

**Biblical
Doctrine
Introduction**

Content of the Eleven lessons

- Lesson #1-Introduction to Theology
- Lesson #2-Contextualizing Theology
- Lesson #3- The Doctrine of God the Father
- Lesson #4- The Doctrine of the Trinity
- Lesson #5- The Doctrine of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit
- Lesson #6- The Doctrine of the Bible
- Lesson #7- The Doctrine of Last Things- (Eschatology) Part I
- Lesson #8- The Doctrine of Last Things- (Eschatology) Part II
- Lesson #9- The Doctrine of the Spirit World
- Lesson #10- The Problem of Evil
- Lesson #11- The Doctrine of the Family and the Means of Grace

**Biblical
Doctrine
Lesson #1**

Introduction to Theology

Lesson Purpose:

- **To teach what theology is and the various ways of understanding it.**

Main Points:

- **Your world view**
- **Different kinds of theology**
- **Religions of the world**

Desired Outcome

- **The student will have a basic understanding of theology and religion.**

Suggestions for teaching

- **Pass out handout #1**
- **Teach Lesson #1**

A. World View and theology. A world view is the way you view the world. All of us have a certain world view which shapes what we believe and how we live. Africans have their own world view.

1. For an African, life is lived within community, therefore the clan or extended community is very important. People find their identity through their tribe or family or clan. This is different from the West which is individual oriented.
2. In African life there is a relationship between the living and the dead, between the living and the spirits of the ancestors. The ancestors are called the “living dead.”
3. Africans understand that they live in a spiritual world and a physical world; much of life relates to what you cannot see.
4. For an African, relationships and people are more important than material resources.
5. Africans view life holistically, you don’t separate your life into different parts- eg your spiritual life, your social life, your family and your job. All parts are interrelated and a whole.
6. In Africa the event is more important than the time.
7. Africa has been shaped by the colonial “masters.” The colonialists have helped to shape the way the African thinks about himself and the world- their world view.

(Above is taken from Biblical Christianity from an African Perspective by Wilbur O’Donovan.)

B. A definition of theology. Theology is the study of God and His relationship with man. Theology is doctrine. We must know what we believe. But it is not enough to know about it, we must learn to do it. We will be looking at theology from the Wesleyan-Arminian perspective -from our perspective, but we will also compare our approach to other disciplines. Wesleyan Holiness theology is related to experience- what good is it to know about God if we can’t experience Him? Our theology is Biblical -what we believe about God and the way he relates to man must be grounded in the Bible. Our theology relates to holiness - right and wrong - it relates to morality. We believe that we cannot have right understanding or doctrine and yet live an immoral life - right understanding must lead to right living. Wesleyan Holiness Theology is also concerned with freedom - and our church’s beginnings. Wesleyan Holiness Theology does not claim that it exclusively understands God and how He relates to man, we do not say that the Calvinists do not know God. But we believe in freedom, that every man has a free moral choice to accept or reject the

gift of salvation through God's son - Jesus Christ. And we believe in holiness- that Christ came to set us free from the power of sin.

C. Different kinds of theology (first four are not Biblical theology)

1. Idealism - which focuses on ideals - non material things are important, the material is not. It is a denial of the world and body.
2. Dualism - there are two great - forces in the world which are coequal- God and His adversary.
3. Process theology - God is unceasingly changing, God suffers and struggles.
4. Existential theology - the focus is on ourselves as individuals and our experience - it doesn't focus on God, but on us.
5. Biblical realism –
 - a. God created the world. we don't deny the physical things around us, but view the world as God's creation, everything in God's creation is to be celebrated.
 - b. God is a person - We are created in the image of God, time is very important, for us the past, present and future are important.
 - c. The church is vital to life. Biblical realism emphasizes the church. There is a visible church and an invisible church - but not all church members are truly Christ's disciples.
 - d. Christ is at the center. Biblical realism focuses on Christ - The Christ born to a virgin - it believes in the incarnation- God became a man; it believes in the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

D. Religion. Religion is man's search for God but Christianity is God's search for man. Revelation (Christianity) is God's self disclosure to man. Christianity teaches that God redeemed man through His Son - Jesus. Revelation demands a response. Faith is the favorable response, doubt is to reject God's revelation. Faith is reasonable, it is concerned with truth. Faith is also commitment - commitment displayed in obedience. Biblical faith is ultimately based on a person, Jesus Christ. Theology and doctrine are based on Scripture. Religion is not a feeling, or knowledge - or simply action.

E. Belief in God. There are many ideas of divine or gods in the world.

1. Animism is the prevailing view in many primitive societies. It believes in a multitude of divine powers - spirits, demons which inhabit trees, rivers, mountains and even humans. Witch doctors, voodoo, charms are part of animism.
2. Polytheism - is another divine idea of man about God. This is the belief in many gods. In both animism and polytheism there is no ethical content - the gods are not concerned with moral righteousness on the part of man. The gods are worshiped so that they will leave man alone to his own affairs. In many cases immorality is part of the worship.
3. Monotheism is another way man views God. Christianity, Islam and Judaism are monotheistic religions, they believe in one God, Deut. 6:4-5.

Forms of monotheism

- a. Deism -God made the universe and then left it to run its own course. It denies divine revelation. God is separated from man - it emphasizes His transcendence. It isn't far from atheism. Atheism is the belief that there is no God.
- b. Pantheism - God and the universe or nature are one. God is all, all is God. It stresses the immanence of God - God is all around you but he is not a personal God. When you make everything God, you are making Him nothing. This also isn't far from atheism.
- c. Theism - the belief in a personal God who is creator and sustainer of the universe. God is transcendent and immanent. God is in the universe but He is also separate from the universe.

F. Evidences of theism or God

1. Cosmological evidence - look at the cosmos - it had to be caused by something, someone and that someone is God.
2. Teleological evidence- there is a purpose in the world - design and purpose reflect a purposer or

designer. Eg- a watch - means there is a watch maker. It didn't just happen.

3. Ontological evidence - God is that being of which nothing greater can be conceived - therefore God is.

4. Moral evidences - the moral law in man, the need for right and not do wrong, indicates that there is a moral being behind it.

5. Faith. However, there is no absolute proof of God's existence-we accept his existence by faith, but our faith is a rational faith, not a frantic leap in the dark.

G. The Religions of the World. In the future you may take a course on the Religions/Cults in the world. This is a brief overview of those various religions, before we begin to look specifically at Christianity and a Biblical Theology.

1. Taoism is one of three religions in China, - It teaches that everything in the universe is designed to move in an ordered and harmonic way, man can find harmony by returning to simplicity and humility.

2. Confucianism - is a system of ethics, education and religion. It teaches the importance of duty and responsibility of 5 basic relationships - ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger brother, friend-friend. Each relationship involves duties and manners.

3. Shintoism - they worship many gods and emphasize rituals and moral standards - it does not emphasize life after death. It is primarily found in Japan.

4. Buddhism - faith in Buddha - a person - his teachings - he left his wife and infant son to develop this religion. Existence is a continuing cycle of death and rebirth.

5. Islam or Mohammedism. Islam began with Mohammed - They believe in one God and His prophet Mohammed. A muslim is "one who submits". The Koran - is their holy book. Heaven is full of beautiful couches, maidens, and fruits. (The suicide "martyrs" were told that when they died they would go to heaven and each be given 72 virgins to enjoy.) Their worship is built around 5 pillars- prayer, almsgiving, belief- there is no God but Allah and his prophet is Mohammed, fasting during Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

6. Hinduism - they worship many gods,-thousands if not millions, they worship animals as gods, they believe in reincarnation - the soul never dies.

7. Christianity which claims that Jesus is God and He alone is the way to God, only faith in Him allows us to enter heaven Heb 11:6, John 3:16. Christianity is a historic religion - it is based in history.

Christianity is founded on Jesus Christ - the Divine Son of God. Christianity is a redemptive religion Rom 1:16-17.

**Biblical
Doctrine
Lesson #2**

Contextualizing Theology

Lesson Purpose:

- **To teach about theology in one's context**

Main Points:

- **Biblical context and culture**
- **Biblical theology and culture**
- **The Gospel transforms culture**
- **ATR, context and Christianity**

Desired Outcome

- **The student will know how to relate Christianity to their context**

Suggestions for teaching

- **Pass out handout #2**
- **Teach Lesson #2**

Contextualization and Theology-African Theology

Introduction. What kind of theology are we studying? There is liberation theology which focuses on freedom for oppressed people, there is African theology which probably ought to be called a Theology of ATR. There could be an American Theology or a South American Theology or a European or Asian Theology which might emphasize things important to the churches/people in that region. But if we approach theology from that perspective we will be developing our theology based on the customs and desires and religions found in those places. In this course we will be studying Biblical Theology- what the Bible says about the great doctrines of the Faith, what the Bible says about God and His church. One of the issues that we face is contextualization in theology. We must make sure that we find a way to relate the great doctrines of the faith and the Bible to the local situation, in this case to Africa and specifically South Africa or Swaziland, or Zambia or Zimbabwe or ? But we are not developing an African Theology per se, instead we are developing a Biblical theology that is relevant to the African Church, to the Zambian church, etc. How do we do that?

A. Biblical context and culture. We begin by understanding that the Bible was written in a cultural context- the Jewish culture of the OT and the NT time periods. There are even other cultures that were present in Biblical times that affected the way the Bible was written eg, the Assyrian and Babylonian, Medio- Persian and eventually the Roman culture. We need to try to understand the cultures of the Bible in order to correctly interpret the Bible and therefore understand Biblical theology.

B. Missionaries and culture. Missionaries have been accused of bringing their "western culture" into a country as they tried to establish a church. Eg, as they developed the doctrine of the church and worship they sometimes brought their customs into the church- they taught the western way of dressing- ties and coats, the western way of worshipping-they translated the English and American hymns into the vernacular instead of allowing the local situation to develop their own hymns and songs. In some cases they banned drums and dancing in worship because they thought those things were associated with witchcraft or "heathenism". They were wrong - forgive them for that.

