

Theology Basics

Course Lecturer: Dr. Sid Buzzell

If you have not already done so, it is important that you first review our [Leader's Packet](#) for specifics on how to open, facilitate, and close your group sessions.

This Leader's Guide walks you step by step through this lesson. Use as much of the suggested material as you find helpful. Some sections have more than one discussion question or idea so you can choose an option that fits your group. Feel free to add other ideas as well. You may also choose to extend this particular lesson to two or more sessions.

The Leader's Guide contains information that isn't covered in the Listening Guide so the group session adds value to those who have completed the Listening Guide.

Step by Step Through the Study

As you prepare for the session, you will find information you need to lead the discussion questions in this Group Leader's Guide.

Introduce the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by reading or paraphrasing the following overview of Lesson 1. “In Lesson 1, we will define what is meant by ‘doctrine’ and examine the doctrines of God and of Christ. The course will show how these foundational truths are relevant to the believer’s life today.”

Ask if there are questions about the session or about preparation for the session.

Review the Lesson Objectives

Review the Lesson Objectives below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

By the end of this study you should be able to

1. Define the term *doctrine*.
2. Explain what is meant by “adorn the doctrine of God” (Titus 2:10).
3. Recall key aspects of the nature and purposes of God.
4. List central ideas about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

While we provide comprehensive **lesson** goals, it is important that your group members also reflect on their own **personal** goals. Even if they choose to elaborate on one of the lesson goals that you provide, it helps to have their own reason for studying the lesson. The group will also have time to reflect on these personal goals at the end of the lesson to see how they have or have not been fulfilled or perhaps have changed.

After you have explained the two levels of lesson goals, ask if anyone would like to share in a sentence their personal goal for the lesson.

Introduction

Open the session by introducing yourself and asking group members to do the same.

- Ask each to share a general fact about their family, where they attended high school, their favorite course or activity in high school, or where they would live if they could live anywhere.
- Tell the group this is a general “get to know you” introduction and you will talk about how we, as individuals, relate to Christian theology later in the session.

Discuss the course purpose from the syllabus (printed below). You will introduce the lesson purpose in

a few moments.

- Theology Basics is a course designed to familiarize you with the foundational truths contained in the Bible. In it, you will examine the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, salvation, the church, the spirit world, and the future. By the completion of this course, you will see how each of these doctrines fits into God’s plan for the redemption of the human race for His glory.

Talk through the course objectives listed below (be careful to distinguish between course and lesson goals).

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to

- *Define the term doctrine.*
- *Identify key aspects of the nature and purposes of God and of the person and work of Jesus Christ.*
- *Explain who the Holy Spirit is and what ministries He performs.*
- *Articulate key ideas concerning the divine origins and composition of the Bible.*
- *Identify key concepts of the doctrine of salvation.*
- *Understand the doctrine of the church.*
- *Explain the doctrines of the spirit world and of the future.*

Ask group members to talk about how the Bible influences the way they live.

- *Do they consciously relate certain ideas, values, and/or behaviors to specific Bible teachings or passages?*
- *What is their experience with the idea and/or process of theology?*
 - ◊ *Never heard of it? Read some theological books (if so, which ones)? Turned off by it? Confused by it?, etc.*
- *Ask what they think a course or group study in theology will talk about.*

Discussion

Introduction

Read the definition of doctrine from Lesson 1.
(Listening Guide question 1)

“Doctrine may be defined as ‘Bible truths that are taught, believed, and practiced.’” Discuss the three parts of the definition.

Bible truths that are ...

- *Taught: Ask how we teach Christian doctrine today and how much group members have been taught about what the Bible claims to be true.*
- *Believed: Ask what specific doctrines group members believe and which ones they can explain and support from the Bible.*
- *Practiced: Ask group members how biblical doctrine consciously influences their daily life. What specific beliefs from the Bible shape their daily activities?*

Ask if anyone can explain how the three parts of the definition relate to each other.

- *Doctrine must be taught (or learned individually if no one teaches it) before it can be believed and must be believed before it is consciously and consistently practiced.*

Read Titus 2:10 where Paul instructed Titus to urge believers to live godly lives so they would “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” in every respect. The NIV (New International Version) elaborates on Paul’s instructions and encourages believers to live godly lives, “so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”

(Listening Guide question 2)

- *Read how Lesson 1 explains the meaning of “adorn” in Titus 2:10. The Greek word translated “adorn” means to organize, but it also means to “ornament, “adorn, or make attractive.”*
 - ◇ *Ask group members how we can “adorn” doctrine or “make it attractive.”*
 - ◇ *What occurs when we “adorn the doctrine of God”? (God is glorified, people are drawn to Christian teaching; we are more attractive and productive people, etc.)*
 - ◇ *Read James 1:22 and 2:18 and discuss what James teaches us about living what we believe.*

Ask group members to gather in groups of two or three to discuss the questions from Lesson 1 listed below. (Putting these on a PowerPoint® slide, chalkboard, or flip chart so the group can see them will be a great help.)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Who is God and what is He like?*
- *Does the Bible teach that Christ is both divine (God) and human?*
- *How can the Holy Spirit affect the believer’s life?*
- *What are the central themes of the Bible?*
- *How did God provide salvation for those who believe?*
- *How should the local church function as a caring community?*
- *What does the Bible teach about angels and demons?*
- *What does the Bible say about future events?*

Ask group members to select a question to answer and discuss.

(Listening Guide questions 4, 5, & 6)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Of the questions listed, which two are of most interest to Christian people and which are of least interest?*

- *Are any unimportant?*
- *Which are of most importance to you?*

After smaller groups discuss as a whole group.

Then ask the smaller groups to discuss which two they think are most interesting to nonchurched people.

Which two are least interesting?

Read 2 Timothy 4:1–4 and discuss the following:
(*Listening Guide question 7*)

Ideas for Discussion

- *How important did Paul believe a clear understanding of God’s Word is?*
- *How interested in doctrine are the people in your church?*
- *How interested in doctrine are the people in your community?*
- *How interested in doctrine are you?*
- *If a core of people more consciously lived their faith and clearly explained from the Bible why they live that way, would they create greater interest in Christianity among unbelievers?*
- *What dangers face the church if we are indifferent to theology?*
- *Do you think “our generation” is as vulnerable to the issues Paul addressed in this passage as Timothy’s generation was? Why or why not?*

These theology lessons are designed around a series of questions. This discussion guide is built around a three-step process you can choose to follow as a basic structure to your group sessions.

- *Ask the question.*
- *Introduce a key passage that addresses the question.*
- *Discuss how the passage addresses the question.*
- *Lead the group to summarize a clear, concise response to the question.*

Emphasize that this is a *basic* course in theology and the purpose is to find a simple answer to some of the world’s most complex questions. Any answer we give to some of the questions about God’s nature and His work are more characterized by what they don’t include than what they do. Your purpose is *not* to present a deep theological answer, but to prepare the group to give an informed response for their own benefit and to give those who ask them these theological questions.

Central Doctrines and Their Importance

The Doctrine of God

Q. Who is God?

A. God is Yahweh...

Ask if anyone can give a brief explanation or definition of the Bible's view of God.

Ask group members to read the following passages and state to the group what each says about God.

