

Foundations 1A with Discussion Questions

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Foundations 1

Lesson One: Who is God?

A. God is the Creator

Genesis 1:1-4 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

God is the creator of all things. The sun, the moon, and all the stars in the sky came into existence because God created them. Who is God? He is the one who is powerful enough to create everything through his words! How many stars did God create? According to experts who study the information given by the Hubble telescope, there are 12,500,000,000,000,000,000 stars! God's power is without limits. Jesus said, "with God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26, "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

In Genesis chapter one, we learn that God created all the plants, animals, insects, birds, and fish in the sea. We are told God then created man in his image.

Genesis 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God created Adam and Eve in his image and gave them the ability to have children. He commanded them to be fruitful and increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it.

We are told that after God created Adam and Eve and he placed them in a garden. The place was called the Garden of Eden. They had everything they needed. They had plenty of food. The food grew all around them and there was always enough. In the afternoon, in the cool of the day, God would come and visit with Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:8)

Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

Genesis 3:8, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

It seems that God came regularly in the cool of the day to meet with Adam and Eve. We learn from this that God cares about his people and wants to have a loving relationship with them.

B. God is Loving

Psalm 36:7, “How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:9-10 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

God has an unfailing love for us. He demonstrated his love by sending his Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. In the Old Testament book of Exodus, we see how God revealed himself to Moses.

C. More of God’s Character

When Moses (one of God’s servants who wrote parts of the Bible) asked if he could see God’s glory, we are told that God allowed Moses to see him in part.

Exodus 33:18-23, “Then Moses said, ‘Now show me your glory.’ And the Lord said, ‘I cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’ Then the Lord said, ‘There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will

remove my hand, and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.’”

God reveals himself to Moses.

5 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:5-7)

God is compassionate (verse 6)

God is gracious (verse 6)

God is slow to anger (verse 6)

God is abounding in love (verse 6)

God is abounding in faithfulness (verse 6)

God maintains love to thousands (verse 7)

God is Forgiving (verse 7)

God is also holy, which means he is totally separate from any kind of sin or rebellion. As we see in verse 7, those who are not forgiven by God will be punished for their sins and the effect of their sin will be passed to their descendants.

1 Peter 1:16, "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Samuel 2:2, "There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."

Psalm 22:3, “Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.”

Leviticus 20:26, “You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.”

God is holy, which means he is totally separate from all sin. For us to have a relationship with God, we too must be holy. We will learn in Lessons 5 that this requires us to put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the next lesson we will see how sin separates human beings from God.

Final Note:

It is essential to know who God is and what He has done for us, since the greatest commandment is to love Him. To truly love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, we must first understand His character and actions.

Matthew 22:36-38 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

D. Discussion Questions

1. God created the world. How does this show His power? How does this make you feel?
2. In what ways does God demonstrate His love for us, and why is this important?
3. What do you learn about God's character from how He reveals Himself to Moses in Exodus?

4. How does understanding God's holiness affect your view of Him?

Lesson Two: Separation from God

A. The Garden and the Tree

God desires to have a relationship with human beings. This is why he created Adam and Eve. Because Adam and Eve sinned, they caused a separation between God and people.

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It was their job to take of the Garden, to rule over the animals, and to be fruitful and multiply. God blessed them, saying, "All this is for you. Help yourself to anything you like. But never touch the tree in the middle of the Garden. That tree gives knowledge of good and evil. The day you eat its fruit, you will die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

Genesis 2:8-9, "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

B. Consequences

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

The consequence for their disobedience was spiritual death.

God did not mean that Adam and Eve would die instantly the moment they ate the fruit from the tree. He meant that in time they would die. If Adam and Eve had not eaten the forbidden fruit, they would not have died.

C. Deception

One day a snake came to Eve and said, "Has God told you that you can eat the fruit from all the trees?" Eve said, "God has told us we can eat all the fruit except for what grows on The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." (Genesis 3:1).

Genesis 3:1-3 Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

The serpent replied, "That's not true! This fruit will not harm you. God knows that if you eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you'll become just like Him, and will be able to decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong."