C. Biblical theology and culture.

a. Good and evil in culture. Now our task is to understand Biblical theology and translate it into the local culture, saving the good part of the local culture, and building on that and then letting it transform the bad parts of the local culture so that it becomes more Biblical. Remember that every culture has some good and evil in it.

b. Biblical Doctrine and culture. Contextualization in theology means that we want to understand Bible doctrine and then ask how to translate its meaning into this culture in a practical and understandable way.

i. The Bible is the foundation for our doctrine-that never changes, but what that means and how it affects a culture in a practical way may be different from culture to culture. The goal is to learn Biblical theology and then to

understand practically what that means in your culture, so that it is relevant in your culture and how to interpret it for your culture. Someday you may want to preach a series of messages on the Great Doctrines of the Christian faith eg the Doctrine of God, the Doctrine of salvation, you might entitle your messages something like this What the Wesleyan Church believes about God, What the WC Believes about salvation, etc.

ii. Application of doctrine. Always remember that your main theology comes from the Bible, but how you apply it, that will relate to your culture. The Gospel needs to be presented in different ways to different cultures- don't change the essence of the message, that stays the same, but the points emphasized, the application may be different to fit the needs of that culture. By the way, that is the process that you go through in every sermon, you find the principles in scripture and then you apply them according to the needs of your people.

iii. The challenge of culture. Culture is the human pattern of life in response to man's environment-displayed in agriculture, law, customs, etc. It is the sum total of the learned behavioral patterns and attitudes of a given community. The challenge of contextualization and cultures is that you have so many different cultures that you have to deal with, the Bible's culture, your own culture, the culture of the people that you are taking the Gospel to and the culture of the western missionaries who first brought the Gospel. Sometimes the Gospel has been rejected because it was seen as a threat to a particular culture, not because the people thought it was false. When the Gospel comes it should change parts of the culture that are wrong but not change the parts that are good or neither good nor bad.

iv. The danger of a foreign religion/culture. Be careful not to present the Gospel with alien cultural forms-foreign styles of worship, attitudes of racial superiority-this creates the impression that Christianity is a foreign religion, a "white man's religion". Islam has penetrated this continent by teaching it is the black man's religion which belongs to Africa and Christianity is more for the white man.

D. The Gospel brings transformation.

1. It transforms a person's life. If the Gospel only modifies or changes a person or a community's observable behavior without producing an equivalent change in the fundamental world view-something is wrong. To bring a set of new moral values without producing changes in the world view produces only a partial conversion.

2. It transforms a culture. The Word of God changes the direction of culture and transforms it. Where Christ is Lord, the living culture for His members will be different than the outside community. Too many times, eg in N America, there is no difference between the lifestyle and goals of Christian and the non-Christian, and that is a tragedy. The boundary lines between what is truly African and what is based on ATR may sometimes be hard to draw-that is the challenge of the church filled with the Holy Spirit. For ex what is the boundary in India between what is truly Indian in the culture and what is Hindu or Muslim?

E. Contextualization begins with understanding culture. To practice good theology in your culture you must understand your culture, your customs and esp ATR. Only then can you learn how to properly apply Biblical doctrines in your church.

1. No culture is superior. The Gospel does not presuppose the superiority of one culture over another, but it evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness which are moral absolutes. Contextuality is the capacity to respond meaningfully to the Gospel within the framework of one's own situation and culture.

2. Our culture affects our understanding of theology. In his book Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture, Bruce Nicholls writes, "It is naïve to suggest that the African theologian can free himself from all Western interpretation and begin again on the basis of his own culture. The Bible was written in the midst of a culture (s). Can we find true pure theology by sifting out NT and OT cultures?"

3. The Bible was rooted in a culture. God chose a culture through which to bring His nation thru Abraham, but He had to remove the undesirable elements of that culture, eg idolatry, pagan sexual immorality.

F. Culture is evaluated by the Bible. The starting point is not culture but the Word of God. We must interpret the Word based on our culture and situation. The church as the people of God is called to take the whole Gospel to the whole world, translating it into relevant forms in order to produce the same fruit of love and righteousness that characterized the individuals, families and communities that comprised the early church. The church should be a model of the Kingdom and a preservative in a corrupt world. The Bible must judge the culture, the culture does not judge the Bible.

G. The Danger of Contextualization. The danger in contextualization is that it can lead to universalism-all roads lead to God and to syncretism where one mixes Christianity with local beliefs and therefore out of Biblical revelation.

H. African Traditional Religion. To make Christianity relevant to Africans we must understand ATR. Always use Biblical theology to judge ATR, but also ask yourself how you can make Biblical theology relevant in a society saturated with ATR.

1. God. African Religion historically has recognized God as the source of all life, esp human life. Historically most tribes worshipped one God alone. They believed God was self - sufficient-He was permanent and unchanging and had no need of any outside support. He is creator and gives life, strength and growth. He is the source of all life. People in Africa live in unity in a network of living relationships with God and with nature. They believe that God knows everything. He knows we love Him, he does need to be continually assured of our love by prayers and ritual offerings. "No one has seen God, and no one knows which way God has gone."

2. Life as a whole. The African sees all of life as a whole, not as parts, eg physical, spiritual and social. Benezet Bujo says that Christian Theology has always tended to split man into body and soul and preach the salvation of the soul. He writes, "Africa could never accept this mutilation of the human being." The focus of African Religion is life. Life is the greatest gift which God has given Africans.

3. The living dead. There is a hierarchy in ATR, below God comes the founding fathers of clans, tribes, the tribal heroes and other deceased members of the family. There is a continuous exchange between the living and the dead- every person must maintain contact with the living and the dead. Ancestors live on in their descendants. African society is a real "mystical" body made up of both the living and the dead. When the living conduct themselves according to the pattern set down by their ancestors, they are strengthening their clan and each member in it. Following laws and customs is imperative. They believe that the society will be ruined if they do not follow those customs. The living cannot hope to survive unless they give due honor to the dead. It is in the invisible "dead" world that the key to living is found. The ancestors and their history are important to the African.

4. Elders. The good life depends not only on the ancestors but also on the degree of esteem which a person shows for parents and the elders in the clan.

5. Procreation. Procreation is important for the African- the dead live on in their descendants. Childlessness is almost a crime.

6. Polygamy. Polygamy is allowed in African Culture especially if the first wife can't have children. The husband with her consent can take a 2nd wife. Also the more children one has the better chance the clan has to survive. More wives = more children.

7. Property. Property belongs to the individual but it may be used for the community.

8. Lying. Lying is wrong unless it helps the clan.

I. Contextualize Christianity. Bujo says that anyone who wants to construct an African theology must take the basic elements of the African tradition and interpret them in light of the Bible. African theology must be contextual, it must take into full account the actual African situation. Make theology relevant to your people where they live. Here are some ways to relate Biblical Theology to African life:

a. By calling Jesus the Proto Ancestor. According to Bujo one way to do that is to call Jesus the Proto-Ancestor- the perfect prototype of an ancestor. In His earthly life Jesus manifested precisely all those qualities and virtues which Africans like to attribute to their ancestors and which lead them to invoke the ancestors in daily life. Jesus not only met the ideal of the God-fearing African ancestor - he infinitely transcended it and brought it to a new level.

i. He is the life giver. He is also the life force- "In Him was life". He is the life giver- "He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not life."

ii. Jesus is the healer. Jesus is the healer above all healers.

iii. Jesus and hospitality. Jesus personified African hospitality and a sense of the family, the care for the elderly, the orphaned, the poor and the unfortunate.

b. Community. Community is important in African culture and the church can build on that community factor.

c. Go through 1-7 above under ATR and contextualize it by building a bridge between what ATR teaches and what the Bible teaches.

You can be Christian and truly African at the same time. We hope that you will help to make Biblical theology relevant to African life.

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #3**

The Doctrine of God

Lesson Purpose:

- To teach what the Bible teaches about God

Main Points:

- God's existence
- God's character- He is holy, personal, living, loving and the all sufficient ONE.

Desired Outcome

- The student will understand what the Bible teaches about God the Father.

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #3
- Teach Lesson #3

Doctrine of God

A. God's Existence

The Bible starts with these words, "In the beginning God..." Scripture assumes God's existence. None of its writers seek to prove His existence, instead they teach us who He is. The arguments for God's existence are inadequate because they lead only to the existence of God not to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. What man most needs to know about God is not merely that He exists or that he exists as a person but that he offers forgiveness because of Christ's death and resurrection. We believe in God because He has spoken to us in Christ and through Scripture and He still speaks to us by the Holy Spirit.

B. The Character of God

1. He is a Holy God. This is the predominate characteristic of God in the OT. This characteristic is the summation of who God is.
 - a. He is right. God is concerned with what is right. Is 6:3; Rev. 4:8, Isa 40:25.
 - b. He is separate from His creation. The Hebrew word for holiness -qodesh basically means to separate. That is, he is separated from us, his creation. He is separated from and above all so called deities (gods).
 - c. Holiness denotes radiance. He lives in unapproachable light - He wraps Himself in light- Ps 104:2.
 - d. He is without sin. The word came to have a moral content. Is 6:5 Woe is me- because I have unclean lips God's holiness demands that man be holy- I Peter 1:15,16. God's holiness cannot stand the presence of sin. Isaiah 6:1-8. Isaiah's favorite description of God is, "The Holy One of Israel." Jesus emphasized the ethical quality of holiness. He called for righteousness which was deeper than outward ceremony or ritual.

e. He is a just God. He calls for justice because He is just, he demands goodness because He is good, for integrity because He is full of integrity. Jesus emphasized a righteousness that was deeper than individual acts, it was a righteousness that searched and cleansed the motives of men. Mt 5:48. The righteousness that Jesus called for was based on the holiness of God. The holiness of God means righteousness, truth, faithfulness and absolute integrity.

2. He is a personal God. There was no sexual distinction in the Hebrew concept of God. This is a contrast with other religions where gods and goddesses lived together.

a. He is personal. Is God a person? He has an intellect, feeling and will, He has self-hood, self-consciousness.

We find anthropomorphisms in Scripture which imply that God is personal- Ps 11:4, 34:15, Hab 1:13-eyes, feet, Ez 24:9-11, Is 66:1.

b. He has human like passion- joy- Is 65:19, anger-Deut 1:37, love John 3:16.

c. He is called a shepherd- Ps 23:1; John 10:11.

