

In Jesus' Steps

Disciples for Life

Unit 1: Who Is God?

Learning to know and love God for who He is, His character, attributes, and being.

Welcome to the *Who Is God?* Bible Study!

We are so pleased you are joining us. You are taking an important step in knowing God better and appreciating the awesome gift of being in relationship with Him. We hope you have already met His Son, Jesus Christ, and prayed for Him to come into your life. If not, we will give you an opportunity to accept Him as your Lord and Savior in *Lesson 1*.

God knows and loves you and wants you to know and love Him also. There are a lot of things said about God in the media and from other sources that are not true. The only way to know God is through His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Bible.

The Bible is the most trustworthy book in the world. It is God speaking to us and sharing His personality with us. The first book of the Bible was written about 3,500 years ago. Since that time, no one has ever been able to prove the Bible false. Although men have tried, the Bible remains the most trusted and most read book of all time.

Enjoy reading your Bible and getting to know God better!



Kathleen Skaar
Executive Director¹

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, ²⁴but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 9:23–24

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¹ Kathleen Skaar, Founder and Executive Director of *In Jesus' Steps*, is the author of the "Who Is God?" Bible study. She is also the founder of *CLI Prison Alliance*, an international prison ministry. Kathleen has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Florida, a Master of Business Administration from Meredith College, and a Master of Divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Lesson 1
God is Good

Day One

The Good Creation

One of the best ways to get to know God is to look at His character or nature. In other words, who is God? What is God's personality like? What are His attributes or behavior traits?

To know God is to love Him. Why do we love God when we know Him? We will love God as we learn the truth about Him because:

1. God is perfect and good.
2. God created or made us for a love relationship with Himself. We are not complete without Him; something will always be missing from our lives.

Please begin this study by praying and asking God to show Himself to you. Pray now:

Dear God, please help me to know you better. Make Yourself known to me through this study. This first lesson is about Your goodness. Help me know that You are good, no matter what is happening in my life, in other people's lives, or in this world. Thank You. Amen.

In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we learn that everything God has created is good. Six times in Genesis 1, God looks over what He has made and finds it "good." God is good and He makes good things.

On the sixth day of creation, God made man and woman "in His own image." He also blessed them! This means God put them in a state of happiness and spiritual good. He wanted them to enjoy and rule over the world (Genesis 1:27–28). God had created a beautiful and safe place for man and woman.

Definition: *Image of God* means humans have been created on purpose to be like God. We are not identical to God but have some of the same attributes and share in His spiritual nature.

Definition: *Spiritual* is an adjective describing the unseen aspects of our being as opposed to material or physical things. When the word *spirit* is used of humans it includes thinking, understanding, and emotions.

God is spirit and does not have a physical body. However, God's Son did walk the earth in a physical body. Jesus *is* both God and man. He is the picture or image of God and His goodness.

In a divine mystery, God exists as one being, yet He consists of three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is known as the *Trinity*. The word trinity can simply mean three. Although the word trinity is not in the Bible, this truth about God is throughout the Bible.

How God is an undivided unity of three persons is beyond our total understanding. However, it does not make this mystery less true. In *Unit 2: Christian Leadership Study*, we discuss the Trinity in more depth. But for now, just be aware that we serve a triune God. Triune can also mean three in one.

The Spirit of God is all-present (omnipresent). This means that God is everywhere at the same time. This is a quality of God we do *not* share. We can only be in one place at a time.

Action Step

Read Psalm 139:7–12 and answer question 1. Ask God to speak to you through these verses:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. (Psalm 139:7–12)

1. What do you feel God is saying to you through Psalm 139:7–12?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to question 1 with the other disciples next week.

The word or description for a person following Jesus is *disciple*. *In Jesus' Steps* is designed to help you grow in Christ while being in a peer relationship with others who also desire to follow Jesus.

If you are in a right relationship with God, the above verses in Psalm 139 are comforting. No matter where you find yourself, you know God is with you. He loves you and is watching over you.

If you are *not* in a right relationship with God, the above verses can be scary. You know you have done things wrong. You might feel you cannot get away from God and His judgment of your sins. Do not despair. You will read some good news about your situation in this lesson.

Definition: *Relationship* refers to the way we are related or connected to another person. It also means how we behave or care about another person. In this case, we are looking at our personal relationship with God.

Read Psalm 139:13–14 and answer questions 2–4:

For you (God) created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:13–14 (parentheses added)

2. Who created you (v. 13)?

3. How have you been made (v. 14a)?

4. How are God's works described (v. 14b)?

God planned for you. No matter the circumstances of your conception or birth, God created you. He designed you before you were born.