- *Deuteronomy 6:4–6 tells us three things about God.*
 - ◊ *There is one God (v. 4).*
 - ◊ *We are to love Him with our whole being (v. 5).*
 - ◊ *His commands are to be central to what we think, feel and will (v. 6) (the biblical concept of “heart” includes all three responses—intellect, emotion and will).*
- *Isaiah 6:1–6 — God is majestic, powerful, and holy*
- *Genesis 1:1 and 1:26–27 — God is the Creator of all things and He created humans in His own image so that we can understand Him and live in relationship with Him.*
- *Acts 17:24–28 — He is the sovereign ruler and created us with the capacity to seek Him.*
- *John 3:16–17 — God loves us and has saved us from sin.*

Ask group members to write down their answer to the question, “Who is God?” in one to three sentences. Then listen to some of their responses. A possible response:

The Bible teaches that there is one God. He rules over everything because He created it all. He created humans with the capacity to know Him and invites us to live in a loving and obedient relationship with Him.

Q. How do we know there is a God?

A. The wonders...

Of the numerous reasons given in nature and Scripture, focus discussion on the four responses below.

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read Psalm 19:1–4 and discuss God's revelation in His creation.*
- *Read Romans 2:12–15 and discuss the fact that God's Law is written on our heart and conscience.*
- *Read Hebrews 1:1–3 and discuss that God is revealed in Scripture (“prophets”).*
- *Read Hebrews 1:2–3 and discuss how God is ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ, God's own Son, who revealed God in the human form.*

Ask the group to work in groups of two and discuss how they would combine the four responses into a clear, simple answer to question 2.

Q. How can we define or describe God?

A. God is the one ...

The answer to this question is similar to question 1. Given the time available for discussion, you may want to go through the list of attributes given in this answer or you can review question 1.

- *The material in this answer is helpful to flesh out your response to question 1 but will open up a complex discussion. You should refer to it as a helpful resource for further study but may find that introducing it for discussion raises more questions than you have time to answer.*

Q. Where do we get the idea that God is one God and three persons?

A. The Bible emphasizes ...

This doctrine is so central and so complicated to explain that many theologians admit they only “sort of” understand it. But the Bible clearly teaches that God is One, but He is made up of three distinct and interrelated persons.

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read Deuteronomy 6:4 to establish the fact that God is one.*
- *Read Matthew 28:19 to introduce the idea that our one God contains three persons.*
- *Read John 10:29–30 where Jesus speaks of the Father and claims that He and the Father are one.*
- *Read Acts 5:3–4 and ask who Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive (God, the Holy Spirit).*
- *Read Hebrews 1:8 and ask what the Son is called.*
- *Read 1 Peter 1:2 where all three persons are mentioned.*

After you have read and discussed the passages, construct a paragraph that would help a high school student understand it. Simply stated, “The Bible teaches that there is One God and He is comprised of three separate and coequal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Q. What do we mean when we say God is infinite?

A. God is infinite ...

Define the word *infinite* from Webster so the group members are discussing the same reality.

- *Webster defines infinite as something extending indefinitely: endless, immeasurably, inconceivably great or extensive. Subject to no limitation or external determination (Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, p. 619)*

Read the following passages and ask, for each, what God is extended beyond, or not bound by.

- *Psalm 139:7–10 — Space*
- *Genesis 17:1 and Matthew 19:26 — Power or strength*
- *Psalm 90:2 — Time*
- *Psalm 147:5 and Romans 11:33 — Knowledge*
- *Titus 1:2 and James 1:13 — God is only limited by His own proclamations of things He cannot do.*

Discuss how you would explain God's infinity in one to three sentences.

Q. What is the comfort of believing that the triune God is the Creator and Sustainer of everything?

A. This assurance enables ...

Review the six questions listed in the Lesson 1 Introduction and ask each group member to state the most significant fact they learned about God that they can apply to their life.

The lesson offers two assurances or comforts. Because we believe in a sovereign God,

- *We can be patient in difficult times (Romans 5:3–4).*
- *We can be grateful to Him in times of prosperity (Philippians 4:10–13).*

Explain that a danger in studying theology is that we can become so involved in defining things that we lose the importance of our personal response to the truths we study.

Close this section with a discussion of how this doctrinal study adds to their love, worship, and appreciation of our God.

The Doctrine of Christ

Q. Who is Jesus Christ?

A. Jesus Christ is ...

Read Colossians 2:9 and discuss the two aspects of Christ's nature it presents.

- *In Jesus all the fullness of Deity dwells. He is undiminished Deity: When He took on His human form, He did not diminish His Deity.*
- *In bodily form: Jesus is completely human. Because Jesus was God, it did not make Him in any way less human.*

“Dwells” — Colossians was written around AD 60, or about thirty years after Jesus ascended into heaven. Paul stated the verse in the present tense, indicating that in Jesus' present state, He is still the fullness of Deity in bodily form.

Jesus came to earth for four reasons (among others). You may want to ask four different group members to read the passages and state what it says about Jesus' reason for coming:

- *Hebrews 1:1–3 — To reveal God to us*
- *John 3:16–17 — To rescue us from sin by paying our penalty*
- *1 John 2:6 — To give us an example of how life should be lived*
- *Hebrews 2:17–18 — To qualify as our Great High Priest by suffering what we suffer*

Ask the group if any of the four stand out as “most significant” to them on a day-to-day basis.

Q. How does the New Testament affirm that Jesus Christ was genuinely human?

A. The Lord Jesus was born ...

- *Was born of a woman — (Galatians 4:4). Jesus had a natural birth to a human woman.*
- *Grew as a normal child — (Luke 2: 40, 52).*
- *Experienced human needs — Hunger, (Matthew 4:4), thirst (John 19:28).*
- *Experienced human emotions — Grief (John 11:35); anger (Mark 3:5); compassion (Matthew 9:36); agony (Luke 22:44); love (John 13:1).*

Because this truth is so important and foundational to our Christian faith, ask group members to summarize these evidences in a brief explanation that they can use to explain to another person why they believe Jesus is fully human.

- *You may want to discuss their answers and, as a group, form a workable explanation.*
- *Stress the importance of each person creating a clear, concise answer to these questions in their own words.*

Q. How does the Bible show that Jesus was not only man but also God?

A. The Bible explicitly ...

Summarize this paragraph in the lesson by discussing three key pieces of evidence for Jesus’ deity.

- *The Bible clearly states it in Hebrews 1:1–3.*
- *Jesus clearly claimed to be God (Luke 22:69–70).*
- *Jesus had various attributes that only God has. A brief sample is given in*
 - ◊ *John 1:1–2 — Jesus as the Logos (cf. 1:14) is eternal; He created and He is the source of life.*
 - ◊ *Hebrews 1:1–3 — Jesus is heir of all things, made the universe, is the radiance of God’s glory, is the exact representation of God’s image, sustains all things, provided purification for sin, sat down at the Father’s right hand. There is also an extensive list under question 3 in the lesson.*

We would not quote this whole paragraph to someone who asked us why we believe Jesus is God, but we must have a solid answer to that question. Take this material and work with the group to create a response you believe is convincing and understandable to someone and that you would feel comfortable using.

Discuss ways our life as Christians can support our verbal explanation that we believe Jesus is God’s eternal Son and our personal Savior and Lord.

Q. Why did Jesus die a criminal’s death on a Roman cross?

A. Since hanging (crucifixion) was ...

Ask students to read and comment on the following Bible passages that address Jesus’ sacrifice on

the cross.

- *Romans 6:23 — There is a penalty for sin that none of us wants to pay — spiritual death.*
- *Isaiah 53:4–5 — Jesus paid that penalty for us.*
- *1 Peter 3:18 — Romans 5:6–8 — Jesus died for us.*

Divide into groups of two. Ask one of them to present the answer to this question to his/her partner as if talking with someone their own age.

Have them switch roles and role-play presenting the answer to a ten-year-old child.

