

0. Introduction to Basics

Purpose

Succinct overview of what we believe about the Bible, God, and ourselves

20 – 30 minute lessons

Teach and encourage you

You can study; go deeper

References to other classes/lessons

7 Lessons

1. What is a Christian?
2. Bibliology
3. — 4. Overview of the Old and New Testaments
5. How to read and understand your Bible
6. Theology

Summarize the Bible's teachings (God, sin, salvation, sanctification)

Optional: Statement of Faith — will understand much when done

7. Spiritual growth

Becoming more like Jesus

Point of studying the Bible

1. What is a Christian?

Starting point

So many misunderstandings

Affects how you will understand this class

Avoid “Christianeze”

“Faith” — all religions/world-views require faith

“Believe in Jesus” — demons believe

Debate

Part of the problem is that there are two parts to the answer

Entering into a relationship and living in the relationship

My definition

How would you answer the question?

“Believes Jesus is who he says he is & that Jesus did what he said he would do.”

Unpack the implications

John 3:16 — “believes in him”

Believe

Jesus is who he says he is — “only Son” — God (1:18)

Problem: biblical belief is not just intellectual assent

Biblical belief is not a single transaction — raise hand and get out of hell card

Trust

No longer trust in my own ability to get right with God

No longer trust that I can do anything to earn forgiveness/relationship

Transfer your trust out of yourself into Jesus

Grammar: “believe into”

Trust that “Jesus did for me what I could not do for myself”

“For the wages of sin is death, but the *free* gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

In him — personal object — Christianity is not ...

A religion or philosophy

It is not a church building—religious organization—religious way of thinking

It is not a list of does and don'ts

All about him (“theological center”)

Unpack: “Believes in him” = “Jesus is who he says he is”

“Kerygma” — Acts 2:22–24, 36

Lord (YHWH) and Messiah (“declared to be”)

If you believe this, only possible result is that you repent of your sin

“Sin”: anything that is contrary to God's character — honest/lie = sin

“Repent”: agree with God that you have acted contrary to his character

Two sins

Sin of not believing Jesus is who he said he is

Sin of acting in a way that breaks the “covenant” (agreement) - Acts 2:38

Unpack: “Jesus did what he said he would do”

When he died on the cross — paid the penalty for our sin

Our sin separates us from God — true of any relationship

God’s holiness/justice requires that sin be punished — can’t just ignore

Penalty is separation from God, and eventually death

On the cross, Jesus was punished for our sin (Is 53:5)

Forgiveness now possible by trusting that Jesus is ...

Rom 10:9 — confess ... believe ...

Resurrection is validation that he did what he said he would do

First part: enter — Christ alone, Faith alone

Second part: Christian is someone who lives in relationship

≠ “Christian”

“Christ-Follower” — not a singular transaction

Common sense: If enter into a relationship, then it makes sense to live in that relationship (marriage)

“Changed people live changed lives”

“Adoption” — Rom 8:15–16

“Gate and Path” (Matt 7:13–14)

When you go through the gate, you are changed: born again, new creature, justified, redeemed

Of course your life is going to be different, you’re different

Changed life is the primary evidence that you truly are in relationship

1 John 2:3–6 — why there are two parts to the definition

Terrifying warnings throughout the Bible about unfaithfulness

Some claim they were changed, but they weren't — Mt 7:21-23

Titus 1:16

Col 1:22–23a

Heb 12:14

Saved by grace through faith in Jesus

We don't earn anything

But changed people will/must live changed lives

So, what is a Christian?

Trust that Jesus is ...; Jesus did ...

When repent of our sin of disbelief and sinful actions — changed

Entering into a relationship and living in the relationship

2. Bibliology

Definition

What do we believe about the Bible

Not “bibliolotry” — worship of the book rather than its author

Overview

Library

66 books and more than 50 authors over 1,500 years

Much variety in terms of vocabulary / style / topics / culture

Yet a consistent message and consistent themes tying it together

Gen 3:15 → Jesus is the theological center

Broken into two “testaments” (covenant, agreements)

Old (Hebrew) Testament (Creation - Malachi)

New (Jesus (“gospel”) → growth of the church → to the end of history)

Books, chapters, and verses — John 3:16

How was the NT Written and how did it come to us?

