



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 Lessons!

We are glad you are joining us. You are taking an important step toward knowing God better and appreciating the wonderful gift of being in relationship with Him. Our hope is that you have already met His Son, Jesus Christ, and invited Him to come into your life. If not, you will have the opportunity to accept Him as your Lord and Savior in *Lesson 1*.

God knows you, loves you, and wants you to know and love Him. Many things said about God in the media or by other people are not true. The only sure way to know Him is through His Son, Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Bible.

The Bible is the most trustworthy book in the world. It is God speaking to us, showing us who He is and what He is like. The first part of the Bible was written about 3,500 years ago. Since then, no one has been able to prove it false. Many have tried, but the Bible remains the most trusted and most read book of all time. This is why all of our lessons are based on it.

May these lessons help you know God better and grow closer to Him.

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, ²⁴ but 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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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. In other words, who is God? What is His 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 love Him as we learn the truth about Him because:

1. God is perfect and good.
2. God created us for a loving relationship with Himself. Without Him, we are incomplete—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? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” ¹² even 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 your discipleship team.

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. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:13–14

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 _____ (v. 8a).

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 humanity 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 5:28–29).

—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 first sin, committed by Adam and Eve, is often called “The Fall” or “original sin.” Like the word *Trinity*, these terms are not found in the Bible but are commonly used to describe that first human sin.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they lost their close fellowship with Him and *fell* into sin and spiritual death. This first act of disobedience is called the *Fall* because humanity *fell* from a state of innocence, blessing, and fellowship with God into guilt, separation, and death. As a result, sin and death entered the world, affecting all people (Romans 5:12). In other words, humanity lost the favor of God and the good life He intended.

God created man and woman in His own image, with the capacity to discern good from evil. This ability made humans distinct from all other earthly creatures. God had set Adam and Eve apart, making them holy and good. That holiness and goodness were not just for Adam and Eve—they were meant to extend to their children, and ultimately to all humanity.

God also gave people free will (Deuteronomy 30:19–20). We can choose, think, and act on our own (John 7:17). God desires to be loved and obeyed willingly, 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; ¹⁷ 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.” 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 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*. This command was not given to restrict them, but to protect them and preserve their good life with Him.

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.” ⁶ 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. 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 (v. 5) ?

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; ¹⁴ but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, 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. ¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. ¹⁶ Through 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. ¹⁷ Your 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. God gives His created beings the freedom to choose—even the angels. Satan chose to rebel rather than serve God.

Evil is the opposite of goodness. In other words, evil exists when goodness is absent. When we turn to something or someone other than God, wickedness appears. God knows all things, so He knew that this could and would happen. Satan's choice shows that even the most beautiful and powerful beings can fall when pride or selfish desire takes control.

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 His plan for His world.

We do not always understand what is happening in a seemingly bad or dire situation. Perhaps the situation is being used to turn one or more people to God. We simply cannot know all the ways God is working in the spiritual world to bring good out of evil, or how much people—though hurting—may be blessed beyond our imagination. These blessings may come in this life or in the next.

For example, the ministry 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. Have you ever experienced a time of pain or trouble and saw good come from it? Yes | No (Underline One) If yes, please write a few sentences about it.

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. Psalm 119:71
(Afflicted is to be troubled mentally or physically.)

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to question 22 with your discipleship team.

If you are in pain now, trust God. Do not give up. Pray. God is faithful and knows what is best.

The origin of evil is a mystery. How a good angel—or even a good human—could choose evil over God is beyond our understanding. The Bible tells us *when* evil appeared, but not *how* the desire to disobey God could arise, even when tempted. Yet we can trust that God’s ways and thoughts are always higher and wiser than ours.

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.
“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 genuine search for truth. However, He does not welcome criticism of His perfect handiwork. God created us and the world out of His vast goodness, power, and love—and as His created beings, we do not have the right to question His pure motives.

Compared to God, our knowledge and understanding are limited. We see the world from a narrow perspective. Only God is wise enough to design a world that makes sense, even when it confounds our human understanding.

In fact, the very existence of evil is itself an argument for God's existence and goodness. If the material world were all that exists, we would have no real concept of good or evil. Death, murder, and destruction would be nothing more than the random movement of molecules and atoms. Without something beyond the physical, events like the Holocaust, genocides, wars, natural disasters, and tragedies such as school shootings would be random and meaningless occurrences. There would be no moral standard to call these acts 'wrong'—just indifferent, purposeless natural processes.²

However, the fact that we instinctively recognize these acts as evil points to a moral order and therefore to a moral Lawgiver—God. Without Him, suffering and evil would be meaningless. But because of Him, we understand that evil is an intrusion into His good creation. His goodness gives us hope for justice and redemption.

The Bible explains when evil entered the world, who is behind it, and when it will come to an end. No other source offers such clear answers about the existence of both evil and good.

Finally, 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."³

To see how God can bring good out of even terrible situations, we will follow the story of Florence Nightingale—an example of God's purpose shining through the evil of war.