Genesis 3:4-5, "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The woman looked at the fruit and thought about how good it looked. She thought how wonderful it would be to be as wise as God. She

believed the serpent's lie and ate the fruit. She then gave some to Adam and he took a bite as well.

Genesis 3:6-7, “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”

D. Separation from God Begins

As soon as they ate the fruit, a change came over Adam and Eve. They became unhappy and fearful of God. They realized that they were naked, and immediately felt ashamed.

Afterwards, Adam and Eve heard God calling them. Without thinking, they hid in the bushes. But God knew where they were. When God asked them if they had eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (that He had told them not to touch), they blamed each other for their sins.

Genesis 3:8-13 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

10 He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

God was sad that Adam and Eve disobeyed Him. He told them that they had to leave the Garden of Eden, "From now on you'll have to scratch a living from the soil. You'll need to make clothes and grow food. Nothing will come easily -- not even childbirth. And one day, you will die."

E. Sin and Restoration

Genesis 3:22-24, “And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.' So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[e] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

This is how man became separated from God. God is love, but he is also holy and sinless. He cannot be with people if they are not sinless as well. That is why we need to be forgiven of our sins and why God sent His only Son to die on the cross for our sins – so we could be forgiven and made holy.

Remember, God wants to be in a relationship with us. It is our sin that stops this from happening. But if we can have our sins forgiven, we can have fellowship with God. Jesus can forgive our sins, but first we need to understand who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

F. Discussion Questions

1. Why did God place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, and what was His command regarding it?
2. What were the consequences of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit?
3. How did the serpent deceive Eve, and why do you think she believed him?
4. What does this story tell us about the nature of sin and its impact on our relationship with God?
5. Why is it important to have our sins forgiven to restore our relationship with God?

Lesson Three: Who is Jesus?

A. Jesus is God

The Bible shows that Jesus is God, who became human, lived among us, and has the same power and nature as God the Father.

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 5:18, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

John 10:30-33, "I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

John 20:28, "Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Col 2:9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

Hebrews 1:8, "But of the Son He says, 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.'"

B. Through Jesus all things were created!

Jesus is the creator of everything, seen and unseen, and He holds it all together.

John 1:3, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

Col 1:16-17, "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

C. Jesus Never Sinned!

Jesus lived a perfect life without sin or dishonesty.

1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

D. Jesus Has Great Authority

Levítico 20:26

Nova Versão Internacional

²⁶ Vocês serão santos para mim, porque eu, o Senhor, sou santo, e os separei dentre os povos para serem meus.

Jesus has complete authority over heaven and earth, with all power and dominion belonging to Him.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

1 Peter 3:22 [Jesus] who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Isaiah 9:6, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

E. Jesus loves us!

Jesus showed His deep love for us by giving His life and ensuring nothing can separate us from His love.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Romans 8:39, "neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

F. Jesus is Coming Back!

Jesus will return in power and glory to fulfill His promises and bring justice to the earth.

Matthew 26:64, "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Matthew 16:27, "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

Luke 21:27, “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

G. Discussion Questions

1. How do we know that Jesus is God, from the verses we read?
2. What does it mean that Jesus made everything?
3. Why is it important that Jesus never sinned?
4. What does it mean that Jesus has all authority?
5. Why is it good news that Jesus is coming back?

Lesson Four: What has Jesus done for us?

Christianity is all about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us. Many people and many religions talk about what they can do for God or gods (idols), but as Christians we talk about what Jesus has done for us.

A. Jesus Came to Earth

Jesus came down to earth from heaven to save us.

John 6:51, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”

Because Jesus loves us, he left the glories of heaven and became a man. Jesus chose to be born in a manger to a humble family. By entering the world in this way, he identified with the poor and the outcast.

Matthew 1:21 "And she [Mary] will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

Luke 2:9-12 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger."

He did not own his own home.

Luke 9:58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has **no place to lay his head.**"

Phil. 2:5 – 8a Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 **but made himself nothing**, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...

“He made himself nothing.” This means Jesus willingly set aside His divine privileges, taking on human form and the role of a servant.

