

Doctrine Class

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV

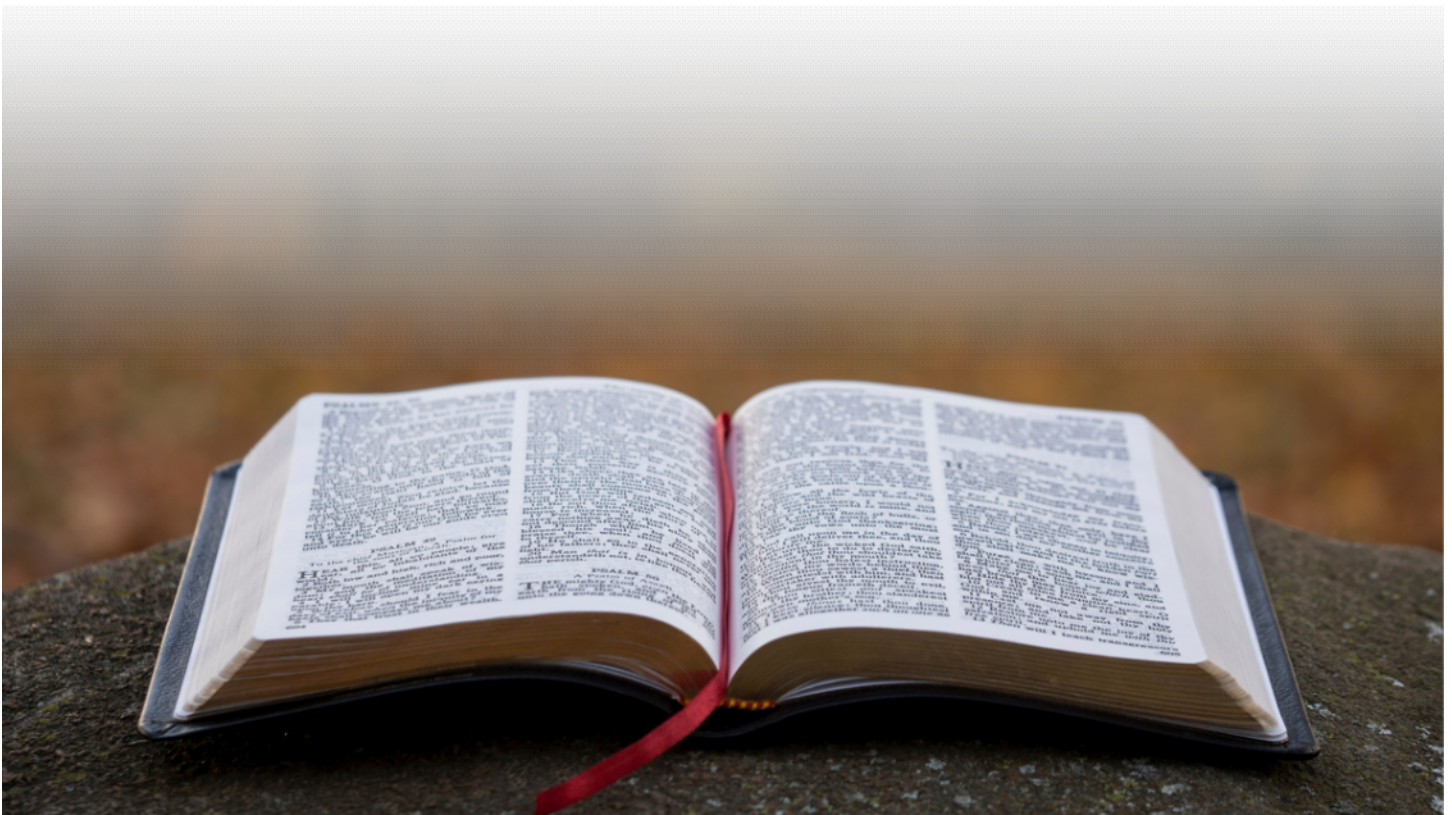


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lesson one | THE BIBLE



Outline

The Bible is God's Word

Bible Basics

- Bible Basics One: The organization of the Bible
- Bible Basics Two: How did we get the Bible?
- Bible Basics Three: Translations of the Bible
- Bible Basics Four: How to Study the Bible
- Bible Basics Five: What are the benefits of reading the Bible?
- Bible Basics Six: What is the primary message of the Bible?

The Bible is God's Word

Doctrine:

A study of doctrine simply means **studying the truths of God's Word**.

God's Word is **absolutely true** in all that it speaks to.

God's Word is:

Without error (**inerrant**)

And incapable of error (**infallible**).

WHY is God's word inerrant and infallible?
Because it is breathed out by God himself.

The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration:

God breathed out to the writers everything that he told them to write. While their personalities had an effect on what they wrote, every word and thought were of God.

*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. (2 Peter 1:21 ESV)*

The word "carried" paints the picture of being picked up like an automobile in a tornado

*All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)*

What is the **extent** of inspiration? **ALL** Scripture was breathed out.

What is the **means** of inspiration? **GOD** breathed it out.

What role does the inspired Word of God play in the lives of believers?

Teaching: instruction regarding truth and doctrine

Reproof: identifying areas where we are wrong

Correction: improving, restoring, correcting faults

Training in righteousness: guiding in living that is aligned with God's Word

We are born in sin, with the focus of our worship being ourselves. Sin, in the broad sense, involves turning our worship inward to ourselves. This robs God of the worship, honor, and glory that he deserves. **Sin is bondage that is always destructive.** God takes our sin seriously in his Word, so should we.

In love, God desires to free us from the bondage of self-worship by turning our worship to him. He wants us to know the freedom of loving him and trusting him. For that to happen we need to be taught, reproved, corrected, and trained in righteousness through his Word.

This process equips us for the good works that God has prepared for us, so that we can walk in them as his people.

⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made (Isaiah 43:7 ESV)

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10 ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:28-29 ESV)

God's inspired Word to us is an act of God's **grace**.

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4 ESV)

¹⁰⁵ Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105 ESV)

God's inspired Word to us comes with God's **authority**.

¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV)

"If God has revealed truth about himself, about us, and about the relationship between himself and us in Holy Scripture, then we should study Holy Scripture. It is as simple as that."

Dr. Robert Reymond: *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*

Bible Basics

Bible Basics One: Organization

The Bible consists of 66 separate books.

39 in Old Testament

27 in the New Testament

The Bible is written in three languages

Hebrew

Greek

Aramaic

Written over a period of more than 1,000 years

Penned by more than 40 writers

The Old Testament

The Pentateuch (Genesis – Deuteronomy)

Written by Moses

Creation Story

Israel's history up to their entrance into the Promised Land

The History (Joshua – Esther)

Story of God's dealings with his chosen people

Wisdom Books (Job – Song of Solomon)

Godly wisdom involving different subjects

Prophets (Isaiah – Malachi)

God's messengers speaking God's messages

Messages focused on judgement, repentance, redemption

The New Testament

The Gospels (Matthew – John)

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ

The **synoptics**:

Matthew: written to the Jews

Mark: written to the Romans

Luke: written to the Gentiles
(addressed to Theophilus)

John: written to the world

These gospels are referred to as the *Synoptic Gospels* because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording, the remaining gospel (John) is comparatively distinct in content

The history of the Church (Acts)

Also written to Theophilus

Epistles (Romans – Jude)

Letters to the churches

Paul wrote 13 of them (Romans – Philemon)

Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon

Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

General Epistles

Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

Apocalyptic Book – (Revelation)

The revelation of Jesus Christ

Bible Basics Two: How did we get the Bible?

Revelation/Inspiration: God revealed himself and his truth to biblical authors

Transmission: The text was copied by trained scribes

Translation: Into different languages

Formation of the Canon: The books of the Bible being assembled

Old Testament: By A.D. 250, believers were in nearly universal agreement on the canon of **Hebrew Scripture**.

Hebrew believers recognized God's messengers and accepted their writings as inspired of God. While there was undeniably some debate in regard to the Old Testament canon, by A.D. 250 there was nearly universal agreement on the canon of Hebrew Scripture. The only issue that remained was the Apocrypha, with some debate and discussion continuing today. The vast majority of Hebrew scholars considered the Apocrypha to be good historical and religious documents, but not on the same level as the Hebrew Scriptures.

