

Notes and Helps To Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

Lessons in Salvation -- Lesson 1

Introduction:

The word “gospel” means good news of salvation. We want to understand that. Before we can fully appreciate good news, we have to understand the bad news. Why do we need salvation? From what are we saved?

Read these passages at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. (Gen 6:5 NKJ)

⁹ "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jer 17:9 NKJ)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom 3:23 NKJ)

Questions:

From where did the great wickedness on the earth come?

What do the words “every intent of the thoughts of his heart” tell us about man?

How would you define “heart”?

What is the most deceitful thing on the earth?

How many people have sinned?

From what does sin cause us to fall short of? Why is that important?

How does the culture’s view of man differ from the Biblical view of man? The culture says, “Down deep all men are _____.”

The culture says that my problems are caused by _____.

How has the culture’s view of man affected you personally?

Lessons in Salvation -- Lesson 1

Introduction:

The word “gospel” means good news of salvation. We want to understand that. Before we can fully appreciate good news, we have to understand the bad news. Why do we need salvation? From what are we saved?

All of humanity asks four questions to understand their existence. Who/what made the world and us? What happened to the world and us (because we all know that there are serious problems with us as humans and the world we live in)? What has/will be done to save us and the world? And what is the ultimate goal of us and the world? Christianity has clear answers to these four questions.

The world has answers to these questions. The world and us were made by chance and evolution. Humanity is no better than a more evolved primate and therefore, has no more intrinsic worth than any other animal.

The world will agree that the problem with the world is humanity, and there are only three things that can fix it. Humanity needs more education; if humanity is educated in the right things, then humans will behave rightly. Humanity needs the right government. If the right government is put in place, and the right laws that come from it, then society will be fixed along with all its problems. Or Humanity needs the right therapy. If humanity is able to grow emotionally and psychologically, then our destructive tendencies can be removed, and society can flourish.

But humanity isn't going anywhere. Humanity is just one branch on the long evolutionary tree of life and will one day pass away or evolve into something new. Or our sun will die, and the solar system will perish. Either way, there is nothing to look to except this life.

But, if humanity is nothing more than evolved animals, if there is no creator, if there is no judge, then how can anyone say what is “right” and what is “wrong?” All we are left with is preferences. But we cannot say that anything is inherently right or wrong. The world sees no meaning, purpose, or hope in creation and can give no meaning, purpose, or hope to your life.

Perhaps ask what they believe is the meaning, purpose, and what brings hope to life. Perhaps ask what the world tells them is supposed to give meaning, purpose, and hope to life? How does the world tell what is right and wrong? And on what basis do they ground those beliefs?

Christianity however teaches a very different reality.

Christianity teaches that God created all things (Gen 1:1-26) And he also made us as humanity. We were made without sin, holy, sinless, and righteous. And we were made in the image of God with gives us both, men and women, equal dignity before God. (Gen 1:27-28) We call this **CREATION**.

Christianity teaches that God gave our first parents, Adam and Eve a command with a blessing for obedience attached. 15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen 2:15-17 ESV) If our first

parents disobeyed God's good command, then they would die, spiritually, and eventually physically. But, if they obeyed, then they would have life. It is not part of God's original design for humanity that we should die, rather we were designed to live forever with him. But humanity sinned in not obeying God (Gen 3:1-6). And their sin affected not only humanity, but also the entire world (Gen 3:14-19). We are all guilty of Adam's sin (Rom 5:12-19) and we have also inherited the corruption of sin (Gen 5:3 notice it says Adam fathered a son in his own likeness, meaning fallen likeness.) This reality that all things including us are touched by sin we call the **FALL**.

Christianity teaches that man cannot save themselves from sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to make clothing for themselves to cover their sin and shame by their own works (Gen 3:7). But that could not cover them. The first proclamation of the gospel, the good news, in the bible comes in Gen 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Satan, sin, and death will be crushed. But that crushing will involve the serpent biting the one who did the crushing. When a serpent bites you, you die. So the cost of the crushing of Satan, Sin, and death, would be the death of the one who conquered them. God further pictured it by killing an animal and clothing Adam and Eve himself. Our covering for sin can only come at the cost of the spilling of blood. And this Jesus has done for us on the cross. This salvation through the work of Christ we call **REDEMPTION**.