Chronologically

Oral teaching at first (but with notes), but accurate

1. Authors in a position to know
2. Eyewitness control — community memory
3. Holy Spirit control (John 14:26)

Period of Writing

Paul in the 40's - 60's, Mark in the 50's, John in 80's - 90's

We know who wrote each (Hebrews) and each was in a position to know the truth

Authority of the author was transferred to their writing

“Inspiration”

Definition: “Scripture comes from the mouth of God” — 2 Tim 3:16

Mystery — from God through human writers — 2 Peter 1:20–2:1

Point — Scripture is true in all that it affirms — 2 Tim 3:17

“Canonicity”

1. Apostolic authorship

2. Harmony of doctrine and tone — Gospel of Thomas fails at both points

3. Continual usage in the church as a whole — 2 and 3 John

No conspiracy theories about Council of Nicea and Constantine

Gospels, Acts, Paul, 1 Peter and 1 John — “core” by 60’s

Transmission of the Writings

“Autographs”

Thousands of copies (“manuscripts”)

6,000 ms with many differences

99% sure, 1% no teaching, most inconsequential (Johnn)

Translations

Bible written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic

Virtually impossible to say exactly in one language what is said in another

Greek doesn’t have a word for “a”

Ambiguity at the word level

“can” has a bundle of meanings

δουλος

Ambiguity at the grammatical level

Col 1:11 — “strengthened with all power according to *the might of his glory*”

Translation philosophy — Focus on words or meaning? Why differences.

Test case — Romans 16:16

NIV (and most mainstream): “Greet one another with a holy kiss”

Good News: “Greet one another with a brotherly kiss”

Later: “Greet one another with the kiss of peace”

Living: “Shake hands warmly with each other”

NLT: Greet each other with a sacred kiss.

Phillips: “Give each other a hearty handshake all round.”

Trust your translations

Pick one for study

Better if read two (of different philosophies) — ESV/CSB and NIV/NLT

Trust (Waltke)

Lesson 5

How to read and understand these translations

3. Old Testament

“Survey”

Basic structure, people, themes
Structure: follow Bert Downs and his three boxes
4/5ths of the Bible — longer lesson

Basic idea of the OT

God created us for relationship with him — “I will be their God ...”

God is our faithful king — kingdom of God is the “thematic framework”

His good creation was damaged by sin

Series of promises to redeem his people — point to Jesus (“theological center”)

His people experience his blessings only as they were faithful to his covenants (“covenantal structure”) — formal relationship — Definition of a Christian?

1. Foundational (5)

Pentateuch. 5 Books of Moses

Genesis

Starts with creation

Most theology comes from the first three chapters

Adam and Eve

Broke the Adamic covenant — sin, punished

God is still faithful — promises to crush the serpent in Gen 3:15

History broadens until all are evil

Narrows to Noah — the one righteous person

Flood to punish unfaithfulness

God is still faithful — covenant to never destroy everything again

Expands to many more people

Narrows to Abraham (1800 B.C.)

Promise to create a nation of descendants who would bless the world

Faithful to the Gen 3 promise

Abraham “believed” God — what pleases God — covenant

Two sons (Issac, Jacob)

Jacob had 12 sons that eventually formed the nation of Israel

Joseph — prepare for the coming famine

Shows God is faithful to his covenantal promise to Abraham

400 leave to Egypt

Exodus

Introduces us to Moses — leads out of captivity

Mt. Sinai — Mosaic covenant (10 Comm — 613 in total) — how people live

Tabernacle — God’s promise, “I will be their God ... “

Leviticus

Rules pertaining to the covenant, especially animal sacrifice

Numbers

Travel from Sinai to Canaan (Abraham’s Promised Land)

Not faithful to the covenant — no blessing — 40 years of wandering

Deuteronomy

God is faithful — rules for life in the Promised Land — 1400 B.C.

2. Historical (12)

Themes of judgment and redemption

Everything determined by the leaders’ (un)faithfulness — break covenant

God’s faithfulness despite people’s sin

Pre-Kings

Joshua — conquer land

Judges — God was the king — “theocracy” — (faithful and then not)

United Monarchy

1, 2 Samuel — Saul (faithful and the not), David (1,000 B.C.)

Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:11bff.)— eternal kingdom — Messiah: Jesus (theological center)

Divided Monarchy

1, 2 Kings

Solomon (faithful and the not) — kingdom splits

Northern kingdom (bad) — disobeyed the covenant — exiled to Assyria
Southern kingdom (8/20 good) — to Babylon

Prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah

Exile (600 – 530)

See punishment for faithlessness, but God’s faithfulness

Return from exile (530 – 420)

Historical: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

3. Instructional — 2 parts

Books usually in response to historical crises

Poetry

Mostly in the United Monarchy period

Job

Not sure of date
Doesn’t mean Job wasn’t a real person

Suffering is not always the result of sin
God is free to do what he wants to do

Psalms—favorite

Many kinds of Psalms — worship, crying out in pain, imprecatory

Great affirmations of faith in the light of current situations

Prov — practical wisdom

Ecclesiastes — vanity of life apart from God

Song of Songs — beauty of the sexual relationship in marriage (≠ church)