New Testament: Several councils affirmed the books that were being embraced by the early Church. As they affirmed what eventually became the official canon, they followed something similar to these principles:

Was the author an apostle or have a close connection with an apostle?
Is the book being accepted by the body of Christ at large
Did the book contain consistency of doctrine and orthodox teaching?
Did the book bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit?

For the New Testament, the process of the recognition and collection began in the first centuries of the Christian church. Very early on, some of the New Testament books were being recognized. The first "canon" was compiled in AD 170. The Muratorian Canon included all of the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John. In AD 363, the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament (along with one book of the Apocrypha) and 26 books of the New Testament (everything but Revelation) were canonical and to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (AD 393) and the Council of Carthage (AD 397) also affirmed the same 27 books as authoritative.

The councils followed something similar to the following principles to determine whether a New Testament book was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit: **1)** Was the author an apostle or have a close connection with an apostle? **2)** Is the book being accepted by the body of Christ at large? **3)** Did the book contain consistency of doctrine and orthodox teaching? **4)** Did the book bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit? Again, it is crucial to remember that the church did not determine the canon. No early church council decided on the canon. It was God, and God alone, who determined which books belonged in the Bible. It was simply a matter of God's imparting to His followers what He had already decided. The human process of collecting the books of the Bible was flawed, but God, in His sovereignty, and despite our ignorance and stubbornness, brought the early church to the recognition of the books He had inspired.

Bible Basics Three: Bible Translations

Types of translations

Interlinear

Greek and Hebrew lined up next to English translation, literal

Word for Word

Literal translations, effort is given to correctly interpret and translate each word
King James Version (KJV); English Standard Version (ESV)

Thought for Thought

Try to convey the meaning of the text
New International Version (NIV)

Paraphrase

Less attention paid to specific word meaning
The Message

Corruptions

Deceptions hiding as true teaching of Scripture
Book of Mormon; New World Translation (Jehovah's Witnesses)

Example: John 3:16 - compare the different English translations to the Interlinear, notice how they are all remarkably close – and yet, the New World Translation makes other changes that deny the deity of Christ.

Interlinear:

Οὕτως	γὰρ	ἠγάπησεν	ὁ	θεὸς	τὸν	κόσμον	ὥστε	τὸν ὕιόν τὸν
in this way	for	loved	—	God	the	world	that	Son —
μονογενῆ	ἔδωκεν,	ἵνα	πᾶς	ὁ	πιστεύων		εἰς	αὐτὸν μὴ
only	he gave	so that	everyone	—	(the ones) believing		in	him not
ἀπόληται	ἀλλὰ	ἔχη	ζωὴν	αἰώνιον				
should perish	but	have	life	eternal				

Word for Word (ESV): For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Thought for Thought (NIV): For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life

Paraphrase (The Message): This is how much God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

Corrupt (New World Translation): For God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.

Bible Basics Four: Basic Bible Study

Understanding Scripture

What it says: (contextualization) Putting the text in the proper context - cultural, historical, grammatical, redemptive, etc.

What it means: There is only one proper meaning of the text, the meaning that God intended to communicate through his human author

Why it matters: (application) There are many ways that the Holy Spirit can properly apply Scripture to our lives when the principle of the text is properly understood.

Learning effective Bible Study methods

Context is king

Literary style and authorial intent - passages first need to be understood as they were intended in order to learn how they properly apply today.

Grammatical – language matters, understanding how each text fits within the broader context of the passage, as well as verb tenses, causal statements, etc.

Historical – the historical and cultural context of the passage when it was penned matters

Progressive revelation

Later passages reflect fuller revelation than earlier passages (not changing meaning, but providing fuller understanding)

The New Testament is the final, clearest revelation

Scripture interprets Scripture.

Unity of Scripture (Scripture reveals God's redemptive plan, does not contradict)

Diversity of Scripture (Passages have unique characteristics based on context)

All passages on a subject should be considered, within their specific contexts

Clear passages carry weight over difficult passages

The points of Didactic (teaching) passages tend to be clearer than narrative (stories) passages. They are designed to compliment each other. Explicit teaching is generally clearer than implicit teaching, but both are critical.

Literal passages tend to be clearer than symbolic passages, though both are present and important.

Use trustworthy tools

Study Bibles (*ESV, MacArthur, Reformation, ESV Archeology Study Bible, NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Apologetics Study Bible / Commentaries*)

Concordance / Bible Dictionary

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

Systematic Theologies

Online: Biblegateway.com; blueletterbible.com

Note: Study tools are extremely helpful, but they are not infallible. Always use discernment.

Get plugged in

Local church preaching and teaching

Study with others (small groups, Sunday School, other Bible studies and classes)

Bible Basics Five: What are the benefits?

Scripture:

- is powerful and effective (Isaiah 55:11)
- is the guide for life (Psalm 119:105)
- is a joy and delight to the heart (Jeremiah 15:16)
- is convicting and humbling (Jeremiah 23:29)
- invokes change (James 1:22)
- is the standard of truth (Acts 17:10-12)
- is the agent of faith (Romans 10:17)
- is sin exposing/cleansing (James 1:21)
- is the weapon for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:17)
- cuts to the core (Hebrews 4:12)
- is life giving (James 1:18)

Bible Basics Six: What is the primary message of Scripture?

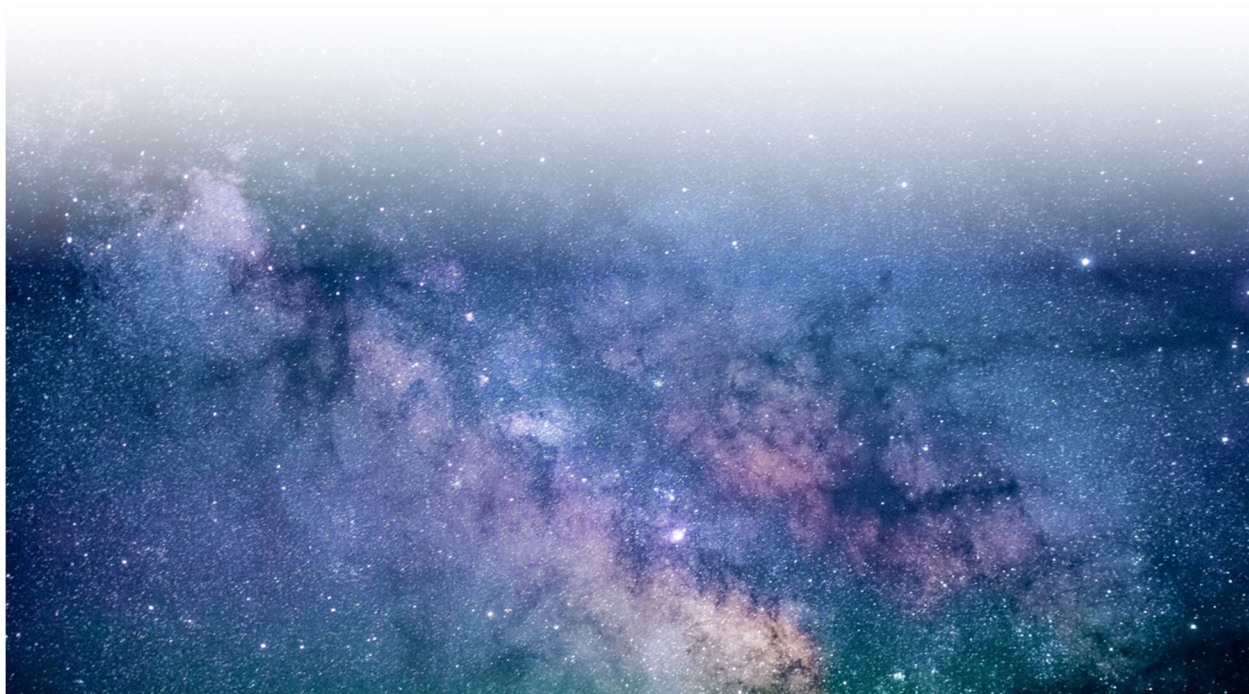
Part 1: God's self-revelation (specifically about Jesus – John 5:39)

Part 2: God's story about human history (creation, fall, redemption, restoration)

God's Word is a wealth of information that enlightens us as to what he desires. First and foremost, God desires a relationship with his children that can only come through faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. For those who have entered into this relationship, the Christian life is an intimate walk with God experienced **primarily through:**

- the preaching/teaching/study of his Word
- baptism and the Lord's Supper
- prayer
- Christian fellowship (especially within the local church)

lesson two | GOD



Outline

Who is God?

