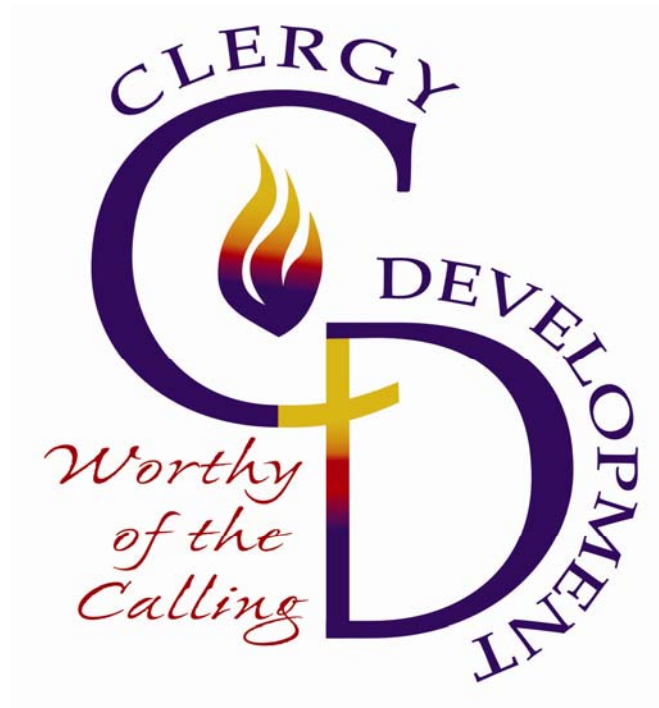

Faculty Guide

Tracing the Story of God in the Bible



Clergy Development
Church of the Nazarene
Kansas City, Missouri
816-333-7000 ext. 2468; 800-306-7651 (USA)
2005

Copyright ©2005 Nazarene Publishing House, Kansas City, MO USA. Created by Church of the Nazarene Clergy Development, Kansas City, MO USA. All rights reserved.

All scripture quotations are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)*. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

JB: From the *Jerusalem Bible (JB)*, copyright 1966 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., and Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. Used by permission.

KJV: From the King James Version.

NASB: From the *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*, copyright the Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.

NCV: From the *Holy Bible: New Century Version (NCV)*. Copyright Dallas, TX: Word Bibles, 1991. Used by permission.

NEB: From *The New English Bible (NEB)*. Copyright by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1961, 1970. Reprinted by permission.

NKJV: From the *New King James Version (NKJV)*. Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

NLT: From the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation (NLT)*, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

NRSV: From the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Phillips: From *The New Testament in Modern English (Phillips)*, Revised Student Edition, by J. B. Phillips, translator. Copyright 1958, 1960, 1972 by J. B. Phillips. Used by permission. reserved.

TEV/GNB: From *Good News Bible: the Bible in Today's English Version (TEV)*. Copyright by American Bible Society, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992. Used by permission.

TM: From *The Message (TM)*. Copyright 1993. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Notice to educational providers:

This is a contract. By using these materials you accept all the terms and conditions of this Agreement. This Agreement covers all Faculty Guides, Student Guides, and instructional resources included in this Module.

Upon your acceptance of this Agreement, Clergy Development grants to you a nonexclusive license to use these curricular materials provided that you agree to the following:

1. Use of the Modules.
 - You may distribute this Module in electronic form to students or other educational providers.
 - You may make and distribute electronic or paper copies to students for the purpose of instruction, as long as each copy contains this Agreement and the same copyright and other proprietary notices pertaining to the Module. If you download the Module from the Internet or similar online source, you must include the Clergy Development copyright notice for the Module with any online distribution and on any media you distribute that includes the Module.
 - You may translate, adapt, and/or modify the examples and instructional resources for the purpose of making the instruction culturally relevant to your students. However, you must agree that you will not sell these modified materials without express, written permission from Clergy Development.
2. Copyright. The Module is owned by Clergy Development and is protected by United States Copyright Law and International Treaty provisions. Except as stated above, this Agreement does not grant you any intellectual property rights in the Module.
3. Restrictions.
 - You may not sell copies of this Module in any form except to recover the minimum reproduction cost of electronic media or photocopy expense.
 - You may not modify the wording or original intent of the Module for commercial use.
4. Unpublished rights reserved under the copyright laws of the United States.

Clergy Development
Church of the Nazarene
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, MO 64131
USA

The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

Members of the development committee for the Modular Course of Study were
Michael W. Vail, Ph.D., Series Curriculum Editor
Daniel Copp, Director of Clergy Development
Jerry D. Lambert, Commissioner, International Board of Education
Al Truesdale, Ph.D., Nazarene Theological Seminary (retired)
Robert L. Woodruff, Ph.D., World Mission Educational Coordinator
David Busic, Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Bethany, OK
Michael W. Stipp, Clergy Development

Series Foreword written by Al Truesdale

Journaling Essay written by Rick Ryding

Principal contributors for each module are listed in specific Faculty Guides.

GL: Translated by George Lyons

Series Foreword

A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, of all creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people, the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ, through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people in a form that is referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe that God calls and that persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled and amazed by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful

preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes that “the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; ‘in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left’ (2 Cor 6:6-7)” (*Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ “must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God’s Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world that He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ’s Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation—one’s education in all its dimensions—for ministry in Christ’s Church should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe that the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe that God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect that those

standards be observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe that Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12: 1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules that comprise the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

Contents

Series Foreword	iii
Introduction	ix
Unit 1: Introductory Lessons	
Lesson 1: Introduction to the Module	1-1
Lesson 2: Discovering Theology in the Bible	2-1
Unit 2: Overview of the Bible	
Lesson 3: The Torah	3-1
Lesson 4: The Prophets	4-1
Lesson 5: The Writings	5-1
Lesson 6: The Christ	6-1
Lesson 7: Life in the Spirit	7-1
Unit 3: Unifying Theological Concepts	
Lesson 8: The Creator God	8-1
Lesson 9: Sin and Salvation	9-1
Lesson 10: The Covenant Relationship	10-1
Lesson 11: Law, Security, and Authority	11-1
Lesson 12: Holiness, Peace, and Love	12-1
Unit 4: The Concepts of Warning, Evangelism, and Discipline	
Lesson 13: Discipline and Discipleship	13-1
Lesson 14: When Humans Go Too Far	14-1
Lesson 15: Forgive and Forgiven	15-1
Lesson 16: Freely Received and Freely Given	16-1
Unit 5: Practical Relationships	
Lesson 17: Biblical Ethics	17-1
Lesson 18: Wisdom and the Secret of Time	18-1
Lesson 19: Future Hope	19-1
Lesson 20: The Way to Perfect Life and True Greatness	20-1
Lesson 21: Commitment to Compassion	21-1
Lesson 22: Overcoming Evil	22-1
Unit 6: Review and Conclusion	
Lesson 23: Review	23-1
Lesson 24: Catechism	24-1
Resources	(contained in the Student Guide)

Introduction

Intended Use of This Faculty Guide

This Faculty Guide serves as an instructor's guide for teaching principles of *Tracing the Story of God in the Bible* to adult learners who are preparing for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The content is based on intended outcomes defined through the collaborative process conducted at Breckenridge, CO, USA, between 1990 and 1997. The materials prepare the pastor-teacher to present the topic by providing background reading, lesson plans, lectures, instructions to the teacher, and teaching resources for each class session. In the lessons complete lectures, questions for guided discussions, and defined learning activities are provided.

The pastor-teacher who will lead this module should hold a master's degree. Ideally, the pastor-teacher should have participated as a student in a module using this material prior to teaching the material to others. This Faculty Guide assumes that the pastor-teacher has some basic understanding of biblical theology.

It is further assumed that learners participating in a module using this material will be high school graduates and be adult learners beyond the traditional college age. Learners are assumed to be motivated to learn, and to have adult life-experiences. No prior college classroom experience is assumed on the part of the learners.

Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module. Every effort has been made to accurately represent the original intent of the principal contributors.

Principal Contributors

The principal contributors for this module are George Lyons and Ted Esselstyn.

George Lyons is professor of New Testament at Northwest Nazarene University. He has been a professor at Olivet Nazarene University, visiting professor at Nazarene Theological Seminary and other Nazarene institutions in the USA and in world mission regions.

Dr. Lyons holds academic degrees from Olivet Nazarene University (AB), Nazarene Theological Seminary (MDiv), and Emory University (PhD, New Testament Studies). He is a past president of the Wesleyan Theological Society and a member of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Dr. Lyons has served as an associate pastor, supply preacher, Sunday School teacher, and member of several denominational committees and commissions. He is a prolific writer of books and articles and has been named the Pauline Epistles editor of the newly proposed Beacon Hill Press commentary series.

George and Terre, his wife, enjoy travel and have visited over 20 countries of the world. His hobbies include travel, photography, and computers.

Dr. Lyons is the major contributor for Lessons 1, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, and 23.

Ted Esselstyn is adjunct professor at Mount Vernon Nazarene University. Dr. and Mrs. Esselstyn retired from service as missionaries to Africa in March 2002 after serving on that continent for 34 years.

Ted was born in Swaziland, Africa, and grew up in the Johannesburg area of South Africa. He is a graduate of Eastern Nazarene College where he prepared to teach ministers. Further preparation took him to Nazarene Seminary in Kansas City, Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, and service as pastor of the Wallingford Church of the Nazarene in Connecticut.

Ted and Joan were assigned to Africa in 1968. They taught and served as principal in Arthurseat, in the South African low veld. In 1975 they were reassigned to Johannesburg where Ted served as teacher and rector. In 1983 Ted was asked to become the first Regional Education Coordinator, a position he held until retirement. This assignment, supervising the starting and development of education institutions, took him to every country in Africa where the Church of the Nazarene had education work.

The major projects were the establishment of Africa Nazarene University in Kenya, and the merger of the four segregated schools in South Africa into one Nazarene Theological College. Ministerial scholarships are the burden of their present ministry.

Dr. Esselstyn is the major contributor for Lessons 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 15, 18, 20, 22, and 24.

Revision History

Third Quarter 2005. Revision 1, the current version,

- The Lesson Overview, Introduction, Body, Close format was established.

Intended Outcomes for the Module

The *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, and the *International Sourcebook on Developmental Standards for Ordination* define educational preparation for ordination. Additionally, each region of the International Church of the Nazarene has developed educational guidelines to qualify educational programs for ordination offered within their region.

The USA Region *Sourcebook for Ministerial Development* defines outcomes for the overall ministerial development program. The module assists candidates in developing these skills. Other modules in the program may also address the same outcomes. The specific outcomes that relate to this module are:

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- CN7: The ability to describe major theological concepts of the Old Testament
- CN14: The ability to identify and describe the major theological concepts of the New Testament

To a more limited extent the following are also addressed:

- CH2: Ability to discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- CH4: Ability to understand and apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the church
- CH5: Ability to apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity, specifically as they relate to ministers and laity for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness

- CH6: Ability to pursue holy character (Christlikeness) by practicing faith formation and the classic Christian disciplines as a means of grace
- CH8: Ability to take responsibility for his or her own continuing spiritual development
- CN3: Ability to identify the basic thrust of each major section of the Old Testament
- CN11: Ability to identify the significant elements of the message of Jesus and Paul
- CN16: Ability to identify the steps of historical, literary, and theological analysis used in exegesis
- CN23: Ability to identify and explain the doctrine of holiness from a Wesleyan perspective
- CP7: Ability to conceive and articulate purpose, mission, vision and to develop strategic plans that strengthen a unified vision
- CP21: Ability to envision, order, participate in contextualized theologically grounded worship and to develop and lead appropriate services for special occasions (i.e., wedding, funeral, baptism, and Lord's Supper)
- CP22: Ability to prepare, organize, and deliver biblically sound sermons using appropriate techniques and skills in culturally appropriate ways (see also: CP25, CP28, CP31, CP34)

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- The learner should acquire the ability to understand and articulate the coherent story of God, his people, and the world as presented in the Scriptures.
- The learner should acquire an understanding of the exegetical bases for forming sound theological and ethical convictions.
- Learners should acquire a greater appreciation for the impact of contextual realities on the theological affirmations of the biblical authors and the need for an understanding of their own contexts to be able to appropriate biblical theology.
- The learner should acquire the ability to form appropriate theological and ethical convictions.

Upon the successful completion of this module, learners will have acquired the ability:

- To understand, accept, and explain the Bible as a living revelation of God to the believer in today's context.
- To discern and apply appropriately the theological concepts in the Bible to practical life situations in today's world.
- To delineate ways the Bible is a valued resource for critiquing culture, forming worldview, establishing

- theological convictions, directing spiritual formation as well as guidance for practical ministry to others and a thought seedbed for sermonic development.
- To know the theological thrust of the major components of the Bible together with the unifying themes of the whole and the distinctive contributions of the various authors.

About This Module

A module is composed of two major works—a Faculty Guide and a Student Guide. Both are necessary for the whole body of information and learning activities pertaining to the module topic. You will need a copy of both.

We have tried to design this module to be flexible and easy to adapt to your situation. You as the instructor will need to be familiar with the information, activities, questions, and homework that are provided in both works. In some cases you may need to modify the illustrations or questions to meet the needs of your group.

Rationale

Biblical theology attempts to summarize and synthesize the main strands of the diverse theological assumptions and affirmations of the Bible. The Bible is not a systematic theology. Nevertheless, Wesleyans share the Protestant conviction that Scripture must provide the foundational source for all theological reflection that is truly Christian. Authentically Christian preaching must also arise responsibly from the biblical text.

The goal of this module is to help students think about the Bible as more than an anthology of the classic literature of ancient Israel and the Early Church. It is this. But it is also an essential resource for defining what should characterize contemporary Christian faith and practice.

How does one move from the Bible—with its exultant affirmations of faith alongside tiresome genealogies; strange levitical legislation; poetry, proverbs, and prophecy; patriarchal anecdotes; palace intrigues; stories of miracles, misunderstanding, and miscarriage of justice; letters to confused and sometimes contrary churches; and grotesque visions of the future—to the Apostles' Creed? And much less to a fully developed theological system like Wesleyanism?

How does one preach from the Bible in a way that takes with equal seriousness its origins thousands of years ago in a cultural, social, economic, and political environment dramatically different from ours, and the pressing needs of those who gather from week to week in our churches expecting to hear an edifying message from this book?

It is the daunting tasks of biblical theology to sort through the Bible's witness to God's involvement in the lives of people long dead to discern the timeless truths that should shape our understanding of God and life as his people in the present and our aspirations for the future.

Notes from the Original Authors

Purpose

The function of this course is to enable the learner to discover the varied ways in which the Bible instructs today's Christians in their life of faith and faithful walk as God's people, renewed in Jesus Christ and empowered by the sanctifying Holy Spirit. God is the central character of both the Old and the New Testaments. The whole Bible expresses his instruction of and interaction with His people, culminating in the revelation of himself in and through Jesus Christ, and made personal and real by the universal gift of the Holy Spirit.

The approach this module takes to the biblical material is primarily thematic, recognizing the intertwining of themes and the richness of the instruction they express. At the same time it works from the canonical foundations of scripture—the Torah, the history and prophets of Israel, the diverse collection of other writings in the Hebrew Bible, the Gospels, the community letters of Paul, and other early Christian writings. These provide the basis for understanding God's gracious revelation of himself and his intentions for his people.

Methodological Presuppositions

The perspective from which we approach the written word of God is unapologetically Christian. We understand the Old Testament through the instruction of the New Testament, of the Christian Church, and of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. The context of the writer and of the canon informs the instruction that we receive and appropriate. The divine origin and human expression of the written word—the Bible—and of the

living Word—Jesus Christ—must both be understood and appreciated.

If you feel it would be helpful for your students, you can give copies of this section to the students.

Preparation of Formulation Statements

In order to prepare for Lesson 23, it is essential that students prepare personal notes on each lesson as they progress through the module. These notes will not be submitted to the instructor for evaluation. They are for the personal use of the students. Without these notes, they will be unable to fulfill the requirements of preparing a catechism as required in the syllabus.

- You will need to give special attention to each of the themes selected for attention in the various lessons in the module and to the biblical foundations or bases for these themes.
- Note also the more significant supporting topics within the broader and more comprehensive themes and the biblical support for them.
- Note the specific biblical books and chapters that impress you as playing crucial roles in shaping Christian theology. Clearly, some passages have been more influential than others. Which ones? How so?
- Note also the books and chapters that seem to have been neglected in this selective survey of biblical theology. How might attention to these neglected passages have significantly altered the contours of the biblical theology presented here?
- Can you think of any major biblical themes that the authors failed to treat in this survey? What are they, and what biblical passages might have been used to survey these themes?
- Note the inevitable overlapping of themes. Do the internal connections between themes provide a basis for discerning an overarching or under-girding theme that might be considered the central theme of the entire Bible?
- Note the points of dissonance or disunity that appear in this study of the various biblical theologies. The Bible is not systematic in its approach to theology, so these should be expected. Furthermore, since the Bible is an anthology that developed over many centuries, the authors and communities that first wrote and received the books that comprise the Bible faced changing issues and challenges calling for different approaches and emphases.
- Give some thought as to how these notes might contribute to the catechism assignment.

Note on Methodology From the Series Editor

Palmer, Parker J. The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998, 115-40.

In his book *The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer describes an alternative teaching/learning strategy to the dichotomy of teacher-centered and student-centered classroom models. The alternative he suggests is a subject-centered model. In a subject-centered classroom, the subject—in this case the Bible—not the teacher or the student holds the center of attention. The subject provides a plumbline, a standard that holds both teacher and student accountable for what they say and do.

Palmer, 118.

“In a subject-centered classroom, the teacher’s central task is to give the great thing [subject] an independent voice—a capacity to speak its truth quite apart from the teacher’s voice in terms that students can hear and understand.” The teacher then models for the student ways of approaching, interpreting, and understanding the subject. The teacher does not deliver conclusions of his or her study to the student but demonstrates the methods a professional uses to draw meaning from the subject.

The Bible narrative contains many theological truths and an exhaustive study of them would require many lifetimes. This module cannot hope to deal with the whole scope of biblical theology but through the examples presented in its lessons, the student should seek to grasp the methods of study that will allow him or her to explore the richness of the Bible narrative for personal growth, guidance, teaching, and preaching.

Palmer, 122.

Rather than filling the class time by telling students everything practitioners know about the subject, the instructor should “present small but critical samples of the data of [biblical theology] to help students understand how a practitioner in [biblical theology] generates data, checks and corrects data, thinks about data, uses and applies data, and shares data with others.”

To that end, lessons contain many examples of “doing” biblical theology. The instructor may need to select specific examples for classroom activities that are particularly relevant to the students, their culture, and their needs. The other examples within a lesson can be assigned as reading/homework assignments or students may take away the additional examples in the Student Guide for future reference.

Module Development

One reason for developing this module is for the benefit of extension education. We understand that teachers all over the world are called upon to teach courses that are not in their area of specialty, but they teach them because they want to see pastors trained and leaders developed for the church. Extension education is basic to rapid church growth. We want to provide this as a resource for extension educators. If it helps others along the way, that's fine too.

Another reason for developing this module is to equip indigenous faculty. We believe that a class like this is best taught and contextualized by someone from within the culture of the students. There are many fine teachers who are leaders in our churches around the world who do not have higher degrees in theology but who have the skills to teach a module like this effectively. We want to set them free to do so, and in so doing, to actually improve the module and make it more dynamic and meaningful for their context than it would have been had we held on to it and insisted on teaching it ourselves.

About This Faculty Guide

Note: It is critical to remember that active participation by the learners will enhance their learning. That means you will not be an information-giver. This module is not about you. The focus of the module is helping students learn. Your role is to design an environment in which your students will learn. Sometimes you will give lectures. At other times you will guide discussions or assign your students to work in groups. These kinds of activities keep the participants actively involved in the learning process. Learning is a team activity.

The Faculty Guide has been written to guide an instructor as he or she prepares to teach this module. It contains complete lesson plans to provide a solid educational design for the topic. You will need to prepare for each lesson well in advance of the meeting time. Often there are background reading suggestions for the instructor or you may know additional reference materials you want to interject into the lesson.

A two-column format was chosen for the Faculty Guide. The right-hand column contains the contents of the lectures, descriptions of activities, and questions to keep students involved. Questions that are intended to be answered or discussed by the students are in italic type. The left-hand column is to give suggested instructions to you, the teacher. It also contains examples you can use to illustrate concepts in the lectures. Whenever possible you should use examples from your own experience and from your students' real-life context.

Large white space has been left in the left column to allow you to write notes and personalize the Faculty Guide.

The Faculty Guide has two major components: the Faculty Guide Introduction, and the Lesson Plans. You are reading the Faculty Guide Introduction now. It provides a teaching philosophy for adult learners, background information for organizing the module, and ideas about conducting the lessons.

Each lesson of the Faculty Guide is numbered with a two-part page number. Page 5 of Lesson 3 would be numbered "3-5." The first number is the lesson number and the second is the page number within the lesson.

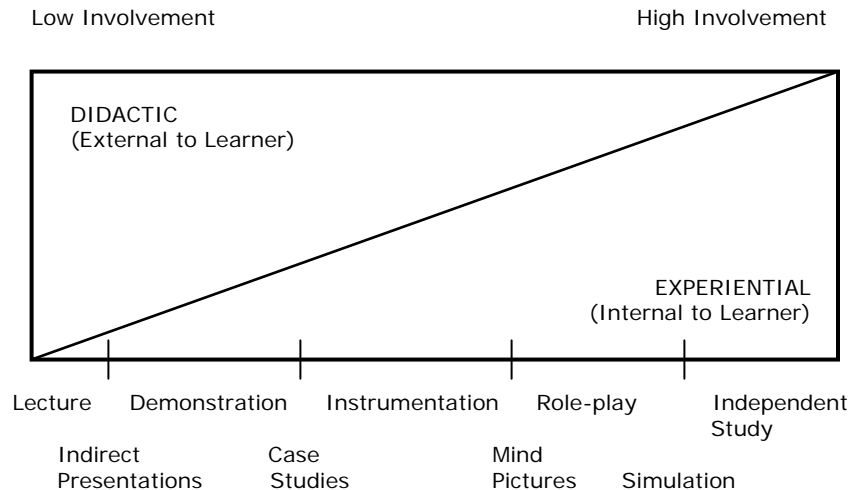
The Lesson Plans are complete in themselves. They contain an Overview, Introduction, Body, and Close. The Lesson Overview provides you with a planning tool for preparing and conducting each lesson.

