confidence? David knew early on in life that God was to be trusted and obeyed. As we see in Scripture, David's faith pleased God, and God rewards David for his faithfulness.

Another reason David was a man after God’s own heart is that he absolutely loved God’s Law. Of the 150 psalms in the Bible, David is credited for writing over half of them. Writing at various and often troubling times in his life, David repeatedly mentioned how much he loved God’s perfect Word. We find a beautiful example of this in Psalm 119:47–48: “For I delight in your commands because I love them. I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.” It is not hard to see his complete adoration for God’s Word. Also notice how David “meditates” on God’s statutes. God granted David understanding and wisdom through daily meditation. We would do well to not only read God’s Word but also think about it throughout the day, for God loves us to think about Him. “Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek Him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in His ways” (Psalm 119:2–3).

David was a man after God’s own heart in that he was truly thankful. “I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your alter, O LORD, proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.” (Psalm 26:6–7). David’s life was marked by seasons of great peace and prosperity as well as times of fear and despair. But through all of the seasons in his life, he never forgot to thank the Lord for everything that he had. It is truly one of David’s finest characteristics. “Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him, bless His name!” (Psalm 100:4 ESV). As followers of Jesus Christ, we would do well to follow David’s lead of offering praise through thanksgiving to our Lord.

After he sinned, David was truly repentant. David’s sin with Bathsheba is recorded in 2 Samuel 11:2–5. The mighty fall hard, and David’s fall included adultery, lying, and murder. He had sinned against God, and he admits in in 2 Samuel 12:13: “David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.’” But admitting our sin and asking for forgiveness is only half of the equation. The other half is his repentance, and David did that as well. Psalm 51 is David’s prayer of repentance to God: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” (Psalm 51:1–2).

In conclusion, David was a man after God’s own heart because he demonstrated his faith and was committed to following the Lord. Yes, his faith was tested on a grand scale, and he failed at times. But after his sin he sought and received the Lords forgiveness. In the final analysis, David loved God’s Law and sought to follow it exactly. As a man after God’s own heart, David is a role model for all of us.

Footnote: Excerpts from GotQuestions.org

DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES IN YOUR LIFE

Reflect on a difficult circumstance in your present or from your past.

Describe the situation.

Have you been able to recognize God's mercy in the circumstance?

How can remembering God's mercy help you in your daily life?

What is one verse from this lesson that will help you remember God's mercy in a difficult circumstance?

GOD'S MERCY TOWARD A DEJECTED DISCIPLE

Peter was a bold and brash disciple and a natural leader of the band of Jesus' disciples.

Matthew 16:13-18.

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [a] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

When Jesus asked Peter “...do you love more than these?” what are the “These” Jesus might have been referring to?

If Jesus asked you the same question what are the “these” he might be referring to in your case?

Peter was very down cast and dejected after denying Jesus but he was marvelously restored by the Lord’s mercy. Where do you need that kind of mercy in your life?

The Lord is merciful gracious,
slow to anger and abounding
in steadfast love.

Psalm 103:8

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Revelation 4:8b, 11

⁸“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

¹¹“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

In “Revelation Song” Jennie Lee Riddle wrote “With all creation I sing, Praise to the King of Kings; You are my everything, and I will adore You.”

Meditate on the above Scripture and the words Riddle penned. Thank God for the depth of His mercy.

Application

How will your personal response to the holiness of God change your upcoming week?.

Reflect on God’s judgment and mercy, the reality of hell and judgment. How will you prepare for suffering this week? How will you rest in His mercy, to not be afraid but be ready? How will you share the Gospel with non-believing friends and family this week?

LESSON 5: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S POWER

In many ways it is impossible to understand God's power because it is so profound. In Lesson 5 you will get a glimpse of it. The evidence of God's power is everywhere around you, both in the magnitude and majesty of creation as well as in every microscopic detail of your body.

GOD’S POWER REVEALED IN CREATION

Reflect on what the following Scriptures tell you about God’s power as Creator. Read the following Scriptures and underline what you learn about His power.