Q. How important is Christ's resurrection?

A. Through our Lord's ...

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–3, 12–17, and discuss how these passages answer the question.

- *The lesson presents four specific reasons that, if you have time, you may want to discuss. They lead you into some heavier theological questions so you may want to stay with a more simple response, depending on time available.*
 - ◊ *Romans 1:4 — The resurrection confirmed Jesus as God's Son.*
 - ◊ *Romans 4:25 — Resurrection showed the Father's satisfaction with Jesus' sacrifice for sin.*
 - ◊ *Romans 8:11 — Resurrection affirmed Christ's power to give life to those who trust Him.*
 - ◊ *1 Corinthians 15:20–21 — Resurrection assured His followers that we, too, will be resurrected.*
- *If you present the four reasons given here ask the group if there is one that is "most important" to them.*

Q. Where is Jesus now and what is He doing?

A. Jesus Christ ascended ...

Where is Jesus now? Read Ephesians 1:18–23 and discuss what Paul said there.

What is Jesus doing now?

- *Read John 14:3 and discuss what Jesus said He would be doing for His followers.*
- *Read Romans 8:34 — Jesus is at God's right hand praying for His followers.*
- *Read Hebrews 4:14–16 — Jesus is serving as our Great High Priest advocating for us and actively participating in the process described in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins."*

In Ephesians 1:15–22, Paul expressed an important prayer asking that we would know about the benefits Jesus offers His followers. Read that prayer and thank God for what Jesus is doing for us now.

Objectives ...

(Listening Guide questions 40–43)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Can you define the term doctrine?*
- *Explain in your own words what is meant by “adorn the doctrine of God” (Titus 2:10).*
- *Name a few key aspects of the nature and purposes of God.*
- *List a few central ideas about the person and work of Jesus Christ you would use when explaining why you accept Him as your Savior and Lord.*

Application

We have plowed through some heavy soil in this lesson. Deep truth about God can be difficult to fathom. Before you go on, take a few minutes and ask group members to reflect on what you just studied and to jot down two or three things about God and Jesus they can express gratitude for in their prayers.

Then close in a brief time of prayer, asking group members to express their thanks for the items they wrote down.

Reflection

It is important to promote this reflection time in each session of the course. Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of God’s Word. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Also emphasize that this part of the group session could be an important time for participants to minister to other members of the group. Not everyone “sees” the same emphases and something one person highlights may be an added insight to others in the group.

Close in Prayer

You may want to ask if anyone is dealing with something they would like prayer for. Depending on the size of your group, it would be meaningful to pray for each person by name.

Doctrines of the Holy Spirit and of the Bible

Introduce the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by reading or paraphrasing the following overview of Lesson 2. “In Lesson 2, we will discuss the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the Bible. Through this study we will see how the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are vital to the believer’s spiritual walk today.”

Ask if there are questions about the session or about preparation for the session.

Review the Lesson Objectives

Review the Lesson Objectives below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

By the end of this study you should be able to

1. Explain who the Holy Spirit is and what ministries He performs.
2. Articulate key ideas concerning the divine origin and composition of the Bible.

While we provide comprehensive **lesson** goals, it is important that your group members also reflect on their own **personal** goals. Even if they choose to elaborate on one of the lesson goals that you provide, it helps to have their own reason for studying the lesson. The group will also have time to reflect on these personal goals at the end of the lesson to see how they have or have not been fulfilled or perhaps have changed.

After you have explained the two levels of lesson goals, ask if anyone would like to share in a sentence their personal goal for the lesson.

Introduction

Teaching Note: Because some of the questions in the Theology Basics course require extensive details to cover the topic, we suggest that you discuss a summarizing answer to each lesson’s questions in your group study. We have provided a response to each question that highlights the main point of the question. In addition we added other points from the lesson material for you to use if you choose to add more detail to the discussion.

Introduce the session’s topics.

Ask if anyone can think of any relationships between the two topics for this session’s focus: the

Holy Spirit and the Bible.

- *Read John 16:12–13 and ask what the connection is between the two topics.*
 - ◊ *The Holy Spirit leads us into God’s truth contained in the Bible. Also, 1 Corinthians 2:9–13 teaches us that the Holy Spirit reveals God’s deeper wisdom and the mysteries of the Bible.*
 - ◊ *In addition, the Bible is our source of knowledge about the Holy Spirit, as we will see in the session.*

Discussion

Doctrines of the Holy Spirit

Q. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit ...

A simple answer to the question is that the Holy Spirit is one of the three persons that makes up the Holy Trinity, or the Godhead.

- *All three persons of the Trinity are named in Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14.*

Optional additional material for further discussion:

- *You may want to review question 4, from Lesson 1, “Where do we get the idea that God is one God in three persons?” (Under the Doctrine of God in Lesson 1)*

Q. What were His roles as a member of the Godhead during the Old Testament era?

A. He acted with ...

- *Read Genesis 1:2 — He participated in God’s act of creation.*
- *Read Exodus 31:1–5 — He equipped God’s servants to minister.*
- *Read 2 Peter 1:20–21 — He inspired the prophets as they wrote the Old Testament.*

Discuss with the group:

- *Of the responsibilities and acts the Holy Spirit was responsible for in the Old Testament, which is most impressive to you?*
- *How would you summarize the Holy Spirit’s Old Testament roles in a brief paragraph so you could explain it to someone?*

Optional additional material for further discussion:

The Spirit also enabled Israel’s kings to succeed. Some followed His leading and some didn’t (1

Samuel 16:13).

Q. What is the Holy Spirit's relationship to the church, the body of Christ?

A. The Holy Spirit ...

- *Read Acts 1:2–4 — The Holy Spirit provides the essential power for effective ministry.*
- *Read Acts 2:2–4 — He initiated the church as God's strategy to reach the world with Jesus' message by empowering the apostles.*
- *Mention that the Spirit also gives ministry gifts to the church's members, but that you will discuss that later in the lesson.*

Ask group members to discuss

- *How evident is the Holy Spirit's presence and ministry in your church.*
- *What does the Holy Spirit's investment in your church teach us about how important your church is to God?*

Optional additional material for further discussion:

The Holy Spirit also

- *Provides unity for the church's members and dwells in our midst (Ephesians 2:19–22).*
- *Enables the church's leaders (Acts 20:28).*

Q. What does the Holy Spirit do for those who have not made peace with God?

A. He draws attention ...

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read John 3:16–17 and ask the group what God's attitude toward unbelievers is.*
- *Read John 16:7–11 and discuss how the Holy Spirit relates to unbelievers.*
 ◇ *The Holy Spirit convinces believers they are sinners and need a Savior.*
- *Read Titus 3:4–7. The Holy Spirit produces rebirth (John 3:16) and renewal (2 Corinthians 5:17) in a person when they receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord.*

Read Ephesians 2:1 and then 2:4–5 and ask why the Holy Spirit is needed for this work to happen.

- *Because we were dead to God and, according to Titus 3, the Holy Spirit regenerates us, or gives us this new birth. Salvation cannot happen apart from the Holy Spirit's work.*

Q. What is the Holy Spirit's relationship to the church, the body of Christ?

(Listening Guide question 6)

A. Tell the group that although the Holy Spirit ministers to Christian believers in a number of ways, there are two that are especially important to our daily life as Jesus' followers.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–7 and discuss the Holy Spirit’s role in giving each believer a spiritual gift or gifts that enable us to minister effectively to the church.

Read Galatians 5:22–23 and discuss the concept of the fruit of the Spirit. His presence in our life transforms us into the kind of people who exhibit these “fruits” of His presence.

