

AN INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

Don't be afraid of theology! It's not as dry and boring as its reputation would suggest. I remember taking my first class on theology (also known as doctrine, by the way). My professor was Dr. Wilbert Ratledge (that's right - Wilbert!), and I had heard he was tough. I was kinda scared. I wasn't sure I was smart enough to handle all this. It was a challenge, but boy was it worth it! Almost right away, I was drawn closer to God. Learning more about Him in a systematic way caused me to realize just how amazing He truly is.

As you go through these studies, ask the Lord to help you – He will! Of course we are not just after head knowledge here. These truths need to sink into our hearts and shape us into more Christlike believers.

To God Be the Glory!

Charles H. Ray

Instructions: For each lesson, read and discuss the description of that area of theology. Then, fill in the blanks for the Key Passage using the *New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition* (© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, The Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA)

Table of Contents

<i>Lesson 1 - The Study of God Himself (Theology Proper)</i>	1
<i>Lesson 2 - The Study of Christ (Christology)</i>	4
<i>Lesson 3 - The Study of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)</i>	7
<i>Lesson 4 - The Study of Sin (Hamartiology)</i>	9
<i>Lesson 5 - The Study of Salvation (Soteriology)</i>	11
<i>Lesson 6 - The Study of the Church (Ecclesiology), Part 1</i>	14
<i>Lesson 7 - The Study of the Church (Ecclesiology), Part 2</i>	17
<i>Lesson 8 - The Study of the Bible (Bibliology)</i>	19
<i>Lesson 9 - The Study of Humans (Anthropology)</i>	22
<i>Lesson 10 - The Study of Angels (Angelology)</i>	24
<i>Lesson 11 - The Study of Satan and Demons (Satanology and Demonology)</i>	26
<i>Lesson 12 - The Study of Future Events (Eschatology)</i>	28
<i>Lesson 13 - The Study of the Christian Life (Zoeology)</i>	32

Lesson 1 - The Study of God Himself (Theology Proper)¹

Who is God? How could you begin to answer such a question?! Because He is beyond us humans (transcendent), don't become frustrated in trying to fully understand this stuff.² He is infinite (unlimited in every aspect of His being); we are finite (quite limited!). This area of theology has to do with what are called God's attributes or characteristics. Some of these include His eternity (He has always existed and will always exist), His immutability (unchanging), His omnipresence (present everywhere),³ His omnipotence (all powerful), His omniscience (all knowing), and His goodness. The Bible also tells us He is light (1 John 1:5) and love (1 John 4:8).

In addition to His attributes, the Lord fills various roles such as Creator (Isaiah 40:28), King (Psalm 103:19), Savior (Luke 1:47), and Judge (Genesis 18:25).

If you had to pick just one characteristic which summarized Him altogether, it would probably be His holiness. By holy I mean not just that He is pure (which He is of course!), but also that He is wholly other.⁴ Keep in mind though that these attributes are not "parts" of the Lord. They all work in harmony in the one Being we call God. Even though He exists as one Being, He is in fact a Trinity (or Tri-unity). We do not worship three Gods but one God Who exists in three Persons. This concept is obviously difficult to understand, and for at least two major reasons.

First, it is an idea which deals with infinity, and we are finite (as noted above). Second, the Trinity is unique. We can't totally comprehend it because there is nothing to which to compare it. We need to try to grasp the concept of the Trinity as best we can, but don't think about it too long – you'll get a headache!

The Bible never argues formally for the existence of God. It merely assumes His existence (Genesis 1:1).

It's important to remember God is not some impersonal and unknowable spirit out there somewhere. He is actually a Person, but not a human, of course. We should be grateful He graciously decided to reveal Himself in nature (known as general revelation), in the

¹ The word theology is based on the Greek word *theos*, meaning god or God.

² We try to make God some sort of super-human; but He isn't! People and God have some of the same characteristics (capable of loving others, a will, emotions, etc.) but He is way beyond us in every way. Think about this concept – do you really want a god who is like you? Not me! I want to love, worship, and serve a God Who is a Supreme Being. A wonderful thought: Although He is transcendent (beyond us), He is also personal and knowable through Christ!

³ Omnipresent does not mean *some* of God exists everywhere but that He is *fully* present everywhere. Does that blow your mind or what?!

⁴ To be "holy" or "sanctified" is to be set apart, notably for a special use.

Bible (known as special revelation; See Bibliology), and in His Son (See Christology). There is no Being like Him anywhere in the universe. Let us worship Him!⁵

Key Verse: Psalm 99:9

_____ **the LORD our God And worship at His holy hill, For _____ is the LORD our God.**

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about God?

Deuteronomy 6:4

Matthew 4:10

John 4:24

2 Corinthians 13:14

Dig a Little Deeper!

What does Romans 1:19, 20 tell us about the existence of God?

⁵ One of many verses which speak about our worship is John 4:24, "God is spirit [not *a* spirit], and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Much could be said about this verse but it basically asserts Christians can worship Him at any location ("in spirit") but it must be done based on Who He truly is (not based on what has done or will do for us).

Because God exists everywhere (omnipresent), does that mean He is in hell? Consider 2 Thessalonians 1:9 with Revelation 14:10.

For which attribute of God are you most thankful? Why?

How would you respond to someone who said, "I can't understand God, therefore He must not exist as the Bible describes Him."

Can creationism and evolution be harmonized? Explain.