Jeremiah 10:12

It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

Jeremiah 32:17

“Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”

Romans 1:19-20

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

GOD’S POWER EVIDENCED IN THE CREATION OF YOUR BODY

Psalms 139:14a

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

The human body is the most complex, unique organism in the world. Every aspect of the body reveals God’s amazing power. Consider the human eye as described by agnostic evolutionist, Robert Jastrow:

“The eye is a marvelous instrument, resembling a telescope of the highest quality, with a lens, an adjustable focus, a variable diaphragm for controlling the amount of light, and optical corrections for spherical and chromatic aberration. The eye appears to have been designed; no designer of telescopes could have done better. How could this marvelous instrument have evolved by chance, through a succession of random events?”¹

Robert Jastrow

How do you respond to the beautiful truth that the Creator of the Universe also created every detail of you? Read the following passage and record your response.

Psalm 139:13-16

¹³For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. ¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

GOD’S POWER INDWELLS YOU

Read and reflect on some of the benefits you receive from God’s indwelling power through the Holy Spirit.

God’s power enables you to witness boldly.

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

God’s power is exalted in your weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9b

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

God’s power, that which raised Jesus from the dead, is at work within you.

Ephesians 1:19-20

¹⁹What is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

God’s power is beyond anything you can ask or imagine and is at work within you.

Ephesians 3:20

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.

Joshua—Israel's Leader Whose Confidence Was in the Power of God

Joshua was one of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament. He was an assistant to Moses (Exodus 24:13; 32:17–33:11). He was one of the twelve tribal leaders sent to spy out the land God had promised in preparation for entering it. He was one of the two spies who reported that the land could be conquered and possessed. He was a successful general (Exodus 17). Joshua was courageous and godly and served as God's leader for bringing the people of Israel into the land God had promised.

God's power assures His promise of land would be kept. Israel conquered the land by God's promise and power. God gave the right to possess it and the power to take it.

What gave Joshua such confidence in the power of God?

- Joshua witnessed the parting of the Red Sea and the safe passage of the people through it.
- Shortly after this Israel encountered its first enemy, Amalek. Joshua led the Lord's army in that battle (Exodus 17:8–16).
- When Moses and the elders of Israel ascended Mount Sinai to see God and to eat in His presence, Joshua was with them, and Joshua went still further up the mount with Moses (Exodus 24:9–13).
- Joshua was alone with Moses on the mountain when the camp below fell into idolatry and debauchery (Exodus 32:17–35).
- Joshua witnessed the Lord's judgment and power against the people for their sin.
- Only Joshua was in the tent of meeting when the Lord spoke to Moses (Exodus 33:7–11).

Joshua's life experience convinced him of the power of the living God. He saw idols had no such power and only the God of Israel was worthy of worship. Joshua was mentored by Moses and God passed His Spirit to Joshua upon Moses' death. Joshua was ordained and called by God to lead the people of Israel into the land God had promised.

After Moses died God told Joshua:

Joshua 1:2–7

²"Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my

Reflection

Meditate on God's mighty, invincible, holy, gracious, glorious, infinite power that empowers you as His child. Record your thoughts.

Application

In light of knowing the breadth of God's power, what "faith steps" are you taking or do you need to take?

Father God, thank You that Your goodness and kindness are always represented in Your sovereignty and power over all creation and in my life personally. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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Knowing

Jesus

and the

Holy Spirit

Unit 3: Knowing Jesus and the Holy Spirit

In Unit 3 you marveled at the truth that the Sovereign God is your holy, merciful, and powerful Father who lavishes His love on you. In Part 4 you will learn the unique roles of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in carrying out the Father's will.

- 106 Lesson 1: Jesus, Humble Servant
- 118 Lesson 2: Jesus, My High Priest
- 130 Lesson 3: Holy Spirit, My Helper
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LESSON 1: JESUS, HUMBLE SERVANT

Though Jesus is fully God, He submitted to the Father and chose to humble Himself and become fully human to accomplish His mission.

In Lesson 1 you will discover Jesus' mission and the means by which He accomplished it. Jesus' example is the model of servanthood for your life.

HE EXISTS IN A STATE OF BEING GOD.

Colossians 2:8-10

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

John 1:1-2

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.

What point/passage particularly stood out to you? Why?

*Jesus Is Full Deity & Full Humanity;
No One But Jesus can make this claim.*

JESUS CHRIST BECAME A MAN TO ACCOMPLISH HIS MISSION

Luke 19:10

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Why did Jesus have to become fully man to accomplish His mission? Are you convinced that it was the plan from the beginning?

Jesus’ primary mission was to fulfill God’s plan to seek and to save the lost (1 Timothy 1:15; 1 John 3:8b). To accomplish His mission, Jesus had to become a man and fully experience humanity. If Jesus had not become human, He could not have accomplished what He did on the cross, for God cannot suffer and die, but man can.