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 a 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."*

² Jonathan Cahn, *The Dragon's Prophecy* (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2024), 9.

³ Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2009), 122.

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! ¹³ You 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. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” ¹⁵ But 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 (vv.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.

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

In Genesis 18, Abraham pleaded with God to save his nephew Lot and his family from Sodom. God listened and rescued Lot, but the city itself was destroyed for its sin. This shows that God is perfectly just, yet merciful.

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. Yet God is so good that He had a plan from the beginning to give everyone the opportunity to be saved from everlasting punishment. Before we look at this good news—the gospel—we must first understand that we are all sinners.

Just as our physical characteristics are passed down to us from our parents, our sinful nature is also inherited. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve and have received from them both physical and spiritual characteristics. Because Adam sinned, all humanity is born with a sinful nature. Even if a person were to die before committing a single act of sin, that person would still be a sinner by 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 in marriage (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: A biblical definition of *righteousness* is being in a right relationship with God. It means doing what God expects. That is, doing God’s will in all areas of life.

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 accomplish for those who believe (vv. 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

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—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 now.

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: _____

Please let us know if you just prayed to receive Christ—we want to 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 at the bottom. Click on “Next Step,” then click “I Accept” 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.

“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” 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. Little did she know that God was going to use her to change nursing forever. Nurses were generally poorly trained, and the profession was not respected—many people associated it with unskilled labor or even bad morals. Through Florence’s work, nursing became cleaner, more organized, and far more respected.

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, too, 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 step into her calling to help the sick and injured. Nevertheless, she 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 we have all turned from God and gone our own way, He still reaches out to us in love and compassion. His greatest act of love is the gift of salvation—rescuing us from sin through Jesus Christ. If you are reading this lesson, God has now given you His plan of salvation. If you have not already, we pray you will accept Jesus as your Savior and live through Him.

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

Whether you have followed Jesus for years or have just trusted Him during this lesson, we rejoice with you. Your life will never be the same. You may still face trials and pain, but God promises to be with you and to work all things for your good.

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 with 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. According to these verses, God planned in advance for believers to become like whom?

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. ²⁹ For 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 or her 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 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 very definition of goodness. Without Him, there would be no good in the world. Even when unbelievers do good, it is because of God and His influence. Evil, on the other hand, comes from Satan or from people turning away from God.

As Christians, we may sometimes turn from God. We still have a sin nature and the freedom to obey or disobey. Though we no longer desire to live in sin and now have the power to resist it, we still stumble at times. But God has given us help—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 cholera⁴ 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.”⁵

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—

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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's answers to prayers are not always what we hope is another century-old question. Imagine a child praying for her sick mother to live—and yet her mother dies. It can feel as if God allowed needless suffering or did not answer the prayer. You may have moments in your own life when it seems God has abandoned you, even though He has 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; and 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

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. ³ If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! ⁴ I 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. ¹¹ But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." ¹² The 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 control of everything and everyone. Notice that Satan had to ask for God's permission to make trouble for Job. While God currently allows the devil to have some power on earth, that authority is limited and temporary.

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?*

In the same way, God may allow suffering to shape us and help others. Job experienced tremendous pain and loss, but his story ultimately brings comfort to those who read it, especially when we see God's eventual blessing and restoration in Job 42. Through suffering, God can build holy character and use our trials to encourage others. Remember, our ultimate goal on earth is to become more like Jesus.

49. Have you ever felt God did not answer your prayers or protect you from evil? If yes, how do you look at 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 47–51 with your discipleship team.

Although Habakkuk and Job did not receive direct answers from God, they ultimately stood in awe of Him (Habakkuk 3:2; Job 42:1–6). They came to understand that God is sovereign over all people and events, and what He does is always right. They learned to trust Him, regardless of how difficult their circumstances appeared.

Today, God answers the prayers of those in Christ Jesus, though His response may be delayed or different from what we expect. Sometimes He says “no” for reasons beyond our understanding. Scripture also tells us that God may not answer prayers that come from unrepentant hearts or are outside His will (Psalm 66:18; 1 John 5:14). Though the loss of a mother, as in the case of the child who prayed for her healing, may seem unbearably tragic, it may still be part of a greater, holier plan that we cannot yet comprehend. Only when we reach our eternal home in heaven will all the answers be revealed.

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?"⁶

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."⁷

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."⁸

⁶ Ibid., 152.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://www.azkurs.org/a-lady-with-a-lamp-shall-stand-in-thy-great-history-of-the-lan.html> (accessed 5/15/2017).

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."⁹

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."¹⁰ She went on to open nursing schools and continued to help others.

52. How does Florence Nightingale's story encourage you?

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

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer to questions 52–53 with your discipleship team.

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. ¹⁸ So 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—

⁹ Ibid., 167.

¹⁰ Ibid., 178.

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

Lesson 6: Intimacy With God

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