- How we know God
- What it means to know God

God's Attributes

- God's unique attributes
- God's shared attributes

Who is God?

The Bible doesn't attempt to explicitly state, nor logically prove the existence of God. God's existence is assumed from the very first verse:

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The 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. (Genesis 1:1 ESV)

And this assumption carries through the entirety of Scripture to the very last verses:

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen." (Revelation 22:21 ESV)

In addition, Scripture reveals that God can be known:

*"Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he **understands** and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth" Jeremiah 9:23-24 ESV*

To understand is to have insight (typically that leads to proper action/wisdom) This word also occurs in Prov 1:3 where it is stated that the book was written to give the young man "insight" into wise behavior. As in Jeremiah, wise behavior means conforming one's life to the character of God

"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21 ESV)

While God can be known, he cannot be **fully comprehended**.

To fully comprehend is to have a **complete and exhaustive knowledge of an object**.

It is impossible for man to have exhaustive knowledge of God. However, it is comforting to know that God can be known because he has graciously revealed himself to us.

The infinite God is incomprehensible, and our knowledge of Him is both partial and imperfect; there is much in God which we do not know at all, and what we do know, we know very imperfectly; nevertheless, our knowledge, as far as it goes, is true knowledge. God really is what we believe Him to be, so far as our idea of Him is determined by the revelation which He has made of Himself in his works, in the constitution of our nature, in his word, and in the person of his Son." - Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology

How do we know God?

Through general (or natural) revelation.

General revelation refers to God's revelation of himself through the **created world**.

"¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For 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. (Romans 1:19-20 ESV)

The created world refers to nature, human consciousness, and the providential government of the world.

General revelation is limited in what it accomplishes, as the 1689 London Baptist

Confession summarizes:

General revelation reveals enough about God to condemn, but not enough is revealed in general revelation to lead fallen and sinful man to salvation.

"Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation."

Through special revelation.

Special revelation (also called supernatural revelation) refers to God's revelation of himself, mainly through **his Word**.

Special revelation testifies to the truth of general revelation (see Romans 1:19-20 above)

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" Psalm 19:1 ESV

In one sense, God's word (special revelation) testifies to general revelation. "The heavens declare the glory of God" Psalm 19. Also see Romans 19.

Special revelation is the necessary revelation that explains to us who God is, who we are, the status of our relationship to God and, ultimately, guides us to salvation in Christ.

"How will they then call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:14 ESV)

The Bible, as the inspired Word of God, gives us the basis upon which we can discern all spiritual things.

What it means to know God

We can know things about God:

- God is love (1 John 4:8)
- God is light (1 John 1:5)
- God is spirit (John 4:24)
- God is righteous (Romans 3:26)

Knowing things about God isn't the same as **personally** knowing God

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3 ESV)

Many people know things about the President of the United States, but not everyone knows him personally.

Note how DA Carson defines "knowing" God here in John 17:3:

*"The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ entails fellowship, trust, personal relationship, **faith**. There is no more powerful evangelistic theme"*

Faith includes confession/acknowledgement that I am a sinner, and acceptance that Jesus Christ alone is my Savior (see 1 John 1:5-2:2). Those who say they have no sin (refusing to acknowledge their sin) are those that walk in darkness.

"What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the "eternal life" that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God...What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? Knowledge of God."

– JI Packer, Knowing God

God's Attributes

Unique (Incommunicable) Attributes (unique only to God)

1. God is **omnipresent**: While God is knowledgeably present in heaven, as spirit, he everywhere at all times. Nothing in the universe exists outside the presence of God

Passages: (Psalm 139:7-12; Jeremiah 23:24).

Since God is present everywhere at all times, we cannot avoid him or hide our sins from him (Job 34:21-22). Also, this comforts us; he is there, wherever we are, in times of trouble (2 Kings 6:14-17).

2. God is **omniscient**: God has perfect, complete knowledge of all things. He never learns, nor does he forget. He knows all things that exist and all things that could have existed. God cannot grow in knowledge, understanding, or wisdom

Passages: (Romans 16:27; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20).

It is comforting to know that God knows all about us, yet still loves and forgives us. Since God knows everything, nothing can separate us from him, nothing can surprise him, and he knows our every need.

3. God is **omnipotent**: God is all-powerful and able to do all that he wills

Passages: (Job 42:2, Psalm 147:5).

While God is unlimited in what he can do, he will do nothing that conflicts with his person (nature) or his will. God's power saves us (Romans 1:16) and keeps us in salvation (1 Peter 1:3-5). We are unable to save ourselves, and we are unable to keep ourselves saved.

4. God is **immutable**: God does not change.

Passages: (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 102:7; Romans 11:29; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17)

Our salvation, our hope, and our peace are all based on God's promises. If God were to change, then we would have no confidence by which we can exercise our faith, which means we would have no hope and no peace. However, since God does not change, we know that his promises are true and that they will be carried out according to his will.

5. God is **eternal**: God has always existed. He has no beginning or end. While God is conscious of time, he is not bound by it.

Passages: (Psalm 90:2; 93:2, 102:12; Ephesians 3:21; John 10:28; 1 John 5:13; 1 Peter 1:5)

God has the power to give us eternal life because he is eternal, and no one can keep us from this promise. Since God is eternal, he also sees and acts from an eternal perspective – even as he uses our earthly experiences for his purposes.

6. God is **sovereign**: God is the supreme authority over all creation. He is the supreme being who answers to no one and who has the absolute right to do with his creation as he desires

Passages: (1 Timothy 6:15; Isaiah 46:10; Psalm 103:19; 2 Samuel 7:28; 1 Chronicles 29:1-13)

God's sovereignty over his creation comforts us because it ensures that he can accomplish that which he wills. Nothing can prevent him from doing that which he desires to do.

Shared (Communicable) Attributes:

1. God is **spirit**: God is a spiritual being, and therefore, his existence does not depend on a physical body.

Passages: John 4:19-24; 1:18; 3:1-10; 14:16-17; 16:12; 2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Timothy 6:15-16

We are created in the image of God, and we too possess a spirit (although not divine in nature). As spiritual beings, our existence does not depend on our human bodies. Additionally, being created in the image of God means we have been given intellect, emotion, and will.

2. God is **holy**: God's main moral attribute is his holiness as it governs all other attributes. As God he is separated from all that is sin.

Passages: Exodus 3:5; Leviticus 19:2; Psalm 5:4-6; 99:5; Isaiah 6:3; 8:13; 57:15; Habakkuk 1:12-13; 1 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:14-16

The holiness of God is both fearful and awe-inspiring. Since God is holy, the only way we can enter into a relationship with him is through his Son and the work that he has completed. We were made holy and righteous, not by our works, but by his work.

3. God is **love/goodness**: God is love and God is perfect. Everything the Lord does is good.

Passages: 1 John 4:8-16; Exodus 34:7; Psalm 84:11; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-7; Galatians 5:22

4. God is **truth**: God is the source of all truth, and Jesus is God's Truth revealed to mankind.

Passages: John 17:17; 14:6; Titus 1:2; Numbers 23:19; 2 Corinthians 1:20

Our confidence in God and in his Word is anchored in the fact that he is truth and conveys only truth to us.

5. God is **just/righteous**: Because God is holy, he is also just and every decision or act that he performs is right.

Passages: Exodus 34:7; Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 32:4; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:11

While God is a God of love, he is also just, which brings us great comfort that he will right every wrong.

6. God is **merciful**: As believers we have been blessed in that God has shown us compassion and pity when we deserved judgment. Through Christ we have experientially known God's mercy.

Passages: Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:4-7; Exodus 34:6-7; Matthew 18:23-35; Romans 12:8

Recognizing that God has shown mercy to us when we were undeserving frees us to show mercy to others.