Hebrews 2:9

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Reference *Philippians 2:6–8*.

Describe how Christ demonstrated absolute humility and sacrifice through His incarnation and death.

What was Jesus' mindset?

Isaiah 50:7

"But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame."

Luke 9:51-56

⁵¹When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. ⁵³But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶And they went on to another village.

*Jesus was resolved to fulfill His mission,
dependent on God and confident of His help.*

SO WHAT DID JESUS GIVE UP?

Jesus gave up His privileges and status as God for the benefit of others. In Philippians 2:3–5, Paul exhorts the follower of Christ to live in this same way.

What do the following verses state regarding Jesus' humility?

Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Matthew 11:28–29

²⁸“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

John 5:18–19

¹⁸This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

What is the significance of these verses on your life?

1 Peter 2:22-23

²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Romans 12:19

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Hebrews 10:30

For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

How do you keep serving a person when his/her disposition is undeserving and disrespectful?

- Recognize that you are not called to entrust your heart to the person (John 2:24–25).
- Pray for them and for your heart and ask God to reveal to you what the person really needs (Matthew 7:3–5; Ephesians 4:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15; James 1:5).
- Recognize that you are serving God and not the other person (1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 4:1–3; Colossians 3:22–24; Hebrews 3:19).

“[T]he essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.”²

Timothy Keller

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 2: JESUS, MY HIGH PRIEST

In Lesson 1 you surveyed Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost by serving those He came to save. Not only is Jesus a humble servant, but He is also High Priest. In service to God, Jesus became both your Priest and your sacrifice.

In Lesson 2 you will discover more about the role and significance of Jesus as the High Priest.

THE HIGH PRIEST'S ROLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The office of high priest was hereditary through the Levite tribe. The high priest was the supreme religious leader of the Israelites and his most important duty was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement. Only he was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil to stand before God and offer a sacrifice for himself and for the people, for their sins committed during the past year.

The high priest's role on the Day of Atonement is compared to the ministry of Jesus as High Priest.

Hebrews 9:11-28

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

¹⁵Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. ¹⁶For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

²³Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

What did Jesus' role as High Priest entail?

What is the significance that Jesus' sacrifice was "once for all"?

You do not need another high priest. Jesus made the sacrifice "once for all" (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12, 26; Hebrews 10:10). Nothing more is needed to make peace with God; Jesus has done it all.

JESUS IS YOUR FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST

Jesus was appointed as High Priest by the Father and in His role as High Priest became the sacrificial Lamb on your behalf. "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him" (Hebrews 3:1–2a).

What do you learn about Jesus as your high priest and your sacrifice?

Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Matthew 20:28

"The Son of Man came, to give his life as a ransom for many."

Romans 5:19

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

You are always to be needy and dependent on God in all situations. You are to intentionally preoccupy yourself with Jesus and rely on the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in obedience. To depend on God to care for you does not mean you are to be passive. It does not absolve your responsibility to take action when a clear action step is required.

3. Jesus understands your suffering because He experienced ultimate suffering.

Luke 9:22

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Are you going through a challenging time and finding it difficult to trust God? If so, take comfort in knowing that Jesus understands your suffering. Acknowledge your need, confess to Him your struggle, and ask Him for help.

Revelation 4:8b

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

Do you sometimes hear the whispers of the devil that:

- your past is too awful?
- you are not good enough today?
- you will never be good enough?

We can trust that Jesus paid it all and we do not add to the cross.

**“Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.”**

Elvina Hall

*You can confidently and unreservedly trust
Him to meet all your needs and to sympathize
with you in all areas of life. He is your hope.*

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

High Priest

In Old Testament times, before Christ's great and final sacrifice for us on the cross, priests were appointed by God to offer daily, weekly, and annual blood sacrifices to atone for (or "cover over") the sins of the people. Because sin is so atrocious, an animal had to sacrifice its life as a substitute for the sinner, for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

"Tens of thousands of animals were ceremonially slaughtered by Jewish priests for centuries, the spilling of their blood vividly illustrat[ing] the deadly seriousness of sin"—Answers in Genesis (www.answersingenesis.org).

