
BASIC DOCTRINES CLASS

Faith Community Church



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Lesson 1

The Bible

The Bible is the most extraordinary book ever written. More copies of it have been sold than any other book in history. It has changed millions of lives. The Bible is the foundation of Christianity.

In order to understand who God is and what He expects of us, we must understand the Bible. This lesson will help us to gain a basic understanding of the Bible.

Background of the Bible

The Bible was written by about 40 different men over a period of approximately 1,500 years—from roughly 1400 B.C. until about A.D. 100. It was written in three different languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

None of the original pages used in writing the Bible exist anymore. But there are thousands of copies that are in close agreement. We can be certain that the Bible we have today is genuine and reliable.

Most people who own the Bible today have what is called a translation.

What is a translation?

In the case of the Bible, the written copies of the original pages have been translated from Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic into other languages. Most of us here in the United States use an English translation.

Today there are many English translations of the Bible available. Here are some of the more popular ones.

- English Standard Version (ESV)
- Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
- King James Version (KJV)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New King James Version (NKJV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)

Why are there so many different translations of the Bible?

Overview of the Bible

Though the Bible itself is considered a book, it actually contains many separate books.

Turn to the table of contents in your Bible.

What are the two major sections of the Bible?

1. _____ *How many books are in this section?* _____
(This section was written in mostly Hebrew and a little Aramaic.)

2. _____ *How many books are in this section?* _____
(This section was written in Greek.)

How many books are in the Bible? _____

The Old Testament can be divided into 4 parts:

1. Law (5 books)
2. History (12 books)
3. Poetry (5 books)
4. Prophecy (17 books)
 - a. Major Prophets (5 books)
 - b. Minor Prophets (12 books)

Here are the 5 books of the law in the Old Testament:

- Genesis (**Jen**-uh-sis)
- Exodus (**Ek**-suh-dus)
- Leviticus (Li-**vit**-eh-kus)
- _____
- Deuteronomy (*Doot*-a-**ron**-uh-me)

Here are the 12 books of history in the Old Testament:

- Joshua
- _____
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel (First Samuel)
- 2 Samuel (Second Samuel)
- 1 Kings (First Kings)
- 2 Kings (Second Kings)
- 1 Chronicles (First **Kron**-uh-kulz)
- 2 Chronicles (Second **Kron**-uh-kulz)
- Ezra (**Ez**-ruh)
- Nehemiah (Nee-uh-**my**-uh)
- Esther (**Es**-ter)

Here are the 5 books of poetry in the Old Testament:

- Job (Jobe)
- Psalms (Salmz)
- Proverbs (**Prov**-erbz)
- Ecclesiastes (Ick-*klee*-zee-**as**-teez)
- Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon)

Here are the 17 books of prophecy in the Old Testament:

Major Prophets

- Isaiah (I-**zay**-uh)
- Jeremiah (Jer-uh-**my**-uh)
- Lamentations (Lam-en-**tay**-shunz)
- Ezekiel (E-**zee**-kee-el)
- _____

Minor Prophets

- Hosea (Ho-**zay**-uh)
- Joel (**Jo**-ul)
- Amos (**A**-mus)
- Obadiah (O-buh-**die**-uh)
- Jonah (**Jo**-nuh)
- Micah (**My**-kuh)
- Nahum (**Nay**-hum)
- Habakkuk (Huh-**bak**-uk)
- Zephaniah (*Zef*-uh-**nye**-uh)
- Haggai (**Hag**-eye)
- Zechariah (*Zek*-uh-**rye**-uh)
- Malachi (**Mal**-uh-kye)

The New Testament can be divided into 3 parts:

1. History (5 books)
 - a. Gospels (4 books)
 - b. Early Church (1 book)
2. Letters (21 books)
 - a. Paul's Letters (13 books)
 - b. General Letters (8 books)
3. Prophecy (1 book)

Here are the 5 books of history in the New Testament:

Gospels

- Matthew
- _____
- Luke
- John

Early Church

- Acts (Ax)

Here are the 21 books that are letters in the New Testament:

Paul's Letters

- Romans (**Ro**-munz)
- 1 Corinthians (First Ku-**rin**-thee-unz)
- 2 Corinthians (Second Ku-**rin**-thee-unz)
- Galatians (Gu-**lay**-shunz)
- Ephesians (E-**fee**-shunz)
- Philippians (Fu-**lip**-ee-unz)
- Colossians (Ku-**losh**-unz)
- 1 Thessalonians (First Thes-uh-**lo**-nee-unz)
- 2 Thessalonians (Second Thes-uh-**lo**-nee-unz)
- 1 Timothy (First Timothy)
- 2 Timothy (Second Timothy)
- Titus (**Tie**-tus)
- Philemon (Fi-**lee**-mun)

General Letters

- Hebrews (**Hee**-brooz)
- _____
- 1 Peter (First Peter)
- 2 Peter (Second Peter)
- 1 John (First John)
- 2 John (Second John)
- 3 John (Third John)
- Jude (Jood)

Here is the 1 book of prophecy in the New Testament:

- Revelation (Rev-uh-**lay**-shun)

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters, which are in turn divided into verses. The writers of the Bible did not include the chapter and verse divisions. They were added by others later on so that people could find specific statements in the Bible more quickly and easily.

A specific verse in the Bible can be referenced by first mentioning the name of the book, then the chapter number, and finally the verse number. Here is an example in writing: John 3:16. Notice that the chapter and verse numbers are separated by a colon.

Some books in the Bible contain only one chapter. Verses in these books are normally referenced without listing the number one as the chapter number. Here is an example: Jude 3. Notice that only the name of the book and the verse number are listed.

Sometimes the chapter and verse divisions were not chosen very well. Occasionally they separate content that should flow together. So we should not rely on them too much. But overall these divisions are helpful.

Origin of the Bible

We've learned that the Bible was written by about 40 different men over a period of approximately 1,500 years. But is the Bible merely a book written by men, or is it something more? Let's see what the Bible itself says about this subject.

Turn to the book of 2 Timothy.

Is 2 Timothy in the Old or New Testament? _____

In which section of this Testament is 2 Timothy found? _____

Look at 2 Timothy 1:1-2.

Who wrote 2 Timothy? (See verse 1.) _____

See Appendix 1 on page 101 for more information on this person.

To whom was 2 Timothy written? (See verse 2.) _____

See Appendix 2 on page 102 for more information on this person.

How did the writer describe himself? (See verse 1.)

See Appendix 3 on pages 103-104 for more information on this subject.

Look at 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

Who is being contrasted with Timothy at the beginning of verse 14? (Hint: see verse 13.)

What command did Paul give to Timothy in verse 14?

What two things did Timothy know that gave him motivation to obey Paul's command? (See verses 14-15.)

1. _____

2. _____

To whom do you think Paul was referring at the end of verse 14? (Hint: see 2 Timothy 1:5.)

According to verse 15, how long had Timothy known the holy Scriptures (or sacred writings)?

What were the holy Scriptures able to do for Timothy? (See verse 15.)

What topic mentioned in verse 15 did Paul elaborate on in verses 16-17?

What two facts about Scripture did Paul affirm in verse 16?

1. _____

2. _____

To what part of Scripture do these two facts apply? _____

What did Paul mean when he used the word “Scripture”? Let’s take a look at how Paul used this word in his letters and how other writers of the New Testament used this word as well. (The word “Scripture” is not found in the Old Testament.)

The Greek word used for “Scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16 is γραφή (*graphe*). The English words “graph” and “graphite” come from this word. It is found 14 times in Paul’s letters. 10 of these 14 occurrences are in Romans and Galatians.

Look at Romans 4:3.

What is the source of Paul’s quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did Paul call what he had quoted? _____

Look at Romans 9:17.

What is the source of Paul’s quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did Paul call what he had quoted? _____

Look at Galatians 3:8.

What is the source of Paul’s quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did Paul call what he had quoted? _____

Look at Galatians 4:30.

What is the source of Paul's quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did Paul call what he had quoted? _____

The Greek word used for "Scripture" in 2 Timothy 3:16 is found 36 times outside of Paul's letters in the New Testament.

Look at Matthew 21:42.

Who is speaking in this verse? _____

What is the source of his quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did he call what he had quoted? _____

Look at John 19:24.

What is the source of the writer's quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did he call what he had quoted? _____

Look at John 19:37.

What is the source of the writer's quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did he call what he had quoted? _____

Look at Acts 8:32-33.

What is the source of the writer's quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did he call what he had quoted? _____

Look at James 2:8.

Who wrote this book? (See James 1:1.) _____

What is the source of his quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did he call what he had quoted? _____

Look at 1 Peter 2:6.

Who wrote this book? (See 1 Peter 1:1.) _____

What is the source of his quote here? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

What did he call what he had quoted? _____

We've just examined 10 of the 50 passages in the New Testament that contain the Greek word for "Scripture" used in 2 Timothy 3:16.

What did the writers (or speakers) do in each of these 10 passages?

Circle the best answer to the following statement.

Each of the 10 quoted passages comes from the _____.

- A. Bible
- B. New Testament
- C. Old Testament
- D. Law
- E. Major Prophets

Therefore, the word “Scripture” in the Bible is primarily a reference to the

_____.

It is this section of the Bible that Paul said is God-breathed (or inspired) and useful (or profitable), as we saw in 2 Timothy 3:16. Now we must turn our attention to the phrase “God-breathed.” It comes from one word in the Greek: θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*). The only time this word appears in the New Testament is here in 2 Timothy 3:16. It is a compound word.

What is a compound word?

What are some examples of compound words in English?

The Greek word for “God-breathed,” θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*), comes from the Greek words θεός (*theos*) and πνέω (*pneo*). θεός (*theos*) is the Greek word for “God.” πνέω (*pneo*) is a Greek word that means “to breathe.”

What did Paul mean when he said that “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16)? He meant that the entire Old Testament was breathed out by God. Its origin is the very breath of God. In other words, the Old Testament is made up of God’s own words.

This truth presents an apparent contradiction. How could the words of the Old Testament have been written by men if they are really God's words? A partial answer to this dilemma is found in another part of the Bible.

Turn to the book of 2 Peter.

Is 2 Peter in the Old or New Testament? _____

In which section of this Testament is 2 Peter found? _____

Look at 2 Peter 1:1.

Who wrote 2 Peter? _____

See Appendix 4 on pages 105-106 for more information on this person.

To whom was 2 Peter written? _____

In other words, who are these people? _____

In what two ways did the writer describe himself?

See Appendix 3 on pages 103-104 for more information on the second way in which the writer described himself.

Look at 2 Peter 1:16-21.