3. He is a living God- Jer 10:10 This is the most typical word for describing God in the OT. He confronts people in a living encounter, he reveals himself in a living person. We cannot fellowship with an it, we fellowship with a living being. 60 x's in the OT you read, "as Yahweh lives" eg Judges 8:19. Joshua 3:10- "that the living God is among you who disposes of all His enemies." Mt 16:16.

4. He is the Father God- Mt 5:16 But He is only Father to believers. Jesus called God, "Father", most often.

5. He is a loving God- This is the predominate characteristic of God in the NT. I Jn 4:8,16; John 3:16 I Jn 4:10 a. He has a concern for man's good. God's holiness is his deep concern for what is right, his love is his deep concern for our good. Sin and evil bring destruction to man. God hates sin not only because he is holy but because his nature is love. He wants the best for us through righteousness. Hosea in the OT is an ex of the love of God.

b. agape love. There are two kinds of love- eros a sexual love- it seeks self- fulfillment and agape- it seeks to promote the well being of others even at the price of sacrifice. Agape love is God's love. This agape love reaches to the unlovely, the poor, the hateful, it seeks not to get but to give- I Jn 4:10. The only way that we can know this love is by revelation. God is a God of holy love.

c. His wrath is the other side of love. Even His wrath is an expression of His love. The opposite of love is not hate but wrath. Wrath is the other side of love, the unfailing opposition of God towards that which destroys those he loves. That's why God hates sin. The love of God is just and holy and He therefore must punish evil.

6. He is the unchanging God- Heb. 13:8; Mal 3:6. God does not change in His faithfulness but he does change in a sense in the way He related to man- eg- the incarnation. That doesn't mean his character changed- but he gave us a fuller revelation of who He is in Christ. Look at how he related to man in the OT and in the NT. God changed and relented and did not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah-see Abraham and Jonah - Jonah 3:10, 4:2.

7. He is the all sufficient One, the sovereign God. He is Lord above all, He is above all other gods. Ez 36:33

a. He is Omnipotent- God has all power to do what his infinite goodness and wisdom see to be desirable- Mt 19:26, Isaiah 50:2 . God is capable of doing all things consistent with His character. He cannot lie or be unfaithful. Some have struggled at this point- If God has all power why does he allow evil in the world. That will be discussed in the problem of evil.

b. He is Omnipresent- God is anywhere and everywhere- He is anywhere he needs to be,

anywhere we might need His help- we can go nowhere and not find Him.- Ps 139:7-10

c. He is Omniscient- Ps 119:168, Is 40:13-14. God knows all things, our past, our present and our future. He knows those who will accept Him and those who will reject Him. But does that mean that He causes some to reject Him and others to accept Him? NO He provides a way for man to accept Him, God, "is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance." He knows what will happen but He gives man the free will to decide.

8. God is One- Deut 6:4, Mk 12:28-30 God is the creator and sustainer of all. Jn 1:3, Gen 1:1

9. God is the eternal God- Yahweh Ps 90:2: 41:13 God IS.

10. God is transcendent and He is Immanent- Is 57:15, I Kings 8:27. He is here and at the other side of the universe. Deism teaches that God is transcendent but not necessarily present- maybe He is on the other side of the universe.

11. The names of God reveal His characteristics also.

1. Jehovah (Yahweh)- it means God was, is and forever will be. God will become for you whatever you need Him to be. Exodus 3:14

2. Jehovah M'qaddishkem-God is my sanctifier Exodus 31:13

3. Jehovah Raphah-God is my healer Exodus 15:26

4. Jehovah Jireh -The Lord is my provider Genesis 22:14

5. Jehovah Sabaoth -The Lord of Hosts or armies of heaven II Kings 6:17

6. Jehovah Rohi -The Lord is my shepherd Psalm 23:1

7. Jehovah Shalom -The Lord is my peace Judges 6:24

8. Jehovah Shammah-The Lord is here (there)-Ezekiel 48:35

9. Jehovah Nissi -The Lord is my banner Exodus 17:15

10. Jehovah Tsidkenu- The Lord is my righteousness Jeremiah 23:6

11. El Shaddai-The God who is almighty Genesis 17:1

12. El Roi- The God who sees me Genesis 16:13

13. El Olam- The everlasting God Genesis 21:33

14. El Elyon- The most High God Genesis 14:19,20. Psalm 91:1

15. Elohim- The creator God Genesis 1:1

16. El Bethel- house of God (to Jacob it represented one who never changes- one who can be depended on.) The God who never changes Genesis 28:19

17. El Elohe Israel- The God who is my God. Genesis 33:20

18. Adonai -The God who is my strength. This is the common name used for God in the OT. The Jew could use this name. Genesis 15:2,8; Joshua 7:7, Judges 6:13,15, Philippians 4:13

19. God is my rock and my redeemer -Psalm 19:14; my fortress Psalm 31:2,3; my shield Psalm 3:3; my strength, my song and my salvation Psalm 118:14; my help and my deliverer- Psalm 70:5; my stronghold -Psalm 37:39, my hiding place-Psalm 32:7; my light-Psalm 27:1

20 Joshua-God is my salvation- through Jesus Christ. God wants to become each of these things for us in Christ. Christ is every one of these names because He is God.

The Doctrine of God (Trinity)

Lesson Purpose:

- To teach about the Trinity

Main Points:

- God is three in ONE
- Divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- The Church Creeds
- Opposition to the Trinity
- Importance of the Doctrine

Desired Outcome

- The student will know the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #4
- Teach Lesson #4
- Use interaction in your teaching, this can be a complicated topic.

The doctrine of the Trinity

A. Definition. God is three persons existing eternally in one nature or essence. God is one in being or nature, 3 in persons- (Tertullian was an early church father who taught this in the 3rd century based on scripture). It is one of the key doctrines of the Christian faith, some would say the key doctrine. To try to explain it is difficult, how can mortal man explain the infinite God? Scripture teaches that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all divine but that there is only one God.

B. Understanding of Trinity. Augustine tried to explain the Trinity using a tree which is made up of root, trunk and the branches. (Draw a triangle). Another ex is, I am a father, a son and a husband. Water, ice and liquid. But these pictures cannot adequately explain God. The trinity will always remain a mystery. It is above reason, not contrary to reason.

C. Biblical basis. Scripture never says that the 3 are 1, I Jn 5:7 is not in the oldest Greek Manuscripts. But the Bible refers to each of the Trinity as God.

1. The unity of God. The Bible speaks of the unity of God.- Deut 6:4. Is 45:18. In the midst of the polytheism of the Canaanites, the oneness of God was essential.

2. Trinity in the OT. It is not clearly taught in the OT as in the NT. Elohim is a plural form of God, but it is used with a singular verb. Gen 1:26, 3:22; 11:5-7, Is 6:8, Ps 33:6- Is 61:1-here there seems to be a 3-fold distinction of God.

3. Trinity in the NT. John 17:3, I Cor 8:6, Eph 4:6, Jn 14:9, 10:30; 17:22; In John 17:3 Jesus is distinguishing God from the so called gods that are idols made by human hands. I Tim 1:17; Mt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6, II Thess 2:13; I Peter, I:1-2, I Jn 5:4-7

D. Divinity of Jesus. Jesus' divinity- He is called Lord which is the word used to translate Yahweh and Adonai, two names of God in the OT. Mt 1:22-23 Immanuel. Heb 1:8 quoted from Ps 45: 6-7. Col 1:13-20. Jn 1:1 (Jehovah witnesses misinterpret this vs.) John 20:28- the one most prone to doubt became the first person to express the highest and most profound faith in God-Theos. Romans 9:5; I Jn 5:20 Rev. 1:8.17, II Peter 1:1; Titus 2:13, Col 1:15, Jn 8:58; 17:5,24; Phil 2:6.

E. Divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's Divinity- Ps 51:11, Is 63:10-11 Is 11:2 Ex 31:3 Jer 31:31-35-Yahweh speaks, then in Heb 10:15-18 the writer quotes the passage and says it refers to the Holy Spirit.

In the NT pneuma (Spirit) is neuter in gender but personal pronouns are used to refer to Him. Jn 15:26, 16:13-14, Mt 28:19-20.

F. The Trinity and the Biblical Creeds. Historically there are three main creeds that have summarized what the church believes about God and faith.

1. The Apostles Creed. The first is called the Apostles Creed. It wasn't written by the apostles but it summarizes their teachings. It was written somewhere between 100-150 AD.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen."

The apostle's creed did not include the Trinitarian Doctrine- Why? Because no heretics were teaching otherwise.

2. The Nicene Creed In AD 325 the Nicene Council was called by the Emperor Constantine to help overcome the Arian controversy - Arius taught that Christ and the Holy Spirit were created beings - and not part of the Godhead. The Nicene Creed dealt with the divinity of Christ and stated that Christ was of the same substance as the Father. There were some there who believed that Christ's nature was unlike the Father, others said he was like the Father, but the view that won out said that he was very God of very God, He was not created but was from eternity with the Father. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed declared that The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead and is to be worshipped. He proceeds from the Father.

"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds. Son of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He arose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets; and I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come.

Amen.”

3. The Athanasian Creed - around 449 AD this creed was developed and had a strong emphasis on The Trinity.

So the early church time and again defended orthodoxy or right Biblical doctrine against those who would try to destroy the faith.

G. Priority in the Trinity. In the Trinity the Father has priority, Phil 2:6-9. Why is this important? Some evangelicals have lifted Christ to the first position in the Trinity. We pray to the Father in Jesus name. God has redeemed us by His Son, God raised Jesus from the dead. Each of the three have a role to play in redemption and creation. The Father is our Creator, The Son is our Saviour, the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier.

H. Opposition to the Trinity

1. Praxeas- He taught that the Father, Son and the Spirit are actually one and the same. The Father alone is God. This is called Unitarianism. (He said that they are not also three separate persons.)

2. Sabellius- He taught that the Father, Son and Spirit are one God, one person who has manifested Himself in three successive modes or fashions. (Modaliam or monarchianism- God is one like a Monarch- the sole ruler- not 3.

