

UNDERSTANDING YOUR **RELIGION**

7 MAJOR DOCTRINES THAT DEFINE CHRISTIANITY

MIKE MAZZALONGO

TEACHER'S GUIDE

bibleTalk^{TV}



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Understanding Your Religion

7 Major Doctrines that Define Christianity

Mike Mazzalongo

This series presents 7 basic doctrinal ideas that provides the student with a "big picture" view of the Christian religion. Done in an informal style with helpful graphics and summaries, Understanding Your Religion is a useful guide for those seeking to know what Christians believe and how these beliefs affect what they do.



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**Teacher Guide created by
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2020**

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Overall Teaching Strategy

It is recommended that teachers use a combination of informal lecture and guided discussion to present these lessons. There are discussion questions associated with each lesson that teachers may use and/or supplement their own questions. A student note guide is also provided for each lesson.

It is recommended that teachers have students view the associated video or read the text for the lesson. This helps students come to the class ready to discuss the lesson and to formulate questions of their own. Teachers should begin the class with a review of key points from the video/text before starting the discussion.

Begin each lesson with appropriate introductory statements that help students focus on the lesson. Teachers should also provide a brief summary of the previous lesson and an overview of key points of the new lesson. This helps students see the ongoing narrative of scripture.

Conclude the lesson by summarizing or having students summarize the information from their notes. It is also helpful to ask questions from the lesson to determine that students have grasped the concepts. Asking questions in this manner serves as an assessment to ensure objectives are met.

Challenge students with a call to apply this information to their lives in order to help them grow spiritually and help others to do so as well. This can be accomplished by asking questions of students as to how what they have learned affects their spiritual development at this time and moving forward.

For more information on teaching adults, please visit:

<https://bibletalk.tv/101/teaching>

A student workbook is also available for this series:

<https://bibletalk.tv/workbooks/understanding-your-religion>

Lesson #1 – Why Study Doctrine?

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is to establish a foundation of why it is important to study the main doctrines found in the Bible and how they relate to one another. Of special note in this lesson is the importance of determining and following God’s will and its impact on our lives.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand why it is important to study the Bible.
- **Feel:** Defend the importance of regular Bible study.
- **Do:** Make Bible study a regular part of our life.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 1 – Why Study Doctrine?
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 1

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Jesus commands it
- 1.3 False doctrines cause problems.
- 1.4 Results of correct doctrine

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. What is doctrine and where is Christian doctrine found?

Doctrine is a word that means a set of beliefs taught by an organization or group. For the purpose of this study and our Christian faith, doctrines are beliefs taught in scripture. Although they should be the same, there are some doctrines taught by men that may not agree with doctrine found in scripture.

Answers will vary as to where our Christian doctrine is found but the preferred answer is from the teachings of Jesus. These are found in scripture.

2. What are some examples from scripture that show Jesus placed importance on following His teachings?

The purpose of this question is to establish that we follow doctrine because it is commanded by Jesus. If we are to be followers of Jesus, then we must follow His teachings.

Answers will vary but here are some examples: John 14:15; John 8:31-32; Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 16:24; Matthew 7:21-27; 1 John 2:3-4;

3. How does Satan use doctrine to attempt to destroy the church and what are some scriptures that warn us about this?

He uses false doctrine to lead believers astray. One method he employs is to use something that sounds plausible yet is false. He has done this from the very beginning as he tempted Adam and Eve to sin in Genesis 3. Refer to the text for examples that warn about false doctrine.

4. What are some problems caused by false doctrine?

Answers will vary. Here are some considerations:

- Cause division
- Instils false ideas which interfere with one's spiritual growth, even to possibly lose one's soul
- Causes distress within the believer
- Leads others to reject Jesus

5. What are some results of correct doctrine?

Answers will vary. Here are some considerations:

- Creates unity within the Body of Christ
- Leads to salvation
- Aids in our spiritual growth which helps us stand against Satan
- Helps us lead others to Jesus

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

It is critically important that we discover and follow the teachings of Jesus. These are clearly taught in scripture and seen in the lives of those who are committed to Jesus. Discovering the doctrines of Jesus is not difficult but it takes a lifetime of faithful living to put them into action as God wills. Every Christian struggles from time to time with living faithfully and for that reason, God grants us His grace (Matthew 11:28-30; 1 John 1:5-10).

Lesson #2 – The Writing of the Bible: The Doctrine of Inspiration - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is to establish the Bible as the basis for Christian doctrine. Of special note in this lesson is how the Bible was developed over the centuries.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how the Bible came into being.
- **Feel:** Value the importance of the Bible in creating faithfulness to God.
- **Do:** Apply the will of God in our lives as revealed in scripture.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 2 - The Writing of the Bible: The Doctrine of Inspiration – Part 1
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 2

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 The history of writing and materials used for ancient books
- 1.2 The origin of the Bible

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Discuss the introductory statements from the associated text regarding no mention of the doctrine of God's existence in scripture.

The intent of this question is to establish that God is the originator of all things. Scripture simply describes the nature (Exodus 3:14; 1 John 4:16) and actions God. **Note:** Jesus would also use the expression, "I am" several times in John (John 6:35; John 8:12; John 10:9; John 10:11; John 11:25-26; John 14:6; John 15:5). This is also a reason the Pharisees sought to stone him in John 8:59.

2. How does the existence of writing dispel the mistaken belief that Abraham or Moses could not have written early biblical documents?

It was mistakenly believed that the ability to write did not exist in the time of Abraham or Moses, but research has found that the ability to write was present in early civilizations. These discoveries lend support to our understanding that from earliest times man possessed the ability to write and thus pass on God's word from one generation to the next.

3. Summarize the history of writing materials used in making ancient books and how this supports the recording of scripture.

Several methods of semi-permanent recording existed in ancient times that allowed scripture, or what would become scripture to be preserved. These included stone, clay, wood, leather, papyrus, paper and now electronic means. All of these were recognized and used to preserve and communicate God's will.

4. Summarize the origin of the Bible.

The intent of this question is to show the Bible can be trusted as the inspired and infallible word of God. Through it we find God's will and how to apply it as we seek to live faithful lives.

The Old Testament origin – The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language. Moses is the first example of recording events and communication from God (Exodus 24:1-4, 34:27-28). Moses is also credited with writing the first five books of the Bible.

Other writers also contributed to the Old Testament but after Malachi, there were no other prophets or inspired writers until the apostles began writing about the life and teachings of Jesus.

5. List the three main areas of the Jewish or Hebrew Scriptures.

The Law; The Prophets; The Holy Writings

6. List the main divisions of the Old Testament used by Christians.

Pentateuch; History; Poetry; Major Prophets; Minor Prophets.

7. What other books are used by Jews and Christians but are not inspired by God?

The Talmud – Writings that interpreted the Old Testament; Apocryphal (hidden writings) – non inspired religious books discussing end-times; Josephus – A history book and commentary of life during the time of Christ.

8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Christians can depend on the Bible as the source of God's will. It has been preserved from the very early years of man's existence. It shows that God wishes us to know Him and enter a relationship with Him. To seek to gain that relationship in any way other than given in scripture will only lead to failure.

Lesson #3 – The New Testament Record: The Doctrine of Inspiration - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is a review of how the Bible was put together. Of special note in this lesson is the criteria for the selection of books to be included in the New Testament.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how the Bible came into being.
- **Feel:** Value the importance of the Bible in our relationship with God.
- **Do:** Apply the will of God in our lives as revealed in scripture.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 3 – The Doctrine of Inspiration – Part 2
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 3

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Events leading the Canon of Scripture.
- 1.2 Divisions of the New Testament
- 1.3 Translations

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Summarize how the early Christians received written instruction from the Apostles and other influential teachers.

The early Christians received much of their instruction in the form of letters from the Apostles and others. These would be passed between various congregations or individuals in the region. In the early years since the apostles and others were still alive and teaching, many of the letters were not kept. But as the writers began to die and incidents of false teaching were threatening the church, Christians began preserving the writings of the apostles and others.

2. Summarize the formation of the New Testament writings as discussed in the text.

- **The canon of Marcion** – A false teacher who rejected the Old Testament and recognized only the epistles of Paul and part of Luke’s gospel.
- **Persecution** – Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, it was illegal to have a written copy of the Christian scriptures. This forced them to keep only the most precious and accepted works.
- **Codex form** – When church leaders decided to bind the letters that were scrolls into book form, they had to decide which should be grouped together.
- **Authorship** – If a speaker was considered inspired, then his writings were also inspired. This included those who were closely associated with the apostles.
- **Value of book** – This describes whether a writing was authored by one of the apostles or an accepted associate and not by a third party. These pseudo-inspired books would be compared against known inspired writings. The inspired books had harmony of thought, purpose and style.
- **Circulation** – Those included in the canon had been traditionally recognized by all the churches. No new writings were accepted.

3. State the major division of the New Testament.

- Gospels
- History
- Pauline Epistles
- General Epistles
- Prophecy

4. What is one way that Hebrews and Jude can be accepted as inspired even though the author is not known?

Their message is the same as the other books of the New Testament where the author is known.

5. Why are various translations still accepted as inspired even though they use different language than the earliest manuscripts?

There is no major difference doctrinally among the various translations. If there are mistakes, it is in the form of punctuation, names of places or locations, etc., which are obscure in the original languages as well. For example, the percentage of error in modern translations from the Greek text is less than 1/10 of 1%.

6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7 and 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and discuss how these apply to the compiling and value of scripture.

One of the major ways God demonstrates His love for us is how He preserved His will through the written word. It has been preserved through the ages and has been distributed worldwide in keeping with God's desire for all to be saved.