These sacrifices were made in the Tabernacle (while the Israelites were wandering in the desert) and in the Temple (during Solomon's time and Jesus' time). The Tabernacle/ Temple was divided into various areas, including the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, which was behind the second curtain/veil (Hebrews 9). The daily and weekly sacrifices were made in the Holy Place, and no one was allowed to go into the Most Holy Place except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest was appointed from among the Levitical line, and one of his most important jobs was to perform the rites on the annual Day of Atonement. On this day, the High Priest, wearing only a simple robe of white linen instead of his usual priestly garment, would reverently and solemnly enter into the Most Holy Place behind the second veil to sprinkle the blood of the animal sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. This was to take away the sins of the people and himself (see Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9).

Hebrews 9:11–28 tells us that Jesus came as our High Priest. He entered once for all into the Most Holy Place and secured for us an eternal redemption by putting away all of our sins with the sacrifice of His own blood.

When Christ willingly died for us on the cross, it was as if He entered behind the veil as our High Priest and instead of bringing with Him the blood of an animal sacrifice to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat, He climbed upon the Mercy Seat to spill His own blood to make the perfect or complete atonement for our sins. This was the ultimate and final Day of Atonement. He is indeed able to save us to the "uttermost" (Hebrews 7:25).

At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place "was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51a). This tearing of the veil and the tearing of Jesus' body on the cross signify the free access we now have to God. ("[W]e have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh..." Hebrews 10:19b-20). This is an incredible privilege and we owe it all to our Lord and Savior, our Great High Priest.

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14–16).

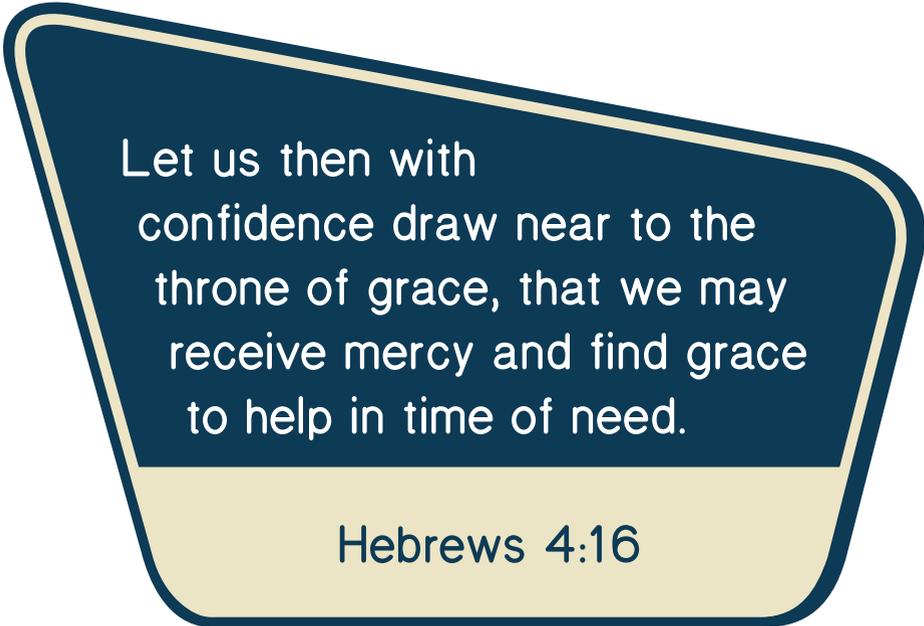
It is significant that Christ not only acted as our High Priest but that He voluntarily sacrificed Himself as the Lamb of God. “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (John 10:18).

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Let us then with
confidence draw near to the
throne of grace, that we may
receive mercy and find grace
to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

LESSON 3: HOLY SPIRIT, MY HELPER

In Lessons 1–2 you focused on the role of Jesus in carrying out His Father’s will. Jesus was both High Priest and the sacrificed Lamb of God.

In Lessons 3 and 4 you will focus on getting to know the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Your relationship with the Holy Spirit is profoundly unique. His presence in the believer’s life may seem as unassuming as the whisper of a “still, small voice,” yet as all-encompassing as the very air that you breathe and cannot live without. Without the Holy Spirit it would be impossible for you to see the beauty and majesty of Christ. In Lesson 3 you will learn about the Holy Spirit’s personal attributes and roles.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament/old covenant?

While there is some mystery regarding all of the Holy Spirit’s role in the Old Testament, it is certain that He is God and does not change (Malachi 3:6). The Holy Spirit was intimately involved in creation (Genesis 1:2); and He inspired and empowered Old Testament authors and prophets (1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21).

