



# DOCTRINE STUDY



# The Delight and Duty of Studying Doctrine

In this study, we will take a deep look at key biblical doctrines. The thought of studying doctrine brings a variety of responses. For some, it sounds boring. But doctrine should not be confined to dusty books and stuffy conversations. **God intends us to know what the Bible teaches in such a practical and gritty way that the way we think and live are transformed.** As we dedicate time to think about the central teachings of Scripture, may God open our hearts and expand our minds. May we study these essential truths not just out of a sense of duty, but to experience pure delight in all God is and all He has done.

*Please note: this study was designed to be done in a group setting, but can easily be adapted to enjoy as an individual study.*



*Oh, the depth of the riches of the  
wisdom and knowledge of God! How  
unsearchable his judgments, and his  
paths beyond tracing out!*

*Romans 11:33*



Lesson 1

# Introduction: Getting Started



## Day One:

# What Is Doctrine?

1. a. What do you think is meant by the term “doctrine”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What are some general perceptions people have about doctrine?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Name three doctrines that are important to the Christian faith.

Biblical doctrines summarize key teachings about central themes or points of emphasis in Scripture. There are long lists of key doctrines, but sound doctrine consistently incorporates truth about **God’s multifaceted character, the tenets of the gospel, and the culmination of God’s redemptive plan in Christ.**

2. a. Why is maintaining balance and consistency around God, the gospel, and Christ so important?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why is an understanding of key truths that crystallize the teaching of the whole of Scripture helpful?
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3. Read Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 4:7; Romans 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:15; Titus 1:9; 2:1. Summarize your impression regarding the study of doctrine.



## Day Two:

# The Importance of Doctrine

The study of essential truth grounded in the whole counsel of Scripture provides a grid through which to interpret life. **Studying, understanding, and applying doctrine is a worthwhile pursuit for the believer.** What God knows and declares is good, right, and true.

1. How does an emphasis on doctrine, or a lack of emphasis on doctrine, affect the spiritual health of the Church – God’s people – and their impact on the world?
2. How does the Bible help you understand the world you live in?
3. How does growing to better understand truth about who God is and what He has done impact your spiritual life and your personal walk with the Lord?
4. Paul David Tripp wrote, “My thoughts always precede and determine my activity.”<sup>a</sup> How does this relate to understanding doctrine?



## Day Three:

# The Threat of False Doctrine

Satan's greatest ploy, from the garden of Eden and beyond, is to undermine God's truth. Scripture is full of warnings about false teachers who distort the gospel. Sometimes Satan's opposition involves outright, overt lies. But more often than not, he seeks to promote error with subtlety, diluting the truth or distracting people from seeking the truth. Truth does not change. Therefore, Satan has no other option but to cast doubt and to declare what is true to be false. **Believers must passionately seek to preserve truth and recognize error.**

1. What is the best defense against false teaching? (See 2 Timothy 4:2-3; 2 Peter 3:17-18; 1 John 4:4-6.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. a. What overt lies does Satan try to get people to believe?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How have you experienced the more subtle ways Satan undermines truth?

**Believing a lie opens the door to dismiss God and live for yourself.** As an example, think about how refusing to believe God is Creator declares self-rule and ignites a chain of mutiny against God.

3. Given the real threat of false doctrine, how will you prepare your heart to study and respond to what is true?



## Day Four:

# The Practicality of Sound Doctrine

The value of doctrine goes far beyond an intellectual grasp of truth. Doctrine is extremely practical. These truths are not intended only for theological minds and long discussions in seminary classrooms. These essential teachings transform the way Christians think and live.

**Sound doctrine provides the grid through which life in this world can be interpreted.** The truth God has revealed provides safe boundaries and a solid foundation. What is true about God, His work, and people provides context for living in this world and preparing for eternity.

1. How are you helped to think about what is true?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read Isaiah 55:8-13. How does this passage express the practical impact of solid truth, or sound doctrine?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Give a personal example of scriptural truth that has practical impact on the biggest challenge you are facing today. For example, how do teachings about faith or God's grace impact today's struggle?

**Day Five:**

## **Praying for One Another**

Reflect on the truth you have pondered this week. Listen to the music in the provided link ahead of time and come prepared to pray for one another.

Listen to [Be Still My Soul by Selah](#)

1. What stood out to you this week as you thought about the amazing gift of the Bible, God's true Word?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can your group pray for you in light of this truth?

## **Go Deeper**

a: Paul David Tripp, "Big Doctrine, Real Life," Paul Trip Ministries, Inc., <https://www.paultripp.com/preview/posts/doctrine-preview>



**Lesson 2**

**The Bible: Written Words  
From Almighty God**

## Day One:

# The Bible Is God's Word

The Bible is an amazing book. A collection of 66 writings from more than 40 authors, its consistency and unity reveal that God inspired its human authors. **The very words and thoughts of God were supernaturally communicated to human beings.**

1. What do you learn from each of the following passages?

Isaiah 40:8

John 17:17

2 Timothy 3:15-17

2 Peter 1:20-21

**Because the Bible is from God, it should not just be read and studied, but believed and obeyed.**

Read Matthew 4:4; Luke 11:28; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23.

2. What is the proper human response to the Word of God?
3. In today's world, the Bible is not held in esteem or accepted as the plumb line for truth. As a believer, how can you speak for God and for truth to people who dismiss the Bible?
4. Read Psalm 19:7-14. What stands out to you?



## Day Two:

# The Wonder That God Has Revealed Himself to Us

Sometimes we lose our sense of wonder about God's Word. Most of us have quick and easy access to Bibles in multiple versions and to a vast array of Bible study options. But God's Word is anything but ordinary. The Bible is unlike any other literature. **In the Bible, the almighty, eternal God communicates truth about Himself, His Son, and His plan for humanity.**

Though God is above us in every possible way, He has stooped to mold eternal, infinite concepts into human words. And if that was not enough, He has given us His Spirit to illuminate spiritual concepts that mere human intelligence cannot grasp. We only understand a fraction of who God is. **However, what He has revealed in human language is more than enough to capture our hearts and transform our minds.**

Do you adequately marvel that the truths about God have been communicated, recorded, and are at your fingertips? God's Spirit ignites God's Word to bring people to salvation (1 Peter 1:23). **We can drink deeply from this amazing fountain of truth to satisfy our thirsty souls.** We do not worship the Bible, but God's Holy Word reveals truth about the God we worship. The riches contained in the Bible can be taught to children and deeply pondered by theologians. The wisdom contained in the Bible cannot be exhausted.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-16. What does this passage teach about how the Spirit interacts with God's people and the words of Scripture?
2. How has the Holy Spirit made God's Word come alive to you?

**The Bible has stood the test of time and speaks across the ages, generations, and cultures.** Surviving political opposition, false teaching, and Satan's attacks to distort and destroy its truth, the Bible endures. Its message continues to awaken dead hearts and transform lives.

3. How would you explain the indestructability of the Bible?
4. What amazes you most about the Bible?

The Bible upholds truth and orders our steps. It produces joy, gives light, and strengthens our fainting hearts. It reveals God's will, builds up the saints, and produces fruit. It convicts of sin, converts the soul, and cleanses the guilty. It confirms what is right and comforts the wounded heart. The Bible brings help, hope, and healing. **God's Word reveals God and exalts Christ.**

## Day Three:

# The Bible Tells a Grand Story

1. The Bible tells one grand story that unites all smaller themes and individual accounts. The four themes listed below capture the flow of the Bible's message. Take these four ideas and write or draw the story. Be creative!

Creation

The Fall

Redemption

Restoration

2. Why are the central themes of the Bible an important backdrop for studying God's Word?





**Day Five:**

# **Praying for One Another**

Listen to [Word of God Speak by MercyMe](#)

**Our spiritual hunger and desire to feed on God's Word reflects our love for God and pursuit of Him.**

1. What compelling thought did God give you about His Holy Word this week?

2. How can your group pray for you in light of this truth?

**Lesson 3**

# **Humanity: Creation and Purpose**



**Day One:**

# **You Were Created by God Himself**

**God created people by His own sovereign will and for His unique pleasure.** This very fact makes God our Creator and incorporates us as part of His created order. (See Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7.)