Prophets

Not always future — speak words (judgment) from God

Pre-exilic

Warnings against northern kingdom (Hosea, Amos) and the surrounding nations (Jonah)

Message of judgment & restoration (covenant faithfulness) — Habakkuk 2:4; 3:17-18

Exilic

Endurance and hope

Ezekiel (Jerusalem would fall; promise of redemption), Daniel

Last three prophets were post-exilic

God is faithful and will return a faithful remnant

Ends with a promise — Malachi 4:5–6

Point?

We were uniquely created for a relationship with God — “I will be ...”

God will always be faithful despite our sin

Our (dis)obedience determines if we enjoy the benefits of the covenant if we live in relationship

Ultimately, everything points to Jesus

God’s ultimate act of faithfulness to Abraham and us

God’s provision for our forgiveness

4. New Testament

Introduction

Continue format from OT Survey

Six boxes

Review: Basic idea

God created us for relationship with him — “I will be their God ...” (thematic framework)

His good creation was damaged at the very start

Series of promises to redeem his people — point to Jesus — theological center

Blessing or punishment — based on our faithfulness to the covenantal

Promises fulfilled in Jesus and growth of the church

Eve (Gen 3:15); Abraham (Gen 12); David (2 Sam 7:11ff.)

See the new covenant unfolding — words written on hearts by Spirit

1. Foundational

Core teaching upon which everything else is based

4 gospels

“Synoptic” have basic structure: beginning, Galilean, travel, Jerusalem

All four in a position to be trustworthy

Matthew

Tax collector, one of the 12 disciples

Emphasis: fulfillment of the Jewish hope

Why starts with a genealogy

Notable features: Jesus’ birth; Sermon on the Mount (5–7); Great Commission

Mark – 50's

“Jesus the Messiah, Son of God” in what he does — authority over the Law, forgiveness

Notable feature: discipleship (Mark 8)

Luke

Gentile, not first hand, friend of Paul

Term paper (1:1–4)

Notable features: historicity; Jesus' birth; non-Jews (Wise Men); social outcasts (shepherds, women)

John – 80's to 90's

50 years to reflect — developed theology (implicit => explicit)

7 miracles (“*I am* bread, light, resurrection, way)

Notable features: global, divinity (1:18; 10:30), belief/faith

2. Historical

Growth of the church — Great Commission (28:18–20); Acts 1:8

Phase 1: Jerusalem (1–7)

Peter — Jewish/Jerusalem — 33 – 35 A.D.

Notable features: Pentecost (HS), Peter's sermon (clarity on salvation), persecution, Stephen (Gentile, rejection of Jews for disobedience)

Phase 2: Samaria (8–12)

Persecution and Philip in Samaria

Saul's conversion

Notable features: Cornelius' conversion — first theological debate settled

Phase 3: Ends of the earth (13–28)

Paul has a series of missionary journeys

Ends in Rome (jail [62], eventually released but later killed in 67 A.D.)

Notable features: Persecution, God's faithfulness to Abraham

3. Instructional

22 letters during the Historical phase

Paul's 13 — addressing specific questions raised in the new church

Romans — core doctrine, reflected in other letters (3:22–24)

1, 2 Corinthians — dysfunctional church, lack of sanctification

Prison epistles — salvation by grace; Jew vs. Gentile; thankfulness; divinity

1, 2 Thessalonians — new church (Titus)

Pastoral — leadership (1 Tim); personal (2 Tim)

Philemon — Onesimus the slave (seeds of the abolition movement)

General Epistles — not to any specific church

Hebrews — authorship; superiority of Christ; warning passages

James — practical wisdom

1 Peter — persecution

2 Peter / Jude — false teachers

1 John — necessity of obedience (2:4; 3:6) and love (2:9–10)

2/3 John personal

Revelation — debated; God will win and return; faithful

Summation

God created us for relationship with him — “I will be their God ...”

Sin separated

God's promise to redeem us is fulfilled in Jesus

Because of what Jesus did, we enter the relationship through faith (Is... Did ...)

Live faithfully and so receive the blessings of the new covenant.

5. How to Read the Bible

Introduction

Bible Study Template

My approach is little different — get to the point / details latter

What do you do when you open the book?

Please do not lead with the question, “What does this mean to me?”