- *While it is tempting to elaborate on each of these “fruits,” the point of the lesson is to understand that this is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. Encourage members to read the list on their own and pray that He will daily cultivate these qualities in their life.*
- *You may also read Galatians 5:19–20 to contrast the “deeds of the flesh” to see what our natural self produces.*

Read Romans 8:5–9 and ask the group what we have to do to benefit from the Holy Spirit’s ministry.

Optional additional material for further discussion:

- *Romans 8:8–11 — The Spirit energizes God’s life in those who follow God by actually living in them.*
- *Ephesians 5:15–20 — He creates a new, godly attitude and lifestyle in us.*

Q. In what ways can we harm ourselves by sinning against the Holy Spirit?

A. We are warned ...

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read Ephesians 4:30–32 and discuss the fact that we can grieve the Holy Spirit by how we deal with each other. If the Spirit is grieved by what we often think of as a minor issue (relating to others harshly) what are some other ways we may grieve Him?*
- *Discuss the fact that we can stifle the Spirit’s ministry in our life by allowing sin to dominate us. The Spirit never forces Himself on us but is always available to us.*
- *Ask the group how we can be more sensitive to our relationship with God’s Holy Spirit.*

Optional additional material for further discussion:

We can grieve the Spirit by

- *Lying to Him (Acts 5:3).*
- *Quenching Him with a negative attitude (1 Thessalonians 5:19).*
- *Resisting Him (Acts 7:51).*
- *Insulting Him (Hebrews 10:29).*

The Doctrine of the Bible

Q. What sets the Bible apart from other books?

A. The Bible in its ...

Read 2 Peter 1:20–21 and ask what it means that the Bible is inspired by God.

- *God used human writers and they “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*
- *Read 2 Peter 1:19 and ask what two facts it teaches us about God’s prophetic message.*
 - ◊ *It is completely reliable.*
 - ◊ *We will do well to pay attention to it.*
 - ◊ *The rest of the verse says we should rely on it and pay attention to it until we are completely informed of God’s teachings when Christ returns.*

Ask how this passage influences the group members’ attitude toward the Bible.

Divide into groups of two and construct a clear, concise answer to question 1.

- *The Bible is special because of its author and its life-giving message.*

Q. How do we know that the Bible we hold in our hands accurately represents the original documents that go back more than thirty-five hundred years?

A. The amazing ...

- *Although we have none of the original writings of Old or New Testament books, we have thousands of copies that have been made over many centuries. When we compare these copies, we discover they are almost perfectly preserved. The discipline of textual criticism carefully examines these texts for accuracy and assures us that the Bible books we read today are exactly the same as the earliest copies we have of the original manuscripts.*
- *Second, we believe that the God who took such care to inspire the Bible’s writers would take equal care to preserve the message He communicated to His people through those writers.*

Q. What evidence can we give to support the claim that the Bible is the inspired Word of God?

A. Christ repeatedly ...

- *Jesus validated the Old Testament writings as God’s holy Word (Matthew 5:17–18).*
- *Jesus believed biblical characters and events like Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4–5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:37–39), and Jonah’s fish (Matthew 12:38–41) were real.*
- *The New Testament records that many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled. The Old Testament prophesied that Jesus would*
 - ◊ *Be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). Fulfilled in Luke 1:26–35.*
 - ◊ *Be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Fulfilled in Matthew 2:1.*
 - ◊ *Be Called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Fulfilled in Matthew 1:23.*
 - ◊ *Minister in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2). Fulfilled in Matthew 4:12–16.*
 - ◊ *Triumphantly enter Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9). Fulfilled in Matthew 21:1–11.*

Discuss if, and if so, how these facts help develop confidence in the Bible’s claim to be God’s Word.

Ask the group how they would summarize this evidence into a brief explanation they can use to explain why a person can trust the Bible.

(Listening Guide question 24)

Romans 12:1–2 provides a concrete piece of evidence for the Bible’s validity.

- *We are urged to stop being conformed to the world and be transformed by God’s Word so that we can “prove” what God’s will is. A powerful evidence of God’s truth is how it works in our own experience.*

Q. How can we understand the Bible?

A. By asking...

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9–10 and discuss the Holy Spirit’s role in helping us understand God’s Word.
(Listening Guide question 26)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Ask the group if they pray to the Author of the Bible for guidance as they read it.*

Q. What should we do when we encounter a Bible passage we can’t understand or verses that seem to contradict one another?

A. If after serious...

(Listening Guide questions 27 & 28)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Ask the group if they think a human with finite wisdom will always be able to clearly understand the mind of our God who has infinite wisdom.*
- *Ask if they can be comfortable with ideas they find in the Bible that they don’t understand or agree with.*

What should we do with those difficult passages?

- *Prayerfully read them over a number of times.*
- *Consult a pastor or a commentary.*
- *Move on to another passage and trust that God will reveal His truth to you in this life or in the next. Read 1 Corinthians 13:11–12 and take comfort in the fact that even the apostle Paul needed to wait for answers to some of his questions.*

Objectives...

(Listening Guide questions 29 & 30)

Ideas for Discussion

- *How would you explain who the Holy Spirit is and what ministries He performs to a sixth-grade Sunday school class?*
- *In a paragraph, explain the Bible’s divine origin and why we can trust what it says.*

Application

God has made a wonderful interaction between His Holy Spirit and His inspired Word. We learn God's will as we read the Scriptures, but we always know that the same God who revealed it is here to help us understand it. We should make it a habit to combine our Bible reading with prayer for the Spirit's teaching ministry to us.

Reflection

It is important to promote this reflection time in each session of the course. Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of God's Word. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Also emphasize that this part of the group session could be an important time for participants to minister to other members of the group. Not everyone "sees" the same emphases and something one person highlights may be an added insight to others in the group.

Close in Prayer

You may want to ask if anyone is dealing with something they would like prayer for. Depending on the size of your group, it would be meaningful to pray for each person by name.

Doctrines of Salvation and of the Church

Introduce the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by reading or paraphrasing the following overview of Lesson 3. “In Lesson 3, we will examine the foundational truths of the doctrines of salvation and the church. We will see key ideas about how a person who is converted can be transformed daily by the Spirit, and should be involved in a fellowship of believers.”

Ask if there are questions about the session or about preparation for the session.

Review the Lesson Objectives

Review the Lesson Objectives below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

By the end of this study you should be able to

1. Explain key concepts such as salvation, sanctification, redemption, and saving faith.
2. Understand the difference between the universal and the local church.
3. Recall the scriptural guidelines for what constitutes a local church.

While we provide comprehensive **lesson** goals, it is important that your group members also reflect on their own **personal** goals. Even if they choose to elaborate on one of the lesson goals that you provide, it helps to have their own reason for studying the lesson. The group will also have time to reflect on these personal goals at the end of the lesson to see how they have or have not been fulfilled or perhaps have changed.

After you have explained the two levels of lesson goals, ask if anyone would like to share in a sentence their personal goal for the lesson.

Introduction

Introduce the session by asking why we combine the two doctrines of salvation and the church in one session.

These two doctrines relate because when a person experiences salvation they become a member of God’s church. They are adopted into God’s family along with the saints from the beginning to the end of time. Salvation brings us into the church and the church is God’s means of meeting the spiritual needs of those who are saved.

Discussion

The Doctrine of Salvation

Q. What is salvation?

A. Salvation is deliverance ...

Ask if anyone can explain what the word *salvation* means in normal language, apart from the Bible.