The main difference between the Holy Spirit’s role in the Old Testament and the New Testament is that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit only empowered certain individuals at specific times to perform specific tasks regardless of the person’s spiritual condition.

The Spirit “came upon” such Old Testament people as Joshua (Numbers 27:18), David (1 Samuel 16:12–13) and even Saul (1 Samuel 10:10). In the book of Judges, we see the Spirit “coming upon” the various judges whom God raised up to deliver Israel from their oppressors.¹

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the new testament/New Covenant?

While the Holy Spirit only empowered certain individuals in the Old Testament for a specific task, after the Pentecost there is a “more powerful, fuller work of the Holy Spirit” in all believers. (For additional teaching on the Holy Spirit, see Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, page 637ff.)

Joel prophesied that God declared, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (Joel 2:28a). The Apostle Peter, quoting Joel, said, “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...” (Acts 2:17a).

We are now living in the “last days,” and as of the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been poured out fully on all believers. We are now all empowered for ministry and the work of the Kingdom.

John 14:17

...even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

“In the OT, the presence of God was many times manifested in the glory of God and in theophanies [a manifestation of God to a person], and in the gospels Jesus himself manifested the presence of God among men. But after Jesus ascended into heaven, and continuing through the entire church age, the Holy Spirit is now the primary manifestation of the presence of the Trinity among us. He is the one who is the most prominently present with us now.”²

Wayne Grudem

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

As a follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit is at the very core of your being. He is the Source of God’s power for you to live for His purposes each day and the Revealer of the Father’s love that satisfies your every longing.

At this point in your relationship with God, what do you know about the Holy Spirit and who would you say that He is? Take a moment to ask God to deepen your desire and understanding of the Third Person of the Trinity.

THE HOLY SPIRIT’S PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person in the Godhead, as much as the Father and the Son are Persons. The following are some fundamental biblical truths about the Holy Spirit’s personal attributes.

The Holy Spirit is God.

When Jesus was baptized, He saw the Spirit of God descending on Him (Matthew 3:16–17).

Jesus declared the Holy Spirit’s deity as He commanded that His followers be baptized in the Name of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

He is called God. When Ananias and Sapphira sinned against the Holy Spirit, they sinned against God (Acts 5:3–4).

The Holy Spirit is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.

The Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, a virgin, to conceive and give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

The Spirit is present everywhere; there is no place where you can flee from His presence (Psalm 139:7–8).

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. Only He can know and reveal the thoughts of God that are beyond your comprehension (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

The Holy Spirit is eternal.

The Lord Jesus promised to send you the Holy Spirit to be your Helper Who will be with you forever (John 14:16).

Through the eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself unblemished before God so that you may serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

The Holy Spirit has emotions.

The Holy Spirit was grieved by the rebellion of His people (Isaiah 63:10).

You are warned against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit has an intellect.

The Holy Spirit uses His mind in interceding for the Saints (Romans 8:27).

Luke 1:35

And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."

Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Romans 8:11

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:16

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

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Titus 3:4-5

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:21

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Which of the Holy Spirit's attribute/role do you find most comforting? Why?

Which attribute/role is new to you or one you would like to experience more fully in your life? Explain.

The Holy Spirit is not a force or power. He is the Person who possesses the power that sustains you.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 4: WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

In Lesson 3 you learned about the personal attributes and roles of the Holy Spirit. In Lesson 4 you will focus on the Spirit-filled life God desires for you. The Bible teaches that at the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit indwells you and abides in you.

You have been set free to no longer walk in the flesh but rather to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). You are no longer bound to sin but now you are enslaved to righteousness (Romans 6:18). Obedience to righteousness leads to more righteousness, “sanctification and its end, eternal life” (Romans 6:22). In Lesson 4 you will look at what it means to walk in the Spirit.

Review the list and ask God to help you evaluate and determine the areas of your life where you need to put to death the things of the flesh and put on what is godly. This is not an exhaustive list, and you can find other lists of characteristics or behaviors to “put to death” and/or “put on” in Romans 12, Galatians 5:16–23, Ephesians 4:17–32, Ephesians 5:3–11, and 2 Peter 1.

Galatians 5:16 says, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” The wisdom, strength, and desire to obey comes from the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father has sent to you. Philippians 2:13 says, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” God longs for you to keep in step with the Holy Spirit always.

Walking with the Spirit includes action (James 1:22).