7. God is **beauty**: God is beautiful, and his creation reflects his beauty.

Passages: Psalm 27:4; 50:2; Isaiah 33:17; Ecclesiastes 3:11

We are created in the image of our beautiful God and while we are tainted by sin, we need to realize the beauty that is inherent in humanity as God's image bearers.

"The foundation of all true knowledge of God must be a clear mental apprehension of his perfections as revealed in Holy Scripture. An unknown God can neither be trusted, served, or worshipped."

AW Pink, The Attributes of God

lesson three | THE TRINITY



Outline

- The Trinity Explained
- False Understandings of the Trinity

The Trinity

The Trinity Explained:

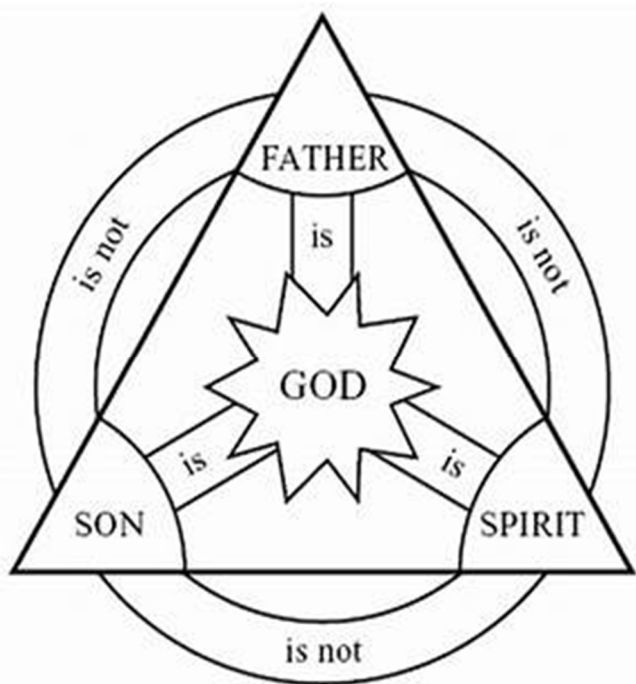
The term **Trinity** was coined by Tertullian, an early church father (155-210AD) and refers to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. While the word Trinity does not appear in Scripture, there are numerous passages that speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as being, in essence, one God.

The term Trinity does not mean that there are three God's, or that one God reveals himself as either the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit on various occasions.

"In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit." (Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647; Chapter 2.3 – Of God, and of the Holy Trinity)

"In keeping with this truth and Word of God we believe in one God, who is one single essence, in whom there are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties – namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause, origin, and source of all things, visible as well as invisible. The Son is the Word, the Wisdom, and the image of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, this distinction does not divide God into three, since Scripture teaches us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has a distinct subsistence distinguished by characteristics – yet in such a way that these three

persons are only one God. It is evident then that the Father is not the Son and that the Son is not the Father, and that likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless, these persons, thus distinct, are neither divided nor fused or mixed together. For the Father did not take on flesh, nor did the Spirit, but only the Son. The Father was never without the Son, nor without the Holy Spirit, since all these are equal from eternity, in one and the same essence. There is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.
(Belgic Confession, 1561; Article 8 – The Trinity)



The quoted confessions are summarizing Biblical teaching:

There is one God:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4 ESV)

*"You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"
James 2:19 ESV)*

Father is God:

*"Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."
(John 6:27 ESV)*

Jesus Christ is God:

*"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of this world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily"
(Colossians 2:8-9 ESV)*

Also compare:

*"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me"
(Malachi 3:1 ESV)*

"A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" (Isaiah 40:3 ESV)

"John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness...and he preached, saying, 'After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down to untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'" (Mark 1:4-8 ESV)

Holy Spirit is God:

"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? What is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.'" (Acts 5:3-4 ESV)

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18 ESV)

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are the Trinity:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The 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." (Genesis 1:1-2 ESV)

"According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood..." 1 Peter 1:2

Other references for study:

1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:4-6
2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 13:14
Ephesians 2:18; 3:16-17; 4:4-6
Colossians 1:5-8
1 Thessalonians 1:2-5
2 Thessalonians 2:13

Matthew 3:16-17; 28:18-20
Romans 14:17-18
1 Corinthians 2:2-5
John 5:18-47

False Understandings of the Trinity to avoid

- Adoptionism: Jesus was human and adopted at his baptism
- Modalism: God has different modes, different roles, and can only take on one role at a time
- Arianism: Jesus is not just a human being, he's the first thing that was created, so he's a 'demi-god,' exalted but not supremely
- Nominalism: Heresy: The Holy Spirit is only an attribute of God and isn't a part of the person of God
- Tri-theism: Heresy: Separates the persons of God...but all three of the Trinity live inside of us, if one is present, then all three are present.

lesson four | GOD THE FATHER



Outline

- Who is God the Father?
- Father as the Beginning
- Inherent Fatherhood
- Eternal life: Adopted as sons to the Father

God the Father

Who is God the Father?

To God the Father

"is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things"

– John Calvin, *Institutes of Religion*.

In relation to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in relation to us united with his Son,

"Father is the proper name for God and does not merely describe what he is like."

- Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: in Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*

Eternal life is defined as knowing the Father:

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3 ESV)

Father as Beginning

The Father created all things by His Word and Spirit.

- It is **from Him** that His Son Jesus Christ came "for us and for our salvation" (as the Nicene Creed puts it) in the power of the Holy Spirit
- It is **from Him** that the Spirit of His Son is sent into our hearts, crying out to God, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

It is the Father, in love and for our salvation, who exalted Jesus Christ "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come". It is the Father who subjects all things to His Son, and "gave him as head over all things to the church." (Ephesians 1:20,21)

It is in this sense that the Father is sometimes referred to as the first person of the Holy Trinity – but this terminology of "first" (and "second", and "third") is for convenience only. It is not meant to imply that there ever has been any God except the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Inherent Fatherhood

Besides being the creator and nurturer of creation by His Son and Spirit, and the provider for his people as revealed in the Old Testament, the New Testament presents God the Father in eternal relation to his only Son, Jesus, which implies an exclusive and intimate familiarity that is of their very nature:

"No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Matthew 11:27 ESV)

Fatherhood is inherent to God's very being - God is not called Father by comparison to mankind; rather family and fatherhood among men is called such **by comparison** to God.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14-15 ESV)

All earthly fatherhood is but a faint reflection of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son

Eternal life: adopted sons to the Father

Although God may be said to be Father of all in the sense that he is the Creator of all, Christians are made participants in the eternal relationship of Father and Son, through Jesus Christ. Christians are adopted children of God:

"... to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12 ESV)

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying out, 'Abba, Father!' So, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." (Galatians 4:4-7 ESV)

"...In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:3-6 ESV)

"On whom he (God the Father) sets his love, it is set forever. God's love does not grow to eternity or lessen in time. God's love is an eternal love that had no beginning and that shall have no end. It is love that cannot be increased by anything we do and that cannot be lessened by anything in us."

- John Owen, *Communion with God*

lesson five | GOD THE SON



Outline

- Jesus is the Christ
- Jesus' pre-existence
- The Word became flesh
- Jesus' life and ministry
- Jesus' return

God the Son

- Jesus Christ is the originator and focus of the Christian faith
- He is the eternal second person of the Triune God who took on humanity at his incarnation, being born of the virgin Mary.
- He is uniquely the God-man, truly God and truly man in his one person, who came to fully reveal God and accomplish the redemption of mankind through his sacrificial atoning death on the cross. On the third day following his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and now sits at the right hand of God the Father, according to the Scriptures.
- His incarnation, earthly ministry, death, and resurrection are specifically recorded in the four Gospels of the New Testament. The study of Jesus Christ is called Christology.

“Jesus is the Christ”

The name 'Jesus' is derived from the Latin form of the Greek *Iesous*, which in turn is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Jeshua*, or Joshua, meaning "Jehovah is salvation."

The title 'Christ', from the Greek *Christos*, is the equivalent of the Hebrew *Messias*, meaning Anointed One. Thus, the term Christ is a title rather than a proper name and identifies Jesus as the anticipated Messiah of the Old Testament.