1. Why does believing that there is a personal Creator make a difference?
2. Why is rejecting God as Creator such a serious matter? How does it defy logic?
3. What societal damage results when people refuse to acknowledge God as Creator?
4. Read Psalm 139. What verse stands out to you as you think about God as your Creator?



## Day Two:

# You Were Created in God's Image

**Not only is God your Creator, mankind was also created in God's image, unique from everything else He created.** This truth imparts dignity and sacredness to every human.

1. What specific things about mankind are different than the rest of creation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. a. How does being created in God's image relate to mankind's universal quest for significance?  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
b. In what lesser things do humans often seek to find identity and purpose?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How does recognizing the stamp of God's image on all people change the way you view yourself and others?

Acknowledging God as the source of human dignity raises our passion to alleviate human suffering. The atrocity of human trafficking, murder, racial injustice, mistreatment of the disabled and elderly, and other social issues gain context when we view people as image-bearers. **We can love and accept people not like us because we understand what binds us together as humans created in God's image.** A failure to see God's imprint on humanity steals the worth and value God intended for all people. Without our life centered on God, we value things more than people and our own comfort over the welfare of others.

4. How are Christians uniquely suited to uphold the dignity of human life?

## Day Three:

# Understanding the Purpose for Which You Were Created

You were designed to know God intimately. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”<sup>a</sup> God is your Creator, and you were made in His image. **You are most complete, most joyful, and most satisfied when you live for God’s glory and not your own.** So often we seek pleasure and fulfillment in what cannot ultimately satisfy us.

1. No higher pursuit exists than to know and worship God. Why are we so often satisfied with lesser things? (See Jeremiah 2:12-13.)
2. Read Isaiah 43:7; John 6:35; Acts 17:28; Hebrews 11:6. How have you experienced that God Himself is your very great reward?
3. Why is the atoning sacrifice of Christ on your behalf necessary for you to achieve the purpose for which you were created?
4. What response or thoughts about God do these realities generate within you?

## Day Four:

# Living in the Light of This Truth

God is responsible not just for your existence; He is also the source of your intrinsic worth. You are His child, which signifies your highest purpose and most profound identity. You are dearly loved and sought by Him. And in knowing God through Christ, you find the sweetest place to abide. **The most fulfilling life is one lived in constant awareness of God and His goodness and worth.**

1. Think about your heaviest burden and greatest struggle right now. How does this truth offer you needed perspective?
2. In what way does your thinking go astray when you forget this truth?
3. Why is seeking identity and understanding your true identity at the core of so many practical struggles?

An article in *Psychology Today* in 2014 declared, “your purpose in life is to live the life of a hero.”<sup>b</sup> David Livingstone, the great pioneer missionary to Africa, stated a different viewpoint on December 4, 1857, in a stirring appeal to the students of Cambridge University:

*“For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. ...Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view, and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in, and for, us. I never made a sacrifice.”<sup>c</sup>*

4. Why is seeking God and knowing Him worth any sacrifice?



## Day Five:

# Praying for One Another

Listen to [Be Thou My Vision by Audrey Assad](#)

1. What is the loudest message God spoke to you as you focused on the reason for which you were created?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can your group pray for you in light of this truth?

## Go Deeper

- a: The Westminster Confession of Faith. 3rd ed. Lawrenceville, GA: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1990.
- b: Scott T. Allison, Ph.D., "What Is Your Purpose in Life?," Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, LLC, June 26, 2014, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/why-we-need-heroes/201406/what-is-your-purpose-in-life>
- c: David Livingstone, "Cambridge Speech of December 1857," David Livingstone 2013, December 4, 1857, <http://davidlivingstone2013.blogspot.com/2012/05/cambridge-speech-of-december-1857.html>

Lesson 4

# The Trinity: God in Three Persons





3: The Son is God.

4: The Holy Spirit is God.

5: The Father is not the Son.

6: The Son is not the Holy Spirit.

7: The Holy Spirit is not the Father.

3. What do you find most amazing about the doctrine of the Trinity? What do you find most challenging?



## Day Two:

# Knowing and Worshiping God as He Declares Himself to Be

We live in a world where it is fashionable and acceptable to self-declare the truth about God that you are comfortable believing. In other words, people want to fashion and bow to a god of their own making, but only on their own terms. The problem with this approach is that the foolish imaginations and ramblings of earthbound people cannot change the nature and person of God at all. **As created beings, we do not have the right or power to define God as we imagine Him to be.** God has declared, and rightly so, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14).

Therefore, wise people seek to know and understand who God really is – what He has revealed to be true about Himself. The Great I AM has declared that He is one, yet three. So the question before us, as we face a doctrinal mountain with the altitude of the Trinity, is this: Do you want to know God as He declares Himself to be? **The truth about the triune God that He has revealed is not just nice to know; we need this truth.**

1. How do these Scriptures help us realize that what God has declared to be true about Himself is important?

Deuteronomy 6:4

Isaiah 44:6

1 Timothy 1:17



## Day Three:

# The Role of the Trinity in Creation and Salvation

The Bible explains the harmonious unity within the Trinity. **Both creation and salvation provide beautiful examples of Trinitarian unity and cooperation.**

1. How do you see all three persons of the Godhead at work in creation? (See Genesis 1:1-2, 26; Psalm 104:30; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-16.)

God did not create the world and humanity because He was lonely or lacking anything. There was not a “man-sized hole” in the heart of God. Kevin DeYoung wrote: *“God did not create in order to be loved, but rather, created out of the overflow of the perfect love that had always existed among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who ever live in perfect and mutual relationship and delight.”*<sup>b</sup>

2. How is your thinking challenged by this statement?

3. How do you see all three persons of the Godhead at work in salvation? (See John 3:5, 16; Galatians 4:4-6; and share any other verse that comes to mind.)

A quote from Justin Dillehay: *“One writer has said, ‘The Trinity and the gospel have the same shape.’ Are you beginning to see why? This is how God saves us – by sending his Son and Spirit. Our salvation hangs on these two sendings. Without them, God will still be a Father, but He wouldn’t be our Father. He would still have a Son, but he wouldn’t have many sons.”*<sup>c</sup>

4. What response does this produce in you?



5. God, three in one, is the giver of physical life and spiritual life.
  - a. What damage is done when you ignore or refuse to believe this truth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. How can this truth lead you to worship?

*"Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!"* – Reginald Heber<sup>d</sup>

## Day Four:

# Is This Truth Practical? How Does It Help Me?

How do we take such lofty truth from our heads to our hearts? **Because the doctrine of the Trinity is so beyond our understanding, we often focus on what we cannot comprehend and miss what we should apply.**

We don't want to do that! Listed below are some aspects of the Christian life that are impacted by the wonderful truth that God exists and operates in three persons.

- As your time allows, ponder and write down how this doctrine enlarges your thinking and helps you in practical ways.
- As you gather with your group, help each other fill in the gaps!
- And...this is not everything. This doctrine permeates our belief system and daily lives.

Prayer (See Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:15-17.)

The gospel

Differing roles and the unique value of each

Relationships

Cooperation and submission



Unity and diversity (See John 17:20-21.)

The life and expansion of Christ's Church (See Matthew 28:19.)

The importance of love and community

Humble, heartfelt worship based on the truth about God

One more quote from Justin Dillehay: *"This is the Holy Trinity. This isn't just a doctrine; this is our life. It's more than just a mystery or a mind-bending math problem; this is our God, who loves and gave his Son for us (John 3:16), who loves us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20), who loves us and lives inside of us (Romans 5:5)."*<sup>c</sup>

## Day Five:

# Praying for One Another

Listen to the [Doxology](#).

1. As you considered God in His fullness, what is the most compelling challenge or encouragement you received from the Lord this week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In light of this truth, how can your group pray for you?