This is the end of the process

Most mistakes in understanding and applying the Bible start here

4 step process of “exegesis”

1. Meant — what it meant in its historical context (e.g., Peter)

A. Beginning and ending of passage (never just a verse)

Sometimes a paragraph

Sometimes the paragraphs between headings

Neither inspired, but can be helpful

Mark 2 — stop and read

B. Larger literary context

Where are you? Old or New Testament

“Genre” (Hermeneutics)

Narrative (stories)

Letters (historical purpose)

Theology

Special —poetry, parables, apocalyptic (Revelation)

Mark 2

C. What's the point?

Don't get lost in the details — theological terms; place on the map

Examples

Parable of the Sower

Write out title and perhaps headings for paragraphs (pencil)

What's the point, and how does the author get there?

Mark 2

1-2: Context

2-4: Introduce the players

5: Creates the conflict

6-7: Protagonists — another group of players

8-12a: Jesus' rebuke

12b: Result

Point? v10 and his claim to divinity (1:1)

Title: Jesus is Lord over Sabbath (i.e., OT Law)

2. Means

A. Culture/Non-cultural — John 3:16 vs Mark 12:17 (Caesar)

B. If cultural, reinterpret eternal principle

Cannot ignore by saying it is cultural

Always a timeless truth that has been expressed culturally

Can't ignore the parable of the sower if you are not a farmer

Can't ignore laws of sacrifice — fulfilled in Christ

Mark 12:17 — taxes

3. Reflection

Not application (#4)

Three questions

1. Learn about God

 Sending of John the Baptist

2. Learn about yourself

 Put yourself in the shoes of every person in the story. How does this affect your understanding of the passage? Prodigal Son.

3. Learn about others

A passages may not have something to say about each of these

 Will have something to say about one of them

 Why else would the passage be in the Bible?

4. Application

One practical, concrete application for this week

 Not, "I'll be a better person."

 "I will not respond in anger to my spouse."

Start next week's Bible study asking how people did

If you have time ...

 Look up words you may not have understood (my dictionary)

 Read other translations

 Check a study Bible (same as your main translation)

What's the point the author is making?

 How affect my understanding of God, myself, and others

 So what?

6. Theology

Definition

What we believe

Take all the verses on a topic and organize them

Statement of Faith

9 categories (“articles”)

Longest lesson

Article One: Scripture

Bibliology — Comes first since all the follows depends on it

Article Two: God

Most poor theology comes from a misunderstanding of who God is

1. “Omniscience” — knows all, past, present, future (Ps 139:1-4)

Nothing is going to happen to you that will surprise him

He will never misread or misunderstand you — better than know yourself

2. “Omnipresence” — present everywhere (Ps 139:7-12)

Not that God is huge — he is bigger than huge

Has no spatial dimensions — God is spirit (≠ a spirit)

God exists in his fullness in every place throughout reality — stars, your heart

There is no place where God is not present to help, love, or encourage
Full attention when you pray

3. “Omnipotence” — omni-potentate — all powerful — “Sovereign”

“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3)

Book of Revelation is true — God will win over Satan

Even in the midst of our pain — entrust ourselves to an all-powerful God

4. “Love” — As loving as he is powerful

See his power — let that draw you to his heart

5. “Divine” (Rom 1:20)

Separate from creation (≠pantheism, Hinduism, Mormonism)

6. “Monotheism” vs “Trinity”

Implication of biblical teaching

One but Three “persons”

God the Father is fully God, but he is not the Son — Mystery

7. Not a nanny

Disappointed with God/Church

Article Three: God the Son (“Jesus”)

“Incarnation” — fully God/human — greatest mystery

Who he is: fully human

Heb 2:17

Who he is: fully God — YHWH (LORD)

John 1:1 — Jehovah Witnesses are wrong; don’t know Greek

“No one has ever seen God (the Father); the only God (the Son), who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18)

What he did: “atonement”

“Lamb of God” — sacrificial animal

Sin demands punishment to have a relationship (#1)

Did for us what we could not do for ourselves on the cross

Unique

John 14:6; Acts 4:12

Only one “person” did anything about sin

Article Four: God the Holy Spirit

Third “member” of the Trinity

1. *Draws* us to Jesus by convicting us of our sin (Jn 6:44)
2. *Regenerates* (“born again”) — John 3:5 — makes us new
3. *Indwells* every believer (“ask Jesus to come into our heart”)
4. *Seals* our regeneration guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph 1:14)
5. *Guides and empowers* — “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).

God the Father plans, God the Son accomplishes, God the Holy Spirit completes

Article Five: “Anthropology” (“human beings”)

Created as the apex of creation (“image”) to be God’s vice-regents over the earth

Separate from God — we can never become God

Separate from animals (image of God)

Sinned and unable to live in a relationship with him unless he did something first

Article Six: “Soteriology”

Lesson 1

Only through Christ

Only through faith, believing God is ... did ...