Paul recognized and taught us that the only way God's will is revealed is through His written word, and the only way this is taught is by the church. God does not use divine inspiration any longer to reveal His word. It is now our responsibility to know God's word so that we can preserve our own relationship with God and bring others to Him.

Lesson #4 – 6 Proofs of Inspiration: The Doctrine of Inspiration - Part 3

Teaching Strategy

The emphasis of this lesson are the arguments that support the idea that the Bible is an inspired text. This lesson is an introduction into these concepts and will be continued in following lessons.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how the Bible came into being.
- **Feel:** Value the importance of the Bible in maintaining our faithfulness to God.
- **Do:** Apply the will of God for our lives as revealed in scripture.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 4 – 6 Proofs of Inspiration
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 4

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 The Bible claims to be inspired
- 1.2 Inspiration theories

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. What does the New Testament state regarding its inspiration?

This is a review of information from the text.

- Matthew 10:19-20 – Jesus’ statement to the apostles about their words coming from God.
- John 14:26 – States how the apostles spoke from God.
- II Timothy 3:16 – Paul states all scripture is from God.
- II Peter 1:20-21 – The Bible states that scripture was not derived from man’s ideas but men chosen by God were guided by the Holy Spirit as to what they would say.

2. Summarize the inspiration theories presented in the text and state what theory appeals to you most and why.

- Dictation theory – God dictated word for word what is in scripture.
- Thought theory – God provided general ideas and principles and the writers interpreted these in their own words.
- Verbal inspiration – God revealed the true knowledge to the patriarchs, prophets and apostles as well as other Bible writers, and they wrote down the information under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

One can choose not to believe in the inspiration of scripture, but this would be going against teachings that have been handed down and validated throughout history. We can trust God’s word as inspired because of how it was put together and how it has withstood the test of time and survived continual attacks against its legitimacy and truthfulness.

Lesson #5 – 6 Proofs of Inspiration (continued): The Doctrine of Inspiration - Part 4

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on several key proofs concerning the inspiration of scripture. Of special note in this lesson is how scripture has survived both tests and threats, and how we can trust it to find God's will for our life.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how various threats and tests of scripture have confirmed its inspiration.
- **Feel:** Value the importance of the Bible in maintaining our faithfulness to God.
- **Do:** Apply the will of God in our lives as revealed in scripture.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 5 - 6 Proofs of Inspiration (continued)
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 5

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Proof 2 – History of the Bible
- 1.2 Proof 3 – Uniqueness of the Bible
- 1.3 Proof 4 – It works
- 1.4 Proof 5 – Historical exactitude
- 1.5 Proof 6 – Fulfilled prophecy

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Discuss why Satan would consider it vital to destroy our faith in scripture and how we can overcome his efforts.

There are many reasons why Satan would not want us to have knowledge of God's will. Perhaps a leading reason is the power of having knowledge that others do not have. If Satan can keep us ignorant of truth and control the flow of information, then we would not know God's true will. His attempt to compromise scripture is seen in many ways throughout history and even to this day.

Perhaps the best way to overcome his efforts is to gain personal knowledge and help others also gain knowledge of scripture.

2. Summarize the three major attacks on the Bible as discussed in the text.

- **Attack by the Roman Empire** – It became a capital offense (death penalty) to own any portion of the Christian scripture. Later, Emperor Constantine permitted the reading of scripture and even provided copies.
- **Attack by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages** – The Catholic church attempted to restrict the use of scriptures to clergy only. This was due to the possible threat to church power if the common person knew the scriptures. By the 16th century, King James provided Bibles in the common language which eventually led to the breaking of the monopoly of the Catholic church.
- **Attack by philosophers, skeptics and critics** – In the 17th to 19th centuries, writers and thinkers began to question the Bible's inspiration and authority. A leading figure was Voltaire, a French philosopher.

3. Discuss how the Bible is unique, especially compared to other religious writings.

The Bible, unlike religious writings developed by man-made religions has withstood a myriad of tests and threats against it. It has remained relevant to all of humanity no matter the time period or society. We change and our understanding and application of scripture changes, but God's word has remained constant.

4. Summarize the three examples of uniqueness as presented in the text.

- **Its depth of insight and beauty** – Other religious writings do not possess the depth of the Bible, yet it is understandable by virtually any age group.
- **In its unity** – The totality of scripture written over 1400 years and by approximately 40 writers in different times, places and societies unknown to each other, tell the same story without contradiction, confusion or disorder. All scripture points to Jesus and His role as our Savior.
- **In its universality** – The Bible is the most read book of all history. It continues to appeal to all people who seek God's true will.

5. What is the value of scripture regarding its usefulness?

The teachings of scripture work. It works in our personal spiritual growth, interpersonal relationships and certainly in our relationship with God. Societies that live by Christian principles thrive. Other societies thrive for a period, but any person or society that moves away from God's will, eventually ceases to exist or does not reach full potential.

6. Discuss the historical exactitude of scripture.

The Bible contains many detailed and verified historical references not found in other sources. We see references to leading figures, historical locations and nations. These and other references serve as markers to be studied by archeologists and historians and serve to confirm the inspiration of scripture.

7. How does fulfilled prophecy offer proof of the inspiration of scripture?

A major test of the inspiration of scripture are the many prophecies that came about as prophesied. This phenomenon is seen in the interactions between nations or peoples and especially information pertaining to Jesus.

When prophecies are fulfilled, they confirm the truthfulness of the prophet and his writings. This is considered as direct and irrefutable evidence for the inspiration of scripture.

8. If you were trying to determine whether or not to believe in the inspiration of scripture, which of the 6 proofs provided in this lesson are the most significant for you and how can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Answers will vary as to which is significant. As a follow-up question consider asking if there are other insights that someone might have gained that further offers proof of inspiration. This question is designed to help learners internalize the lesson.

No matter the threat or attempt to destroy God's word, it has and will continue to be available for us to learn God's will. We can see from the many threats that it has survived, that it is inspired. We can see from how it has revealed God's will through prophecies made and fulfilled that what God says is true. As we read in scripture how to be added to God's Kingdom and how to live faithfully, we also learn of God's promise to save us through our faith. No other philosophy or teaching of man provides for our salvation, and promises us eternal life.

Lesson #6 – What the Bible Says About Jesus: The Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is an overview of what the Bible says about Jesus. Of special note in this lesson is how the Bible establishes Jesus as the Divine Son of God. This identification is the basis of our faith and the hope for our salvation.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Identify biblical statements regarding the divinity of Jesus.
- **Feel:** Trust in Jesus as our savior.
- **Do:** Seek opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 6 – What the Bible Says About Jesus.
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 6

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 The Bible’s central theme
- 1.2 Who is Jesus
- 1.3 The witness of the Apostles
- 1.4 The testimony of Jesus

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Give examples from the Old Testament regarding Jesus as our redeemer.

There are many examples that can be given. The first is from Genesis 3:15 where God promised a redeemer following the sin of Adam and Eve. As a follow-up question, ask how each book of the Old Testament points to Jesus. A specific example is the blood of the lamb over the door from the release of the Hebrew Nation in Exodus 12.

2. Defend the following statement:

The Old Testament reveals how the creation came into being, the fall of man and how God brings Jesus as our Savior through the Jewish nation.

3. How is Jesus the central theme of the gospels?

The gospels are eyewitness accounts of the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension to heaven of Jesus.

4. How do the remaining books of the New Testament point to Jesus?

We learn in Acts how to be added to the Church and begin our journey to Christ likeness. The epistles teach us how to live as citizens of God's Kingdom and maintain faithfulness. Revelation teaches us to remain faithful no matter the circumstances and that God has already won the battle for our souls if we will remain faithful.

5. How does the New Testament establish Jesus as the Divine Son of God?

The gospels provide us eyewitness accounts of His teachings, miracles and life. From these many examples we see how only the Son of God, someone divinely endowed could perform these. For example, although many did heal, only Jesus, as the Son of God could forgive sins. Further, only Jesus as the innocent lamb of God could die for our sins.

6. Give examples of how the apostles were witnesses to the divine nature of Jesus.

There are many examples. Here are those from the text.

- Matthew 16:16 – Peter’s statement regarding Jesus as the Christ.
- Acts 3:14-15 – Peter’s statement about how the Jews put Jesus, the “Prince of life” to death.
- John 20:24-28 – Thomas’ statement regarding Jesus as his Lord and God.
- Acts 22:1-16 – Paul’s statement regarding how Jesus was active in Paul’s conversion.
- Colossians 1:15-18 – Paul’s statements regarding the identity of Jesus.

7. Give examples of Jesus' own statements regarding His identity.

- John 4:25-26 – The Samaritan woman.
- Matthew 16:15-17 – Jesus response to Peter's statement identifying Jesus as the Messiah.
- Matthew 28:18-20 – Jesus' charge to the disciples and His claim of all authority.
- John 20:30-31; 21:25 – John's statement about the signs Jesus performed that were too many to mention.

8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Given the overwhelming evidence both from scripture and from secular history, we can trust who Jesus was and what He taught. We must trust Him, and Him alone for our salvation. As John recorded in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Lesson #7 – The Resurrection as Proof: The Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is how the resurrection of Jesus shows the inspiration of scripture and how the resurrection is the pivotal teaching of the Christian faith.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Identify biblical statements regarding the inspiration of scripture shown through the resurrection of Jesus.
- **Feel:** Trust in Jesus as our savior.
- **Do:** Seek opportunities to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 7 – The Resurrection as Proof
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 7

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 The Resurrection – Proof of divinity
- 1.2 Why Jesus had to resurrect

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Read Psalm 110:1 and 16:8-11 and summarize what they say regarding the coming of the Messiah and how this shows the inspiration of scripture.