"To believe that 'Jesus is the Christ' is to believe that he is the Anointed, the Messiah of the prophets, the Savior sent of God, that he was, in a word, what he claimed to be. This is to believe the gospel, by the faith of which alone men can be brought unto God. That Jesus is the Christ is the testimony of God, and the faith of this constitutes a Christian (1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 John 5:1)." (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

Jesus' pre-existence

Scripture presents Jesus as the second person of the Trinity who existed prior to his incarnation.

Christ was involved in the Creation:

"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 anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3 ESV)

Christ existed before all things were created:

"16 For 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. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16-17 ESV)

"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." (John 17:5 ESV)

The Word became flesh

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14 ESV)

Although Jesus pre-existed as the Son of God, Scripture teaches that he took on flesh and was born in the likeness of men in human form. This has traditionally been understood as his incarnation. Jesus was born of a virgin, a doctrine well attested in the NT and found deep in the beliefs of the early church fathers.

"⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV)

"²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." (1 John 4:2-3)

The human authors of Scripture were resourceful in finding terms and expressions which adequately portray the coming into existence of Christ, who had eternally preexisted. They clearly show that Christ's birth and entrance into humanity was different than that of any other human being. Consider:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Where Christ came from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o John 1:1-3; 3:13,17; 6:51o 1 Corinthians 15:47o 1 Timothy 1:15- What Christ gave up:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Philippians 2:7o 2 Corinthians 2:9o Hebrews 2:9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What Christ took on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Hebrews 2:14; 10:5o Galatians 4:4o Romans 1:3; 8:3o 1 Timothy 3:16- What Christ became:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Philippians 2:7-8o Hebrews 2:1 |
|---|--|

Jesus' life and ministry

According to Luke 3:23, Jesus' public ministry took place when he was about 30 years old.

- Jesus was baptized, signifying the beginning of his ministry.
- He was then tempted by the devil and remained obedient unlike the disobedience of Israel in the midst of their temptations, and unlike Adam in his disobedience.
- Throughout his ministry he performed many miracles, healing the sick, raising the dead, and performing many "signs" that point to who he is as the God-man
- He told parables, and the NT (especially the Gospels) are full of his teachings.
- Jesus lived a sinless life, fulfilling the law and completely obeying the will of God

The person of Jesus

- Jesus is both truly God and truly man.
- Jesus has been traditionally understood as Prophet, Priest, and King (his "offices").
- Scripture presents him as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53)
- Scripture also presents him as the Second Adam (Rom.5:12-21; 1 Cor.15:20-22).
- Who Jesus is (his person) is closely linked to what he did (his works).

The culmination of Jesus' life

Jesus' life culminated in his substitutionary death, resurrection and ascension. Scripture teaches that Jesus died, was buried, and rose on the third day (1 Cor 15:3-4; cf. Acts 2:32). In this, he revealed the glory he had with the Father before the world existed (John 17:5), being exalted to the right hand of God and given the name above all names (Phil 2:9).

Jesus' return

Jesus will return to judge both believers and unbelievers (see Matt 24-25; cf. 1 Thess). Known as the parousia, Christians call this the Second Coming.

"This is probably the most amazing miracle of the entire Bible – the eternal Son of God, himself fully God, became fully man and in doing so joined himself to a human nature forever. Jesus, a man unlike anyone else the world will ever see again, by eternally bringing together both the infinite and the finite, changed the course of history forever."

- Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs*

lesson six | GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT



Outline

- The personhood of the Holy Spirit
- The deity of the Holy Spirit
- The roles of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit's relationship with us

God the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is the name of the third person in the Trinity, also called the Holy Ghost.
- Jesus promised the Apostles that he would send the Holy Spirit after his crucifixion and resurrection:

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you"
(John 14:26 ESV)

The personhood of the Holy Spirit

It is important to establish the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is often forgotten in the discussion of the Father and the Son, and yet plays a role within the Trinity and salvation that is fundamental to the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is a person who can:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Be grieved (Eph 4:30) | - Be blasphemed (Mark 3:29-30) |
| - Tested (Acts 5:9) | - Be insulted (Hebrews 10:29) |
| - Bear witness (1 John 5:7) | - Be lied to (Acts 5:3-4) |
| - Teach (John 14:26) | - Be obeyed (Acts 10:19-21) |

The deity of the Holy Spirit

"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? What is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.'" (Acts 5:3-4 ESV)

Words used to describe the divine attributes of God, like eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, are attributes of the Holy Spirit.

- The writer of Hebrews spoke of the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14)
- Paul wrote the Spirit searches the deep things of God and no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-11)
- King David wrote in Psalms 139:7-10 that no matter where he fled, he could not flee from God's Spirit and presence

The roles of the Holy Spirit

Role in Creation:

"The 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." (Genesis 1:2 ESV)

Psalms 104:30 and Job 26:13 also reveal that the Holy Spirit had an active role in creation.

Role in Regeneration:

"⁵ 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, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6 ESV)

John 3:3; 5-8 also speak of being born of the Spirit.

Role in Resurrection from the dead:

"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 8:11 ESV)

Role in Sanctification of believers:

"But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV)

Role in Inspiration of the Scriptures:

"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." (2 Peter 1:21 ESV)

Role in Conception of the Human Nature of Christ:

"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.'" (Luke 1:35 ESV)

Role in Conviction of sin:

"7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

(John 16:7-11 ESV)

The Holy Spirit's relationship with us:

He helps:

The word helper is "parakletos" in the Greek, which means "one called alongside, summoned, called to one's aid." Hence, the idea of helper, comforter, advocate, or aid is brought out. The Holy Spirit is our divine helper always pointing us to the person and work of Christ, so that we might rest in Christ to the glory of the Father.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John 14:16 ESV)

He lives in us:

His living in us is called indwelling. It is defined as the permanent abode of the Holy Spirit in all true believers which results from regeneration.

"Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23 ESV)

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." (Romans 8:9 ESV)

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV)

Indwelling is a gift of the Holy Spirit of God.

"And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38 ESV)

He secures us:

Indwelling is permanent.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever" (John 14:16 ESV)

"²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 ESV)

Sealing is the divine ownership of a believer and the divine guarantee of eternal security because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who himself is the seal.

"¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV)

He produces growth:

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16 ESV)

He gives assurance:

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16 ESV)

Additional Study:

Scriptures on the Holy Spirit regarding how:

- He speaks (Acts 8:29)
- He intercedes (Romans 8:26)
- He commands (Acts 1:32)
- He teaches (1 Corinthians 2:13)
- He testifies (John 15:26)
- He reproves (John 16:8)
- He empowers (Zechariah 4:6)
- He guides (Romans 8:14; John 6:13)
- He prays (Romans 8:26)

So, how are we to understand our communion and fellowship and prayer with God?

Communion with our Triune God: We have communion with the whole Trinity any time we enjoy communion at all. Whenever we are communing with one person of the Trinity, that communion is automatically influenced by the other members of the Trinity. So, to enjoy fellowship with one person of the Trinity is to come under the influence of all three persons of the Trinity.

Communion with God the Father: The Father is the source of all the love we see in Christ. The Father is also the source of our communion. From him flows an everlasting fountain of love, like nectar from a flower. It is this love that moves the Father to send his Son to die for us. Now, united to Christ, we are the recipients of the Father's love for us. When we enjoy communion and fellowship with the Father, we do not burden him. He has adopted us, he is our Father.

Communion with God the Son: The Son both perfectly reveals the Father to us and, through his life, death, and resurrection, the Son brings us to God as our Father. Jesus is the one who makes communion with the Father possible. As the Bride of Christ, it is our blessed privilege to also be in communion and fellowship with our Bridegroom. He is our mediator, he personally knows our struggles, and he loves us – His Bride - more than we can imagine!

Communion with God the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the one who can bring us into communion with the Father and the Son. Through our communion and fellowship with the Holy Spirit we find comfort and assurance as the Holy Spirit reminds us of the Father's perfect love and the Son's perfect salvation.

How, then, are we to pray? When we pray, we enter into the communion and fellowship that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are already enjoying. The Son, who is already interceding for us with the Father – brings us with him to be with him before the Father, and there, with Christ (or in the name of Christ) before our Heavenly Father, the Spirit helps us as we pray.

With this picture in mind, we enter into communion and fellowship with our Triune God when pray to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power and help of the Holy Spirit.