Lesson 2 - The Study of Christ (Christology)

Usually when we talk about Christ doctrinally, we include His Person (Who He is) and His work (what He did). Who is Jesus? That is a most important question. How one answers that question determines if that person is truly referring to the Christ of Scripture. Jesus is 100% human and 100% God. How that is possible is simply a mystery taught in the Bible that we accept by faith. No other concept can properly explain all the evidence of Who He is. If He were not fully human (and was some other type of being), He could not have taken our place on the cross. It was, and is, humans who needed to be saved.

Similarly, if He is not fully God, that would create at least two problems. First, it was His Deity which kept Him from sinning. Second, it would have made Him a liar. Contrary to what most people believe, He did claim to be God. See John 5:18 and 10:33. Numerous other lines of evidence show Jesus is indeed God. One example is the comparison between Luke 3:4-6 with Isaiah 40:3, 4. The Isaiah passage applies to Jehovah. John the Baptist (the speaker in the Luke passage) applies those verses to Jesus. The conclusion is Jesus is Jehovah. Another example is Hebrews 1:10-12 with Psalm 102:12, 25-27. Both passages declare Jesus is the Creator.

By the way, the Lord Jesus didn't have His beginning in Bethlehem when He was born to Mary and Joseph. He has existed from all eternity, and He will always exist. A simple expression of this truth is found in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Two other good verses to check out are Colossians 1:15 and 2:9.

We likewise must remember Jesus is fully man as well as fully God. He added humanity to His deity without diminishing His divinity. That's called the Incarnation. His humanity and deity are together in one Person but are not mixed. Mixing them would create some weird being unlike any other, and thus could not have been a substitute on the cross for humans. That He was a human during His earthly ministry is indicated by the fact that He had a human body (Matthew 26:12) and a human spirit (27:50). He will forever have a body. 1 Timothy 2:5 states, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,..." Notice it says Jesus is still a man.

As noted elsewhere in these lessons, the Lord has graciously revealed Himself in three ways: in His creation (known as general revelation; Psalm 19:1), in His Son (2 Timothy 1:8-10), and in His Word (known as special revelation; John 5:39; See Bibliology).

Now what about His works? What did He do? Well, that is a very long list. It is easier to say (and more important) what He did not do – namely, sin. Even people who are not Christians know He did a great deal of good (healed the sick, raised the dead, and much more). Most significant of all, He meet people's needs. Of course, our most pressing need is to have our sins forgiven. Thus, His love for us and willingness to endure the cross was absolutely an incredible act. That He went through much physical pain by having His body pierced by spikes is not the major issue. Worse, He took upon Himself the punishment for all the sins of all time. But He did not stay dead. He rose to give believers victory over sin

and death (Matthew 28:5, 6) and has now ascended to be with the Father (Acts 2:33). We can do no less than respond with adoration and obedience!

Key Verse: Hebrews 12:2

Fixing our eyes on _____, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the _____ set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about Jesus?

Matthew 28:6

Luke 2:52

John 1:1

Hebrews 4:15

Dig A Little Deeper!

Why do you think it's so difficult for people to believe in Jesus' virgin birth?

Why is it important that Jesus was sinless?

Do you think Jesus could have sinned?

Since Jesus is God, how is it He didn't know certain things? See Matthew 24:36.

Lesson 3 - The Study of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

Pneumatology is a strange word isn't it (kinda like hamartiology!)?¹ It comes from the Greek word "pneuma," meaning "spirit, wind, or breath." The most significant issues about the Holy Spirit are His personality and deity. By personality (or Personhood) is meant the fact that He is a Person and not some ghost floating around. When He speaks, He uses pronouns for Himself such as "me" and "I" (Acts 13:2). He has individual will (1 Corinthians 12:11). He has emotions like grief (Ephesians 4:30). Many others could be listed, some of which we will turn to now.

We must never forget the Holy Spirit is God! That's why He isn't just the Spirit, He is the HOLY Spirit. Because He is generally recognized as the third Member of the Trinity, we tend to view Him as less than deity. Take note of these verses which cause students of the Scriptures to conclude He is God. He: is eternal (Hebrews 9:14); can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31); is omnipresent (exists everywhere, Psalm 139:7); loves (Romans 15:30). A very powerful passage is in Acts 5. Peter tells the foolish couple Ananias and Sapphira that they have lied to the Holy Spirit (v. 3), and then the next verse says they have lied to God. This parallelism (as it is called) is a clear indication the Holy Spirit is God. Furthermore, The Holy Spirit is closely associated with the other Persons of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2).

The Holy Spirit also does the work of God. He was involved in the creation of the universe (Psalm 33:6; Job 26:13; Remember: "breath" is from the same Hebrew word which is often translated "spirit."). He superintended in the accurate writing of the Bible (2 Peter 1:21). In some way not understood by us mere humans, He brought about the conception of Jesus in Mary (Luke 1:35). He grants people new life (regeneration) at the moment of salvation (Titus 3:5).

The Holy Spirit works in the believer's life in a multitude of ways. He helps us in our prayers (Romans 8:26). He helps us to understand the Scriptures (illumination; John 14:26). He guides us (Romans 8:14). He helps us to lead the holy life God desires (Galatians 5:16). In order to live our lives in such a way so as to please the Lord, we must be filled by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Basically that means to be controlled by the Spirit. The parallel illustration in Ephesians 5:18 is helpful. Instead of being controlled by alcohol, we need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Isn't it interesting that alcoholic drinks are often called "spirits"?! Because we cannot live the Christian life well in our own power, part of being controlled by the Spirit involves using His strength (Ephesians 3:16).

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 6:19

Or do you not know that your body is a _____ of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from _____, and that you are _____ your own?