Your body is a work of wonder. It is complex. Think of all the inner parts working together so you can breathe, eat, and sleep. Your brain allows you to think, understand, and make decisions.

We can all praise (honor) God because of how we are made—fearfully and wonderfully. We are awesomely made (fearfully). God designed us from His heart with great care. We are unique and God has a special purpose for each one of us.

5. Read Genesis 1:31 below and fill in the blanks: All that God had made was _____.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)

God created the whole earth and everything in it, including man and woman. When God said it was very good, He was saying that it was excellent, superior. The world was pleasant, delightful.

Everything God made was agreeable to man and woman's five senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. It still is. Think about the beauty of the earth. We can see the blue sky, white clouds, trees, oceans, and mountains.

We can smell freshly fallen rain, flowers, beaches, and spices like cinnamon and spearmint. We can hear another person's voice, birds singing, ocean waves, and leaves rustling in the wind. Natural foods like honey, apples, carrots, and sugar cane are sweet to our sense of taste. Lastly, we can touch and feel soft fabrics, furry animals, tree bark, and the good, rich earth.

6. Underline one of the five senses mentioned above that you value the most: Sight, smell, hearing, taste, or touch.

7. Name one good thing you enjoy about the sense you underlined:

Read Psalm 34:8 and answer questions 8–9:

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Psalm 34:8
(Refuge is defined as a place of shelter and protection from danger or trouble)

8. Fill in the blanks: _____ and _____ that the Lord is _____.

9. Since God is good, where should we go to seek help and protection?

“Taste” in Psalm 34:8 means to become aware or understand that God is good. Children do not usually like to try new foods. An adult might say, “Just taste it and you’ll find it’s good.” The same is true for us. We need to come to God’s table with an open mind to find He is good.

Believing God is good does not deny evil exists. Since humankind was banished from the garden of Eden, the world has been vastly different. There is tragedy all around us, including wars and their carnage (slaughter).

The Crimean War (1853–1856) was especially horrific. It was fought between the Russian Empire and an alliance that included the Britain Empire. It was one of the first conflicts that used modern technology, and the casualties were massive.

The war was terribly mismanaged on both sides. Of the 500,000 deaths, a substantial number died from a lack of medical care and disease. How did such a good creation become such a murderous cesspool?

The answer traces back to the choice made by the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. The garden of Eden was their first home. It was a place of happiness and loving relationship with God. They spent time together. At first there were no tears, hardships, or death.

God created the world and everything in it. He also set up the rules. No one else could possibly be wise or smart enough to plan, run, and judge the universe. But as we will learn in Day Two’s lesson, Adam and Eve would choose a different way.

God chooses what is right and wrong. This is the act of judging. God decides whether something is good or bad. We do right when we do what God requires; we do wrong when we do *not* do what God expects of us. Only God, the Creator, has the authority to set the standard or rule by which we should live. Consider that God has established certain authorities for us to obey (Romans 13:1–7) and yet when authorities require evil of us, we are *not* to obey (Acts 5:28–19).

—End Day One—

Day Two

The Fall from Good

Definition: *Sin* is going against God and His plans. *Sin* causes us to miss God's purpose and good plan for our lives.

The time of Adam and Eve's first sin is called "The Fall." This is another term that is not in the Bible. However, it is a common way of referring to this first or original human sin. Humankind fell from grace and fell from good. Or we could say they fell into sin and fell into death.

Definition: The word *grace* can have a variety of meanings in the Bible. Saying people "fell from God's *grace*" means they lost His favor or goodwill.

God created man and woman in His own image with the ability to learn to discern good from evil, thus making humans distinct from all other earthly creatures. He had set Adam and Eve apart, making them holy and good. This holiness and goodness were not only for Adam and Eve but were to be for their children—the whole human race—to follow.

God also made people with free will (Deuteronomy 30:19–20). We can choose, think, and act on our own (John 7:17). God wants to be loved and obeyed by choice, not by force (Matthew 22:37). We are no different. We prefer real children rather than little robots. Well, most of the time.