The Lesson Introduction should get participants' attention, bring accountability for homework, orient them to the place this lesson holds in the overall module, define the intended objectives, and prepare them for the learning activities.

The Lesson Body is the core message of the lesson. The key is to keep the learners actively involved. Even in lectures, ask questions that prompt learners to think about the content not just hear the lecture.

The following chart shows a continuum of learner involvement in different teaching methods. Lecture requires the least learner involvement, and independent study requires the most learner involvement.

METHODS CONTINUUM



A variety of learning activities are used to present information and allow learners to experiment with their new knowledge. Each individual has a set of preferred methods of learning and he or she has different life-experiences that can color or filter what he or she actually learns. A variety of learning activities help adults adapt to the learning task—by hearing, by doing, by reading, by discussing, or by combinations of these. The learners should have opportunities to test and clarify their new learning by talking with the instructor and other participants, and applying new knowledge in real or contrived situations as soon as possible.

The Lesson Close provides a time for answering questions, reviewing the information, connecting this lesson to future lessons, making assignments, and punctuating the finish. The close does not provide any new information but gives a sense of closure to the lesson.

Homework assignments are important learning activities. They provide the student with an opportunity to synthesize classroom learning. Working on these assignments also extends the learning experience beyond the time constraints of class time.

The student—especially the adult student—needs frequent and timely feedback about his or her learning. While interaction with other students helps the learner refine what he or she is learning, feedback from the instructor is also critical to the quality of his or her learning and ultimately to his or her persistence in the Course of Study.

It is your responsibility as the instructor for this module to provide students with timely responses to homework assignments in order to enhance the learning process. Ideally, homework should be returned at the beginning of the next lesson. Reviewing and responding to homework will also provide you with critical information about what your students are learning and how well the teaching-learning process is succeeding.

Since these modules are preparing the learner for ordination rather than leading to a university degree, a letter grade may not be appropriate. Your response to the learners' assignments should be thoughtful and in most cases it should be written. Its purpose will always be to refine and enhance the learning of the student.

Letter grades will not be issued at the end of the module as a measure of completion. Completion of the module is based on attendance, participation, completion of all homework, and showing competence in the ability statements.

Recommendations for printing. You may print this Faculty Guide if desired. The introduction and lesson plan segments are formatted for printing on both sides of the paper. The resource pages of the Student Guide should be printed on one side for use as transparencies.

About the Student Guide

The Student Guide for this module contains the series foreword, acknowledgments, syllabus, all resources, lesson objectives, and assignments. The Student Guide should be made available to each student in either hard copy or electronic format—CD or floppy disk.

Each resource sheet in the Student Guide is numbered at the top for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1." In the Faculty Guide, in the left-hand column, you will be informed when to refer to the appropriate resource.

The first page for each lesson

- Reminds the student of the assignments that are due
- States the learner objectives
- Gives instructions for the homework assignment
- Sometimes includes relevant quotes

For each lesson, there are several support pieces, which we have called simply "resources." They help guide the flow of the lesson. Some resources are basic outlines that guide the student through a lecture. Others direct small-group activities. For some lessons, data/statistic resources are given. And for some modules homework assignment information resources are included.

You must determine how each resource will be used in your context. If an overhead projector is available, then transparencies can be made by replacing the paper in your photocopy machine with special transparency material. Resources also can be used as part of a PowerPoint presentation.

The instructor may photocopy resources to use for his or her own lecture outlines. There is space to add notes from the Faculty Guide, from a textbook, or from the additional suggested readings. Add in your own illustrations too!

Recommendation for printing. For student use it would be best to print the Student Guide on one side of the paper.

Suggested Meeting Schedule

The module lessons are designed to last 120 minutes each. Each lesson is complete in itself with an opening, a middle, and a closing. They are sequential. Each lesson assumes the learners have mastered material presented in previous lessons. The lessons can be grouped in a variety of ways to accommodate the schedules of your learners.

When lessons are taught in the same meeting, instructors will need to adjust homework assignments because participants will not have time between lessons to prepare homework. It is very important for the instructor to always be looking ahead and planning for upcoming lessons.

Here are three suggestions—out of many—for ways that the meetings can be organized.

1. Resident campus: The class can meet two days a week for 120 minutes. Present one lesson per meeting time. Total time: 12 weeks.
2. Extension education: The class can meet one day—or evening—each week for 4 to 4½ hours. Present two lessons per meeting with a break period between lessons. Participants will need to travel to a centralized location for meetings, so make it worth their time. Total time: 12 weeks.
3. Intensive module: Because of the length and breadth of this module, and time required to acquire these critical skills, it is *not* recommended that this module be taught in a weeklong intensive format. It might be possible to conduct 3 lessons on a single day (Saturday)—1 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. Total time: 8 weeks.

The module is divided into 6 units. The progression of these units can be seen in the chart below. Space is

given for you to fill in the dates when your class sessions will meet.

Date	Lesson
	Unit 1: Introductory Lessons
	1. Introduction to the Module
	2. Discovering Theology in the Bible
	Unit 2: Overview of the Bible
	3. The Torah
	4. The Prophets
	5. The Writings
	6. The Christ
	7. Life in the Spirit
	Unit 3: Unifying Theological Concepts
	8. The Creator God
	9. Sin and Salvation
	10. The Covenant Relationship
	11. Law, Security, and Authority
	12. Holiness, Peace, and Love
	Unit 4: The Concepts of Warning, Evangelism, and Discipline
	13. Discipline and Discipleship
	14. When Humans Go Too Far
	15. Forgive and Forgiven
	16. Freely Received and Freely Given
	Unit 5: Practical Relationships
	17. Biblical Ethics
	18. Wisdom and the Secret of Time
	19. Future Hope
	20. The Way to Perfect Life and True Greatness
	21. Commitment to Compassion
	22. Overcoming Evil
	Unit 6: Review and Conclusion
	23. Review
	24. Catechism

Recommended Textbooks

Each module within the Modular Course of Study is intended to be textbook independent. This does not imply that the modules are textbook irrelevant or that the module content cannot be enriched by selecting and requiring that students study a textbook along with the lessons provided in this faculty guide.

If these modules are adapted for use outside of the English-speaking countries of North America, a specific textbook may not be available in the language of the

students. Therefore, the module does not rely on one textbook. The instructor may select any doctrinally sound textbook that is available to the students.

Recommended text

Each student will need a modern study Bible of their choice for this module.

Recommended resource—assignments will be given using this resource.

Alexander, T. Desmond and others, eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (NDBT). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

This resource is available as a printed book or as part of the CDROM, *The Essential IVP Reference Collection*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. The CDROM contains 13 IVP reference books.

A Hidden Agenda

Hidden curriculum issues . . . because the way we teach teaches

In each session, there are certain methodological and environmental things to consider.

First, consider the classroom arrangement. Whenever possible, the room should be arranged to encourage a sense of community. The group should sit either in a circle or around a table. If the group is very large, chairs can be arranged for easily moving into clusters for discussion.

Second, consider how you present yourself as teacher. Standing behind a lectern with your students facing you in rows says that you are above the students and have something to give them—although in a very large group this standing to teach may be unavoidable. Sitting as part of the circle makes the teacher a co-learner at the same level as the students. Speak naturally. Pay close attention to your students, and value the things they share. Learn their names. Encourage participation. Remember that you are modeling for them, and the way you teach will teach them far more than the words you say.

Third, invite the Holy Spirit's presence in the classroom. Do this each time the class meets.

Fourth, the sharing of stories activity does more than help the students begin to reflect on their own Christian experiences. It is a way to build community between the students. This is more than an exercise to be checked off. It is vital to set the tone of your intentional community.

When meeting times exceed 90 minutes, consider adding break times. The break between segments is an important time for community building. Remain available to the students during this time. Consider offering coffee or tea during this time as a way to encourage fellowship.

Journaling: The Key to Spiritual Formation

Journaling is a major assignment of each module in the Ministerial Preparation Course of Study. It is the integrating element that helps you draw spiritual meaning and ministerial application from the content of each module whether the module concentrates on content, competency, character, or context. It ensures that the “Be” component of “Be, Know, and Do” is present in every module in which you participate. What is journaling and how can it be meaningfully accomplished?

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the Course of Study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each module you will be required to listen to lectures, read several books, participate in discussions, and write papers. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The module work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritual formation work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head to your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling

The Syllabus contains this explanation of journaling. Journaling provides the spiritual formation component for the module and is an integral part of the learning experience.

Journaling is an effective way to get students to think beyond the classroom to real-life applications of classroom concepts.

Have students read the journaling section during the Syllabus review in Lesson 1 and emphasize that journaling is an assignment for each lesson in the module.

When giving assignments in each lesson, assign journal writing each time the group meets.

simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work to faithfully spend time daily in your journal. Many people confess that this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, and an ah-ha that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet, family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with module material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available. However, as computers become more and more an integral part of our lives, the use of a computer for journaling may take on that special bond.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your module work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration—weaving together faith development and learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

Bibliography

Alexander, T.D. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Anderson, Bernard (ed.). *Creation in the Old Testament*. London: Fortress Press, 1984.

Banks, R. *Jesus and the Law in Synoptic Tradition*. Cambridge: CUP, 1975.

_____. *The Tyranny of Time*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997.

- Barr, J. *Biblical Words for Time*. London: Allenson-Breckinridge Books, 1969.
- Bauckham, R.J. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- Baum, G., and H. Wells (eds). *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Behm, J., and E. Würthwein. "Forgiveness," in Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol 4. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977: 975-1008.
- Blocher, H.A.G. *Evil and the Cross: Christian Thought and the Problem of Evil*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- Bowe, Barbara E. *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality*. Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Brewer, David I. *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE*. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1992.
- Brower, K.E., and M.W. Elliot (eds.). *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in Bible and Theology*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Critical Meaning of the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Carr, G. Lloyd. *The Song of Solomon*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984.
- Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology in Crisis*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970.
- Clements, R.E. *God and Temple*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965.
- Come Ye Apart*, Vol 64, No 1. Kansas City: WordAction Publishing Company, 2003.
- Crenshaw, James L. "Theodicy" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992.
- Cullman, O. *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964.

- _____. *The Christology of the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963.
- Derrett, J.D.M. *Law in the New Testament*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970.
- Dixon, Larry. *The Other Side of the Good News: Confronting Contemporary Challenges to Jesus' Teaching on Hell*. Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1992.
- Dockery, David (ed.). *Holman Bible Handbook*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992.
- Dumbrell, W.J. *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984.
- Dunn, J.D.G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today*. London: S.C.M. Press, 1970.
- _____. *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Esser, H.H. "Grace, Spiritual Gifts" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 3 volumes. Edited and translated by Colin Brown and others. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.
- Fee, Gordon D. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Fergusson, D. *The Cosmos and the Creator: An Introduction to the Theology of Creation*. London: SPCK, 1998.
- Franks, R.S. *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. London: Duckworth, 1953.
- Fuellenbach, J. *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Glickman, S. Craig. *A Song for Lovers*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976.
- Goppelt, L. *Theology of the New Testament*, vol 1. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981.

- Greathouse, William M. *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998.
- Gunton, C.E. (ed.). *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997.
- Guthrie, Donald. "The Future" in *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981.
- _____. "Grace" in *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981, 602-40.
- Hahn, Roger. Paper to the Wesley Theological Conference, Nampa, Idaho, February 2002.
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleycon2002/AwesleyApproachtoScripture.htm>
- Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.
- Harrison, R.K. "Law in the Old Testament," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1979-88.
- Hazel, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology and New Testament Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979, 1978.
- Hurtado, L.W. *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988.
- Illingworth, J.R. *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Apologetically Considered*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1909.
- Johnston, Philip S. *Shades of Sheol: Death and the Afterlife in the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Klein, W.W. *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.
- Koester, C.R. *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature and the New Testament*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989.

Ladd, George Eldon. "Eschatology" in *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1974.

Lehne, S. *The New Covenant in Hebrews*. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990.

Longenecker, Richard N. *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, SBT 2: 17. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981.

Lyons, George. *Biblical Theology and Wesleyan Theology: 1994 WTS Presidential Address*, <http://Wesley.nnu.edu/theojrnl/26-30/30-2-01.htm>.

_____. *Holiness in Everyday Life*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1992.

_____. *More Holiness in Everyday Life*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1997.

Marshall, H. *Kept by the Power of God: A Study of Perseverance and Falling Away*. London: Epworth Press, 1969.

Martin, R.P. *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989.

McComiskey, T.E. *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985.

McKelvey, R.J. *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Montague, G.T. *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.

O'Brien, Peter T., and David G. Peterson. *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.

Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Pinnock, C.H. *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989.

- Purkiser, W.T., Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. "The Divine Judgment," "Beyond the Judgment," and "The Collapse of Evil" in *God, Man, and Salvation: A Biblical Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977.
- Robertson, O.P. *The Christ of the Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.
- Robinson, H. Wheeler. *The Christian Doctrine of Man*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911.
- Schweizer, E. "Pneuma, ktl." in TDNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 6:389–455.
- Shelton, R. Larry, and Alex R.G. Deasley. *The Spirit and the New Age: An Inquiry into the Holy Spirit and Last Things from a Biblical Theological Perspective*. Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1986. The following essays may be particularly useful: Bruce Baloian and John Hartley, "The Spirit in the Old Testament"; George Lyons, "The Spirit in the Gospels"; Wayne McCown, "The Spirit in the Book of Acts"; and Alex R. G. Deasley, "The Spirit in the Pauline Epistles."
- Snaith, Norman H. *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*. London: Epworth Press, 1944.
- Taylor, V. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. London: Macmillan, 1941.
- Turner, Alice K. *The History of Hell*. San Diego: Harcourt & Brace, 1995.
- Turner, George A. *The Vision which Transforms: Is Christian Perfection Scriptural?* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964.
- Wenham, J. *The Enigma of Evil: Can We Believe in the Goodness of God?* Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1985.
- Wesley, John. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966.
- _____. *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, on I Corinthians 11:17-22. London: Epworth Press, 1941.

_____. *"The Way to the Kingdom," The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., 14 vols, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1986:5.

Wright, N.T. *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Yancey, Philip. *What's So Amazing About Grace?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Unit 1: Introductory Lessons

Lesson 1

Introduction to the Module

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:20	Methods of Doing Biblical Theology	Small Groups	Resource 1-1
0:45	Journaling	Guided Discussion	Student Guide
0:55	Presuppositions	Lecture	Resource 1-2
1:05	Nature of the Bible	Lecture	Resource 1-3
1:20	Nature of Biblical Theology	Lecture/Discussion	
1:35	Wesleyan Perspective on Biblical Theology	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 1-4
1:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology in Crisis*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970.

Hazel, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology and New Testament Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979, 1978.

Lyons, George. *Biblical Theology and Wesleyan Theology: 1994 WTS Presidential Address*, <http://Wesley.nnu.edu/theojrnl/26-30/30-2-01.htm>

Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

Orientation

Each student needs a copy of the Student Guide.

Spend some time going through the guide. Look at the Series Foreword and the Syllabus. Make sure that the students know the dates and time for each lesson.

Exchange information with the students regarding phone numbers and email addresses.

Highlight what is expected of them in attendance and homework assignments.

The title, "Biblical Theology", may convey the mistaken notion that the Bible is a collection of logically organized statements about God and doctrine. It is not. The Bible is first and foremost an anthology of the literature of ancient Israel and the earliest Christian Church that emerged over a period of well over 1000 years and came to be recognized as the authoritative witness to the foundational convictions of both religious communities.

This literature of the Bible takes a wide variety of literary forms—various kinds of historical narratives, legal codes, genealogical records, prophetic oracles, prayers, hymns of thanksgiving and lament, letters, sermons—and styles—prose, poetry, symbolic discourse, etc. This does not mean that the Bible does not contain theology. It abounds with theological truths, but they are presented for the most part, not in an organized philosophical structure, but in narratives, symbols, rituals, hymns, legal statements, and other such forms of literature.

Although the Bible is not a sequential narrative, it does presume a coherent story of God's historical encounters with his creation from beginning to end. Numerous themes thread their way through the books of the Christian canon. In some cases the recurrence is simply a restatement of the theme. In other cases there is a growing development in the understanding of the meaning of the theme. Other theological

affirmations, however, are of more limited range, appearing in only a few or even a single book.

It is essential that we not lose sight of the reality that the divine inspiration of Scripture is to be found in its wholeness rather than in its independent, individual parts. When examining the theological implications of a text it is essential to do it in the context not only of that text but of all the other texts that address the issue. Failure to do this distorts the truth.

Nevertheless, faithfulness to the full biblical witness requires us to take seriously the distinctive theological contributions of each of the biblical books. No part of the canon can be discarded, even though we recognize that some parts address issues more effectively in one culture or setting than in another.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

At the end of this lesson, participants should

- begin to formulate a definition of biblical theology
- understand some of the methodology of biblical theology
- describe several perspectives and theological presuppositions for approaching biblical study
- describe how the Nazarene Article of Faith (4) on the Bible informs how we study and interpret the Bible

Note to Instructor

In all of these lessons you may want to adjust the proportion of lecture and discussion. Where the resources of your students are very limited you may want to use all of the lecture materials provided. If your students have access to good resources for study, they should be in a better position to discuss the issues meaningfully. It is our belief that students learn more effectively when they are preparing for discussions or presentations and when they are involved in thinking together about the issues.

Lesson Body

Small Groups: Methods of Doing Biblical Theology

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into 4 groups. Assign each group one of the methodological presuppositions.

Refer to Resource 1-1 in the Student Guide.

This section, together with the theological presuppositions, is key to the orientation and development of the spiritual life of the learner who has a popular fundamentalistic outlook on Scripture.

Allow 10 minutes for group time and 15 minutes for reports and instructor comments.

*I am uncomfortable with both of these first two formulations. I'm not sure if it's only the present wording or the content that I cannot accept. I don't second-guess OT authors. A foundational assumption of my approach to exegesis is that a biblical message cannot mean something to a contemporary reader that it could not have meant to its human author and his first readers. (Only on this basis can one challenge the bizarre fantasies of Hal Lindsey and his reading of biblical prophecy.) Of course, I recognize that the NT authors sometimes read their OT in this anachronistic way. But I am not authorized to follow their exegetical method—this was acceptable exegetical practice in their day—even if I accept their theological conclusions. Besides, it is essential (I think) to distinguish interpretation from application, exegesis from contextualization, meaning from relevance. I don't accept the notion of the so-called *sensus plenior*. I am not an apostle; I do not claim to be a divinely inspired writer. Thus, I cannot practice the rabbinic *derash* method that teases out "hidden meanings" based on hindsight. I prefer the *peshat* methods that focus on the plain/open meaning (see Richard N. Longenecker, *The**

In your group find other biblical examples of your assigned presupposition. Select a group recorder/reporter who will report to the class.

The perspective from which we approach this inspired word of God is a Christian perspective. This means:

1. That we choose to understand the Old Testament through the instruction of the New Testament. For example: we understand from the instruction of the Book of Hebrews that the work of the high priest was symbolic of the work done for us by Jesus Christ, and from the instruction of the Gospels and Acts that the Isaiah image of the Suffering Servant is a foretelling of the saving work of Jesus.
2. That we approach the whole Bible from the perspective of the Christian Church and especially of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. For example: Canticles is understood to describe not simply a loving relationship between a man and a woman, but primarily provides an example of issues in building a relationship between Christ and his Church, his Bride.

Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, *SBT 2: 17* [London: SCM, 1970 / Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981]; and David I. Brewer, Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE [Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1992], 14).

No one before Christ (so far as the surviving evidence suggests) saw the Servant Songs as Messianic prophecies. If this had been a prominent strand of Jewish expectation, it becomes totally unintelligible why most of Jesus' contemporaries rejected him. But the powerful Christian experience of the Resurrection persuaded them that he was the Messiah, despite all of the expectations he did not fulfill. Most of these early Christians simply transferred to the future, Second Coming. Their experience of Jesus and their convictions about his identity caused them to read their OT with new eyes, as it were. Thus, they concluded that the Servant Songs could apply best to Jesus and saw them in hindsight as Messianic. I do not for a moment think that the Song of Songs is about God's love for Israel or Christ's love for the Church. If it is, then Galatians could be about the terrorist attack on the New York City World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The retrospective attempts to justify the disputed canonical status of the book cannot be used to tell us what it meant or means any more than the claim that Paul wrote Hebrews makes it a fact.

It is also worth noting that the account at the same time insists that the miracle at the Sea is Yahweh's doing, and yet refers to a strong east wind blowing all night as the "natural" explanation of the event. God never acts in ways that compel belief. Even the resurrection appearance accounts all mention that "some doubted."

3. That the context of the writer and the canon needs to inform the instruction that we receive. For example, some of the laws listed in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy deal specifically with the culture of the writer's day. Deuteronomy 22:8 instructs that a parapet must be built around the roof of every house. This application of responsible living is properly applicable to the flat roofs and balconies of the Middle East and is certainly irrelevant to the thatched roofs of much of the world. Again, the canon has placed the story of Jonah among the prophets, and therefore it must be considered as a message from God to his people.
4. The divinity and the humanity of the Bible must be understood. For example: Exodus 14 and 15 each record Israel's exodus from Egypt across the sea and the destruction of the army of Egypt. The descriptions are quite different and the human use of narrative and poetry must be understood. It is essential not only to recognize the miracle of God's grace to Israel reflected in these accounts, but to look at the literary fact that chapter 14 is a narrative relating the events of the miraculous crossing, while chapter 15 is a poem expressing the emotional exuberance of a free Israel as the result of the crossing.

Guided Discussion: Journaling

(10 minutes)

Every learner should be encouraged to follow this practice in this course, for it is a major tool to help them transfer the theological concepts of Scripture into daily living.

Refer to the Journaling essay in the Student Guide.

Allow for student response.

Share from your own personal experience.

The nature of biblical theology requires us to examine our relationship with God, others, and ourselves. Journaling will help to monitor the extent to which mental and spiritual life develop while considering the things that the Holy Spirit brings to attention as we explore the issues raised in the Bible. In biblical theology we are not simply discovering what the Bible says, or what the writers thought, or what the biblical world was like, but rather we are endeavoring to discover what God is saying, to me and to the world in which I live, through the Bible.

How many of you have done "serious" journaling?

Have you done it because it has been assigned or has it become a valuable part of your life and ministry?

Would anyone like to share what journaling has done for you?

Lecture: Presuppositions

(10 minutes)

It is imperative that the learners understand these theological presuppositions. It is impossible to approach Scripture without some theological perspective.

Refer to Resource 1-2 in the Student Guide.

Review the concepts of revelation, inspiration, canon, and inerrancy in the light of Article IV.