The sections above are quotes and paraphrases from the following resources:

- Michael Reeves: *Delighting in the Trinity, an Introduction to the Christian Faith*
- Matthew Barrett: *Simply Trinity, the Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*
- John Owen: *Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly, in Love, Grace, and Consolation.*

lesson seven | CREATION



Outline

- Creation of the universe
- The creation of man
- The presence of the Trinity at creation
- The purpose of the created universe

Creation

The Creation of the Universe

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The 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." (Genesis 1:1-2 ESV)

"In the beginning" refers to the point in time when nothing existed but God. If nothing existed but the Triune Godhead, then the universe as we know it today had to be created by God.

The universe as we know it was spoken into existence by God; see Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, and 26 where we read, "And God said..." Everything we see and all that is beyond our sight was spoken into existence by God.

"⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. ⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! ⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be, he commanded, and it stood firm." (Psalm 33:6-9)

"All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3 ESV)

"For 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" (Colossians 1:16 ESV)

"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." (Revelation 4:11 ESV)

"³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." (Hebrews 11:3 ESV)

"God is eternal and transcendent; creation is not. Everything owes its creaturely existence to the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with Christ as the preeminent agent of creation. Biblical teaching implies that God created the world out of nothing." Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

It's interesting to note that pagan religions did not put man at the pinnacle of creation like the Bible does.

The Creation of Man

- God created man from dust

"then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground..." (Genesis 2:7 ESV)

Adam and Eve were created in an instant, as grown adults. This was not an **evolutionary process** taking place over many years.

- God breathed life into man:

"... and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." (Genesis 2:7 ESV)

An **evolutionary process** doesn't allow for there to be a time when God created man as man and gave him a soul that separates man from the rest of creation.

According to God's perfect design, he created two genders in his image: **male and female**, man and woman.

Marriage is a covenant promise between **one man** and **one woman** intended to last a lifetime.

- God created man in his image:

*"²⁶Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. ²⁷So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; **male and female** he created them.'" (Genesis 1:26-27 ESV)*

In his Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem states that "made in the image of God" can be defined as *"The fact that man is like God and represents God."* However, there are various views on how man is like God. The following notes can begin to shape our understanding:

"... Scripture is not specific as to exactly what it is about man that constitutes the image of God. The image of God cannot be reduced to one attribute or any combination of attributes of man. The biblical portrait is more holistic. The entire man, as a human being, images God." Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

"Man is unique among the creatures in that he is like God and therefore able to have communion and fellowship with God... The moment man became a living creature; he was the image of God. Both male and female share this likeness to God... Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible

"The most distinctive feature of the biblical understanding of man is the teaching that man has been created in the image of God"

– Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*

The presence of the Trinity at Creation

God the Father initiated the act of creation, but Scripture is clear that God the Son was present and active at creation as well:

"All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3 ESV)

"For 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" (Colossians 1:16 ESV)

"but 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." (Hebrews 1:2 ESV)

Additionally, while Scripture regarding the specific activity of the Holy Spirit at creation is scarce, it is clear that the Holy Spirit was present at Creation as well:

"The 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." (Genesis 1:2 ESV)

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image...' (Genesis 1:26 ESV)

The purpose of the created universe

God did not create the universe without a clear and established purpose. Our understanding of this purpose is an essential element of Christian doctrine and has a massive impact on how we understand the Christian life. We were designed to rely on and worship God because we exist to enjoy and glorify him.

"Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:7 ESV)

"Creation was intended as the stage on which God's redemptive design is enacted and fulfilled... 'God created all things in order that the many-splendored wisdom of God might now be made known, through the church, to the principalities and powers in heavenly realms. Creation's most important purpose then is to serve the redemptive ends of God.'"

Robert Reymond, A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith.

lesson eight | SIN



Outline

- The Fall
- The effects of sin
- Deliverance from sin

Sin

Sin defined: any failure to conform to the law of God in act, attitude, or nature

"⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:4-6 ESV)

"³⁷You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40 ESV)

"²⁹The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31 ESV)

Based on Scripture's definition of the Great Commandment, we have all failed.

"¹⁰as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.'" (Romans 3:10-11 ESV)

"²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 ESV)

The Fall:

The fall of Adam and Eve into sin was nothing more than willful disobedience to God.

Satan did three things to deceive Eve:

1. Doubt: *"Did God **actually** say...." (Genesis 3:1 ESV)*
2. Distortion: *"...of **any** tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1 ESV)*
3. Denial: *"But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'" (Genesis 3:4 ESV)*

Satan also used three steps of temptation on Eve:

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." (Genesis 3:6 ESV)

1. Lust of the flesh: Eve saw that the tree was good for food
2. Lust of the eyes: The tree was a delight to the eyes
3. The Pride of life: She desired to be wise like God

Satan used a similar approach on Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11:

1. Lust of the flesh: *"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* (Matthew 4:3 ESV)
2. Lust of the eyes: *"Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'" (Matthew 4:8-9 ESV)*
3. Pride of life: *"Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and, 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your feet against a stone.'" (Matthew 4:5-6 ESV)*

The method that Satan used on Adam and Eve reveals the same way we are tempted today – through our appetites for the things of the world. With our eyes we lust after those things, and then, through the pride of life, we tell ourselves we are entitled to them, and we make the willful decision to sin.

The effects of sin:

"The primary reason (that God punishes sin) is that God's righteousness demands it, so that he might be glorified in the universe that he has created."

– Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

- Spiritual death (refers to separation from God, loss of relationship to God)

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17 ESV)

- Physical death

"By 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." (Genesis 3:19 ESV)

"Thus, all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died." (Genesis 5:5 ESV)

- Expulsion from the garden

²² Then 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—" ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He 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." (Genesis 3:22-24 ESV)

- Inherited sin

"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 5:12 ESV)

"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. (Romans 5:19 ESV)

From the moment of the fall, all of creation was impacted – the effects are still being felt today. Creation groans under the curse and mankind is in desperate need of a Savior.

"¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (John 3:17-18 ESV)

Deliverance from sin:

Our deliverance from sin depends **entirely** on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

"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." (Romans 5:19 ESV)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 ESV)

By grace and through faith, God's people are

- Delivered from the penalty of sin:

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1 ESV)

- Delivered from the **absolute power** of sin:

*"to open their eyes, so that they may **turn** from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:17-18 ESV)*

*"And you **were** dead in the trespasses and sins ² in 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— ³ among 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." (Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV)*

We will never be free from the presence of sin in this life – but, in Christ we are free from the absolute power of sin that previously prevented us from seeing and worshiping God.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh"
(Galatians 5:16 ESV)

- Promised future deliverance from the presence of sin:

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."
(1 John 3:2 ESV)

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." (Philippians 3:20-21 ESV)

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 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." (Revelation 21:3-4 ESV)

As Christians, we are delivered from the condemnation of sin and we are delivered from the absolute power (or dominion) of sin, but in this world, we are not yet delivered from the presence of sin.

"For we all stumble in many ways..." (James 3:2 ESV)

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10 ESV)

Sin (rooted in self-worship) always causes disruption and destruction, often times far beyond what we can observe or measure.

Since the presence of sin is a reality for every Christian, it is important to know:

- For the Christian, sin **cannot** change our legal standing before God.
- For the Christian, sin **always hinders and harms** relationships.
- For the Christian, sin is forgiven.

"When God forgives a sinner, the pardon is complete: the sin problem is settled...The number of times our heavenly Father will forgive is limitless...The distance God removes our sin is infinite...Our sins are forgiven wholly...Our sins are forgotten."

- Harold Lindsell and Charles Woodbridge, *A Handbook of Christian Truth*

lesson nine | SALVATION



Outline:

- We are saved from God
- We are saved by God
- We are saved through God
- We are saved for God

Salvation

Salvation is defined as safety, deliverance or preservation from something (death, danger, enemies, etc.)

"¹³And Moses said to the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you only have to be silent.'" (Exodus 14:13-14 ESV)

"²¹I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²²The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." (Psalm 118:21-22 ESV)

"⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins..." (Luke 1:76-77 ESV)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16 ESV)

We are saved from God, by God, through God, for God.

We are saved from God

- We are born in sin

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalm 51:5 ESV"

"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." (Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV)

- God is just

"²The 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. ³The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty." (Nahum 1:2-3 ESV)

"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4 ESV)

*"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him **from the wrath of God**. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:8-10 ESV)*

We are saved by God.