Read Genesis 2:16–17 and answer questions 10–11:

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

10. What was the name of the tree the man and woman were not supposed to eat from (v. 17a)?

_____ of the _____ of _____ and _____.

God set the standard for Adam and Eve. They were to run things in accordance with His will. Adam and Eve could rule the world and take part in of all its pleasures, except one. God gave only one command or rule: *Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

11. What did God say would happen if Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 17b)?

Read Genesis 3:4–7 and answer questions 12–16:

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶When 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. ⁷Then 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. Genesis 3:4–7

The serpent is another name for Satan, or the devil. Satan was either possessing or appearing as a serpent. See also Revelation 12:7–9, 20:2; John 8:44.

12. What did the serpent (Satan, the devil, Lucifer) say to the woman, Eve, about dying (v. 4)?

13. According to Satan, why did God *not* want Adam and Eve to eat from this particular tree?

14. Why did the woman disobey God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 6)?

15. Did the man disobey God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 6c)?
Yes No (Underline One)

16. What happened after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 7)?

This is the most significant story of the Bible regarding good and evil. Here is where sin, or evil enters the perfect world. Notice, the serpent or Satan did not force Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He invited her to sin—that is, he tempted her. Eve in turn invited Adam to sin. She gave him the fruit. Eve did not force Adam to sin either. He had the ability to say no.

Satan and his followers cannot make you, me, or anyone else sin. They have limited power and are under God's rule (Job 1 and 2; Luke 22:31). Therefore, each person is responsible for their own sin or disobedience to God.

Read James 1:13–15 and answer questions 17–19:

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James. 1:13–15

17. Could God ever be tempted or attracted to sin (v. 13)? Yes No (Underline One)

18. Does God ever tempt or invite anyone to do or be evil (v. 13)? Yes No (Underline One)

19. Each person, including you and me, are tempted by our own _____ desire (v.14).

Satan is the father of lies (James 8:44). He will speak half-truths, twist the truth, or just lie outright to get people to join his revolt or rebellion against God. Satan is not alone. He is a fallen angel who sinned and invited other angels to join him. These are the demons he rules and who *try* to rule us.

Read Ezekiel 28:14–17 and answer questions 20–21:

You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. ¹⁵You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. ¹⁶Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. ¹⁷Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. Ezekiel 28:14–17

Definition: A *cherub* is a class or group of angels usually represented with wings. The cherubim are guards or attendants.

Definition: *Fiery Stones* are gemstones, such as emeralds, that describe God and heaven. The precious stones reflect the brilliance of God's presence and heaven (Revelation 4:3, 21:18–21).

20. Satan was a guardian cherub in heaven that was blameless in his ways from the day God created him until *what* was found in him (v. 15)?

21. What had happened to Satan's heart (v. 17)?

Angels were also created good by a good God. Satan was a beautiful and powerful being who had free will. He chose to sin on his own. God was not responsible for his sin, nor did God create evil. Again, God gives the right for His created beings to choose, even the angels. Satan chose to rebel rather than serve God.

Evil is the opposite of goodness, or we could say evil exists when goodness is absent. When we choose something or someone other than God, wickedness appears. God knows all things, so yes, God knew this could and would happen.

The fact that God knows all things and allows evil to continue does not change the truth of His goodness. God is perfectly good. We are limited in our knowledge and do not have the wisdom to judge God's plan for His world.

We do not know everything that is happening in a seemingly bad or dire situation. Maybe the issue is making one or more persons turn to God. We simply do not understand how God is working in the spiritual world to bring good out of evil. Or how much people, although hurting,

may be blessed beyond our imagination. The blessing may come while they are on earth or in the next world to come.

For example, the ministry CLI Prison Alliance has received many letters from inmates about their imprisonment. They say similar things, like, "It was good for me to come to prison because I found Jesus." Or "I thank God for being in prison because if I hadn't come here, I would never have known God."

22. Read Psalm 119:71: *It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.* Have you ever experienced a time of pain or trouble and saw good come from it? Yes No (Underline One) If yes, please write about it:

If you are in pain now, trust God. Do not give up. Pray. God is faithful and knows what is best. How a good human or a good angel could choose evil over God is a mystery. We do not know how the desire to disobey God could appear, even when tempted. The Bible tells us when evil appeared, but it does not tell us how.

23. Read Isaiah 55:8–9. Are our thoughts and ways as great and wonderful as God's? Yes No (Underline One)

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.
9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* Isaiah 55:8–9

24. Read Romans. 9:20. Do human beings have any right to question God or His goodness in creation? Yes No (Underline One)

But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Romans 9:20

God welcomes sincere questions and a seeking after truth. However, He does not appreciate criticism (disapproval) of His handiwork. God made us and the world in His vast goodness, power, and love. As a created creature, we do not have a right to question God's pure motives.