## Go Deeper

- a: Saint Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Book 1, chapter 3
- b: Kevin DeYoung, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: No Christianity Without It," The Gospel Coalition, The Gospel Coalition, Inc., September 28, 2011, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/the-doctrine-of-the-trinity-no-christianity-without-it>
- c: Justin Dillehay, "Two Reasons the Trinity Matter," The Gospel Coalition, The Gospel Coalition, Inc., August 8, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/two-reasons-trinity-matters/>
- d: Reginald Heber, "Holy, Holy, Holy," 1826

**Lesson 5**

**Prayer: We Are Welcome  
in God's Throne Room**



James 1:5-6

1 John 1:9

3. What amazes you most about prayer?



## Day Two:

# “Lord, I Need You”

Prayer offers a way to acknowledge our neediness to God. As human beings we enjoy feeling strong and in control. Admitting our needs and crying out to God requires humility. **In every case, prayer reveals our desperation, not just for our needs but for God Himself.**

We will never admit to God anything in prayer that He does not already know. However, we need to admit our utter dependence on God. **We need to recognize that God is our Rock, the strong tower into which we can safely run.**

1. What do each of these verses say to you? Be prepared to share the one that you found most meaningful and why.

Psalm 35:10

Psalm 40:17

Psalm 72:12

Psalm 109:22

Psalm 140:12



## Day Three:

# “Lord, Glorify Your Name”

**Our human challenges often lead us to pray.** God often works through the difficulties in our daily lives that bring us to the end of our human resources. It is spiritually healthy to acknowledge that we have no other option than to depend on God and to cry out to Him. Situations that lead us to recognize our neediness and turn to God are a gift from Him. These moments force us to recognize what is always true, even when we wrongly imagine we have things under control.

1. Why do moments of desperation often lead us to pray?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the danger behind a lack of motivation to pray when we feel things are going well?

God listens when His children pray. But God’s answers to our prayers accomplish far more than merely solving our pressing problems. **The process of being drawn to prayer, crying out to God, admitting our need, acknowledging His power, and waiting on Him to work helps to mature us spiritually.**

3. Read James 5:16. What do you think makes prayer “powerful and effective”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What do you think is God’s highest purpose in answering our prayers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How has God used situations that have called you to pray:
  - a. To grow your faith and dependence on Him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. To allow you to deepen your experience with God Himself?

Prayer is a miraculous privilege offered to God’s children. **But the highest goal of prayer is not to elevate prayer itself, but rather to glorify the God who hears and answers us when we pray.**

## Day Four:

# “Lord, Teach Me to Pray”

Our prayers are often flimsy. The substantive prayers recorded in Scripture – those of the patriarchs, the psalmists, the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles help us. We pray for our comfort and that of those we love. We learn to offer prayers that include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This is all good. We pray for physical healing, success at work, and green lights at every intersection. While it is not wrong to bring these very real concerns to the compassionate Savior, we should long for more. **God does not disregard our prayers, even when we pray poorly.** Our loving Father delights to hear us pray.

**Prayer should be as natural as breathing.** The joyful moments in our days, our thoughts as we ponder a verse of Scripture, and our real needs should lead us to naturally flow in and out of praise and prayer “without ceasing.” Honesty, urgency, passion, and perseverance should develop as we cry out to the Lord. When we pray, we find our Father’s ear poised to listen and His mighty arm ready to act.

1. Write two or three statements about God, people, or both that help explain the wonder of prayer.
2. What is your greatest challenge with prayer?
3. What has helped you learn to pray as a natural and normal part of life?
4. What is the heaviest thought in your mind today? What do you think about most when your mind wanders? Based on what is true about prayer, how should you pray?





**Lesson 6**

# **The Church: Christ's Radiant Bride**

## Day One:

# What Is the Church?

**The Church is the company of God's redeemed people, joined to Christ and, through Him, joined to one another.** With Christ as its cornerstone and built upon the teaching of the apostles, the Church carries on the mission of Christ in the world. Theologians speak of the Church invisible, all those who are truly redeemed and known to God, and the Church visible, which is the professing Church. Not all who claim to belong to Christ's Church are genuine followers of Christ (Matthew 7:21-23).

1. Read these passages that describe the Church. What does each passage teach and what does each truth mean to you personally?

Galatians 3:26-29

Ephesians 2:19-22

Ephesians 5:25-32

1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:15-16

2. a. What is the difference between the universal Church and the local church?  
  
b. Why are both important?

**God calls a people unto Himself and sends them into the world to shine forth His glory.**

3. What important truths are contained in that statement?



## Day Three:

# The Call to Gather and the Command to Scatter

God's people find strength and solidarity together. Believers need each other. In Hebrews 10:24-25, we are reminded, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." **Community and fellowship among believers are vital to spiritual health.**

1. Think of specific reasons or purposes for which Christians should gather and support one another within the local church and in Christian community.
  
2. This season of COVID-19 has led us to do this in different ways and to experience the loss of face-to-face fellowship. What have you learned?

**Not only are we called to gather as God's people, the Church is also called to scatter as a witness to the world.**

3. What is the mission to which God's people, the body of Christ, are called? (See Mark 16:15.)
  
4. How can the comfort of gathering overrule Christ's commission to scatter?

## Day Four:

# The Glorious Future of Christ's Church

The people of Christ's Church live as pilgrims in this world. The promises of future deliverance and joyous celebration that await us for all eternity provide hope amidst daily struggles. The foretaste of heaven's fellowship that we experience as we gather together reminds us that this world is not our home. **The Church is here in the present, but its full and most glorious expression remains future to us.** Believers and all creation groan through painful moments and in passionate, impatient expectation of what is to come.

1. Read Romans 8:18-25. What do you learn that gives you hope today?
2. As you study alone, read Revelation 19:1-9 aloud. What stands out to you?
3. How does life in your world remind you that you are a pilgrim? (See Hebrews 11:13-16.)
4. How does life within the body of Christ remind you that you await something even better?



Lesson 7

# Faith: Believing God



## Day One:

# Framing the Doctrine of Faith

Faith is a concept that means different things to different people. In 2012, an article in *Psychology Today* defined faith as “an expression of hope for something better ... closer to a belief, but not quite.”<sup>a</sup> In the Bible, faith means much more than wishful optimism or intellectual agreement with facts. **Put most simply, faith is believing God and acting on it.**

Theologians have most often defined true faith as having three elements:

- Content: specific truth to be believed – knowledge – involves the intellect (*notitia*)
  - Conviction: understanding the personal relevance of what is true – agreement – incorporates emotion (*assensus*)
  - Commitment: acting upon what is true – trust – enacts the will or volition (*fiducia*)
1. a. We often use the term “saving faith.” Consider the three elements of true faith listed above and how each is manifested when a sinner receives salvation in Christ. If helpful, think of your own experience of coming to faith in Christ.

Content (See Matthew 16:15-17; John 3:16; Acts 16:31.)

Conviction (See John 1:12; 6:37.)

Commitment (See Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2.)

- b. How would you describe supposed faith that falls short of saving faith? (See Matthew 7:21-23; 13:1-23 and James 2:19.)

*“The principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life ....”* – Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)<sup>b</sup>

*“Saving faith is faith that not only knows and comprehends the facts about the gospel of Jesus Christ but also trusts in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone for salvation.”* – J.V. Fesko<sup>c</sup>

2. What is most meaningful to you about these two quotes?

## Day Two:

# Biblical Faith – Reasonableness That Exceeds Human Reason

Hebrews 11:1 offers a functional definition, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” **The heroes of faith listed in that famous chapter were commended for seeking an unseen reality.** The chapter goes on, “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance...” (Hebrews 11:13).

The full realities that faith must grasp remain unseen. We are called to walk by faith, not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Does this mean that God is asking Christians to make a blind leap? Does believing God defy logic and human reasoning? How do we become convinced that what God says is true enough to base our lives upon *and* also accept what remains unseen? **What is the evidence of the unseen that makes faith in God a reasonable response?**

Is faith in God only reasonable when you understand everything He has promised? God’s ways and thoughts are infinitely higher than us. But what God has promised can be trusted because of Who God is. Faith in God is reasonable because He is the foundation and object of our faith. God is trustworthy. He has never failed, and He never will. He has the power to accomplish everything He has promised. Therefore, His promises are certain. Trusting His promises is indeed reasonable. **Thinking rightly about God makes trusting Him to take a step of faith no leap at all.**

The consistency of Scripture, the witness of the Holy Spirit, the history of the Church, and many other things validate God’s truthfulness. The Holy Spirit must awaken our hearts to recognize truth and to know and trust God. We learn that He can be trusted, even if we do not have all the facts. **God can be trusted when what He has promised exceeds human logic.**

1. Why do some think biblical faith depends on mindless belief that denies human reasoning?
2. How do you struggle with the balance of reason (what you can see and understand) and faith (trusting God with what you cannot see and understand)?
3. Read the words of three faith-filled young men in Daniel 3:16-18. Why did they believe that their unwavering faith in God was reasonable?
4. What helps you believe that trusting God is reasonable and right?