“So then, to walk in the Spirit is achievable when we know the Gospel, believe it to be true (1 John 4:6), and depend on the inward prompting of the Spirit to guide us in that truth (John 16:13)... Really then, the power to walk in the Spirit and turn away from sin begins with decision points we encounter hundreds of times each day. Making the hard choices up front will strengthen one's resolve to be obedient in every thought, word, and deed (Romans 6:11–14). In closing, walking in the Spirit is how we take up our cross, crucify the flesh, die to self, and allow Christ to rise up in our stead (Matthew 16:24–26).”¹

Jim Allen

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Realize that sin seems like the easiest path initially, but eventually it always becomes a harder path.
- Realize that you can choose to respond in obedience, even if it means choosing moment to moment, it is never done.
- Ask God to renew the desire of your heart toward Christ, your Treasure. Ask God to give you spiritual eyes to see His beauty in these times of temptation.
- Ask God through the indwelling of the Spirit for help.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF QUENCHING AND GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. You are careless to guard your heart.

This will rob you of your true Treasure: your intimacy with God. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (NIV). You are to be intentional regarding what you allow to influence your heart. If you are careless in guarding your heart, you will find it more difficult to hear the Holy Spirit’s promptings. (See Part 6 Lesson 5—My Guarded Heart.) Fix your eyes on Jesus and the cross.

2. You choose to get distracted by fleshly desires.

This will inevitably lead you astray from God’s way. 1 John 2:15–16 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.” These distractions may seem harmless at first, but when you continue to allow them to preoccupy your mind and influence your actions, you are drifting away from walking with the Spirit. Guard your eyes, feet, and hands. What we look at can enrich or pollute us. Where we go can put us in bad situations. What we do can open the door to temptation (Matthew 18:8–9).

3. You willfully rebel and disobey the Father’s commands.

The Lord Jesus said in John 14:21 and 24, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me, and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.... Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.” Disobedience will cause a separation between you and God.

WHEN HAVE YOU GRIEVED THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Think of a time in your life, past or present, when you grieved the Holy Spirit by being distracted, careless, or rebellious regarding following God’s way. Record any thoughts the Holy Spirit brings to mind. Use the My Heart Unchained chart to process your choice and its outcome.

Step 4: Walk by the Spirit in obedience.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Search me, o God,
and know my heart!

Psalm 139:23a

Spend time in prayer to confess your sins to God.

Receive His forgiveness and allow the Spirit to speak to you through God's Word as you meditate on His faithfulness in cleansing you from all unrighteousness. Thank Him for His amazing grace. Record your thoughts.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

What does it mean to be "slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:18)?

Thanks be to God that "now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Romans 6:22).

Application

List out what areas you are most easily tempted? For example:

- Overworked
- Family
- Lust
- Porn
- Computer game addiction
- Substance abuse
- Media addiction

Next time you are tempted, will you look for the way of escape God has provided?

Is there a habitual sin or temptation you battle? How will you resist the devil's schemes this week?

LESSON 5: MY TRUE IDENTITY

In Lessons 1 and 2 you discovered Jesus as your Humble Servant and High Priest. You can confidently approach God, knowing you are forgiven and stand righteous in His presence.

In Lessons 3 and 4 you learned that the Holy Spirit was active in your new birth and is active in your ongoing daily life, transforming you as you walk in step with Him.

In this lesson you will explore what "identity" is and what it means to live out your new identity in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

WHAT IS "IDENTITY?"

Every human being has an identity. Merriam Webster defines "identity" as "who someone is: the name of a person, the qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person different from others." Many things and people influence your birth identity—your race, gender, talents, physical looks, physical fitness, personality, relationships, socio-economic standing, career, education, life experiences, roles (daughter, wife, mom, etc.).

You live out of your identity. Your goals, motives, and sense of self-worth or lack of worth come from and are directed by your identity. Your identity will define your outlook on life. More importantly, it will determine what you think, feel, and choose.

When someone asks you to describe yourself, what things typically come to mind?

When Adam and Eve sinned, spiritual death came to all mankind (Romans 5:12, 18–19), resulting in all people being born into a state of confusion regarding their identity and their purpose. But thanks be to God, for in Christ, He has redeemed your identity.

YOU WERE GIVEN A NEW IDENTITY WHEN YOU WERE BORN SPIRITUALLY

At the point of salvation you were reborn (John 3:3). You were "born of God" (1 John 3:9). You became a new creation. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your new identity as a child of God is who you became at the time of your new birth and is who you are now. At the point of your new birth, God's goal for you is to begin to define your worth, motives, goals, values, etc. by your new identity as His child. This is your true identity. Your birth identity becomes secondary to your new identity (Galatians 3:26–29).