We have little knowledge and understanding compared to God. We see the world from our limited viewpoint. Only God is smart and wise enough to plan a world that makes sense.

In fact, even the existence of evil is a reason (argument) for God and His goodness. The Bible explains when evil appeared, who is now causing it, and when it will end. No other person or source has genuine answers for the existence of evil or good.

God's goodness still abounds in our world. It is from the good that we can recognize the bad. If God did not exist, we would not even have a definition of good and evil. Jeffrey Dahmer, the notorious sexual predator and cannibal, who later converted to Christianity, said, "If it all happens naturalistically, what's the need for a God? Can't I set my own rules? Who owns me? I own myself."²

Even at an early age Florence Nightingale knew there is a God of purpose. Florence was born May 12, 1820 into a wealthy, upper class family. When she was eight years old she began helping her mother take food to villagers near their home in Embley Park, England.

On one of their visits, Florence had the privilege of helping with a sick baby. This act filled her with love and sense of purpose. Even at this young age, Florence realized this was God's work. She recalled Matthew 25:40, *The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

Read Isaiah 14:12–15 and answer questions 25–26:

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! ¹³You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. ¹⁴I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." ¹⁵But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Isaiah 14:12–15

25. Satan had fallen from heaven and was cast down where (v. 12)?

26. Who did Satan want to rule over (v.13–14)?

27. Satan was brought down to the realm of the _____ (v. 15).

Satan was the first to sin. His sin immediately separated him from God and His good kingdom. Satan lost his position and wanted to bring others down with him. He tempted other angels to sin. Sadly, some of the angels were fooled and followed him (Revelation 12:7–9). These are the fallen angels the Bible calls demons.

Not satisfied with his band of fallen angels, Satan set his sight on God's new creation. He wanted to ruin these new creatures that God loved so much. He set a trap. Perhaps the man and woman would want to be like God, too. Pride was the cause of their downfall, and it became the root of humanity's sin also.

² Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good*, Multnomah Books, (Colorado Springs, CO, 2009), 122.

Definition: *Pride*, in the context of sin, is a high opinion, in thought or action, of oneself. It is the view that one's own person is more important, superior, talented, or worthwhile than another's.

We do not know if Satan had a chance to repent or turn from his pride and evil ways. Maybe God was giving him a chance to change by allowing him to roam the earth. However, the Bible does not tell us this. We do know he has continued in sin and is doomed. When this world ends, he will be thrown into the lake of fire where he will suffer day and night "for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

We, and all human beings, have an opportunity to turn from sin. God has a plan for us to be forgiven. However, those of us who do not take advantage of God's plan will suffer the same future as Satan. This fact makes God just, righteous, and good.

—End Day Two—

Day Three
The Rescue

28. Read Genesis 18:25. Does God treat the righteous and the wicked alike? Yes No (Underline One)

Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?
Genesis 18:25

God, the Judge of all the earth, always does what is right and good. He does not treat the righteous and the wicked alike. The wicked must be judged and punished. However, God is so good that He planned for every person to be saved from everlasting punishment. Before we look at this good news (called the gospel), we must understand that we are all sinners.

Just as our physical characteristics are passed down, our sin nature is also passed on to us. We are all descendants of (come from) Adam and Eve and receive from them our physical and spiritual characteristics. Even if we were to die before we committed sin, we are still sinners because of our sinful nature (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:3).

29. Read Psalm 51:5. When do we become sinful?

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Psalm 51:5

30. Read Romans 5:12. Who is the one man through which sin entered the world?

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

God created Adam first and gave him the first command (Genesis 2:15–17). The Bible tells us that God made Eve from Adam's side. They were separate human beings but were to be united as one flesh (Genesis 2:23–24). Adam was chosen to be the representative of humanity's sin.

Every human has sinned in some way in their lifetime. Death is the punishment for sin. You might say humans are all under a death sentence. Our death sentence includes our physical death and spiritual death. Spiritual death is separation from God and all goodness.

God is so good that He has provided for the punishment for our sins. He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty (punishment) for all sin. Jesus, God the Son, came to earth willingly. He allowed Himself to be born of the Virgin Mary and to die on a cross for you and me.

Read Romans 3:22–26 and answer questions 31–34:

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3:22–26

Definition: *Righteousness* means being in a right relationship with God. It means doing what God expects. That is, doing God's will in all areas of life. This is a biblical definition.

31. How do humans become righteous (v. 22a)?

Definition: *Faith* means complete trust and dependence on God. Believing *in* Jesus Christ means the same as *faith* in Him. *Faith* is total commitment and loyalty to Jesus and to God's will.