## Day Three:

# Walking by Faith

Saving faith is the starting point. **But how does biblical faith impact not just eternal salvation, but also daily life?** Coming to Christ in faith ignites a major life change. We are invited to a persevering and permeating faith that will grow until we experience the full joy of heaven.

The Bible is full of thousands of wonderful promises that God wants us to believe. We are called to depend on God in big things and small things. We recognize God's plan for His eternal kingdom but also His purposeful plan for our lives. He orchestrates the joys and challenges of everyday life circumstances to teach us to rely on Him and that He is faithful. **True faith represents a walk of believing God, step-by-step and day-by-day.** Our faith is about more than streets of gold. Our faith impacts today.

**Faith in God is not faith in a worry-free, obstacle-free life.** People of faith trusts God's character, purposes, and promises in the midst of struggles and hardships. Our faith muscles grow when our faith is stretched and tested. We learn to trust specific promises of God in specific ways. Faith is practical.

1. Why is it sometimes easier to trust God for eternal life than for daily life?
2. What kind of situations has God used to stretch and grow your faith?
3. How does the practical, everyday kind of faith also include content, conviction, and commitment?

Content:

Conviction:

Commitment:

4. How is walking by faith daily directly related to trusting Him for salvation?

## Day Four:

# Putting Faith Into Action

**Faith is believing God and acting on it.** Let's practice doing that.

1. What is the biggest need, uncertainty, or challenge you are facing today?
2. In what ways are you tempted to fear or doubt God in this struggle?
3. What promise from Scripture or truth about God speaks to that need?
4. What might it look like if you fail to trust that truth?
5. What might it look like, in practical terms, to trust that truth?
6. What tool or lesson have you learned that could stimulate your faith for the next time you encounter a challenge that might tempt you to panic?

**Day Five:**

## **Praying for One Another**

Listen to [Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus by Casting Crowns](#) for gentle encouragement.

Listen to [Believer by Rhett Walker](#) to go forward with a challenge.

**We need God and we need each other.**

1. What stood out to you this week as we focused on the doctrine of faith?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can your group pray for you in light of this truth?

## **Go Deeper**

- a: Arthur Dobrin D.S.W., "Why Faith Is Important," Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, LLC, September 28, 2012, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/am-i-right/201209/why-faith-is-important>
- b: The Westminster Confession of Faith. 3rd ed. Lawrenceville, GA: Committee for Christian Education and Publications, 1990.
- c: J.V. Fesko, "The Doctrine of Saving Faith," The Gospel Coalition, The Gospel Coalition, Inc., <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/doctrine-saving-faith>

**Lesson 8**

**Salvation: From the Penalty,  
Power, and Presence of Sin**

## Day One:

# The Amazing Wonder of Salvation

1. As you [watch this short video](#), jot down what stands out to you. What touched you most deeply?

As a simple definition, salvation means being “saved” from something. It incorporates the idea of being delivered from, rescued from, protected from something.

2. a. What are Christians saved *from*?  
  
b. Certainly those who trust in Christ are delivered *from* something bad, but we are also saved *to* something wonderful. What are Christians “saved” *to*?  
  
3. How is the word “saved” perceived in our culture or even Christian circles today? How do you feel about it?  
  
4. How does the salvation of sinners bring glory to God?



## Day Two:

# Salvation From the PENALTY of Sin

**The doctrine of salvation is a comprehensive term that incorporates many other rich doctrines.** Grace, repentance, redemption, reconciliation, regeneration, eternal security, justification, sanctification, substitution, election, righteousness, sin – and we could go on! All three persons of the Trinity work together to accomplish the sovereign plans of God, to remove God's wrath, and make us a part of God's kingdom. The Church is the company of the saved who live by faith and find their highest purpose in Christ. Our salvation demonstrates the unified and multiplied attributes of God in beautiful ways. So much hinges on this doctrine. Breathless yet?

The doctrine of salvation cannot be captured by a simple explanation. In heaven, we will sing forever the wonders of salvation in Christ and never exhaust the riches of this glorious doctrine. **For the sake of getting a toehold on this grand truth, we will consider three dimensions of its wonder.** Today, we will look at the *past* element: Believers are saved from the PENALTY of sin. Tomorrow the *present* aspect: Believers are being delivered from the POWER of sin's hold on their lives. And next, our *future* hope – Believers long for the day when will forever be set free from the PRESENCE of sin. Let's go!

1. a. What has righteous God declared as the just penalty of sin? (See Romans 5:12; 6:23.) Think of the ways this penalty impacts mankind – spiritually, relationally, physically, emotionally, etc.  
  
b. Why must every individual face not only the broken condition of humanity but also individual culpability – the reality of the penalty you personally face?
2. Why would Christ take on Himself the penalty of so many people? Why is His one-time sacrifice efficient to save all who believe? Here are some Scriptures to ignite your thoughts: Psalm 103:11-12; Matthew 1:21; Matthew 20:28; John 1:14; 1 John 5:13.
3. Write a few words to express your personal gratitude to Jesus for saving you from the just penalty you deserved because of your sin.

## Day Three:

# Salvation From the POWER of Sin

Receiving salvation in Christ is where salvation starts, but those who have been saved “press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Believers continue to sin while living on this earth and incarcerated in human flesh with its sinful appetites. The good news is that as a believer you no longer must live as a slave to sin (Romans 6:17-18). **By God’s grace and through His power, the Holy Spirit provides resources for you to have victory over specific sin in your daily life.** This process, known as sanctification, is gradual and like salvation, never the result of human strength. Being saved is not just a future hope, it is a present reality.

1. How would you describe your ongoing battle with sin as a believer? (See Romans 6:6-7; 8:12-13; James 3:2; 1 John 1:8.)
  
2. How is spiritual growth related to experiencing victory over sin?

An earnest believer continues to be painfully aware of their sinful desires, thoughts, and actions. This is actually evidence of the Holy Spirit’s purifying work. You become increasingly sensitive to God and the truth about your own heart. Sometimes evidence of salvation from sin’s power is easier seen as you look back at the way God has faithfully prodded you forward over many years. The growth may seem slow, but it should be evident. **You should see areas of your life where you have been set free from sin’s stranglehold.**

3. In what areas of your life have you and are you experiencing salvation from the power of sin?

## Day Four:

# Salvation From the PRESENCE of Sin

The transformation that began at salvation and continues as you walk through life in the power of the Holy Spirit has a finish line that is beyond amazing. **The believer's greatest hope is that one day the temptations and influences of sin will be obliterated.** You will no longer fight desires that displease God or think selfish thoughts that steal God's glory. You will no longer live in a world where decay and sickness and death cause pain and misery. People will no longer be divided, but all of God's people, from every race, nation, tribe, and language, will be perfectly unified. As a believer, you will be gloriously and eternally delivered from sin's influence and damage.

1. How does your current reality as a believer living in a fallen world make you long to be done with sin? (See Romans 8:18-25.)
  
2. How does this glorious hope make you long for Jesus to return? (See Jeremiah 29:11; Zephaniah 3:17; 1 Peter 1:3-4; Revelation 22:12, 20-21.)

In Scripture the believer's hope is very often tied to our future deliverance, the glorious consummation of our salvation. **Christ will return to judge the world, deliver His people, and reign without rival.**

3. Why is this the only hope that is truly hope at all? Why do all other sources of hope fall short compared to this truth? Find a Bible verse that expresses this hope to share with your group.



Lesson 9

# Wrath: A Holy God's Holy Response



## Day One:

# God's Holy Hatred of Sin

**The doctrine of God's wrath is mostly rejected in our day.** People prefer to see God only as a God of love, who accepts everyone without condition. God's wrath, like everything He is and does, stands in perfect balance with His entire character and nature. And while this concept stretches us, our desire should be to know God as He has declared Himself to be.