Article Seven: “Sanctification”

Lesson 7

God’s goal for all believers is our sanctification: look like Jesus, Christ-likeness

Article Eight: “Ecclesiology”

Church is the totality of all true believers of all times —not a building (can’t go ...)

Two “signs”: baptism, communion

Article Nine: “Eschatology”

Debates

Agree — Jesus will return, personally, suddenly, visibly to all

All disciples living and dead will be bodily caught up to meet Him (“rapture”), first from the grave, then the rest, meet him and his angels in the air.

Final Judgment — heaven and hell

Theology

Read Statement of Faith

Doesn’t divide

Good theology unites

7. “Sanctification”

Definition: being “set apart” from sin

Process of becoming holy

Became Christians, we were in a sense “babes in Christ”

Just as babies are to grow into mature adulthood

We too must grow into spiritual maturity — God’s will for our lives

What does spiritual growth look like? To be set apart from sin?

More and more we look like Jesus, and less and less like the sinful world

Lives start to show the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

Sanctification is the clearest assurance of our salvation (1 Jn 2:3)

Should not come as a surprise

Changed at the gate perhaps more than you realize -- changed people/lives

1. You had been dead in your sin, and now you are alive
2. Rescued from kingdom of darkness and brought into his kingdom of light
3. Justified — acquitted of all guilt
4. Free from all condemnation from sin
5. Redeemed — price paid; freedom secured from mastery/tyranny of sin
6. Sanctified — made holy and are becoming holy
7. Caused me to be born again — made me into a new creation
8. Reconciled — relationship with God
9. Adopted me as child of God, new family ... inheritance
10. Given the Holy Spirit as a helper and guarantee of God’s promises

Of course life is going to be different

It can’t possibly be the same because I am not the same

Challenges

1. The mastery of sin was broken, but Satan does not want to let you go

Sometimes we act like we have not been changed in our conversion

What will you do when you stumble and fall in your Christian walk?

Confess your sin — early — often — fully (Ps 51)

Know that you have been fully forgiven (1 Jn 1:9)

2. To help us grow, God will allow difficult circumstances into your life

Accidents, sickness, unemployment — persecution for your new faith

God's priority for our lives is not the absence of pain -- growth

When times are good, we rarely grow in our faith

We grow best during times of stress and hurt and challenge

Did I do something wrong?

Not necessarily. You might have done something right — 2 Tim 3:12

God wants to do something right — grow in our sanctification/holiness

Part of spiritual growth is recognizing that we grow in community

New Father

New "brothers and sisters" — most common way for NT to refer to believers

We were built for community, for relationships

Part of spiritual growth is also listening/talking with God

Listen — Bibliology

Talk/Prayer -- just talking with God

"Lord's Prayer" (Matt 6:9-13)

Prayer starts with a proper view of God – “Our Father in heaven”

“Father”

Teaches us to approach God with familiarity — “immanence”

“In heaven”

“Our Father” is also the God who created all things — “transcendence”

Prayer focuses on God

Imperatives (change translation)

1. “Hallowed be your name” — May your name be hallowed

“Hallowed” means “holy” — sinless

“Name” is all that God is

Calling on God to act in such a way that the world sees that God is holy

2. “May your kingdom come”

Calling on God to exercise his kingly rule in me — expand to the world

3. “May your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

God’s will — purposes; desires — are always done, perfectly, in heaven

Prayer is our chance to admit our total dependence on God

4. Dependence for physical needs—“Give us this day our daily bread”

5. Dependence for spiritual needs — “Forgive us our debts ...”

Jesus is thinking of sin as a debt we owe to God

6. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

God does not tempt anyone with sin (James 1:13)

We are dependent on God to resist the power of sin and evil (One)

Pray the pattern

Calls us to grow up into sanctification

Look less like world and more like his Son

Process — one step at a time — Life is a journey

When we fail — repentance and forgiveness

What's Next?

Life is a Journey

Same material in different order and depth

Bibliology

Big Screen Perspective

OT and NT

Essentials

Bible Study

Exegesis

Hermeneutics

Theology

Howard Marshall (3 hours)

Bruce Ware (11)

Breshears (15)

Mounce on the Statement of Faith (2)

Sanctification

Martyn — Understanding Spiritual Growth

Disciplemaking

Coe - A Guide to Spiritual Formation (dark night of the soul)

You can do this

Study, time, commitment

You have enough to get started and the confidence that you will succeed