- *It means to be rescued from something we want to be “saved” from.*

Ask why that’s an appropriate term to use when we refer to what happens when we are “born again,” or “accept Jesus as our Savior.”

- *We are “saved” from sin. Read the following passages and discuss what that means and why it’s important. We are saved from sin’s*
 - ◊ *Penalty — Discuss Romans 6:23.*
 - ◊ *Pollution — Discuss Romans 3:10–17.*
 - ◊ *Power — Discuss Romans 6:13–14.*

Ask how many think of salvation as a ticket to heaven and never considered how salvation changes our life day to day on this earth. God intends that salvation should change our whole life from the moment we accept it.

Q. What is sin?

A. Sin is any ...

Read 1 John 3:4 for a simple definition. “Lawlessness” is based on the Old Testament concept of ignoring God’s instructions for how He intends life to be lived.

Discuss the lesson’s definition: “Sin is any thought, word, or deed that either violates or falls short of complete conformity to God’s holy laws.”

Discuss the dangers of sin.

- *Romans 3:23 — We are less than the glorious beings God intends us to be.*
- *Romans 6:23 — We live in the tragic condition of spiritual death.*
 - ◊ *For a brief elaboration of what that looks like read Ephesians 2:1–3.*
 - ◊ *Romans 6:23 also warns of the danger of eternal death for those who die in their sinful condition.*
- *Isaiah 59:1–2 — We are divorced from or separated from fellowship with our God.*

Ask if this explanation makes sin sound worse than they thought before your discussion.
(*Listening Guide question 2*)

Does their understanding of sin differ from this one?
(*Listening Guide question 3*)

If so, how?

Ideas for Discussion

- *Add to your discussion the fact of sin’s destructive nature. It degrades us; ruins lives, families; stifles potential, etc. Ask the group to consider for a few minutes various ways sin—either doing what God prohibits or not doing what God teaches us—is destructive.*
- *God is opposed to sin because of what it does to those He so deeply loves.*

Q. What has God done to provide salvation?

A. He became a ...

Read John 3:16–17 and ask what Jesus said God has done.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and ask what Paul said God has done.

Read Hebrews 2:14–15 and ask what the author of Hebrews said God has done.

Ask the group to take this explanation and restate it in a paragraph they can use to tell people what God has done to provide salvation for them.
(*Listening Guide question 4*)

The lesson explains it this way: “In other words, [God] accepts full responsibility to pay the price for the consequences of our sin.”

Optional additional material for further discussion:

Passages that further elaborate on God’s action to “save” us from sin are

- *Matthew 20:28;*
- *John 1:14;*
- *Romans 4:23–25;*
- *1 Corinthians 15:3–5.*

Teaching Note: The next section introduces a complicated and much discussed area of theology related to God’s selecting those who will be saved. The question theologians wrestle with arises because some Bible passages teach us about God’s sovereign rule over all His creation and some passages teach us about our freedom of will. These truths seem to conflict with one another.

It's important to avoid getting stuck in a debate if group members attempt to go there. Explain that theologians have discussed and debated this issue for centuries and this Basics lesson does not go to that depth. Instead of debating the issue and spending time talking about the seeming irreconcilability of the two teachings, time is better spent discussing the idea that some of God's infinite mysteries are beyond our finite mental capacity to comprehend. Some of history's greatest minds have come to that conclusion and it is not a mental copout to admit the limitations of the human mind. Paul did it in 1 Corinthians 13:11–12 and so should we.

Q. For whom did Christ die?

A. Jesus died for ...

Read John 3:16 and ask who Jesus said could believe in Him and have eternal life.

Read 1 Timothy 2:3–6 and ask who can be saved.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

Read Romans 3:23 and ask why the Bible makes no reference to Jesus dying for “good” people.
(*Listening Guide question 6*)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Because “all” have sinned and need salvation.*
- *Ask the group if they believe that Jesus died for them and if they have accepted His gift.*

Q. Who will be saved?

A. From the Divine ...

Read Ephesians 1:4 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

Ideas for Discussion

- *These passages clearly state that God chose people for salvation before He even created them.*
- *Ask if God's infinite knowledge includes His knowledge of who will and who will not accept His offer of salvation.*
- *Ask if the group is comfortable with the idea that some people will choose to not accept this gift God offers.*

Read John 6:40 and Romans 9:10–11 and ask again to whom God's invitation to be saved is open.

Optional additional material for further discussion:

John 6:37–40, 65 focuses both on the Father's choosing and on the openness of the invitation to come. You may choose to discuss these but be aware that the discussion is confusing to some who have difficulty reconciling the two truths.

Q. On what does God base His choosing of some and not others for salvation?

A. God sovereignly ...

This answer briefly summarizes a doctrinal idea that entire books have wrestled with. Explain that the questions are

(Listening Guide question 10)

- *Do we believe the Bible passages that say before our sovereign God created us He chose who would accept His gift of salvation?*
- *Do we also believe the Bible passages that say God offers salvation to anyone who asks for it?*
- *Do we believe that both those who receive and those who refuse God's gift do so of their own free will?*

Q. Does divine election do away with human freedom and responsibility?

A. No! God is ...

Ask the group if they are comfortable with the idea that an infinite God can know things that are beyond our finite capacity to understand.

(Listening Guide question 18)

Ask the group, "If God does something and we disagree with Him, whose judgment should we ultimately accept?"

(Listening Guide question 19)

Optional additional material for further discussion:

Ask the group the following:

(Listening Guide questions 20–23)

Ideas for Discussion

- *When you were younger, did your parents ever do things you didn't agree with that you later came to understand?*
- *If you are a parent or are older, have you ever acted contrary to a child's understanding because you knew what you were doing was right even though the child disagreed?*
- *Would you be comfortable living in a world where five-year-old children made all major decisions?*
- *Do you think there is a greater distance in wisdom between a five-year-old mind and an adult mind or between an adult human mind and God's mind?*
- *How comfortable are you with the idea that your mind is inferior to God's mind?*

Q. How do we receive salvation?

A. By faith alone ...

Read Ephesians 2:8–10 and discuss

(Listening Guide question 25 & 26)

- *What is the only thing God requires for a person to receive salvation?*
- *Have you done the one thing a person needs to do to receive God's free gift?*

How do we not receive salvation? (Galatians 2:16; 3:2)

Optional additional material for further discussion:

Additional Bible passages: Romans 4:1–12; Galatians 3:1–9

Q. What is the repentance called for by John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and Peter? (Matthew 3:1–2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 20:21)

A. Repentance is ...

Read Matthew 3:1–2 and ask if anyone can explain the difference between repentance and just being sorry for something.

- *One can be sorry for doing something without a decision to not repeat the act.*
- *Repentance includes a commitment to turn away from the attitude or action that caused the sorrow. The Greek word translated "repent" means to experience regret over former behaviors and dispositions that results in a change of attitude toward them, abandoning them, and adopting a new self with new behavior.*

Q. What is saving faith?

A. It is personal ...

The lesson states that saving faith is "personal trust in God. It is believing that He ... forgives and accepts all who trust in Jesus Christ and rely on Him alone for salvation."

Read and discuss Romans 5:1–2 and Ephesians 2:8–10 and ask what the two essential components of "saving faith" are.

- *We can't do anything on our own to earn saving faith. It is not a matter of our works.*
- *We must accept what God has done in Jesus to offer us saving faith. It is a gift that is free to us. But it was not free to God (1 Peter 1:18–19).*

Q. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of our justification? (Romans 5:1–2)

A. The Greek word ...

Discuss the three things God does when He "justifies" someone.