3. Arianism- This was the greatest threat to the Doctrine of the Trinity. The Nicene Council in 325 AD was convened because of this heresy. The Nicene Council decided that Christ was homoousia of the same substance of the Father, not homoiousia- of like substance of the Father. Arius taught that Christ was a created being and that through Him the rest of the universe was made. He was not eternal, he was not of divine nature or substance- That is what Arius taught. He also taught that the Holy Spirit was less exalted than Christ and that the Son created Him.

4. Rationalists or modernist/liberals denied the doctrine also. They teach that Jesus was only a man, a great man and that the Holy Spirit is an influence not a divine person.

I. Importance of the Trinity. Why is this doctrine so important?

1. To understand who God is and how the world was created we must understand the Trinity. To understand the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, we must understand this doctrine. It is more basic than any other Christian doctrine.

2. It helps us to worship- We pray to the Father, Christ intercedes for us and the Spirit helps us pray. To have correct worship we must have correct theology.

3. It helps in evangelism- The Father sent the Son- He forgives us because of Christ, dying on our behalf and the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and guides us into truth.

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #5**

The Doctrine of Jesus Christ and The Holy Spirit

Lesson Purpose:

- **To teach about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit**

Main Points:

- **Jesus Christ is God**
- **The Holy Spirit is God**

Desired Outcome

- **The student will know the Biblical base for what we believe about Christ and the Holy Spirit**

Suggestions for teaching

- **Pass out handout #5**
- **Teach Lesson #5**

The Doctrine of Christ

A. Heresies about Christ

1. Errors about his humanity

a. Gnosticism-this began to affect Christianity in the 2nd century. It said that matter is evil. A flesh and blood man would be sinful because matter (flesh blood) is evil. It denied the incarnation. Christ only seemed to be human it said.

b. Sabellianism- God manifested Himself in 3 personal modes.

2. Errors about his deity-

a. Gnosticism- it denied his true deity and said that Christ emanated from the one true God, but was not God.

b. Ebionism- Christ was the natural son of Joseph and Mary who so completely fulfilled the Jewish law that God chose him to be Messiah. Christ was human only and not divine, he was empowered in a special way at his baptism.

c. Arianism- Christ was the creation of God.

d. Unitarianism- Christ was a good man, even a great man, he had a higher form of goodness than other men, but he wasn't God.

3. Errors about His unity- God and Man

a. Apollinarianism- it denied His humanity- his humanity was incomplete and passive.

Apollinarius could not understand how God could become a man completely. He thought that to become a man would be to take on sin.

b. Nestorianism- it separated the 2 natures of Christ into 2 persons- God lived in Jesus in much the same way that God lives in us as Christians. He did not believe that there was a union of the two natures.

- c. Eutychianism- Christ only had one nature-divine, his humanity was only an appearance.
- d. Adoptionism- his humanity was adopted into His divinity gradually. Christ was human and was adopted as God's son, esp at baptism.

B. The Truth about Jesus Christ

1. His Earthly life-for 30 years little is said of His life- Lk 2:52 He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. Scripture records him going to the temple with his parents and staying and talking with the leaders-Lk 2:41.
2. Significance of His baptism- This was His official induction into the office of Messiahship. Mt 3:16-17-Notice who was there at His baptism-Jn 1:29. John prophesied about Him.
3. The Prophecy of His Coming
Person of Christ-His coming was predicted-Mal 3:1-Mt 11:10;Jer 23:5- a righteous branch; Dan 9:24-26- the time of his appearing; Micah 5:2- the place of his birth; Is 7:14; Zech 9:9; Mal 3:2
4. His virgin birth-Mt 1:18-25, Luke 1:5-2:52, 3:22. The importance of this doctrine-
 - a. It indicates Christ's deity- he wasn't born of a male but of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. It assures Christ's humanity- Christ was born in Mary's womb, He became like us in every way He was human.
 - c. It is in harmony with many supernatural events in our Christian faith.
5. His Temptation-
 - a. Christ had to triumph over sin voluntarily before he could offer forgiveness of sins to others. The first Adam was tempted on the physical, intellectual, spiritual level. (The fruit, become like God, knowing God and evil, desirable for gaining wisdom).
 - b. He was tested. Jesus was to be tested like Adam -physically, intellectually and spiritually. We also are tested- I Jn 2:16- lust of the flesh- physically, lust of the eyes- intellectually, pride of life- spiritually)
 - c. His example. Christ set an ex before us of how to defeat the enemy. Could Jesus have sinned? Yes. Did He sin? No.
5. His Death and Resurrection. He was the sinless lamb- he fulfilled the blood covenant began with Abraham. He became sin for us. Without the resurrection there would be no hope of a personal resurrection. I Cor 15:14.
 - a. He descended into Hades Ps 16:10, Acts 2:27, 31 I Peter 3:18-20. Hades was the place of the dead. It was not a place of punishment.
 - b. Christ's resurrection- His grave clothes were left there. He appeared alive to His disciples, they were transformed into joyous believers. They began to tell others about His resurrection. It proved who He was. Death our enemy was conquered in His resurrection.
 - i. The Resurrection is the ground for our justification. Rom 4:25.
 - ii. It gives us hope of a new spiritual fellowship. Col 1:15-19, Rom 8:29
 - iii. It is the guarantee of our own future resurrection.
6. His ascension- He is now in the presence of God the Father interceding for us- Roman 8:34, Heb 9:24, Jn 2:2
It prepares the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit- Jn 16:7
7. His divinity. Our theology teaches that Jesus was 100% human and 100% divine. He speaks with the authority of God. He deepens the meaning of the OT- You have heard it said, but I say to you (Matt 5-6). He forgives sins.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

A. The Holy Spirit is divine. He is Spirit.

B. The Holy Spirit is a person. He is personal. He thinks, feels, acts, and makes moral choices.

1. He can be blasphemed- Mt 12:31
2. He may be lied to Acts 5:3
3. He may be resisted- Acts 7:51
4. He may be grieved- Eph 4:30

C. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

1. He teaches- Lk 12:12, Jn 14:26
2. He speaks- Mt 10:20; Rev. 2:7,11,17,29 -He who has an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit says...
3. He leads- Acts 16:6-7, Romans 8:14
4. He witnesses-Rom 8:16, Heb 10:15
5. He makes intercession for God's people-Rom 8:26,27
6. He sends Acts 13:4
7. He seals- Eph 1:13,4:30
8. He moves men by inspiration- II Peter 1:21
9. He convicts of sin- Jn 16:7-8
10. He glorifies Christ- Jn 16:14-15
11. He anoints- I Jn 2:20,27
12. He knows the mind of God- I Cor 2:11, 16
13. He selects leaders for the Church- Acts 20:28
14. He fills, baptizes and empowers people - Mt 3:11, Acts 1:4, 8
15. In the OT the Holy Spirit is given to certain leaders- Numbers 11:25, 26, I Sam 19:20, Judges. There were also prophecies of the coming of the Holy Spirit in the OT. In the NT he is given to all born again people.

The Doctrine of The Bible

Lesson Purpose:

- To teach about what we believe about the Bible

Main Points:

- The Bible is inspired by God
- It reveals God to us.
- How we got our Bible
- Application of the Bible

Desired Outcome

- The student will know how we got our Bible and the Importance of the Bible

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #6
- Teach Lesson #6

Doctrine of the Bible

A. The Bible is inspired. Christianity is not a body of beliefs to be argued, it is a message to be proclaimed. The message is found in the Bible. It is full of inspiration-God inspired it through human authors but it also continually inspires today. God bears witness with our Spirit through His Word. The Bible is like a seed- Mk 4, Mt 13, Luke 8.

1. It is "God breathed"- II Tim 3:16-17

2. Internal evidences of inspiration - prophecy fulfilled Micah 5:2 - birth place of Jesus, Isaiah 7:14 - born to a virgin, Is 53 - crucifixion of Christ.

3. Importance of Inspiration. Inspiration is a form of revelation - Inspiration means God helped those who wrote the Holy Scripture and any later additions. Many modern theologies don't believe in the inspiration of Scripture - some say that the Bible contains God's word but not that it is God's Word - what happens whenever say that? Then people can choose what they like or want and discount the rest.

4. Theories of inspiration. Conservative evangelicals teach theories of inspiration

a. Dictation or mechanical theory - God gave holy writings to people with precision - He dictated it to them.

b. Verbal theory - each word is inspired.

c. Dynamic theory - God inspired the writers with thoughts, but let them choose the words to express those thoughts. The Holy Spirit protected those writings from error - especially faith and practice matters. II Peter 1:16-21, I Thess 2:13.

5. The degree of inspiration of the Bible

a. Partial inspiration- the Bible contains the Word of God, and parts of it become the Word of God as the Spirit speaks to the individual. God's word must judge our thoughts and activities.

b. Plenary inspiration- which means full or complete inspiration. The Bible is not a book of science or history, its purpose is to make known God's will, not to answer man's question about nature. It doesn't mean that all scripture is equally valuable but that all scripture is equally true. For ex the genealogies of I Chronicles and Is 53 are not equally valuable to me.

B. The Bible reveals God to us. God has revealed Himself in 3 ways

1. God has revealed Himself in history, a revelation by the Father,

2. In Christ -a revelation by the Son and

3. In the Scriptures a revelation by the Holy Spirit - His revelation came in history through the call of the patriarchs- the deliverance of His people Israel from Egypt-the covenant, the conquest of Canaan and the government of David and His descendants.

C. Proclaim the Truth of the Bible. Our primary task is not to defend the Bible but to proclaim its truths to the World.

1. The humanity of the Bible is one of its greatest strengths - God spoke through men -shepherds, priests, prophets,

kings, the rich, the poor, the highly educated, the untrained. The people of the Bible are the quick, the slow, the intellectual- all types of personality are reflected in the Bible.

2. The Bible also has a divine character- God is speaking to us.

3. The Bible has historical facts. The Bible contains historical facts such as the Exodus, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

4. The Bible also interprets what happened-eg Paul's Epistles.

D. How we got our Bible.

1. Autographs. The documents first written by the Bible authors are called autographs. The autographs were originally written by men but we don't have the original autographs, we only have copies of them called manuscripts.