32. How many people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (v. 23a)?

33. How many people who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be “justified” (v. 24)?

To justify is to make righteous. *God is so good* that He planned a way for people to be made righteous. This means inherited sin and all the sins humans commit on earth can be forgiven (Genesis 3:15). He sent His perfect Son to pay the penalty for sin by dying on a cross. *Jesus is so good* that He *willingly* died on the cross so that we would have our sins forgiven.

Definition: *Redemption* is a word that was used in ancient times. It meant to pay the price owed for the release of a convicted criminal, prisoner of war, etc. Biblical writers borrowed the word to describe Christ's death on the cross in payment of our sins. Thus, Jesus is known as our Redeemer.

Definition: *Atonement* can be remembered by taking the word apart (at-one-ment). It means to bring together as one, that is, to reconcile those who were enemies. Biblically, it is what Christ accomplished by His death and resurrection; He took away the effects of our sin. In this way, He makes those who trust Him as Lord and Savior at one with God.

34. What did Christ's sacrifice of atonement on the cross do for those who believe (v. 25–26)?

We are providing a lot of definitions. However, learning the meaning will help you in the future. As you come across these words in your reading, you will better understand the Bible.

35. Read Isaiah 40:11. Who looks after His people like a shepherd?

He (God) tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. Isaiah 40:11 (parentheses added)

God loves and cares for the people He made. Read Psalm 23 from the Holy Bible. God loves you and cares about your every need.

Read John 10:11 and answer questions 36–37:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11

36. Jesus says, “I am the _____ shepherd.”

37. What does the good shepherd do?

Jesus gave His life by dying on the cross for our sins. God, the Father, raised Him from the dead and Jesus is now our living Lord and Savior. That is, He is our Savior if we believe in Him and follow Him in faith (Philippians 2:12). Following in faith means to trust and obey God.

The following verses explain how a person is saved from their sins and can have a relationship with God. It is a matter of stating your belief in Jesus as Lord and meaning it in your heart. Your heart includes mind, soul, and spirit.

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. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:9–10

If you have already prayed sincerely for Jesus to come into your life, you do not need to pray a particular prayer of commitment again. You are His child and belong to Him! However, you do need to continually confess your sins and remind yourself that Jesus is Lord of your life. We all need to review our thoughts and actions and see if they line up with God’s word Word—the Bible—and His ways.

Sometimes a person was *not* sincere in their prayer or commitment to God. Perhaps you were in a group responding to the gospel message and just went along with the crowd. Or maybe you prayed as a child but really did not understand or know what you were doing. There could be other reasons. If you are *not sure* or have *never prayed* to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you may pray:

Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God who died for my sins. I have not obeyed God and I am truly sorry. Right now, I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my life. I receive You as my Lord and Savior. I want God's plan for my life. I will follow You and obey You in all that I do. Thank You, Heavenly Father, for saving me and loving me. I love You. Amen.

38. I prayed the above prayer *today* from my heart. I sincerely trust Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

If you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior after praying above, please let us know so we can rejoice with you. You may either email us at kathleen.skaar7@gmail.com with the month, day, and year of your decision or go to our website, injesussteps.org and locate: “New Decision to Follow Jesus” on the Homepage. Click on “Share With Us” and fill out the form.

Make sure you share with the other disciples in your group. They will also rejoice with you! No matter what age or how many years you have been attending church, this is exciting news that causes much rejoicing in heaven (Luke 15:10).

Trusting Jesus means following His plan for your life. When Florence Nightingale was 17 years old, she felt God calling her into His service. God used her wealthy household in various ways to help Florence in her calling. For example, her desire for nurse uniforms came from that early life of leisure (free of work). The servants in her household had specific uniforms or dress to identify their jobs. Nurses needed to be identified properly in their work.

Florence also learned the importance of organization from how the servants were managed. There could be forty or more workers on an estate. Duties were assigned and done in a timely fashion. God will use everything in our past and present for His glory, if only we will let Him.

It would still be years before Florence would fully understand her calling to help the sick. Nevertheless, Florence was always thinking about doing something good. God is good and gives us a mindset to do good in our lives. What “good” do you feel God calling you to do? Pray and ask Jesus to show you the way.

—End Day Three—

Day Four

The Good Relationship

Although each of us has turned our backs on God, selfishly doing things our way, He continues to reach out to us in love. He reaches out to everyone with compassion. Compassion is concern for the suffering of another. If you are reading this lesson, God has given you His plan of salvation. We pray you will accept Jesus and live through Him.