Psalm 110:1 – This Psalm, also written by David, long before the life of Jesus. It prophesied the role Jesus would have as our Savior in defeating death. Although we still die, we do not have to suffer spiritual death. This death was brought about by the sin of Adam and Eve through their disobedience. It further confirms God's promise in Genesis 3:15.

Psalm 16:8-11- This Psalm, also written by David long before the life of Jesus further points to the role of Jesus. In this Psalm we also see that Jesus is not only the Savior of humanity, but a personal Savior. Furthermore, it states similar words from Psalm 110:1.

Both Psalms, show Jesus' role as savior, mediator and conqueror of spiritual death that results from our sin. This points to information that could only come from inspiration.

2. How does the resurrection of Jesus differ from other miracles and signs given by prophets and servants of God?

Although there were others raised from the dead, it is only Christ who died for a specific reason, arose from the dead and continues to live.

As referenced from Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus himself stated that this was a sign of His true identify.

3. Discuss the following reasons why Jesus had to resurrect.

He had to resurrect to prove who He was.

This singular act proves His claim although Jesus did miracles, presented incredible teachings and lived a pure life. Many died by crucifixion, some made claims as messiah, but only Jesus proved the claim through His resurrection.

He had to resurrect to demonstrate his sinlessness.

We have all sinned and deserve death (separation from God) – Romans 6:23. Jesus alone lived a sinless life and was sacrificed unjustly. Had Jesus remained in the tomb, all His claims would have been a lie. The resurrection shows that His greatest claim, overcoming death, was possible because of His sinlessness and divinity.

He had to resurrect to prove that we could resurrect.

This is the ultimate basis for our hope. Without the resurrection of Christ then we too would die without hope. However, Jesus demonstrates His divinity and confirms His promise for life through His overcoming physical death (a symbol for spiritual death). This is the meaning of the statements in Hebrews 2:14-15 and John 6:40.

4. What were the four ways listed in the text that show the second Christian doctrine is the divinity of Jesus?

- The Bible claims it.
- The resurrection proves it.
- Eyewitness accounts recorded it.
- Neither Jews nor Romans could find the missing Body.

Note: He appeared publicly on several occasions and to various individuals and groups so one would think they could have approached Him whenever they wanted to.

5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Jesus overcame death by living a pure life and being resurrected from the dead. Knowing that we cannot live a sinless life, Jesus died for us. However, had He not resurrected, then His life would have been no better than ours and offered us no hope, but He did resurrect. He does reign with God and we do have hope if we obey and trust Him.

Lesson #8 – The Complete History of Mankind: The Doctrines of Original Goodness, Fall of Man and Restoration

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is the first of three ways the Bible describes the history of man's relationship with God. Of special note in this lesson is man's fall from original goodness to separation from God and various misinterpretations of God's plan to restore His relationship with man.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how the Bible confirms its inspiration through the record of man's relationship with God.
- **Feel:** Accept the inspiration of the Bible.
- **Do:** Use trust in the inspiration of the Bible to grow spiritually.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 8 – The Complete History of Mankind
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 8

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Original goodness
- 1.2 The fall of man through sin
- 1.3 Misinterpretations of major doctrines

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. How does the record of man's creation, fall from sin, and God's redemptive plan show the inspiration of scripture?

The Bible provides a history of our relationship with God written over a period of approximately 1400 years by many authors in different places. There is no conflict in their writing. The Bible also provides details of people, time, places and events that later science and archeology confirm but are not confirmed in other records.

2. Describe some ways in which you feel man is created in the image of God.

Answers will vary depending on what learners feel best describes similarities to God. The answers should point to intangible qualities and character similarities.

We are an independent thinking creation with the ability to make moral choices and not simply just react from instinct. We also possess the ability to do good and create. We can also change the direction of our lives.

3. Describe from Genesis 1 some of the aspects of the original goodness of man and creation.

The intent of this question is to summarize the perfect environment for God's greatest creation before sin entered our world.

God created all the elements of time, space and matter as described in Genesis 1. Once everything was in place for man's survival and growth, God created mankind and placed them in a perfect environment. God also had a direct relationship with mankind.

4. What caused man to sin?

Answers will vary. Emphasize misusing the power to choose rather than the actual event itself.

5. What are four major elements of man's rebellion as described in the text?

- Rebellion (disobedience)
- Shame (hiding from God)
- Anger (blaming Eve and not accepting responsibility)
- Loss of innocence and love (defensive attitude)

6. Read the following passages and describe how they are either similar to or different from the reaction to sin that Adam and Eve displayed in Genesis 3?

- **1 Samuel 15** – Saul's disobedience of God. Why did God reject Saul?
Saul did not repent nor accept responsibility.
- **2 Samuel 11** – David and Bathsheba. Why did God forgive David?
David repented and accepted responsibility.
- Speculate why God punished Adam and Eve rather than forgive them and what can we learn from this?

Adam and Eve did not display a repentant attitude. It is possible that had they recognized their sin and accepted responsibility that God would have taken a different action. Of course, there are consequences for sin (David's family problems) but God promises to forgive when we repent (1 John 1:5-10).

7. Summarize the misinterpretation of various major doctrines concerning the fall and restoration of man.

- **Original sin** – Adam’s fall produced a human nature incapable of choosing good or responding to God in faith – without the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit one is incapable of obeying God. We are born guilty of Adam’s sin and helpless to do anything about it.
- **Infant baptism and baptism for the dead** – If one is born with sin then one must be saved immediately. **Note:** The time period of when this misinterpretation began was marked by a high infant mortality rate. Baptism of the dead, on the other hand, stemmed from a belief that one could be saved through the faith of another.
- **Predestination/Arbitrary Election** – This false doctrine teaches that God chose in advance those who would be lost and those who would be saved. If one is unable to respond to the gospel then how could anyone be saved? One can determine one’s state of salvation by one’s progression in improvement of moral character. This also supports the idea of “wait and see” before baptism and the idea of baptism not being necessary for salvation.

8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

God wants everyone to be saved and refuses none who come to Him. God created within us the ability to choose. It is, therefore, within our power to respond to God and accept His salvation. We cannot save ourselves nor were we predestined by God as saved or unsaved. There is a difference between God’s omniscience (He knows all in advance) and forcing His creation to choose him. In other words, God knows in advance what we will freely choose. One does not conflict or contradict the other.

Lesson #9 – Error and Consequence: The Sub-Doctrines of Election and Predestination

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on the various consequences of the false teachings of election and predestination. Of special note in this lesson is an explanation of the biblically accurate doctrine of reconciliation.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the doctrine of reconciliation.
- **Feel:** Value that God has put in place a way that we can be reconciled to Him.
- **Do:** Submit to the process God put in place to bring us back to Him.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 9 – Error and Consequence
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 9

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Election
- 1.2 Predestination

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses

1. Summarize the following three doctrines:

- Original goodness (the ability to choose) – Man is created good and he is responsible and able to choose to do so.
- The fall of man through sin – Man chose to disobey God that resulted in suffering, death and condemnation but retains the ability to choose right from wrong and to respond to God.
- Reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ – God’s plan to offer reconciliation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

2. What is meant by the word “election” and how did God use election to reconcile us to Him?

Election means to choose. God chose to make a way of reconciliation to Him. He did so because of His love for us. He accomplished this through Jesus.

3. What is a false or erroneous teaching about election?

Many believe the Calvinistic teaching that God chooses to save some and not others. This belief stems in part from the teaching that all men are born guilty of sin and thus lack the ability to choose right or obey the gospel. God, therefore, is required to choose those who will be saved and those who will not.

4. Summarize the verses below that support that God has chosen Christ through whom he desires to save all men.

- 1 Timothy 2:4-5
- 1 Peter 2:4
- Hebrews 10:5-7
- Matthew 28:18-19/Mark 16:16
- Galatians 3:26-27
- Ephesians 1:3-4

These verses point to Jesus as the one through whom we are saved. God saves all who choose to be in Christ.

5. Summarize the erroneous teaching of Predestination.

Predestination means knowledge of a result. Another Calvinist teaching that God knows in advance who He would choose to save and who He would condemn.

6. How does Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5 explain the correct teaching on Predestination.

These verses point to God's predestination of the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. Through Jesus all can receive salvation if they obey the teachings of Jesus to be granted eternal salvation. We turn to God through Jesus and are saved by our response of faith to His offer of grace (which we are fully capable of doing – Acts 2:37-38).

7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Scripture clearly teaches that God does not want any to be lost (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). The plan that God put in place from the very beginning was that His Son Jesus would die for our sins thus bringing about the possibility of salvation. It is not through any action on our part that we earn it, only God's grace and our faith expressed in repentance and baptism (Acts 22:16) completes our salvation.

Lesson #10 – God's Method of Reconciliation: The Sub-Doctrine of Atonement - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is a review of God's plan for our reconciliation to Him. Of special note in this lesson is the role Jesus plays in God's plan and the response God desires of us.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how Christ's sacrifice satisfies the requirements of God's justice and love.
- **Feel:** Appreciate the love God has for us.
- **Do:** Seek to live faithfully to God's will.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 10 – God's Method of Reconciliation
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 10

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Atonement
 - 1.1.1 The problem
 - 1.1.2 The extent
 - 1.1.3 The result
 - 1.1.4 The solution
 - 1.1.5 The method - atonement
- 1.2 Personal atonement

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as "right or wrong" responses.

1. How do you define “reconciliation” from a biblical perspective?

Reconciliation is God restoring man to Himself through Jesus Christ.

2. Discuss the following elements of God’s method of reconciliation.

- The problem (Isaiah 59:1-2) – What sin produces
- The extent (Romans 3:23; 5:12-14) – Sin is universal
- The result (Romans 6:23) – Man separated from God
- The solution (Romans 5:6) – Reconciliation with God

3. What is atonement?

This question is intended to clarify for the learner how God forgives our sins and reconciles us to Him through Jesus. Jesus' perfect life is the payment (atonement) that pays the moral debt produced by our violations of God's laws (sin).