God loves everything that is good and right, and therefore hates everything that opposes what He loves. **God's wrath is the deliberate response of a Holy God against all that dishonors Him.** Understanding the concept of God's wrath is directly tied to an understanding of His holiness. Theologians see God's wrath as a secondary attribute of God, different than His qualities of love, holiness, justice, and righteousness, for example. 1 John 4:8 tells us that "God is love." We do not believe in the same way that God is wrath. Rather, God's wrath is a holy *response* to something external to Himself. His wrath is based on His intense hatred of sin.

**God hates sin, but He does not hate people.** In fact, He sacrificed His Son so that we do not have to experience His wrath. The fact that Jesus experienced the wrath we deserve only highlights the reality of God's immense love.

1. One challenge in understanding God's wrath is that we might equate it with human anger. What is the difference?
  
2. The book of Romans presents a well-rounded picture of the biblical doctrines, including the wrath of God. What do these verses say about God's wrath?

Romans 1:18

Romans 2:5-8

Romans 3:5

Romans 5:9

Romans 9:22

Romans 12:19

3. What stands out to you today about God's wrath?



## Day Two:

# God's Wrath – Present and Future

One aspect of God's wrath awaits a future day when God will judge humanity. There is also a present expression of His wrath against sin. **God's wrath is both poured out now and coming later in full measure.** Romans 1:18 says, "The wrath of God is *being revealed* from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness." God's wrath is a serious matter, more serious than many societal ills we do recognize.

1. What do you learn about the nature of God's wrath from Romans 2:5-8 and 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What evidence of God's wrath can you see already at work in our world?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. As a Christian, you live in a world that sits both under and awaits God's wrath.
  - a. What are some wrong ways to respond to this truth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What are some right ways to respond to this truth?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. God's wrath against sin is warranted and righteous. What do Romans 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9 reveal about God? How should you reflect His heart?

## Day Three:

# Old Testament God of Wrath/New Testament God of Love?

**A common view, actually a misconception, is that the Old and New Testaments portray two somewhat opposed but certainly different aspects of God's character.** In the Old Testament, we see physical manifestations of God's judgment: the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the conquest of the promised land, and the plagues on Egypt, to name a few. The old covenant involved a lot of blood sacrifice and fearful high priests cautiously entering the holy of holies once a year. On the other hand, in the New Testament, God sent His Son to call people to a new covenant of forgiveness and a beautiful life walking with God with a changed heart.

**In reality, God's entire character is in full display throughout the Bible.** The Old Testament is full of expressions of God's grace. And the New Testament presents the greatest expression of both God's wrath and love known to man – the cross of Christ. The book of Revelation foretells the final outpouring of God's wrath in final judgment. The greatest judgment of all is hell itself, foretold often in the New Testament.

**A more accurate way to balance God's love and His wrath is to see how they escalate through the pages of Scripture.** D.A. Carson says that in the New Testament both God's love and His wrath "ratcheted up" from material and temporal expressions toward an eternal expression. The Old Testament sacrifices and prophecies were fulfilled in Christ. Both the theme of God's love and the theme of His wrath "barrel forward" to the cross.<sup>a</sup> And the final judgment will see God's wrath poured out and God's people removed from sin's influence forever.

1. How is the cross of Christ the ultimate expression both of God's wrath and His love?
2. What is the danger of seeing "two Gods" – one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament?
3. How does an emphasis on God's love, to the exclusion of His wrath and judgment, deny truth and devalue the cross?
4. How do you find both settling comfort and unsettling questions when you consider this aspect of God's character?

## Day Four:

# What Difference Does This Make to Me?

To reject this truth of God's just wrath against sin diminishes the gospel and distorts the cross of Christ.

1. Explain this statement in your own words.

**Satan's game plan, from the garden forward, is to distort truth and bring into question what God has said.** Our acceptance or denial does not alter truth. Human arrogance stands in judgment of the God who will Himself judge everything fully and rightly.

2. Read John 8:45 and Romans 3:4. People reject God *because of* what is true.
  - a. Are you willing to believe and uphold an unpopular but true view of God?

- b. If God did not hate sin, who would He be?

- c. What is the danger of believing lies?

**Our approach to a truth like this makes a difference.** We must not be mean-spirited and gleeful about it.

3. How do these verses help you rightly approach the truth of God's wrath?  
Matthew 23:37

Romans 5:9

Romans 12:19

**Day Five:**

## **Praying for One Another**

Listen to [The Blood of Jesus Speaks For Me by Travis Cottrell](#)

1. How has your understanding of this challenging doctrine been enlarged? What response to this is God urging in you?
  
2. How can your group pray for you in light of this truth?

## **Go Deeper**

a: Desiring God, "The Doctrine of the Wrath of God," April 2, 2013, <https://youtu.be/TjwvlgHv26M>

b: Desiring God, "Six Truths About God's Wrath," January 23, 2019, <https://youtu.be/GWLCyecSfzI>

Lesson 10

**Repentance: A Faith-Filled  
Response to Our Sin and  
God's Mercy**

## Day One:

# The Refreshing Grace of Repentance

We often think of repentance as painful and to be avoided. For believers, nothing could be farther from the truth. **Repentance is a beautiful thing for sinners.** The Holy Spirit reveals both general sinfulness and specific sin to the sinner, who can face that reality with faith in God's forgiveness and restoration through Christ. Repentance is a Holy Spirit-driven response to sin that brings change and wholeness to the whole person – the mind, the emotions, and the will.

**Coming to Christ for salvation and walking with Him in life both involve repentance.** We have to recognize the reality of our sinfulness to seek Christ as Savior. And our relentless daily battle with sin as a believer makes repentance a regular and healthy part of our spiritual life. True repentance involves turning around and going a different direction.

1. Theologians speak of three essential elements of true repentance.
  - a. From the verses below, explain what you think each means, either as a definition or from personal experience.

Conviction (See John 16:7-11; Jude 1:14-15.)

Contrition (See Isaiah 57:15; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.)

Conversion (See Acts 3:19; Romans 6:1-4.)

- b. Why are all three important?



2. Write down your reflections on these three statements:  
We are more sinful than we think we are.

Our sin is more awful than we think it is.

God is more gracious than we think He is.

## Day Two:

# Counterfeit and Genuine Repentance

1. Satan concocts a cheap substitute for every true and beautiful thing God offers. What are some human responses to sin that fall short of true repentance?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Practically speaking, how does true repentance incorporate:
  - a. Godly sorrow (See 2 Corinthians 7:10)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Biblical faith that believes and acts on specific truth
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. The work of the Holy Spirit (See John 16:8-10; Romans 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. A celebration of God's amazing grace

*"Confession of sin without the celebration of grace leads to guilt, self-loathing, timidity and spiritual paralysis. Embracing grace without the admission of sin does not result in change in your heart and life. So today, refuse to minimize sin, reject the temptation to devalue grace, and run to Jesus weeping and celebrating at the same time." – Paul David Tripp<sup>a</sup>*

3. Ponder this quote and write words that capture how this truth settles in your heart.

## Day Three:

# Repentance – The Constant Posture of a Growing Christian

**Spiritual growth involves a process we call sanctification. God lovingly, tenderly, and specifically works through our circumstances, His Word, and other people to root sin out of us.** He gently and tenderly redeems our wretchedness, in increments we can stand.

**Repentance is not just about the expulsion of sin, but rather an invitation into deeper, richer, and more beautiful experiences of fellowship with God.** We don't repent just to deal with what is ugly. We repent to increase our delight and experience with what is beautiful. So repentance is not meant to be a last resort or painful necessity. Instead, our ongoing purification from sin offers a repeated opportunity to relish God's grace and experience the gospel at work. Repentance is an amazing gift.

1. How does the believer's ongoing battle with personal sin offer opportunities to experience God's grace?
2. Why must we face specific sin, not just the general sinfulness we inherited from Adam, if we are to grow spiritually?
3. How does God's Word contribute to the exposure of sin and process of repentance?
4. In what ways have you experienced both the pain and joy of repentance?