What event in the life of Jesus did Peter refer to in verses 16-18?

What passages in the Bible record this event? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

To whom did Peter refer when he used the word “we” in verses 16-18?

What was made more certain as a result of their presence at this event in the life of Jesus? (See verse 19.)

Peter had more to say about this topic in verses 20-21.

What words did he use to describe this theme in verse 20?

Here is another occurrence of the word “Scripture” in the New Testament. As we already saw, this word refers to the Old Testament. But here Peter narrows in on a certain part of the Old Testament: prophecy.

A prophecy is basically a message that is directly from God. It is delivered through a special messenger—usually a prophet. Prophecy is usually associated with predictions about the future. Often prophecy does involve the future, but it can also concern the present. The Old Testament contains many prophecies. Most of them are found in the writings of the prophets at the end of the Old Testament.

Now let’s see what Peter had to say about prophecy in verse 21.

Where did prophecy not come from? _____

Where did prophecy come from? _____

How did it come from him? _____

See lesson 4 for more about this person.

What did Peter mean when he said that men “were carried along” by the Holy Spirit? Let’s look at another place in the Bible where the Greek word translated “were carried along” is used.

Look at Acts 27:14-17.

Observe the word “driven” in verses 15 and 17. It comes from the same Greek word that is in 2 Peter 1:21.

This incident in Acts 27 provides an illustration as to how “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The wind drove or carried the people on the ship by means of the sails. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit drove or carried men as they spoke from God.

So 2 Peter 1:21 affirms that prophecy came from both God and men. The messages were ultimately from God, but they came through men. The Holy Spirit enabled these men to communicate messages from God. He utilized their natural abilities and distinct personalities during this process.

Though this passage in 2 Peter 1 refers specifically to the prophecies in the Old Testament, it may also provide a hint as to how the whole Old Testament was produced. Many Bible scholars and theologians make this assertion. Several other passages in the Bible seem to back up this claim.

Look at 2 Samuel 23:2.

Who is speaking in this verse? (Hint: see verse 1.) _____

Who spoke through this person? _____

Look at Mark 12:36.

Who is speaking in this verse? (Hint: see verse 35.) _____

Whom does this person quote? _____

What is the source of this quotation? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

By whom did the person being quoted speak? _____

Look at Acts 4:23-26.

Who was released from being questioned by religious leaders in Jerusalem? (See verse 23. See also verses 13 and 19.)

When they were released, whom did they tell what the religious leaders had said to them? (See verse 23.)

What did these people do when they heard the report? (See verse 24.)

What did they acknowledge God to be? (See the end of verse 24.)

Notice that verses 25 and 26 contain a quote. The quote begins in the middle of verse 25.

What is the source of this quote? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

According to verses 24-25, who spoke these words? _____

By whom did he speak? _____

Through whom did he speak? _____

Look at Hebrews 3:7-11.

What is the source of the quote found in these verses? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

According to verse 7, who spoke these words? _____

These four passages—2 Samuel 23:2, Mark 12:36, Acts 4:23-26, and Hebrews 3:7-11—indicate that the truth taught in 2 Peter 1:21 applies to more than just prophecy. God spoke by the Holy Spirit through David (as is the case in these four example passages) as well as various other men throughout the Old Testament.

So other Bible passages confirm the teaching of 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture (the entire Old Testament) is God-breathed. In other words, it finds its ultimate origin in God. These other passages reveal to us that God spoke through men (with the Holy Spirit playing an active part). Our finite minds cannot understand this subject completely, but we must affirm that both God and men wrote the entire Old Testament.

Though God is the ultimate author of Scripture, he did not bypass the natural abilities and distinct personalities of the human writers. He allowed for their different writing styles to be utilized during this process. Even today we can distinguish between the writing styles of Moses, David, and Isaiah, for instance. So God didn't simply dictate to the human authors what he wanted them to write down. Most of the time they wrote using their own distinct styles. Yet they wrote down exactly what God wanted them to write.

What about the New Testament? How does it fit into this discussion? Was it merely written by men? Or does it come from God also, like the Old Testament?

Look at 1 Timothy 5:17-18.

What group of people did Paul refer to in verse 17? _____

What are these people worthy of? _____

What does this phrase refer to? (Hint: see verse 18.) _____

What did Paul appeal to in verse 18 in order to support what he said in verse 17?

How many quotes are found in verse 18? _____

What are the sources of these quotes? (Hint: look for notes in your Bible.)

Which part of the Bible is the second quote from? _____

What did Paul call what he had quoted? _____

In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul placed a New Testament passage alongside an Old Testament passage and called them both “Scripture.” Paul’s action here indicates that other writings besides the Old Testament were considered to be part of Scripture even during Paul’s lifetime. Specifically, the words of Jesus as recorded in the gospels are also Scripture.

Look at 2 Peter 3:14-16.

To whom does Peter refer in verses 15 and 16? _____

According to Peter, did Paul write anything hard to understand? _____

What do ignorant and unstable people do to some of what Paul wrote?

Besides Paul’s letters, what other group of writings do these people distort?

The phrase “other Scriptures” indicates that Peter considered Paul’s letters to be part of Scripture. In other words, Paul’s letters belong side by side with the Old Testament and also the words of Jesus.

These two passages show us that the word of God is more than just the Old Testament. It includes other writings as well. These writings, which include the words of Jesus and Paul’s letters, are found in the New Testament.

How can we be sure that everything in the Bible is really God’s word? Are there any books in the Bible that shouldn’t be there? Are there any writings not in the Bible that should be there?

The Old Testament as it is today was generally accepted as God's word at the time of Jesus. The final Old Testament book to be written was completed about 400 years before Jesus lived on this earth. So there was plenty of time for the Old Testament books to be collected into one unit. Jesus quoted regularly from the Old Testament and gave no indication that he did not accept any part of it as God's word.

However, the last New Testament book to be written was not completed until almost 100 years after Jesus lived on the earth. And the books of the New Testament were not collected and organized until about 400 years after the earthly life of Jesus. So we cannot look for an opinion from Jesus on this matter.

But the early Christians utilized several principles to help them validate which books belong in the New Testament. First, a book needed to be written by an apostle or a close associate. Second, a book needed to agree with and not contradict the rest of God's word. Third, a book needed to be widely accepted by Christians.

Using these general principles, the early Christians affirmed what is truly God's word and rejected what is not. Their conclusions have stood the test of time. No legitimate objections to the contents of the Bible have ever been raised. And no one has ever been able to make a sound case for adding other writings to the Bible.

Some people, like Roman Catholics, assert that the books of the Apocrypha should be included in the Bible and specifically the Old Testament, since they were written before the earthly life of Jesus. But these books have never been accepted by the Jews as God's word. Jesus and the New Testament writers never quoted from the Apocrypha. In addition, these books contain inconsistencies and often disagree with the Bible. So the books of the Apocrypha do not belong in the Bible.

In summary, the New Testament does indeed come from God, just as the Old Testament does. Therefore, the truths about the Old Testament that are revealed in 2 Timothy 3:16 apply by extension to the New Testament as well. Christians today rightly refer to the whole Bible—both the Old and the New Testaments—as “Scripture.”

Look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

These verses affirm not only that all Scripture is God-breathed but also that it is useful.

What four things is Scripture useful for? (See verse 16.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Scripture is useful positively and negatively for both doctrine and behavior.

1. Positive Doctrine
2. Negative Doctrine
3. Negative Behavior
4. Positive Behavior

Scripture is useful for one's journey on the path of life.

1. It tells you the path on which you are to walk.
2. It shows you where you got off the path.
3. It shows you how to get back on the path.
4. It teaches you how to stay on the path.

Verse 17 reveals the purpose for the Scripture being God-breathed and useful.

What is the Scripture able to do for the man of God? _____

Paul was likely referring to Timothy and other pastors when he used the phrase "man of God." But this truth also applies by implication to all Christians of either gender, especially those who are spiritual leaders.

Verse 17 is a clear statement of the sufficiency of Scripture. Both the divine origin and the usefulness of Scripture ensure that it is able to make a person complete. Scripture can equip a Christian for every good deed. God's word is the only resource necessary to live a successful Christian life. It will give a person all that is needed to live for God and to instruct others to do the same.

Summary of the origin of the Bible:

- I. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).
 - A. “Scripture” primarily refers the Old Testament. (See Romans 4:3; 9:17; Galatians 3:8; 4:30; Matthew 21:42; John 19:24, 37; Acts 8:32-33; James 2:8; 1 Peter 2:6.)
 - B. The fact that Scripture is God-breathed means that it comes from God. How can the Scripture be both the words of men and the words of God?
 1. For prophecy in the Old Testament, “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).
 2. Other passages hint that the above truth applies to the whole Old Testament. (See 2 Samuel 23:2; Mark 12:36; Acts 4:23-26; Hebrews 3:7-11.)
 - C. Though the word “Scripture” refers primarily to the Old Testament, on occasion parts of the New Testament are viewed alongside the Old Testament, which implies that the New Testament is now part of Scripture.
 1. The words of Jesus are Scripture (1 Timothy 5:18).
 2. Paul’s letters are Scripture (2 Peter 3:16).
- II. All Scripture is useful (2 Timothy 3:16).

It is useful for:

 - A. Teaching
 - B. Rebuking
 - C. Correcting
 - D. Training in righteousness
- III. Scripture makes a person thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).

Basic Steps of Bible Study

Now that we know a little about the Bible, we should be motivated to study it. We know that the Bible is made up of God’s words, that it is useful for our journey on the path of life, and that it can make us completely prepared to do every kind of good deed (2 Timothy 3:16-17). These truths should motivate us to dig into the Bible and work hard to understand it.

How should we go about studying the Bible? Are there any steps that we should follow? Are there any special rules that we should consider? Let’s look at three basic steps for studying the Bible.

1. Observation (“What does the Bible say?”)
2. Interpretation (“What does the Bible mean?”)
3. Application (“How is the Bible relevant?”)

The first step of Bible study is observation. This step answers the question, “What does the Bible say?” Observation includes coming to the Bible as a detective. It means looking carefully for clues to determine all the facts. Even the smallest details should not be overlooked.

Observation starts with reading. The Bible is a book that must be read. So it’s important to read the Bible consistently. When studying a particular book, passage, or verse, that section should be read over and over.

When reading the Bible repeatedly, it is helpful to use several different translations. Christians have never had so many good Bible translations to choose from. This benefit should be utilized. Paraphrasing or restating a passage in your own words can also be helpful.

Another helpful way to observe the Bible is to listen to it. Many different Bible translations have been recorded into an audio format like CDs. This format can be utilized in many different situations, such as driving to work.