Christianity teaches that all creation is moving towards the time when God makes all things right that sin has damaged. Christ and his work for us is the instrument for reconciling all things (Eph 1:7-10). For those who repent and trust in Christ, their debt of sin is paid by the work of Christ. For those who do not, then God will give them the right judgment of guilt for their sins, and they must pay that debt for eternity. But the reconciliation Christ has earned extends to the whole world (Rev 22). This reconciliation we call the **CONSUMATION**.

This is the story of redemption, the united story that the bible tells. Study this story so it becomes a part of you and you can share it in your own words.

Read these passages at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Gen 6:5 NKJ)

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jer 17:9 NKJ)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom 3:23 NKJ)

Questions:

From where did the great wickedness on the earth come? Genesis 6:5

In Gen 6:5, God declared that he saw man's (humanity's) great wickedness. And that wickedness comes from his heart which is only evil continually.

How would you define "heart"? Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9

Listen here to the answers of the students. They will probably give a wrong answer here. The “heart” in the bible is short for the emotions, mind, will, actions, soul, and the real us. It is the real person we are, the true person we are. All of who we are flows from our heart. To expand upon the heart, read Mark 7:14-23. Show how it is the source from which all that we are flows.

What do the words “every intent of the thoughts of his heart” tell us about man? Genesis 6:5

It means that all that flows from our heart has been tainted and touched by sin. It does not mean that we are all as bad as we could be, but it does mean that sin affects all our thoughts, actions, emotions, will, and all that we are.

Gen 6:5 says every thought which are the actions of our heart, but also the intents, or the motives we do things in our lives, are touched by sin. And not simply a one-time mistake, or a sometimes mistake, our heart is like this continually.

What is the most deceitful thing on the earth? Jeremiah 17:9

Jeremiah 17:9 says our heart is the most deceitful thing. The world tells you to “follow your heart.” But as we established our heart in every place has been touched by sin, so it is not a reliable guide. Perhaps ask how many times has following their hearts got them into trouble?

How many people have sinned? Romans 3:23

It may be helpful to start reading at Rom 3:9. From that verse we see that “no one does good” and “no one seeks for God.” He does not say some people but all of us. We are all sinners.

But what about people who do good and nice things in the world? Yes, those are good things in the world, and are used by God as tokens of his goodness to us all. But civic good (giving money to charity, helping others, doing good works in our community) that we can do does not make righteousness before God. And pointing to our works to save us from our sins is the same as trying to bribe a judge. God cannot be bribed by any of our good works. He must judge truly and righteously.

The fact is we are sinners, and we have all sinned. And if God is just, he must judge us guilty which he will because he is.

From what does sin cause us to fall short of? Why is that important? Romans 3:23

We all fall short of the glory of God. The glory of God is the fullness and perfection of God. It is who he is in his very being, his very character. We were made to be in his image and reflect his glory to the world. But our sin distorts that image and falls short of his perfection.

We were made to live eternally with God and to have fellowship with the fullness of his glory. Everything our heart desires is fulfilled in the glory of God. And all the pain we have for our sin, and the sin of others against us is healed and redeemed in the glory of God. The more

God is glorified, the more we are satisfied in him. The more he is glorified, the more we find our enjoyment in him.

How does the culture's view of man differ from the Biblical view of man? The culture says, "Down deep all men are **Good.**"

The culture says that my problems are caused by **things outside of me.**

Is it true that all men are good? Is that what the bible says?

The culture says that it is the things outside of me (family, neighborhood, school, etc.) are the cause of all my problems. But is this true? Of course, those things affect our lives, but if all our problems are from outside of us, then we are left without hope because we cannot control and change most things outside of us. The hope of the Gospel is that God can change me. I do not have to be in bondage to my culture.

How has the culture's view of man affected you personally?

Has this culture left you without hope that you and your heart can change?

Has the culture given you excuses that you rely on?

How do those excuses hold you back?

Has the culture given you meaning, purpose, and hope in your life?