4. What is meant by personal atonement (Romans 5:12; 18)?

Each of us is personally responsible to respond to God's plan for our atonement. God requires a sinless life, not a "pretty good" life. Since we are unable to offer that to Him, we must go through His plan and process for atonement found only in Jesus.

5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

We must understand our condition and the resolution found only in Jesus. A good example of this is found in Acts 2. Peter lays out the case that the Jews had killed Jesus and were personally responsible for His unjust death. Upon realizing their guilt and acknowledging their belief in who Jesus really was, they cried out what must be done to make amends for this evil act. Peter responds that they must express their faith through repenting and being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Upon that, God restores them to a relationship with Him and provides the Holy Spirit to live in them and guide them in their efforts to live faithful lives.

That situation and resolution is still true today. It was for our sins that Jesus died, and it is only through Him that we find forgiveness in the same way as the early Church.

Lesson #11 – God's Method of Reconciliation (continued): The Sub-Doctrine of Atonement - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

This lesson is a continuation of God's Method of Reconciliation. Of special note in this lesson is the language the Bible uses to describe Jesus' act of atonement.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how Christ's sacrifice satisfies the requirements of God's justice and love.
- **Feel:** Appreciate the love God has for us.
- **Do:** Seek to live faithfully to God's will.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 11 – God's Method of Reconciliation (Cont.)
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 11

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 The language of atonement
- 1.2 How faith is expressed

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as "right or wrong" responses.

1. What are some ways we explain the doctrine of atonement?

The intent of this question is to help students understand the meaning of atonement. Look for expressions commonly used. As a follow-up question, ask students to explain in their own words what the term or expression they used means to them.

Common expressions are: payment for the debt of sin, satisfying God's justice, sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, freedom from sin.

2. What emotion is at the heart of God's willingness to offer His son and Jesus' willingness to sacrifice His life and position with God the Father on our behalf?

There are many emotions one can express. For example, mercy, grace, pity or forgiveness, but the core emotion is love. As a follow-up question, ask how other emotions involved with our forgiveness have love as a foundation.

3. What can we add to the sacrifice of Jesus that would help us obtain God's mercy?

In reality, there is nothing we can add. We might want to but Jesus paid the full price (1 Peter 2:24). This gets to the heart of Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." We cannot earn any part of our salvation. We can only respond to God's grace through our faith.

4. Explain how the following actions express our faith:

- Belief – We believe who Jesus is and what God has done through Him.
- Repentance – We resolve to put sin away from our lives.
- Confession – We acknowledge Jesus as the Lord and Christ.
- Baptism – By being immersed in water we express our faith in Jesus.
- Faithfulness – We strive to live by the teachings of Jesus.

5. Which of the elements of our response to God's plan for our salvation only has to occur once and why?

The basic responses expressing our faith are believe, repent, confess, be baptized and live faithfully. Of these, the only one needing to occur once is baptism. Baptism brings us into contact with the blood of Christ through which we find salvation.

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

We stand before God guilty and helpless. We cannot do anything to earn our salvation. Because of God's love for us, He offered a suitable sacrifice for our sins. This was Jesus, His Son. God requires of us that we demonstrate our acceptance of His grace (gift) by our active faith beginning with our belief, repentance and baptism. We then live faithfully according to the teachings of Jesus.

Lesson #12 – What Atonement Achieves: The Sub-Doctrine of Redemption

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is the difference between the act of atonement and its natural result of redemption. Of special note in this lesson is the process and relationship of these two vital salvation concepts.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Explain the relationship between atonement and redemption.
- **Feel:** Value the love and sacrifice offered by God.
- **Do:** Live faithfully as a result of our redemptive state.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 12 – What Atonement Achieves
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 12

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 The meaning of redemption
 - 1.1.1 Old Testament examples of redemption
 - 1.1.2 New Testament examples of redemption
- 1.2 Our freedom
 - 1.2.1 Conditions of our freedom
 - 1.2.2 When freedom begins
 - 1.2.3 What are we free to do

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Explain the doctrines of atonement and redemption, and state their relationship.

Answers will vary but look for responses that show that atonement is the method or process that God used to bring us back into a good relationship with Himself.

To redeem means to buy back or purchase a debt. It can also mean to liberate or set free from punishment due to our guilt. As a result of the atonement (payment), we have been bought, set free or redeemed from the consequence of our sins (death) which have been removed.

2. Explain the relationship between Israel's physical redemption from slavery in Egypt and spiritual redemption.

God freed Israel from physical slavery and gave them a new identity (Exodus 3:7). Along with the identity came the responsibility of having a special relationship with God.

In the same way, the death of Christ frees us from the slavery to sin, identifies us as citizens of His Kingdom and gives us a special relationship with God (Romans 6:1-10; 8:12-24).

3. Explain how the following scriptures show spiritual slavery and the resulting punishment.

- John 8:34 – Sin is slavery.
- Romans 3:23 – Everyone is guilty.
- Romans 6:23 – We are separated from God because of our sin.
- Romans 5:6-11 – We owe debt to God we cannot pay therefore God paid the price through Jesus.

4. Read Titus 2:11-14 and explain what the three statements below mean to us as redeemed by God.

- We are released from slavery – We have been bought (redeemed) from slavery and the eternal consequences.
- We have a new identity – We now belong to God as His people.
- We have a new purpose – We now live to serve God as faithful citizens of His Kingdom.

5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

The expression, “freedom is not free” has been used to help us understand the sacrifice others have made for the physical freedoms we enjoy as citizens of our respective nations. In the same way, our freedom from the slavery to sin was purchased at an incredible price. It required the death of the innocent Jesus. We must not forget that nor take it for granted. We owed a debt we could not pay. God paid the debt. We are now His people and enjoy all the benefits and consequences of that relationship.

Lesson #13 – A New Life in Christ: The Sub-Doctrine of Regeneration

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on a new life in Christ. Of special note in this lesson is the concept of regeneration brought about by the atonement of our sins and how that is seen in our lives.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the impact of regeneration in a Christian’s life.
- **Feel:** Value the new life given in Christ.
- **Do:** Live faithfully according to the teachings of Jesus.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 13 – A New Life in Christ
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 13

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Background of regeneration
- 1.2 The gospel of regeneration
 - 1.2.1 The point of regeneration
 - 1.2.1 Before and after
 - 1.2.2 The life signs of regeneration

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Explain the concept of regeneration.

Regeneration means to make alive again. It is to take something that was and renew it. It is the same concept as being born again.

2. How does the history of the Jewish people in Egyptian slavery, their release from slavery and their period of wandering in the desert illustrate regeneration?

Before their slavery they were recognized as an independent nation of God's people. During the period of slavery, they lost their identity as a free nation and were seen as a race of captives/slaves. God freed them from slavery giving them back (regenerating) their identity as a nation of His people. They then went through a period of teaching and growing as a nation during their period of wandering in the desert.

3. What is the significance of Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3 regarding being reborn and how Paul spoke to this in various statements (Romans 6:16-17; Romans 8:15, II Corinthians 5:17, and Ephesians 5:8)?

Jesus was describing the concept of spiritual rebirth made possible through Himself. One had an initial birth in innocence but eventually died because of sin and needed to be reborn in order to be freed from sin.

Paul explained that our baptism was the process of both dying to sin and being reborn free from sin. He also used the illustration of being free from the slavery of sin to become a servant/slave of Christ. Paul states that we are now in the family of God. This gift has been called the new birth, new life, walking in light and citizenship in the kingdom of God.

4. How is the concept of regeneration good news?

It is through regeneration that we can have life. We've lost the hope of eternal life because of our sin. God knows we cannot regain it without His grace, so He took on the cost of redemption through the atoning sacrifice on the cross of His Son, Jesus. Our faith in God's grace is seen by our willingness to obey His will seen through our conversion. The conversion process is experienced through our regeneration.

5. What is the point of regeneration?

The dividing line is our repentance and baptism. Belief is critical but we can believe all we want to and remain lost if we do not act upon that belief. We can't earn our salvation, but we can express our faith. Repentance is our commitment to follow-through with our belief. Repentance, although vital, is not enough. The combination of repentance and baptism initiates our regeneration. This regeneration continues as we mature spiritually.

6. Contrast the difference before and after regeneration.

Before regeneration we are lost. This means we are guilty of our sins and have no hope of eternal life. Some may fool themselves into a false belief that God will forgive without faith or obedience on our part. This is a false hope. Remember, it is not our action, but God's grace (Ephesians 2:8) that saves us, however, we must express our faith according to Jesus' command (Mark 16:16).

After regeneration (our conversion) we now have a new life. Even though we fail in our faithfulness, we are nevertheless born into God's family and can return to the Father for forgiveness. Before we were outside the family without hope but now are within the family and have hope (Luke 15) and a sure pathway to forgiveness when we fail (1 John 1:7-9).

7. What must begin upon regeneration?

Regeneration means that we continue to transform from our old self to the new self in Christ. We've been freed from our sins, but Satan will attack us to draw us back into our former selves. We must grow spiritually so that we can draw closer to God and continue to live faithful lives. God does not require perfection, but He does require faithfulness.

8. What are some life signs of regeneration?

We should grow:

- in our desire to serve and obey our Lord.
- in our faithfulness to God's Kingdom (His church/body).
- in our desire to live pure lives.