Definition: *Salvation* means to save—or deliver—from danger, loss, or ruin. In Christian terms, *salvation* means being saved from the penalty of sin through the power Christ Jesus.

Perhaps you have been a believer for some time or trusted Jesus during this lesson. We join you in praising God for His goodness in restoring your relationship with Him. Your life will never be the same. You may still go through difficult and painful situations, but God will help you through them.

Jesus walked the earth and went through many painful trials. He was rejected by people He created and loved. He was misunderstood by family and friends. He was abandoned. During His suffering before being placed on a cross to die, He was beaten by a whip until He was barely recognizable. He was humiliated (dishonored or shamed). And lastly, Jesus was nailed to that cross and received all the sins of the world into His body. God understands pain.

39. Read Psalm 145:9. The Lord is _____ to _____: he has _____ on all he has made.

The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. Psalm 145:9

Remember that we live in a fallen world and sin is all around us. God has not promised us a perfect life until we get to heaven. What He does promise is that He will work out everything in your life for good so that you may become like our Lord, Christ Jesus.

40. Read Romans 8:28–29. For believers who have been called according to God's purpose, who did He decide we should be like?

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
Romans 8:28–29 (Predestine means to decide in advance; predetermine by divine will.)

Some people think God is *not* good because He will judge sinners. On the contrary, allowing evil to exist without penalty would *not* be fair. Hell is the punishment for those who die in their sins. It is a place of agony and torment (Mark 9:43; Matthew 18:8, 25:46; Revelation 20:10).

Remember, God sent His Son to die a horrible death to rescue sinners from punishment and hell. If someone does not accept this amazing sacrifice, that person deserves God's wrath. For now, our job is to pray for sinners to accept God's offer and escape the fires of hell.

Also, remember God is the judge of each person. We cannot judge whether a person has gone to heaven or hell. Only God knows a person's heart. A person could be saved right before his death. However, waiting until the last minute is a bad idea. Who can know when that last hour may come?

God is good. God is righteous. He would not be good if He let the crimes against Him and His people to go unpunished. But He is patient and that is one reason the world still exists.

41. Read 2 Peter 3:9. How many people does God want to repent (turn from sin)?

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. 2 Peter 3:9

Action Step

42. Read Psalm 119:68 and pray for God to teach you His decrees. Did you pray? Yes No (Underline One)

You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees. Psalm 119:68

Definition: *Decrees* are statutes, laws, or commands. A decree is the way God wants things to work.

God is good and wants things to work for good. He is always the same. There is never a time when God is not good.

Read James 1:17 and answer questions 43–44:

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17

43. Where does every *good and perfect gift* come from?

44. Does God ever change from being good? Yes No (Underline One)

God is the definition of goodness. There is no goodness anywhere without God. The goodness in the world is due to God. Even when nonbelievers do a good deed, it is due to God's influence. The evil in the world is caused by Satan and his followers or when we turn away from God.

Even as Christians we may turn from God at times. We still have a sin nature and free will—we are free to obey or disobey God. Although we do not like to sin anymore and have the ability not to sin, at times we still do. God has given us help through His Holy Spirit.

45. Read Luke 11:13. Who will your Father in heaven give to you?

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! Luke. 11:13

46. Read and pray Psalm 143:10: "My God, Teach me to do Your will and may Your good and Holy Spirit lead me in the way of righteousness. Amen." I prayed: Yes No (Underline One)

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.
Psalm 143:10

Florence Nightingale continued to pray and seek God's will. At times she would become frustrated with her social life and status. She longed to be useful. She continued to dream about the "good" God wanted her to accomplish. Gradually, the Holy Spirit led her to help with the sick and dying.

Miss Nightingale was a pretty young woman and had many suitors. A suitor is a man who pursues a relationship with a particular woman, with a view toward marriage. In fact, she had two marriage proposals but accepted neither. She was concerned that she would not be able to pursue God's call through her nursing work. She never married and had no regrets.

Although her parents were not supportive of her desire to work as a nurse, she persisted. She attended the Institute of Kaiserswerth in Germany, where Christian women were trained in nursing methods. They were also taught to be faithful and live simple lives.

In 1853 Florence became superintendent of the Institute for the Care of Sick Gentlewomen. She was 33 years old. She immediately improved care and cut the costs for patients in half. Using excellent management and organizational methods did not lessen her commitment to care and relationships. Her patients loved her and wrote many notes saying so.