B. Jesus Suffered

Jesus was spit upon. Mark 14:65, “Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!” And the guards took him and beat him.”

Jesus was mocked. Mark 15:20, “And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.”

Jesus was denied by Peter and betrayed by Judas. Mark 14:68 “But he denied it. ‘I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,’ he said, and went out into the entryway.”

Jesus was blindfolded and beaten. Mark 14:65, “Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!” And the guards took him and beat him.”

Jesus was scourged. Mark 15:15, “Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”

A crown of thorns was put on his head. Mark 15:17, “They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.”

Jesus was struck with a reed. Mark 15:19, “Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him”

Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Isaiah 53:3, “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar

with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”

C. Jesus Died on a Cross

Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins, so we could be forgiven and live in righteousness.

Isaiah 53:6, “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Luke 23:33, "When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals -- one on his right, the other on his left."

He died so we could be forgiven.

Rom. 4:25, "He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."

1 Peter 2:24, “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

Jesus rose from the dead!

“Jesus Christ came into this world to die for our sins. Jesus came to give his life for us” (Matt. 20:28).

D. Jesus Rose from the Dead

While Jesus was alive, he had predicted that he would rise from the dead. He challenged his enemies:

"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." He was speaking about his body (John 2:19-22).

We read about the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 15:1-4, "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Romans 4:25, "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

What we learn from Jesus' resurrection:

1. It proves that everything he said and promised was true!
2. It shows us that Jesus has power over death.

E. Discussion Questions

1. Why did Jesus come down from heaven, and what does this show about His love for us?
2. What kinds of suffering did Jesus go through, and why did He endure this suffering?

3. Why is Jesus' death on the cross important for our forgiveness?
4. What does Jesus' resurrection show us about His power and promises?
5. How does knowing what Jesus did for us change the way we view Him and view our lives?

Lesson Five: Salvation

A. Two Criminals

There were two criminals crucified on the right and the left-hand side of Jesus. At first, both criminals insulted Jesus.

Matthew 27:41-44, "Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing."

After being with Jesus for a short time, one of the robbers totally changed his attitude.

Luke 23:39-43, "One of the criminals who hung there, hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

What an amazing time to repent and turn to Jesus. This was the last day of his criminal life. As far as we know, this criminal had never followed God. However, he is crucified next to Jesus. At first, he also insulted Jesus. But after spending a very short time with the Lord, he repented, defended Jesus, and asked Jesus to remember him when he entered his eternal kingdom.

This is a great picture of salvation. The criminal knew he was a sinful man and said, "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve." The criminal changed his ways, which is the definition of repentance. Then he called upon Jesus to save him. By faith he believed that Jesus could save him when he entered his eternal kingdom. Jesus saw his repentance and faith and said, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The moment the criminal died he went straight to paradise to be with Jesus forever. What a wonderful story. We are not saved because we have served Jesus our whole lives. This man did nothing for God. He had no ability to serve the Lord, for his hands and his feet were nailed to a cross. However, he did do three things. First, he realized he was a sinful person. Second, he repented and turned from his evil ways. And third, he asked Jesus to remember him when he entered paradise (heaven).

This story shows how people become Christians and spend eternity with Jesus. Following are three steps to explain this clearly with more detail.

B. Three Steps to Becoming a Christian

1. Realize the Problem

Every single human being has the same problem—sin.

Romans 3:23 tells us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Ecclesiastes 7:20 tells us the same truth, “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

God is holy, completely sinless. Heaven is also a holy place where no sin is allowed. Because of our sin, we cannot enter heaven.

Our sin creates a wall between us and God, leaving us unable to enter heaven unless our sins are forgiven. But there is good news—God, in His love and grace, has provided the solution to our greatest problem.

In summary, we all have a problem. The problem is that everyone is separated from holy God because of sin and therefore cannot go to heaven. Yet God has shown us the solution. We are to repent and have faith in Jesus.

2. Repent

Acts 3:19, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”

2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Matthew 4:17, “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

Ezekiel 18:32, “For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!”

Acts 17:30, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”

What is Repentance?

Repentance means to turn around and go the other direction. We turn away from our sin and turn to God. We turn from our old way of life and follow Jesus.