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about the Holy Spirit?

Matthew 12:31

Matthew 28:19

Ephesians 4:30

Dig A Little Deeper!

What is meant by the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)?

What do you think is a good way to explain how the Holy Spirit helped the human authors write the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)?

What does John 16:14 say about the Holy Spirit's purpose?

Lesson 4 - The Study of Sin (Hamartiology)⁶

I know. An unpleasant subject! Of course, sin was not God's idea. Humans were created pure. When the Lord looked at all He made, He judged it to be "very good" (Genesis 1:31). It was mankind who blew it (Genesis 3:6). Sin is pervasive. That is, it affects all aspects of our being (will, emotions, *etc.*). What is sin? Basically any thought, word, or deed which is offensive to the Lord. Anything which goes against His holy nature. Sin is a wall which separates humans from God (Isaiah 59:2; Habakkuk 1:3).⁷ Sins can be either of commission (such as doing something bad) or omission (not doing what you know to be right; James 4:17). Every person is a sinner by birth and by action or thought.

Since the fall of mankind (Genesis 3), every single person was born with a sin nature (Romans 5:12). (I know it's hard to believe since babies look so cute!) Our society doesn't want to believe that. They exclaim, "We're born good." But that is not true. The difference is, people act out their sin to various levels of severity. Because God is just and righteous (Jeremiah 9:24), sin must be punished. As horrible as it sounds, hell is where sin is punished. Thankfully, the Lord has provided a way of salvation (Romans 6:23). When a person trusts Jesus alone as his or her Savior, that person will be with Jesus forever in heaven.

I cannot emphasize enough the fact that heaven and hell are real places (Luke 16:19-31). They are just as real as Chicago or New York; they just happen to be in the spirit world. Someone who denies hell must also deny heaven because it is the Bible which let us know both actually exist. It's certainly not enjoyable to think about hell but we must not ignore its reality. Jesus believed in hell! He spoke of it often (Matthew 5:29, 10:28, 25:41).

What happens when a Christian sins? It's helpful to distinguish between relationship and fellowship. A person who has trusted Jesus as his or her personal Savior will always have that relationship. What sin does is break the fellowship.⁸ Confession restores it (1 John 1:9) and the believer can have a close walk with the Lord again. The three great sources of sin in a person's life is the world, the flesh, and the devil. See under Zoeology (doctrine of the Christian life) for more information and advice. A believer who sins does *not* lose his or her salvation. Praise God for His grace!

Key Verse: Romans 5:12

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

Look It Up!

⁶ Hamartiology comes from the Greek word *hamartia* (sin).

⁷ Sin is what keeps people out of heaven. There is nothing you can *do* to get rid of your sins (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). If you haven't already, ask Jesus to forgive your sins and make Him your personal Savior (John 14:6)!

⁸ Think about a husband and wife. If they fight with each other, does that mean they are suddenly divorced? Of course not! What has broken is their fellowship, not their marriage (relationship).

What do these verses tell you about sin?

Genesis 4:7

Psalm 38:3

John 19:11

James 4:17

Dig a Little Deeper!

How did sin get into the world? Why do you think God allowed it?

What is forgiveness?

What steps can a follower of Christ take in order to minimize sin in his or her life?

Lesson 5 - The Study of Salvation (Soteriology)⁹

Since we just finished talking about sin, it is only right that we now get to the good news – salvation. How a person knows he or she will go to heaven when he or she dies is THE most important matter anyone can deal with because it has to do with one's eternal destiny. It is more important than which college to go to, whom to marry,¹⁰ etc.

As pointed out under hamartiology as well (the doctrine of sin), heaven and hell are real places (Luke 16:19-31). They are just as real as Chicago or New York; they just happen to be in the spirit world.

Salvation has always been by grace through faith, even in Old Testament times. It has never been possible for someone to work his or her way to heaven (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). The only thing that has changed is the content of one's faith. By that change I mean God revealed more and more about Himself as time marched on throughout world history (known as progressive revelation). Thus, to be saved, each person had to acknowledge and believe what was known about God at that time. How thankful we should be that God provided a way out of hell (John 3:18)!

The ancient peoples, even the Jews, had to have faith in Jehovah as He revealed Himself in the Hebrew Scriptures. Now we know Jesus died on the cross in our place – to take the punishment we deserve – and we can trust Him alone (no works added) to forgive us our sins. If we say we need to add works to faith to be saved, then we are in effect saying Jesus didn't do it all. Somehow, He was deficient. Banish the thought!

A question Bible students have been debating for centuries is: for whom did Christ die? This debate concerns what is called the extent of the atonement. Did He die for every single person who would ever live, or only the elect (those who are actually saved)? I personally believe He died for all (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2). That belief does not mean, however, *all* will be saved.¹¹ That conclusion cannot be true (John 5:28, 29).

Ephesians 1:3 is a fantastic verse. It informs us we have "every spiritual blessing." As with every other aspect of theology, we don't have the space to go into other issues such as election, propitiation, regeneration, justification, as well as others.

We must conclude with a comforting thought. Once a person realizes he or she is a sinner, and that sin blocks one's relationship with the Lord, and that trusting in Christ alone for salvation is the only way (John 14:6), that person is saved forever. You cannot do anything to lose your salvation (John 10:28, 29)!¹²

⁹ Soteriology comes from the Greek word *soteria*, meaning deliverance or salvation.

¹⁰ However, one should never go into marriage with the idea that "I can always get out of it."

¹¹ Universalism is the belief everyone will eventually wind up in heaven. I do not hold to that belief.