(Listening Guide question 30)

- *God declares that we are righteous (meaning "right") (Romans 3:24–26).*

- *God declares that we are free of any condemnation (Romans 4:8).*
- *God restores us to His favor (Romans 5:9–11).*

Q. What is sanctification?
(*Listening Guide question 31*)

A. Sanctification, which ...

Sanctification means to set something or someone apart as separate and special.
(*Listening Guide question 33*)

Ideas for Discussion

- *God’s part in sanctification involves how He views those who accept His gift (2 Thessalonians 2:13).*
- *Ask if anyone can describe our part in sanctification.*
 - ◊ *It is to separate ourselves from sin and to a process of spiritual maturity (1 Peter 1:13–16).*

Q. What is redemption?

A. Redemption is our ...

Ask if anyone can describe what the word *redemption* refers to.

- *The Greek word translated “redeem” expresses the idea of liberating someone or of buying someone’s freedom; as when a benefactor pays the price to purchase a slave and then sets the slave free.*

Ask what Christ *redeemed* us from.

- *Galatians 3:13 — the penalty we deserve by breaking God’s law.*
- *Romans 6:11–12 — enslavement to sin*
- *Colossians 1:13–14 — Satan’s domain of darkness and ignorance of God and His ways*

Ask how Jesus redeemed us, and read 1 Peter 1:18–19 to find the answer.

The Doctrine of the Church

Q. What is the church?

A. The church is ...

Ask the group how they would answer the question, “What is the church?”

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read Ephesians 1:22–23 and Romans 16:5 and ask how the word is used differently in the two passages.*
 - ◊ *Ephesians 1 discusses what we call the “universal church” made up of God’s people of all time and*

every place.

- ◇ *Romans 16:5 speaks to a specific church in a specific location, or what we call the “local church.”*

So in the New Testament, a church is not a building made of wood or bricks. It is the people who have chosen to relate to God. Christians, individually and corporately, make up what the Bible refers to as the church.

Q. When did the church begin?

A. The church was ...

Read Acts 1:6–8 and identify what event Jesus said had to happen before the apostles could be Jesus’ witnesses.

Then read Acts 2:1–3 and connect the two passages to answer the question, “When did the church begin?”

- *What event initiated the church’s birth?*
 - ◇ *The Holy Spirit empowered God’s people on the day of Pentecost.*

Read Galatians 3:26–29 and ask how God’s plan changed from the Old Testament.

- *Since Abraham’s time (Genesis 12:1–3) his descendants, called Israel, had been God’s people. Now the church, which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted God’s gift of salvation, are God’s people.*

Optional additional material for further discussion:

Ephesians 2:11–21 expands and explains this concept that Jews and Gentiles are united as one body in Christ in the church.

Q. Who are the church officers?

A. Bishops (elders) ...

The New Testament allows for a variety of church governing structures, which we see today in the various denominational approaches to church leadership. This should not be a point of controversy.

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read 1 Timothy 3:1–2; 3:8 where the office of elder (overseer, NIV) and deacon are mentioned. Note especially that both are held to the highest qualifications.*
- *Discuss why it’s so important that our church leaders are held to such strict standards.*
- *Mention that if we combine these lists with those found in Titus 1 and Acts 6 (where the apostles’ “helpers” were anointed) there are twenty-two qualifications. Of the twenty-two, only “able to teach” addresses a function. All the rest are character qualities. Why is this so?*

Q. What is the meaning of church baptism?

A. Baptism in the name ...

Read Matthew 28:19 and ask the group why they think baptism is so important that Jesus commanded it as part of His Great Commission.

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read Romans 6:1–7. Baptism signals a complete and intimate identification with a person and/or a belief. Paul taught that our baptism into Christ makes us so intensely related to Him that it is as if we died and rose again with Him.*
- *Since this identification is an internal reality, the act of water baptism came to symbolize a public statement of a private relationship.*
- *Ask if group members understood what they were testifying to when they were baptized.*
- *Discuss the Romans 6:1–7 concept that we died to sin and were raised again to a holy life when we accepted Jesus as our Savior. Ask if they are willing to live that aspect of their baptism.*

If some want to discuss modes of baptism (sprinkling, immersion, etc.) or infant baptism, suggest that these are secondary questions and are better discussed in their local church.

We should, however, be baptized as believers who have made a conscious, personal decision to follow Christ as our Savior and Lord if we have not done so (Acts 8:36–38).

How seriously should we take baptism? Suggest that we should take baptism very seriously. Not just the fact of being baptized as a believer, but the reality of what it means that we are intimately committed to Jesus, His teachings, and His people.

Q. What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper ...

Read Matthew 26:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

Two important “meanings” are attached to the Lord's Supper.

- *Remember that Jesus' body was broken and His blood was shed to redeem us.*
 - ◊ *The Last Supper was a celebration of the Passover, which God commemorated so Israel would “remember” the fact that He “passed over” their homes when all the firstborn members of Egypt's households died (Exodus 12:12–14). God commanded that they celebrate that event every year so they would never forget it. Jesus and His disciples had celebrated the feast every year of their lives and on this night Jesus poured a new meaning into what they were to “remember” when He said, of both the bread and the cup, “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24–25).*
- *It was also a reminder of the believer's commitment to holiness. Read 1 Corinthians 11:26–28.*

Discuss how you would describe the Lord's Supper to a sixth-grade Sunday school class.

(Listening Guide question 46)

Q. What is the local church to do when a member continues to live in sin despite repeated warnings?

A. The local church is ...

Ideas for Discussion

- *Read Galatians 6:1 and discuss what the church's goal is when a member is living in sin.*
- *Read Matthew 18:15–20 and discuss the three steps involved if a member fails to respond to the church's efforts to restore him order.*
- *Who did Galatians 1 specifically say was to handle this difficult situation?*
 - ◊ *Why is that so important?*

What would happen if churches did this more consistently and lovingly?

(Listening Guide question 52)

Objectives ...

(Listening Guide questions 53 & 54)

Ideas for Discussion

- *In a couple of sentences each, explain the key Christian concepts of salvation, sanctification, redemption, and saving faith.*
- *Explain the difference between the universal and the local church.*
- *What are the scriptural guidelines for what constitutes a local church?*

Application

Take a few minutes to meditate on, celebrate, and thank God for your salvation. Now that you have a deeper understanding of what it means to be saved, sanctified, redeemed, and baptized; and have been accepted as a member of Jesus Christ's Body and Invited to participate in the Lord's Supper—take some time to process these marvelous privileges and worship God for what He has done for you.

Reflection

It is important to promote this reflection time in each session of the course. Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of God's Word. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Also emphasize that this part of the group session could be an important time for participants to minister to other members of the group. Not everyone "sees" the same emphases and something one person highlights may be an added insight to others in the group.

Close in Prayer

You may want to ask if anyone is dealing with something they would like prayer for. Depending on the size of your group, it would be meaningful to pray for each person by name.

Introduce the Lesson

Introduce the lesson by reading or paraphrasing the following overview of Lesson 4. “In Lesson 4, we will examine the realm of angels and the future of heaven and earth. Through this study, you will see how an invisible war between good and evil is being played out in our own lives and how Christ can give us victory.”

Ask if there are questions about the session or about preparation for the session.

Review the Lesson Objectives

Review the Lesson Objectives below and briefly comment on any that you feel need elaboration.

By the end of this study you should be able to

1. Recall the ministry of angels to the believer.
2. Understand how Satan and his fallen angels seek to tempt and mislead.
3. Gain a biblical understanding about what happens after death.
4. Explain how theologians have differed and agreed about the events related to Christ’s return.