Mark 1:15 says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

3. Have Faith (believe) in Jesus

Jesus is God’s Son. He came to earth, lived a perfect life, and willingly died to pay the penalty for our sins. Three days later, He rose from the dead, proving His power over sin and death.

To believe in Jesus means to trust Him completely. It’s like relying on a strong bridge to carry you safely across—you depend on Jesus to save you.

Believing in Him means trusting that He died on the cross to take away your sins and rose again to give you new life.

Now we can be with him in heaven forever. He is the one who makes this happen. It is not our good works that save us; it is God's grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."

When you believe, you can pray something like this:

"Jesus, I believe in You. I admit I need forgiveness and want to turn away from my sin. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I trust in Your sacrifice, and I'm grateful that through You, I can go to heaven."

The Bible promises this hope of forgiveness and eternal life in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that anyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."

Our greatest problem is sin, which separates us from God. But God provided the solution. When we repent and believe in Jesus, God forgives our sin and restores our relationship with Him.

E. Discussion Questions

1. What changed the heart of the criminal on the cross, and how did Jesus respond to his faith?
2. Why is it important to recognize that we are all sinners?
3. What does it mean to repent, and why is it a necessary part of following Jesus?

Lesson Six: The Grace of God

A. Salvation is a Free Gift

While Jesus was dying on the cross for our sins, remember there were two criminals next to him. One was on his right and the other was on his left. They had done horrible things and deserved to be punished. Early in the day both men insulted Jesus, but later in the day one of them changed. The criminal on his left started to insult Jesus by saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" The criminal on Jesus' right said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." This story is found in Luke 23:39-43 and Matthew 27:44.

The criminal on Jesus' right is now in heaven. In fact, that very day as Jesus had said, he was in Paradise! What did he do to deserve salvation? Did he go to church? Did he pray every day? Did he evangelize? NO! He could do nothing because he was nailed to a cross. But he did believe in Jesus. So he asked Jesus just to remember him. And Jesus graciously forgave him.

Salvation does not come because we do good things! Salvation comes because of what Jesus did - by dying on the cross. If we believe that Jesus died for us on the cross and trust in Him, we will be saved.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have ever lasting life” (John 3:16).

Because God loves us, he sent his son into the world. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried and on the third day he rose from the dead. If we believe this, we will have eternal life. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sin and there is nothing we can do to add or pay for this salvation.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Grace means that you are given something that is free of cost.

We receive the grace of God through faith. When we truly believe in who Jesus is and what he has done for us, we are forgiven.

God even tells us that salvation is “not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”. This means that even faith is given to us as a gift. He did this because he loves us. Our response needs to be thankfulness!

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

B. Not by Works

We do not receive salvation through good works. Going to church, praying, and sharing our faith are good things but they will not save us. We are saved by faith. We can give to the poor, help others, and sing

praise songs all day long, but these things will not save us. We are saved because of what Jesus did for us; He died on the cross for our sins.

1 John 5:11-13, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

- We are saved by the grace of God.
- Salvation is a free gift.

Acts 15:11 "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved."

Acts 4:12 "For there is no deliverance through any other person, nor has any other name on earth been given by which we must be saved,"

Acts 16:31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

God is ready and willing to give salvation to anyone who asks with faith.

Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

"And the Spirit and the bride say 'Come!'
And let the one who hears say, 'Come!'
And let the one who is thirsty come;
let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."
(Revelation 22:17)

C. Discussion Questions

1. What did the criminal on the cross do to receive salvation, and what does this show about God's grace?
2. Why is salvation called a "free gift" from God?
3. What does Ephesians 2:8-9 teach us about being saved by grace and not by works?

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

4. Why is it important to believe in Jesus for salvation, according to Acts 4:12 and Acts 16:31?

Acts 4:12, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Acts 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

5. How can we accept God's invitation for eternal life, as described in Revelation 3:20 and Revelation 22:17?

Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."

Lesson Seven: How Can I Know I'm Saved?

How do we know for sure that we are saved? What are some signs?