¹² Some believers think a Christian can lose his or her salvation. They point to verses such as Hebrews 6:4-6. However, one must not base his or her doctrine on difficult-to-understand passages. The clear passages must dominate (John 6:39). Don't call it *eternal* life (as in John 3:16) if it's not forever!

Key Verse: John 3:36

He who _____ in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the _____ of God abides on him.

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about salvation?

2 Corinthians 5:20

Ephesians 1:4

Ephesians 4:30

1 John 2:2

Dig A Little Deeper!

Define the gospel.

Must a person be baptized in order to be saved? If not, how would you respond to Acts 2:38, 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:21. You should also consider Luke 23:39-43 and 1 Corinthians 1:17.

Do you think Jesus died for all people or just those who will be saved?

What aspects of your salvation (if you are saved) are most significant to you?

Lesson 6 - The Study of the Church (Ecclesiology),¹³ Part 1

In thinking about the Church, one should consider the two ways that word is used. One way is the universal Church (which some call the invisible Church). That term includes all believers throughout the world. The other way refers to the local church (the visible church). This term includes the building where you worship, and the people assembled there. Many scholars believe the Church began in Acts 2 with the coming of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 11, Peter is reporting about the salvation of the Gentiles. He explains that “the Holy Spirit fell upon them [Gentiles] just as He did upon us [Jews] at the beginning.” At the beginning of what? The Church! (See also 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Most Protestants recognize two offices in the church. One is elder (also called overseer or bishop) and the other is deacon. The elders are the ones “in charge.” They are responsible for the organization and finances as well as the doctrinal purity of that assembly.¹⁴ Deacons do more “nuts and bolts” work. Their duties may include things such as chairing committees and maintaining the condition of the building. These statements are not to suggest the duties are absolutely rigid. Some overlap of responsibilities will likely take place so as to run the church in an efficient manner. The qualifications for elder and deacon can be found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Notice almost all the qualifications have to do with who the person is (character) and not so much what he does (skills).¹⁵

Another major aspect of a local church is the authority structure. This has to do with church government. Unlike the offices of elder and deacon, there are no passages in the New Testament which provide specific details as to how a local body is to be governed. The three most common forms are Congregational (most Baptists), Episcopalian (most Anglicans and Methodists and some Lutherans and Assemblies of God), and Presbyterian (that’s right, you guessed it! – most Presbyterians).

Those three choices basically concern *where* the authority is placed. In other words, is it in the people (Congregational), a bishop (Episcopalian), or in a group of officials, such as the session, the presbytery, synods, and general assembly (Presbyterian)? Many other Protestant churches have what is called “elder rule” (which I believe is the best). As noted above, the elders of a church have the authority. They make the “big decisions” which need to be made (conduct church discipline, or deal with some other major issue among the members). More often than not, the senior pastor (and any other pastors on staff)

¹³ Ecclesiology comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning assembly, church, or congregation.

¹⁴ Leaders in the church are to be gracious and not lord it over the congregation (1 Peter 5:3).

¹⁵ Much debate has taken place about what leadership roles a woman is allowed to hold. Many conservative students of the Scriptures believe a woman can hold the office of deacon (although some conservatives disagree) but the office of pastor/elder is reserved for men only. Many passages come into play here. Some are 1 Timothy 2:11-14, 3:2 (“husband of one wife”); 1 Corinthians 14:33-36. Those passages seem to restrict the office of pastor/elder to men. Those who believe women can serve as pastor/elders look to Deborah as a leader (Judges 4 and 5), the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26), and Phoebe (Romans 16:1, 2). Whatever the exact truth is, it’s important to keep in mind this discussion has nothing to do with character, ability, or intelligence. I believe the focus of the debate is off. Christians should emphasize the many ministries a woman *can* do and not what she is *not allowed* to do by the Scriptures.

serves on the board for as long as he is at the church. Finally, keep in mind the true Head of the Church is our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

A too-often-ignored aspect of a church's ministries is referred to as church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20). This important ministry concerns individual members who have been accused of a moral problem (continuing to sin) or a theological problem (teaching something which is unbiblical). Impurity (moral or theological) must not be tolerated. The end goal is not so much punishment as it is restoration. The church is to work with the member in question so as to encourage him or her to live a life pleasing to the Lord. Such efforts are difficult and delicate but if discipline is not attempted, it is to the congregation's peril. One cannot expect the Lord to bless a body of believers if they are not concerned with purity (Revelation 2:2, 20).

Almost all Protestant churches observe two significant rites or, more commonly, ordinances. Those two are called the Lord's Supper (sometimes called Communion, the Lord's Table, or other names) and baptism (frequently by immersion,¹⁶ as opposed to pouring or sprinkling). Again, the New Testament does not specify how often these are to be conducted. Take time to think about the significance of each!

Key Verse: Matthew 16:18b

...I will build My _____; and the gates of _____ will not _____ it.

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about the Church?

Acts 2:42

Ephesians 1:22, 23

Philippians 4:2

¹⁶ I believe immersion is the proper mode. Romans 6:3, 4 talk about dying and being buried with Christ. Actually going under the water best pictures these ideas.

Dig a Little Deeper!

Use Acts 11:15 to explain when the Church began.¹⁷ Also notice the future tense of our Key Verse.

What is the basic idea behind being baptized by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13)?

Which type of church government seems best to you? Why?

¹⁷ Take note it was about 9AM when the Church was formed (Acts 2:15). Is this why we start church so early? Probably not. It likely had more to do with accommodating farmers' schedules. Further, if church started later, we might get involved in something else and become less motivated to attend the service.