As you read the Bible, ask the following types of questions.

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Grammar is very important to observation. Words can be classified according to their parts of speech. Here are some examples of different parts of speech.

- Verb
- Subject
- Object
- Adjective
- Adverb
- Preposition
- Conjunction

Observing different units of thought and how they fit together is very important to observation. Words make up sentences, sentences make up paragraphs, and paragraphs make up books. So the best way to study the Bible is sequentially. In other words, an entire book should be studied as a whole from start to finish. That way the units of thought can be observed together.

As you make different observations, write them down! Record your thoughts so that you can look at them again. Use diagrams and charts to help you manage and arrange your thoughts. Develop an organized storage system so that you can find your work easily in the future.

Let's practice the first step of Bible study! Turn to Matthew 28:19-20 and observe these verses carefully. Utilize all the tools that we just discussed. Write down your observations below.

The second step of Bible study is interpretation. This step answers the question, “What does the Bible mean?” Interpretation builds on the step of observation. The meaning of the Bible cannot be determined without first observing it carefully. More time spent in observation means less time spent in interpretation as well as more accurate results.

But sometimes the Bible doesn’t make a lot of sense even after a great deal of observation. Problems may come up that cannot be resolved easily, or questions may arise for which there seem to be no answers. Differences in language and culture often prevent a clear understanding of the Bible. What does a person do at this point?

There are several guidelines to follow in sound interpretation. The main principle for interpreting the Bible correctly is context. Context is the key to solving difficult issues in the Bible. The context is basically whatever surrounds a passage. It includes both what comes before and what comes after a passage.

The importance of this principle was hinted at earlier under the step of observation. Verses or passages in the Bible should not be studied by themselves. Instead, the bigger picture should be noted. Studying through a book of the Bible in order helps accomplish this need.

There are several circles of context to consider. The immediate context includes paragraphs, sections, and books. A verse or even several verses should be studied within the larger paragraph. A paragraph should be viewed within the larger section. And a section should be related to the book as a whole.

In addition to the immediate context, the remote context should also be noted. The remote context includes groups of books (like the Law or the Minor Prophets), the Testament (Old or New), and the Bible as a whole.

When viewing a verse or passage within its immediate context, watch for key words. Key words are words that carry a great deal of meaning. The meaning of a verse often hinges on a key word. Key words tend to be verbs, but they can also be nouns or other parts of speech. Conjunctions, especially those at the beginning of a sentence, can also be key words.

Key words are often repeated within a paragraph, section, or book. So watch for repetition when studying the Bible. The major themes of a book or passage are often revealed by repeated words or concepts.

When viewing a verse or passage within its remote context, make sure to consider the genre of the material. Genre basically refers to the type of literature. There are many different types of literature found in the Bible. Here is a sample of them.

- Legal
- Narrative
- Poetry
- Proverb
- Prophecy
- Parable
- Exposition

Another issue to keep in mind when interpreting the Bible has to do with figures of speech. The Bible is full of figurative language. Great care must be taken to understand these figures correctly.

Normally the Bible should be interpreted literally, just as if it were a newspaper or a magazine. Many Christians in the past made the mistake of searching for hidden meanings in the Bible. They basically made the Bible say whatever they wanted it to say. But sound interpretation demands that the Bible be understood literally.

However, sometimes a literal meaning doesn't make sense. Only when the plain meaning doesn't fit should a figurative meaning be considered. When attempting to determine the meaning of a figure of speech, consider carefully the imagery being used. Seek to discover the reason it is present and what it is communicating. In addition, pay special attention to the context. The context may help explain the meaning of the figurative language.

Finally, interpretation often requires special Bible study tools. These resources provide a great deal of assistance when facing passages that are difficult to understand. They help overcome barriers such as language and culture. Here are some examples of helpful Bible study tools.

- Concordance
- Atlas
- Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia
- Bible Commentary
- Study Bible
- Bible Computer Software

The third step of Bible study is application. This step answers the question, “How is the Bible relevant?” Sometimes this question is worded, “What does the Bible mean to me?” However, when the question is worded this way, application can be easily confused with interpretation. It is better to distinguish carefully between these two steps and use the word “relevance” in connection with application.

Notice that the question is not, “Is the Bible relevant?” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 assumes that it is relevant. Instead of asking whether the Bible is relevant, the question to ask is how it is relevant. The purpose of this step is to determine the way in which it is relevant.

Application should not be considered until observation and interpretation have been completed. If the first two steps are not completed properly, then the third step is more likely to produce incorrect results.

There is one major difference between interpretation and application that clearly separates them. There can be only one interpretation of a Bible verse or passage, but there can be many applications. The single meaning of a verse or passage can produce many different applications. In fact, the same passage can apply in different ways to different people.

As you think about how to apply a Bible verse or passage to your life, ask yourself the following questions. Are there:

- Sins to avoid?
- Promises to claim?
- Examples to follow?
- Commands to obey?

These SPECS will help a you see (spectacles) God’s blueprints (specifications) for your life.

When you ask yourself these questions, consider all the different areas of your life. Think about your relationships with family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even enemies. Think about work, school, and your recreational activities. How does the Bible affect your life in these areas?

In addition, be a student of culture. Understand the world around you so that you can evaluate it correctly and respond to it appropriately using the Bible.

Make sure that you don’t neglect the step of application in the Bible study process! The Bible warns against committing this mistake.

Look at James 1:22.

What must be done in addition to merely hearing or listening to the word?

Now let's practice the final step of Bible study on the passage that we observed earlier: Matthew 28:19-20. Make sure to resolve any lingering interpretive issues first. Then write down some ideas for possible applications below.

Once you've completed the Bible study process, start memorizing some of the verses that you've studied. If you want to continually apply Bible verses to your life, you need to know them well. When you need them, you'll be able to remember them if you've committed them to memory.

Look at Psalm 119:11.

To whom was the psalmist speaking? (Hint: see verses 1-4.) _____

What did the psalmist do with this person's word?

Why did the psalmist do this?

How does this verse apply to you?

Once you've memorized some Bible verses, reflect on them often. Think about what they mean and how they apply to your life. In the Bible this process is called meditation. Biblical meditation is not simply emptying your minds of all thoughts but also includes filling your mind with God's word and pondering it.

Look at Psalm 1:1-6.

What two kinds of people are described in this psalm? (Hint: see verse 6.)

Which one is portrayed in verses 1 through 3? _____

How is this person described in verse 1? _____

What is this person's attitude toward God's law (or instructions)? (See verse 2.)

What does this person do with God's law (or instructions)? (See verse 2.)

What is this person compared to? (See verse 3.)

How do these verses apply to you (especially verse 2)?

Look at Joshua 1:8.

Who is speaking in this verse? (Hint: see verse 1.) _____

To whom was he speaking? (Hint: see verse 1.) _____

What did God command Joshua to do with the book of the law?

Why should Joshua do this?

What would be the result of Joshua's obedience?

How does this verse apply to you?

Finally, make sure to commit the entire Bible study process to God through prayer. Pray before you start, and pray throughout your study. Confess to the Lord any sins that you have committed so that nothing will hinder you as you study. Only with God's help will your study be successful. Let your prayer be the one found in Psalm 119:18: "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

Lesson 2

God

The first lesson addressed the subject of the Bible. We discovered that the Bible was written by God. He has revealed Himself to us in this book. We also learned how to study the Bible.

With this foundation in place, the second lesson deals more specifically with the author of the Bible. This lesson focuses on the person of God Himself. We will discuss the existence, knowability, and character of God. There is no person who is more important to study and know than God.

The Existence of God

In the first lesson we assumed the existence of God. But does God really exist? And how can we know for sure?

There are several methods that have been traditionally used to prove the existence of God. Here are four of the most popular approaches.

1. Cosmological Argument
2. Teleological Argument
3. Ontological Argument
4. Moral Argument

The cosmological argument is that every effect must have a cause and that the ultimate cause is God. The teleological argument is that since the universe is orderly, it must have been created by an intelligent designer—God. The ontological argument is that because the concept of God is universal, then God must have given that knowledge and thus must exist. The moral argument is that people have a sense of right and wrong and that this sense must come from God and be based on His own standards of right and wrong.

Though these arguments can be helpful, ultimately they are not conclusive on their own. The Bible must be consulted since it is the final authority on this and any other subject.

Look at Genesis 1:1.

According to the very first verse in the Bible, does God exist? _____

What kind of proof is offered in this verse for the existence of God?

Look at Psalm 14:1.

What does the psalmist call the person who denies God's existence? _____

Today those who deny the existence of God are commonly referred to as atheists. But in contrast to the beliefs of atheism, the Bible asserts that God exists. And there are at least four traditional arguments that support this claim.

The Knowability of God

Now that the existence of God has been defended, the subject of knowing God can be addressed. Can God be known? If so, how can He be known?

Look at Jeremiah 9:23-24.

What does God say a person should boast about? _____

Look at John 17:3.

What is involved in having eternal life? _____

These verses affirm that it is possible to know God. In fact, knowing God is presented as very desirable. But to what extent can we know God?

Look at Job 37:5.

What does this verse say about the great things God does?

Look at Psalm 145:3.

What does this verse say about the greatness of God?

Look at Romans 11:33.

What does this verse say about God's judgments and paths (or ways)?

These verses show that there are things about God that are beyond our comprehension. In other words, we cannot know God completely. We can know God in a limited sense, but we cannot know everything about Him.

Now that we have established that God can be known, a further question arises. How can God be known? There are two main ways that God has revealed Himself to us.

Look at Romans 1:18-20.

What is being revealed from heaven? (See verse 18.) _____

What is it being revealed against? (See verse 18.) _____

Why is it being revealed? (See verse 19.) _____

What has been clearly seen ever since the creation of the world? (See verse 20.)

How have these things been clearly seen and understood? (See verse 20.)

So one way that God has made Himself known to us is through creation. This method is called general revelation. It is called general revelation because it is available to all people. But this revelation only includes the most basic truths about God. It cannot bring a person to salvation by itself. (For more on salvation, see lesson 5.) Another kind of revelation is needed.

Look at Psalm 19.

What declares God's glory and His works? (See verse 1.) _____

How far does this form of revelation extend? (See verses 3-4.)

The first six verses of this psalm address the subject of general revelation. They speak of how God is revealed through His creation. The Bible asserts that God created the entire universe and everything in it. (See Genesis 1-2.) But the rest of Psalm 19 deals with another form of revelation. As an introduction to this subject, complete the following chart.