1. We declare and believe

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

2. We believe the promises in the Bible.

Scripture assures us that say if we believe in Jesus and have a loving relationship with Him, we have eternal life.

¹¹ “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:11-12)

3. We all sin, but when the Holy Spirit lives inside us, we have remorse when we sin.

We eagerly confess and repent, knowing we have hope for forgiveness because of His great love. A personal relationship has begun and we don't want any sin to bring distance between us.

1 John 1:8-9 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

4. We have a new life

Those who are truly born again are growing in their Christian faith, which means they desire to sin less and obey the will of the Lord more and more, with His help.

2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

John 14:23, “Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.’”

Our minds start changing. We start thinking differently as we read the Bible and spend time talking to God and listening to Him.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
(Romans 12:1)

5. We begin “walking in the Spirit” and bearing fruit

Galatians 5:14-26: ¹⁴“For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did

before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

We experience true peace, joy, love, and other fruits of the Spirit, because He IS love, joy, and peace and now lives in us! Sometimes these are special times of powerful experiences (or "encounters" of His Presence. But day to day, the Holy Spirit is also transforming us into His likeness, producing these qualities in us as we "walk" with Him.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

If you are wondering if you are saved, take a look at your life. Are you bearing fruit? If not, do you really know God? He says, "Draw near to Me, and I will draw near to you." (James 4:8).

6. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are His children.

When we accept Christ's forgiveness and give our lives to Him, the Holy Spirit comes and lives inside us, assuring us that we belong to Him.

Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

7. Our hearts change – We love God and desire to obey Him

Jesus said, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” (John 14:23)

Jesus also said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

We see that discovering truth through His teachings and obeying them brings us freedom.

We are no longer under the bondage of sin. Because of Jesus’ blood sacrificed for us, we now have the power to make good decisions and walk in the light.

Romans 6:22-23 “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

8. We have a new passion and love for God’s Word (the Bible)

The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that the Bible is true and inspired. We hear God speak to us as we read and meditate on His Word. We receive strength, wisdom, and life as His Spirit speaks to us through the scriptures. We come to know God and love Him more and more as we read and obey His Word. We begin to understand the Scriptures like never before because His Spirit living in us gives us fresh revelation.

9. Questions to ask yourself to give you assurance you are saved

Have you given your life to Jesus by faith and invited Him into your heart? This means choosing to follow Him, honoring Him with your words and actions.

Is your thought life and lifestyle changing because you are aware He is in you and you belong to Him?

Are your desires changing? Do you want to obey and please God because you are thankful, He forgave you of all your sins?

Is your heart filled with love for God and others because you have experienced His great love for you?

Chapter 8: Now That I'm a Christian

A. I Have a New Identity

When you gave your life to Jesus, something powerful happened. God gave you a new identity.

That means you are not the same person you were before. You are not defined by your past, your mistakes, or what others say about you.

God says who you are now.

Here are some truths from the Bible:

1. You Are a Child of God

When you believe in Jesus, God adopts you into His family.

"Yet to all who did receive him... he gave the right to become children of God." —John 1:12

You are His son. You are His daughter. He loves you like His own.

2. You Are Forgiven

Your sins are not just covered—they are gone.

“In Him we have... the forgiveness of sins.” —Ephesians 1:7

God doesn't hold your past against you anymore.

3. You Are Seated with Christ

You have a new position in the spirit. You are not low or forgotten—you are seated with Jesus.

“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places.” —Ephesians 2:6

This means you belong with Him—you have value and purpose. You do not need to live your old life.

4. You Are a New Creation

The old you is gone. God is making something new in you.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new is here!” —2 Corinthians 5:17

You are not who you used to be.

Final Thought

Don't believe the lies that say you're still the same, or not good enough, or unworthy.

Believe what God says.

You are His child. You are loved. You are free. You have a new identity in Jesus.

Remember, now that you're a Christian, you are a new creation in Christ. Our goal is to become more and more like Jesus, bringing him glory as he changes us by the power of the Holy Spirit who now lives in us. This is a process, which the Bible describes as going from glory to glory. We will never be perfect on this earth, but we now desire to please him out of love.