While we provide comprehensive **lesson** goals, it is important that your group members also reflect on their own **personal** goals. Even if they choose to elaborate on one of the lesson goals that you provide, it helps to have their own reason for studying the lesson. The group will also have time to reflect on these personal goals at the end of the lesson to see how they have or have not been fulfilled or perhaps have changed.

After you have explained the two levels of lesson goals, ask if anyone would like to share in a sentence their personal goal for the lesson.

Discussion

The Doctrine of the Spirit World

Open the session by asking how group members relate intellectually or emotionally to the idea that there are invisible beings around us called angels and demons.

(Listening Guide question 2)

- *Do they ever think about such matters? Once in a while? Often?*
- *Do they ever talk about such things? Once in a while? Often?*
- *Do they really believe such beings exist?*
- *How should we think about or relate to such beings?*

Remind them that according to an evangelical view of Scripture, all that the Bible asserts is true. Angels and demons are treated seriously as actual beings in the Bible. The first part of Lesson 4 is dealing with reality just as much as Lesson 1 that tells what the Bible says about God, or Lesson 2 that tells us about the Bible.

Q. What is the spirit world?

A. It is that ...

The “spirit world” deals with beings not normally visible to humans. These beings are characterized in two groups.

- *Read Hebrews 1:14 and Ephesians 6:12 and discuss the two kinds of spirit beings the Bible presents to us.*

Its existence is ... Ask group members to summarize in a sentence or two their honest response to the idea that good and evil spirits inhabit our world and influence our life.

Q. What are angels?

A. Angels are created ...

Ask group members what they have been taught about angels.

Read the following paragraph from Lesson 4 of the Theology Basics course and then ask how that teaching fits with what they have been taught previously.

- *“While natural observation does not reveal their importance to us, faith in the Word of God assures us that God’s sovereign provision in our lives is often mediated by these invisible servants. Even more astounding is the assurance of the Scriptures that they do not always remain invisible. Because of this, the letter to the Hebrews urges us, ‘Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels’ (Heb. 13:2).”*

To gain insight on what these angels are like, assign the following Bible passages to different members of the group to read and identify what each says about angels.

- *Psalm 148:1-5 — They are able to praise God (v. 2), and they were created (v. 5).*

- *Psalm 103:20 — They are powerful.*
- *Psalm 103:20 — They serve God.*
- *Luke 20:36 — They don't die.*
- *Luke 15:10 — They rejoice over lost sinners who repent.*
- *Hebrews 1:14 — They are sent to serve Christians.*
- *Hebrews 1:6 — They worship Jesus.*
- *Hebrews 13:2 — They sometime appear in unrecognizable form.*

Q. Who is Satan?

A. Satan is an ...

The Bible's frequent references to Satan indicate that he is a real being and is opposed to God's will.

(Listening Guide question 5)

Ideas for Discussion

- *Ask the group how convinced they are that Satan is a real being.*
- *Ask what they base their answer on. Do they have a specific Bible reference that supports their belief?*
- *Read Ezekiel 28:11–19. While this is intended as a description of the king of Tyre (v. 12), many theologians believe this section is a reference to Satan because the language seems too exalted to apply to a human being. This passage in Ezekiel (and another similar passage in Isaiah 14) indicate that Satan was an angel who rebelled against God and was banished from heaven.*
- *Satan is also referenced in Genesis 3 as a real being who tempted Eve, and in Matthew 4 as the being who tempted Jesus.*

Satan is aggressively opposed to God and His work in the world. Ephesians 6:11 refers to “the devil's schemes” and urges us to build safeguards against his attacks.

(Listening Guide question 7)

- *Read Ephesians 6:10–12 and especially verse 12 to see how God has made provision for our protection.*

Q. Who are demons?

A. Demons are fallen ...

Demons are other fallen angels who allied themselves with Satan and currently serve him as he opposes God and His work in the world through His people (Ephesians 6:12).

Q. What are the activities of Satan?

A. With the help ...

Lesson 4 lists six activities Satan participates in. You can ask group members to read and

comment.

(Listening Guide question 11)

- *1 Peter 5:8 — he seeks to devour God’s people.*
- *2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2 — he rules over the non-Christian world.*
- *John 8:44 — he deceives and lies.*
- *Acts 5:16 — he can possess nonbelievers and take over their life. Mark 1:21-28 and other references in the Gospels refer to demon possession.*

The more aware we are of his tactics the better equipped we are to use God’s armor against them.

While it is dangerous to obsess over demonic presence, we must be aware that demons do exist and pray for one another as Paul requested in Ephesians 6:18–20.

Discuss the idea that some have developed an obsession with Satan and demons and others totally ignore their existence. What is your plan to maintain a balanced approach to your defense against their influence in your life?

(Listening Guide question 12)

Q. What did Christ do to assure the ultimate defeat of Satan and his forces?

A. By His death and ...

Read the following Bible passages and discuss Jesus’ plan to defeat Satan’s influence in our life.

- *Hebrews 2:14–15 — Satan is already ultimately defeated and we are not helpless against him.*
- *Revelation 20:10 — Jesus will ultimately destroy Satan and his demon army.*

Q. How can we defeat Satan?

A. We who have placed ...

Discuss the specific “defenses” listed below (presented in Lesson 4) and make them part of your regular life practices.

- *James 4:7–8*
- *1 Peter 5:6–9*
- *Ephesians 6:10–18*
 - ◇ *Notice that both James and Peter give us dual defenses: flee Satan and draw near to God. Discuss which of the two is our more powerful tactic.*
 - ◇ *An intimate relationship with God and an acute awareness of His power at work in our life is essential to resisting or fleeing from Satan’s attacks. We cannot defeat Satan in our own power. You could read parts of Paul’s prayers in Ephesians 1:18–19; 3:14–16; and Colossians 1:11 where he prays for God’s power to be available to us.*

Encourage the group members to read the other Bible passages in the lesson that support each of

these “defenses.”

The Doctrine of the Future

Q. What happens to us when we die?

A. Our “life” ...

Read Genesis 1:26–27 and 2:7 and discuss the fact that God

- *Created us in His own image.*
- *Breathed His own life into us.*

God created us as eternal beings, and we will never cease to exist.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:7 and discuss the fact that our body dies and goes back to dust (Genesis 3:19) as a consequence of Adam and Eve’s fall in the garden of Eden, but that our soul lives on.

Q. What happens to our soul after we die?

A. When a person’s ...

Read John 5:28–29 and discuss the two options of where our soul goes when it leaves our body.

Ideas for Discussion

- *Mention that there are a few different beliefs among Christians about where our souls go.*
- *Read Luke 23:40–43 and discuss Jesus’ statement about where the repentant thief’s soul would go after he died.*

Additional optional material:

You may want to also read Philippians 1:20–24 and/or 2 Corinthians 5:6–10 where Paul expressed his understanding of where he would be when he died.

Be sensitive to the fact that there are various positions on this question and that it is a secondary theme and that the biblical statements aren’t conclusive enough for us to be dogmatic on the subject. If some disagree with the lesson’s teaching on the point, allow room for that.

Q. When will Christ return and judge the earth’s people?

A. Jesus said that ...

Read Mark 13:32 where Jesus answered that question for His disciples.

Read Mark 13:33 and ask the group how they respond to the advice Jesus gave His followers about His return.

Ideas for Discussion

- Ask what specific things a person could do in response to Jesus' advice.

Q. What events does Scripture say will take place before Christ's return?

A. Jesus taught that ...

Jesus taught that certain events would occur before He returned.