	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Action or Description</u>
1. Verse 7	Law	Perfect	Reviving the soul
2. Verse 7	_____	_____	_____
3. Verse 8	_____	_____	_____
4. Verse 8	_____	_____	_____
5. Verse 9	_____	_____	_____
6. Verse 9	_____	_____	_____

What overriding subject is addressed in verses 7-11? _____

The other way that God has made Himself known to us is through His word—the Bible. This method is called special revelation. Though many people have access to this kind of revelation, it is not available to everyone. However, this form of revelation contains enough information to bring a person to salvation. (See 2 Timothy 3:15. For more on salvation, see lesson 5.)

It is this type of revelation that we will consult in this lesson as we seek to know God. Now there is one final question that needs to be answered in this lesson. What is God like? This question will be answered at length in the following section.

The Character of God

The character of God can be summed up in His attributes. An attribute is a quality or characteristic inherent in or ascribed to someone or something. God’s attributes have been ascribed to Him in His word.

The attributes considered here are not exhaustive. Only some of the most important ones will be covered. Remember, we cannot hope to understand God completely. But these attributes will help us get started.

1. Invisibility

Look at 1 Timothy 1:17.

Who is the king described in this verse? _____

How is this person described? _____

Look at John 4:24.

Who is speaking in this verse? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

What is the topic of conversation? _____

What does the speaker assert about God in this verse? _____

What is the meaning of this assertion? (Hint: see Isaiah 31:3 and Luke 24:39.)

Look at John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12.

What phrase is present in both of these verses?

What about Bible verses which seem to say that God has body parts (Deuteronomy 5:15; Ezra 5:5) or that people have seen God (Genesis 32:30; Exodus 24:9-11)? It seems best to see the first set of verses as metaphorical. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is used to describe someone or something in a non-literal way in order to suggest a resemblance. In other words, references to God's hand or arm usually communicate His power, and references to God's eye usually communicate His knowledge and wisdom.

The second set of verses is best interpreted literally. But it is not necessary to say that God possesses a body as part of His essential nature. Instead, it is sufficient to say God sometimes shows Himself through visible, physical forms. In the past He has taken on different bodies in order to reveal Himself and communicate to people. But these physical forms are not a part of God's permanent being.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

2. Unchangeableness

Look at Malachi 3:6.

What does this verse say about God (the LORD)? _____

What was the result of this fact that was communicated about God?

Look at James 1:13-18.

According to verses 13-15, what does not come from God?

According to verse 17, what does come from God (the Father)?

How is God described in verse 17? _____

Look at Psalm 102:25-27.

Who is the psalmist speaking to in this psalm? _____

What is God being contrasted with in these verses?

How is God different from what He is being compared to?

The fact that God is unchangeable leads to the belief that God does not change His mind. And the Bible certainly teaches this truth very clearly (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29). But there are some passages that seem to teach that God sometimes does change His mind (Exodus 32:9-14; Isaiah 38:1-6; Jonah 3:4-10). How are these passages to be understood?

The best way to explain these passages is that God relates to people based on the present situation. A change in the situation leads to a change in the way that God responds. For example, God announced through the prophet Jonah His intention to destroy the city of Nineveh because of the wickedness of the people (Jonah 3:4). But when the people of Nineveh repented of their wickedness, God decided not to destroy them (Jonah 3:10). The change in the situation led to the change in God's response.

So God was not really the one who changed in this situation. The people of Nineveh were the ones who changed. God simply related to the people of Nineveh based on their change in a way that was consistent with His character. God's unchangeableness allows room for Him to relate to people in different ways based on different circumstances. But His interaction with people is always consistent with who He is. God's character—His nature or essential being—never changes.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

3. Eternity

Look at Romans 16:25-27.

How is God described in verse 26? _____

What does this word mean? _____

Look at Genesis 21:33.

Whose name did Abraham call upon? _____

How is this person described? _____

Look at Psalm 90:2.

Who wrote this psalm? (Hint: see the title of the psalm.) _____

To whom is he speaking? (Hint: see verse 1.) _____

How long is this person God? _____

What does this statement mean? _____

Look at Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8.

How is God related to time? _____

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

4. Omnipresence

Look at Psalm 139:7-12.

Who wrote this psalm? (Hint: see the title of the psalm.) _____

To whom is he speaking? (Hint: see verse 1.) _____

Where is God located? _____

Where could the psalmist go to get away from God? _____

Look at Jeremiah 23:23-24.

Who is speaking in these verses? _____

What is the main topic in the context of this passage? (Hint: see verses 21 and 25.)

What type of sentence is used by the speaker in verses 23 and 24? _____

What is the implied answer to each of these questions? _____

What does God assert about Himself in these verses?

Look at 1 Kings 8:27.

Who is speaking in this verse? (Hint: see verse 22.) _____

To whom is he speaking? (Hint: see verse 23.) _____

What had just been built for God? _____

What does the speaker assert about God in this verse?

Several objections have been raised to this attribute. First, if God doesn't have a body, how can He fill space? Since God is not physically present anywhere (except on rare occasions), He does not fill space in a physical sense. But He is present with all His being (non-physical) everywhere at once. He is present with or in addition to everything that exists, but not as everything (Pantheism).

Second, how can God be present in hell and unbelievers? The answer is that God is present in the universe in different ways. He is present everywhere with His entire being, but not in the sense that He has a relationship of fellowship. He lives in believers for fellowship but not hell or unbelievers. In addition, God is present in Christ in a different way than He is present in believers (Colossians 2:9).

Third, doesn't the Bible teach that God travels from place to place (Genesis 11:5-7; Exodus 19:18-20)? The best explanation for these occurrences is that each time God revealed Himself in a special way for a special purpose. In Genesis it was to observe the people and confuse their language, and in Exodus He descended in fire to give the law.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

5. Omniscience

Look at Psalm 147:5.

What does this verse say about God's understanding? _____

Look at 1 John 3:19-20.

What does God know? _____

Look at Psalm 139:1-6.

What does the psalmist say that God knows about him?

Look at Isaiah 40:13-14.

What type of sentence is used by the speaker in verses 13 and 14? _____

What is the implied answer to each of these questions? _____

What do these verses assert about God? _____

Look at Isaiah 44:28 and 45:13.

What does God say that Cyrus will do in the future? _____

Do these things take place? (See 2 Chron. 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-3.) _____

Look at 1 Samuel 23:10-13.

What do these verses teach about God?

What about Bible verses which seem to say that God learns about things (Genesis 22:12; Deuteronomy 8:2)? A close look at these verses shows that they should not be taken straightforwardly. In Genesis 22 God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac. But just before Abraham was about to kill Isaac, the angel of the LORD stopped him. If God wanted to know for certain that Abraham truly feared Him, then He should have waited long enough for Abraham to kill Isaac. Even if God had waited, Abraham still could have abandoned God at some point in the future. So this test could not have proven once and for all that Abraham feared God. God already knows every person's heart (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 28:9). The test simply demonstrated what God already knew to be true. God did not learn anything new factually, but He did witness Abraham's obedience in a fresh way. He genuinely experienced Abraham's fear for Him in their relationship.

What about Bible verses which seem to say that God forgets things (Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34)? There are two possible interpretations. First, these verses might simply mean that God does not count sins against people who have been forgiven. He will never again let the knowledge of these sins play any part in the way that He relates to them. Second, these verses could mean that God doesn't recall forgiven sins in His mind. He doesn't literally forget them; He just never thinks about them again. This would mean that God is not always consciously aware of what He knows. For us an example would be remembering our telephone number. We aren't always thinking about it, but we can recall it if we wish.

What about the passage which seems to say that things never enter God's mind (Jeremiah 32:35)? This verse cannot be teaching that God had never thought of the possibility that parents would sacrifice their own children. God actually commanded the Israelites through Moses not to do so about 800 years earlier (Deuteronomy 12:31). The Hebrew word in Jeremiah 32:35 that is translated "mind" is usually translated "heart" in the Old Testament. The best understanding of this verse is that God did not think of parents sacrificing their children in a positive way. In other words, He did not want it to happen.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

6. Omnipotence

Look at Genesis 17:1.

To whom does the LORD appear? _____

What command does the LORD give to this person? _____

How does the LORD refer to Himself? _____

Look at Revelation 1:8.

How does the Lord God refer to Himself? _____

Look at Revelation 16:7 and 19:15.

What is the word “Almighty” associated with? _____

What does the word “almighty” mean? _____

Look at Job 42:1-2.

What does Job assert about the LORD? _____

Look at Matthew 19:26.

What subject is under discussion in this passage? _____

What does Jesus affirm about God? _____

Look at Hebrews 6:18.

What is impossible for God to do? _____

There are several categories of things that God cannot do. First, God cannot do anything that is a logical contradiction. For instance, He cannot make round squares, married bachelors, or a stone so heavy that He can't lift it. Second, God cannot do anything that is opposed to His nature. For instance, He cannot commit sin, scratch His ear, or learn something new. The fact that God cannot lie fits under the second category above. Lying is opposed to God's nature.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

7. Sovereignty

God's omnipotence tells us how much power God has. God's sovereignty tells us the extent to which God uses that power.

There are 3 basic views regarding God's sovereignty:

1. God is not sovereign at all.
2. God is somewhat sovereign.
3. God is totally sovereign.

Look at Psalm 115:3 and 135:6.

What do the psalmists say that God does? _____

Look at Proverbs 16:9 and 19:21.

What does Solomon say about the LORD with regard to the plans of people?

Look at Proverbs 16:33.

What does Solomon say about the lot? _____

Look at Acts 2:22-23.

Who is speaking in these verses? _____

What does he say about God's involvement in the death of Jesus?

Look at Ephesians 1:11.

How many things and in what way does God work things out?

There have been several objections raised to an absolute view of God's sovereignty. First, how can people have free will if their choices have been determined by God? The definition of free will is the key to answering this question. People do not have free will in the sense that their choices are undetermined. But they do have free will in the sense that they act according to their desires without constraint (in most circumstances).

Second, how can God hold people accountable for their sins? People are responsible for their sins because they sin in accordance with their desires. God does not force people to sin against their wills. They sin because they want to sin. When Paul deals with this objection in Romans 9:19-21, he takes the protestor to task for talking back to God. He affirms that God has the right to do whatever He wants to do.

Third, doesn't this view make God responsible for sin? This question is difficult for any view of God's sovereignty to answer. The issue of God's relationship to sin is usually referred to as "the problem of evil." The best answer is simply that sin is part of God's plan, but He is not the source of evil. God included sin in His plan for His own glory (Romans 9:17). It allows His attributes to be displayed to the fullest.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

8. Holiness

Look at Psalm 99.

How is the LORD described in verses 3, 5, and 9? _____

How should people respond to God based on this description?