Romans 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

B. I Can Have Victory Over Sin

Everyone struggles with sin. Even after we give our lives to Jesus, temptation still comes. But the good news is this: you don’t have to fight it alone. God has given us everything we need to walk in victory.

1. Start with Jesus

Victory doesn’t start with trying harder—it starts with Jesus.

When He died on the cross, He didn’t just forgive your sins. He broke the *power* of sin over your life. That means sin doesn’t control you anymore.

“For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” —Romans 6:14

You still have a choice, but now you have the power to choose what’s right.

2. Stay Close to God

Just like a lamp won’t shine unless it’s plugged in, you won’t have power over sin unless you stay connected to God.

How do you stay close?

- Talk to God every day. Be honest. Tell Him when you're tempted. Ask for help.
- Read the Bible. It gives you strength and helps you see what’s true.
- Worship. Sing to God, even if you’re alone. It changes your heart and mind.

- Get around other believers. We're stronger together than we are alone.

3. Say, "No" Quickly

Sin often starts small—a thought, a look, a little compromise. The sooner you say, "No", the easier it is.

You don't have to argue with temptation. Just walk away. Turn your mind to something good. Call a friend. Pray.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." —James 4:7

4. When You Fall, Get Back Up

You won't be perfect. You might mess up. But don't stay down. Run back to Jesus. He still loves you. He still wants you.

Ask Him to forgive you. Let Him clean your heart. Then start fresh.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us..." —1 John 1:9

God doesn't want perfect people—He wants honest ones who keep coming back.

5. Let the Holy Spirit Help You

God didn't leave you to fight this alone. He gave you the Holy Spirit—His own power living inside of you.

Ask the Holy Spirit every day, "Help me live like Jesus."

He'll give you strength, peace, and even warning signs when you're headed in the wrong direction.

"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." —Galatians 5:16

Final Thought: You're not alone. Jesus is with you. He already won the battle—now He walks with you as you learn to live in that victory. Keep going. Don't quit. Every step forward counts.

C. I Can Have Victory Over Demonic Forces

As a Christian, you belong to Jesus, and the enemy has no right to control your life. But sometimes we give the enemy access—like leaving a door open in your house. Self-deliverance means closing those doors, standing on God’s truth, and telling the enemy to leave.

1. Understand the Basics

- Jesus already won the victory on the cross.
- If you’ve accepted Him, His Spirit lives in you.
- Recognize that believers are in a constant spiritual battle and that demonic forces can influence or oppress but not "possess" a true believer.
- The enemy looks for open doors—ways to invade your mind, emotions, or body.

“Do not give the devil a foothold.” —Ephesians 4:27

2. What Are “Open Doors”?

These are things that give the enemy permission to mess with you.

Here are some examples:

- Unforgiveness
- Hidden sin (like sexual immorality, pornography, lying, stealing, anger, etc.)
- Occult involvement (going to the witchdoctor, speaking to the dead)
- Bitterness or hate
- Continuing to live in a sin you haven’t repented of
- Drugs or alcohol abuse
- Keeping cursed or demonic objects (charms or amulets, “blessed” bracelets, necklaces, braids, or strings given by a Shaman, “healer,” witch doctor, etc. carved idols)

Think of each of these like a window left open at night—they invite trouble in.

3. Close the Doors with Jesus

Step 1: Repent

Talk to God like this:

“Jesus, I’m sorry for opening doors to the enemy. I confess [name the sin or activity]. I repent and choose to turn away from it now. I commit my life to you. Thank you for forgiving me and cleansing me with Your blood.”

Another example of a repentance prayer:

“Lord, I repent of my addiction to (_____) and I commit my life to you. I’m sorry. I thank you that I belong to you, and my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Thank you that I am forgiven. Demon of addiction, you now have no right over my body because I have repented. In Jesus’ name, I command every spirit of addiction to leave my life now!” Amen.

Be honest. Don’t hide anything. He already knows—and He wants to set you free.

Step 2: Renounce and declare with authority

Renouncing means to *cancel* the enemy’s claim. By verbally rejecting any hold that a demon might have, believers can sever ties with the demonic realm.