Lesson 7 - The Study of the Church (Ecclesiology), Part 2

A significant question to ask as we begin Part 2 is, why should Christians go to church? A common acronym used to answer this important question is w-i-f-e (you young guys like that don't you!). Although church is a wonderful place to meet a potential spouse, that's not what I'm talking about here. The "w" stands for worship, probably the first thing that came to your mind in answering the question. There is no substitute for corporate worship (Hebrews 10:25). Singing and praising the Lord with a group of other believers is a unique moment in a Christian's life. It is vital to note we should not go to church to be entertained. Our adoration and thoughts need to be directed toward Jesus. Colossians 3:16 declares we should be "singing...to God." The "i" stands for instruction. Just as not eating enough food is bad for the body, not consuming enough spiritual food is hard on the soul. I encourage you to check your attitude about studying the Bible, both corporately and individually.

The "f" stands for fellowship. Although the church isn't a social club, it is healthy to develop proper relationships with other believers. Think of it this way. Would you rather go see a good movie by yourself, or with some close friends? Almost everything in life is enhanced when it is done with family and friends. Not many people want to worship standing next to a complete stranger! John Donne (1572-1631) was an English scholar and poet. It was he who wrote, "No man is an island." The last letter, "e," stands for evangelism (although edification isn't a bad word either). I am certainly not saying an unbeliever must be in a church building in order to be saved. On the other hand, for evangelism to be completely ignored during a worship service is foolish. Only the Lord knows the heart of every single person there (2 Timothy 2:19). Something may be said or done which grabs the unbeliever's attention.

I have spoken to many followers of Christ who grew up in a Christian home (which I didn't) but had a drug problem ("My parents drug me to church!"). If that is your attitude, ask the Lord to help you change it!

Key Verse: Hebrews 10:25a

Not forsaking our own _____ together, as is the _____ of some...

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about the Church?

Matthew 4:10

Matthew 28:19

1 John 1:7

Dig A Little Deeper!

What do you believe should be the role of women in ministry? Consider Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 11:5, 14:33-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-14, 3:2 (“husband of one wife”).

Someone says to you, “I don’t need to go to church. I’ll just watch it on TV.” What would you say to that person?

Which people qualify as candidates for baptism? Should babies be baptized?

Lesson 8 - The Study of the Bible (Bibliology)¹⁸

The Bible is often called the Word of God. “Word” in this case doesn’t mean a single word. It means “message.” The two primary things to know about the Bible are its inspiration and inerrancy. That it is inspired means it was written by God (2 Timothy 3:16). Yes, He used people to do the actual writing, but somehow the Lord supervised the process in such a way that what was written (in the original languages¹⁹) was exactly what He wanted. It was not really dictation, nor did He override the writer’s brain. Somehow it was something “in between”!

By inerrant I mean the Bible doesn’t have mistakes in it (again, in reference to the original writings). It never presents something as true which in reality is false. That concept obviously includes spiritual matters but is not limited to that. The Bible was not written as a complete textbook, but wherever it does touch on science or history, you can be sure it is accurate. Since God wrote it, how could it be otherwise but perfectly true.

Even though we call the Word of God the *Holy Bible*, we should not worship it. Only God is to be worshipped (Matthew 4:10; Revelation 22:9). That said, a person who ignores the Bible’s teachings does so to his or her own peril.

The Scriptures are important also because we could not know God very well if He had not graciously chosen to reveal Himself in them. They don’t argue for the existence of God but merely assume it (Genesis 1:1). To some degree we know about Him through His creation, such as His power and beauty. Psalm 19:1 states, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” The Lord has also revealed Himself in His Son (See Christology).

What a fantastic masterpiece the Bible is. Even people who are not believers admit it has some incredible beauty. It is both simple and profound. A child can understand the gospel, but one could not fathom the depths of the Bible in ten lifetimes. The Scriptures are literature but of course so much more than just that.²⁰ It’s like no other book ever composed (Hebrews 4:12)!

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 2:13

Which things we also speak, not in words taught by _____ wisdom, but in those taught by the _____, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

¹⁸ Bibliology thus means what the Bible says about itself.

¹⁹ The Old Testament was written in Hebrew (as well as some in a sister language, Aramaic) and the New Testament in Greek.

²⁰ That thought brings up an important reminder of how to interpret the Bible. In one sense we read it as we would any other book – we take it at face value. That is, we read it knowing the normal use of words and language (acknowledging the presence of figures of speech for example). In another sense we don’t read it as any other book. We realize God is trying to communicate some truth to us. A word of caution: a Christian studying the Word of God is not to look for some “hidden” or “deeper” meaning to a passage. The Bible can be deep, but that depth is obvious to someone committed to Christ. The Lord is not trying to keep secrets from us, or force us to play some guessing game (1 Corinthians 14:33; Titus 1:2).

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about the Bible?

Matthew 4:4

1 Thessalonians 2:13

2 Peter 1:3

2 Peter 1:21

Dig a Little Deeper!

What does fulfilled prophecy (such as Micah 5:2 with Matthew 2:1) indicate about the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Scriptures?

Since the Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, can our English translations be trusted, and viewed as inerrant?

What makes the Bible authoritative?

What did Jesus have to say about the Scriptures (Matthew 10:35; Luke 24:44)?