Look at Isaiah 6:1-5.

What does Isaiah see in his vision? (See verses 1 and 2.) _____

Who is speaking in verse 3? _____

How do they describe the LORD? _____

What is Isaiah's response to this experience? (See verse 5.) _____

Look at 1 Peter 1:14-16.

What does Peter command his readers not to do? (See verse 14.)

What does Peter command his readers to do instead? (See verse 15.)

How does Peter support this positive command? (See verse 16.)

In 1 Peter 1:14-15 holiness is contrasted with conformity to evil desires. So holiness basically means separation from sin. It involves the ideas of purity, consecration, and cleanness. In Old Testament times it included separation from all that was common and profane.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

9. Righteousness

Look at Deuteronomy 32:4.

Who is speaking in this verse? _____

What does he assert about God? _____

Look at Psalm 7:6-11.

Who wrote this psalm? (Hint: see the title of the psalm.) _____

How does he describe God? _____

Look at Psalm 11:5-7.

Who wrote this psalm? (Hint: see the title of the psalm.) _____

How does he describe the LORD? _____

Look at Romans 3:25-26.

Whom did God present as a sacrifice of atonement? _____

What did God demonstrate when He did this? _____

What had God done with the sins committed before that time?

Righteousness can be defined as conformity to an ethical or moral standard. It is basically right behavior. God is the ultimate standard of what is right. God's righteousness is linked with His judgment of the wicked.

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

10. Love

Look at 1 John 4:8 and 16.

What do these verses say about God? _____

Look at Deuteronomy 7:7-8.

Who is speaking in these verses? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

Where did he speak these words? _____

Why did God choose these people and deliver them from slavery in Egypt?

Look at Romans 5:8.

What did God demonstrate? _____

When did He demonstrate it? _____

How did He demonstrate it? _____

Look at John 13:34-35.

What did Jesus command His disciples to do? _____

Look at 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

What is the definition of love? _____

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

11. Grace

Look at 1 Peter 5:10.

How is God described in this verse? _____

Look at Psalm 145:8-9.

Who wrote this psalm? (Hint: see the title of the psalm.) _____

How does he describe the LORD in these verses? _____

Look at Titus 2:11.

What does God's grace bring for people? _____

Look at 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Why was Paul given a thorn in the flesh? _____

How did Paul respond to this thorn in the flesh? _____

What did the Lord say to Paul? _____

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

12. Mercy

While grace means unmerited or undeserved favor, mercy is pity shown toward those in misery. But there is a great deal of overlap between the attributes of grace and mercy. Love overlaps with these attributes significantly as well. All three of them show the goodness, kindness, and compassion of God.

Look at 2 Samuel 24:14.

What had David just done? _____

Why would David rather fall into the hands of the LORD than the hands of men?

Look at Ephesians 2:4-5.

How is God described in these verses? _____

Look at Titus 3:4-5.

What is the basis of salvation? _____

Look at Luke 6:36.

How should we behave in light of God's mercy? _____

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

13. Patience

Look at Exodus 34:5-7.

How does the LORD describe Himself? _____

The Hebrew construction used here and elsewhere in the Old Testament for “slow to anger” is literally translated “long of nose.” Anger was usually conveyed in the Hebrew language with the idea of a hot or burning nose. A long nose would not be burned up easily. To be “long of nose” or slow to anger is to be patient.

Look at Romans 2:4.

How is God described in this verse? _____

Look at 2 Peter 3:9.

What is the promise that Peter refers to? _____

Why is the Lord patient? _____

Look at James 5:7-8.

What does James command his readers to do? _____

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

14. Truth

Look at Isaiah 65:16.

How is God described in this verse? _____

Look at Titus 1:2.

What does this verse teach about God? _____

Look at John 17:17.

What does Jesus say about God's word? _____

See Appendix 5 on page 107 for more information on how this fact applies to the Bible.

Look at Ephesians 4:25.

What instructions does Paul give to believers in this verse?

Summarize what you have learned in this section.

Write down some ways that you can apply what you have learned to your life.

Summary and Classification of God's Attributes

Non-moral Attributes

- Invisibility
- Unchangeableness
- Eternity
- Omnipresence
- Omniscience
- Omnipotence
- Sovereignty

Moral Attributes

- Holiness
- Righteousness
- Love
- Grace
- Mercy
- Patience
- Truth

Throughout history the most popular way to classify God's attributes has been to use the terms incommunicable and communicable. Incommunicable attributes are those that God does not share with us, and communicable attributes are those that God does share with us. This system does have benefits, especially in the area of application. But no attribute is completely incommunicable or communicable. It is better to say that God shares all His attributes with us to some degree, whether great or small.

Probably the best way to classify God's attributes is to use the terms non-moral and moral. Moral attributes have to do with what is right and wrong. Non-moral attributes are more abstract and don't relate to what's right and wrong. Ironically, the attributes are divided the same way for this system as they would be for the incommunicable and communicable categories. All the non-moral attributes are usually considered incommunicable, and all the moral attributes are usually considered communicable.

Our response to all this knowledge about God should be worship and adoration. We should acknowledge to Him how great and good He is. We should humble ourselves before Him and give Him the glory and honor He deserves. If we don't respond in this way, then we don't truly understand who God is.

Lesson 3

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the most important person in human history. Our timeline is structured around his life on earth. It took place during the transition from B.C. to A.D. In fact, the initials B.C. stand for “before Christ.” The term “Christianity” is actually based on the word “Christ.”

This lesson addresses the person of Jesus Christ—who he is. Lesson 5 will deal with the work of Jesus Christ—what he did. The content of this lesson can be summarized in one statement: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one person. Each part of this statement will be discussed: first the humanity of Jesus Christ, then the deity of Jesus Christ, and finally the unity of Jesus Christ.

The Humanity of Jesus Christ

Look at Luke 1:26-38.

To whom did Luke write this letter? (Hint: see verse 1.) _____

When did the event recorded in this section take place? (See verses 26 and 36.)

How is Mary described? (See verse 27.) _____

Who visited Mary? _____

What did the angel say would happen to Mary? (See verse 31.)

How does the angel describe Jesus? (See verses 32-33.)

Why was Mary confused? (See verse 34.) _____

What was the angel's response? (See verses 35-37.) _____

How does the angel describe Jesus? (See verse 35.) _____

What was Mary's response? (See verse 38.) _____

Look at Matthew 1:1-17.

What is recorded in verses 1-17? (See verse 1.) _____

The Greek language is more precise than the English language. Words in English are not inherently masculine or feminine. But the Greek language has many words that are either masculine, feminine, or neuter in gender. For example, the word "whom" in Matthew 1:16 is from a Greek feminine pronoun.

Of whom was Jesus born? (See verse 16.) _____

What does the feminine pronoun imply about Joseph's role in the birth of Jesus?

How is Jesus described? (See verse 16.) _____

The word “Christ” is from the Greek word *χριστός* (*christos*), which means “anointed one.” The Hebrew word *מָשִׁיחַ* (*mashiach*) also means “anointed one.” Some English translations of the Bible actually have the word “Messiah” here in Matthew 1:16. During Old Testament times a king or ruler was often appointed by anointing his head with oil and thus was an “anointed one.”

Look at 1 Samuel 10:1.

What did Samuel do to Saul? _____

Look at 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

What was the LORD’s attitude toward Saul at this point? (See verse 1.)

What did the LORD want Samuel to do? (See verses 1 and 3.)

Whom did Samuel think the Lord’s anointed was? (See verse 6.) _____

Whom did God want Samuel to anoint? (See verse 13.) _____

Look at 1 Samuel 24:1-7.

How did David refer to Saul? (See verse 6.) _____

How did David treat Saul on this basis? _____

In later Old Testament times the Israelites began looking forward to the coming of a specific “anointed one” or Messiah. This person is likely the one mentioned in Daniel 9:25-26. The New Testament writers proclaim that this person is Jesus. The words “Christ” or “Messiah” are used in reference to Jesus over 500 times in the New Testament. The term “Christ” is virtually used as a last name for Jesus.

Look at Matthew 1:18-25.

Who was responsible for Mary having a child? (See verses 18 and 20.)

How did Joseph intend to respond to the situation? (See verse 19.)

What stopped him from following this course of action?

What name did they give to the child? (See verses 21 and 25.) _____

This name is the Greek version of the Hebrew name יהושוע (Yehoshua), which is better known as “Joshua.” The name “Joshua” means “the LORD saves.”

Why was this name an appropriate one for the child? (See verse 21.)

What verse was fulfilled by this child’s birth? (Hint: look for a note in your Bible.)

By what other name was the child known? (See verse 23.) _____

What does this name mean? (See verse 23.) _____

So Jesus was born of a virgin. His birth was not normal; it was a miraculous act of the Holy Spirit. But nevertheless he was born as a baby. He clearly became a human being. Several other passages show that Jesus was a human being.

Look at Luke 2:39-52.

In what ways did Jesus grow? (See verses 40 and 52.) _____

What kind of growth is implied by the word “wisdom”? _____

What kind of growth is implied by the word “stature”? _____

What kind of growth is illustrated in the event recorded in verses 41-51 and found between the statements of growth in verses 40 and 52? (Hint: see verses 46-47.)

How did Jesus respond to his parents? (See verse 51.) _____

Look at Luke 4:1-2.

What happened to Jesus at the Jordan river? (Hint: see Luke 3:1-3 and 3:21-22.)

Where did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus? _____

How long was Jesus there? _____

What happened to Jesus there? _____

What did Jesus eat during this time? _____

So what was his condition? _____

Look at John 4:1-6.

What caused Jesus to leave Judea and go to Galilee? _____

Where did Jesus pass through on his way to Galilee? _____

What happened to Jesus when he arrived in the town of Sychar?

Look at John 11:32-35.

Who was Mary's brother? (Hint: see the beginning of chapter 11.) _____

What had just happened to him? _____

How did Mary and the other Jews respond to what happened? _____

How did Jesus respond? _____

Look at Luke 24:36-43.

Whom did Jesus visit and greet? (Hint: see the beginning of chapter 24.)

Why were they startled and frightened? _____

How did Jesus reassure them? (See verses 39-40.) _____

After reassuring them, what did Jesus do? (See verses 41-43.)

So Jesus clearly was a human being. After being born as a baby, he grew both physically and mentally. He experienced hunger, fatigue, and sadness. He had a body with flesh and bones as well as hands and feet. He also ate food. However, some people have denied the humanity of Jesus.

Look at 1 John 4:1-3.

Instead of believing every spirit (person), what does John want his readers to do?

Why does he give this command? _____

What is the test for knowing if someone is from God? _____

Look at 2 John 7-11.