2. Manuscripts. We have NT manuscripts that date to 325 AD and before. Some parts of the OT manuscripts we have were written before Christ. Scripture points us to God- it is the full revelation of God, yet there are some variations in the text-which are minor and don't effect matters relating to faith or salvation. Christ and others in the NT quoted scriptures, not the autographs of the OT but the Greek translation of the texts which were developed from the autographs. In the canon of scripture we look for theological meaning and the meaning of salvation.

3. The Canon. The canon of the Bible is made up on 66 sacred books of Scripture and was decided on also by men who were led by the Holy Spirit. We are confident that the original writers were inspired and that the Holy Spirit continued to protect the text. The Holy Spirit guided the church to form a canon. Canon means a straight rod or a measuring rod. It is the official list of books accepted by the church as constituting the Bible.

a. OT Canon. By the time of the Council of Jamnia in AD 90 the OT Canon was already established. It was written over a period of 1000 yrs from 1400- 400 BC. The OT was written by the prophets.

i. Protestant canon. The Protestant canon of the OT is the same as the Hebrew canon accepted by the Jews.

ii. The Roman Catholic Canon includes 14 books or parts of books that are not included in the Protestant OT, though they were in the original KJV. These are called "the Apocrypha". The Catholic church has included in their canon of Scripture the apocrypha- extra canonical books. At the council of Trent in 1546 AD these books were declared to be Canonical. These books include these 7 plus some additions of parts of the OT. Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, I, II Maccabees, and additions to the books of Esther and Daniel. The Catholic Church declared these books to be canonical as a reaction to the reformers who recognized only the books in the canon of the Jews. 14 books from the Septuagint, written between 400 BC and the time of Christ were not included in the Jewish scriptures. 11 of these are included in the Roman Catholic Canon. The ancient tradition was that these books contained secret wisdom, which could only be known by the initiated-those who were serious and were taught. The Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate accepted these books. They were written during the inter- testamental period- 400BC - to the time of Christ. Why don't we accept these books? In the 4th century Jerome, a church father produced the official Bible translation of the Roman Catholic Church called the Latin Vulgate- He said that the apocryphal books were good for edifying but were not authoritative.

iii. The Jews divided their Hebrew Canon into 3 parts- 1) the law, 2) the prophets, and 3) the Writings.

1) The Law was called the Torah- we call it the Pentateuch- pente- Greek word for 5.

2) The prophets were divided by the Jews into two parts-

a) The Former prophets-Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. In the Hebrew text Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are each one book.

b) The latter prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12, (Minor Prophets)

3) The writings included the rest of the OT. These were divided into:

a) The three poetical books, (Psalms, Proverbs, Job),

b) The Five Rolls (Song of Sol, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) and

c) The three Historical books- Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

The 3-fold division is found in Luke 24:44. Since the third group, the Writings, began with Psalms the whole group could be referred to as Psalms. The Jews counted 24 books in the OT Canon- but these included the 39 that are in our canon.

iv. The Septuagint- The Hebrew OT was translated into Greek- Septuagint-in 250-150 BC (?). In the Greek Text they added vowels, The Hebrew alphabet has no vowels, which made the manuscripts too long, hence I, II Sam, I, II Kings. We put the former prophets in Historical Books but the Jews saw these 4 books as prophetic history.

b. NT Canon. It was decided at the Council of Carthage in 397 AD no other books but the 27 books in our current NT were to be read in churches as Scripture. NT-The NT was formed when the early Christians canonized books which had apostolic origin or authorization. 27 books- Gospels, Acts- the link between the Gospels and the Epistles, 13 Pauline Epistles, Hebrews, 7 General Epistles, and Revelation. They were written from about 45 AD to 95 AD.

The whole Bible was written over a period of 1500 yrs.

By the end of the 4th century the NT Canon was officially declared. By the end of the second century the church was using essentially the same NT we have today, but it was not bound in one volume like today. There was some debate about which books were canonical, eg some doubted Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and Revelation.

E. The Bible and Inerrancy

1. The Total inerrancy view- the Bible is inerrant (without error) in its original autographs (the actual letters, manuscripts written by the prophets and the apostles)
2. Doctrine and Practice inerrancy- The Bible is inerrant in faith and practice matters.
 - a. The problem of Hebrew- there are no vowels in Hebrew and therefore later editors had to add the vowels.
 - b. The problem of the Greek- the NT was written with all capital letters- with no punctuation marks and no spaces between the words.
 - c. The Septuagint was the translation used in the NT when quoting the OT. The Septuagint was the Greek translation of the OT Hebrew which was translated about 200 years before Christ.
 - d. There is a problem of translating the Bible into other languages eg - Chitonga, Chinyanja, Siswati.
 - e. When quoting the OT, NT, writers sometimes did not quote it with exactness (Mt 12:18-21)
 - f. We don't have the original autographs.

F. Translations of Scripture

Before NT times the OT was translated into Greek. It was called the Septuagint. In the Fifth Century AD it was translated into Latin and Coptic. By 1988 at least one book of scripture had been translated into 1907 languages and 310 languages had the whole Bible. Many missionaries and Nationals have worked on translating the Bible into different languages. Interpretations-We have many manuscripts which were copies of earlier manuscripts or the original autographs. We don't have the original autographs. Some of the manuscripts are of portions of the Bible, some have a larger amount. The earlier manuscripts are more important or hold more authority than the later ones because they were copied closer to the time of the original writing and therefore should be more correct.

G. Application of Scripture.

1. Read it to grow. We should come to scripture looking for help to live our relationship with Christ. We read it to be challenged, encouraged, instructed, and rebuked by it.
2. The Unity of the Bible. There is a unity throughout the Bible- the story of salvation.
 - a. OT. The OT tells the story of how God chose one man out of which he would create a nation of His people- the Jews and through them He would bring the Messiah. The OT- looks forward to the coming of the Messiah,
 - b. NT- The NT tells the story of the Messiah and looks back at Him and proclaims that He will come again.
 - c. Power/authority of Scripture. We interpret scripture with scripture-we respect church tradition on the interpretation of Scripture. But scripture is our primary authority in our faith and practice. The Word of God has power- Heb. 4:12; Many times in the OT you read, "the Lord spoke to, through me, the Word of the Lord came to me"- eg. II Sam 23:2. Acts 1:16, Ezekiel and Jeremiah.
 - i. Roman Catholic view. Roman Catholicism has moved beyond Scripture to form their own theology. They base their theology on Scripture and the writings of the church (Pope).
 - ii. Wesleyans find their support for what they believe in Scripture. We don't invent doctrines, our doctrines are based on Scripture.
 - iii. Jesus. Jesus declared the OT to be God's Word-Mt 15:3-6, John 5:39.Lk 24:27
 - iv. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was the source of inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. God inspired/used holy men to write the scriptures. We do not have the original autographs that Moses and Paul wrote but we have manuscripts which were copies of those autographs. We believe that the Holy Spirit protected and preserved the text that eventually became our canon.

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #7**

The Doctrine of Last things (Eschatology) Part I

Lesson Purpose:

- To teach about what we believe about the Last things

Main Points:

- The Second Coming of Christ

Desired Outcome

- The student will know how we got our Bible and the Importance of the Bible

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #7
- Teach Lesson #7

Doctrine of eschatology (last things)

A. The Second coming- when Christ comes again.

1. Christ will come again. Wesleyan holiness theology has emphasized that Christ will return, meanwhile we are to live holy lives. Our last enemy is death- it is evil. No one knows when but some have tried to set the date. Christ promised to return- John 14:2-3. It will be literal and physical - I Thess 4:16-17. Some think that it may not be a fixed date but the Gospel must be preached to the whole world first. Then He will return. Matt 24:14, II Peter 3:9. We don't hold a dogmatic view of any position as to when Christ will return.

2. We cannot know or find out when-Mt 24:36. We must be careful of trying to date the coming of the Lord. The date isn't known but there will be signs- Mt 24:32-33

a. the Gospel will be preached to the whole world-Mk 13:10, Matt 24:14

b. anti-Christ will come II Thess 2:1-12,

c. There will be apostasy within Christendom- Matt 24:12; 2 Thess 2:3

d. There will be tribulation- Matt 24:21-22; Rev. 6:9; 7:14,

e. there will be cataclysmic events in the natural order- Matt 24:29, Acts 2:20, Rev. 6:12-17; creation will be impacted - Rom 8:19-21, 2 Peter 3:10.

3. We must always be ready for His return.

4. He could come back at any time.

5. Christ's coming will be sudden- Mt 24:42-44-Is this the second coming or the fall of Jerusalem or both?? , II Peter 3:10

6. It will be visible and open- Mt 24:30, 26:64, Lk 17:24, I Thess 4:16,

7. Why is Christ returning?

a. to reveal His glory. Phil 2:10-11, Matt 16:27, Rev. 1:7,13-18;14:14

b. to divide men- the sheep from the goats- Matt 13:41,49; Matt 24:40-41; 25:31-32,

- c. to bring to an end man's chance of salvation- Matt 25:46- there will be no 2nd chance. Matt 25:10ff, Luke 13:25, d. to judge the wicked- Mt 16:27. Matt 25-judgment is implied, Jude 14-15,
- e. to redeem His people
- i. from wickedness II Thess 1:7, I Peter 1:4-13
- ii. to take His people to be with Him forever- I Thess 4:17
- iii. to deliver them from the limitations of this life- I Cor 15:50-53, we will be glorified-delivered from all sin.
- f. To make everything right, to judge, to punish the unbeliever and to take the believer home to be with Him.

B. The rapture-

1. When Christ returns those who are Christians will be raptured- and will be with Him forever. Believers will be taken up in the air -I Thess 4:17
2. At the same time those who died in Christ will rise again to be with Him forever. Matt 24:36-44, I Cor 15:50-57, I Thess 4:13ff.
3. Some believe that the church will be raptured before the tribulation and then after the tribulation Christ will return. GE Ladd- "there is no affirmation in the scripture that the rapture will happen before the tribulation."
4. The elect will probably go through the tribulation.
5. We must be prepared for His coming- the rapture, by living in righteousness/holiness-Mt 25.
6. The second coming of Christ and the rapture may happen at the same time or there may be a space of time between the two events.