Lesson #14 – Becoming Children of God: The Sub-Doctrine of Adoption

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is an explanation of doctrines that describe God’s plan of salvation from different perspectives. Of special note in this lesson are the elements of salvation as put forth by God and their meaning.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Be able to explain God’s plan of salvation from a personal perspective.
- **Feel:** Appreciate the love God has for us through His deep desire to adopt us as His children.
- **Do:** Live faithfully as an expression of our love for God.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 14 – Becoming Children of God.
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 14

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Review of the 5 elements of God’s plan for our salvation
- 1.2 Background of adoption
- 1.3 Paul’s explanation of adoption

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Name and explain the elements of salvation.

- Election – The choice God made to choose Christ as an acceptable sacrifice for our sins and our choice to accept God’s way.
- Predestination – God’s knowledge that His choice of Christ will produce our reconciliation.
- Atonement – God paying the price for our debt through Jesus’ sacrifice.
- Redemption – The result of atonement
- Regeneration – God giving new life to the freed sinner.

2. Provide a short explanation for the following concepts:

- **The story of the gospel** – The historical story of Jesus, who He was, His life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).
- **The meaning of the gospel** – God’s plan to redeem man through Christ. It is seen in the teachings that explain the gospel message of why Christ came, what He did and how we are affected.
- **The response to the gospel** – Our choice to accept God’s plan for our redemption seen through our active faith (repentance, baptism, and holy living).

3. What is the main image of adoption from Exodus 4:22?

Moses is to tell Pharaoh that Israel is His son, His firstborn. This imagery is of God adopting the nation of Israel as His special people. The concept of “holy” or “sanctified” is shown here as God sets aside for a special purpose the nation of Israel. That special purpose was that Israel would be the people through whom Jesus would come to complete the plan for man’s redemption.

4. What is the difference between Jesus as God’s only “begotten” son and man as God’s “adopted” children?

The word “begotten” normally means to be brought into existence by a parent. When used in reference to Jesus means one-of-a-kind. In other words, only Jesus shares the divine nature as God the Son. Only Jesus is referred to as “begotten” of God.

Mankind and the nation of Israel were said to be adopted by God for a special purpose. God chose Israel initially as His adopted sons. Now, as we obey the plan for our redemption, God adopts us into His family. Israel was first (firstborn – Exodus 4:22) to have this distinction, however, since Jesus all who believe in Him also have this special identify (Galatians 3:26).

5. What is the main point of Paul's concept of adoption?

It was the end result of God's plan. (Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 3:23-4:7. He also explains how we receive special considerations and blessings from God our Father as His adopted children (Romans 8:15-17). As legally and fully adopted children, we are full heirs to the blessings offered by God. There are many given but the ultimate blessing is eternal life with the Father.

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

We should grow spiritually to the point that we fully appreciate that we are indeed redeemed. We can live confidently and peacefully that we are free from the guilt of sins and can go about living for and serving God. Our focus shifts from fear of punishment to the anticipation of life with our Father. This special relationship is offered to all but granted only to those who obey the plan for our redemption God put forth. It is not something we earn, but something we accept in God's way and not our own. This shows that we understand God's love for us and our humility as we accept that love through faith in Jesus Christ. Even when we fail, God accepts us back as we repent and return to Him (Luke 15:11-32; 1 John 1:5-10).

Lesson #15 – Becoming Acceptable to God: The Sub-Doctrine of Justification - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on growing in our relationship with God by recognizing the concept of justification before God. Of special note in this lesson is the concept of justification as we stand before God guilty of sin and how God removes that guilt through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand what brought about our justification before God.
- **Feel:** Recognize the grace God grants us.
- **Do:** Live faithfully in recognition of God's grace.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 15 – Becoming Acceptable to God
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 15

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 How man became separated from God.
- 1.2 The doctrine of justification
 - 1.1.1 Background
 - 1.1.2 A personal need
- 1.3 Response to God's grace

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Discuss how man originally became separated from God.

When we review the first three chapters of Genesis, we see that God created a perfect environment for man, including a direct and personal relationship between God and man. Sin entered the world because Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation offered by Satan. It is a shared guilt between Satan and mankind due to disobedience.

Since God is pure and holy, sin could not be allowed in His presence. Therefore, man had to be removed from the direct presence of God. This was both a physical and spiritual separation.

2. Discuss how God put in place a plan to reestablish the relationship with mankind.

Even as God pronounced judgment on mankind because of sin, He put into motion the plan to have a sacrifice made that would pay for sin (Genesis 3:15). We did not fully understand the meaning of this until we learned of the sacrifice of Jesus. The Bible is the record of man's creation, fall and return to God through Jesus. It tells us who Jesus is, what He did, continues to do and will do upon His return. All of this is the plan God established to bring us home to Him.

3. What is justification from the perspective of God as our judge?

God is the final judge of our response to Him. We either stand before Him forgiven of our sins, or we stand guilty. We cannot remove our sin by ourselves, so God put His plan into motion.

The standard of absolute right and wrong is God's standard therefore He is the only one that can make that judgment. Exhibit 1, and the only necessary exhibit in our trial is the ultimate willingness of God to give Himself through His Son Jesus. As Jesus stated in John 3:16, God loved us so much that He gave Himself to save us. Jesus also stated in John 15:13 that there is no greater love than the willingness to give up one's life for another, which He did.

4. Why do we still feel unjustified as we stand before God?

Perhaps because we still harbor the guilt of our sins. Again, this points to the absolute wisdom and power of God. God forgets (does not hold us accountable) our sins and grants us a relationship with Him. We continue to live in a world where we face temptations that we all too frequently give in to. God recognizes our weaknesses and asks us to continue to repent and come back to him (1 John 1:5-10). When we do so, we continue in our saved relationship with Him.

Those who have not accepted God's grace with an active faith do not have that relationship and remain unjustified before God.

5. Why is a person that does not know God's plan still at risk of punishment for their sins?

God's plan includes a way for us to come to know His plan and to respond to that plan. God has never kept His plan from man. In fact, He has made every effort to let us know what it is. In the Old Testament He spoke through the patriarchs and prophets. In the New Testament it is through the recorded word of God, as well as those who teach and guide us in living faithfully. It is also our responsibility to teach others, so they come to know the truth of God's word.

God does not want anyone to be lost. It is through the poor choice of rejecting truth that keeps one lost (1 Timothy 2:1-7; 2 Peter 3:9).

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

God wants us to be in a personal relationship with Him. He put into place everything to bring this about. The only missing piece is our response to obey what He asks of us. It is both a response of love on His part and a response of faith on our part.

Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2 that we were dead in our sins but because we obeyed through our active faith, our sins and the eternal consequence of separation from God have been removed. We can do nothing to earn salvation (vs. 8-10), but we must accept it. This is our response of faith to God's grace.

Lesson #16 – Becoming Acceptable to God (continued): The Sub-Doctrine of Justification - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on how God resolves the legal dilemma in justifying guilty sinners without compromising the Law. Of special note in this lesson is the contrast between man's futile attempts at self-justification and God's way to justify man.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the contrast between the futility of man's attempts to justify himself and God's plan for man's justification.
- **Feel:** Recognize the grace God grants us.
- **Do:** Live faithfully in recognition of God's grace.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 16 – Becoming Acceptable to God (Continued)
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 16

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Man's way to justify man
- 1.1 Primitive sacrificial system
- 1.2 Law keeping
- 1.3 Human philosophy
- 1.4 Magic
- 2.0 God's way to justify man
- 2.1 The time is now
- 2.2 The method is by imputation

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Briefly summarize each of the ways man has tried to justify himself and state the futility of the way.

- **Primitive sacrificial system** – Giving something to satisfy the anger or appetites of the gods. This was an attempt to manipulate the gods or make peace with the gods. A major problem is that the god was made in man’s image including the shortcomings of man. Being a false god to begin with, it would be impossible for man to be justified.
- **Law keeping** – To be acceptable before God, one must strictly keep the ceremonial/moral law. Over time man watered down or added to the law from man’s perspective and lost sight of the intent of the Law given by God. Furthermore, it is impossible to keep the Law perfectly in spite of one’s efforts.
- **Human philosophy** – The belief that man controlled one’s own fate through a higher level of understanding and wisdom through meditation and logic. The idea was that the more one knew and understood, the better he became. A major issue is that it was human philosophy and not God’s will. Many of the requirements of God appear illogical to man. (As a follow-up question, consider asking for examples of man’s philosophy in contrast with God’s will. A good example would be the requirement of baptism to wash away our sins.)
- **Magic** – Magic and belief in the occult tries to control the unseen world through the use of charms and rituals. Paul tells us we are in a spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18). We cannot control the spiritual or unseen world, God does.

2. Briefly summarize the way God justifies man and discuss why it is superior to man's ways.

- **The time is now** – We do not become acceptable to God before we are born or after we die. We are made acceptable in this life by God as we accept His method. God reveals in His word His requirements and we must accept and obey God.
- **The method of imputation** – To impute means to put something on someone else. God put our sins on Jesus because we are unable to remove them ourselves (Romans 3:19-24).

3. Explain the following statement:

“God knew believers would become His acceptable children through Christ.”

The intent of this question is to have students internalize the idea that God justifies us. We cannot justify ourselves. He did/does so through the blood of Christ. When we accept His will then we are added to the body of Christ as adopted children.

4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

As we learn the doctrine of justification – being made acceptable to God by God, we understand that it does what we cannot do. We cannot remove our sins through sacrifice, effort, philosophy, magic or any other means other than submitting to God’s plan as He has revealed it in scripture. God brought this plan about because of His grace. We must accept that grace and respond to it by faith.

Lesson #17 – God's New Vision of Mankind: The Sub-Doctrine of Perfection

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on why and how God now sees us as His redeemed children. Of special note in this lesson is God's view of perfection.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how God sees us as His redeemed children.
- **Feel:** Value the new vision God has for us.
- **Do:** Live faithfully as God wills.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 17 – God's New Vision of Mankind
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 17

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 General definition of perfection
- 1.2 Paul's explanation of perfection
- 1.3 Paul looks ahead

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Explain the sub-doctrine of justification.