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene, Article IV reads:

4. We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith. (Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

The word "plenary" refers to the wholeness of Scripture. The authority of Scripture is to be found in the canon as a whole, not in any individual part to the neglect of the whole. Every segment of the canon needs to be considered. A passage must not be isolated from the whole when you consider its authority as Scripture.

By "inspiration" we emphasize the divine origin and authority of the Bible. The church recognizes that the various human authors and editors who composed the books of the anthology we call the Bible were also spokesmen for God. These human words

offer unique insight into the person, ways, and words of God himself.

By “66 books” we mean the Protestant canon.

Although we recognize the devotional, instructional, and historical value of the Apocrypha, commentaries, and other spiritual writings, these 66 books of the Old and New Testaments provide unique authority as the expression of the word of God.

By “inerrantly revealing the will of God” we

mean: The Bible is a fully adequate expression of what God wants in everything relating to our salvation. This is a reminder that Scripture has a direction and concern and should not be looked to as the textbook for every area of study. Scripture is the basis for validating theological belief and authorizing right behavior (2 Tim 3:15-17). As Christians we accept the instruction of all Scripture from the perspective of the New Testament.

Note that Nazarenes do not insist that “the Bible is inerrant.” Our concern is not with some speculative theory about what the Bible is. We have no interest in defending some officially sanctioned interpretation of the Bible. Our concern is with what the Bible does—“inerrantly revealing” God’s saving disposition toward us and deeds for us.

Scripture is the foundational source of all

Christian doctrine. “Whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.” Latter-day doctrines that have no biblical warrant have no place in the theology of the Church of the Nazarene. Certainly tradition, reason, and Christian experience inform and support our interpretation of Scripture. But we do not expect agreement on views that do not arise naturally from the Scriptures themselves.

Point out that these full explanations can be found in the Appendix of the Student Guide page 384.

Lecture: Nature of the Bible

(15 minutes)

This section is the opportunity to discover what the student has learned about the Old and New Testaments, particularly as regards the origin and development of Scripture. The emphasis here is upon the development of the canon. The chart on the development of the canon is useful here.

Refer to Resource 1-3 in the Student Guide.

Review of the Nature of the Bible

As we approach the study of biblical theology it is important that we have a good concept of the nature of the Bible itself. There are three collections that are called sacred scriptures in the Christian and Jewish traditions. The Hebrew Bible, the Protestant Bible, and the Catholic Bible. Both the Protestant and Catholic Bibles include the Hebrew Bible, but the Catholic Bible includes additional books attached to or integrated into the Old Testament.

This sets the Bible apart from books such as the Book of Mormon or the Rig Veda or the Koran, which are attributed to activities of divine beings.

The Bible is not a theological treatise, nor is it a book written by the finger of God or dictated by angels and dropped to humankind from the skies. It is a compilation of a variety of forms and styles of literature composed by various men over millennia. It records the activities and thoughts of men and their encounters with God and his word.

The common element in this collection of writings is the belief that these books provide a special revelation of the nature and will of God toward humankind. The recognition of this inspiration did not occur immediately upon writing. Some were written by great spiritual leaders, and some by unknown scribes. The great variety of statements, stories, poems, letters, and decrees were collected. Some were discarded. The collections were joined and edited over time. As the people of God recognized their inspiration, they came to be considered sacred writings that could not be changed.

For a discussion of the Samaritan Pentateuch, Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and canon refer to the relevant articles in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.

The oldest of these sacred groupings was The Torah, the five books later known as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These were also called The Law, the books of Moses or just Moses, and later as the Pentateuch. This is the foundational collection of scripture that sets out the basic principles necessary for life in harmony with God and each other. We can deduce that this collection was considered sacred before the Exile. Copies of copies of the collection that survived in Samaria and that survived the exile in Babylonia and in Egypt are all very much the same.

The rabbinic consultations at the Jewish courts of Jamnia, AD 66-70 were probably the conclusion of the Old Testament canonical process. The first occurrence of a canon identical to the present Christian canon was the Festal letter of the Bishop Athanasius in AD 367.

The second grouping of sacred books occurred after the return of the Israelites from exile. The collection was known as The Prophets. These books record the activities of the Israelites and the effort of the spiritual leadership, the prophets, to get Israel to follow the ways of God that had been revealed in the Torah. They include the activities and the spoken and written messages of the prophets. A prophet was perceived primarily as a person who could speak for God. This also meant that God could show prophets the future so they were also known as seers. The key words of prophecy are "the Lord says." The 21 books were divided into two groups, the former prophets: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings; and the latter prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These collections were recognized as sacred during the time Jesus lived as man.

Luke 20:42, Acts 1:20.

The third of the three groups of books that came to be known as the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament was the Writings and included a great variety of materials. The largest segment is a collection of poems and songs. Many of these were recognized as sacred during the time of Christ and Luke made reference to this group as Psalms. Among the books are very ancient writings such as the Book of Job and the Book of Ruth. Others were more recent books of the exilic and postexilic period such as Daniel and Ezra. The focus of all of these books was on practical life in worship or in work. They included the wisdom of the sages, the actions and guidance of administrators, and the worship and confessions of the psalmists. The 13 books that formed this group were Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

During the postexilic period Greek became the common language of a great part of the Greco-Roman world, and the many Jews living in the Roman Empire needed the Scriptures in Greek. The task of translation was undertaken in Egypt. Many legends surround the work of the body of scholars doing the translation. What is important at this point is that their translation was taken from a collection of scriptures that had been brought together in Egypt, and which differed from the collection that had been gathered in Babylonia. There were insignificant differences in the Law, some differences in the Prophets, especially in the text for Jeremiah, and major additions to the Writings. This Greek translation, known as the Septuagint (LXX), became the Old Testament of the Early Church. The Roman Catholic Old Testament includes the additions found in this collection. The Septuagint retained this role until the Reformation of the 16th century when Protestant leadership chose to accept only the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament.

The Apocryphal writings were considered to be of secondary importance, although they do provide considerable historical and theological information about the periods involved.

The fourth group of books in the Bible is the New Testament. This collection of 27 writings went through many of the same processes as the books of the Old Testament, except that it took place over a much shorter period of time. The collection was not finalized until the fourth century. The Gospels and letters of Paul were the first to be recognized as Scripture and several attempts at canonization took place before the canon was finalized.

The Protestant Bible is the collection of 66 books that were canonized by the church. Even though the content of the Old Testament was that of the Hebrew Bible, the organization of the books continued to follow

that of the Septuagint. We accept that God inspired these books, in the form in which they were canonized and therefore do not seek for a more authoritative theoretical autograph. Basic to the Protestant concept is the belief that these 66 books are the canon from which Christian beliefs and practices must be developed and which critique the beliefs and practices of the church.

Lecture/Discussion: Nature of Biblical Theology

(15 minutes)

The objective is to give the learner an awareness of the issues that surround the discipline of biblical theology, and the perspective from which we have chosen to approach the subject.

Roger Hahn's history of biblical interpretation offers some useful insights here that I had not thought of before in his paper presented at the Wesley Center conference at NNU in February 2002. This paper is available in Resource 1-5 for you and the students.

Biblical theology emerged as a discipline in response to the Protestant Reformation. Although the Bible had always been a major source of theological beliefs the Church in its councils and pronouncements had been the final interpreter. The thinking reflected through these councils changed as the philosophical concepts dominating the leaders changed. The philosophy of the time period was the base for the structure of theology, the Bible provided content, and the Church decided how these fit together.

The Protestant movement made the Bible, not the Church, the final authority in the formation of theology. Biblical theology then emerged as the corrective to the dogmas and traditions of the Church. It took two centuries and the influence of both pietism and rationalism to produce the first biblical theology as distinct from dogmatic theology. The emphasis of these tomes was on the presentation of the theological content of Scripture in a systematic arrangement.

By the start of the 19th century the first Old Testament and New Testament theologies had been written. It should be noted that although John Wesley was a product of this period, his focus was somewhat different from that of his continental peers who sought to understand the theology of the writer. He not only wanted to know the theological content of Scripture but also wanted to understand how this content then exercised its authority and guidance to the followers of Christ in his day. For him this was not an academic exercise alone but was the necessary undergirding of practical Christian living.

During the 19th century, without church dogma to bring it to heel, the approach to biblical theology shifted to a description of the historical development of the faith of Israel and of the Early Church. This was in line with the changing philosophical assumptions of the period that equated historicity with truth. This

approach has brought a great richness to our understanding of the history and faith of ancient Israel and the Early Church. But the further it progressed—whether down the avenue of salvation history or identification of the core of Israelite or Christian faith—the less it looked to provision of a basis for daily Christian life.

The historical and descriptive academic task had become the primary, and even the sole focus. The result is that Biblical theology lost meaning and relevance as a separate discipline and became another historical study.

The 20th century brought in a fundamentalistic emphasis upon the Bible as the theological sourcebook. This brought in what some called a biblical theological movement with antirational and antiphilosophical tendencies. The resulting biblicist view of revelation could not exclude the rest of human knowledge from Christian accounts of God and the world. The result was an identity crisis for Biblical Theology. Attempts were made to return to the proof text role for a systematic organization of theology, or to present the theology of a particular book of the Bible, or continue with the analyses of the history of biblical theology as a discipline.

Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis.

Allow time for student response and discussion.

What does the expression “proof text” mean?

How would systematic theology be supported by proof texts?

What is the danger of using proof texts to support systematic theology?

How does the art of describing the theology of a particular book of the Bible fit with Article 4 of the Manual?

Lecture/Discussion: Wesleyan Perspective on Biblical Theology

(15 minutes)

The diagram, “A Family Tree of Religious Groups”—Resource 1-4—may help the learner to grasp the complexity of the influences on John Wesley’s thought. It is important for the student to see that Wesley’s prime emphasis was upon practical Christian living—a

Wesleyan theology, which acknowledges the normative status of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience, is better suited to the task of biblical theology. John Wesley recognized the Bible as a collection of books produced by and for various Jewish and Christian communities in different times and places.

holy life—under the power of the Holy Spirit in the German pietist tradition.

Its books were accepted as authoritative by these communities, not in isolation, but as parts of a normative collection. This collection represented not merely the consensus but also the diversity of these communities. Wesley knew that the Bible did not speak with one voice on every subject. Different biblical emphases as well as different interpretations accounted for the coexistence of such disparate theological traditions as Arminianism and Calvinism within the Anglican Church of Wesley's day.

His catholic spirit disposed him to tolerate, even celebrate, such diversity. Wesley vigorously protested against the distortion in later ages of the scriptural meaning of the words "heresy" and "schism." He insisted, "Both heresy and schism, in the modern sense of the words, are sins that the Scripture knows nothing of: but were invented merely to deprive mankind of the benefit of private judgment, and liberty of conscience."

See footnotes in Lyons WTS.

Although Wesley was a Protestant, the influence of the Church of England helped him avoid some of the extreme positions of the Reformation tradition on the subject of Scripture. Whereas Protestants in principle insisted that Scripture alone was to be the source of all Christian faith and practice, Wesley self-consciously included tradition, reason, and experience as complementary sources. They confirm, illuminate, and apply the message of Scripture.

John Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, on I Corinthians 11:17-22.

Wesley also avoided the presumption that there exists a "canon within the canon." Like Wesley, our articles of faith guard against the danger of taking individual books of the Bible as normative alone. "Any major book of the Bible taken by itself and pressed to its logical conclusion will lead to heretical distortions."

Raymond Brown, The Critical Meaning of the Bible. New York: Paulist Press, 1981, 32.

Loyalty to the primacy of Scripture gives Wesleyans a deep dissatisfaction with the easy conclusions of church dogma, even Wesleyan dogma. To be Wesleyan is to read the Bible with no prior constraint as to what it may mean, but it is also to submit biblical interpretations to the tests of tradition, experience, and reason. In these and other ways Wesleyan theology and biblical theology have much in common.

Allow time for student response and discussion.

How can tradition, reason, and experience help Wesleyans understand the Bible?

How would tradition, reason, and experience help avoid mis-interpretation of the Bible?

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to respond.

The students' statements and questions will give you an idea of where the students are in their understanding of the subject.

Give a key idea or message from this lesson.

Do you have any questions or comments on the material?

Look Ahead

The next lesson starts the study of the theological issues raised in the Pentateuch. The first of these issues is acceptance of the fact of God. The second is the recognition of God as Creator.

Bring a copy of the *Manual* to the next class session.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

- Read: Genesis 1—5 and prepare a list of at least 10 theological concepts these chapters seem to support or presume.
- Read: Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5—6, Matthew 5:21-29.
- Explore some other passages you find that address the nature of or use of the word "sin" or related words like "iniquity," "trespass," "transgression," etc.
- Look up "Cain," "Abel," and "Lamech" in your concordance; note and read each of the passages that contain those names.
- Look up "murder," "crouch/ing," and "kill" in your concordance—words chosen are from the NIV translation, you may need to look up corresponding words if you are using a different translation. Read a selection of these passages and note the issues that are raised.
- Read the essays on "Sin" and "Murder" in the NDBT (*New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*).
- Organize the results of your reading and study so that you can participate in the class discussions with other students.

Write in your journal. Reflect on your past experience/method of Bible reading and study. How do you anticipate improving during this module?

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 2

Discovering Theology in the Bible

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide Resource 2-1
0:10	Homework Exploration	Small Groups	Resource 2-2
0:35	Genesis 4	Lecture	Resource 2-3
1:00	Issues of Genesis 4	Small Groups	Resource 2-4
1:30	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	Resource 2-5
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Orientation

We look to the Bible as our primary source for doctrine and practice. This lesson uses Genesis 4 to discover how to expose theological truth: First to discover it in the setting in which it occurs and then how to use it to contribute to our theological understanding. It provides a basis for one methodology used in the module. Remember, our focus is not on developing a systematic theology, but rather on discovering the theological truths that Scripture brings to our attention.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- understand a method that can be used to reveal biblical concerns that should influence the formation of our statements of belief and our way of life
- recognize various concepts of sin that occur in Scripture
- formulate a statement or statements that express biblical views of sin, and use these to formulate a definition of sin—your definitions should be reexamined as the course continues

Lecture: Introduction

In the previous lesson we reminded ourselves of information that we studied in Old and New Testament and hermeneutics classes. In this lesson we want to focus on the theological instruction that comes from Scripture, particularly the first few chapters of the first book, Genesis.

The first 11 chapters are the prelude to the story of a very special family that came into being some 3500 years ago when a man living in the great Euphrates river valley began to realize that God was giving him directions for his life. His name was Abram. By faith he became Abraham, the father of nations and bringer of blessing to the world.

He believed that God, Yahweh, was directing him to a new life in a new land bringing into being through him

a people who would bring blessing to the tormented world in which they lived.

Psalm 8: 11ff.

During most of the next two millennia his descendants, and those that united with them, followed that calling, sometimes faithfully, but most often badly. These are the people whom God calls, "My people."

John 8: 39ff records Jesus' words to the Jewish leaders, rebuking them as children of the devil and clarifying that descendancy from Abraham is a spiritual not a physical matter. In Romans 4:6 and Galatians 3:7 Paul applies this directly to believers.

A shift takes place at the turn of the ages. One of his descendants, Joshua by name—Jesus in Greek—opened the door for all humankind to join that family by faith. He taught that it is neither physical descendancy nor formal membership that makes a people the family of God; instead, the true family of Abraham is composed of those who believe and follow this Jesus.

It was members of that family of believers, under the guidance of God, who brought the 11 chapters of Genesis preceding the establishment of the family into the Bible. The stories and poems are written or revised from the perspective of these believers in the one true God, and reflect their understanding of these issues in terms used by their culture. Genesis 1—11 describes how the people of God were set apart for God's purpose.

The major stories in these eleven chapters are:

- The creation poem
- The making and fall of man
- The story of Cain and Abel
- The story of the Flood
- The story of the tower of Babel

God, most often identified as Yahweh, is the active power in these stories. These chapters are very important to us theologically, but except for creation they are rarely referred to in the Old Testament. Certainly the Old Testament is full of the acts of Yahweh, and creation is the one theme that comes up over and over in the books of the Prophets and those of the Psalms and wise men. But if you exclude these 11 chapters, several important facts and the people who play a significant part in these chapters would simply disappear from the Old Testament:

Refer to Resource 2-1 in the Student Guide.

- Adam is referred to only in the genealogy of 1 Chronicles and in Hosea 6:7 where it is noted that Adam broke his covenant with God. It is noteworthy that God's relationship to the family of Abraham, to the Church, and to humankind after the Flood, is established as a covenant. The prophet Hosea applies this covenant concept to the

relationship between the newly created humankind and God. This will be examined when we consider the covenant concept.

The name Noah occurs in Numbers 26:33, 27:1, 36:11, and Joshua 17 each time as the name of one of the daughters of Zelophelod—an important case where daughters inherited when there were no sons.

It is usually assumed that the reference is to the man, part of whose story is told in the Book of Job. Danel may be Daniel.

There is a second Lamech, the father of Noah and he is referred to in the later genealogies of Chronicles.

Adam occurs in Luke's genealogy of Christ as the "Son of God," and is used to identify Enoch in Jude. Paul uses Adam in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 to explain that all men are sinners because Adam sinned. 1 Timothy uses Adam in the argument against women holding church office. Cain occurs as an example of evil in Hebrews 11, 1 John 3, and in Jude. Abel is an example of faith in Hebrews 11. Jesus cites him in the condemnation of Jewish leaders in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51. Noah is cited in Luke's genealogy and in Hebrews 11 as a man of faith. In Matthew 24 and Luke 17 end time is likened to the days of Noah. In 1 Peter 3 and 2 Peter 2 God's patience is noted as he waits for the ark, and then extends salvation to Noah's family.

- Noah is mentioned in the genealogies of Chronicles; and in Isaiah 54:9 when the prophet reminds Israel of God's promise; and in peculiar references in Ezekiel 14 where reference is made to three good men, Noah, Danel, and Job.
- Terah is mentioned only in the genealogies of Chronicles.
- Eve, Seth, Cain, Abel, and Lamech—the descendant of Cain; do not get a single reference in the rest of the Old Testament.
- Cities are mentioned that may have been named for Cain, Abel, Adam, and Terah but there is no definitive evidence to associate these cities with these individuals. The cities could have been named for other persons who had these names.

This sparse use of these chapters would, on the surface, indicate that they had little meaning for the message of the Old Testament. In reality they are the record of the foundation events of the nation of Israel, and like a foundation they do not often appear above ground.

The New Testament, like the old, quite frequently makes use of creation as a demonstration of the power and character of God. John chapter 1 identifies Jesus as the Word that caused creation. The New Testament also cites the actions of Adam, Cain, Abel, and Noah as important in the understanding of our relationship to God and to each other. These citations mean that our understanding of the thrust of biblical theology, when viewed from the New Testament, is rooted not only in the life of Israel, but also in God's dealings with all humankind since the dawn of creation.

In this lesson we are focusing on the sin issues raised in the fourth chapter. Other aspects, such as the anger of God, sacrifice, creation, and atonement, will be dealt with in later lessons. Your homework should open up the issue we want to highlight today. The lecture will examine the context in which the fourth chapter occurs.

Note to Instructor

In all of these lessons you may want to adjust the proportion of lecture and discussion. Where the resources of your students are very limited you may want to use all of the lecture materials provided. If your students have access to good resources for study, they should be in a better position to discuss the issues meaningfully. It is our belief that students learn more effectively when they are preparing for discussions or presentations that they make and when they are involved in thinking together about the issues.

All homework needs to be evaluated. Give students feedback on their ideas, organization, and quality of work.

Evaluation does not mean giving a grade. Grades are not the standard for successful completion of the module.

Module completion is based on attendance, completion of all work, the level of participation, and overall accomplishment of ability statements.

Lesson Body

Small Groups: Homework Exploration

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 2-2 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into groups of 2-5 students each. Ideally you should have three groups.

Allow 15 minutes for group discussion and 10 minutes for group reports of 3 minutes each.

In your group exchange and compare your lists of theological concepts from Genesis 1—5. Justify claims that you have made.

Select a recorder/reporter to report to the class.

Consider these questions:

- If chapter 4 was removed from the Old Testament, the only biblical reference to Cain and Abel would be in the New Testament. What does this mean? How does the New Testament make use of the story?
- The penalty for murder here was expulsion from society into the wilderness, the loss of stable farm life loved by Cain, and the taking up of a wandering pastoral or hunting style of life.
- When was the death penalty first instituted? How did it become so widespread that it included not only murder but sexual offenses like adultery, homosexuality, intercourse with animals, and even such acts as striking a parent and breaking the Sabbath?
- The mark on Cain was to prevent his death. Does this imply that execution for murder is wrong? Who enforces the vengeance penalty if Cain is killed?
- Is Lamech entitled to claim the vengeance penalty for his protection or is his claim to protection an attempt to avoid the death penalty?
- To what extent are we responsible for each other?
- What is the relationship of failure to sin? Did Cain sin by failing to make a proper sacrifice? How could Cain determine the nature of a proper sacrifice? What does it mean that sin crouched like a lion ready to attack when he failed?

Lecture: Genesis 4

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 2-3 in the Student Guide.

Textual Context of Genesis 4

Chapter 4 is the third story in the book of "Beginnings." It is followed by a genealogy that excludes the characters involved in chapter 4 and continues from the creation poem. If the chapter were

removed, there would be no direct reference to the events recorded in the chapter elsewhere in the Old Testament. The theological issues raised in the chapter do recur many times. They become important to our theology of sin for they show the expansion of the effects of sin in the world.

Highlights of Genesis 1—11

In order to properly study Genesis 4 we need to put it into the context of the whole of Genesis 1—11.

Creation—Story One (Genesis 1:1—2:3)

The Book of Genesis opens with the declaration of God's acts of creation. There is no discussion of the origin or nature of God, simply acceptance of his existence and power. It is a faith statement.

There are some striking similarities to the verbiage of the creation accounts of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures. In those cultures the creative activity of the gods is incidental to the conflicts among the gods. When we look at creation we will examine this in more detail.

The Genesis account is different. God decides to create the heavens and the earth. His Spirit moves over the dark chaotic formless nothingness and begins to speak order out of the chaos, light out of the darkness. God brings order where there was nothing, and does it in carefully planned stages so that the work of each day prepares for the work of the next day. He creates a self-sustaining, ordered, time-oriented, perfect universe to be managed by humankind, a creature made to be like God and with whom he has fellowship.