Declaring means to command the enemy to leave with the authority you now have in Christ because he now lives in you. Now, with Jesus’ authority, tell the enemy to go. Speak with faith.

Example Prayers:

“In the name of Jesus, I command every unclean spirit that came through [name it] to leave me now. You have no place in my home or on me. I belong to Jesus.”

(You don't have to shout, but you must believe.)

“In Jesus' name, I renounce [name the sin, habit, or spirit]. I break every agreement I've made with it. It no longer has power in my life.”

“I renounce anger. I break its power. I belong to Jesus, not to a spirit of anger.”

“In Jesus' name, I command the spirit of addiction to leave my life. I am forgiven. Leave now!”

If you are a victim of abuse, you may be tormented by a demon because of unforgiveness. Forgive the person for whatever they did to you. When you forgive, the authority of that demon loosens its grip. Forgiveness doesn't mean you let the abuse continue. You should seek wise, Godly counsel and put up healthy boundaries. Forgiving others is necessary even if the other person doesn't deserve it. Jesus forgave us while we were still sinners and says if we don't forgive others, he will not forgive us. Ask God to give you his eyes and heart. The Holy Spirit will help you as you step out in obedience to forgive.

Example of a forgiveness prayer:

“Thank you, Jesus, for taking my sin upon yourself when you died on the cross and rose again. Help me to forgive others because you have forgiven me. I now choose specifically to forgive (name) for (what they did). I take authority over all demonic forces in the name of Jesus Christ and tell you to get out of my life now! I am a child of God, forgiven and set free. You have no right to stay. Go in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

4: Remove Anything Connected to Sin or the Occult

If you have anything in your home or on your body tied to sin or the occult (charms, powders, roots, oils, bowls, animal figurines, necklaces, bracelets, or rings), get rid of it. Burn it or throw it in the latrine.

“Don’t bring a cursed thing into your house...” —Deuteronomy 7:26

5: Fill the Empty Space

After the enemy leaves, fill that space with God’s presence.

- Read your Bible
- Pray every day
- Worship Jesus
- Speak God’s Word out loud
- Stay connected with other believers

What will happen if you don’t fill the empty space with God? The Bible says in Matthew 12:43-45, *“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”*

Don’t leave the house empty—fill it with the Holy Spirit.

Final Thoughts

You don’t need to be a pastor to do self-deliverance. You need to belong to Jesus, be willing to repent and speak with His authority.

If you fall again, don’t give up—go back to Jesus. Keep your doors shut and your heart clean. Freedom is a process, but every step you take in truth brings more light, more strength, and more peace.

If you need more help, find a godly person who knows their authority in Christ to pray for you.

D. I Can Have an Intimate Relationship with God

When you said yes to Jesus, He came to live inside you. His Spirit is with you right now. You don't have to climb a mountain to find God. He's already here.

"Abide in me, and I in you." —John 15:4

To "abide" means to stay close, like a branch staying connected to a tree. The tree gives the branch everything it needs—life, strength, fruit.

2. It's Not About Trying Harder

You don't need fancy prayers or big words. God listens to your heart. You can talk to Him like you talk to a friend. Even a whisper or a thought can reach Him.

"God, I'm here. I want to know You more."

Simple and honest – that's where it begins.

3. Make Space for Him

When you love someone, you want to be with them. Same with God.

You don't need hours—just give Him your attention:

- Sit in silence. Say, "Jesus, I'm here."
- Thank Him out loud for something simple.
- Read one verse slowly. Ask Him to speak through it.
- Breathe and listen. Let your heart rest in His presence.

This is what it means to practice His presence—not just knowing He's there but being aware of Him throughout the day.

4. Bring Him into Everything

You don't have to be in church to be close to God. You can talk to Him while:

- Washing dishes

- Walking to work
- Sitting under a tree
- Feeding your children
- Lying in bed

Every moment becomes holy when your heart turns towards Him.

5. He Wants Your Heart, Not Just Your Habits

God doesn't just want you to read the Bible—He wants to speak to you through it.

He doesn't want you to pray just to check a box—He wants you to connect with Him.