Lesson 9 - The Study of Humans (Anthropology)²¹

Humans were created by God (Genesis 1 and 2). We did not evolve from some lower creature. The Bible also says we were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27). Nothing else created by the Lord has this image. What this image is exactly isn't totally explained in Scripture. At the least it means people represent God on the earth in some form or fashion. It also means we have some of the same attributes as He does. Of course, His are infinite and perfect whereas ours are limited and corrupted by sin. That every single person has this image means everyone deserves our love and respect (Colossians 3:13). Furthermore, despite being made in the image of God, we have a sin nature, too.

The Bible also notes some of the other components of humans. The most obvious is the physical part – we all have a body! The other is the non-physical part (immaterial). This would include at least a soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Based on this information, some conclude people have three aspects: soul, spirit, and body. Others disagree, noting that the Scriptures also talk about our mind and heart (Matthew 22:37). Does that mean humans have five aspects (soul, spirit, heart, mind, body)?²² That question is very difficult to answer because the Bible does not give a detailed explanation of “soul,” “spirit,” etc. But we certainly can say for sure we are material and immaterial. The immaterial aspect will exist forever (Luke 16:19-31).

Key Verse: Matthew 19:4

And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who _____ them from the _____ made them male and female.”

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about humans?

Matthew 22:37

Romans 3:23

Hebrews 9:27

²¹ Anthropology comes from the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning man, human, or mankind.

²² Because the Bible does not explain the immaterial aspect of our being and how it functions, people should not be dogmatic about their conclusions in this area.

Dig a Little Deeper!

Is it possible to combine the Creation account with evolution?²³

Where did the idea of marriage come from? Did mankind come up with the concept?²⁴

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19. What does that verse say about our body and how we should take care of it? See also Romans 6:11-13.

²³ I do not believe it is possible to successfully insert evolution into the Biblical record. Keep in mind evolution is the word of man – and people make mistakes. Also, evolution did not come about as the result of an in-depth study of the Bible. Creation is in the Word of God, a God Who doesn't make mistakes (Titus 1:2). Ask yourself, what is the basis of my authority – man or God?

²⁴ Genesis 2:22 shows marriage is God's idea. Therefore, people have no right to change its meaning.

Lesson 10 - The Study of Angels (Angelology)

The Scriptures have more to say about angels than you might think at first. The words “angel” or “angels” come up in the Bible almost 300 times. Angels are seen playing a role in Jesus’ earthly ministry in places such as Luke 2:9, 13 and 22:43. “Angel” simply means “messenger.” There must be different levels or ranks because Michael is called the archangel (Jude 9, the only place he is identified as such). Apparently, we will someday hear him because 1 Thessalonians 4:16 mentions “the voice of the archangel.” Gabriel is the only other angel named. The only other types of angels noted in the Scriptures are seraphim (Isaiah 6:2, 6) and cherubim (Genesis 3:24 and many others). They are not present everywhere at the same time as God is (Daniel 10:12-14). None of them are to be worshipped (Revelation 19:10).

Angelic beings have what Bible scholars call “personality.” That is, these created beings²⁵ are “persons” and not just “blobs” or ghosts. They have emotions (Luke 15:10), desire (1 Peter 1:12), and can speak to humans (Daniel 8 and 9). They are further described as “ministers” (Hebrews 1:7, quoting Psalm 104:4) and “spirits” (Hebrews 1:14).

One other being that should be noted is the angel of the Lord, who appears a number of times in both Testaments. Exactly who he is is a matter of some debate. Because he is called THE angel of the Lord in the Old Testament and AN angel of the Lord in the New Testament, most conservative scholars believe most of his Old Testament appearances are none other than Jesus Himself.²⁶ Once He came in the flesh, He no longer showed up as THE angel of the Lord.

So far, we have talked about the holy angels. Fallen angels are discussed in the next lesson. What interesting creatures these seem to be!

Key Verse: Hebrews 1:14

Are they not all _____ spirits, sent out to render _____ for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about angels?

Psalm 103:20

²⁵ They almost certainly had to have been created during the week of Creation as described in Genesis 1, as suggested by Exodus 20:11 and 31:17. However, some are of the opinion the angels were created *before* creation week because of what is stated in Job 38:7. Revelation 9:1 is an interesting verse to consider. It says a star fell from heaven but then the star is called a “he”! We don’t want to base our doctrine on one verse but this verse has caused many to wonder about the relationship between stars and angels. I mention this point because Genesis 1 nowhere specifically notes angels but it does mention stars (v. 16, and what a very matter-of-fact way to point out the creation of something which numbers in the trillions!).

²⁶ The Old Testament appearances are called pre-incarnate because they took place before Christ came in the flesh. Remember: Christ did not begin at His birth in Bethlehem. He has always existed and will always exist.

Matthew 18:10

Revelation 4:8

Revelation 5:11

Dig a Little Deeper!

Are there such angels as guardian angels? Consider Matthew 18:10 and Psalm 91:11.

In Revelation 9:1, why do you think the star is referred to as "him"?

Chapters 2 and 3 in Revelation contain seven letters written to seven churches. Each one is addressed to "the angel of the church." Who do you think these "angels" are?

Lesson 11 - The Study of Satan and Demons (Satanology and Demonology)

I know this does not sound like a very encouraging or helpful lesson, but it is needed. When thinking about this subject, you must maintain balance. We should not think too highly of the devil or too lowly of him. He is powerful, but not nearly as powerful as God is. If you maintain this balance, you will be just fine. Keep your thoughts on Jesus! Nevertheless, if you do not feel comfortable, certainly feel free to skip this lesson.