In 1854 cholera³ broke out in London. Florence not only managed the institute, but she also worked tirelessly in another hospital and slum area. It was dangerous and tough work. But it was during these challenging times when she was attending the sick that she would have a sense of Christ's presence. She said it was as if all at once He stood in the midst of them."⁴

It had been 16 years since Florence waited to fulfill her calling, but now things were moving quickly. In just two short years, she became a leading expert on hospitals. With her good character and reputation came an opportunity for an even tougher job. She would be tested in a place of extreme evil and suffering.

—End Day Four—

³ Cholera is an infectious and often deadly bacterial disease of the small intestine, typically contracted from infected water supplies and causing severe vomiting and diarrhea.

⁴ Sam Wellman, *Florence Nightingale*, in *Heroes of the Faith*, (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 1999), 90.

Day Five

Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?

Why does a good God allow evil and suffering? It is an ancient question. Why God does not always answer prayers positively is another old question. Think of a child praying for his sick mother to live—and yet her mother dies. It *seems* God allowed needless suffering and did not answer the child's prayer. You may have examples in your own life, where you feel God abandoned you, even when He had not.

The topics of evil and unanswered prayer both focus on God's seeming lack of love and goodness. There are some theologians (people who study God as presented in the Bible) who will try and answer this dilemma (problem) by saying that God is limited in power or knowledge. Therefore, He cannot stop evil or answer every prayer because He either does not see it coming or is not strong enough to stop it. Thus, God is good and loving, but just not knowing and powerful enough to do something about troubles. This is incorrect—and it is not how the Scriptures present God.

The Bible is clear: God is all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-knowing (omniscient). He is above His creation, yet He cares for all His creation. This is the truth we can accept as we continue with our study, for it is how the Scriptures reveal God. Trying to weaken our Supreme Ruler to make Him fit into human understanding is wrong and ultimately damaging to our faith.

47. Read the following verses from Isaiah 43:13, Daniel 4:34, and Luke 1:37 about God being all-powerful. What do you learn from these verses?

Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it? Isaiah 43:1

At the end of time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation.
Daniel 4:34

"For no word from God will ever fail." Luke 1:37

48. Read the following verses about God being all-knowing from Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Hebrew 4:13). What did you learn about God?

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit. Psalm 147:5

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, The Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.
Isaiah 40:28

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:13

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to questions 47–48 with the other disciples next week.

The prophet Habakkuk questions God, *"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"* Habakkuk 1:13

When Habakkuk says that God's "eyes are too pure to look on evil," it does not mean He cannot see it. God is everywhere. He sees all that is happening and will judge wrongdoers. The meaning is in the second part of the sentence: "God cannot tolerate wrong." It means that God does not approve of evil.

Job also wanted to question God after he lost his children, health, and wealth:

Then Job replied: ²"Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. ³If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! ⁴I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments." Job 23:1–4

Job thought it was God who was causing his troubles, but it was Satan. In the book of Job, Satan said to God, *"Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."* ¹²The LORD said to Satan, *"Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."* Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Job 1:10–12

God is in charge of everything and everyone. Notice, Satan had to get permission from God to make trouble for Job. God allows the devil to have power on earth for the current time.

Part of the answer goes back to creation. God wants to be loved for who He is, not just for the good gifts He gives. Suppose you were wealthy and generous to your friends and family. Then one day, you lost it all. You had no material gifts to give to others. Would you want your family and friends to stand by you, or walk off and want nothing to do with you?

People with great wealth often have this fear. They wonder, *Do people really love me or my money? Does this person want to be my friend or want to use me for what they can get? Does this person want to marry me because of loving me or because of loving my money?*

God may also use suffering to help others. Job went through tremendous heartache and pain. However, those who read his story, including God's eventual blessing and restoration of Job (in Job 42), gain comfort. God can use situations of suffering and unacknowledged prayer to build holy character and encourage others. Remember, our goal on this earth is to become like Jesus.

49. Have you ever felt God did not answer your prayers or protect you from evil? If yes, how do you look on those situations now?

50. Are you currently going through a hard time and feel that God does not care? If yes, please share so your team can pray with you:

51. Can you share a difficult time in your life that God has used to help others?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to questions 49–51 with the other disciples next week.

Although Habakkuk and Job did not get a direct answer from God, they eventually stood in awe of Him (Habakkuk 3:2; Job 42:1–6). They understood that God is in control of all people and things. What He does is right, and they cannot think otherwise. They will trust God no matter what their circumstances look like.