Justification states that we can stand before God acceptable according to His standard. We become acceptable when God places (imputes) acceptability on us. We are justified by faith, expressed through our repentance and baptism. We do not earn it or accomplish it through any action on our part other than accepting it as a faithful response to God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-10).

2. What is the general definition of the doctrine of perfection?

It is the quality of the condition of those who are in Christ. This differs from the secular (dictionary) definition which states something that is entirely without flaw or defect, something that satisfies all the requirements.

3. How does scripture use the term "perfect"?

It is an expression communicating healthiness, completeness, wholeheartedness; but not sinless perfection (1 Kings 8:61). It expresses the idea of not wavering from one's faith rather than living a sinless life (Colossians 1:27-28).

The only way to reach perfection (wholeness and spiritual ripeness) is through Christ.

4. Explain the following statement in light of Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:1-10.

“God does not demand perfection, but He does demand faithfulness.”

Romans 3:20-24 and 1 John 1:1-10 both teach that we sin. To one it might seem as a futile effort to live life as God wills since we are incapable of sinless perfect. God understands this so made a way to Himself through Jesus.

John goes on to explain that as we live faithfully to include making the effort to obey our Lord and repenting when we realize our failures, God sees us as faithful and continues to forgive. This is not based on our efforts, but is the gift of grace given to those in Christ.

5. How does Paul explain the concept of perfection in Philippians 3:4-16?

Nothing we might use to attain perfection has any value in making us perfect. One could say that they might even contribute to our imperfection since we're relying on something other than God to achieve perfection. We use what God gives us for His glory and to accomplish His will for us, but not to attain perfection. We are made perfect through our response of faith to the sacrifice of Christ.

6. Why would one continue to strive to attain perfection knowing we cannot attain it, or if having been given it by God, worry about continuing in it?

Perfection can be seen from the perspective of a timeline or continuum. We are made perfect (whole and without sin in our lives) through our obedient response to the gospel. We then continue to seek to serve God according to His will (faithfulness). We grow in our knowledge of God's will and its application in our lives. This is a spiritual maturation process that enables us to grow closer to God and consequently know Him more perfectly which is the essential experience of eternal life (John 17:3).

7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Being made perfect through our response to the gospel is only a beginning. We must continue to do our best to live faithfully as servants of God because this process leads us to experiencing here on earth the promise of eternal life when we resurrect at Jesus' return.

Lesson #18 – How Mankind Becomes Holy: The Sub-Doctrine of Sanctification - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on the doctrine of sanctification. Of special note in this lesson is how God devised a plan to enable man to share in His holiness.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the concept of sanctification and how it is part of God’s plan.
- **Feel:** Value the love God has for us as demonstrated through His grace.
- **Do:** Seek to live faithfully as a child of God.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 18 – How Mankind Becomes Holy – Part 1
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 18

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Sanctification
 - 1.1.1 Word meaning
 - 1.1.2 Action
 - 1.1.3 Nature
- 1.2 Lessons learned

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Explain in your own words what Sanctification means and what it means to you.

Look for the idea of being set apart for God's purpose. We submit to God's will since He is setting us apart for a special reason.

Answers will vary as to the personal application of this concept.
Encourage discussion about how this action has begun in student's lives.
What do you think God has set you apart for?

2. Explain the following statement and how it relates to God's action of sanctifying us.

"The greater the superiority of the one setting aside, the more significant the consecration of the one being set apart."

God, of course, is the Supreme Being. He created human existence and placed us in a perfect environment. We allowed sin to enter and fractured that pure and holy relationship. Rather than destroy us, God put into place His plan to redeem us from our sins. We have no power to redeem ourselves, so He took the action in the form of the sacrifice of Jesus. In doing so, God places us into His family offering us full rights and privileges as His adopted children. How should we respond to this high calling and new identity?

3. Describe each of the concepts below as they relate to the nature of one who is sanctified.

The new status of those sanctified (Galatians 3:26-28). We are now called out of the world and set apart in Christ. We remain in this world, but we are to no longer be a part of it. This means that we answer to a higher calling with a greater hope (no greater hope) as God's children.

There is a new purpose for those reconciled (Matthew 5:14-16) since God saved us for a purpose. We are now servants of God seeking to do His will in all things. Part of His will is the primary task of showing the light of His truth and love to a sin darkened world (Matthew 28:18-20).

4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

We all sin (Romans 3:23) and are completely helpless before God. God, in His infinite love and grace recognizes our weaknesses and offers us salvation. Once we accept this gift by our repentance and baptism, we now are set aside for the purpose of faithfully serving God. This means that we seek to do God's will including showing and teaching others about God.

Each of us have varying abilities to do this. We must discover how we can use all we have and are to fulfill our role as faithful servants to God. The first action, however, is to become a part of God's family. From there we grow spiritually and become better able to serve God.

Lesson #19 – The Process of Sanctification: The Sub-Doctrine of Sanctification - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is to examine common errors in thinking about sanctification. Of special note in this lesson is the process of sanctification taking place in each Christian. Note that these elements of sanctification vary in strength and intensity as we mature spiritually but nevertheless should be seen in each Christian.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the biblical process of sanctification.
- **Feel:** Value God's love and grace as He's set us aside for His purpose.
- **Do:** Seek to improve our faith and spiritual maturity.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 19 – The Process of Sanctification
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 19

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Sanctification – Common errors
 - 1.1.1 Those sanctified have spiritual gifts
 - 1.1.2 Those sanctified can perform miracles
- 1.2 How do we know that we are truly sanctified
 - 1.2.1 By faith
 - 1.2.2 By power
- 1.3 The Process of sanctification
 - 1.3.1 Positional stage
 - 1.3.2 Practical stage
 - 1.3.3 Perfected stage

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Discuss the error with the following beliefs regarding sanctification.

Those sanctified have spiritual gifts. – Indeed, we do have spiritual gifts. These however, are not those that some feel we possess today if we are truly saved. Paul lists these in Ephesians 1:3-14. He states we are blessed in the heavenly places by God. In other places Paul speaks to Christians being gifted to carry out the work of the church (Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12 – 14).

The problem some have today is that they want the special spiritual gifts given through the Holy Spirit during the first century, specifically, speaking in tongues. This gift was given at Pentecost and seen in other places in the record of Acts. In later references, Paul indicates that of all the gifts, this is the least significant (1 Corinthians 13). The ability to demonstrate miraculous gifts ended with the death of the Apostles since only they had the power to transfer such gifts to others (Acts 8:13-18). To believe that today we have miraculous gifts is to misunderstand and perhaps practice false teaching.

Those sanctified can perform miracles – Like other spiritual gifts given through the Holy Spirit in the first century, the ability to perform miracles was given to a limited number of Christians for the purpose of demonstrating God’s power and for the growth and edification of the Church. Not all Christians had those powers, however. A good example of this is found in Acts 8:9-24 with Simon the Sorcerer. He did not have the miraculous gifts and wanted to purchase the power from the apostles. Peter rebuked him for his misunderstanding. These gifts also ended.

2. How does faith and power demonstrate to us that we are sanctified?

Faith is knowing God, trusting God and obeying God. We demonstrate our faith as we come to believe God, obey His command to repent and be baptized. He now adds us to His Kingdom (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26, Colossians 1:13). We must also believe God when He states we are saved (sanctified). As our spiritual maturity increases, our faith increases and as our faith increases, our spiritual maturity increases. As this growth process continues, so too does our relationship with God and our understanding that we truly are sanctified. Sometimes it is difficult to accept this as we continue to see sin in our lives. Always remember 1 John 1:5-10. God lovingly, willingly and without reservation takes us back as we repent. In fact, sometimes when we think God is not there, however, during these times He is usually there the closest. A lesson we learn from the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) is to never be afraid to come home.

Power – The power of God is not seen in whether or not we can perform miracles but rather how God takes us as repentant sinners and develops us into servants in His Kingdom. Review Paul's words in Romans 7:1-25 as he reviews his weaknesses and how Jesus is the only One Who can save him. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul states he has been given a thorn in the flesh specifically so that God's power can be seen more clearly in him.

As a lesson to us, Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 4:7 regarding the treasure we have in "jars of clay" so that God's power is seen through us. Again, not in our power to teach, preach or other gifts, but how God works through us. We are the humble and fragile vessels through which God reveals His will to a lost and starving world.

3. Discuss how each of the stages listed below relate to the process of sanctification.

Positional stage – When we are set aside following our baptism.

This is the beginning stage. God places us, we do not join.

Practical stage – This is our daily effort to live according to God’s will and as we take the gospel to the world making disciples. This is the daily struggle we all share as we seek to live faithfully.

Perfect stage – The use of perfect here is not intended to mean without faults or blemishes. It is a stage of completeness. We never achieve this in this lifetime. This stage is given by Christ when He returns to take us home. Remember, God does not demand perfection, but He does require faithfulness.

4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Always remember that God sanctifies us, we do not sanctify ourselves. Sanctification begins with our new birth at baptism and continues through our lives as Christians as we strive to be Christlike in order to both honor and know God.

Lesson #20 – The Role of Baptism: The Sub-Doctrine of Salvation - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is the relationship of baptism to the other doctrines associated with God's plan to reconcile man. Of special note in this lesson is how baptism is a major doctrine and its impact on our relationship with God.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the importance of baptism in relation to our reconciliation with God.
- **Feel:** Value the role of baptism.
- **Do:** If one is not baptized, then repent and be baptized to fulfil our faith response to the gospel.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 20 – The role of Baptism.
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 20

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Baptism and major Christian doctrine
 - 1.1.1 To distinguish Jesus' baptism from others
 - 1.1.2 To establish its importance
- 1.2 One baptism, many descriptions of baptism
- 1.3 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. What is the relationship between belief and baptism as stated in Mark 16:16?