C. The tribulation-II Thess 2:1ff, Matt 24, Dan 12:1, Rev. 6-9 A time of deep distress and trouble before Christ returns- probably a period of 7 years. Some believe Christ will come and the rapture will happen before the tribulation-pretribulation; others believe the rapture will happen after the tribulations -post tribulation and some believe He will come in the middle of it-midtribulation.

D. The day of the lord- In the OT the Day of the Lord is spoken of- Isa 24:21, 52:6; Joel 3:14, Amos 5:18.

1. It is usually associated with a time of judgment because of the disobedience of Israel.
2. But sometimes it is associated with a promise of God's coming in mercy and blessing.
3. It probably is a prophecy of the second coming of the Lord to judge the world. Oftentimes prophecies of the OT have a double fulfillment, once when Christ first came and secondly when he will come again. In Joel's prophecy which Peter quoted in Acts 2, he said that Pentecost was the fulfillment of that prophecy- Day of the Lord, but some things about that Day had not yet happened and will possibly happen at the second coming. Does the temple need to be built first before the second coming/day of the Lord? Some say yes, some say no- that is debatable and you can find scriptural positions for both.

E. Armageddon- it is only found once in the Bible- Rev. 16:16. Possibly Ezek 38:2.15-16 and Zech 14:2 refer to it but the name Armageddon isn't directly mentioned. Zech 14:14 may be symbolic so the whole passage may be symbolic. This is when the nations of the world gather to fight against Israel. The question is, is this a literal event or a symbolic event of how Satan is fighting against the church?

F. Antichrist-Someone who is opposed to Christ-

1. Possible antichrists-The pope, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Sadam Hussein have been called

the antichrist. All people who are opposed to Christ are antichrists and someone may yet appear who will be the Antichrist-one who is the embodiment of Satan. There will be many false christs and false prophets- they pretend by copying Christ's teachings and person.

2. John. Only John uses the term antichrist. - I Jn 2:18,22;4:3 2 Jn 7; He/They will have power to do great signs and wonders-Matt 24:24. Be careful, don't follow after or look for signs and wonders. Those who oppose Christ are antichrist- John speaks of them in I John 2:22. They include the Jew who rejects Jesus as Messiah and the Moslem who only thinks he is a prophet and the humanist who rejects His divinity. The coming of anti-Christ(s) is a sign of the last hour. I Jn 2:18.

3. Man of lawlessness (sin)- At the end will come a person who is the embodiment of Satan- he gives himself totally to Satan- through him Satan will try to rule the world. II Thess 2:1-12, Rev. 13:1-18, 17:8-18 and possibly the "little horn" of Dan 7:8, 20-27. It could be that he will begin a new religion- opposed to Christ and control a world empire or country. He will come just before the end. Some believe that he will bring "peace" to the world. This is another name for the antichrist.

G. Many will fall away at the end. How many people will be saved in the end? Most people will be lost. Many will turn away from Christ. Luke 18:8. Satan fights against the Gospel by encouraging false religions. When people believe a lie, they will not believe the truth which can save them. Much of the world is deceived by false religions. I Tim 4:1 says that many will fall away because of materialism.

H. The kingdom of God/heaven. Matthew is the only Gospel which uses, "kingdom of heaven."

1. It indicates the heavenly character of the kingdom - it has come down from heaven.
2. The Jews considered the name of God sacred so they prefer kingdom of heaven which is probably what Jesus actually said in Aramaic, "Basileia". That word translated kingdom, means a territory or domain and royal power or dominion. The kingdom of God or heaven refers to a new way of life materially and socially which will be established through Christ - but it also refers to the kingly rule of God in the hearts of men. The kingdom has come but it is yet to come in its fullness.
3. The kingdom has come in the person of Jesus. Its blessings can now we enjoyed through faith. But it is not fully come. The final consummation is delayed and is therefore yet to come when Jesus returns. Rev. 22:17.

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #8**

The Doctrine of Last things (Eschatology) Part II

Lesson Purpose:

- To teach more about what we believe about the last things

Main Points:

- The millennium
- Life after death
- The judgment
- Heaven and Hell

Desired Outcome

- The student will understand the millennium and what will happen when we die

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #8
- Teach Lesson #8

A. Millennium. Rev 20:1-7 (different views)

1. premillennialism-Christ returns before the millenium. for the purpose of establishing his kingdom literally on earth. Rev. 11:15.

a. They believe that this is the only way that certain promises in the OT can be fulfilled.- Is 2:4;66:8-24; Micah 4:3-5; Zech 9:9-10, Habb 2:14. (Pg 643 God Man and Salvation)

b. They believe Israel will be restored, Jerusalem will be the capital of the whole earth, and Christianity will be the only religion.

c. Christ will literally reign on earth for 1000 years with His resurrected and glorified people. It has lead to pessimism- things will get worse and worse until Christ returns.

d. Some who hold his view believe another temple will be built when Christ returns. At the rapture - the church will be taken away - tribulation will come for seven years-the last half will be very severe. Many Jews will turn to Christ, many who missed the rapture will be given another chance to believe on Christ. They teach 2 comings of Christ, a. At the rapture to take saints & b. Seven years later when he comes to reign 1000 years on earth. The church is exempted from the tribulation. Some believe in the Pretrib, mid trib and Post trib for the 2nd coming of Christ.

e. Christ's return will be preceded by signs such as the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world, wars, famine, earthquakes, a great apostasy, the appearance of the Antichrist and a great tribulation. After he returns there will be time of peace and righteousness before the end of the world and Christ will reign in person. The Jews will be converted, ferocious beasts will be tamed and evil will be stopped because Christ will rule. Then at the end of the millennium there will be a rebellion of wicked men.

f. After the millennium the non-Christian dead are raised and the eternal states of heaven and hell will be established.

2. Amillennialism –

a. there will not be a literal 1000 years reign of Christ on earth after the 2nd coming.

b. Rev 20 is symbolic, not literal. They believe that the millennium mentioned in Rev. 20 refers to the present reign of the souls of deceased believers with Christ in heaven. Christ bound Satan at His 1st coming, 1000 yrs are symbolic of the entire Gospel age- which will end in tribulation and the second coming.

c. Most believe the 1000 years refers to now, the time between the 1st and 2nd coming.

d. They say Christ's resurrection bound Satan.

e. Judgment will take place immediately after Christ's 2nd coming. Evil and good will grow in the world and finally Christ will return, the dead will be raised and the last judgment will be held. The kingdom of God is now present in the world as Christ rules by His Word and His Spirit. In the future there will be a glorious perfect kingdom on the new earth in the life to come. Christ will appear at the peak of the tribulation to destroy Anti-Christ- and to judge

the world- The Great White throne judgment- The earth will then be destroyed and a new world order created. Then the OT promises will be fulfilled. They don't believe that the temple will be rebuilt.

3. Postmillennialism Post mill –

- a. after a period of time Christ will return to subdue antichrist and judge all humans.
 - b. They believe things will get better and better and Christ will return.
 - c. the kingdom of God is now being extended through Christian teaching and preaching.
 - d. This will cause the world to be christianized and result in a long period of peace and prosperity called the millennium.
 - e. Things will progressively get better and better and many social and economic problems will be solved.
 - f. Then Jesus Christ will come again, the dead will be resurrected and the final judgment will happen.
 - g. The kingdom according to them is wholly spiritual and the OT promises are fulfilled spiritually.
4. Realized millenianism - the millennium is the time between 1st and 2nd coming - Christ reigns over the dead and the world, more or less, because Satan is defeated - we are in a real millennium now. There is not much difference between this view and amill. But this is different than post mill. It says that the whole world will be Christianized and it says the millennium has not yet come.

What does realized mill. believe?

- a. Christ is already reigning
- b. It is similar to a view believed by most Christians from the time of Augustine to after the Reformation
- c. It explains how Christ reigns over the dead now (the martyred dead)
- d. It encourages social action
- e. Christ can come at any time
- f. The Church is the true Israel- it inherits the promises given to Israel.

B. Destiny- Life after death-

1. The Resurrection-

a. It will be experienced by the redeemed and the wicked-Acts 24:14. There will be two resurrections one of the righteous and one of the dead. ?? I Cor 15:20-25.

b. Jesus Himself is the source of both resurrections.

c. Christ's resurrection proves the reality of our own resurrection- I Cor 15:12.

d. Jesus is the first born from the dead- the first to die and come back and live forever

e. Our new bodies will not be flesh and blood- I Cor 15:50. They may be like Christ's resurrected body- he could walk through locked doors. Our new bodies will not experience pain, disease, decay or death. We will be resurrected and we will know ourselves and others.

2. Paradise or Hades- or? What happens when we die? When we die we go to an intermediate state with Christ or separated from Him, awaiting our final resurrection and the judgment where man is sent to Heaven or Hell. Rom 14:8-9. Matt 22: 31-32. II Cor 12:1-4, 2 Tim 2:18, Lazarus and the rich man.

a. Intermediate state – paradise is where the righteous go after death.

b. Hades is the place where the wicked and righteous people go. Luke 16:19-31- Lazarus and the rich man. Sheol- OT equivalent of Hades (NT).

c. Purgatory. Roman Catholic teaches a place 3rd –limbo for the unbaptized in their unaccountable years. They also teach about purgatory- a place of temporary punishment. Romans Catholics teach that good works are the essence of repentance. They believe people will be punished for lesser sins in the fires of purgatory- mortal sins will be punished in hell. In Luther's day purchases of indulgences would allow your loved one to go through purgatory more quickly, repentance was not required. There is no biblical record of purgatory.

d. Annihilationism – the wicked will be punished by extinction (Jehovah's witnesses teach this) this is unbiblical.

e. Universalism – everyone will be redeemed to a state of bliss. This is also unbiblical.

C. Judgment- Matt 24:36-51 and Matt 25. All mankind will someday be judged.

1. This is called the great white throne judgment. Rev 20:12-13.

2. The righteous and wicked will be there, they will be transferred from their temporary states of bliss and torment to heaven or hell.