As fallen human beings, we are unable to perfectly fulfill God's law, and therefore, are unable to save ourselves.

- We are **unable** and **unwilling** to save ourselves

"¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be

justified." (Galatians 2:15-16 ESV)

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose." (Galatians 2:19 ESV)

"⁹...For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰as it is written: 'None is righteous, no not one; ¹¹no one understands, no one seeks for God. ¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'" (Romans 3:9-12 ESV)

As fallen human beings, we are unwilling to save ourselves, because, to put it simply, we would rather worship ourselves than God. This is due to dull minds and hard hearts that cannot see God's beauty.

- God is able and willing to save us

"It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26 ESV)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV)

- Grace is unmerited favor; God saved us completely apart from our own efforts
- We were saved through faith in Christ – this faith is a gift from God
- If salvation were of man, then we could (and would) boast
- Salvation is the work of God and faith is the gift of God

Further Scripture for study:

Ephesians 1:3-6; John 15:16-19; Mark 13:20; Luke 10:22; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3|

We are saved *through* God

- John the Baptist declared that Jesus was the One who would take away sin:

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

- Jesus taught that he is the only way to be reconciled to God:

"6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6 ESV)

- Peter taught this in his speech to the rulers, elders, and scribes gathered in Jerusalem:

"11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12 ESV)

- Paul and Peter also wrote about Christ as the only Savior:

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

"He (Jesus Christ) is the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2 ESV)

- As our propitiation, Christ drank the cup of God's wrath in our place:

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we were healed. (Isaiah 53:5 ESV)

"Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10 ESV)

Jesus both pays the penalty in full for our sin and gives us the righteousness required for us to be reconciled to our holy Creator God! In Christ we are **justified**.

To paraphrase the Westminster Catechisms, **justification** is God graciously pardoning sinners of their sin against him **and** graciously declaring those sinners to be perfectly righteous. This is not based on anything the sinner does but is only given to sinners through the perfect obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ on behalf of sinners. In other words, justification before God can only be received through faith in Christ alone.

Saving faith includes *(how God generally saves sinners)*

- **Knowledge:** Knowing of who Jesus Christ is as he is revealed in Scripture
- **Assent:** Agreeing with who Jesus is (I believe this is true)
- **Trust:** Placing faith in Jesus Christ (I believe this is true for me)
 - Confessing I am a sinner who has rebelled against the holy God
 - Confessing that I deserve the eternal wrath of God for my rebellion
 - Confessing that Jesus Christ alone is The Savior who can save me
 - Placing my faith and trust in Christ alone as my Savior

We are saved for God

- As former participants of darkness and slaves of Satan, we are not saved without a purpose:

*"And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, **so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God,** that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."*
(Acts 26:15-18 ESV)

- We were created to worship God, and we are redeemed for that purpose:

"All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name." (Psalm 86:9 ESV)

"¹⁹...you are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 7:20 ESV)

Summary

Apart from the person and work of Christ, we are enslaved to Satan, sin, and spiritual death. In that state, as enemies of God, Christ bought us with his blood. Now, those who have faith in Christ are declared justified and righteous by the blood of Christ. We who were once enemies are now called the children of God.

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:8-10 ESV)

"You were bought with a price..." (1 Corinthians 7:23 ESV)

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." (Acts 20:28 ESV)

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God; and so, we are..." (1 John 3:1 ESV)

Jesus Christ, as God, took on human flesh, endured the temptation of sin to the highest degree, and then drank the cup of God's wrath to utter completion so that we could be redeemed, purchased, reconciled to the loving, merciful, and gracious God that we had rejected.

As a result, those who believe in Christ receive the full benefits of being united to Christ.

The tragedy of both legalism and easy-believism is that both sides diminish the person and work of Christ by failing to embrace all that was accomplished. Both fail to see what Christ died to set us free from.

- Legalism (adding to the Gospel in order to be saved or feel saved, trying to add to the work of Christ through man-made rules and/or self-sacrifice) fails to see that Christ died to free us from the condemnation of the law.
- Easy-believism (not taking sin seriously under the excuse that God saves us and isn't really too concerned about ongoing sin in our lives, and the consequences of that sin) fails to see that Christ died to set us free from the bondage of sin.

True freedom is found when we embrace and rest in who Christ is and what he accomplished for us. This rest leads to our enjoying and worshipping God in gratitude.

What is the gospel of your salvation?

- **The good news that we are saved...**
 - o *From* the bondage of self-worship and all of its eternal consequences
 - o *By* the will of God, who is perfect in love, grace, mercy, and justice
 - o *Through* the perfect person and work of Jesus Christ, who cancels our debt through his sacrifice and delivers our souls
 - o *For* the enjoyment and worship of God, in thankfulness.

And we are sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption! (Ephesians 4:30)

lesson ten | THE CHRISTIAN WALK



Outline

- The Christian walk is about worship
- Worship includes knowing and enjoying God
- Worship includes confession of our sins
- Worship includes stewardship of our blessings
- Worship includes obedience
- Worship is the work of the Holy Spirit in us

The Christian Walk

The Christian walk is all about worship.

As Christians, we are saved from God, by God, through God, for God. We were created and designed to worship God, and that worship is what he redeems us into.

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

Worship of God includes knowing and enjoying God.

In worship, we recognize and embrace his divine perfection and his worthiness to be honored and praised as God. Worship can be expressed through prayer, adoration, thanksgiving, service, in private, or in public. Worship presupposes that God exists, that he can be known by man, and that his perfections set him high above man. *(From the New International Bible Dictionary).*

Worship includes confession of our sins.

Confession of sin requires an understanding of the tragedy of sin.

Sin is always inward focused, fueled by self-worship.

Sin is rooted in destruction; it attacks everything it touches.

Sin hurts those around us, as well as ourselves.

Sin hinders our experience and enjoyment of God, thus our worship.

Sin runs much deeper and causes more destruction than we can even imagine.

Confession of sin requires a trust that the God whom we have sinned against will comfort us with the truth of his steadfast love and his forgiveness.

Sin is inward-focused self-worship. The worship of God turns us outward.

Confession a necessary step to that. It turns us away from ourselves to serve others in worship of God.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:3-4 ESV)

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:9-10 ESV)

Worship includes stewardship of our blessings.

As Christians, we are bought with the blood of Christ and we are now united to Christ. In Christ, we have received “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Now, as redeemed people, we are called to worship God by humbly serving others with what God has entrusted to us.

Our blessings in Christ:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...” (Ephesians 1:3 ESV)

Examples of the call to **stewardship**:

*“I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your **bodies** as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your **mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2 ESV)*

Biblical Stewardship can be understood as the responsibility to manage all the resources of life for the glory of God, acknowledging God as provider (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

*“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1 ESV) ... “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only, **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh**, but **through love serve one another**. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:13-14 ESV)*

*“**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace**: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV)*

Also, consider the stewardship of our time, our energy, and our resources. All of these have been given to us from God, and ultimately, in all of these things, we are stewards of God’s love. In other words, we are called to love others as we rest in God’s love for us.

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. **And walk in love, as Christ loved us** and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV)*

Worship includes obedience.

Christian obedience at its core is the living out, or the expression, of who we are in Christ. God calls us to love him and love others as we have been loved by God. With his commands, God then shows us what this love looks like when it is lived out.

True obedience to God always has at its center the elements of faith, love, and hope. The commands of God guide us in what it looks like to express our faith, love, and hope in relationship with God and others.

*"And without **faith** it is impossible to please him (God), for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."* (Hebrews 11:6 ESV)

*"May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in **hope**."* (Romans 15:13 ESV)

*"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels...if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains...if I give away all I have and deliver up my body to be burned...**but have not love**, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, I am nothing, I gain nothing."* (from 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 ESV)

Worship is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

The Holy Spirit points us to the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is resting in Christ that ignites within us the faith, hope, and love that create the worshipful obedience in our lives.

*"By grace you have been saved **through faith**. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God**."* (Ephesians 2:8 ESV)

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that **by the power of the Holy Spirit** you may abound in hope."* (Romans 15:13 ESV)

*"Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord **make you increase and abound in love** for one another and for all, as we do for you..."* (1 Thessalonians 3:11-12 ESV)

"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment."