How are the deceivers described? _____

Are these deceivers Christians? _____

How should Christians respond to these deceivers? _____

The Deity of Jesus Christ

Look at Colossians 2:8-10.

What danger threatened to take the Colossian Christians captive?

What does this threat depend on instead of Christ?

What is true about Christ that should motivate Christians to avoid this threat?

Look at Titus 2:11-14.

What does God's grace do? _____

What should Christians be doing while they live godly lives in this present age?

How is Jesus Christ described? _____

Look at 2 Peter 1:1-2.

What does Simon Peter say that his readers have received? _____

Through what have they received it? _____

How is Jesus Christ described? _____

Look at Hebrews 1:1-9.

How did God speak to the Hebrew forefathers in the past? (See verse 1.)

How did God speak to the Hebrews in those last days? (See verse 2.)

Who is the Son? (Hint: see Hebrews 4:14.) _____

How is the Son described? (See verses 2-3.) _____

To whom is the Son compared and found superior? (See verses 4-9.) _____

What does the writer quote to support his assertion? _____

How do the angels respond to the Son? (See verse 6.) _____

How is the Son referred to? (See verse 8.) _____

Look at John 1:1-3 and 1:14-17.

What three facts are taught about the Word? (See verses 1-2.)

What took place through the Word? (See verse 3.) _____

What did the Word become and do? (See verse 14.) _____

What was the Word full of? (See verse 14.) _____

Whom did grace and truth come through? (See verse 17.) _____

So who is the Word? _____

So the Bible teaches that Jesus is God. The writers of Scripture state this fact clearly. The Bible also reveals what Jesus himself had to say about this matter.

Look at John 8:57-59.

What was happening earlier in this chapter? _____

What did Jesus say was true about himself before Abraham was born? _____

What words might we expect Jesus to say instead? _____

How did the Jews respond to this statement? _____

Why did the Jews respond this way? (Hint: see Exodus 3:13-14.)

Look at John 20:24-29.

Who was not present when Jesus first appeared to his disciples as a group?

What would it take for him to believe what the disciples told him about Jesus?

What did he say to Jesus when he saw him a week later?

How did Jesus respond to this statement? _____

So the Bible not only states directly that Jesus is God, but it also records that Jesus affirmed his own deity. He directly claimed that fact about himself and confirmed someone else's statement about it as well.

In addition to direct statements about the deity of Jesus Christ, the Bible states that Jesus possesses the attributes of God.

Look at Hebrews 13:8.

What attribute of God does Jesus have? _____

Look at Revelation 22:13.

Who is speaking in this verse? (Hint: see verse 16.) _____

What attribute of God does Jesus have? _____

Look at Acts 3:12-14.

What attributes of God does Jesus have? _____

Look at Jude 20-21.

What attribute of God does Jesus have? _____

Look at 1 Timothy 1:15-16.

What attribute of God does Jesus have? _____

Besides these clear statements above, Jesus performed many miracles that demonstrate his omnipotence.

Look at Psalm 89:8-9.

How is the LORD described? _____

Look at Matthew 8:23-27.

What happened while Jesus was sleeping? _____

What did Jesus do when his disciples woke him up? _____

How did his disciples respond to what happened? _____

What does this passage imply about Jesus in light of Psalm 89:8-9?

Look at Mark 6:30-44.

How much money would it have taken to feed the large crowd with Jesus?

How much food did his disciples find? _____

How many people did Jesus feed with this food? _____

How much food was left over? _____

Look at John 2:1-11.

Where was Jesus on this occasion? _____

What problem came up? _____

What did Jesus do? _____

What did Jesus reveal through this first miraculous sign of his? _____

The Bible also teaches that Jesus is worthy of worship—something reserved for God alone.

Look at Revelation 19:9-10 and 22:8-9.

What did the angel tell John in both passages? _____

Look at Luke 4:5-8.

What did the devil tempt Jesus to do? _____

How did Jesus respond? _____

Look at John 9:35-39.

Who was thrown out of the synagogue? _____

Why did the Pharisees throw him out? _____

When he found out who Jesus really was, how did he respond to him?

Look at Matthew 28:9.

Whom did Jesus meet? _____

How did they respond to Jesus when he greeted them? _____

Look at Revelation 5:11-14.

What did the angels sing about the Lamb? _____

What is different about what all the creatures sang? _____

How did the elders respond to this scene? _____

Who is the Lamb? (Hint: see John 1:29.) _____

The Unity of Jesus Christ

The Bible seems to teach that Jesus Christ is both God and man. But it is difficult to understand how these truths relate to each other. How is it possible for someone to be divine and human at the same time? Did Jesus lose some of his deity when he became a man?

Look at Philippians 2:5-7.

How should our attitude be like that of Christ Jesus? _____

How did Jesus demonstrate this attitude? _____

Some people believe that that phrase “made himself nothing,” which is literally “emptied himself,” means that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes when he became a man. But the context explains what is meant by this phrase.

How does the rest of verse 7 explain what is meant by “made himself nothing”?

In other words, this “emptying” is an addition, not a subtraction! This passage does not say that Jesus lost any of his deity. It simply says that he took on human flesh.

Yet the Scripture does seem to contain contradictory statements about Jesus. Some passages even seem to deny that certain attributes of God are true about Jesus.

Look at Colossians 1:15-17.

Whom is Paul talking about? _____

What does Paul say about him? _____

Verse 15 seems to teach that Jesus is a created being who was born. In other words, he is not eternal. But the term “firstborn” can also refer to a person of preeminent rank. This passage emphasizes the rank of Jesus over and above creation. He created all things and holds all things together. Instead of denying the eternity of Jesus, this passage emphasizes his omnipotence.

Look at Luke 3:23.

How old was Jesus when he began his ministry? _____

What does this statement imply about Jesus? _____

This passage seems to teach that Jesus is not eternal. Yet earlier in this lesson we saw in Revelation 22:13 as well as John 8:58 that Jesus is eternal.

Look at John 16:28.

Where did Jesus come from? _____

Where was he when he was speaking? _____

Where would he be going in the future? _____

What do these statements imply about Jesus? _____

This passage seems to teach that Jesus is not omnipresent. Many other passages obviously contain similar kinds of statements. Yet the Bible also seems to teach that Jesus is omnipresent.

Look at Matthew 28:18-20.

What promise does Jesus make to his disciples? _____

Look at Mark 13:32.

What does the phrase “day or hour” refer to? _____

Who does not know when it will take place? _____

What does this statement imply about Jesus? _____

This passage seems to teach that Jesus is not omniscient. Earlier in this lesson we looked at Luke 2:52, which teaches that Jesus grew in wisdom. So Mark 13:32 is not alone in suggesting that Jesus is not omniscient. Yet the Bible also seems to teach that Jesus is omniscient.

Look at John 6:64.

What did Jesus know from the beginning? _____

Look at James 1:13.

What does this verse teach about God? _____

Look at Hebrews 4:14-16.

Who is our great high priest? _____

Why is he able to sympathize with our weaknesses? _____

What can we do with confidence on this basis? _____

If Jesus is God, we would expect that he cannot be tempted by evil, just as God cannot. But the Bible teaches that Jesus has been tempted very thoroughly. Some of these temptations are recorded for us in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. The fact that Jesus has been tempted brings enormous benefits to Christians.

In lesson 2 we also saw that one of God's attributes is invisibility. Yet it seems obvious that Jesus was not invisible during his time on earth. We have also seen that Jesus is omnipotent. He proved his great power by performing incredible miracles. But we have also seen that Jesus got tired and hungry.

How are we to understand these seeming contradictions? Does Jesus actually have all of God's attributes? If not, how can he truly be God?

The early church grappled with this issue. It was discussed thoroughly by a large group of church leaders at a council in the city of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. They rejected some wrong views and affirmed the correct view.

The early church leaders recognized that the view called Apollinarianism is incorrect. This view holds that Jesus did not have a human mind or soul. He had a divine mind to go with his human body. So Jesus was partly God and partly man.

They also denied Nestorianism, the view that Jesus was two persons. He had a human person and a divine person. The problem here is that Jesus always speaks of himself as one person, not two.

In addition, they rejected the view called Monophysitism, which holds that Jesus had only one nature. His human nature was absorbed into his divine nature, resulting in a third kind of nature. He was not truly God and truly man, but a mixture of the two.

The early church condemned these views and affirmed that Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person. His human and divine natures are not mixed together but remain distinct. But they are united together in one person. This fact is sometimes called the hypostatic union.

Distinguishing between the divine and human natures is the key to understanding passages about Jesus that seem to contradict each other. For example, Jesus has always existed. But he took on human flesh at a point in time. So his divine nature is eternal, but his human nature is not.

The same is true with the attributes of omnipresence and omniscience. With his human nature Jesus is present in only one location at a time. But in his divine nature he is present everywhere. In his human nature Jesus does not know everything and grows in wisdom. But in his divine nature he knows everything. The same is true about temptation, invisibility, and omnipotence.

Obviously, as finite human beings we cannot understand the hypostatic union completely. But we must affirm everything that God's word teaches us about Jesus, even when those truths seem contradictory.

So Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one person. He has two natures, divine and human, that are united together and yet remain distinct. Jesus is truly God in human flesh, a truth referred to as the incarnation. Our response should be one of wonder and amazement. Jesus is indeed worthy of our worship.

Lesson 4

The Holy Spirit and the Trinity

The subject of the Holy Spirit has not received much attention in the history of Christianity. This theme has often been brushed aside as unimportant. It has also been greatly misunderstood at times. But it's a theme that deserves attention.

This lesson will briefly address three areas related to the Holy Spirit: the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the deity of the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit. It will conclude with a section on the Trinity.

The Personhood of the Holy Spirit

Some people have thought that the Holy Spirit is simply a force or an influence. But the Bible teaches clearly that the Holy Spirit is a person, not a thing.

Look at John 14:16-17.

Who is speaking here? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

What will the Father give them? _____

What distinct title is used later in verse 26? _____

There are two Greek words that mean "another." ἕτερος (*heteros*) means "another of a different kind." It is often translated "different." This word is used in Galatians 1:6. ἄλλος (*allos*) means "another of the same kind." This word is used here in John 14:16. Since Jesus Christ is a person, then by implication the Holy Spirit is also be a person.

Look at John 16:13-14.

Who is speaking here? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

What pronouns are used for “the Spirit of truth”? _____

What gender are these pronouns? _____

The Greek word for “Spirit” here is πνεῦμα (*pneuma*). The gender of this noun is neuter. Normally a pronoun replacing this word would also be neuter in gender. But instead the masculine pronoun ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*) is used. This fact strongly implies that the Spirit is a person.