1. He calls light into being. Good.
2. His word creates the earth in the heavens. Good.
3. He speaks the seas and land and vegetation into being, giving the vegetation ability to propagate. Good.
4. He sets the earth and moon spinning into the cycle of night and day, rest and work, light and dark, summer and winter. Good. Light on day one, lights on day four.
5. He fills the seas and sky with life that can reproduce, and feed upon the bounty provided. Good. Earth and heavens on day two, fills each with life on day five.
6. In the final stage he turns his attention to the land and speaks into being the multitude of reproductive creatures. God then created a caretaker,

The Babylonian Creation story, Enuma elish, relates how Marduk champions some gods against the dragon Tiamat and formed the earth and heavens by splitting her body in half. Humankind was made from the blood of her consort, Kingu, and was responsible to feed the many gods.

Since the 24 hour day comes into being only on the fourth "day" of creation it indicates that the "it was evening and it was morning" that concludes each day's activity is a literary device and not a notation in a scientific record.

humankind—male and female—to take responsibility for the management of the world he had brought into being. He made them to be like himself, in his own image, both male and female. Very good! Dry land and vegetation on day three, living creatures on day six.

7. God's universe now has sequential time; order; light; life forms for air, water, and land; sustenance; reproductive ability; and a caretaker. It was time to rest, so God rested.

This emphasis on rest—Sabbath—concludes the story and becomes the base for understanding the significance of the seventh day, a foundational theological concept.

Creation and rest are two concepts that we will examine in separate lessons.

The relationship of the structure of this majestic poem to the Jewish week is obvious and it is significant for our study of chapter 4.

A word recurs at the end of every stage of the creative acts—the word “good.” God looked at each act and determined that it was good—good light; good heavens; good earth and vegetation; good seasons; good birds and fish; good animals and good mankind—both male and female. When he assessed the final result it was A+—very good! There is nothing wrong, nothing evil, and nothing improper in this universe.

This is in contrast to the later Greek view that the physical world is evil and only the spirit can be good.

The writer of this marvelous creation poem obviously wants us to note that God does “good,” loves order and gives responsibility. With responsibility comes the necessity of making a choice. This sets the stage for what is to come.

The Fall—Story Two (Genesis 2:4—3:24)

The second story has a different character. God again is presented as the Creator, and here is very clearly identified as Yahweh, the one and only God. The focus of the story is not general creation, but upon the creation and assignment of the first human pair. This unique story form, full of symbolic figures, seems unrelated to the dignified poem of good and orderly creation that we have just examined.

It should not surprise us that records that go back to way before the time of even Moses would have been circulated in different places and show the signs of having been orally transmitted from one generation to the next. Each story was a unit that had a point to make and was complete in itself. Incomplete stories related by word of mouth survive about as long as jokes where the punch line has been forgotten. All stories, like all histories, are formed from a selection of data. Sometimes the

The focus of this story is on created humankind, its relationship to the personal God, Yahweh, and the garden that became their testing ground. Yahweh forms man out of the dust of the earth, breathes his own life into him and gives him responsibility to care for the garden that he plants in Eden. Humankind is of the earth, but life is of God.

storyteller chooses what data to use to get the point across and sometimes the storyteller uses all the limited data available to him or her. We can only guess about the data available.

The rivers are named and our tendency is to associate these names with known rivers—but who knows where the rivers flowed before the Flood? The rivers flowed out of Eden, so the association of the names of three rivers—Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile—where the source of the Nile is some 4000 miles from the source of the Tigris and Euphrates implies a rather large garden stretching from Rwanda in central Africa to the borders of Russia. A big job for the first family!

The garden is perfectly situated, the source of the great rivers that water the world and is surrounded by a wealth of rich resources. The first human, Adam, is charged with the care of the garden, and is given freedom to use it and its resources. There was only one rule: The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not to be eaten. The consequence of eating it would be death. These are obviously symbolic trees that carry life on the one hand and death on the other.

The second scene of the story involves the search for a helper for Adam. God forms all of the animals and presents them to Adam. Adam names them but none are found to be a suitable helper. Yahweh then puts Adam to sleep, takes out one of his ribs, and makes a person out of the bone. When God presents her to him there was instant response: "Wow! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she is Woman, she is part of me!" The emphasis here is not primarily upon a sexual partner, but upon a helper—a social partner who is integral to Adam. The "oneness" is further emphasized by the notation that husband will leave parents to form a unity with wife.

Yahweh is doing all this for the good of humankind. He makes the garden, the animals, and woman—all for humankind's benefit.

In the process he sets the baseline for the fundamental social relationship—marriage—one man and one woman, complete together but incomplete apart. As verse 24 states, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." The pair lived in their paradise without shame for they enjoyed innocence from any wrongdoing.

The third scene of the story uses the fable story form by introducing a crafty talking animal, the snake. The form is typical of stories told to discuss a subject that people are reluctant to mention. The euphemistic use

This is a key passage for the understanding of marriage and the family and will be a focus in that lesson.

The garden, the trees, the serpent, the fruit, the nakedness, even though they may be real, must be understood as symbols representing spiritual agents and aspects of life.

Traditionally, for millennia, the story has been interpreted as a euphemistic fable style presentation of coitus as the sin rather than the literal eating a fruit. Many facets of the story

support this, particularly if it is compared to the imagery in the Song of Solomon.

of words abounds. The snake starts a conversation with the woman about the instruction given to Adam forbidding the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden.

At first the word of God is questioned—"did God really say . . . ?" Eve responds by affirming the command and dares to expand it by adding, "and you must not touch it." Then the tempter contradicts God—"You will not surely die." He adds a twisted lie: "You will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The woman accepts the statements of the tempter even though they are contradictory to Yahweh and to the fact that they are already in the likeness of God. She wants to be equal to God, sees that the fruit is edible, looks good, and has promise of wisdom, so she takes, eats, and shares with the man.

The immediate result is shame, not what she expected. The pair uses leaves to hide their previously unexperienced nakedness, then hide in the bushes from the presence of Yahweh. This new awareness of nakedness reinforces the concept that the story is euphemistically speaking of sexual misconduct. The crucial issue however is not sex but unbelief, the desire to be God, and disobedience. They do not believe that God has their best interests at heart, they want to be gods themselves, and they want to make their own rules.

Hosea 6:7, "Like Adam, they have broken the covenant."

Hosea is the only Old Testament prophet who comments on their sin. He accuses Adam—humankind—of breaking the covenant with God. From this perspective humankind was created in covenant relationship with God and was given a responsibility by God who provided for them. They rebelled against that responsibility with the result that their self-respect was immediately damaged and their relationship to God and each other was broken. The consequences of their disobedience are revealed in the continuing story.

The fourth scene of the story is the confrontation of fallen man by Yahweh God. When God comes to them as usual in the cool of the day, they now hide. Their excuse is their nakedness, and God immediately confronts them with their disobedience.

Their marriage relationship is then damaged by ugly accusations of blame. Each seeks to evade responsibility for their actions. The relationship with God has been shattered. There can be no more walks in the garden in the cool of the day. The serpent is

cursed, and becomes the perpetual enemy of humankind. The woman suffers in childbirth yet wants her husband and is ruled by him.

The wonderful partnership God intended is replaced by the dominance of male over female. Even the ecology is upset and the ground no longer produces easily but yields thorns. Man's work becomes hard, and his destiny is now to return to the dust from which he was made. Not only the sinful pair, but also every dimension of creation has been damaged by this disobedience—the spiritual, social, domestic, and ecological. Death has been let in.

Ironically Adam now names his wife Eve—life—because she is the mother of all humankind. Life can only continue now as they pass it on to the next generation. In all of this there is an act of grace. In mercy God does not totally withdraw his Spirit and death is not immediate. In loving mercy God opens the door by providing the shameful pair with a covering for their shame—the skins of animals. Blood was spilled to cover their shame. In this way, in the first of all covenants, the *chesed*—grace/mercy/love—of God is revealed.

The final scene of the story records the consequences of their action—the loss of the garden. Humankind is driven out of the garden and cherubim with the flaming sword stand guard over the way to the tree of life. Unbelief led to disobedience that resulted in shame, loss of the garden of life and banishment to the thorny world of death. But this grace went with them, keeping ajar the door of access to God.

The law of course had not been given with its complex sacrifices for redemption and restoration, but people who had the law collected these stories, and the inclusion of this act of God in the story is probably intended to bring the sacrificial provisions to mind.

Refer to Resource 2-3, page 2.

The First Children—Chapter 4

In your preparation you have been looking at a story of the first male children. We have noted that if chapter 4 was removed from the Old Testament the only biblical reference to Cain and Abel would be in the New Testament. The focus of the Old Testament is on the Covenant with Israel, and Cain and Abel are not in the genealogy of the covenant people. Why then include their story in Scripture? The existence of sisters and the struggles by Adam and Eve to raise a family and establish a home outside of Eden are ignored. The only other child of Adam and Eve to get mentioned is Seth, and nothing is stated about him except to say that he had a son.

Why is this one story about the two first brothers included in the record? Is it because it illuminates

Once again we have indirect reference to the sacrificial system that later became a part of covenant life. Also it is interesting to note that although fat today is considered unhealthy, fat in cultures where people do hard work and a lot of walking, is prized very highly. In many African cultures even today the most prized part of the animal is the inner organs with their fat.

The Hebrew chesed is overwhelmingly translated "know" throughout Scripture, but translators use more than a dozen other words to convey its meaning in various contexts. It is commonly used as a euphemism for coitus and as a description of the relationship of God to the righteous. Psalm 1 indicates that because God does not know the way of the unrighteous, they will perish. Approval, acceptance, and closeness are all aspects of its meaning.

crucial aspects of sin and provides an important note about the deterioration of relationships in the sinful world? Let us review the events of chapter 4:

- Cain, the farmer, brings an offering to Yahweh from the fruit of his fields.
- Abel, the shepherd, brings the firstlings from his flock with their fat.
- God accepts Abel's offering but rejects Cain's offering as inappropriate. The text states that God does not know or recognize his offering.

There is no direct reference to the reason why it is inappropriate. If you read back into the passage the rules of the Sinai law, the cause can be speculated. It could be argued that Cain did not bring his best fruit and produce, for that would have been inappropriate. The most common understanding is that he did not bring a lamb.

It did not need to be explained to the people for whom this was first written. They were believers under the covenant of Yahweh with Israel and these chapters are the prelude to the establishment of the family with whom the covenant would be made. The issue the writer puts before us is the reaction of Cain to the rejection of his offering.

Cain is furious when he realizes that Yahweh has accepted Abel and his offering and has rejected him and his offering. God confronts Cain with a warning about his reaction.

Yahweh reminds Cain that disappointment and unhappiness are consequences of failure, and that encouragement is the result of doing well. He warns him that anger, a natural response to making a mistake, must be controlled because anger gives sin an

The word “crouch” is used throughout the Old Testament as the position of a lion preparing to attack.

In many societies a deformed person is considered marked by God and is treated with deference and fear. Such persons are avoided since contact with them might bring the same mark to you or to someone in your clan.

This reservation is made clear in Deut 32: 35, repeated in Ps 94: 1 and in Rom 12: 19 and Heb 10: 30.

It seems odd that these notations are made when the later stories indicate that the descendants of Cain were destroyed in the Flood.

It was customary to intensify the symbolic meaning of numbers by multiplying or repeating them. It is intriguing here to note the symbolic use of the number seven. It occurred first with the days of creation—as the concluding rest day of the perfect creation and was used to institute the cycle of six days of work and one day of rest. It occurs in the protection extended to Cain—sevenfold vengeance if he were to be harmed, and here again we have the intensification of the protection by use of 77.

The Deuteronomic materials refrain from using the name Yahweh prior to the revelation of that name to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3). Other segments of the records seem more concerned to be sure that it is understood that Yahweh is

opportunity to take hold of your life. Anger and mistakes are not declared to be sin but allow sin to “crouch like a lion” ready to attack.

The word “sin” occurs here for the first time. In order to avoid sin, anger must be mastered. The implication is that sin occurs when anger acts out inappropriately.

Cain sins when he gives way to his anger and kills Abel. Yahweh again confronts Cain, who tries to evade responsibility, but God holds him accountable for his brother’s blood. Punishment is meted out. Cain is banished into the wilderness. He no longer has fields to till, and he is forced to hunt for a living, banished to the land of wandering—Nod.

The grace of God is also shown by the mark upon Cain that protects him from execution by others. The nature of the mark is not explained. It is clear that the right to vengeance is reserved for God, and human acts of vengeance on Cain are made punishable sevenfold. The death penalty for murder is not instituted. Mercy is extended even to the murderer.

The story is rounded out by a brief genealogy of Cain, listing the next six generations. The children settle in cities. Lamech, the fifth generation, takes two wives, making him the first bigamist. For the first time since Eve the names of women are listed. Adah has two children—Jabal the herdsman and Jubal the musician. Zillah has Tubal-cain, the ironsmith. Lamech kills an unidentified young man in a fight and claims protection, not sevenfold as Cain, but seventy-sevenfold. Humankind is busy justifying their evil ways.

The chapter concludes with a note about the birth of Seth to Adam and Eve, and the notation that at the time that Seth’s son Enosh was born, men began to call on the name of Yahweh. The writer is concerned to establish that not only is Yahweh the God of creation who chose to continue his relationship with humankind even after they were driven from the garden of Eden, but that as far back as Adam’s grandchildren he was worshiped.

the God of Creation and that he was worshiped from ancient times. It is possible that they worshiped Yahweh under other names, for many names are given to him in Scripture.

In the cultures of southern Africa the clan name used as a surname is the root of the genealogy and individual identity is rooted in the clan to which that individual can add or subtract praise. The individual is understood to be part of something greater than one's self. This concept is close to the biblical concept of genealogy.

Genealogies

The chapter 5 returns to the language that uses only the name "God" instead of "Yahweh God," and may be a continuation of the story of Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 into which the story of Genesis 2, 3, and 4 has been inserted. It establishes the primary genealogical table. Genealogies are very important in any culture where people want to know who they are. They establish more than the genetic relationship between people. At crucial intervals in the history of the people of God the genealogical tables are brought out in order to establish relationships.

This genealogy ends with Noah and his sons—at the end of an age. There is no indication in this genealogy of the establishment of nations, for it precedes the record of the Flood. Most remarkable in the genealogy is the age of each person mentioned. The shortest life was that of the good man, Enoch, who never died because God took him when he was a mere 365 years old. Methuselah was the oldest at 969 years—he died the same year that the Flood arrived.

We tend to assume that each child mentioned was the firstborn son. This was not the case with Adam, since neither Cain nor Abel are mentioned. Seth was born when Adam was 130. Time to the birth of the child mentioned in the list varies from 65 years to an astounding 500 years in the case of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah.

There has been a lot of speculation about these years, but they do indicate that "in the old days" people were remembered as living a long life quite different from the present. There is an implication that as sin progresses so length of life declines. Chapter 6 records that God set the limit at 120 years and Psalm 90 records that life expectancy is down to 70.

God Repents

The chapter 6 opens with fragments of ancient stories about licentious activities on earth. It is a difficult passage to translate and to understand. A great deal of speculation has gone into attempts to determine just

who these licentious people were. This effort misses the purpose of the passage which is to tell us that God is unhappy with what is going on and reduces the life-span of humankind to 120 years. His Spirit would not be in their flesh forever.

By verse 6 God is so unhappy that he says that he is sorry he created humankind and in verse seven he vows to destroy them from the face of the earth because humankind thinks evil all the time and is full of wickedness, particularly sensual promiscuity. Only one man finds favor with God—Noah. Through him there was to be a new beginning for humankind.

God Says “Enough!”

The story of the Flood is among the best known in scripture. It is THE disaster story of all time. Many cultures have recorded flood stories, and the Sumerian/Mesopotamian version, known as the Gilgamesh Epic, has many parallels to the biblical account.

In both stories the Flood comes because of God's/gods' displeasure with humankind. In both stories the survivor is warned and ordered to build an ark covered with asphalt that delivers them from a lengthy deluge. Both record the sending out of a bird to check on the level of the water. Both record worship after the release from the ark and praise for the savior.

The biblical record in Genesis 6:9 to 10:32 shows that there comes a time when God will not tolerate evil. He dispensed justice by the destruction of the existing civilization. Salvation is extended only to the one righteous man, Noah, and his family. The rescue of this remnant of humankind enables the continuation of humanity through a new covenant.

Care is taken to preserve not only Noah, his wife, and three sons, but also wildlife and farm animals. Seven pairs of all farm animals and birds, and one pair of all wild animals were preserved in the massive vessel. They shared the vessel for a year and 17 days. The first act of Noah and his family is to worship Yahweh and make a sacrifice.

In response Yahweh makes a covenant with the survivors, using the rainbow as a sign that he will never again destroy every living thing by water.

A New Beginning and New Rules

The new beginning is recorded in chapter 9. There are some differences. God instructs Noah and his sons to populate the earth as in the creation story. All animals, however, are added to plants as food for humankind and the animals now become afraid of them. The only restriction is that the blood of animals is not to be eaten. The reason given is that it is the life.

Life belongs to God and he requires the blood of all humankind and animals. A new injunction is given— whoever sheds blood is to have his or her blood shed— the death penalty for murder is instituted. Noah and his sons start to farm.

Once again the harmony that has been established is destroyed by an unacceptable act. Noah gets drunk and lies naked in his tent. Ham sees him and mocks him to his brothers. The brothers respectfully carry a blanket and, moving backward so that they do not see their father, cover his nakedness. Noah awakes aware of what has happened and curses Canaan, the child of Ham. He gives his blessing to Shem and Japheth. This story not only records the disruption of life by sinful acts and the continuing presence of sin in the lives of humankind; but also provides an etiology for the rejection of the Canaanites as the possessors of the Promised Land.

Refer to Resource 2-3, page 3.

Origin of the Nations

Chapter 10 is the conclusion of the story of Noah. It lists the descendants of the 3 sons and notes the territories that they occupied. This should not be seen as a complete list, but rather as an etiology for the relationship of various Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and African nations to each other.

It is not a “normal” genealogy that lists the forefathers of a specific person, but rather sets out parentage for nations. Even that is not complete. For instance Ham has four children, Canaan is the one that gets most of the attention, and Canaan is the nation with which Israel is most closely associated. Put’s descendants, however, are not listed at all. This listing also reminds us that genealogies are selective.

There are 5 sons of Shem in 10:21, Elam being the first cited. Does this mean that Elam was the firstborn? When the genealogy of Shem is given in chapter 11, only the third son, Arphaxad, is of interest because he is the ancestor of Abraham. Arphaxad was born two

years after the flood. If Elam and Asshur are his older brothers, were they possibly on the ark?

If you do not have time for this part of the lecture you can copy it and give it to the students.

If at anytime you feel you would like to spend more time, in class, on a particular area; you can copy the other lecture areas and give them to the students.

Questions to Keep in Mind

Many questions come to mind as we read such passages. Our interest in history and chronology means that we try to use genealogies for dating. The problems of doing this and of all ancient dating efforts are many.

One factor is our knowledge of ancient number systems. The present numeric system came into use less than 1000 years ago. Our system uses the base 10—computers use base 2. Many ancient systems used 12, 6, or even 60 as a base. The Roman system is probably the best known to us of the ancient systems, and yet it seems very strange and clumsy, for like most old systems it did not have a symbol for zero.

Added to this, numbers often are used symbolically. Even today we do this. For instance “a 10” does not mean numeric 10, but perfect. Numbers like 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12 and multiples, repetitions or combinations of those numbers are often used symbolically. This is most common in apocalyptic writings, but occurs in other biblical literature and possibly even in some genealogical dating. Common symbolic meanings are: 3—God, divine; 4—man, world; 6—evil; 7—perfection; 10—complete; 12—religious or social structure; 40—complete time of man; 666—ultimate evil; 70—perfect period; 1000—absolutely complete; 144000—absolutely complete church.

Another problem is calendar. Today we, and most of the world, use the Gregorian calendar of 12 months composed of 28 to 31 days each in order to come out to 365 days for three years and 366 days every fourth year. Ethiopia still uses the Julian calendar that has 28 days each month for 13 months. The present Jewish calendar is 12 months of 29 to 30 days each except on leap years when it has 13 months.

What calendar did the writer have in mind when giving the dates and days in the Noah story?—or many other biblical records. How long were the months? It is often difficult to find out which calendar is in use throughout Scripture because Babylonian and Egyptian and even the Israelite understanding of calendar changed over time. About 400 BC the calendars changed from 360 days a year to 365 days a year.

The kinds of questions that we are asking are ones that arise out of our concerns and interests. We bring our own questions to the text. It is difficult and sometimes even impossible to get answers to our questions if the writer did not share in our concern and interest. It is very easy to move to a wrong conclusion.

To discover the biblical emphasis we need to ask:

- Why was this written?
- What was the writer's concern?
- Why was the passage included in the book by the compiler/s?
- Why is it included in the canon?

Biblical theology is not a matter of trying to find answers to the questions that we have—that is better done by systematic theology—but rather, what is the truth or the issue that the writer wants to bring to our attention? In the case of this genealogy he wants us to recognize the relationship that exists between the nations that took part in the events of that day—the Old Testament period. He wants us to recognize that we are all descendants of Noah and his sons.

Tower of Babel

The final recorded incident of events prior to Abraham is the story of the appearance of languages. This explanation presents language as a punishment imposed by God upon a people who were arrogantly asserting their equality with God. A secondary result is that the confused people scattered over the face of the earth. Languages are presented as divisive. A common language unites. It is interesting that the origin of nations presented in the genealogy is not linked to the development of different languages nor is the punishment of diverse languages presented as the cause of the formation of nations.

There is no direct reference to this event anywhere else in Scripture although the prophets and psalmist do refer to life among a people whose language they do not know as an aspect of the horror of the Exile.

The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is sometimes seen as the reverse of this event, for on Pentecost people from "all the earth" were gathered and the message of God was made known to them in their own language. The gift of speaking in other languages brought people together.

Shem to Terah

This final genealogy of Genesis chapters 1—11 takes us to the father of Abraham and thereby establishes the link between creation and the physical and spiritual family that is the concern of the remainder of Scripture. The length of life drops from the 600 years of Shem to the 205 of Terah, and after that few live to the 120-year limit indicated in chapter 6. Abraham is identified as being of the lineage of Shem, one of the blessed sons of Noah.

Summary of Theological Issues of Genesis 4

The overall theme shows a downward spiral in the growth of evil and violence in the world. God creates a perfectly good universe in which man and woman are created in God's image with the ability to choose—chapter 1. Man is assigned responsibilities and given a warning. Unbelief is followed by disobedience—chapters 2 and 3.