## Day Four:

# Learning to Love and Welcome Conviction and Repentance

We often repent pretty quickly and at a fairly surface level. **However, God wants us to repent not just of our outward actions but also of the appetites and desires that drive what we do.**

We cannot even recognize the sin within us unless the Holy Spirit reveals it! What does it look like to take time to meditate and intentionally welcome God's purifying spotlight into the private recesses of our sin-addicted hearts? What does it feel like to ardently desire to be made clean, not just positionally in Christ, but also practically in what we love and desire? God does not want us to painfully grovel and beg Him for forgiveness He is hesitant to give. He delights when we come to Him and seek His deliverance. He is eager to forgive and restore us.

**The prayer below was adapted from the Puritans and cuts deeper than our common mealtime request, "Forgive us of our sins."** A little more painful and a lot more specific, this prayer takes time to acknowledge the many ways we offend God. He delights to call us to something better. Read, ponder, and respond. Remember – The end game of repentance is not a focus on the sin but celebration of God's open arms, willing forgiveness and gracious deliverance.

*"Merciful Lord, pardon all my sins of this day:*

*Sins of omission and commission, of morose, peevish, and angry tempers*

*Sins of lip and life and walk*

*Sins of hard-heartedness, unbelief, presumption, pride*

*Sins of unfaithfulness to the souls of men, of lack of bold decision in the cause of Christ*

*Sins in deficiency in outspoken zeal for Your glory, sins of bringing dishonor on Your great name*

*Sins of deception, injustice, untruthfulness*

*Sins of impurity in thought, word, and deed, of covetousness, of substance unduly hoarded and improvidently squandered and not consecrated to Thee, the great Giver*

*Sins in private and in the family, in study and recreation, in the study of Thy Word and the neglect of it*

*Sins in prayer irreverently offered and coldly withheld*

*Sins in yielding to Satan's wiles and opening my heart to his temptation. Sins in being unwatchful when I know He is nigh*

*Sins in quenching the Holy Spirit, sins against light and knowledge, against conscience and the restraints of Thy Spirit*

*Sins against the law of eternal love*

*Pardon all my sins, known and unknown, felt and unfelt, confessed and not confessed, remembered and forgotten. Hear O Lord. Hear and forgive."<sup>b</sup>*



## Day Five:

# Praying for One Another

Please take the time to open your heart, *listen*, and bow before our gracious God.

A *cry* for an open heart: [Search Me, O God](#)

A *confession* in light of our daily reality: [My Eyes Are Dry by Keith Green](#)

A *celebration* of God's mercy and forgiveness: [His Mercy Is More by Shane & Shane](#)

1. How has God spoken to you this week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How can your friends pray for you in light of this truth?

## Go Deeper

a: Paul David Tripp, *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional* (Crossway, October 31, 2014)

b: Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision* (Banner of Truth, March 1, 2003)

**Lesson 11**

**Righteousness: Being  
Right in God's Eyes**



## Day One:

# The Absolute Righteousness of God

By definition, righteousness is “right-ness,” or to sound more like a dictionary, the quality of being “morally right or justifiable.” And very quickly, any honest or moderately thoughtful person recognizes a problem. No one would welcome a public broadcast of their inner thoughts or their careless words. If we are anything, it is not righteous. And if that is not troubling enough, another thought comes quickly behind that one. God is righteous. Perfectly righteous. **The gap between who God is and who we are is where the conversation about righteousness starts.**

**As we explore this upright topic this week, we will follow a progression of concepts that takes us from sheer terror over what we lack to overwhelming peace over what Christ has accomplished.** We need this discussion to understand ourselves and humanity and to properly glorify God. The realities around the topic of righteousness are transformational.

**There are four main truths we will explore:**

- God is righteous.
- I am not righteous.
- Christ’s righteousness is *imputed* to every sinner who trusts Him for salvation.
- Practical righteousness is *imparted* to every believer through the Holy Spirit.

**God’s righteousness is linked closely to His holiness.** His holiness speaks to His intrinsic character and incorporates His absolute purity and glory. Holiness also captures the idea that God is distinct from or separate from what is common or ordinary.

**Righteousness incorporates the idea of conforming to a standard.** God sets and upholds the highest, most righteous standard in His *being* – who He is (James 1:17) – and in His *ways*, everything He does. He is righteous and He acts in righteousness. John Piper says, “*God has an unwavering commitment to the highest standard imaginable – namely, His glory.*”<sup>a</sup>

1. Why is the fact that God Himself sets and represents the highest standard in the universe an important truth?
2. What happens when people fail to recognize God as the standard against which everything is measured?
3. What is the healthiest and most proper response to God’s absolute righteousness?



## Day Two:

# Mankind's Dilemma – a Lack of Righteousness

If concentrating on God's absolute righteousness proves a bit staggering, facing the reality of our lack of righteousness is equally serious. **Not only does every human lack the righteousness that measures up to God's immovable standard, in our folly we offer a flawed human substitute: self-righteousness.**

1. a. What is self-righteousness?

b. How do we recognize it in ourselves and others? Why is it dangerous?

**Even when we recognize the flawed state of society and individuals, we often fail to understand the total ruin that is inflicted through mankind's lack of true righteousness.** How bad do we think the situation is? The doctrine of mankind's "total depravity" captures the teaching of Scripture about sin's pervasive damage.

2. a. Read Isaiah 64:6 and Romans 3:10-18. Find words in these verses that indicate the extent and pervasiveness of mankind's (and our own) lack of righteousness.

Malcolm Muggeridge wrote: *"The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact."*<sup>b</sup>

3. a. Why is this truth hard for people to accept?

b. What is the personal benefit when you understand this truth?

4. Write down a sentence that captures your clearest takeaway from this discussion.

Iain Murray wrote: *"To teach men that they possess the ability to turn from sin when they choose to do so is to hide the true extent of their need."*<sup>c</sup>





- b. Why is it helpful to know your right standing with God is not left in the theoretical realm – that God works within you to bring practical transformation that aligns with your change of status?
  
3. Repeat from memory the four main planks of truth regarding the doctrine of righteousness.
  
4. What is the most impactful truth you have discovered as you have pondered the doctrine of righteousness?

## Day Four:

# The Security of Righteousness in Christ Alone

God's character, plan, and truths weave together in an amazing way. **The doctrines of the Bible intersect, support one another, and uphold God's attributes with perfect balance, consistency, and beauty.** As we have studied the concept of righteousness, the connection to God's holiness and many other important doctrines have already become evident.

1. Consider what you have learned and discussed about righteousness.

a. What other doctrines are closely tied to this truth?

b. What attributes of God did you think about?

2. It is important to apply a doctrine into the matters of daily life. Think about what you have learned and consider with your group how the doctrine of righteousness impacts the matters listed below. Pick one or two to consider and combine your efforts with your group. Help each other!

The struggle of a believer with ongoing sin

Wrong views of God that are common today

A proper view of self

Personal security and identity in a world of constant conflict and change

Understanding the work and person of Christ

Anything else come to mind?

3. What one word best describes your response to this doctrine?

**Day Five:**

## **Praying for One Another**

Listen to **All I have is Christ by Sovereign Grace Music**

1. "Hallelujah! All I have Is Christ!" How has this truth resonated with you this week?
  
2. How can your group pray for you in light of this truth?

## **Go Deeper**

- a: John Piper, "God is Holy and Righteous – Are Those the Same?", Desiring God, Desiring God Foundation, October 9, 2017, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/god-is-holy-and-righteous-are-those-the-same>
- b: Malcolm Muggeridge, 1903–1990, British journalist
- c: Iain H. Murray, The Life of Martin Lloyd-Jones – 1899-1981 (Banner of Truth, March 1, 2013)

Lesson 12

# Grace: More Than Amazing



## Day One:

# Grace – an Attribute of God

**Grace – a little word that packs a powerful punch.** Those five letters capture profound truth about God and His ways that explode the mind of God’s child. Even the secular world recognizes grace as a charming or attractive trait. Ballerinas dance with grace and lots of little girls answer to the name “Grace.” So we know grace is wonderful – even amazing. But what is it? What is it to a believer?