The Holy Spirit also has the essential characteristics of a person: intellect, emotions, and will.

Look at Romans 8:26-27.

What does the Spirit do for Christians? _____

What does the one who searches our hearts know? _____

Look at Ephesians 4:30.

What should Christians not do? _____

In what way might they fail to obey this command? (Hint: see verse 29.)

Look at 1 Corinthians 12:11.

What does the Spirit give to each Christian? (Hint: see verses 1-10.)

Who tells the Spirit what to do in this matter? _____

The Deity of the Holy Spirit

Not only is the Holy Spirit a person, but he is also God.

Look at Acts 5:1-5.

What did Ananias and Sapphira do? _____

To whom did Ananias lie? (See verse 3.) _____

To whom did Ananias lie? (See verse 4.) _____

What does this substitution suggest? _____

Look at 1 Corinthians 3:16.

How are Christians described here? _____

What do these two statements imply about the Spirit? _____

Besides these clear statements about the deity of the Holy Spirit, the Bible states that the Spirit possesses the attributes of God.

Look at Hebrews 9:13-14.

What attribute of God does the Spirit have? _____

Look at Psalm 139:7-8.

What attribute of God does the Spirit have? _____

Look at 1 Corinthians 2:10-11.

What attribute of God does the Spirit have? _____

Look at Hebrews 10:28-29.

What attribute of God does the Spirit have? _____

Look at John 15:26.

What attribute of God does the Spirit have? _____

Look at Romans 1:1-4.

What attribute of God does the Spirit have? _____

This last attribute is the one most closely associated with the Spirit. The title “Holy Spirit” is used 90 times in the New Testament.

Look at 1 Peter 4:14.

Why are Christians blessed when they are insulted because of the name of Christ?

What does this description of the Spirit imply? _____

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit demonstrates his omnipotence through his works.

Look at Genesis 1:1-2.

What did God do in the beginning? _____

What was the condition of the earth? _____

How was the Spirit of God involved? _____

Before God filled the earth to make it habitable for humanity (verses 3-31), the Spirit of God was involved in preparing for this event.

Look at 2 Peter 1:20-21.

How did prophecy originate? _____

So the Holy Spirit also played a part in producing the prophecy recorded in the Old Testament. This truth likely applies to the whole Bible as well.

Look at Hebrews 3:7-11.

What is the source of this quote here? _____

Who spoke these words? _____

See lesson 1 for more information about the Holy Spirit's role in the writing of Scripture.

Look at Luke 1:35.

To whom is the angel speaking? _____

What did the angel just say would happen to her? _____

How did the angel say that this would happen? _____

Look at Matthew 1:18-20.

How did Mary become pregnant? _____

So the Holy Spirit was involved in creation, the writing of Scripture, and the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. For more information about this last subject, see lesson 3.

The Bible records other works of the Holy Spirit besides these three. Many of them are connected to salvation. See lesson 5 for more information on some of these works.

The Trinity

Now that the subjects of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have been discussed, the Trinity can be addressed. This theme is difficult to grasp and will never be understood fully. But it is an accurate summary of the Bible's teaching.

The Trinity can be boiled down to several simple statements:

1. There is one God.
2. The Father is God.
3. The Son is God.
4. The Spirit is God.
5. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are distinct persons.

Look at Deuteronomy 6:4.

What does this verse say about the LORD? _____

Look at Isaiah 45:5-6.

Who is God besides the LORD? _____

The Bible teaches clearly that there is only one God. But the Bible also teaches clearly that God is three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

Look at Colossians 3:17.

In whose name should Christians speak and act? _____

What should they do at the same time? _____

Not only is the Father God, but the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit are as well. See lesson 3 for more information about the deity of Jesus Christ. The deity of the Holy Spirit is defended earlier in this lesson.

Look at John 14:26.

Who is speaking in this verse? _____

Who else does he mention? _____

How are the three persons of the Trinity distinguished?

So clearly the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are distinguished here as separate persons. In addition, there are other passages of Scripture that place these three side by side as equals.

Look at Matthew 28:19.

Into whose name should Christians be baptized? _____

Look at 2 Corinthians 13:14.

What request does Paul make for all the Christians in Corinth?

Many people have attempted to use analogies to explain the Trinity. A tree (roots, trunk, and branches) and a three-leaf clover have been suggested. But both of these analogies fail because the three members of the Trinity are each fully God.

Water (steam, water, and ice) has also been suggested as an analogy. But no quantity of water can exist as all three forms at the same time. And there is no such thing as “one water.” Other analogies have also been proposed, but all of them ultimately fail to represent the Trinity adequately.

The Trinity is something that is beyond human comprehension. But this doctrine is vitally important to Christianity. Throughout church history people have denied this truth or redefined it. But all of them have been condemned as heretics. Our finite understanding of this crucial doctrine should not stop us from believing it. And our belief should be accompanied by worship and adoration of our great God.

Lesson 5

Salvation

The subject of salvation is the culmination of what has been discussed in previous lessons. The first four lessons have taken a careful look at the God who has revealed himself to us in the Bible. Now it's time to study God's relationship with the human race. This relationship will be explored by discussing the theme of salvation.

Salvation can be defined generally and simply as deliverance from danger. This subject will be addressed from four perspectives: the need for salvation, the provision of salvation, the way of salvation, and the results of salvation.

The Need for Salvation

This section answers several questions. Who needs salvation? Why do they need salvation? To answer these questions, we must start at the beginning of human history.

Look at Genesis 1:24-31.

Which day of creation is recorded in these verses? _____

What did God create on this day? _____

In what way did God create mankind? _____

Only human beings are said to be made in the image of God. It is hard to know exactly what it means to be created in God's image. In a general sense it obviously means that we are like God in certain ways. Specifically it probably involves the ability to communicate, reason, and understand right from wrong.

The context also provides a clue as to what is involved in being made in God's image.

What did God command the first humans to do? _____

What did God command the creatures of the sea and air to do? (See verse 22.)

How are these two sets of commands different from each other?

As the creator of everything, God has authority and rules over His creation. He has given us this ability and responsibility in a more limited sense. But the rest of God's creation does not share in this likeness to God.

As a result of being made in the image of God, human beings hold a special place among God's creation. God relates to us differently than He does to the rest of His creation. He desires to have fellowship with us.

How did God evaluate His creative work when He was finished?

Genesis 2:4-25 records some details from the sixth day of creation that were not included in chapter 1. For instance, Genesis 2:18-25 reveals that the first woman was created after and from the first man. Just before the woman was created, God gave a command to the man.

Look at Genesis 2:15-17.

Where did God put the man? _____

What did the man do there? _____

What command did God give to the man? _____

What would happen if the man disobeyed this command? _____

Look at Genesis 3:1-7.

Who is speaking in this passage? _____

Who was really speaking through the serpent? (Hint: see Revelation 12:9.)

Whose words were quoted in verse 1? _____

Is this quote accurate? _____

How did Satan make God seem? _____

Did the woman affirm the way that Satan handled God's words? _____

Did the woman quote God accurately when she corrected Satan? _____

If it was inaccurate, in what way was it wrong? _____

What did Satan do to God's words in his response to the woman?

What did Satan say would happen to her if she ate the forbidden fruit?

What Satan said was actually somewhat true. The man and the woman did not have any understanding of what evil was at that point. If they disobeyed God, they would experience evil for themselves. But it would not be like God's experience of evil. God understands evil, but He has never sinned.

How did the woman now view the forbidden fruit? _____

Satan tempted Jesus in these same three areas (Luke 4:1-13). The world tempts us that way today as well (1 John 2:15-17).

How did the woman respond to Satan's temptation? _____

Notice that the man was with the woman the whole time! He was the one who originally received the command from God about the fruit. But he never stepped in to halt Satan's temptation or to stop the woman from eating the fruit. Instead he disobeyed God too!

What happened to the man and the woman when they disobeyed God?

Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. The rest of Scripture and life itself do not make much sense without this chapter. It records how the human race experienced sin for the first time. Sin is simply defined as disobeying God. The rest of the chapter shows how God responded to this first sin.

Look at Genesis 3:8-13.

What did the man and the woman do when they heard God approaching?

How many times did God speak in this passage? _____

How did God speak each time? _____

Did God do this because He didn't know the answers? _____

Why didn't God simply proclaim what He knew about the situation?

Notice that God questioned the man first and foremost. He asked him three questions and the woman only one. He held the man primarily responsible for the situation.

What reason did the man give for hiding? _____

How did the man respond to God's question about eating from the forbidden tree?

To whom did the man shift the blame? _____

How did the woman respond to God's question to her? _____

So did the man and the woman take responsibility for their actions? _____

In the rest of the chapter, especially verses 14-19, God laid out the consequences for the sin that had just taken place. He addressed the serpent first, then the woman, and finally the man.

Look at Genesis 3:14-19.

What were the consequences for the serpent? _____

What were the consequences for the woman? _____

What were the consequences for the man? _____

What did God curse? _____

Look at Genesis 3:20-24.

What happened to Adam and Eve? _____

God kept His promise that eating the forbidden fruit would result in death. This physical death was not immediate, but it would take place eventually. But another kind of death came immediately. Death basically means “separation.” Physical death is the separation of the body from the spirit. Spiritual death is the separation of a person from God. Adam and Eve were separated from God spiritually as soon as they sinned. Their relationship with God was affected drastically. They no longer had close fellowship with God.

It did not take long for sin to spread to other members of the human race.

Look at Genesis 4:1-12.

Who were the children born to Adam and Eve? _____

What did they bring as an offering to the LORD? _____

How did the LORD respond to their offerings? _____

How did Cain respond to the situation? _____

Look at Genesis 4:23-24.

How was Lamech related to Cain? (Hint: see verses 17-18.)

What did Cain tell his wives? _____

Adam and Eve's oldest child not only sinned but committed a murder. Lamech did the same thing and showed an even stronger desire for vengeance.

Not only did sin spread to other members of the human race, but death did as well. Genesis 5 records Adam's physical death along with a number of his descendants. Only Enoch (and later Elijah) escaped physical death. God took these godly men directly to Himself before they died. But every other person who has ever lived has died eventually.

The New Testament teaches these same truths.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10:31.

What should people do everything for? _____

Look at Romans 3:23.

What have all people done? _____

Look at Romans 6:23.

What is the payment (or wages) for sin? _____

The Bible teaches that all people are sinners and are separated from God in a state of spiritual death. After a person dies physically, this state of spiritual death leads to punishment in hell.

Look at Matthew 5:21-22.

Who is speaking here? _____

What will happen to the person who is angry with his brother?