God does answer prayers. He may delay answers or have good reasons for saying no. In addition, God does not answer evil requests or those requests that are not in His will. As tragic as it may seem for children to lose their mothers on earth, it may be part of a holier plan for those families. We will not have all the answers until we reach heaven, our permanent home.

God is the master world builder. His running of the universe may seem arbitrary (random), but it is not. God has a plan and is using evil and suffering to accomplish it. We really do not know exactly how or why God allowed evil to enter through Satan, Eve, and Adam. But whatever your pain, it does not have to be useless. Let God use it for your good and the good of others. Jesus suffered tremendously, but in the process offers us the remarkable gift of eternal life.

In the same year that Florence Nightingale was working with cholera patients, England and France declared war on Russia. This was known as the Crimean War (mentioned in Day One of this lesson). Reports started getting back to London of men dying for lack of medical care. Wounded soldiers could lie unattended for a week.

With the cholera outbreak in check, Florence turned her attention and interest to her country's wounded. These soldiers were to be taken to Scutari in Turkey, a quite horrible place.

Florence went to work right away. She recruited 38 nurses, had uniforms made, gathered medical supplies, and arranged travel. Others helped financially. God was working through Florence and others to bring mercy and compassion through a hellish war.

Before her private mission left, she received a letter from a government official. She was asked to do the very thing she had planned. However, now she had the authority and endorsement of the British government. Six days after she received the letter, Florence boarded a ship for Turkey.

When Florence arrived at the so-called hospital, she wondered, "Could hell be worse than this?"⁵

Sam Wellman writes in *Florence Nightingale, Heroes of the Faith*, "She has seen much sickness—yes, even death in her life, but not of this magnitude, not of this unimaginable gore. Most of the British soldiers were ripped, torn, and mutilated. Arms, legs, eyes, noses, ears, jaws were gone, replaced by filthy, blood-clotted rags! Florence had to fight tears of sympathy, then of rage. All but a few of the wounded men were sprawled on the broken tile floors. There were few beds, few blankets. No hospital garb was issued, although supposedly hundreds of outfits had been sent from England. No one knew where the outfits were. The men lay in their rotting battle gear, infested head to toe with lice."⁶

And there were thousands of them.

Florence not only cared for their wounds, but she also offered the comfort of Jesus. She had a calming effect on the men and attended 2,000 on their deathbed. She was called the "lady with the lamp" because when the day was over, she would continue her rounds with a glowing lamp.

A reporter noticed her tireless work and wrote, "When . . . silence and darkness have settled upon those miles of prostrate sick, she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making the solitary rounds."⁷

Florence Nightingale is a legend in nursing. She is also an amazing example of God's goodness during a tragic event in history. She wrote from Turkey that she was, "in sympathy with God, fulfilling the purpose I came into the world for."⁸

Her commitment to God did not end in the war. She stayed for the duration and was one of the last to leave. She said at that time, "It matters little, provided we spend our lives to God, whether like our Blessed Lord's, they are concluded in three and thirty years, or whether they are prolonged to old age."⁹ She went on to open nursing schools and continued to help others.

52. What good work do you think our good God is calling you to do?

⁵ Ibid., 152.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <<http://www.azkurs.org/a-lady-with-a-lamp-shall-stand-in-thy-great-history-of-the-lan.html>>(accessed 5/15/2017).

⁸ Ibid., 167.

⁹ Ibid., 178.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to question 52 with the other disciples next week.

Florence was not looking for fame or fortune. She had fortune and left it. She simply wanted to help the sick.

God used Florence to revolutionize (change) healthcare in England and around the world. Nursing would become a caring, noble profession. So much good for the sick and dying would come from this single life. Think how different our world would be if we all embraced God's good calling on our lives.

God designed our world in a way that we can see and experience good and evil. Without evil and suffering in the world, we would not be able to genuinely appreciate God's good character, or the people who reflect God's goodness through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Evil, suffering, pain, and heartache will all pass away one day for those who are in Christ Jesus. On that day we will be in God's good kingdom, rejoicing forever. A short life span on earth is nothing compared to our future home of everlasting joy.

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17–18

—End Day Five and Lesson 1—

Next—Unit 1: Who Is God, Lesson 2: God Is Mercy

Who is God? Bible Study Lessons

Lesson 1: God Is Good

Lesson 2: God Is Mercy

Lesson 3: God Is Love

Lesson 4: God Is Sovereign

Lesson 5: God Is Holy

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