- Read Matthew 24:5–6 and ask the group to identify what each verse says will happen near the time of His return.
- Mention that Revelation 6–19 contains an elaborate description of a period called the tribulation that precedes Jesus' return (the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls are dramatic, visible events that occur before Jesus' return in Revelation 19).
- But Jesus also taught that, in spite of these events, Matthew 24:36–37 is also true.

Additional option for discussion:

In Mark 6:50–52 after feeding the five thousand and in Mark 8:16–21 after feeding the four thousand, Jesus scolded the twelve apostles—who had participated in those miracles—because their hearts were hardened and they didn't "get the message." We may be amazed at how dull we are to spiritual realities going on around us. It is no mystery that Jesus can teach that there will be visible signals and still no one will know when He returns.

Q. What will happen when Christ returns?

A. Bible-believing Christians ...

Discuss the difference between a "primary" and a "secondary" Christian doctrine.

- Christians refer to those distinctive doctrines that separate a Christian from a non-Christian as "primary" doctrines. A primary doctrine is one that is clearly stated in Scripture as foundational. Even in New Testament time there were supposed Christians who denied some of these foundational truths. John, in 1, 2 and 3 John; Peter in 2 Peter; and Jude in his book referred to these false teachers who posed as Christians but denied some of Christ's primary teachings.

Ask the group what they consider as "primary" doctrines of the Christian faith.

Many use the Apostles' Creed as a list of primary truths:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

- *God's existence in three persons; Jesus' deity, sacrificial death, and resurrection; inspiration of Scripture; salvation by faith and not by works; our future resurrection and eternal life, etc.*

Secondary doctrines are those where the Bible isn't as clear and where Bible scholars agree to disagree.

- *Mode of baptism, church government, role of women in ministry, the exercises of some spiritual gifts, details of Jesus' return, etc.*

Jesus' second coming to finalize the establishing of His kingdom (referred to as the millennium) and our resurrection to eternal bliss or eternal condemnation are primary doctrines.

Specific details about events surrounding Jesus' thousand-year reign, called the millennium, should be seen as secondary doctrines. We can discuss and debate these details, but we must not allow them to be matters of Christian orthodoxy that divide the church.

Q. What will happen when Christ returns?

Ask the group if they know the major views of Christ's return.

You will want to have a copy of Lesson 4 on hand for this discussion, but we have provided summary answers to the questions in the Listening Guide for quick reference. Remind group members that this is Theology Basics and not a course in the doctrine of last things (eschatology). The material in the lesson is intentionally brief and uncomplicated. To help guide the discussion use the summary answers to questions from the Listening Guide given below:

What do theologians call the thousand-year reign of Christ referred to in Revelation 20?

- *The millennium*

a. According to the postmillennial view

- *When will the millennium occur?*
 - ◇ *The millennium begins when the church has sufficiently influenced the world to follow Christ's teachings.*
- *What has to happen before Christ returns?*
 - ◇ *Jesus said that when all have heard the gospel He will return.*
- *What happens when Christ returns?*
 - ◇ *The dead Christians will be raised and reign with Christ for a thousand years. At the end of Jesus' thousand-year reign, the unrepentant dead will be raised. There will be a final judgment; unbelievers and Satan will be condemned. Believers will enter the new heaven and new earth for eternity.*

b. According to the amillennial view

- *When will the millennium occur?*
 - ◇ *We should understand the millennium figuratively. The church has been fulfilling the figurative thousand-year reign of Christ. We are in the millennium now.*

- *When do the persecutions described in Matthew and Revelation occur?*
 - ◊ *The events referred to as the tribulation have been occurring throughout church history.*
- *What happens when Christ returns?*
 - ◊ *All the dead will rise from the grave to join those who are living and Christ will judge us. He will separate those who have responded to His truth from those who haven't and we will all enter our eternal state.*
- *The thousand years of the millennium is understood figuratively and not literally.*

c. According to the premillennial view

- *When will the millennium occur?*
 - ◊ *When Christ returns.*
- *When will the persecutions described in Matthew and Revelation occur?*
 - ◊ *There will be a time of intense persecution of the church before Christ returns.*
- *What happens when Christ returns?*
 - ◊ *The dead Christians will be raised and reign with Christ for a thousand years.*
- *What happens at the end of the millennium?*
 - ◊ *The nonbelieving dead will be raised. There will be a final judgment and unbelievers and Satan will be condemned. Believers will enter the new heaven and new earth for eternity.*

Ask the group if they know what two significant differences dispensationalists have with other premillennial believers.

- *The church will be raptured before the tribulation and will be with Christ during the following seven years of persecution. Jesus will then return with the raptured believers who will rule with him during the millennium.*
- *Israel will be reinstated as a significant presence during the millennium in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.*

What do the postmillennial, the amillennial, and the premillennial views believe in common?

Although theologians differ on some points, what is far more important is what they agree on about Jesus' return. Ask the group if they can list two or three points where theologians agree about Christ's return.

- *Jesus died and was raised again to save us from sin's power and penalty (John 3:16–17).*
- *Jesus is alive and is the Savior and Lord of His church (Colossians 1:13–20)*
- *Jesus is coming again and He could return at any moment (Matthew 24:36–42).*
- *When Jesus returns, each person's soul will be reunited with his or her resurrected body and will live eternally, either in God's presence or separated from Him (John 5:28–29).*
- *Jesus commissioned all of His followers to be His witnesses and tell all who will listen that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (Luke 19:10; Acts 1:8).*
- *We are to wait longingly and expectantly and be prepared at any moment for Jesus' return (Matthew 24:42–44).*

Conclusion: Living What We Believe

Briefly review the definition of doctrine and discuss each of its parts. We defined doctrine in Lesson 1 as: “Bible truths that are

- *taught*
- *believed*
- *and practiced.*”

Before leaving the Theology Basics course, review each of the doctrines discussed in the course and ask students to refresh their thinking about one or two major points related to each.

Theology Basics course presented a brief introduction to eight Bible doctrines:

- *God (theology proper)*
- *Jesus Christ (Christology)*
- *The Holy Spirit (pneumatology)*
- *The Bible (bibliology)*
- *Salvation (soteriology)*
- *The church (ecclesiology)*
- *Angels and demons (angelology)*
- *Last things (eschatology)*

Ask group members what their plan is to continue adding depth to their understanding of God’s eternal truth.

Suggest that continuing to take Our Daily Bread Christian University courses will deepen their understanding of God’s Word and ministry skills.

Objectives ...

(Listening Guide questions 32–35)

Ideas for Discussion

- *List a few ways angels minister to Christian believers.*
- *Describe how Satan and his fallen angels seek to tempt and mislead.*
- *Describe what happens to a person after death.*
- *Explain how theologians have differed and agreed about the events related to Christ’s return.*

Application

Satan and his demons labor feverishly to destroy any human but especially one who is committed to his great enemy, our Lord Jesus Christ. What is your plan to guard yourself against his efforts to destroy you and your reputation as a Christian?

Reflection

It is important to promote this reflection time in each session of the course. Ask the members to think back over what they have just experienced and form at least one point they can add to their understanding of God's Word. These insights may or may not match what they expected at the beginning of the lesson. Have them reflect on those affirmations or changes.

Also emphasize that this part of the group session could be an important time for participants to minister to other members of the group. Not everyone "sees" the same emphases and something one person highlights may be an added insight to others in the group.

Close in Prayer

You may want to ask if anyone is dealing with something they would like prayer for. Depending on the size of your group, it would be meaningful to pray for each person by name.