Both are necessary in the salvation process. One cannot truly believe and not demonstrate that belief by action on our part. If one goes through the process of baptism, yet does not believe, then the baptism is worthless. Note that in Mark 16:16, this is emphasized by the second part of this verse, “but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” Without the interaction between belief and baptism, one remains lost.

2. Explain the two statements below regarding baptism as a doctrine of salvation.

To distinguish Jesus’ baptism from others – Baptism was practiced by many different religious groups, both those obeying Jehovah God as well as pagan religions. Water baptism represented a cleansing process as well as an initiation rite. A way was needed by Paul and the other New Testament writers to show how baptism into Christ was different than these other types of baptisms. This was done by the various teachings of the apostles including Paul (Ephesians 4:5; Romans 6:3-5).

Note that baptism with the Holy Spirit was not done to put one into Christ. The Holy Spirit was given by God to the one who was baptized in water (Acts 2:38).

To establish its importance – When baptism is mentioned in the New Testament it is always associated with salvation. It is not the only element of our salvation that is important, but it is the culmination of the elements God requires of us to demonstrate our faith. Please note, we are not earning nor are we ever deserving of salvation, God grants it to us by His grace. Our response to that grace is to obey as demonstrated by our belief, repentance, baptism and faithfulness. Baptism is a form of shorthand expressing that all of these have occurred.

3. If a person is responding to God's plan for his or her reconciliation, what occurs at the moment of baptism?

When one is baptized, he or she is expressing faith in Christ as the Son of God and as God promised, receives salvation and its associated blessings, including forgiveness of our sins and the inward possession of the Holy Spirit.

4. Summarize what each of the following verses are expressing regarding baptism and salvation.

Disciples – Matthew 28:18-20 – When one is baptized, one becomes a disciple, or, as a believer, one should also desire to be baptized.

Obedience – Mark 16:16 – Baptism is an act of obedience to God's will.

New Birth – John 3:5 – It is a symbolic rebirth. One has died and is now reborn with a new life.

Forgiveness – Acts 2:38a – Forgiveness is granted through our baptism.

Holy Spirit – Acts 2:38b – In addition to forgiveness of our sins, God's Spirit dwells in us.

Added to the Church – Acts 2:41 – Upon baptism, we are now citizens in God's earthly Kingdom, the Church, the Body of Christ, a community of believers.

Burial and Resurrection – Romans 6:3 – Baptism is a symbolic form of burial and resurrection.

Adoption – Galatians 3:26 – We are now adopted members of God’s family and full heirs to the associated blessings.

Clothed with Christ – Galatians 3:27 – We put on Christ in a symbolic way of covering ourselves with Him. The benefit is that when God sees us as His faithful children, He sees Christ.

Clear Conscience – 1 Peter 3:20-22 – Our past sins are forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ. Our future sins are forgiven as we strive to remain faithful and continually repent of our sins (See also 1 John 1:5-10).

5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Baptism is an essential response to God’s requirement that we demonstrate our faith. It is only the beginning of our relationship with Him. We must also remain faithful. Baptism is the only element of salvation that is required once. We continue to express our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. We continue to commit to living by the teachings of Jesus (repentance and faithfulness). All of these elements are contained within the statement by Jesus in Matthew 28:20, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...”

Lesson #21 – The Role of Baptism and Communion: The Sub-Doctrine of Salvation - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on the roles of baptism and communion. This lesson provides responses to common questions about baptism and what communion is and its role in supporting a Christian's faithfulness.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand what scripture states about baptism.
- **Feel:** Value the role baptism plays in the process of salvation.
- **Do:** Teach baptism as scripture intends.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 21 – The Role of Baptism and Communion
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 21

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Most asked questions about baptism
- 1.2 Major Christian doctrine and communion

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Provide a response to each of these questions:

Is baptism necessary for salvation?

Yes, baptism is one of the elements of salvation as specified in scripture. Without baptism, one cannot enter God's Kingdom.

Does the Bible not say we are saved by faith?

Yes, but faith is a response of someone seeking salvation. Scripture teaches, however, that faith must be seen in visible ways. Therefore, salvation is through faith, but that faith is expressed in a biblical manner through baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

What about Romans 10:10-13?

First, selecting individual scriptures as proof texts is known as "confirmation bias." This is when someone seeks to use data or information to prove a preconceived point. It further sets one up to misapply scripture by taking it out of context. If this was the only scripture used to explain the role of believing and salvation, then perhaps this might be a valid point. However, there are many scriptures that point to belief as an element of salvation. The other elements (confessing, repenting, baptism) also have associated references, even within the book of Romans, thus including the elements of repentance, confession and baptism as necessary also.

Should I be re-baptized?

This question is asked by many who are concerned that they might not have fully understood what baptism was for or were baptized for reasons other than "for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38). This is addressed in Acts 19 by Paul as he "re-baptized" 10 men that were baptized by John's baptism (for repentance and preparing for the coming of God's Kingdom) rather than to be added to the church. One must ask why one was baptized and how. If it was for the reasons listed in scripture (Mark 16, Matthew 28, John 3, Acts 2:38) and was done by immersion as a repentant believer, then perhaps not. If these questions are not answered, then yes. In either way, it is strongly recommended you discuss this with another person knowledgeable with scripture (elders, preacher, teacher) to guide you in this decision. Many have chosen to be re-baptized to ensure they are doing so according to God's will.

2. Discuss the role of communion as it is associated with salvation.

Our Lord, knowing our human nature, instituted what is known as the Lord's supper to help remind us of the sacrifice He paid to reconcile us to God. In participating in communion, we recognize that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for us, He paid the price, and we continue to participate in that plan by receiving communion each week.

3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Baptism is an essential element of our response to God's will for our salvation. It is not singularly the most important element but is critical. Without it, we have not fully complied with God's will.

Once one completes this step, along with the other elements, then we have obeyed what God wills for us and receive the blessings of salvation (forgiveness of sins and the presence of God's Spirit in our lives). Although it is important, and we are added to God's Kingdom (the church) when we are baptized, it is only the beginning of our spiritual journey. We must follow-through with our commitment to live according to the teachings of Jesus, study and apply God's word daily in our lives, and strive to live faithfully, coming back to our Father for forgiveness when we sin (repentance).

Lesson #22 – The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth: The Doctrine of the Kingdom

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is a review of the nature of the “Kingdom” in the Bible compared to the concept from secular history. Of special note in this lesson is the description of our King and His Kingdom as described in the New Testament.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** The identity of God’s Kingdom on earth.
- **Feel:** Express loyalty to our King and His Kingdom.
- **Do:** Seek to be granted citizenship or to maintain citizenship in God’s Kingdom.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 22 – The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 22

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Development of the King and Kingdom – Ideas in the Old Testament
 - 1.1.1 Theocratic rule
 - 1.1.2 Human kings
- 1.2 God’s relationship with kings
- 1.3 Man as divine king
- 1.4 The King and the Kingdom in the New Testament
- 1.5 The Kingdom theology in post New Testament times

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Summarize the concept of Theocratic rule.

Theocratic rule means ruled by God. This was how God's people were ruled in the beginning and much of its early history. It was how God wanted His relationship with His people to be established and operated.

2. Summarize the beginnings and concerns with human kings.

Human kings over God's chosen people began with the selection of Saul in 1 Samuel 8-9. Israel wanted to be like the nations around them ruled by human kings. Samuel warned the people that they were going against God's will. The king would require their sons for his military use and to serve him. He would also press into service their daughters. He would take a portion of their wealth for his use. Later they would cry out to God against the King but God would not listen.

All of these prophecies came to pass even from the start. Although some of Israel's kings were honorable men, many more were not, at least for a period of time. As a result, the people drifted further away from God's will until eventually He allowed the nation to be destroyed and the people dispersed.

3. Summarize the concept of man as divine king.

This is the idea that a human could be a divine ruler of sorts; a “god king.” This is seen in various nations through history. To the Jewish mind, God is king over man although they desired and accepted a man to rule over them. The human king was seen as having been appointed by God to rule therefore, he had absolute power. In the New Testament we see the idea of the divine king taking on human form (Jesus), dwelling among men and inviting them into His divine Kingdom.

4. Describe the King and the Kingdom in the New Testament.

Our Lord as our Messiah is characterized as a ruler (King). The Jews mistakenly saw this as a physical king and kingdom, but Jesus taught that the Kingdom He brought would be a spiritual Kingdom, thus an eternal Kingdom.

John the Baptist taught that the Kingdom was at hand and that the people must prepare for it, through their baptism as a purification action. Jesus took up this teaching telling them that the Kingdom had arrived. His miracles and teachings were used to validate His authority and divinity as the King of this Kingdom.

5. Describe the Kingdom in a post New Testament time.

Roman Catholicism – Augustine: Catholic theology, originally formed by Augustine in the 4th century taught that the kingdom and church were the same with the Pope ordained to head the church on earth. A strong hierarchy was developed to teach and enforce this theology.

Protestants – Reformers: Protestant reformers emphasized the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom without the strict hierarchy of the Catholic church.

Modern theology: Modern theology injects an element of a “social gospel” in an effort to make the world a better place.

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

As Christians we must look to scripture, specifically the teachings of Jesus to guide us in becoming aware of Him as our King and the church as His Kingdom. As such we learn that:

Jesus is the center of the Kingdom.

The church is a physical manifestation of the spiritual Kingdom here on earth.

The complete church will be seen when Christ returns.

The church will be fully integrated with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. In other words, we will be united with God into the relationship He originally created.