"The most important belief that we possess is a true knowledge of who God is. The second most important belief is who we are as children of God, because we cannot consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with how we perceive ourselves. And if we do not see ourselves as God sees us, then to that degree we suffer from a wrong identity and a poor image of who we really are. It is not what we do that determines who we are. It is who we are that determines what we do."¹

Neil T. Anderson

Our beliefs affect our behaviors.

REFLECT ON YOUR TRUE IDENTITY

What things come to your mind when you think about being a child of God?

Can you think of any immediate changes that took place in your life when you were reborn?

Think about and record some of the gradual changes that have taken place in your life since you were reborn. (Some of these may include goals, responses to situations and people, thoughts and feelings, patterns of life, etc.)

YOUR NEW IDENTITY

Every child of God has the same identity, which is uniquely expressed through a person's God-given personality, gifts, and skills. In the first two Units of Ephesians, Paul explains your new identity as a child of God in Christ. This is not an exhaustive list as there are many Scriptures that address this topic, but it is a good start.

Personal Testimony

My parents raised my sister and me in a Christian denomination that was very legalistic. This gave me great head knowledge of the bible, but I didn't really understand and know God. The perfect storm of immigrant parents, a cultural background focused on hard work, and a legalistic religious upbringing created in me a drive to be self-reliant.

I continued to rely on my efforts as I worked my way through school and entered the workforce. According to the world's standards I was a success. I worked in many coveted industries and roles, had an accelerated career path, and had built a nest egg to provide for the family. However, it was never enough. I kept thinking the next promotion or the next salary increase would take care of everything. Then I would get it, be satisfied for a little bit, and then the cycle to chase the next thing would begin. I had relegated God to a secondary position and was really trusting in my way and my hard work. I was essentially violating God's first commandment to have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). The stress of being good enough and striving for the next big thing started to manifest itself physically. I regularly would get chest pains, sores in my mouth, and have restless sleep. In those moments I started to pray and really ask God for his help.

God is true to his promise that if we genuinely seek Him, He will reveal himself to us (Deuteronomy 4:29, Proverbs 8:17). It wasn't a big event but a gradual transformation that God did to move my head knowledge of Him to my heart. He answered my prayers, as I leaned on God and asked for help to grow in knowing and following Him. I began to really understand and embrace that I was a child of God (John 1:12). My identity and self-worth was not in my work title, my bank balance, or what others thought of me. My identity and self-worth is in knowing that the almighty and all-knowing creator loves me and has adopted me as His child.

Last year, I lost my job which years ago would have shaken me because my identity was so tied to being a good provider and in my job. Instead, I was at total peace and confident that God was in control and would provide (Proverbs 3:5-6). I looked back at the track record of my life and how He patiently directed and guided me, even when I was not faithful. I now knew his promises in the Bible and His character. It created great discussions with family and friends about why I was at peace. We talked about how I knew God would provide in some way and that even if we lost the house or had to move it wouldn't matter because we had God. It was great to discuss that I don't follow God because I think He is going to give me an easy life, riches, or health. I follow God because of who He is, what He has done, and what He continues to do. Six months later, God placed me in a great job with a better work culture. However, the greatest gift was that my family, friends, and old co-workers shared how they were encouraged in how I totally leaned on God during that time and wasn't worried. They shared how they could see that my identity was rooted in God and that I was fully trusting in Him. I'm so grateful to God's patience and grace in restoring my relationship with Him and embracing my identity as a child of God, and that He would use me in some small way to point others to Him.

RENEW YOUR MIND WITH SCRIPTURES THAT REINFORCE YOUR NEW IDENTITY

The Scriptures are rich with the truths that proclaim what God did for you in your new birth and encourage you to walk as His child.

Bathe your mind in the Scriptures below and highlight the one most meaningful to you at this time.

Psalms 103:10-12

¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Colossians 1:21-22

²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him [.]

1 John 3:1

See what kind of love the Father has given to (“lavished on” NIV) us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:33-34

³³Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Romans 6:6-8

⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.



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Lesson 5: My True Identity

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- 2 Barthel, Tara. *Living the Gospel in Relationships*. Peacemaker Ministries, Billings, Montana, 2007, pg. 16.