Christians do need to know some things about the evil one. We are in a spiritual war and, just as in any war, it's important to know the enemy. He is a created being, but God didn't create him as evil. It seems he was a glorious angel (Ezekiel 28:11-19) who became proud and fell (Isaiah 14:12-17). His main weapon is deception. He makes sin seem appealing. He can even change himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Don't be fooled! (Read more about Spiritual Warfare (as it's called) in Lesson 13.) Peter tells us Satan is roaming around (1 Peter 5:8). He is primarily in the spirit world but occasionally God lets him appear on earth (Matthew 4:3).

Demons are also fallen angels who followed Satan in his rebellion (Revelation 12:4). They too have some power and influence but, like Satan, they are not as strong as God is – in fact, it's not even close!

Key Verse: James 4:7

_____ *therefore to God.* _____ *the devil and he will* _____ *from you.*

Look It Up!

What do these verses tell you about Satan and demons?

Matthew 25:41

John 12:31

Revelation 12:10

Dig a Little Deeper!

Is Satan a real creature or just a symbol of evil? Consider Matthew 4:9 and Revelation 12:12.

Can Christians “bind” the devil? If so, what verses do you use for support of that view? (Don’t forget our Key Verse as well as 1 Peter 5:9)²⁷

What will finally happen to Satan? Consider Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 20:10.

²⁷ I believe Christians have no authority to “bind” Satan. Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 are not in the context of spiritual warfare. If Christians could do so, the perfect places to mention that power would be Ephesians 6:10-19 and 1 Peter 5:8, 9 – but no such “weapon” is mentioned.

*Lesson 12 - The Study of Future Events (Eschatology)*²⁸

Many Christians seem to be of the opinion that this subject (and especially the book of Revelation) is just divisive, controversial, and irrelevant and thus should be avoided. It's divisive only because some believers make it a test of fellowship. "If you don't believe the details just like we do, you might not even be saved!" What a tragedy! No Bible student is able to understand the details of the future with 100% certainty. The one thing that *is* the clear teaching of Scripture is that Jesus is absolutely coming back – physically and visibly (Acts 1:10, 11).

We should look at two aspects of eschatology. One is general eschatology and the other is personal eschatology. The first has to do with the major public events of the end times such as the return of Christ, the Tribulation, the Kingdom, *etc.* The other of course has to do with what happens to each individual person, saved and unsaved. First things first.

Christians should not study future events in the Bible merely out of curiosity (even though I do think it's fun!), but to know as much about the entire Word of God as possible. One verse in Revelation (ironically) states the person who reads that book is blessed (1:3).²⁹ Many (most?) believers think Jesus could come back at any time (1 Thessalonians 5:2). The study of future events is loaded with vocabulary (amillennial, pretribulation, and many more). But don't let all those possibilities stop you from looking into this subject. There are a number of books which present just the basics.³⁰

General eschatology has much to do with the timing of the events (and not so much whether or not they will actually happen) when trying to determine the order of those events. The two main "timing" events are the Rapture and the Tribulation. The big question is, when will Jesus return in relation to the major happenings? Because eschatology can get deep in a hurry, I'm going to present only the timeline that, in my humble opinion, is the correct one. I will spend some time explaining why I hold these views. I encourage you to read the books suggested in endnote 3 to understand other viewpoints.

I believe the major events of the end times will be in this order: Rapture, Tribulation, Second Coming, Millennial Kingdom, Eternal State. Some Bible students understand the Rapture and the Second Coming to happen at about the same time. Why I distinguish between the two is a very long discussion that I won't go into in these lessons. The Rapture is the meeting in the air between the Lord and the Church. The main passage here is 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18. That the Church will not be here for the Tribulation is based on a number of passages. Two of those verses are 1 Thessalonians 4:18 and Titus 2:13. Since there are no signs before the Rapture, Jesus could come at any moment. Pondering that fact should encourage us to live holy lives (2 Peter 3:11; 1 John 3:3). Do

²⁸ Eschatology comes from the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning end or last.

²⁹ Another good verse is Revelation 22:7. How many other books of the Bible declare a Christian is blessed by reading and heeding that book? Zero!

³⁰ Just a sampling are: *A Basic Guide to Eschatology* by Millard Erickson, and *Understanding End Times Prophecy* by Paul Benware.

you want to be caught doing something bad when He shows up? We should want to please Jesus and not just avoid guilt and shame.

In the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage, Paul has been talking about the Rapture, and concludes by saying: “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Those words are not very comforting if Christians are about to enter the Tribulation! Titus 2:13 states we are to be looking for the appearance of Christ. Why say that if the next major event on God’s calendar is the Tribulation? See also 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:1-11. The other events fall into place in the order described above if you believe what I just wrote about the timing of the Rapture. The Tribulation will last seven years (the “one week” of Danial 9:27) then Jesus will come back to judge and to set up His 1000-year (“Millennial”) Kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:1-7). Finally, all who have believed on God for salvation will enter the Eternal State to be with Him forever.

Now on to personal eschatology. The idea here is similar to what we discussed under the Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology). To put it in a question we could ask, *what am I going to do with Jesus?* The good answer is to trust Him alone as my personal Savior in order to go to heaven when I die (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The bad answer is to ignore Him and go to hell when I die (John 3:36). Like it or not, that is the plain truth the Bible teaches. It’s also vital to keep in mind that this decision must be made now. There is no second chance after death (Hebrews 9:27). At some point in time, all persons will be resurrected to face judgement (John 5:28, 29). Believers will “all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10) but not for salvation but for rewards for faithfulness. The unsaved will appear before the Great White throne (Revelation 20:11) where it will be determined they are to be consigned to hell.