3. There will also be degrees of reward- Matt 16:27 and Rev. 20:12.

4. No one will escape the judgment, Rev. 20:11-12, Heb 9:27, Rom 14:11, Phil 2:9-11

5. There is no court of appeal beyond the Great White Throne Judgment.

6. Our destiny after death is final and irrevocable- there are no 2nd chances after death.

7. What will be judged on that day? 1) Our words- Mt 12:36-37. 2) Our attitudes- Mt 5:22. 3) Secret sins- Mt 5:28-30 4) our actions 5) Our stewardship of life will also be judged- Mt 25:29 esp.

8. Books will be opened. A record of our lives is being kept- There is a book of life- Rev 20:12, this book of life records those who are redeemed through faith in Jesus. Luke 10:20; II Cor 5:10. After death there will be a separation of the wicked from the righteous.

D. Hell. A place for the wicked - unbelievers

1. O T - the wicked are punished in this life, except Dan 12:2 which speaks of eternal punishment.
2. N T - Gehenna
 - a. a place of eternal punishment. Jesus used the word Gehenna and James uses it once- James 3:6. Jesus taught eternal punishment, as did Paul and John - Rev 20:14.
 - b. The Bible speaks of this place as the second death-Rev. 2:11 and 3 other times in Rev.
 - c. It is also called the Lake of Fire.
 - d. It is a place of utter darkness- Mt 8:21; 22:13; 25:30,
 - e. a place of absolute evil. 6) It is a place of terrible suffering where men will weep and gnash their teeth.
 - f It is a place of conscious sadness and sorrow.
 - g. It is a place for the wicked- Rev. 21:8,
 - h. It is a place of separation from God.
 - i. It is final and eternal.
 - j. If sin is not cleansed then the sinner will be forever banished from God's presence and be punished.
 - k. Satan will be thrown into eternal fire and tormented day and night forever. Rev 20:10. He will be defanged. Hell was created for the devil and his angels. Man goes to hell by joining forces with the devil. Some say but how can a God of love send people to Hell? God is holy, he must punish sin. Where God's holiness is transgressed and grace is refused - the punishment is eternal. Some say it is not reasonable, but scripture teaches it. God's ways are not our ways. God has sent us His Son to save us from hell. We must repent and believe in Jesus to escape hell and get ready for heaven.

E. Heaven

1. Christ has gone to prepare a place for us a place with many rooms.
2. Believers will be with Christ in heaven. We will have many activities- more responsibilities there. Luke 19:17, Mt 25:20-21,
3. Heaven is where God's throne is.
4. It is a permanent place of total security.
5. It is where the angels are.
6. The Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee- the down payment of heaven. I Cor 2:9 ff; Isaiah 64:4.
7. We will know each other in heaven-all barriers will be removed.
8. It will be a place of joy- Rev. 21:4.
9. There is no death no tears, no sorrow there. Rev tell us much of heaven. Rev. 21:10-27.
10. There will be degrees of reward - based on what we have done (not salvation by works). Rev 20:12, 22: 12. They are probably beyond our current understanding.
11. A new heaven and earth will be created- Rev. 21:1-22

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #9**

The Doctrine of the Spirit World

Lesson Purpose:

- To show what the Bible teaches about the spirit world.

Main Points:

- Angels
- Satan
- Demons
- ATR and the spirit world

Desired Outcome

- The student will know what the Bible teaches about the spirit world and how ATR and the African view of the spirit world relates to that.

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #9
- Teach Lesson #9
- Use illustrations to explain ATR and the power behind it. Involve your students in discussion.
- Review lesson # 2 especially the part on contextualizing Biblical doctrine in Africa.

The Spirit world

Introduction- The Bible says that everything was created by Christ Jesus and is under His power. Col 1:16. God created the heavenly host- angels. Originally the angels were holy beings with a freedom of the will-they could have chosen voluntarily to serve God and therefore to serve the heirs of salvation or to rebel against Him. Possibly there was a probationary period after they were created where they could prove their loyalty to God.

A. Angels of God. There are the holy angels who are servants of God- Psalm 103:20-21. Mark 8:38.

1. They have great knowledge and strength.
2. They guard the people of God- Ps 91:11. An angel helped the apostles get out of jail. Acts 5:17-19. Angels are able to help believers. Heb 1:14; 13:2. Elijah- I Kings 19:5-8. Ps 34:7. But God doesn't always deliver people from difficulty or from the fiery furnace.
3. They are used in judgment. They can be used by God to attack armies/people. II Sam 24:15-16, Is 37:36. They will come with Jesus at His 2nd coming. Matt 13:41-42. They will be used to bring judgment on the world. Rev. 7:1, 16:3-4, 18
4. They love to worship God. Rev. 5:11-14.
5. There are different kinds of angels with different kinds of authority.
6. Angels can appear to man. Dan 10:4-8. Sometimes angels can be seen by man- they can appear in human form (Gen 18:1,22).

7. God alone directs the angels- not man.
8. They are not to be worshipped or to receive sacrifices.
9. Angels were created by God, they are not the spirits of the ancestors
10. They are the majority but there are also the fallen angels- those who rebelled against God. Rev. 12:4 and Matt 25:41. The fallen angels may be 1/3 of the angels.

B. Satan- Many scholars believe that Ezek 28:11-18 refers to Satan. He fell because of his pride. Ezk 28:13,17; Matt 4:9, Isaiah 14:12.- Lucifer may refer to Satan. Pride is the root from which sin comes. When Satan rebelled, God sent him out of heaven.

1. Satan is the prince of the power of the air- Eph 2:2 and his hosts are called spiritual wickedness in high places -Eph 6:12.
2. He is called the god of this world- II Cor 4:4. He controls much of the present world and its values and “religions”. (But not Christianity)
3. Satan is a personal being, the head of the kingdom of evil spirits. He is THE Anti Christ- he called Satan, the devil, the adversary, Belial, Beelzebub. Another name for him is Lucifer- Is 14:12-17. “O Lucifer, son of the morning...” (KJV) In the immediate context that may also refer to a king.
4. Satan is a fallen high ranked angel of God- Gen 3, Luke 10:17-18, Jude 6, Rev 12:1-17. Satan apparently was filled with pride and tried to take the place of God or Jesus. He is a personal being but is not more powerful or equal to God. I Jn 4:4
5. He sows doubt and error in the church-Mt 13:24-25,39.
6. He is a liar and the father of all liars, he is a murderer- John 8:44
7. He can pretend to be an angel of light. II Cor 11:14
8. He roams about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. I Peter 5:8
9. He comes to steal, kill and destroy. John 10:10; I Peter 5:8
10. He is the accuser. Job 1:8-11; 2:3-5; Rev. 12:10
11. He is behind non-Christian religions. The Bible refers to the gods behind the gods of the foreigners, eg Molech as demons- Jer 32:35. Ps 106:35-37. I Tim 4:1. Those who follow ATR know that there are spirits behind it- those spirits are demons. These demons practice deception.
10. He will be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur (hell) forever. Rev. 20:10) He is NOT omnipotent, omniscient, nor omnipresent.
11. He was NOT the brother of Jesus.

C. Demons. Demons are fallen angels. 1/3 of the angels apparently went against God and were cast out of heaven with no possibility of redemption- Rev. 12: 1ff. 1/3 of the “stars” were cast out of heaven along with the dragon. -maybe their problem was pride- I Tim 3:6. They were therefore condemned by God-II Peter 2:4. They will be punished eternally Mt 25:41.

1. Evil angels are spiritual forces of evil 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:4. Eph 6:12; Col 2:15.
2. They are liars. Demons lie to people because their leader is a liar.
3. They are evil. Demons can be involved in murder, torture/sickness-Matt 12:22, sexual immorality-Matt 10:1, Mark 1:23, hindering the Gospel- I Thess 2:18; hinder prayer, Dan 10:12-13 trouble God’s children- II Cor 12:7, promote idolatry and witchcraft Ps 106:35-37, Rev 18:2; I Sam 15:23. They can even do false miracles- 2 The 2:9; Rev 16:13-14 and they also falsely accuse the people of God. Rev 12:10.
4. The force behind religions. Demons can sometimes be seen. Rev. 16:13. Probably some of the

visions/appearances that some people have experienced that have led to false religions/cults were demons. Eg Mohammed, Joseph Smith, etc.

5. They oppress and possess people. Jesus and His disciples cast out demons that were troubling people. Matt 8:28ff; 17:14ff.

6. ATR - Africans believe in God and in spirit beings.

a. Ancestors- Evil spirits are believed to be spirits of evil dead ancestors- but they are actually demons. The belief that the spirits of the ancestors are there to help or trouble man is unbiblical. Those spirits- even the “good” ones are demonic. Any ritual sacrifice or offering to spirits or ancestors is to worship the devil or his demons. God’s angels never ask for worship or offerings brought to them. God wants us to go directly to Him in prayer and worship and not to go through intermediaries or human beings such as a witch doctor. The spirits who pretend to be God or ancestors are servants of Satan- demons. Demons pretend to be what they are not. Be careful! Deut. 32:16-17; I Cor 10:20.

b. Spirits of the ancestors. What does the Bible say about the ancestral spirits? God does not want man to speak to the dead spirits. Deut 18:10-11. I Sam 28:8-19. The Bible says that at death there will be a separation between the righteous and the unrighteous. Luke 16:19-31. In traditional beliefs there is a relationship between the living and the dead, oftentimes sacrifices and offerings are given to satisfy the ancestors or the ancestors are sought for help and guidance. When that happens one is breaking God’s commandment. Ex 20:3. Remember these spirits that pretend to be ancestors are in reality demons!

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #10**

The Problem of Evil

Lesson Purpose:

- To learn about the problem of evil and find a Biblical answer to it.