*“Grace is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him.” – Jerry Bridges<sup>a</sup>*

*“Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues.” – John Stott<sup>b</sup>*

*“Grace is getting what you don’t deserve. Mercy is not getting what you do deserve.” – Unknown*

*“Grace is the love of God shown to the unlovely; the peace of God given to the restless; the unmerited favor of God.” – Justin Holcomb<sup>c</sup>*

*“Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving.” – A.W. Tozer<sup>d</sup>*

*“God answers the mess of life with one word – grace.” – Max Lucado<sup>e</sup>*

*“Unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification.” – Merriam-Webster Dictionary<sup>f</sup>*

1. After reading these quotes about grace, how would you define grace, in your own words?

2. What do these verses say about grace and the nature, or very essence, of God?

Psalm 145:8

Isaiah 30:18

Joel 2:13



Titus 2:11

James 4:6

3. Read this list of descriptive words that describe the truth that God, by nature, is gracious. Pick one or two and ponder how this expresses an aspect of God's grace. Or come up with one of your own. Write down your reflections. As a group, share your thoughts and marvel a bit together.

Uncoerced

Scandalous

Extravagant

Sufficient

Loving

Pervasive

Generous

Undeserved

## Day Two:

# Grace – an Action of God

God's actions flow from His attributes. **When God extends grace to the undeserving, He is simply being Himself.** God's attribute of grace flows into expressions of grace.

1. How do you see God's grace in action:

In your salvation? (See Romans 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-9.)

In your sanctification? (See 2 Timothy 2:1; 2 Peter 3:18.)

In the security of your eternal salvation? (See Romans 5:1-2.)

In the difficulties of life? (See Hebrews 4:16.)

In your mission as a believer? (See Acts 20:24.)

As the source of peace? (See 1 Corinthians 1:3.)

2. Why is it important to stop and notice specific ways God extends grace to you?

God's grace permeates our life as His children. Grace is not merely a past experience, although that expression is indeed beautiful. In grace, God called us to Himself and saved us from sin. Grace is not merely a future hope. By grace, we will participate in the glorious wedding feast as His radiant bride. But perhaps one of the most amazing aspects of God's grace is its constant, present reality. **We survive and thrive in a bubble of grace.** God's unending waves of undeserved, sustaining goodness and ongoing rescue uphold us and secure us.

3. a. Read John 1:16. Why is the present reality of God's ongoing flow of fresh grace essential for you?

b. Think through the last week. What is one personal and timely expression of God's grace that you received this week?

c. What is your response to God and His fountain of grace?

## Day Three:

# Those Who Receive God's Grace Are Poised to Extend Grace to Others

God does not show us grace so we can marvel at it like a room full of prized but dusty trophies. The grace we receive freely is to be extended freely to others. Those who have received much have much to give. We love that God has been gracious to us. We rejoice that He has shown us undeserved mercy. **What does God require of the recipients of His lavish grace?**

Grace is not simply to be valued, explained, and analyzed. Grace is also to be expressed to others with a constant awareness of our own incessant need of God's grace. When other people irritate us or are caught in sin, we must see them as God does. When someone's need gets in the way of our comfort, we should respond with graciousness. Responding in grace is not natural for us. The idea of giving or getting what you have not earned defies human thinking. **Those that have received grace from God through Christ are well prepared to extend grace to others.**

1. Why is it easier to receive grace than to extend grace? In what ways are we more likely to desire justice for others but mercy and grace for ourselves?
2. When has someone shown you grace when you did not expect it? How did that impact you?
3. What are the practical implications of Colossians 4:6? How does this happen in real life?
4. Is there someone in your life that demands more grace that you want to extend? What is God asking you to do?

## Day Four:

# Living in and Loving God's Grace

Even as believers, we can lose sight of our need for God's grace. We readily and joyfully receive the gift of salvation in Christ and heartily confess that we can do nothing to earn God's favor. Hallelujah! And then, as we walk from the heavenly wonder of salvation into the hallways of daily life, we can slip into trying to live and grow, not in grace, but in our own effort. **Everything about walking faithfully with God as a believer comes through His grace.** By grace, He reveals our sin. By grace, God delivers us from sinful patterns of thought and action. By grace, He puts us in fellowship with other believers. By grace, He meets our needs day-by-day. He is the God of grace and glory.

1. In what ways, as a believer with a doctrinally sound explanation of God's grace at the ready, can you unintentionally slip back into seeking God's favor?
2. What helps you keep a steady focus on the wonder of God's grace?
3. What does living in and loving God's grace look like when:  
You disappoint someone or they disappoint you?

You say something you didn't mean or want to say?

You have deep hurts in your past?

You face uncertainties or unplanned hardships in your future?

You experience unexpected joy?

4. What do you think is the most amazing thing about God's grace?

## Day Five:

# Praying for One Another

Listen to [Your Grace Still Amazes Me by Phillips Craig and Dean](#) for sweet meditation.

Listen to [Holy Water by We The Kingdom](#) for joyful celebration.

1. What did God say to you this week?

2. How can your group pray for you?

## Go Deeper

a: Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love* (NavPress, April 22, 2008)

b: John R.W. Stott, *Christ The Controversialist: A Study in Some Essentials of Evangelical Religion* (Tyndal Press, January 1, 1970)

c: Justin Holcomb, "What is Grace?", Christianity.com, Salem Web Network, January 23, 2013, <https://www.christianity.com/theology/what-is-grace.html>

d: A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (HarperOne, November 15, 1978)

e: Max Lucado, "God's Answer for the Mess of Life," MaxLucado.com, UpWords, <https://maxlucado.com/listen/gods-answer-for-the-mess-of-life>

f: Merriam-Webster, s.v. "grace," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grace>

**Lesson 13**

**Idolatry: Anything We Love  
More Than God**

## Day One:

# Loving God Most

Watch this short [video](#).

1. Write down one thing that stood out to you in the video.

An idol is any thing or person that you love, enjoy, or treasure more than God. And before we dive into the things that we foolishly put before God, let us first ponder why we should love God most. As a person created in God's image, your highest and best purpose in life is found in Him. **So much is forfeited when we choose anything or anyone as a weak and foolish substitute for God Himself.** God rightfully deserves our deepest affections and is the source of our greatest joy.

2. As humans, what makes us so quickly and easily abandon the best love for a lesser one?
3. Read Deuteronomy 6:5. Why is the command in this verse so connected to the concept of idolatry?
4. Read Exodus 34:14. How would you describe the "jealousy" of God, and why is it vastly different from sinful human jealousy and utterly appropriate?

**Idolatry is not merely about the things we honor; it is much more about the affections and desires of our hearts.** The first of the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20 says, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."



## Day Two:

# The Danger of Idolatry

Idolatry represents a serious offense against God. A.W. Tozer suggested that idolatry is “libel” against God’s character as we assume Him to be different than He truly is. Tozer said that “wrong ideas about God ... are themselves idolatrous.”<sup>a</sup> In putting something other than God in His place, we are substituting a god created in our own likeness and to conform to our own whims. **Entertaining thoughts about God that are less than worthy of Him is where idolatry starts.**

In our modern day, we might suppose that we have escaped the foolish notions of idolatry demonstrated by less advanced societies. We might look at the fall of Israel into idolatry with disdain. However, the modern world embraces idolatry with its own brand of vigor. We have simply perfected idolatry and modernized it in a way that is no less dangerous. Idolatry is more than kneeling before a visible object. **We idolize anything and anyone we love, treasure, and enjoy more than God.**

1. How do you maintain a right view of God to avoid slippage toward idolatry?
  
2. Read Colossians 3:5-6.
  - a. What is equated with idolatry? Explain this connection.
  
  - b. How is idolatry connected to the wrath of God?
  
3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:7-14 and Galatians 4:8. What do you learn about the seriousness of idolatry?
  
4.
  - a. See Romans 1:25. What are some idols that tempt people today? For example, an immaculately landscaped yard, good grades, a healthy BMI, youthful appearance. Be specific and real.
  
  - b. What appetites or desires lurk under those things?
  
  - c. How can we be helped by a right view of God and a healthy craving for Him?