Even if you mess up, don't hide from Him. Repent and run to Him. He already knows. He's not angry—He's waiting with open arms.

John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." —James 4:8

6. Intimacy with God develops as we read the Bible

How? It is unlike any other book because the Holy Spirit inspired the authors in what to write. That's why we call the Bible the Word of God. It is alive and has the power to change your life.

2 Tim 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."

Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires."

The Bible has 66 books, divided into two sections - the Old Testament and the New Testament. The best place to start is the book of John. You can find this in the table of contents at the beginning of your Bible. If you do not have a Bible, save up your money to buy one. If you cannot afford a whole Bible, then buy the New Testament. Some New Testaments come with Psalms and Proverbs, which is in the Old Testament. After reading the book of John, I suggest you next read one chapter from the book of Proverbs, one chapter from Psalms, and/or one chapter from the New Testament each day.

Choose a special time and place without distractions to read the Bible every morning before you start your day. Your faith and relationship with God will grow the more you read God's Word. It will be a light to your path and food to your soul. The Holy Spirit will speak to you as you read in a contemplative prayerful manner with an open and humble heart to listen and obey. He will also give you the desire and ability to do what he says.

7. Intimacy develops when we pray

Prayer is just talking to God. He can hear you anywhere and anytime. Spend time praying about what you read and listen to what the Holy Spirit might say to you. If you are anxious about something, bring your problems to God in prayer with thanksgiving, and he will give you peace. (Philippians 4:6,7)

If you are feeling distant because of a sin you've committed, confess your sin to Him, repent, and ask for forgiveness. He promises to forgive you (1 John 1:9). If you have sinned against another person, you must make it right with them. Remember, God loved us first and has forgiven us for ALL our sins. God says if we don't forgive others, He will not forgive us. Sin separates us from God. Let's keep our hearts and minds

pure so our intimacy with Him is preserved. Nothing is more valuable in life.

Prayer also includes listening, just like when we talk to someone, we also listen to the other person respond. Now that you're a Christian, you are God's child. Jesus said, "My sheep know My voice." Most of the time this will be a thought, rather than an audible voice.

Sometimes God speaks to us through others, like a teacher, preacher, or prophet. You will also often hear the Holy Spirit speak to you as you read the Bible. The Bible says the Holy Spirit is our teacher and reveals the meaning of scripture to us as we read. The more we take time to listen and obey what He says, the more we will hear. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing. If we do this, we will stay in constant communion with God and have an intimate relationship with Him.

8. Intimacy with God grows as we worship Him

The Bible says in John 4:24, "Worship in spirit and truth." This means engaging with God authentically, from the heart, and based on the truth of who He is, rather than just following rituals or traditions.

Worship can take on many forms, like singing songs to God, praying, giving time or money, using your talents to glorify God such as in art, dance, or instruments. But for these things to be worship, they must be done with a humble heart to please and glorify God. It's an act of sacrifice and giving honor to God, acknowledging his character of love, goodness, faithfulness, etc. (As you continue reading the Bible, you will know God better and better, and your worship and prayer time will naturally become more meaningful and intimate.)

When you worship Jesus in spirit and in truth, He will respond. God knows your thoughts and your heart. He loves you and desires to interact with you. If you can focus on Jesus, and not get distracted by

those around you, you will more likely experience His supernatural presence and feel His love, joy, and peace.

9. Intimacy with God includes loving God and experiencing His love for you.

Besides everything already mentioned above, a key to experiencing this wonderful intimate loving relationship with God is obedience.

John 14:21, *“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”*

10. Intimacy comes when we are just still and quiet in His presence.

Psalm 42:10, *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

Find a quiet place and time without distractions to just BE with God. Meditate on his holiness, his goodness, etc. Maybe play some quiet music with no words. Enjoy His presence, just you and Him. Let Him love you as you spend time with Him.

“Those who live in the secret place of the Most High will remain under the shadow of the Almighty.” —Psalm 91:1

Final Encouragement

You don't need to be smart or perfect.

Just come to God with an open heart.

He wants to speak to you—and He will.

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” —James 4:8