Main Points:

- The two kinds of evil
- Different ways of understanding evil
- Christ is the answer to all evil

Desired Outcome

- The student will have a Biblical answer to the problem of evil

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #10
- Teach Lesson #10
- Make sure that the students understand the Biblical response to evil

The Problem of Evil

Introduction- Job 5:7- Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward. What is evil? It is whatever frustrates the ideal fulfillment of human life, especially the lives of innocent and righteous persons who are obviously not deserving of it. Part of the problem of evil arises from the assumption of the Christian that the world is controlled by an all good, all wise, and all powerful God. As all good, he wants the best for innocent righteous persons, as all wise, he would know what is the best for them, as all powerful, he would be able to hinder or stop all things that were less than the best, including all evil. Why does God let people suffer, especially good people? When the wicked grow fat and rich and the righteous grow lean and poor and sickly, then the question must be asked, how can God allow that?

A. The two kinds of evil. The problem of evil is one of the greatest problems that religion has to face.

There are two main kinds of evil- Moral evil and natural evil.

1. Moral evil we would call sin, where someone breaks the moral law of God- murder, stealing, profanity, etc.

a. Moral evil that we ourselves have committed.

b. Moral evil that others commit against us.

2. Natural evil- bad things that happen naturally- earthquakes, deafness, hurricanes, auto accidents where people are killed or injured, a child dying of malaria or another disease. The

thing that bothers us as Christians is that natural evil affects all people - good people, bad people and even Christians. The rain falls on the good and the bad. Natural evil is a greater problem for us than moral evil, because we can grapple with the fact that moral evil happens because people are bad and therefore do bad things.

B. Ways of responding to evil.

There are 3 different ways to respond to evil- Pessimism is one way, optimism and meliorism.

a. Pessimism

i. Religious pessimism is one way- eg Buddhism which says that sorrow and pain are part of life and exist because of man's desire- especially the desire to live. Therefore if we suppress all desires suffering and sorrow will be eliminated. They seek to free themselves from desires. The 4 "truths" of Gautama who founded Buddhism are pain, the cause of the pain, the suppression of the pain, and the path to the extinction of the pain. Gautama LEFT his wife and children to find the answer to the why of pain and in the process caused them pain!

ii. Philosophical pessimism- life is full of despair, we are destined to suffer, man has no hope. They feel that we are orphans in the universe, the world is a headache that we are born and die with.

iii. Scientific pessimism- leads to atheism- bad things happen so therefore there must be no God. Nature has no purpose. Man has no more purpose than an insect.

iv. Naturalistic pessimism- the only thing that counts is love, a man's love for a woman.

b. Optimism-

i. Religious optimism- Christian science denies the reality of evil. God is real but evil is unreal. Evil is an illusion. Things that are unreal are sin, sickness and death. They discourage vaccinations- they don't believe evil is real and therefore do little or nothing to improve conditions. It avoids common sense and is therefore illogical.

ii. Philosophical optimism- usually is represented by pantheism. Evil is positive and good, we must submit to the evils of nature- all is good.

iii. Theological optimism- John Calvin believed this- Everything is good because God wills it. God is sovereign, God will do what He wants regardless of what we humans do. All natural evil is designed to discipline us. Suffering comes so that the righteous might sin less. It teaches that evil is not real. This view says who are we to question God and His ways? This view-optimism, overlooks the facts and says I know all is good, therefore all is good.

c. Meliorism admits the reality of both good and evil and urges a willingness to work toward the promotion of the good and a lessening of the evil.

i. Pluralistic meliorism says that in some sense both good and evil are real, but good is dominant in the state of affairs in the universe and is capable of improvement. We should try to get rid of evil and there are many different kinds of realities- God is finite- he is not all knowing or all powerful. But God knows most things and is quite powerful.

ii. Finitistic Meliorism- God is a finite being who is limited. Evil is in the very nature of God- there is something in God, an uncreated eternal force that obstructs God's plans. God is working to improve the world. ES Brightman who was an exponent of it defined it as the view, "that the will of God does face conditions within the divine experience which that His will neither created nor approves." Some feel that evil was there when the world was created.

iii. Dualistic Meliorism- Good and evil are real, there is evil which is opposed to God. God is good but limited. He has an adversary which is evil. Satan eternally exists as God's adversary, man must fight with God against evil, eg fight against cancer.

iv. Absolutistic meliorism- (The view of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology)

1) God created the world perfectly- Gen 1:31.

2) With creation came the possibility for suffering and sin. Because of sin there was a curse- Gen 3:16, 17-18. Not only was man cursed but also the whole world was affected. After the fall came disease, floods, lightening, etc. In the incarnation God entered this suffering fallen world. God is there with us, when we experience natural evil. There will come a day when all natural evil will be finished. Rev. 21:1-4

3) God has given man the free will to do His will or oppose His will. We don't believe that God directly orders whatever happens on earth. We don't call lightening strikes or floods or hurricanes "acts of God". We don't say, "for some strange reason God took your baby away from you." We believe God is on the side of the sufferer, He is our refuge in times of trouble.

4) God is not limited. We can work with God to alleviate or exterminate the evils of nature. He is not troubled by an eternal evil opposite. Evils in nature happen because of the laws of nature, eg- tornadoes, earthquakes. God as all powerful, can work miracles and set natural laws aside- sometimes he does that. But the righteous and wicked are subject to the natural laws and their devastation-eg floods, earthquakes, hurricanes. God does not directly order earthquakes, etc. but he permits them, because he has established natural laws which usually work for our good.

v. A practical response. How should we face evil?

1) It is our educative opportunity. We can learn much from suffering: patience, sympathy, faith- Romans 5:3-4. It is a learning opportunity. James 1

2) it can develop our character or destroy us- depending on what we do with it. Rom 8:28. God does not send evil but works through it. He came to destroy the works of the devil. I Jn 3:8 The answer to all evil is Christ. Where there is personal sin he delivers from all sin, where there is death he provides resurrection. Where there is natural evil or physical effects from evil He will create a new heaven and a new earth.

3) If we suffer remember it may be because of natural evil, not because of moral evil. The book of Job.

C. Christ is the answer to all evil. Christ is the answer to both moral and natural evil- we are redeemed from moral evil through His death on the cross and redeemed from natural evil by His resurrection. Natural evil may do the worst possible thing- take our life, but Christ's resurrection defeats it because through His resurrection we shall also be raised to life- never to suffer the problem of evil again- be it natural or moral evil. The resurrection takes the worst that natural evil can do to us- death and conquers it.

**Bible
Doctrine
Lesson #11**

The Doctrine of the Family and the Means of Grace

Lesson Purpose:

- To show what the Bible teaches about the family and the means of grace.

Main Points:

- Doctrine of the family- one man and one wife
- The means of grace

Desired Outcome

- The student will know what God's plan is for the family and the means of spiritual growth

Suggestions for teaching

- Pass out handout #11
- Teach Lesson #11
- Explain why we don't practice polygamy
- Explain how the means of grace help us to grow

Doctrine of the Family

Introduction- Marriage is God's plan- it began with Adam and Eve. God created it for mutual encouragement, companionship, love, procreation and sexual satisfaction. Gen 2:18; I Cor 7:2-3.

A. God's original plan was one man for one woman. Gen 2:22-24. Matt 19:6-8. Both the man and woman have emotional needs that need to be met. The woman cannot have her emotional needs properly met in a polygamous home. Polygamy creates jealousy and bitterness among the wives and children. There was polygamy in the OT but that wasn't God's first choice. You can read about the problems it creates in the OT- eg Abraham and Hagar. Gen 16.

B. God's plan for marriage is for spiritual unity, mental unity and physical unity. Spiritual unity is where the couple with their children can pray together and help their children together to come to know Christ and grow in Him. Mental unity is where the couple can sit together and discuss their plans for the future, where there can be mutual respect. Physical unity is the beauty of sex in marriage where the couple can have sex for enjoyment and to produce children. That kind of unity can only properly happen when there is one wife and one husband in a marriage covenant.

C. God wants the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church and the wife to respect her husband. Ephesians 5:22ff; Colossians 3:18ff. There should also be a mutual submission between them. Eph 5:21. In the sight of God men and women are equal. Gal 3:28.

D. God hates divorce. God desires that a man and woman marry for life. The only Biblical grounds for divorce is adultery. But even then the goal should be forgiveness, repentance and counseling. Only if there is no repentance and the counseling fails is divorce allowed. Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:32; I Cor 7:27.

E. God's plan for children. As parents the couple should work together to raise the children.

1. Parents should both love God first above everything else.

2. Parents should love their children and provide for them. The practical application of loving your children may differ in various cultures, but in every culture the children will feel the love of the parents and the parents will purposely love their children in ways their children understand. Christian parents should seek to love their children according to the Word of God not simply according to their culture.

3. Parents should teach their children about God, how to live a godly life and help to guide them through life. Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:4ff

4. Parents should discipline their children in love. Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13.

5. Parents should set a good example before them. They should teach by being a good example. Whether we like it or not our children will become like us!

6. The Father should love the mother of the children. Someone once said that one of the best things a father can do for his children is to love their mother. There is no room for verbal or physical abuse in a Christian home.

MEANS OF GRACE

Introduction- These are the means or things we can do to help develop our Christian life. They help us maintain our Christian life and live a holy life. We call these the means of grace.

A. Prayer- We pray to the father in Christ's name. Prayer is the way of aligning us with God's will.

B. Meditation -a time of seeking for the real meaning of your life and purpose. It is to think deeply about something, especially a passage of scripture.

C. Scripture intake through reading, memorizing, etc.

D. Lord's Supper - It helps to increase and deepen our faith.

E. Worship - Singing, Reading the Bible, Public prayer, Preaching, saying the Creeds. During the Middle Ages some individuals practiced worship individually but that wasn't - the best. They became monks and sometimes formed monasteries.

F. Christian Conference - ACTS 15 (leaders Conference)- Going to women's and men's meetings, district conference, etc.

G. Fasting

H. Finding a mentor

I. Practicing accountability

J. Read powerful Christian books

K. Indirect means of grace

1. We should discipline ourselves
 - a. Our bodies
 - b. Our speech
 - c. Use our possessions in a disciplined way.
2. Practice service - we are to serve others, fellow Christians - non Christians.
3. Suffering - even suffering can help us grow. I Peter 1:7-9. James 1:2-4. The suffering should not be sought but comes as a result of one's faith in Christ. Matthew 5:11-12