Tradition, primarily because of the euphemistic language used, associates the initial disobedience with sexual misconduct. The result is disrupted relationships, loss of the garden, a sense of shame, blaming others, ecological disaster, and decay that leads to death.

The seeds of evil have been sown. Sin has entered the world. God extends his mercy. His Spirit is not totally withdrawn and he sends them from the garden into a spoiled world, but with clothing for their shame. The base for understanding original sin, its consequences, and the nature of the sinful act has been established.

The downward spiral continues in chapter 4. The first children are a contrast of success and failure. Abel pleases God. Cain fails. Hatred and murder follow his failure. The consequence is banishment from society. Mercy marks the killer for his protection. Before the chapter closes bigamy has been introduced and attempt is made to justify violence as a response to attack. The issues of responsibility, intention, murder, and vengeance have been raised.

By chapter 6 God observes that humankind's thoughts are dominated by evil continually. The examples of evil reveal a self-centered, ruthless, violent, and unchecked sexual promiscuity. God says, "Far enough!" and the downward spiral is checked as the world is destroyed

by water. The issue of the total depravity of humankind has been raised.

The new start is complicated by drunkenness that leads to sexual misconduct, scorn, and cursing. The sad story of sin and failure is repeated with the descendants of Noah, who fathered all the nations of the earth. In chapter 11 is the arrogant attempt of humankind to put themselves out of the reach of God.

Once again God says enough and disrupts communication by giving people different languages. The people who now speak different languages scatter into the far reaches of the earth. Now, for a third time, God makes a new start. This time he chooses to develop a nation that will serve him and calls Abraham to leave his people and land and walk in faith with him.

The marvelous story of the revelation of the love and mercy of God through Abraham's descendants begins. This is the story of the rest of the Old Testament and continues into the New Testament with the story of the true spiritual children of Abraham.

Small Groups: Issues of Genesis 4

(30 minutes)

Refer to Resource 2-4 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into 3 groups. Assign one of the topics to each group.

Each group will need a copy or see the statements from the other groups.

This could be done by having each group write their statement on a markerboard or flipcharts.

In your group read the assigned topic. Prepare a statement to bring to the whole class. This will be used when it is time to formulate theological statements arising from this chapter.

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 2-5 in the Student Guide.

You can have the students work in the same groups as before or assign new groups.

Take the information in today's lesson, both from in class and your preparation and formulate at least two theological statements that you consider important today. Briefly outline what these statements say and then tell about the character of God and his requirements for humankind.

Instructor information concerning formulation statements can be found on page xv in the Introduction to the Faculty Guide.

When you have completed this task move into your small group to discuss and evaluate your statements.

Compare your statements to any similar issues in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene, especially the Articles of Faith (§§1-22), the Covenant of Christian Character (§§27) and The Covenant of Christian Conduct (§§33-38) and the Current Moral and Social Issues (§§903)

Are any of the statements you have formulated important enough to be included in a catechism—the instrument for informing new believers of the faith? Raise this question in your small groups and record any such statements in your catechism file.

While the formation of statements is an ongoing project for the module, you need to keep track of the thinking of the individual students as they progress in the formation of ideas and statements.

It is best if this is kept on a computer so that you are able to amend it, and not only add to it but also move statements around for better organization and instruction. If you do not have a computer, you can accomplish the same level of flexibility by writing each statement—with supporting scripture references—on a 3 X 5 index card. Cards can be re-ordered to create your structured catechism. It is valuable to keep a copy of the catechism at each stage so that you are aware of the way in which you own understanding of the faith is developing.

You will not be collecting these statements but remind students that they need to keep these statements for completions of a catechism in Lesson 23 and 24.

Collect homework that has not already been collected.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on one person from each group to read one of his or her group's statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review:

Genesis 6—9; 12; 15—19; 22; 24; 27—29; 32; 37—39; 50

Exodus 1—4; 12—15; 18—21; 32

Leviticus 15; 16; 19

Numbers 6; 12; 13

Deuteronomy 1; 6—8; 12; 17; 34

Prepare a list of at least ten theological concepts these chapters seem to support or presume.

Read: Part Two: Biblical Corpora and Books: "Genesis to Kings" *NDBT*

Read: The essays in *NDBT* entitled:

Abraham	Israel
Atonement	Jacob
Blessing	Joseph
Covenant	Joshua
Creation	Land
Deuteronomy	Law
Evil	Leviticus
Exodus	Numbers
Faithful	Obedience
Genesis	Seed
God	Serpent
Humanity	

You may want to divide this list into 2 or 3 parts and assign students to read and report on only 1 part.

Write in your journal. How has your understanding of the stories in Genesis changed from when you were a child?

Unit 2: Overview of the Bible

Lesson 3

The Torah

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide Resource 3-1
0:10	Homework Exchange	Small Groups	Resource 3-2
0:45	Theological Concepts in the Torah	Lecture	Resources 3-3—3-6
1:25	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	Resource 3-7
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Orientation

The Torah is the foundation for the understanding of God and his relationship with humankind and particularly to those whom he called “my people.” This lesson is an overview of the major theological issues in the first five books of the Bible.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to explain the theological foundations for the biblical theology of:
 - creation
 - covenant
 - community

Introduction

An example of this is our own Nazarene textbook, God, Man, and Salvation.

Walter Eichrodt used this for his two-volume OT theology.

Gerhard von Rad used this theme for his theological presentation of Salvation History.

The Bible is a book of theology. It teaches us about God, our relationship with him and about humankind and the world in which we live. It is not a systematic theology organized in the Greek philosophical patterns that we are accustomed to in theology books. Nevertheless this collection of a wide variety of literature types is the foundation for Christian theology. There are many ways in which the theological development can be organized. One way is to utilize a philosophical, systematic structure like *God, Man, and Salvation* and then look for the passages that illuminate the biblical understanding of these topics. This system became very common under the dominating influence of Greek philosophy.

Another way is to look for the theme or themes that make the Bible a theological whole. Covenant is one theme that has been used, as when covenants were made by God with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and the Church. Another theme is to see that the Bible records multiple acts of salvation throughout history—saving Adam, saving Noah, saving Abraham, saving Israel over and over, and finally saving the world through the Church established by Jesus Christ.

We are not attempting to provide an organization of theological truth into a particular structure, but rather

to observe the theological truth thrust at us by the records we encounter in canonical Scripture.

Refer to Resource 3-1 in the Student Guide.

Scripture is organized into a canon. The three sections of the Jewish organization of scripture were viewed in different ways. The Torah was perceived as the foundation upon which all the rest of the canon rested. It provided the roots of Israel and the corps of truth that enabled Israel to know and do the will of God. The former and latter Prophets recorded the observance, and more often the non-observance of the Law by the people of God and the effort of God through his prophets to bring his people back into line. The sometimes even heavy hand of discipline and the great mercy of God come to the fore.

The Writings are the assorted collection of practical records—teaching tools, hymnbook, discussions of difficult topics, instructive stories, and alternative historical records—that brought guidance and understanding into the application of the truth of the Torah to daily living.

It is noteworthy that, even before the New Testament came into being, the organization of the Old Testament was being revised by those under the influence of Greek philosophy, with the result that the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament, organized the books a little differently. Emphasis shifted to the elevation of historical record, and the concept of who is a prophet changed. No longer was it imperative that prophets speak “the word of Yahweh,” they only needed to foretell the future. The former prophets and some of the writings became history, and the great foreteller, Daniel, joined the prophets. The early Christian church followed the LXX, and even Protestants, when they rejected the LXX in favor of the Jewish Old Testament canon, kept the LXX organization.

One of the simplest ways to view Scripture is to see it as a record of three things:

1. Creation, formation, and development of the nations. This is the primary statement upon which all else rests. It asserts belief in God and God’s involvement with humankind without which there is no coming to God, no theology. It asserts the goodness of God and His creation. It asserts the unbelief and disobedience of humankind and the human predicament of sin. All this in only 11 chapters of the first book, Genesis.

2. The scene shifts to the formation, development, and life of Israel, who are called to be the people of God. About 3500 years ago a man living in the cradle of civilization began to realize that God was giving him directions for his life. His name was Abram, son of Terah, originally of Ur in the land of the Chaldeans on the northernmost tip of what is today called the Persian Gulf and then resident in Haran, the northernmost river port on the Euphrates.

Abram believed God was making a covenant with him. This covenant would take him to a new life in a new land as the father of innumerable people, a covenant people. The purpose of the covenant was to bring transformation and blessing to the tormented, dying world in which humankind now lives. During the next 1500 years his descendants followed that calling, sometimes faithfully, but often badly. All the rest of the 39 books of the Old Testament relate this story.

3. Then comes the new covenant, the New Testament, which records the formation of the Church, the new, the spiritual Israel, and brings to the fore the mission of the people of God—the salvation of humankind from sin. It provides through Jesus the full flowering of our understanding of the theological insights presented in the Old Testament. These are pivotal points in the development of the biblical presentation of theology.

In the Lessons 3—5 we are going to examine the Old Testament according to the divisions that the Jewish rabbis gave to the books.

Note to Instructor

In all of these lessons you may want to adjust the proportion of lecture and discussion. Where the resources of your students are very limited you may want to use all of the lecture materials provided. If your students have access to good resources for study they should be in a better position to discuss the issues meaningfully. It is our belief that students learn more effectively when they are preparing for discussions or presentations that they make and when they are involved in thinking together about the issues.

Lesson Body

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(35 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students.

Refer to Resource 3-2 in the Student Guide.

Allow about 20 minutes for discussion in the groups and about 15 minutes for reports and discussion.

In your group share the theological concepts that you recorded from your reading assignments. Sort these into four categories: Creation, Covenant, Community, and Other.

Discuss, develop, and organize the statements in each of the first three categories so that you can make a report on the understanding that your group has of each theological category.

Lecture: Theological Concepts in the Torah

(40 minutes)

There is an extensive amount of information given for this lecture. You will need to decide what and how much information you want to use.

Our subject is the Torah, the instruction, usually referred to as the "Law" or as "Moses" in the New Testament. It was the first section to be recognized as Scripture, revealing the nature and will of God for his people. It formed the foundation for all that follows. Since it is five books it is also called the Pentateuch. It provides us with the basic information about God and man: Who am I? Why do I exist? What is my relationship to the other?

These questions are not answered in the logical systematic manner we have learned from Greek philosophy. They are answered by stories, genealogies, and the revelation of the Law. It is impossible in this course, let alone this lesson, to expose and develop all of the theological issues raised in this foundational corpus. We have chosen to examine three of the most important theological concepts that emerge from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and

Deuteronomy:

- Creation
- Covenant
- Community

Creation

The creation poem that opens the Book of Genesis is rich in theological truth. It simply assumes the existence of God and God's involvement with his creation; an absolute necessity for any approach to

Refer to Resource 3-3 in the Student Guide.

God as Hebrews 11:6 rightly states, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists."

Creation Reveals the Character of God

Creation is an activity of God alone through His word. God speaks and it is done. It is initiated by God. No one else is involved. Everything that exists came into being this way. Unlike the myths of the Egyptians, Sumerians, Akkadians, and Greeks that circulated in biblical days, no aspect of creation is the result of feuding or power struggles among the gods, nor some accidental result.

God creates because God wanted to create. Creation displays some aspects of the nature of God, for creation emerged from him. The apostle Paul opens his discourse to the Romans (1:20) with a clear statement of this belief. He holds all humankind accountable for their actions because they have had opportunity to observe creation and therefore to discover something of the holy nature of God. Theologians speak of this as natural revelation. Throughout Scripture creation is used to present different aspects of God.

The Glory of God

The usual evidence of the presence of God throughout the Old Testament is the *kabod*, the glory of God. God conceals himself from humankind by smoke and fire, and warning abounds that even the most righteous among humankind, men such as Moses, Isaiah, and Elijah would die simply by exposure to the full presence of the face of God.

Even in the New Testament we can only see God in the perfect human form of Jesus, the opportunity to see him "face to face" is reserved for heaven. The very fact of creation reveals that God is other than a creature. God is not tied to the limits of space and time that provide the boundaries for humankind. At the same time God accommodates himself to his human creature.

It is unique that the first man and woman had fellowship with God, walking with him in the garden. There is no inference that they were unable to see him. After the fall, however, humankind hides from the presence of God. From this point on whenever God reveals himself, it is not a full revelation, but is concealed in the smoking glory of his presence.

Moses in Exodus 33 is permitted only to see the back parts of God for no man "may see my face and live" said God; Elijah in 1 Kings 19 hides in a cave as he waits for God to come, and covers his face before going out to listen to the "gentle whisper"; and Isaiah in chapter 6 becomes acutely aware of his pending death when he sees God in a vision, but is saved by the cleansing touch of the fire to his lips.

William Greathouse notes that the essential meaning of the Hebrew word usually translated as glory, *kabod*, is the visible presence of God.

The New Testament continues to use the concept, but makes clear, especially in John's Gospel—1:14, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son." Jesus as the visible revelation of the Glory of God replaces the concealing smoke and fire. He is the ultimate accommodation of God's revelation to humankind.

We should also note that the Old Testament consistently affirms that creation reveals the magnificence, holiness, and righteousness of God—Psalms 19 and 97. The beauty of his work compels humankind to bow before him. This evidence of God's presence and character, sinful man can observe.

The Power of the Word

The mere word of God brings everything into being. No struggle is indicated, just the simple statement "let there be" and there was. Over and again in Scripture creation is cited as evidence of the power, knowledge, and wisdom of God. The Hebrew word *bara* implies that God brought it into being from nothing. He did not make it out of existing matter.

In the Prophets the power and knowledge of Yahweh God the Creator is affirmed. Isaiah notes in chapter 40 that not only is the Creator tireless, but also no one can give him an IQ test, and no one can measure his power (40:28; 43:15ff). God needed no advice for the creation of the universe or the variety of creatures that he brought into being, all of which are subject to him.

The apostle John opens his Gospel with the affirmation that this Word that brought creation into being is the very same Jesus who became flesh and lived among us. All the power, wisdom, and knowledge of God is his, and as Paul's epistle to the Philippians (2:5-11) relates, he laid it down to accept the limitations of his human creatures and bring them salvation.

God Brings Order Out of Chaos

One of the most striking aspects of the theology of the first story is the revelation of God's orderliness. Chaos—*tohu* and *vohu*—are transformed into a universe with light and purpose. Everything occurs in order so that what it needed for the next creative step

is in place right down to the ability of plants and animals to reproduce. The pattern the poet chooses to express this orderliness is the Jewish week that culminates in the Sabbath. In their calendar the new day ends at sunset and the new day begins at dawn.

The pattern links the light of the first day to the luminaries of the third, the waters of the second to the birds and fish of the fourth, and the land and vegetation of the third to the animals and humankind of the sixth. The giving of the Law to the people of God enables the maintenance of orderly living. Throughout Scripture comes the reminder that God has established order and government, determining who will rise and who will fall among the nations.

God Gives Purpose

The creation account also indicates that the focus of God's attention is humankind. He creates the world in its universe as a dwelling place for humankind. He creates them as the caretakers of the world. They are charged with that responsibility. They have the privilege of fellowship with God. There is no indication that any of this was done to meet some need that God had. It was simply God acting in accord with his holy character.

God Is Good

The affirmation at the end of each day of creation is "it was good." On the sixth day a check over everything done brings the statement "it was very good." What God does is good. This is his character. Goodness flows from him, for it is an aspect of holiness, as is justice and love.

Consistently through Scripture God always chooses good, God supports good, God rejects and destroys evil. The implication is that where there is evil it is the result of choosing other than God. This perfect universe is a manifestation of his holiness, his goodness, and his love. Since Scripture tells us that humans, male and female, were created as a manifestation of his likeness, they were created without evil but with potential to choose.

There is, however no implication that all aspects of humanity display the totality of God. God remains the Creator who gives humanity certain characteristics that are not a part of his eternity. Sexuality is one of those, being an aspect of the procreative need of humanity. Sexuality, and all other aspects of humanity, is a

Genesis 6:5

Matthew 19:17, KJV.

means through which choice can be exercised. The tragedy of the Fall can be seen not only in the original choice but in the fact that humankind was so overcome by evil until that was the dominating character of human thought. After Eden down through time, humanity was evil, just as Jesus said: "there is none good but one, that is, God."

God Rests

First, the concept of resting one day in seven originates with the cessation of the creative work of God. Humans should rest because God rested. God gave this day a blessing and made it a day in which humanity could also rest and bask in the holiness of God. There are several aspects to the Sabbath that relate to humankind and will be examined in the next unit.

Second, orderliness is linked to the seventh day. God rests, humanity joins him in that rest. There has to be a break from the normal activities, the work, of living that turns the attention of humanity to the Creator, the source of life and strength. This rest is entrenched in the Ten Commandments and broadened in the laws to include rest for the slave, rest for the soil, and a restoration to the original owner of inherited land. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 3 turns the attention of Christians to rest in faith in God, as the ultimate in the meaning of the Sabbath.

Leviticus 25 discusses the jubilee year, which is the great year of celebration (50th year) after seven sabbaths of years (49 years). Although there is no record in the narratives of the life of Israel that this was observed, it is presented as the ultimate rejoicing when all relationships are returned to normal as the people of God rest in Him.

Mark 2:27

Jesus himself reminds Israel that the Sabbath is not the imposition of restrictions upon humankind, but rather was established for the benefit of them. It is humankind's opportunity to enjoy the rest that God himself enjoys.

The establishment of the Sabbath does not imply that God became tired and had to take a rest. Rather it is recognition that he had completed the work of creation and now gave his creation the opportunity to function. God was letting go of his creation. He put incredible trust in humankind whom he had charged with the supervision of the earth. He took his hands off, giving humankind freedom to choose.

Creation Reveals the Nature and Purpose of Humanity

The creation story is the primary basis for understanding humankind as moral beings. It is clear that humans are not God; we are creatures and not creator. At the same time we are held accountable for

our actions and responsible for the care, preservation and development of the earth. The first theological story of creation focuses on the work of God who places humankind at the climax of the creation event and affirms creature-hood, goodness and that humankind is created in the image of God. The second theological story of creation focuses on humanity's relationship with God, to each other, to the world and their actions following creation.

Refer to Resource 3-4 in the Student Guide.

The use of the two different terms does not indicate a theological difference between image and likeness, but is simply a part of the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.

Jesus, when addressing his questioners in Matthew 22:30, makes clear that marriage/sexuality is not an aspect of heaven. It is earth related.

Humankind is Created in the Image of God

The *imago Dei*, image of God, is one of the primary theological concepts. Humankind, a creature, is given the image or likeness of God. At the same time they are not posited to be equal to God. Humankind has the limits of creatures. Physical existence—in a time and space bound context—is part of the human predicament, not part of Godlikeness. Sexuality is a part of humanity, and the first poem does not distinguish between the sexes when it states that *adam* is created in the image of God. Both male and female are created “in his image.”

The second creation story further emphasizes that the two sexes when united make the whole: “they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The “image of God” lies not in skin color, body shape, intelligence, sex, or facial characteristics but in the unique relationship of the presence of the Spirit of God within humans. Humankind thus shares the holiness of God that is expressed in right action. It is the basis for morality. It is this that differentiates humankind from other animals and the rest of creation.

The word ruach in Hebrew carries the meaning of wind, breath, and spirit, and this dual or triple meaning of the word continues into the New Testament in Greek. The correct meaning has to be determined from the context in each case.

The second story emphasizes that this special relationship to God is the result of God inserting his breath, his Spirit, into humankind and brings to the fore another aspect of the relationship. This *ruach*—breath or Spirit—gives humankind life. The life of this creature is lived within the limits of time and space. At the same time this life-giving Spirit gives the freedom of choice.

The credo Paul cites in Philippians 2 includes the statement that Jesus did not consider equality with God a thing to be sought. He let go of his God prerogatives and accepted the limitations of a creature.

In the straightforward terms of the story it is the choice between good and evil—obedience or disobedience to the instruction of God. The tempter entices by inferring that God has not told the whole truth. You only become like God when you assert yourself as the authority to decide what is good and what is evil. Seduced by this desire to be God, not merely godlike, humankind chooses disobedience and consequently loses the source of life.

The result of their choice was not what they expected. Shame was immediate, and shattered relationships followed. Retention of the gift of the life-giving breath of God is dependent upon making right choices—choosing to obey the command of God, choosing to believe the word of God, choosing to accept the creatureliness of humankind.

The consequence of disobedience is death, the loss of the image of God, the loss of the indwelling Spirit of God. The story makes clear that this loss not only affected the first pair but the world and future generations. With the breath of God gone the ability to choose right is lost. At the same time the story reveals that God extends his *chesed*, his grace, love, and mercy, to humanity by allowing continued physical life.

There is a progressive revelation of this *chesed*. To the first pair God graciously helps them cover their shame, and even though they are expelled from the garden, they are given hope that one day the serpent's head will be crushed. Throughout the Old Testament we witness the grace of God as his Spirit strives with humankind, giving life and giving enablement to them. But it is only when we come to the New Testament that we witness once again the gift of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in humankind.

Humankind Lives and is Empowered Because of the Gift of God's Spirit

It is only the grace of God that allows life to continue in this sin-damaged world. Genesis 6 reminds us that if God's Spirit is withdrawn, life ceases. He set the limit of his striving with humans at 120 years. The Spirit not only enables life but also enables action. This does not always mean that the anointed person behaves ethically.

Genesis 6—10

Genesis 12:1ff

Exodus 3:12

Noah was empowered to build the ark but was far from perfect in his behavior. Abraham goes out from Haran because God is with him, but his trust in God has to grow. Moses is empowered by the presence of God who promises to be with him, but even this great man disobeyed and was unable to enter the Promised Land.

Over and again in Judges we see God's Spirit falling upon the leaders of the nation to enable them to act on behalf of Israel. These leaders were empowered for a task and often were not ethical in their behavior. Samson is a poor example of morality. The psalmists frequently note that it is the presence, the Spirit, of God that leads them into scripture and into life.

Genesis 5:24

Genesis 37ff

Matthew 17:3

Daniel 6:4

When the Spirit of God comes upon the prophets they were enabled to speak the word of God. Anointed by the Spirit of God, kings were enabled to rule the nations, but certainly David did not rule with personal ethics, and he was considered to be the best of the kings. Old Testament stories that indicate an abiding presence of the Spirit of God with a person, enabling ethical behavior, are rare—Enoch, about whom we know little apart from the fact he walked with God; Joseph, who determined to serve God at all costs; Moses and Elijah, who were permitted to appear with Jesus on the mount; and Daniel, whose fellow workers could not find fault with him. They are unique cases that highlight the fact that the Holy Spirit was not poured out upon all humankind.