Some related questions to these matters are: where are, what are, and what do we know about heaven and hell? Even though they are real places, they are in the spirit world. You cannot travel to far outer space or go way down into the earth and find them. Heaven is basically the dwelling place of God.³¹ To be near Jesus is most certainly a fantastic experience. By stark contrast, hell is a most horrible place (Luke 16:24). Although it is called the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15), it is somehow a place of darkness, too (Matthew 25:30).

As a final word for this lesson, let me encourage you to look past the pain and sorrow of this life and keep watching for “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13)!

Key Verse: Revelation 19:15

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the _____, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce _____ of God, the Almighty.

³¹ The third heaven of 2 Corinthians 12:2 means the abode of God.

Look It Up! (and keep looking up!)

What do these verses tell you about future events?

Matthew 26:63, 64

2 Corinthians 5:10

2 Peter 3:10

Dig A Little Deeper!

How do you feel about what the Bible says about the future? Are you scared? excited? both? something else?

Some people believe the 1000-year kingdom will not happen (called amillennialism) because it's mentioned in Revelation 20 only and in no other passage, and because the word "kingdom" is not in Revelation 20. Others say "thousand years" is repeated six times in Revelation 20 and is thus a literal concept. What do you think?

If someone said to you that all this talk about the future is unimportant and that we just need to be out talking to people about Jesus. What would you say back?

Look at Acts 1:9-11. What does this tell us about Christ's return? You could probably list at least three things.

Are heaven and hell real places? Don't forget to consider Luke 16:19-31.

*Lesson 13 - The Study of the Christian Life (Zoeology)*³²

This lesson is different from all the others. I just wanted to share a few things about the Christian life that I have experienced. The list is certainly not exhaustive but it should be a good start.

1. Living the Christian life well doesn't just happen. It takes work. In fact, Paul uses the word "discipline:" "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). You could say we are to train ourselves to lead holy lives. This process is called sanctification. To sanctify has the basic meaning of setting apart. We are to stand out from the crowd in a good way. The "ingredients" to living a life pleasing to the Lord are similar to the ingredients to a recipe. Leave out a major one and the product doesn't turn out well.

The "ingredients" for the satisfying Christian life include: prayer, church attendance, Bible study, memorizing Scripture, and meditation to name the main ones. You could probably add some of your own. Let me just make some comments on these practices. You may have noticed I wrote Bible study and not Bible reading. It isn't enough just to read the Bible (although that never hurts!) but we must also study it. I urge you to start building a personal library of good Christian books.

Meditation also needs a comment. Don't confuse Eastern meditation with Biblical meditation. Eastern meditation basically involves emptying the mind. By contrast, Biblical meditation involves filling the mind with thoughts of God. You might take a significant verse and chew on it a while.

2. Fruit of the Spirit: These are mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23. The big question is, how does a believer develop these in his or her life? Is this something I do or something the Lord does in my life? The answer is both. I don't just sit around and hope the Lord will do something. Remember: train yourself. The Christian should take each one and make a deliberate effort to work on that "fruit." Taking them one at a time will help keep you from getting overwhelmed by working on several at once.
3. Spiritual gifts: These are gifts given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:11) to build up the Body of Christ. Two of the primary lists of them are 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. Included on the list are things such as teaching or administrating. Every believer has at least one. Like the Fruit of the Spirit, they are to be developed and matured in order to minister to other Christians.³³

³² *Zoe* is the Greek word for life. This "life" refers to human experience, as in "Life is wonderful." The other Greek word for life is *bios*, as in biology. Also, I am heavily indebted to Floyd H. Barackman's *Practical Christian Theology*, pages 373-411, on which this lesson is based. I urge those wanting much more advice and encouragement on the Christian life to read those pages. In addition, any book by Jerry Bridges is excellent.

³³ The one exception is the gift of evangelism. That one of course is to be used to tell others about the Lord and how to be saved. However, just because you might not have this gift doesn't mean you shouldn't share the gospel.

4. There are a number of things you can do to help you keep sin out of your life. One is don't put yourself in a tempting situation. If there is some sin which is very attractive to you, stay away from it. Second, decide in your heart ahead of time to not give in. If you wait to think about it in the heat of the moment, it will be harder to resist. Determine right now to keep yourself pure.
5. Do you want joy in your life? Who doesn't, right? Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is on the outside, created by things which bring you some level of temporary satisfaction. Joy is on the inside. It is that inner sense God is in control and loves me no matter the circumstances or how I am feeling. He can be trusted. JOY serves as a good acronym for developing joy in one's life. J stands for Jesus. Believers should desire to put in Him first in our lives and love Him with all our being (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

The O stands for others. Keeping one's thoughts on others and not yourself will help prevent selfishness. Think about how to minister to them. The Y stands for yourself. God doesn't expect us to live on 3 hours of sleep every night and run ourselves into the ground serving others. That doesn't do anyone any good. We should take care of ourselves so that we are able to minister to others. Practicing JOY will result in joy.

6. Finally, I would like to discuss spiritual warfare. Christians don't realize it often, but we are in a war. Satan is one of our main enemies (along with the world and our flesh). He wants to bring us down. What do we do? Believers have no authority to "bind the devil."³⁴ Two of the important passages helpful here are James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:8, 9. Notice the repetition of the word "resist." The idea is very similar to what we talked about above about not putting ourselves in tempting situations. Rely on the strength of the Lord to not listen to Satan and give in to temptation. Another passage I urge you to think about is Ephesians 6:10-18.

³⁴ The binding talked about in passages such as Matthew 16:19 is not in the context of spiritual warfare.