- CS Lewis "Reflections on the Psalms"

lesson eleven | THE CHURCH



Outline

- The Church is universal
- The church is local
- The church is the source of God's grace
- The church belongs to God
- Putting our aim to action
- LCC membership

The Church

The Church is universal

The universal Church (usually written with a capital “C”) refers to God’s people in general - those who belong to God’s family and God’s kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ – across the globe and across all of time – all true believers belong to God’s universal Church.

The universal Church, which is made up of believers of all times and from all places, has been called out of the bondage of self-worship and into the freedom of God-worship by God through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has purchased salvation for us through his blood.

The church is local

A church is defined as a “called-out assembly.” Local churches, then, are local gatherings of God’s people assembling for worship. These local churches make up the universal Church, the Bride of Christ.

“And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the Church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” (Acts 11:26)

As the Bride of Christ, we come together in local gatherings to worship God as we await the **consummation**. This means that church is not what we do, it is who we are.

“Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.’” (Revelation 21:9)

“so, we, though many, are one in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:5)

We are not created to live out our Christian faith alone. By God’s design, we are called to come alongside each other, to encourage and exhort each other within the local church family where we can roll up our sleeves and really be there for each other.

The Consummation: Includes the visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgement of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ’s kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan and all his demons will be eternally judged and condemned to the Lake of Fire while the righteous enjoy eternal life with God. The Church will live and reign with him forever, enjoying, and worshiping God forever.

The church is the source of God's grace

The means of grace are the primary things that God has given for the purpose of strengthening our faith. We need the means of grace to strengthen and build up our faith in Christ because this faith is at the center of who we are and what we do.

The means of grace include:

- The preaching and teaching of God's Word
- Observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Prayer
- Christian fellowship

Partaking in corporate worship in person at the local church level is where all of the means of grace come together in one place on a concentrated level.

The church belongs to God

God forms and designs his church for his glory, with Christ as the head.

"Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47)

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now, as the Church submits to Christ, so also are wives to submit in everything to their husbands." (Ephesians 5:23-24)

In light of the above, at LCC we aim to be: "A local gathering of God's redeemed people seeking to proclaim the excellencies of God revealed in His gospel, for the making and maturing of disciples of Jesus Christ, according to His design and for His glory."

Putting our aim to action:

Preaching and teaching the word continuously

Embrace the whole counsel of God: placing a supreme value on what God's Word really says, what it really means, and how it impacts our lives.

Leadership consisting of elders and deacons:

- Elders serve the spiritual needs of the body

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:1-5 ESV)

Christ is the Chief Shepherd and elders are shepherds under Christ, leading by example, in humility. The Church is called to respect and follow the elders, as they follow Christ.

- Deacons serve the physical needs of the body

"Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-7 ESV)

Observing the ordinances of the Church

Ordinances (also called Sacraments) refer to a Christian rite that is ordained by Christ and held to be an outward symbol of an inward reality. Through the ordinances Christ continually assures us of our salvation, which strengthens and builds our faith.

- **The Lord's Supper:**

Christ commanded his disciples to celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him. This to be observed by those who have trusted in Christ for eternal life. Observance of the Lord's Supper is a memorial to remember and reflect on the truth that our secure salvation came at the cost that Christ paid.

"²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' "²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'" (Matthew 26:26-29 ESV)

"²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' "²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' "²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV)

· Baptism

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

We believe that baptism is for the individual who has experienced true salvation in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul taught that the new believer dies to self through baptism so that they can walk in newness of life just as Christ did when he rose from the grave. Baptism for the believer is a declaration that they have experienced the power of regeneration. Believers baptism by immersion is necessary for church membership.

Embracing the opportunity to live out our faith as a community, which includes:

Assembling together regularly to encourage and exhort each other as we partake together in the worship of God through the teaching and preaching of God's Word, fellowship, singing, prayer, giving, baptism, and the Lord's supper.

"²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV)

Caring for the well-being of the church by caring for each other through the stewardship of what God has given us.

Embracing the call to make disciples

*"¹⁹ Go therefore and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
(Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

God makes **disciples** and he does so primarily by the means of grace flowing through the church. This starts with the regular, faithful preaching and teaching of the Word and partaking in the ordinances. These then shape the way we pray and the way that we fellowship together, as God shapes us to engage the world around us with the heart and mind of Christ.

Disciples are God's people being transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they are learning to actively engage the world around them with the heart and mind of Christ. *Colson Center*

Embracing the call to spread the gospel

"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 3:8-10 ESV)

...¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"
(Philippians 2:12-15 ESV)

*"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*
(1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV)

This call to proclaim and spread the gospel happens on various levels – from formal missions and outreach on the global and local levels, to simply living out our faith in the personal relationships and interactions that are part of our daily lives.

Exercising church discipline when biblically called to do so

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector." (Matt. 18:15–17)

"Church discipline largely takes place informally...However, in this fallen world, there will

Biblical Steps:

1. Have a private conversation
2. Take one or two others along
3. Involve leaders or elders
4. Give adequate notice
5. Tell it to the church
6. Remove membership

be times when informal discipline will not be enough; there will be times when those who belong to the church refuse to repent and continue down the path of sin. It's for these situations that Jesus provides instructions for church discipline.

Every **single step** of this process is an expression of Christ's loving and wise rule over his church" Geoff Chang, 9Marks

God's design includes formal church membership

God's people were formally and publicly identified with the local gathering of God's people. Their association with the local "church" that they attended was not hidden.

Formal, public identification with the local church is what allows us follow God's design for his church in Biblical and practical ways.

Within the local church, we are able to submit to one another as fellow believers and to the leadership that has been given the responsibility – by God – to shepherd and care for the local church. In this context, church membership allows for church discipline to be wisely and lovingly applied if needed.

¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:19-21 ESV)

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. (Hebrews 13:17 ESV)

Entering into church membership is a declaration of acceptance and commitment that shows a person is deeply bound to their church family.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7 ESV)

Formal membership (and the process involved) allows the elders to know that we are doctrinally aligned (especially on the essentials) and that we have communicated our philosophy when it comes to understanding Scripture.

Church membership allows the leadership of the church - and the church as a whole - to publicly affirm the faith of those coming into membership.

The commitment of church membership also provides the security we need to be able to work through the challenges of life together in a healthy way that builds our faith.

LCC Church Membership

Membership at LCC is a **covenant relationship** between you and the LCC body. **With the help of the Holy Spirit, church leadership accepts the following responsibilities:**

To lovingly care for you and seek your growth in Christ (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12)

To provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures that will span the spectrum of Scripture (Galatians 6:6; Acts 20:27-28)

To help you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; James 2:14-17)

To hold our pastors, elders, and deacons to the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

To pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14)

To be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)

To exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1)

To help you become equipped to serve Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13)

To seek God's will for our church community as we follow the Scriptures and the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

To set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12)

Members of LCC entering into the covenant relationship as the body of Christ affirm the following:

Our sin nature has separated us from God and put me at enmity with him. Because of my sin, I deserve eternal torment and separation from God's love, mercy, and grace – I deserve hell (Romans 3:10; 23).

There is only one way to God, salvation, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life: Jesus Christ. There is no other way. My redemption and the forgiveness of sins is an unmerited gift of grace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, accomplished by his death and his shed blood on the cross at Calvary (John 14:6; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus Christ is exactly who he claimed to be (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; John 4:25-26; 6:29; 11:25-27; 14:6-7; 15:5). I recognize that I am a sinner in desperate need of a Savior, and I have turned to Christ and put all of my faith in him alone as my Savior. I confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9).

By grace and through faith (Ephesians 2:8) I have been saved from the bondage and condemnation of my sin and have been delivered into the kingdom of God for the purpose of enjoying and worshipping God forever. United to Christ, in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, I can have assurance of eternal life (John 3:16-18; Romans 3:23-26).

In obedience to Scripture, I have been baptized after becoming a believer in Christ as testimony of the work of regeneration that God has performed in me.

As born-again followers of Christ, members at LCC embrace the biblical teaching that walking in love, walking in light, and walking in wisdom (Eph. 5) are beneficial and necessary for the health and unity of the body of Christ