Our role is to obey our Lord’s teachings to be granted citizenship into His Kingdom and to faithfully obey His teachings. In doing so, when He returns, we will be granted entry into eternity with God. (Matthew 25).

Lesson #23 – Jesus Describes the End: The Doctrine of the Second Coming - Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on the events and timing of the return of Jesus. Of special note in this lesson are the teachings of Jesus concerning His return.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the teachings of Jesus as He describes His second coming.
- **Feel:** Commit to faithful living.
- **Do:** Put into practice the principles and commands taught by Jesus so as to be prepared for His return.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 23 – Jesus Describes the End
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 23

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Jesus' discourse on His second coming (Matthew 24:1-3)
- 1.2 The panoramic view until the second coming (Matthew 24:4-14)
- 1.3 The telescopic view
 - 1.3.1 The fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-35)
 - 1.3.2 The second coming (Matthew 24:36-44)
- 1.4 Exhortations to vigilance (Matthew 24:45-25:30)

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as “right or wrong” responses.

1. Describe a brief outline of Matthew 24 and 25 and discuss the following questions.

What do you see as significant as to the timing of these teachings?

Answers will vary. Here are some suggestions: It was at the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus just prior to His betrayal and death. His focus of teaching over the previous three years had now narrowed to the closest of His followers, His 12 apostles (Author's opinion: Judas included at this time signifying that Judas could have repented and would have been forgiven.) In doing so, Jesus was preparing them for His eventual departure. Notice the focus is not so much in these teachings about His upcoming sacrifice.

What two questions are asked in Matthew 24:3 and what is their significance?

(1) When will these things be, (2) and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

Answers will vary as to the significance of these questions. Here are some suggestions to consider. To the disciples, it was a one-part question, but Jesus considered it a two-part question to the statement He made in verse 2, thus He provided a two part response. To the Jews, Jerusalem was the center of all elements of their life. It was inconceivable that life as they knew it would continue if Jerusalem was destroyed. As such, it was the end of the world and the time for our Lord's return. Jesus on the other hand knew the events that would eventually lead to the destruction of the Jewish way of life. When Jerusalem fell, all elements of proof of Jewish ancestry were destroyed along with the Temple. It truly brought an end to Judaism in a harsh and physical way. Pentecost ushered in the earthly Kingdom of our Lord (the Church), but the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD ended the role of the Jews as God's people.

2. State the main points from Matthew 24:4-14.

Let no one mislead you – There would be many who claimed to be the returning Lord, or speaking for the Lord and lead the apostles astray. They were to keep focused on the things Jesus taught.

The apostles would face persecution – History records the persecution and death of not only the apostles but faithful Christians as well. In truth, this persecution continues today and will continue until the Lord returns. This will sadly lead many to abandon their faith.

The one who endures will be saved – They are to remain faithful no matter what because it is simply a beginning that will eventually lead to the glory of being in the presence of God.

The gospel will be preached to the whole world – As Jesus provided His final instruction prior to His ascension, He charged the apostles to take the gospel into the whole world. Many believe, with good reason, that once this is accomplished then the final period of time will have begun for the return of our Lord. Some also believe that this will not occur until everyone has the opportunity to hear and obey God's will.

3. Why was it necessary for Jerusalem to be destroyed?

It was the heart of the Jewish faith and seen as the place from which the Messiah would rule. This was a mistaken belief but one so strong that only the removal of this symbol would show its error. Sadly today many still hold that the Messiah will return to that spot and rule. This is false teaching.

4. What are the primary teachings of Jesus from Matthew 24:36-44?

Jesus will return but no one, not even He knows when, only God that Father knows.

When Jesus returns, life will be going on as it normally would. There will be no special signs to alert anyone to get ready.

The return will be swift, everyone will know it.

Because it will return when no one knows, we must be ready and live faithfully so as to continually be prepared.

5. What is the key point for each of the three parables in Matthew 24:45-25:30?

- **The Parable of the evil slave** (24:45-51) – Don't think we can sin now and prepare later when we see the Master is going to return. We must be faithful always.
- **The Parable of the 10 Virgins** (25:1-13) – All of the virgins in this parable believed the bridegroom was coming but half of them were not fully prepared. As a result, they were banned from entry into the celebration. The end will come when we least expect it. We must always be prepared because we will not have a chance to prepare once our Lord comes.
- **The Parable of the Talents** – (25:14-30) – At judgment we will face our Lord to give an account of what we've done that demonstrates our faithfulness. To those who have made the effort at faithfulness, it will be a time of reward. To those who have not prepared, not obeyed, not been faithful then it will be a tragic time beyond our comprehension.

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Our Lord does not want anyone to be lost therefore His will is provided for us in scripture. We must learn His will of how to become reconciled to God. We must then live faithfully according to the teachings of Jesus. In doing so, we will be rewarded as faithful servants.

God does not demand perfection but He require faithfulness. Faithfulness involves two elements: (1) obedience to be admitted into God's Kingdom; (2) doing our best to remain faithful by following the teachings of Jesus and repenting and recommitting when we fail. God rewards both of these elements by continuing to see us as faithful servants (1 John 1:5-10).

Lesson #24 – The Doctrine of the Second Coming - Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson are the key passages about the second coming of Jesus. Of special note in this lesson is a review of the four main “Millennial” teachings found in the world today.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the teachings of Jesus as He describes His second coming.
- **Feel:** Commit to faithful living.
- **Do:** Put into practice the principles and commands taught by Jesus so as to be prepared for His return.

Support

- Series – Understanding Your Religion (Mike Mazzalongo)
- Video – Understanding Your Religion – Lesson 24 – The Doctrine of the Second Coming
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 24

Body of the Lesson

- 1.1 Key Bible Passages about the return of our Lord
 - 1.1.1 Romans
 - 1.1.2 I Corinthians
 - 1.1.3 II Corinthians
 - 1.1.4 Philippians
 - 1.1.5 I Thessalonians
 - 1.1.6 II Thessalonians
 - 1.1.7 I Timothy
 - 1.1.8 II Timothy
 - 1.1.9 Titus
- 1.2 Summary of Millennial theories

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. State the core teaching of each of the following passages:

(Note: Teachers may consider reviewing selected passages rather than all of these. This is not to discount any of them, but to form a foundation to encourage further study.)

- Romans 2:5; 12-16 – The return of Jesus will be a time when God judges and punishes.
- Romans 8:23 – When our Lord returns our physical bodies will be redeemed, meaning we will be resurrected.
- Romans 14:10-12 – All will be judged and must give an account of their lives to God.
- 1 Corinthians 8:8 – Jesus will come for His own.
- 1 Corinthians 5:5 – It will be a day of destruction or salvation depending on our faithfulness.
- 1 Corinthians 15:23-28 – The faithful will be united with God forever.
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 – We get a glimpse of our relationship with God as the Holy Spirit guides us into faithfulness now.
- 2 Corinthians 5:10 – We will be judged for our deeds. Note, not as a way that we’ve earned salvation, but as a sign of our faithfulness.
- Philippians 3:21 – We will be transformed into an image provided by God.

- 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 – Those that lead and teach others have the task of helping prepare the Church for the Lord’s return. In truth, this is also a task for all of us.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:2 – The return of our Lord will be unexpected.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 – When Jesus returns, the faithful will be raised first, then the living who are faithful will join the resurrected ones and be transformed to be with Christ.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 – All of this will happen without sign or warning. We’ve already been warned that it is coming and must be ready.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 – The unbelieving will believe and know why they are being punished and those that believe (and act upon that belief) will be rewarded.
- 1 Timothy 6:14-15 – Jesus will appear in real time, not figuratively or as a vision.
- 2 Timothy 4:1, 8 – The return of Jesus will be the end of this world with punishment to the wicked and reward to the faithful.
- Titus 2:11-13 – We prepare for our Lord’s return now by faithful living. Our growing faith provides growing hope.

2. Summarize each of the main Millennial theories listed below:

Dispensational Premillennialism – This is a literal interpretation of prophetic passages about end times. It features:

- An actual 1000-year reign of Christ on earth
- Two dispensations (periods of time): the salvation of the Jews; the salvation of the Gentiles
- A “rapture” period where people disappear into heaven leaving others on earth
- The Millennium (1000 years on earth) is marked by a return of Jewish temple worship, a great war, etc.

Historic Premillennialism – There will be a 1000-year separation between the first resurrection of Jesus and the second. The final judgment will happen at the second resurrection. Features of this position:

- A great apostasy (falling away) and tribulation (period of suffering) must happen before Jesus returns.
- The Kingdom will be revealed and Satan is bound during the 1000 year reign.
- A massive rebellion will take place before Jesus returns a second time for judgment

Post-Millennialism – A millennial age begins gradually as the gospel is preached. The church exercises financial and political authority on earth as a sign of the Kingdom’s superiority. The features of this position are:

- The church binds Satan and his influence on earth
- Proponents believe in a form of Christian theocracy (rule)

A-Millennialism – The teaching that the 1000 years refers to a time between Jesus’ initial appearance and his return. The 1000 years is symbolic of a time known only to God. Features of this position are:

- No rapture or tribulation
- Both Jews and Gentiles are called by the same gospel
- The Kingdom is represented by the church on earth
- At Jesus’ return the world will end, the wicked will be judged, saints will be with Christ in the new heaven and earth forever.

3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

We don't know when our Lord will return but we do know He will return. The time is known only by God the Father (Matthew 24:36). Our role is to be prepared by obeying God's will for our salvation, to live faithfully and to help others come to know our Lord. In doing these we are faithful and will be rewarded by God for eternity.

As we close this series of lessons, please keep in mind the statement made throughout this study. God does not demand perfection, but He does require faithfulness.

We give God the glory for all things, especially for His grace.