What will happen to the person who says, "You fool!"?

Look at Matthew 25:41.

Who is speaking here? _____

Where will those who are cursed go? _____

So hell is a place of fire where people are punished forever because of their sins. Clearly the human race is in trouble! Every person has a definite need for salvation.

The Provision of Salvation

Humanity's need for salvation has been established. Has someone provided salvation for the human race? Or is humanity doomed to spend eternity in hell?

Look at Matthew 1:21.

Who is speaking here? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

Why was Jesus' name appropriate for him? (See page 60.) _____

Look at 1 John 4:14.

What could John and his readers testify about? _____

Lesson 3 focused on the person of Jesus Christ—who he is. This lesson focuses on the work of Jesus Christ—what he did. In other words, why did God the Father send him to earth? The passages above make it clear that he came to save people.

But a further question arises: how did he provide salvation? What did he do to make salvation possible for people? The answer is recorded at length in all four gospels. This lesson will examine Luke's account.

Look at Luke 22:1–24:8.

Summarize this passage in your own words.

Look at Luke 9:22.

What did Jesus say must happen to him? _____

Notice that Jesus did not simply predict what would happen to him. He said that these things must happen to him. In other words, these things needed to happen to him so that he could fulfill his purpose in coming to earth—providing salvation for people.

The necessity of a death sacrifice to pay for sin is rooted in the Old Testament. During Old Testament times the priests would offer sacrifices according to God's commandments. But Jesus offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

Look at Hebrews 7:23-27.

How was the sacrifice of Jesus different than those of the Old Testament priests?

Look at 1 Peter 3:18.

What does Peter say about the death of Christ? _____

Look at 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

What did Paul want to remind his readers about? _____

What did Paul receive and pass on to his readers that was so important?

Look at Luke 24:50-51.

Who was speaking in the previous verses? _____

Whom did he lead to the Bethany area and bless? _____

What happened while he was blessing them? _____

The Way of Salvation

Clearly Jesus Christ has provided a way for people to be saved from eternal punishment for their sins. But is there another way that people can be saved?

Look at John 14:1-6.

Where was Jesus going? _____

What was he going to be doing there? _____

What was Thomas confused about? _____

How did Jesus respond to Thomas? _____

Look at Acts 4:1-12.

What had Peter and John just been doing? (See chapter 3.) _____

How did the religious leaders respond? _____

What was the response of the people? _____

What did the religious leaders ask Peter and John? _____

What was Peter's answer? _____

What did Peter say about salvation? _____

Obviously people can only be saved through Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. So how must people respond to what they learn about Jesus?

Look at Acts 3:19.

Who is speaking here? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

What does he command them to do? _____

What will happen if they do? _____

Look at Acts 16:31.

Who is speaking here? _____

To whom are they speaking? _____

What had just happened? _____

What do they command him to do? _____

What will happen if he does? _____

Look at Acts 20:21.

Who is speaking here? _____

To whom is he speaking? _____

How does he summarize his ministry? _____

Look at Romans 10:9.

What does Paul say that one must do to be saved? _____

So people must repent or turn from their sins and believe or trust in Jesus Christ to save them on the basis of his death and resurrection. They must acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and submit to his lordship over their lives. People cannot be saved unless they respond in this way.

But can we contribute to our salvation in any way? Do we need to perform good deeds in order to be saved?

Look at Ephesians 2:8-9.

How does Paul say that people are saved? _____

How does Paul say that Christians are not saved? _____

What could people do if they could be saved this way? _____

It is clear that Christians cannot be saved by doing good works. So what is the relationship between Christians and good deeds? This question will be answered in the next section.

The Results of Salvation

Look at Ephesians 2:10.

How does Paul describe Christians? _____

Look at James 2:14-17.

What are the implied answers to the questions in verse 14? _____

What does James call faith that is by itself and without action? _____

So Christians are not saved by doing good works, but they do good works because they're saved. Salvation always produces good deeds. There is no such thing as a Christian who does not perform good deeds.

So one of the results of salvation is good deeds. Before they are saved, Christians do not desire to please and obey God. But after they get saved, there is a change. The catalyst for this change is another one of the results of salvation.

Look at Romans 8:8-9.

What does Paul say about people who are controlled by the sinful nature?

What does Paul say is true about Christians? _____

What is true about those who do not have the Spirit of Christ? _____

Look at 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

What is the topic under discussion in the context? _____

What does Paul say about the bodies of Christians? _____

What does Paul say about the Holy Spirit? _____

So it is clear that the Holy Spirit lives in each Christian. And his presence has a definite impact on those whom he indwells.

Look at Galatians 5:22-23.

What is the fruit that the Spirit produces in Christians? _____

Will the Holy Spirit ever leave a Christian? Once people get saved, can they ever lose their salvation?

Look at Ephesians 1:13-14.

What happened to the Christians in Ephesus when they got saved?

How is the Holy Spirit described? _____

Look at John 10:27-29.

Who is speaking in this verse? _____

What is his relationship with his sheep? _____

So the Holy Spirit will never leave Christians once they get saved. They can never lose their salvation. No one can snatch them from the hand of Jesus or his Father.

Look at John 3:16.

What will happen to those who believe in the Son of God? _____

Look at Ephesians 1:7.

To whom do the pronouns "him" and "his" refer? (Hint: see verses 3 and 5.)

What do Christians have through this person? _____

Look at Romans 5:9-11.

What is true about Christians since they have been justified by Christ's blood?

What is different about a Christian's relationship with God after salvation?

Salvation brings incredible benefits to Christians. They receive the gift of eternal life. Instead of spending eternity in hell separated from God, they get to be with God forever in heaven. Their sins have been totally forgiven. God does not hold their sins against them anymore. Instead of being God's enemies, they are now reconciled to Him and are His friends. They have been redeemed (released from captivity) and justified (legally declared "not guilty").

The good news about salvation through Jesus Christ is the best news anyone can ever hear. And salvation is the best gift that anyone can ever receive. The right response to this truth brings eternal benefits that cannot be matched. What is your response?

Appendix 1

Who was Paul? We've already learned that he wrote 13 letters in the New Testament. So we can guess that he must be a very important person. Let's take a brief look at this man.

We first meet Paul in the book of Acts, which records the history of the early church. He was born with the name of Saul. Later on his name was changed to Paul. (See Acts 13:9.)

Look at Acts 7:54-60.

What was Saul doing in this passage? _____

Look at Acts 8:1-3.

What was Saul's reaction to the death of Stephen? _____

What did Saul do after Stephen's death? _____

Look at Acts 9:1-20.

In just a few words, what happened to Saul in this passage?

Look at Acts 13:1-3.

This passage records the beginning of Saul's first missionary journey. He went on two more journeys before being arrested and put in prison. On these journeys he and others went from town to town sharing the good news about Jesus Christ. He established churches everywhere he could. Later on he wrote letters to them. These letters are what we find in the New Testament.

Appendix 2

Obviously Timothy is a companion of Paul's. What is their relationship?

Look at 2 Timothy 1:2.

How did Paul refer to Timothy? _____

Look at 1 Timothy 1:1-2.

How did Paul refer to Timothy? _____

Let's see how Paul first met Timothy.

Look at Acts 16:1-3.

Timothy became one of Paul's most faithful traveling companions on his missionary journeys. He is listed alongside of Paul in the greetings of several of Paul's letters. (See 2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1:1.)

Look at 1 Timothy 1:3.

Where did Paul ask Timothy to stay? _____

It seems likely that Paul had appointed Timothy as a pastor at the church in this city. Later on he wrote two letters to him (1 and 2 Timothy) for pastoral training and encouragement.

Appendix 3

We have seen that Paul is an apostle. He refers to himself using this title in the greetings of 9 of his 13 letters. (See Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1.)

What is an apostle? An apostle was someone who was sent out as an official representative. He had the authority of the one who sent him. New Testament apostles were sent out by Jesus. They represented him and carried his authority.

Apostles were foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20). Their primary responsibilities were proclaiming the truth in both oral and written form as well as establishing and building up churches.

Who else was an apostle besides Paul?

Look at Luke 6:12-16.

What did Jesus call the twelve disciples whom he chose? _____

These twelve disciples were:

- Simon (Peter)
- _____
- James
- John
- _____
- Bartholomew
- Matthew
- _____
- James (the son of Alphaeus)
- Simon (the Zealot)
- Judas (the son of James)
- Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and later killed himself, so he was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:26).

There were others as well:

- James, the brother of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19)
- Barnabas (Acts 14:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5-6)
- Perhaps others

Appendix 4

Who was Simon Peter? We first meet him in the Gospels, which record the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Each of the four Gospels contains different yet complementary accounts of the “good news” about Jesus Christ. Let’s take a brief look at what the Gospels tell us about Simon Peter.

Look at John 1:35-42.

Who brought Simon to Jesus? _____

Who gave Simon the name “Peter”? _____

Look at Luke 5:1-11.

What was Simon Peter’s occupation? _____

What did Jesus instruct Simon and his partners to do? (See verse 4.)

What happened when they did as Jesus directed? (See verses 6-7.)

What was Simon Peter’s reaction to this event? (See verses 8-9.)

What did Jesus say that Simon would do from that point on? (See verse 10.)

How did Simon and his partners respond to what Jesus said? (See verse 11.)

Simon Peter was the most prominent follower of Jesus Christ. He is mentioned in the Gospels more often than anyone except Jesus. He went through high points, such as when he acknowledged that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). He also went through low points, such as when he denied three times that he knew Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-27). But Peter later reaffirmed his devotion to Jesus (John 21:15-19).

After Jesus ascended to heaven, Peter played a vital role in the early stages of the church. God saved thousands of individuals through his preaching (Acts 2:14-41; 3:12-26; 4:1-4). He also used Peter to heal people who were lame and sick (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16). Near the end of his life, Peter wrote two letters which have been preserved for us in the New Testament: 1 Peter and 2 Peter.

Appendix 5

In John 17:17 Jesus says that God's word is truth. How does this fact relate to the Bible? Since the Bible is God's word (2 Timothy 3:16-17), it is proper to say that the entire Bible is truth.

Many people claim that the Bible is filled with mistakes, especially in historical or scientific details. But since God cannot and does not lie (Titus 1:2), His words in the Bible cannot contain any errors. Certainly mistakes have found their way into copies of the Bible that have been made. But these mistakes are few and far between, and most of them have been corrected. The original pages of the Bible in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic had no errors or mistakes.

This fact about the Bible has been labeled "inerrancy." It is an important doctrine that has been the subject of much recent debate. It has divided denominations and split churches. But it is true and should be accepted by Christians.