The creation accounts reveal that death now rules the world and humankind continues to live only by the *chesed*, the grace of God. This grace enables action. This grace is the basis for the covenants that God will make with humankind.

Humankind Has a Purpose

It is well to remember that adam is the word for humankind in many Biblical passages and only occasionally is used as the name of the first man. It is only in the second creation account that the names Adam and Eve are used.

Creation also affirms the purpose of humankind. In the first creation story *adam*, male and female, is created for the pleasure of God. *Adam* is the pinnacle of the creative acts of God and is blessed with the image of God. Fellowship with God is the unique purpose and privilege of humankind. This fellowship is the essence of the worship of God. Essentially it is participation in the holiness of God, the consistent doing of good, the attitude of *chesed* or mercy and the acknowledgement that God is Creator, God is God and humankind is his creature.

Micah 6:8

Micah captures this in his summary of the desire of God: "He has showed you, O man [*adam*], what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy [*chesed*] and to walk humbly with your God." This is the primary purpose and the essence of worship.

There is also a specific charge given to *adam* by God. It is the ecological responsibility for the world. In the first account humankind is charged with the care of the fish, the birds, the animals, the land, the insects—everything on or in the earth. They are to be fruitful and rule over it all. The root of this charge is contained in the primary responsibility—the doing of justice, practice of love for others and the humble walk with God.

Humankind Is Intended to Fellowship with God

One of the remarkable aspects of the first story of creation is that it does not end with “job done”, but with God taking a Sabbath. He rested, and he blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The concept of the seventh day as a day of worship and rest appears again after Israel has stood at the foot of Mount Sinai and received the law of God.

The concept of Sabbath was not associated only with a day, but primarily with recognition of our dependence upon God and the need to worship him. The seventh day as a day of worship and of cessation from any work was very much a part of Judaism by the time of Christ. The rabbis had given a multitude of interpretations and expansions of the Sabbath law, attempting to close every loophole one might use to work on that day. The focus had basically shifted from worship—fellowship with God—to abstinence from work.

One of the emphases of Jesus was on the Sabbath. He attended the synagogue for worship, but he also healed and even approved the crushing of grain for hungry men to eat. Matthew 12 narrates the basic position of Jesus on the Sabbath. He declares that the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath. Mark 2:27 records that he declared: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” He “did good” on the Sabbath, which he declared God had established for humans.

In the third and fourth chapters of the Book of Hebrews the meaning of the Sabbath is explained. The emphasis is not upon keeping day seven as a holy day, but upon entering into the rest promised by God for his people. Israel should have enjoyed a rest in God when God brought them out of Egypt and took them to the Promised Land, but they rebelled and lost out on entering into that rest. In 4:7 the implication is that the rest they should have enjoyed is the rest that God enjoyed after the six days of creation. This is in no way a cessation of living, but an enjoyment of fellowship and of creation.

This rest of faith is the re-establishment of a right relationship with God that is his gift, and cannot be accomplished by our efforts. It is a spiritual rest—a real peace (*shalom*)—of which the seventh day was the symbol. On the part of God it implies that he trusts humankind to choose the right. On the part of us it implies a total trust in the goodness, love,

righteousness—holiness of God. As in Eden it requires the presence of the breath of God in humanity.

Humankind Introduces Sin into the World

The creation stories record that God brought into being a “very good” world inhabited by “very good” creatures. One of those creatures, humankind, was given the “image of God” and was charged with the care of the world. Freedom to choose, and especially freedom to choose to accept God’s authority or to declare itself the authority, was a part of that image. As long as there were no rules there could not be a challenge to the authority of God. But a rule was given and disobeyed.

Suddenly they found the emptiness of being their own god. Shame and blame followed, and then they tried to hide from God. Sin, rebellion against God, had entered and every aspect of the perfect world was damaged: Their relationship with God was shattered; their relationship with each other was damaged.

Where the woman had been a partner, her desire and her husband now ruled her. Unbelief, which led to disobedience, was the cause of the disaster. Humankind had chosen to let evil into their nature and world. The abiding breath of God was gone. Without the presence of God in life, the freedom to choose right, and the image of God was lost. And, except for the mercy of God, humankind faced total destruction.

God’s holy character of righteousness and love is also revealed, and is the source of hope. The penalty is applied. Hardships become a part of life. The perfect garden is no longer accessible. The walks with God are no longer possible. But God extends mercy and gives hope. Scripture records the long process through which humankind travels toward the day when God can once again be at home in the heart of humankind and they can truly live as the image of God.

Covenant

Living in a covenant relationship with God becomes a major theological issue throughout Scripture. We will be examining the covenants with Israel and with the Church in a later lesson. These two covenants lend their names to the two segments of Scripture—the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. There are many other covenants. At this point we want to examine the different covenants and establish the dominant role of covenant in biblical theology.

Covenants of the Old Testament

Refer to Resource 3-5 in the Student Guide.

Adam: In Hosea 6:7 it is written in the NIV that Israel broke the covenant just like Adam. In this translation Hosea's implication is that there was a covenant between God and humankind at the very outset of creation. Other modern translations are uncomfortable with the Hebrew and modify it to the place name making it read "at Adam/ah" (RSV, NRSV, NEB). The KJV translators treated *adam* as the generic form and translates it "like men." Covenant is thus reserved as a concept for the relationship between God and fallen humankind.

Noah: The first recorded covenant is between God and humankind following the Flood (Genesis 9). God establishes a covenant with Noah that requires the building of the ark and the collection of pairs of animals that are brought into the ark together with his family. God then saves those in the ark. The rules of this covenant imposed upon the family of Noah, the parents of us all, after the salvation experience are the freedom to eat animals, the responsibility for the shedding of blood, and in particular the requirement to execute murderers. God makes a promise that there would never again be a destruction of all humankind by water and gives the sign of the rainbow as assurance of his promise.

Abraham: In Genesis chapters 12, 15, and 17 we read the record of the covenant that the Lord makes with Abram. Abram is called to leave his homeland and go where God leads. God makes certain promises that are emphasized a little differently in each repetition of the covenant:

- Chapter 12: God calls on Abram to leave his country, kinsmen, and father's house and go to the country God will show him. God will make him a great nation, and make his name great so that he would become a blessing. Upon arrival in Shechem God promises to give the land to Abram's descendants and Abram sets up an altar.
- Chapter 15: God restates the covenant when Abram raises the fact that he has no heir. His descendants are to be as the stars of the sky. This time the covenant is done in accord with ancient ritual with the division of the carcasses of a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. The carcass halves are laid over against each other with the birds laid down whole. In the dark a smoking fire-pot and flaming torch pass between the pieces

and God promises to give the land, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, to his descendants. God tells Abram of the slavery his descendants will experience in Egypt.

- Chapter 17: A third time God makes the covenant with Abram. This follows the attempt of Abram and Sarai to solve the heir problem in the traditional Mesopotamian way. But God rejected their plan. When Abram was 99 God renewed the covenant, promising that Abram would be the father of a multitude of nations and in verification of the promise God changed his name to Abraham. God promised again to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. Sarai, whose name was changed to Sarah, was to be the mother of the promised child.

This covenant establishing a people, a land, and a mission, becomes the foundation for the covenant that would be made at Sinai with the descendants of Abraham.

Isaac and Jacob: The covenant with Abraham carries over to Isaac and Jacob. The phrase, “The God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” is used frequently in the Pentateuch especially when referring to the promise of the land or the promise to be “your God.”

It is noteworthy that when God appeared to Jacob at Bethel in the famous dream of the ladder, God says: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (Gen 28:13-15).

This is the repetition of the promise to Abraham. When Jacob (deceiver) awakes, he tries to turn the covenant given by grace into a bargain with God. It was not until he abandoned bargaining and threw himself on the grace of God at Jabbok that his name, his character, was changed to Israel—Prince of God. The covenant is not established by bargaining, but given by grace.

Sinai: The most important of the covenants is that established by Yahweh with Israel at Sinai. This is the

covenant that gives the Old Testament its name, and transformed, it also names the New Testament. At the heart of this covenant is the Ten Commandments listed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. They are summarized in the Shema—Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Hittite covenant pattern is Identity of the covenant maker, History of the relationship, Stipulations, Blessings to the obedient, Curses on the covenant breakers, Call to witnesses.

The application of the covenant principles to the life of the people of God takes up most of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The format used to present the covenant parallels that commonly used by Hittite kings when making covenants with those they had conquered. The entire book written as Moses' parting sermon to Israel, Deuteronomy, follows the covenant pattern. The covenant includes the instruction for living from Yahweh—the Law—and the establishment of the covenant maintenance and restoration system with the priests serving in the tabernacle or temple of Yahweh.

The Law is not merely a set of regulations for worship, but a code of conduct binding on even the leaders for every aspect of life. This is in marked contrast to the laws of the surrounding nations where the king could do no wrong. Yahweh is concerned that the standard of holiness—justice, truth, mercy, and love—be practiced in every aspect of society. The tabernacle was not placed on some distant "holy hill," but rather was to be located at the heart of life.

Covenant Renewal: The covenant relationship is not hereditary. Each generation had to reaffirm their commitment to the covenant. Moses called for such commitment from the generation that was born during the years of wandering in the desert. This is the reason given for the message of Deuteronomy. Joshua called the people together at the close of his life to renew the covenant. The people committed to the covenant, but as predicted by Joshua they failed to serve God. Another renewal ceremony is on record during the time of king Josiah of Judah who served Yahweh as no other king—before or after him.

Joshua 24:14

2 Kings 23:23ff

New Covenant: The writing prophets spoke of a new covenant, one that would be internalized—not written on stone but in the heart, empowered by the Spirit of God. This is the covenant that comes into being with the establishment of the Church recorded in Acts.

Other Covenants: There are numerous other covenants mentioned in Scripture. They are not necessarily covenants granted by a superior, but are the strongest form of establishing a relationship between two people or groups.

1 Samuel 18

- David and Jonathan made a covenant of friendship with each other in which they promised to care for family members.

2 Sam 23:5; 2 Chr 13:5; 2 Chr 21:7

- Yahweh made a covenant with David to establish his throne forever. Jesus became the fulfillment of this covenant.

2 Kings 11:14; 2 Chr 23

- Jehoiada the high priest made a covenant with his co-conspirators to overthrow the daughter of Jezebel.

Neh 13:9; Mal 2:4ff

- Both Nehemiah and the prophet Malachi interpret the selection of the Levites to serve as priests instead of the first-born of each family as a covenant between Yahweh and the Levites. They were held responsible to represent the people and to keep them faithful.

Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14

- Both the wise man in Proverbs and the prophet Malachi use the word "covenant" to express the strength of the bond of marriage.
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all refer to a covenant in association with a change of order that has been understood to be the coming of the Messiah.

Covenant Formats and Functions

The five books of the Torah are addressed to Semitic people who lived about 3500 years ago using literary styles and cultural settings that are not always familiar to us today. The Torah is the foundation for the relationship of God's people to God and raises most of the theological issues that are addressed throughout Scripture. The form of the covenant was used to present this material because it is the strongest of the social and political structures of ancient times. It is a covenant imposed by the grace of God and extends the opportunity for holy living that results in *shalom*—peace. It is accepted or rejected. Acceptance brings blessing because society then operates in harmony with God and his creation. Rejection brings a curse because society then is out of harmony with God and his creation.

Key to the covenant is the priest and the Temple in which he functions. It is his role to maintain the relationship of the people to God and to restore that relationship when it has been broken. The true priest is the firstborn. Aaron as the firstborn of the tribe of Levi, and Levi as the representatives of all the firstborn of Israel, serve as the high priest and his helpers. In the

Exodus 19:6

establishment of the covenant at Sinai Israel is noted to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Restoration of the relationship with God is only possible because God sits upon his throne of grace, his mercy seat, the seat of *chesed*, in his Temple. Without *chesed* there could only be destruction following sin.

We will examine the maintenance of the covenant in greater detail in Lesson 10.

Maintenance of the Covenant

At this point we need to note that the Temple, or the tabernacle that was built according to the pattern provided to Moses on Mount Sinai, is the focal point of both maintenance and restoration of right relationships in family, society, and with God. It was to be erected at the center of the camp where it could dominate every aspect of life.

The activities in the tabernacle itself—using the light of the lamp, exercising the life of prayer, and the presentation of tithes and offerings—were the daily maintenance activities that needed to be observed in order to keep right with God and man. The restoration activities took place in the courtyard at the altar.

The Church and the New Covenant

Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25

It is very clear that the New Testament writers viewed the Church as the spiritual successor to Israel. In the establishment of the Lord’s Supper Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record that the giving of the body and blood of Jesus is the establishment of the new covenant as does the apostle Paul when he outlines the proper way to hold the supper to the Corinthian church.

Hebrews 9:11

Paul speaks of himself as one who has been made competent to be a minister of the new covenant in 2 Corinthians 3:6. This new covenant is not written in letters but is written in the spirit. The Book of Hebrews is explicit in identifying the Church with the new covenant. This was the goal of the old covenant—the establishment of a people who served God from the heart. In chapters 8 and 9, Jeremiah 31 is quoted as fulfilled in the establishment of the Church—the old covenant now nullified. The new covenant is established, not in a tent but in a greater and more perfect tent that is not made with hands.

The old covenant simply displayed the pattern or shadow of the reality that was to come in Christ Jesus. The Church, the new Israel, now has the responsibility of the mission given to Israel and has the ability to carry out that mission because of the coming of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church becomes an

instrument through which blessing can flow into the world.

Community

One of the strong concepts in the Bible is the concept of community. We do not live unto ourselves but are a part of the whole of society, the whole of our community. Present-day thinking that emphasizes the individual and individual responsibilities occurs in scripture but is not dominant in the Old Testament. We are the family of humankind, creatures of the Most High God.

Refer to Resource 3-6 in the Student Guide.

H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911.*

Corporate Versus Individual Personality

H. Wheeler Robinson's use of the term "corporate personality" recognized an important aspect of Hebrew and Middle Eastern thought. The individual was understood to be part and parcel of the larger group—the family, the clan, the tribe, or the nation. It is a concept of solidarity that permeates Scripture. The action of the individual is a part of the action of the larger group. Thus when Achan took forbidden goods from Jericho, his whole family suffered the consequences. Words like *adam* and Israel can have dual meaning. *Adam* can be the name of the individual, Adam, or a word for humankind, while Israel can be Jacob or the nation or people of Israel.

Of course there were many laws that applied to the individual, and punishment for breaking such laws was exclusive to that individual. The penalty for murder, for instance, was exacted from the murderer and not the clan or family. Even so the evil acts of a group of Benjamites brought down the wrath of the nation against them, almost exterminating the tribe.

Judges 19

One tendency of such communal concepts of the person was that it allowed blame to be placed on others—particularly the ancestors—for the troubles being experienced. It was this tendency on the part of the exiles in Babylon to blame the fathers for their predicament that prompted Ezekiel's message in chapter 18. It is a strong statement on personal responsibility: "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die."

Ezekiel 18:2-4

The tension between these two concepts continues into the New Testament where the believer is a part of the Church, the Body of Christ, and yet the individual must be born again. Salvation is individual, no one can repent on your behalf, but the saved become a part of family.

Adam the Human Community

Adam, the first man, is the father of all humankind. Eve, his co-creature, identified as a very part of him, is the mother. The entire human community emerges from this pair. The very word with the definite article *hadam*—the adam—is the word used for humankind. Adam is perceived as the father of all, representative of humankind, and generic humanity.

The implication is that ultimately we are all children of Adam, all a part of his race, sharing his likeness, sharing the consequences of his actions. Paul uses this concept when he states in Romans 5:14 that death reigned from Adam to Moses, even for those who did not break a specific command as Adam did.

The phrase, “Son of Man”—*Adam*—came into use during exilic times. In the Book of Ezekiel this is the title that God most frequently uses when addressing the prophet. The phrase does occur in a poetic passage of the Book of Numbers. “God is not a man (*ish*), that he should lie, nor a son of man (*adam*), that he should change his mind.”

Numbers 23:19

This concept was not only used extensively in Ezekiel but is used in Daniel when God addresses Daniel and when Daniel has a vision where one like the son of man was seen approaching the Ancient of Days. The phrase in a heavenly context is repeated in the vision of John in Revelation chapters 1 and 14 and in the vision of the dying Stephen in Acts 7:56.

Daniel 8

Daniel 7:13

Apart from Ezekiel this phrase is used most often as a description of Jesus. In all four Gospels Jesus applies the title to himself. Jesus is the ultimate Son of Adam. Luke, when he traces the lineage of Jesus, traces the genealogy back to Adam. It concludes with this statement: “the son of Adam, the son of God.” Jesus is presented as the Son of God by virtue of his lineage through Adam, and as the Son of God by virtue of his birth as the child of Mary and the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 15 the apostle Paul contrasts the two progenitors of life—the first Adam and the last or

second Adam—Jesus Christ. In verse 22 his argument is that the first Adam brought death into the world, a death that we all share with him. The second Adam brought life into the world, a life we can share if we accept Christ. The first earthly Adam is of the dust of the earth where the natural life ends, while the second heavenly Adam opens the way for us to be of the likeness of heaven. We are all humans and can be Christian humans, and are part of this collective reality because we are in Adam and can choose to be in the second Adam.

The Name—Family and Tribal Identity— 1 Corinthians 7:14

An important part of community is the recognition of one's place in the community. This is the role of the genealogies that form an important part of Scripture, especially in the Torah. As a part of the whole it becomes important to recognize where you fit into the whole.

The genealogies provide this information, both bad and good. It is informative to note that when the genealogy of Christ is given in both Matthew and Luke, recognition is given to the fact that people of unsavory reputation are a part of that genealogy. Leah the unloved is the mother of Judah, of David, and of Christ. Both Ruth the Moabitess and Rahab the harlot of Jericho become part of the identity. The individual adds to or detracts from the glory of the family.

Each person can add to the list of praises. This African concept of oneness with the family is very similar to the Hebrew concept that permeates the Old and even the New Testament. As part of the family you may be good or bad, but you are not easily thrown out of the family. This is a concept that is important when we consider the fact that we can be adopted into the family of God, adding to or detracting from the glory of the family.

In the New Testament we find that this concept persists. Each individual does need to be saved, but at the same time we often read that believers joined the Church by the house or by the family. Acts 16 records that the Philippian jailer was baptized with his family. In 1 Peter 2, Peter tells us that we are being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. We are a part of the whole. Christians do not exist in isolation.

Israel and National Solidarity

The community that is Israel was not exclusively the physical descendants of Jacob. At the very time of the foundation of the nation we read in Exodus 12:37-38 that when Pharaoh finally ordered the people of Israel out of Egypt "There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them."

It was this motley crowd that came to the foot of Sinai and became the nation of Israel. The word "Israel" thus could refer to Jacob, the father of the nation, or be used as the name of the nation. The values of the nation were developed around the instruction from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). The bonds that held the nation together were to be found in the covenant with God as spelled out in the Torah.

Once settled in the Promised Land these bonds held them together only lightly. Each tribe seemed to function as a separate unit. Until the prophet Samuel arose there was not even a common leader of all the tribes after Joshua. The chaos and apparent weakness of the nation made them want a leader and led to the appeal for a king.

National solidarity was not easy to come by. Saul, from the almost destroyed tribe of Benjamin, ruled badly and never united the nation. David was followed loyally by Judah, but struggled to gain the loyalty of the northern tribes, and the bond disintegrated following the death of his son Solomon.

The 10 northern tribes disappear into the mists of history. When the nation is resurrected after the Exile it is as Judah—even the remnants of the 10 tribes join under that banner. It is this remnant that becomes the people of Israel during the intertestamental and New Testament periods.

Responsibility to Educate

With the formation of the community at Sinai came the responsibility to educate the nation and the next generation. The *shema* includes this statement regarding the statutes God has given: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 6:7-9

Deuteronomy 4:9

In the preceding chapters God states that he is teaching the nation and instructs Moses to teach the nation and instructs the people: "Teach them to your children and to their children after them." This is no isolated instruction but is repeated over and over. The Sabbath is to be an opportunity for instruction. The annual celebration of the Passover and other feasts is for the instruction of the next generations.

The articles placed into the ark of the covenant were put there as a reminder of what God has done. Education was to be an integral part of the life of Israel. Even when the nation had crossed the Jordan into Israel they were instructed to choose a large stone for each tribe and set these up so that the children would ask what they mean—and this would provide an opportunity for instruction.

It is not surprising that in such a culture of education the practical instruction of the wise men and that of the psalmists became a part of the sacred Scriptures. These instructions covered a wide range of activities from work ethic to table etiquette. Of course the Torah, the instruction of God, was of prime importance, but it should be remembered that this instruction was not just ceremonial religion, but instruction for every aspect of life in the home, the workplace, and society.

Again we see that Jesus—referred to most often as teacher (Rabbi)—spent his time teaching people of every walk of life, not just healing and preaching. The record of his preaching is a record of teaching. A very important part of the New Testament is instruction in the application of the principle of love to everyday life.

The Church—the Body of Christ

Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19

Jesus draws us into the community of believers by sharing his body and his blood with us. We become one with him. This spiritual union results in practical and earthly conduct that is characteristic of the head of the body. Paul uses this image of the Church as the Body of Christ in different ways.

In Romans 7:4 he argues that Christians have died to the Law because they died with Christ in his body. Christians share in the death of Christ because we are the Body of Christ. Related to this in Colossians 1:24 he states that he is happy to suffer as a part of the Body of Christ for the benefit of the Church. Christians should expect to participate in the suffering of Christ because we are the Body of Christ.

The strongest use of the image is to help the Church understand that even widely different people of many different talents and even of different races are a part of the Body. The image helps us understand our relationship with each other and the different functions that we serve within the Body.

Since the Body is a unit composed of many parts, each with different functions, we need to recognize that in the Church each member has a different function. Regardless of this the Body is not divided but together makes the whole. It is important to recognize the role that each Christian needs to fulfill in the Body. The various gifts of the Spirit are provided to assist in the performance of tasks within the Body, and are given in accord with the role that each member plays in the Body.

In Colossians Paul reminds us that Christ is the Head of the Body. He is the one who gives leadership and direction. It is essential to maintain the connection to the Head or the action of the Body is meaningless, and severance means death. Further the Body is called to peace, to *shalom*, to bring well-being into the world in which we live.

Summary

These three areas of creation, covenant, and community in no way exhaust the theological instruction of the Torah that is developed throughout the rest of Scripture. They are key elements and provide a base from which to begin a lifelong study of the truth that we can discover in these books.