*“Nothing teaches us about the preciousness of the Creator as much as when we learn the emptiness of everything else.” – Charles Spurgeon<sup>b</sup>*

## Day Three:

# What Do We Crave More Than God?

**We must elevate our concept of God to love and crave Him so deeply that nothing else satisfies.** When we diminish our thoughts of God to less than what is true of Him, we will put other things in His place. We must ask ourselves what and who we treasure more than God. Our disordered loves and desires are the issue. John Piper has defined idolatry as *“Loving more than God what should be loved less than God and only for the sake of God ... loving too much what ought to be loved less.”*<sup>c</sup>

1. What great demand did Jesus make? (See Matthew 10:37; 22:37; 1 Corinthians 16:22.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. a. In your walk as a Christian, how has God stimulated and deepened your love for Him?  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
b. How are the mind, the will, and the emotions related to our love for God and Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Read Philippians 3:7-8. How does your own love for God need to grow so that nothing else is as appealing as He is?

*“If you uproot the idol and fail to plant the love of Christ in its place, the idol will grow back.”* – Tullian Tchividjian<sup>d</sup>

## Day Four:

# Lord, Give Us Hearts to Seek You

Facing the convicting reality of idolatry in our own hearts can be troubling. We do not enjoy facing the fact that we struggle with idols. John Calvin famously said, *“the human heart is a perpetual idol factory.”*<sup>e</sup> We are far too easily satisfied and delighted with lesser things than what God has lovingly prepared for us. This world distracts and woos us to love more what we should love less. **We cannot afford to relegate the doctrine of idolatry to the intellectual zone of our minds without letting the Holy Spirit pierce our wandering hearts.**

These questions may be intensely personal. Do not fail to answer the questions out of fear of sharing the answers with your group. You may not have an answer to every question. That is okay! **The Holy Spirit can be trusted with what He reveals and what He leads you to share.** Invite God to do deeper work than you feel is comfortable. May we gaze on the beauty of Christ and the majesty of God so intently that nothing else compares.

1. What would your schedule and checkbook say that you value most? How has the COVID pandemic changed how you spend your time and money and what have you learned?
2. What most often captures your thoughts?
3. What idols might you have inherited or developed as a part of your upbringing, religious background, or family life?
4. What idols might you have cultivated in your recreational or leisure life?
5. What are some idols we have unknowingly perpetuated in BSF?
6. What is God saying to you?

*“Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God, your functional savior.”* – Martin Luther<sup>f</sup>

## Day Five:

# Praying for One Another

Listen to [Exalted Alone by Shannon Wexelberg](#)

**God deserves our deepest affections and is the source of our most profound joy.**

1. What have you learned that stood out to you this week?

2. How can your group pray for you in light of this?

## Go Deeper

a: A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (HarperOne, November 15, 1978)

b: Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Crossway, September 26, 2003)

c: John Piper, "What is Idolotry?", [desiringGod.org](https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-idolatry), Desiring God Foundation, August 19, 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-idolatry>

d: Tullian Tchividjian, *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* (FaithHappenings Publishing, January 27, 2020)

e: John Calvin, Institutes, 1.11.8

f: Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, 1529* (Fortress Press, June 1, 2016), "The First Commandment"

Lesson 14

# The Sovereignty of God: A Massive Truth

## Day One:

# God's Absolute Authority and Control

This foundational doctrine deserves more spotlight, reverence, and attention than our short week of study affords. We will, no doubt, fail to do this mighty doctrine justice. **The truths of divine sovereignty highlight the mysterious balance within the purposes and character of God that far exceed human comprehension.** What the Bible teaches about God's sovereignty often raises as many questions as it answers. We should grasp what we can, some by understanding, much by faith, but all by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Any tensions or seeming contradictions we uncover reveal, not God's imperfections, but our imperfect capacity to grasp the eternal. This week will be worth it if, even in a small way, our vision of God is enlarged.

*"Men treat God's sovereignty as a theme for controversy, but in Scripture, it is a matter for worship."* –J.I. Packer<sup>a</sup>

1. Why is the quote above an important foundation as we approach this subject?

**By definition, God's sovereignty refers to His absolute rule over His entire creation.** None of God's attributes operate independently of everything else that is true of Him. All that God is and does incorporates the perfect and unrestricted exercise of everything that is true of Him. In other words, God exercises His sovereignty with complete and perfect love, holiness, goodness, justice, compassion, power, mercy, understanding, and so on. Our experience in the human realm makes us fear absolute authority. Nineteenth century British politician Lord Acton said, "absolute power corrupts absolutely."<sup>b</sup> But because God is who He is, His sovereignty should be a source of comfort, not fear.

2. A.W. Tozer noted three things that must be true for God to be absolutely sovereign.<sup>c</sup> Write down why each is essential.

God must be all-powerful.

God must be all-knowing.

God must be absolutely free.

3. Scripture upholds this truth about God and His ways. Share with your group one of these verses that you found particularly meaningful.

Job 42:2

Lamentations 3:37-39

Romans 8:28; 9:20-21

Psalms 103:19

Matthew 10:29-31

Ephesians 1:11-12

Proverbs 16:33

Acts 4:27-28

Colossians 1:16-17

Jeremiah 32:17

*“If there is one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God’s sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled.”— R.C. Sproul<sup>d</sup>*





b. How comfortable are you with accepting what is beyond you?

4. a. How might we wrongly weaponize this truth of God's sovereignty?

b. What has helped you grow to love this truth of God's sovereignty?

*"Sometimes God permits what He hates to accomplish that which He loves." – Steve Estes<sup>f</sup>*



## Day Four:

# How Does This Truth Impact Daily Life?

**Truth as profound as God's sovereignty demands a response.** This is not benign truth that bears no weight upon your daily life. This truth stretches us. Joni Eareckson Tada said, *"I wished God were like He used to be, a few notches lower. I wanted Him to be lofty enough to help me but not so uncontrollable. I longed for His warm presence ... Times when He seemed more...safe."*<sup>h</sup> Continue to ponder the truth that God is able to do as He pleases – always, everywhere, and forever. What is the impact of this truth on you and your life?

1. What does your life look like if you do not believe in or fail to apply the reality of God's sovereignty?

2. Why does this truth call you to submission before God? How have you experienced this?

*"When you go through a trial, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head."*  
–Charles Spurgeon<sup>i</sup>

3. Why does this truth provide comfort? How have you experienced this?

*"Men treat God's sovereignty as a theme for controversy, but in Scripture it is a matter for worship."* – J.I. Packer<sup>a</sup>

4. Why does this truth inspire you to worship? How have you experienced this? (See Psalm 145:3.)

## Day Five:

# Praying for One Another

*“So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless. For it creates the possibility – indeed, the certainty – that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful. Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Christian gospel.” – J.I. Packer<sup>1</sup>*

Listen to [Sovereign Over Us by Aaron Keyes](#).

1. What stands out most clearly from your study this week?
2. How can your group pray for you?

## Go Deeper

- a: J.I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles' Creed* (Crossway, June 9, 2008)
- b: Lord Acton: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/power-tends-to-corrupt-absolute-power-corrupts-absolutely>
- c: A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (HarperOne, November 15, 1978)
- d: R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God: Knowing God's Perfect Plan for His Glory and His Children* (Tyndale Momentum, September 21, 1994)
- e: Matt Chandler, *The Explicit Gospel* (Crossway, June 30, 2014)
- f: Joni Eareckson Tada, “Turning Evil on Its Head,” *Tabletalk Magazine*, Ligonier Ministries, June 1, 2006, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/turning-evil-its-head>
- g: Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters* (Bethany House Publishers, October 21, 2014)
- h: Joni Eareckson Tada, *The God I Love: A Lifetime of Walking with Jesus* (Zondervan, July 22, 2003)
- i: Charles H. Spurgeon
- j: J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, January 16, 2012)

Lesson 15

# Wrapping It Up: A Soul-Satisfying Feast on Doctrine



## Day Two Through Four: Remembering

1. Stop a moment and pray. **Ask God to help you to recall what He wants you to remember.** As best you can, write something down for each doctrine you studied. Record what you remember that stood out most. This could be something you learned in your study or from one another or a way God challenged or prompted you. You may just want to record a reflection of worship or gratitude.

The Bible

Humanity: Creation and Purpose

The Trinity

Prayer

The Church

Faith

Salvation

God's Wrath

Repentance



Righteousness

Grace

Idolatry

God's Sovereignty

*"Sound doctrine is God's road map for living faithfully in the world. Sound doctrine tells you not just where you are, but who you are, and who God is, and how God has saved us from sin and enabled us to live lives that are pleasing to Him." – Bobby Jamieson<sup>b</sup>*





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