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(30 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.

Refer to Resource 3-7 in the Student Guide.

Allow about 15 minutes for the groups to work and about 15

In your groups draw up a list of statements regarding the issues we have examined. Be sure to include the issues raised by the following questions.

- *Creation:* What are the most important theological issues raised by creation?
- *Covenant:* How is the covenant revealed in the Church today? Why do some passages in the New Testament discuss only two covenants?
- *Community:* What are the aspects of community most neglected in the Church today?

*minutes for the class to share ideas
and work on the Catechism.*

Add the perceptions of other groups to the list that you have made in your group. Each student should retain a copy of the list.

Return and collect homework.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to respond.

What was the most insightful revelation to you in this lesson?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

The reading is fairly heavy. You may need to adjust the amount of reading to fit your situation.

Review:

- Former Prophets: Joshua 1—7; 24; Judges 1—9; 19—21; 1 Samuel 1—3; 8—13; 15—17; 2 Samuel 5—7; 11—19; 1 Kings 1—4; 12; 15—19; 21; 2 Kings 1; 2; 5; 17—20
- Latter Prophets: Isaiah 1; 2; 4—7; 9; 11; 20; 36—40; 41; 53; 55; 58; 60; Jeremiah 1—4; 16—18; 23; 27—29; 32; 42; Ezekiel 1—3; 10; 11; 16; 18; 24; 36; 37; 43; Hosea 1; 14; Joel 2; Amos 1; 3; 7; Micah 5; Habakkuk 1; 2; Zechariah 1; 6; 9; Malachi 3
- Prepare a list of at least 10 theological concepts these chapters seem to support or presume.

Read Part Two: Biblical Corpora and Books: “Prophetic Books” (NDBT)

Read your assigned section of the essays in NDBT and write out the 2 to 3 main points of each. Make a copy for each of your classmates (or send by email).

The 4 sections are listed in the Student Guide. If you have more than 4 students in your class assign some sections more than once. If you have less than 4 students you can add more to each section so that all topics are covered or eliminate a section.

Read your assigned narrative from below. You are to play the role of the character, acting him out in such a way as to highlight the theological assumptions and assertions of the passage. (3 minutes)

Assign one passage to each student or allow them to choose.

Joshua 6—7 2 Samuel 11—15 Jeremiah 27—28
Judges 6—8 Isaiah 36—39 Amos 7
1 Samuel 15

Write in your journal. Evaluate your covenant relationship with God. How would you like it to improve?

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 4

The Prophets

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	The Former Prophets	Lecture	Resource 4-1 Resource 4-2
0:25	Characters in Significant Biblical Narratives	Group Activity	Homework
0:40	Homework Exchange	Small Groups	Resource 4-3
0:55	The Latter Prophets	Lecture	Resources 4-4—4-7
1:15	Special Notes	Lecture	Resource 4-8
1:30	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

Accountability

Call on 2 students to give 1 thing that they learned from the homework reading.

Return homework.

Orientation

In this lesson we will observe the record of the discipline and correction of the people of God. We will examine the chaos that arises from a lack of direction and discipline, the corrective and disciplining work of the former and latter prophets, the clash with other religions, and the issues in the collapse of the states of Israel and Judah.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to explain the theological foundations for the biblical theology of blessing, judgment, discipline, and salvation and the development of the concept of monotheism

Note to Instructor

In all of these lessons you may want to adjust the proportion of lecture and discussion. Where the resources of your students are very limited, you may want to use all of the lecture materials provided. If your students have access to good resources for study, they should be in a better position to discuss the issues meaningfully. It is our belief that students learn more effectively when they are preparing for discussions or presentations that they make and when they are involved in thinking together about the issues.

Lesson Body

Lecture: The Former Prophets

(20 minutes)

There is an extensive amount of information given for this lecture. You will need to decide how much of this information you would like to use for the lecture.

You may want to give copies of all or part of the information to the students.

Refer to Resource 4-1 in the Student Guide.

Theological Structure of the Prophets

The Torah set out the core values of the people of God. It showed how they came into being in response to the call and saving acts of God. It described the formation of the nation of Israel and the principles or laws by which the nation should live in the Promised Land. The heroes were holy leaders like Abraham, Joseph and Moses. They were neither kings nor priests, but men who walked with God, stumbling at times, but committed to the calling that Yahweh's grace extended through their lives.

The Prophets record the failure of the people of God to live up to their calling. Key to the story of the grace of God that constantly called them back to truth was the prophet of Yahweh. Prophets were those who spoke for Yahweh. They came from any and every walk of life. Some were priests, some were shepherds, some were professionals, and some are not identifiable except as spokesmen God called. It is these spokesmen of God that give the section its name—the Prophets. It records stories of their actions as well as a record of the preserved sermons and writings.

This section of Scripture was divided into the Former Prophets—those books describing the activities of conquest, settling in and the establishment of the kingdoms; and the Latter Prophets—those books that record the messages of the prophets themselves. The historical period covered in the Former Prophets includes the times of the Latter Prophets. It is common in societies that primarily use oral instruction that when the social structure is threatened then attention is paid to putting the record into writing. The Babylonians and Assyrians threatened the existence of Israel and Judah in the eighth and sixth centuries. This gave impetus to the collection of scriptures and is probably why the messages of the prophets of this later period were recorded.

The Great Start

The Former Prophets begins with the conquest under Joshua. The Book of Joshua records that after three

major campaigns the heart of the Promised Land was under the control of the Israelites. Not all the inhabitants were subdued or destroyed. The land was divided and the Israelites settled in. Archaeological records show that the Israelite occupation was predominantly in the mountains. These areas had been lightly populated up to this time basically because of limited year-round water supply. Concomitant with the occupation was the new skill of building waterproof cisterns—a fact that opened up these areas to a much greater level of occupation.

Joshua 1
Joshua 6
Joshua 7

One fact that is made clear by the story is that the land was not occupied as a result of the superiority of the Israelites to the local inhabitants, but that it was occupied as a result of acceptance of and obedience to Yahweh. He gave them the land. They cross the Jordan when God holds back the floodwaters. Impregnable Jericho falls by the hand of God. Ai is victorious because of their disobedience to God.

Joshua 10:12

At each stage victory comes when the Israelites are obedient and troubles come when they neglect or are disobedient to Yahweh's instructions. At the height of the battle even the sun and the moon are at the command of Joshua through the power of God. Occupation is by the grace of God.

Joshua 13ff

Several chapters of Joshua record the division of the land among the tribes. Joshua was told to follow the plan given to Moses. The structure was for a nation that would be led by the priests of Yahweh. Israel was to be a theocracy.

It is of note that no prophet is mentioned in the Book of Joshua. Joshua filled the role that Moses had played, providing guidance to the nation as well as leadership in war. The prophet seemed to appear only when there was a need to call the people back to God.

See Joshua 24:15-25.

The conclusion and culmination of the book is the great gathering for the renewal of the covenant recorded in Joshua 24. It established the foundation for the theocracy. Joshua's call is to commit to worship Yahweh.

The commitment made is serious. Joshua notes the penalties of committing to follow a holy God because that God will not tolerate disobedience. The people respond by making a strong commitment: "No! We will serve the LORD."

The commitment requires the rejection of other gods. It appears that there were those who worshiped gods that their ancestors had worshiped. These had to be discarded.

Joshua 24:6. Note the discussion in David Dockery, gen. Ed., Holman Bible Handbook. Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, 1992, 206.

The commitment was to live by the instruction of Yahweh. Joshua draws up decrees and laws, probably based upon the laws given by Moses, but these laws are not stated for us. They are recorded in the “book of the law of God,” which may be a part of Scripture. It is clear that a covenant with Yahweh is a commitment to a way of life, and not simply a form or pattern for worship. Sin is punished and faithfulness is rewarded. Sin and faithfulness have consequences for all of society, just as Achan’s sin affected all Israel at Ai and drastically affected his family.

The Period of the Judges

Different dating schemes allocate from 2- to 4-hundred years to this period in the life of Israel. The nation was held together by a theocracy as outlined in Joshua, and it focused on their common worship of Yahweh. In such a government they normally consulted the priests for guidance. Local leadership of different kinds emerged in different places as there was need. This leadership was charismatic—brought into being by the spirit of God. The book records the gradual disintegration of authority and ethics among the people until every person “did that which was right in his own eyes.”

Judges 17:6; 21:25 (KJV)

It is difficult to build a chronological record of the judges because the writer is not concentrating upon chronology but upon the deterioration of Israelite society. The quality of the leaders pictured declines.

The period climaxes with the horrendous story of the sin of the Benjamites against the concubine of a Levite and the resultant near extermination of the Benjamites by their infuriated brothers. It is interesting that the story of Ruth, which probably was well known at the time of the writing of Judges, and which comes out of the same period, was not a part of the book. It does not fit the theological theme of the book—the cycle of sin and repentance that gradually grows into chaos without strong leadership.

Judges 19–21

Leadership during this period was in the hands of charismatic individuals, raised up by Yahweh to meet the challenges of the day. There was a growing demand for a king who would provide stable leadership. The only prophet mentioned in the book was sent by Yahweh to scold the people before Yahweh

Judges 6:8

Only 11 prophetesses are mentioned in all Scripture: Miriam—Exodus 15:20; Deborah—Judges 4:4; Huldah—2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chronicles 34:22; Noadiah—Nehemiah 6:14; Isaiah's wife—Isaiah 8:3; Anna—Luke 2:36; The four daughters of Philip the evangelist—Acts 21:9; and finally Jezebel of Thyatira who called herself a prophetess and was roundly denounced—Revelation 2:20.

raised up Gideon. The only prophetess mentioned is Deborah. If there were other prophets during that time, they did not fit into the story. Priests are also absent from the leadership role even though one would assume that a people who are “ruled by Yahweh” would consult his priests.

A strong theme is that God will save the repentant. It is noteworthy that the instrument of salvation is often a person that we would shun: Ehud the assassin, Deborah a woman; Gideon the coward, Jephthah the prostitute's son; and Samson the bullying womanizer. God often surprises us in his choice of leaders.

The United Kingdom

The two Books of Samuel through to the 12th chapter of 1 Kings record the formation and development of the United Kingdom. The story begins with the emergence of a new kind of leader. Samuel is the son of the second wife, Hannah, of a man of Ephraim, Elkanah. Samuel is taken to Shiloh—a main center for the worship of Yahweh—where Eli was in charge.

Eli's decadent sons were a detriment to the priesthood, and their rejection by God brought about the necessity for the emergence of Samuel. God said: “I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always” (1 Sam 2:35). Integrity is established as of greater importance than genealogy, for this context indicates that the priest is Samuel.

Samuel's unique call direct from Yahweh, coming to him as a child sleeping in the tabernacle, established him as chosen by God. Disaster overtook Israel when the ark of the covenant was lost to the Philistines, Eli and his sons perished and Shiloh was destroyed, this projected Samuel to leadership as the prophet, priest, and judge of Israel. He even led Israel to victory over the Philistines and checked their power for several years. Unfortunately his children were little better than those of Eli.

What followed was a transition from theocracy to kingdom. The people wanted a king to provide protection and stability to their society. Although the statement, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing

Some feel that prophetically it refers to Zadok who served before David and Solomon or to Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel 8

It is also interesting that when Jeremiah describes life on the "holy mountain" he notes that there will no longer be a need for teaching because everyone will know Yahweh and obey Him. It is a reversion to a theocratic government.

1 Samuel 11

to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do" (1 Sam 8:7-9). This indicates that Yahweh's preference is for a theocracy; it also indicates the willingness of God to be limited to a structure that humankind can understand and follow. King and Kingdom become a metaphor for God's rule.

Saul, a Benjamite was the first chosen. The story of his selection reveals an obedient, humble, and outstanding individual of superior stature and strength. He did not seek the position, and only came to be accepted after he rescued the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead. It is also made clear that Yahweh had chosen him by anointing him for the task with his Spirit even though Saul came from the smallest and weakest of the tribes.

1 Samuel 13:7ff

Saul's chief enemy was the Philistines, and he fought them to the end of his life. Tragically Saul gradually became a law unto himself. The first recorded instance was when he chose to make sacrifices because Samuel was late. Samuel warned him that this had cost him an enduring kingdom and God would choose a new king from outside of his family. The second was when he chose to disobey the command of God regarding the destruction of the Amalekites. God withdrew his Spirit from him. The story becomes sad and sick as the deranged king becomes inordinately jealous of David.

1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22
1 Samuel 16:7

David, the second king of a united Israel, is a perplexing individual. He was chosen because he was a man after God's own heart and because "Yahweh looks at the heart." George Lyons expresses the other side of David so well in his October 30, 2003, devotional:

David is not the kind of man I would want to marry my daughter . . . He was a successful con man and ran a protection racket during his outlaw days hiding from Saul (1 Sam 21:25, 27). As Israel's king he was an adulterer and murderer, and his awful example led his children to ruin (2 Sam 11—20). He died a pitiful, dirty old man with a seething passion for revenge (1 Kings 1—2).

*Come Ye Apart, Volume 64,
Number 1. Kansas City:
WordAction Publishing Company,
2003, 58.*

2 Sam 7:1ff; 1 Chr 22

David was definitely not chosen because of his perfection. He was passed over for the building of the Temple when he wanted to make a permanent house for the ark in Jerusalem. The Chronicler explains that this was because of his bloody hands. The one consistent aspect of this sinful king was his confidence in and willingness to submit to Yahweh.

*Refer to Resource 4-2 in the
Student Guide.*

- Yahweh got credit for the lion and the bear (1 Sam 17:34ff).

Because the students have this list of information, you would not need to go over the information.

- Yahweh was his confidence in the conflict with Goliath (1 Sam 17:37).
- Yahweh was the subject of his many songs and hymns.
- Yahweh was his refuge when he fled from Saul (1 Sam 19ff).
- He refused to kill Saul because Saul was the anointed of the Lord (1 Sam 24:6).
- He brought the ark of God to the capital of the kingdom (2 Sam 6).
- He, the king, repented when confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 12:5ff).
- He threw himself on the mercy of God when he sinned by taking a census (2 Sam 24:1ff).

David expanded the influence of Israel to reach from the borders of Egypt to those of Assyria. He built the kingdom that became the ideal concept of the land of Israel. He was a great general even though he had weak morals and poor discipline in both his family and among his leaders and the consequences were rape, murder, and insurrection. He left it to his son Solomon to punish those who had not obeyed his instructions or loyally supported him.

1 Kings 1—2

But it was with this controversial David that God made a covenant to make his kingdom endure forever. The song of David in 2 Samuel 22 and the words of in chapter 23 affirm David's belief that he ruled with justice and with the blessing of God. This is the David that became the figure of Jewish and Christian legend.

2 Samuel 23:5

Once again we are aware that God does not deal with humankind according to their actions and character, but according to his own nature. God acts in his grace and holiness. Gad and Nathan were the prophets who confronted and advised David.

The story of the attempted coup is recorded in 1 Kings 1 and 2 with the death of Adonijah recorded in 2:25. Amnon, David's oldest son, was murdered by his half brother Absalom, David's third son, for raping his sister. Kileab, David's second son, did not seem to be of significance for his name appears only in 2 Samuel 3:3 in the listing of David's sons. Absalom was killed when he attempted to take the kingdom from David. Adonijah was the fourth son, and as such ranked well ahead of Solomon, one of the youngest.

Solomon, the second son of David and his stolen wife Bathsheba, was David's choice to succeed him as king. Adonijah tried to take the kingdom and ultimately it cost him his life. Solomon started his reign with humility, seeking wisdom from God. He acquired a reputation for wisdom and teaching, and exploited the assets of the extensive kingdom he inherited. He became a wealthy trader and noteworthy builder. This was the apex of the glory of the nation of Israel.

His policy was trade, accommodation, and alliances, not war. He made many alliances and in the process accumulated wives. This was his spiritual undoing; for in his accommodation he built shrines to the many different gods they served and was drawn away from

the worship of Yahweh into a life of great luxury that exploited his people. The end result was the division of the kingdom, although this occurred only after his death. Knowledge and wealth do not assure one of God's blessings. The united kingdom died after scarcely 100 years.

The Divided Kingdom

1 Kings 12:15

God had announced to Solomon through Ahijah the prophet that the kingdom would be divided and 10 tribes would be given to Jeroboam. The immediate cause of the split was Rehoboam's—Solomon's son—refusal to lighten the taxation of the Israelites. The northern 10 tribes turned to Jeroboam. Rehoboam prepared to reunite the kingdom by force but Shemaiah the prophet stopped him.

There were now two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, and their influence over the surrounding nations faded. For a little more than 200 years these two nations struggled with each other and with their neighbors. Israel, the larger and the occupier of the better land, was the first to pass from existence at the hands of invading Assyrians.

2 Kings 16 records the war between Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus on the one side and Ahaz of Judah on the other.

Judah continued to exist, often as a vassal state, for another 100 years before the Babylonians destroyed their land and their capital, Jerusalem. One of the biggest threats to both nations was their intermittent bickering and fighting with each other. It was this fighting that brought about Judah's alliance with Assyria and the destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

The Southern Kingdom

2 Kings 11

Judah suffered almost immediately after Solomon's death from plundering by the Egyptians. Rehoboam was not able to stop the plunder. Officially the nation continued to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem, and the succeeding kings were at least nominally loyal to Yahweh until the time of king Jehoshaphat in the mid 9th century. He made an alliance with Israel that included a marriage with Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah, and this was to bring trouble into Judah. Athaliah, a devotee of Baal, took over the throne upon the death of her son Ahaziah and executed all his heirs.

Only the quick action of the high priest, Jehoiada, saved the babe Joash from her hand. A palace coup put Joash on the throne and Athaliah was executed. The worship of Yahweh was restored. With the rise of

Assyria as a major power—they established the largest empire known at that time, an empire that stretched from the edge of Persia to the Mediterranean and from the Caucasus to Egypt—during the time of Ahaz in the middle of the 8th century; Judah was forced into a vassal relationship with Assyria.

This meant that they adopted the gods of their “lord.” Ahaz was thus seen as the most wicked of the kings of Judah up to that time. When the devout Hezekiah returned to the worship of Yahweh the Assyrians were angry, and while they were busy trying to conquer Egypt they vented their anger upon Israel and Judah. Israel did not survive, but Judah, accepting the promise of salvation delivered by the prophet Isaiah, did survive.

Hezekiah’s successor, Manasseh, however went back to a policy of alliances with strong nations and their gods, and became known as the worst king of Judah, the cause of its ultimate destruction and exile.

A hundred years after Hezekiah’s reforms King Josiah endeavored to reestablish the worship of Yahweh in accord with the documents found in the wall of the Temple. There was a revival in Judah. It coincided with the struggle between the Assyrians and Babylonians, a time when Assyria could not assert itself in Israel.

The Babylonians sought the aid of the Egyptians to end Assyrian supremacy and foolishly Josiah chose to get involved. He died at the hand of Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo. From this time on Judah became a pawn in the rising power of the Babylonians and their conflict with the Egyptians. They trusted in alliances first with one side and then the other and finally were erased by Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the 7th century BC.

The Northern Kingdom

The story of the Northern Kingdom is quite different. The country was far less stable than Judah, and was ruled by 19 different kings for 239 years an average of under 13 years each. Some, like Zechariah and Shallum, only ruled for a few months. Zimri only ruled for seven days! The longest reign was that of Jeroboam II who ruled for 41 years.

Jeroboam, their first king, did not want to forsake the worship of Yahweh but did not want his followers to go to Jerusalem for their religious festivals. He reverted to the practice of setting up shrines in various places to house precious sacred images. Perhaps in line with the

1 Kings 13 records the remarkable story of the prophet who denounced the king and the altar at Bethel. He then died because he did not follow instruction from God, but listened to a false prophet and returned to Bethel to eat there. A lion killed him as he went home, but did not trouble his donkey, even though that is a favorite food of lions.

thinking of the Israelites at Sinai, or perhaps in line with the Canaanite custom of displaying an image of god on the back of a bull, he made two golden calves and placed them in shrines at Bethel and Dan.

Added to this he introduced the Asherah poles, which were a typical part of the Canaanite practices. The worship of Yahweh was corrupted by his action, and was roundly denounced at Bethel by an unknown prophet. The kings of the Northern Kingdom adhered to this policy whenever they reverted to the worship of Yahweh. It became known as the "sin of Jeroboam."

A permanent capital was not established until the time of Omri. He built Samaria, a city without any natural water source but with huge cisterns. A major change took place under his son, Ahab, who married Jezebel of Tyre, an ardent worshiper of Baal. This introduced not only a licentious worship form, but a different ethic that held that the king could do no wrong. It was in striking contrast to the worship of Yahweh.

Despite the efforts of the prophets like Elijah and Elisha, Baal worship flourished until the rule of Jehu, who massacred all the Baal worshipers he could find. The long rule of Jeroboam II merits only six verses, but in these verses it notes that he followed the practice of Jeroboam I and he established dominance over much of the former Davidic kingdom. Within a few years of his death the Assyrian Empire began to develop, and that empire soon dominated Israel. Their efforts to break free during a period of Assyrian weakness brought about their destruction under King Hoshea.

Spiritually the Northern Kingdom received greater condemnation than Judah. The perversion of the worship of Yahweh started by Jeroboam I was roundly condemned and its persistence during the rule of later kings led to rejection by Yahweh. Baal worship, which seemingly became the state religion under Ahab, was confronted head-on, first by Elijah and finally by Jehu who destroyed the worshipers.

Yahweh would neither tolerate perversion nor share his position with other gods. The worship of the gods of those nations with which alliances had been made also brought condemnation, for it revealed that the people did not trust Yahweh to preserve them, but trusted in the power of armies and wealth.

It is also noteworthy that the time of the divided kingdoms and Judah after the fall of Samaria was the heyday of the prophets. We noted that few prophets

appeared in Judges. Samuel dominates first and some of second Samuel, even though groups of professional prophets are noted as active in the land.

Following his death there were some counselors, priests, and prophets who gave advice to David and Solomon, but the great prophets Elijah and Elisha emerged to call the Northern Kingdom, Israel, back to Yahweh when Israel did not have a valid priesthood.

Many other prophets and schools of prophets are noted in the Northern Kingdom. Of the latter prophets, only Amos and Hosea appear to call Israel back to Yahweh, and Amos was from Judah. Jonah is noted as living during the reign of Jeroboam II. His unique message of salvation for all humankind seems out of place for Israel at this time. The book may have been written much later.

Civil wars, greed, injustice, and pursuit of other gods all combined to contribute to the tragic demise of the two states.

Group Activity: Characters in Significant Biblical Narratives

(15 minutes)

Call on each student and keep them to the time allotment.

If you have less than 5 students, you can allow more time or have some discussion of the presentations.

If you have more than 5 students, you may need to adjust the time from one of the other sections in this lesson.

Each of you were to prepare a 3-minute role-play of one of the characters from the Prophets.

I will be the time-keeper so that each of you has equal opportunity to present your Bible personality.

Remember the focus is the theological assumptions from the selected passage.

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of about 3 each.

Refer to Resource 4-3 in the Student Guide.

In your group, pool and organize the theological concepts that you noted in your homework.

Write your agreed statements on the board for the other groups to see and copy. You will also need to copy the other groups' statements for later discussion.

Lecture: The Latter Prophets

(20 minutes)

There is again an extensive amount of information and you will need to select what information you will want to present to the class.

Refer to Resource 4-4 in the Student Guide.

The prophets whose messages are recorded are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. We will look at their concerns related to the historical period to which they apply.

Eighth-Century Prophets to Israel:

Assyria was establishing its empire and wanted the riches of Egypt to add to its collection. Israel and Judah were among those who stood in the way of their rulers' ruthless ambition.

Hosea

Hosea is a powerful address to a wayward people. Chapter 2, a speech by Yahweh, outlines the history of a people in rebellion against their God. There is no justice, there is no truth, and there is no trust in God. Instead Israel has turned to the false gods of other nations. It is clear that there is no escaping the consequences of sinful actions, but also that there is hope offered by the Redeemer.

Hosea is asked to perform a sign-act to demonstrate God's love for his people. He is to marry Gomer, a harlot, and even after she runs away with lovers and is put up for sale as a slave, he is to redeem her and bring her back into his home as his wife. This dramatic and difficult sign-act is one of the most powerful declarations of the love of God for his people in the Old Testament. Prophetically it looks to the redemption that Christ brings to his Bride, the Church.

Amos

Amos, a shepherd from Tekoa in Judah, was sent by God to Israel to warn the nation. His shrewd opening uses the popular wisdom numeric device, "three, and yes four," to organize his denunciation. He starts with condemnation of the enemies of Israel, building toward his condemnation of Israel. The theme is the impending exile—"they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks."

Amos 4:2, NRSV

Perhaps his strongest statement comes in 5:21-24:
I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me

burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 9:11, 15

Amos does not close without hope. His closing message is the promise of Yahweh: "I will restore David's fallen tent. . . . I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them."

Jonah

This unique book has been the center of a great deal of controversy. The story focuses on Jonah, a prophet of the Northern Kingdom who was contemporary with Jeroboam II. His message is to be delivered to Nineveh, the capital of the ruthless Assyrians who at this time were on the road to conquer the world.

Some see the book as a record of an event that is not recorded in any recovered Assyrian documents. Some see it as a masterpiece of the story-teller's art, told to illustrate God's love for all nations. The flying spray from the arguments about the nature and historicity of the book often obscures the clear messages that the book delivers: God loves all people; it is useless to run from your obligations to God; and the covenant with God's people is a call to service and not to privilege.

Eighth-Century Prophets to Judah

Refer to Resource 4-5 in the Student Guide.

Roughly contemporary with Amos and Hosea who preached primarily in the north were two prophets who addressed Judah. One was Micah of Moresheth, a small town in Judah, and the other was Isaiah, the priest prophet of Jerusalem. They witnessed the invasion of the Assyrians and the terror that they struck into the heart of even hardened soldiers because of their newly learned skill—riding with both hands free while held to the backs of their horses by stirrups. They were so arrogant in their skill, newly learned from the Scythians, that they even offered to give horses to their enemies if they could mount riders.

2 Kings 18:23 notes that they offered 2000 horses to Hezekiah if he could put riders on them.

Isaiah

The vocabulary of this erudite prophet gives more problems to translators than any other book, simply because it is so extensive that many words he uses occur

Isaiah, the prophet and priest, remains one of the most influential of all the prophets. His literary and poetic skill excelled that of all the other prophets and writers. His work is beautiful Hebrew. His messages

only once in the Scriptures and nowhere else in ancient records.

are not only powerful, but highly quotable. It almost is surprising that Elijah, and not Isaiah, appeared with Moses on the mount of transfiguration.

There is controversy about the book but not so much about its theological implications as about its origin. Some would hold that it is the work of 2 or 3 writers who belonged to an enduring school of the Isaiah of the 8th century.

It is clear that the message of the first 39 chapters is directed toward the people who lived in the 8th century, while that of chapters 40 to 66 brings hope to the exiles. Perhaps the difference in the sections relates to the disgusting attitude of Hezekiah in chapter 39. Selfishly he rejoices that the evil he has set into motion for Jerusalem will not take place during his lifetime. From this point on the book no longer addresses 8th-century Israel, but the exiles. The book is loaded with theological concepts.

Power and Knowledge of God

Isaiah is acutely aware of the power of Yahweh. His most common expansion of the name of Yahweh is Yahweh Almighty, a title he uses 62 times. There is nothing that God cannot do. There is nothing that God does not know.

Isaiah has a clear understanding that Yahweh is of a nature not shared by humankind. He is a different kind of being. It was in recognition of this power of God that Isaiah promised King Hezekiah that if he would only trust in Yahweh, Yahweh would deliver Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrian invader. When this became reality and Sennacherib was forced to withdraw from Jerusalem because of sickness and bad news from Assyria, it became a theological precept of the Jews that Jerusalem could not fall, because the temple of Yahweh was there.

The One and Only God

It is in Isaiah that we have the first clear statement in Scripture that there is one and only one God. Moses called for the worship of only one God and the Ten Commandments state that his followers cannot have other gods. Moses and Joshua called upon the people to set aside other gods and worship only Yahweh. Elijah on Carmel made clear that Baal is not in charge of world affairs, but Yahweh is.

Isaiah 44:6

Isaiah, however, declares that all other gods are not gods. This is clearest in the second section of the book where chapter 44 is a treatise on the subject: "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."

The God of Justice

Just as the prophets before him had done, Isaiah makes a strong and clear call for justice. Any form of corruption, violence or deception, any perversion of truth, any greed or jealousy, any perversion of sexuality, and any turning to idols is roundly condemned, whether it occurs in Israel or among her neighbors. Righteousness is the standard for all humankind. He sets the stage in the opening chapter, Isaiah 1:13-17.

Isaiah 2:5

He pleads with his people, "Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD." One of his great sermons is the song of the vineyard in chapter 5. He likens the nation to a vineyard planted and cared for by God, but it yields wild sour grapes. It will be destroyed. Jesus himself used the image of the vineyard and the vine to emphasize a right relationship to God and the consequences of fruitlessness.

Mt 20 and 21; Mk 12; Lk 20

Isaiah 5:20

It is in this poetic sermon that Isaiah characterizes the nature of evil: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." Centuries later John Milton in his *Paradise Lost* cites "evil be thou my good" as the ultimate of evil, the words of Satan cast out of paradise.

Deuteronomy 28:64

The failure to practice righteousness, and the acceptance of other gods guaranteed exile just as had been promised in Deuteronomy.

The Holy God

11:44-45; 20:7, 26

Thirty times Isaiah calls Yahweh "the Holy One of Israel." He is acutely aware that the very character of God is holiness and that this becomes the standard for humankind. Isaiah did not set this standard, it had been set in Leviticus. It is the foundation of God's justice and of his love that extends salvation. It was recognized in the New Testament as the requirement for humankind in Ephesians 1:4 and the requirement for God's people in 1 Peter 1:15-16. The theophany of chapter 6 was the dramatic discovery of his own abject poverty of holiness, and the discovery that God could

and would transform his life by a touch of the fire of God to his lips. The message he delivers is not only a message of condemnation of all that is not holy, but a promise of future transformation of the remnant God will preserve.

The God of Hope

Themes of hope are presented in Isaiah. The first is the hope that comes when there is repentance, and we have noted that Isaiah starts in 2:5 with a plea to his people to follow the ways of the Lord. The instruction he received with his call in chapter 6 is not to call to repentance, but to denounce.

Little is said about repentance until the last section of the book. In 55:7 we read his great call to repentance: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon."

An important theme of hope in Isaiah is the preservation of the remnant of the people of God. This is the promise that a few out of the rebellious nation would be preserved and purified and they would be the foundation for the continuation of the blessings of God. In chapter 6 the call of Isaiah concludes with the image that only a stump of Israel would remain, but the "holy seed will be the stump."

Isaiah 6:13

The great hope of the second section of the book is the salvation God extends through his servant. God's plan of salvation will not end because Israel had not been faithful, instead God will raise up a servant who will bring redemption and destroy iniquity.

The Servant of God

In the first 40 chapters of Isaiah the title, servant, is used for Isaiah, Eliakim (king Jehoiakim) and David, simply indicating that these persons served Yahweh. A change takes place in chapters 41 through 53. The term is used 19 times in these chapters, often with the clear statement that God's servant is Jacob, the nation Israel.

See Isaiah 20:3; 22:20; 37:35

Isaiah 41:8-10

But in many passages that refer to the servant it appears that an individual is being addressed. This is especially true of chapter 53, which gives a graphic description of the suffering of the servant and the salvation accomplished through that suffering. These servant songs are frequently applied to Jesus in the

New Testament, and in Acts the early sermons of the apostles recorded in Acts 3:13, 26; 4:25-30, Jesus is referred to as the servant of God.

Messianic Prophecies

One quarter of the passages Christians recognize as messianic prophecies occur in Isaiah. This was the book Jesus turned to when he announced to the synagogue in Nazareth that he had come to fulfill the promise:

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Luke 4:18

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Isaiah's Specific Prophecies

Isaiah sometimes makes mention of very specific persons and nations in his prophecies, unlike the majority of prophecies that are clouded in meaning. At the start of the book, when Assyria was simply flexing its muscle, he prophesies that it will be Assyria that Yahweh will use to bring about the demise of Damascus and Samaria.

Isaiah 8:4

The most remarkable foresight is the use of the name, Cyrus, and the indication that he would rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. If this was the work of Isaiah of the 8th century, then he was shown that the Temple would be destroyed about a hundred years later and the Persian king, Cyrus, would order its restoration about 70 years after that. This is very unusual perception. It is part of the reason, coupled with the change in emphasis of the 2nd section of Isaiah that Eichhorn put the concept of Deutero-Isaiah forth in 1783.

Micah

Micah was Isaiah's contemporary from rural Judah. Unlike Isaiah who differentiated between the good and bad in Jerusalem, Micah saw any big city as evil. There was too much greed, sensuality, and corruption. Justice was hard to find. He was appalled at the misunderstanding of the people about the ways of Yahweh. As the Assyrian menace came near, they multiplied sacrifices and offerings trying to buy the favor of God. They came asking: "With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God?"

Micah 6:6

His response is one of the clearest statements in Scripture of what it means to live as a follower of God: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

- Justice—always doing the right thing at the right time
- *Chesed*—always extending a hand of grace in the spirit of love and care
- Walking humbly with God—not seeking to elevate yourself but accepting Yahweh as Lord of life

Micah also recognized that punishment would come, but that God would preserve a remnant, not because the remnant, the almost nothing, had some good in it, but because he delights to show *chesed*.

Micah 7:17

Micah 5:2

It was Micah to whom it was revealed that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem in Judea. This was the ruler who would bring *shalom* and justice into the world.

Sixth-Century Prophets to Judah and the Exiles

Refer to Resource 4-6 in the Student Guide.

For about 100 years after Isaiah, the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the deportation of the people of Samaria, Judah continued to exist, but in almost constant domination by Assyria. They tended to look to Egypt to rescue them.

The promise of Isaiah to Hezekiah had become a mantra. The leaders held that Jerusalem could not fall because the Temple of Yahweh was there. At the same time they were bowing before the gods of the Assyrians and the Egyptians and the worship of Yahweh was being seriously perverted. The time for the end of Judah had come, and Yahweh sent many

prophets to deliver his word to the leaders and to the people.

Jeremiah was the most prominent of the prophets who served in Jerusalem. Ezekiel became God's prophet to the nation newly in exile. Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Nahum, and Obadiah were 4 other prophets of the period whose messages have been preserved.

Jeremiah

The times in which Jeremiah lived were chaotic, and his personal life was chaotic partly because of his prophetic opposition to the leadership direction of the king and his court. The book itself is a picture of chaos. One legend records that Baruch, the amanuensis for Jeremiah, had collected all the messages of his master, organized them, and gave them to a youth to deliver to the scribes in the writing room. On the way the youth stumbled and fell down a flight of stairs, gathered up the scrolls and delivered them to the scribes. It is probably as good an explanation of the organization of the book as anyone could give.

False Trust in the Temple

The messages of Jeremiah continue and develop the theological truths that were announced by his predecessors. In chapter 7 Jeremiah attacked the false belief in the magical protection of the Temple. "Do not trust these words: 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.' "

Jeremiah 7:4, paraphrased

He made explicitly clear that God had allowed the destruction of the tabernacle at Shiloh because of the wickedness of the people, and that God would not protect a people who were disobedient, practiced injustice, and worshiped other gods. The standard of Yahweh was holiness, righteousness, justice, and truth. This was a politically incorrect stand, made enemies in high places, and cost him severe persecution, including jail and pit time.

Jeremiah 41

The Call of a Prophet

The call of Jeremiah is quite different from the vision of Isaiah. Jeremiah was called when young and, like Timothy in the New Testament, he needed to be encouraged to believe that a call had little to do with age, and all to do with God's hand upon one's life. The call included the promise that God would strengthen him for the calling. A life spent in denouncing a sinful people was not Jeremiah's choice. The vision of the

Jeremiah 1 records the call was extended before he was born.

Verses 6 and 7 record his protests, similar to those of Moses, that he was not an orator, and God's promise to be with him.

message of doom that he would have to deliver made him even more reluctant, but, nevertheless, he accepted God's promise. Key to his acceptance was this promise:

Jeremiah 1:18-19

"Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

As his ministry continued it would appear that Jeremiah misunderstood the nature of the promise. God promised to strengthen him so that he could withstand the attacks, but he seemed to think God had promised to set the wall and pillar in front of him to protect him from the attacks.

It is noteworthy that the call was contingent upon the repentance of Jeremiah. Only if he repented would Yahweh restore him. Further he was to speak worthy, not worthless words and get the people to turn to him. He was not to turn and try to please the people.

Jeremiah 15:19

A Message of Condemnation

The message of Jeremiah was delivered to a people who had broken the covenant with Yahweh and who were not showing repentance. He consistently condemned and called for repentance. Attending ritual worship was not acceptable as an alternative to obedience. As with the other prophets injustice, immorality, idol worship, and corruption in high places were consistently and roundly condemned.

The God of Destiny

An image that Jeremiah used that has been used by Isaiah as well was that of the potter. God is the one who makes humankind into a useful vessel, but the clay has to be yielded to the hand of the potter or it is reshaped into another vessel or is discarded. Yahweh states that Israel is the clay and he is the potter who determines the destiny of all clay. Yahweh decides the fate of all nations.

Jeremiah 18

The Hope of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:33-34 records the insight of Jeremiah into the new covenant that Yahweh would make with his people: "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a

man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

Matthew 22:37-39

The essence of the covenant does not change. It is still the law of Yahweh as revealed at Sinai and summed up in Jesus' statement of the *Shema*: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

But the relationship of the covenant to the follower of Yahweh does change. No longer is it to be a set of regulations imposing the boundaries of righteousness, but it is to become the foundation for living rising from the inner being of each believer. It is the joy of guidance from within rather than restrictions dictated by the priests.

Message to the Exiles

One of the unique aspects of Jeremiah is his message to the exiles in chapter 29. He reminds them of his earlier prophecy that they would be in the hands of the king of Babylon 70 years and then gives them this word from Yahweh:

Jeremiah 29:5-7, RSV

Build houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Mark 9:35

Make a success of life wherever you find yourself. Seek the well-being of those among whom you live, for that is the way to build a stable society. It is important to remember that *shalom*, peace, is the state of well being when everything is as it ought to be. Jesus taught the same principle when he said: "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Meeting the needs of others not only brings about well-being in society but stature to those who seek the good of others.

Exile to Egypt

Jeremiah, who had long prophesied that Jerusalem would fall to Babylon, was seen as a loyalist by the Babylonians, who gave him the option of going to Babylon or staying in Judah. He stayed among those

Jeremiah 24

who were left in Jerusalem—among those seen in his vision as a basket of fruit so rotten it was not worth taking.

Jeremiah 42—43

When they rebelled Jeremiah gave God's promise that they would be safe if they stayed in Judah, but the rebels dragged a reluctant Jeremiah with them to Egypt where there were already several settlements of Jews. The mature Jeremiah was no longer crying about his own sufferings; he was now crying and mourning for his wayward people whose women had even turned to other gods, especially the Queen of Heaven. He became the Weeping Prophet, weeping for his people.

Jeremiah 44: 17ff

Ezekiel

Ezekiel, the priest and prophet, provides us with one of the strangest and most controversial books in the Old Testament. His language is brutal at times and so vulgar that rabbis declared it unfit for reading in the presence of women. The theological implications of his visions were threatening to the rabbinic teachings, and they ruled that only senior rabbis could study the book.

He used many sign-acts to convey truth. His parish was the exiles—he was one of them—uprooted from Jerusalem and settled along the canals of Babylonia. The book is theologically constructed to deliver a message of truth and hope to the exiles. He did not use much poetry, but delivered precisely dated messages to the exiles.

God Can Be Anywhere

The call of Ezekiel the priest to be a prophet of God took place in Babylonia. He was called to be a watchman, to give warning to the people when danger was about. That his call came in Babylonia is remarkable, but even more remarkable is the vision that accompanied the call.

The vision revealed that God had come to Babylonia on his mobilized mercy seat with more than all the trappings of glory that are associated with the holy of holies. If the people thought that God had abandoned them, and that Yahweh was left in Jerusalem, this made clear that God was with them in Babylonia, and that God could be anywhere.

God Will Not Live Where There Is Evil

Ezekiel had been taken with the first group of exiles, along with Daniel and his friends. Jerusalem was still

standing when they left—ruled by a vassal of the Babylonians, Zedekiah.

Ezekiel prophesied, as did Jeremiah, that rebellious and sinful Jerusalem would be destroyed. The vision that begins in chapter 8 makes clear that God will not live where there is corruption. Sadly Ezekiel watches as the glory of God departs first from the holy of holies, then from the holy place, then from the Temple, then from Jerusalem, and finally takes off into the reaches beyond. God will not bless with his presence where there is corruption.

God Holds Individuals Accountable

Among the denunciations of the many sins of Judah and Israel were the X-rated descriptions of their activities as the harlots Oholah and Oholibah. These sins were the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem. The response of the exiles was that their plight was really the fault of their ancestors who had failed to do the right. In the 18th chapter Ezekiel makes clear that God holds each individual responsible for his or her sins, announcing: “The soul who sins is the one who will die.” The social concept of corporate identity was being distorted into blaming the fathers. This message was a check to the evasion of responsibility.

Ezekiel 18:4

God Acts in Character

Ezekiel recounts the sad history of Israel’s wayward ways in chapter 20. The cycle of salvation, forgetfulness, sin, punishment, repentance and salvation that was the literary device used in the writing of the Book of Judges resurfaces in this chapter. But there is a difference. God acts in salvation, not because of the value or the acts of Israel, but because of his name—in accord with his character. “But for my name’s sake” is the key. Salvation is not earned as a reward for good behavior; it is extended by God, because of his character of love and mercy.

Ezekiel 20:14, KJV

God Can Do Anything

One of the most dramatic presentations of truth comes in chapter 37, the chapter of the dry bones. The exiles are convinced that Israel has come to an end. There is no hope for them. But God gives another vision, this time of a valley a long time after a battle. The unburied bones have been picked clean even of the marrow. The bones are very dry. Word comes to Ezekiel—“prophecy to the bones!”

Obediently Ezekiel commands the bones to come together, and with a great rattling they join together, flesh comes upon them and they are covered with skin—dead corpses. Then comes the command, Prophecy to the spirit/wind/breath—all three are translations of the same word. Ezekiel obeys and life comes to the dead bodies and they rise up a great army of people. God has done the impossible, for dry bones are now living bodies. God can do anything.

God Will Make a New Covenant

Genesis 48: 15

Isaiah 40: 11
Jeremiah 50: 44

Ezekiel 34: 11

The next major concept is the new covenant brought into being by the Shepherd of Israel himself. Chapter 34 picks up the concept of God as the shepherd of Israel a concept that was first used by Jacob. It became a strong image with David; and also beautifully used by Isaiah; and then used by Jeremiah; and now is elaborated in Ezekiel 34 where God describes himself as shepherd of Israel: "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them."

Ezekiel 34: 25

This is the message of John 10 where Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of the promise that God will be the shepherd of his people. It is in this context, by this shepherd, that the new covenant of peace is made with the sheep.

God Will Bless Through His People

The conclusion of the book is a vision of the restored Temple. This is a new temple in a perfect setting. When Ezekiel arrives a glowing man who holds in his hands the tools of the building inspector—the rod and the plumb bob—meets him. They do a lengthy survey of the Temple, and this time everything is as it ought to be.

Everything is in its place. There are no hidden rooms. One peculiarity is that they measure only one room in the Temple itself and the priests are observed offering incense directly before the ark of the covenant. It appears that there is no veil cutting off the holy of holies anymore.

Once the inspection is over they withdraw and watch. The glory of God returns: first over the mountain, then over the city, then into the courtyard, and finally into the heart of the Temple itself. The smoke of the glory of God fills the Temple and its surroundings.

Back into the Temple the pair go, and Ezekiel observes a stream flowing out from the very threshold of the Temple. This is no common stream, it grows without tributaries and brings blessing wherever it goes. The water at first only wets the soles of the feet, but within meters it is up to the knees then too deep to wade in.

Trees with food year round and leaves that bring healing grow on its banks, and as it flows into the desert it transforms desert into lush farmland. When it reaches the Dead Sea the sea comes alive. Fish abound and reeds flourish along the banks. It pictures the blessing that flows from the people of God when all is right with God and he reigns at the heart of life.

This is the image that Jesus invokes when he speaks of the living water that flows out of the heart of the believer. This is the river of life that flows out of the New Jerusalem and brings blessing to the entire world.

This is the difference between the holiness of the old covenant, a water that has to be protected from contamination by any dirty agent, and the holiness of the new covenant, a water that has power to transform the dirty world into which it flows and bring it to fruitfulness and goodness. This is the mission of the people of God.

Refer to Resource 4-6, page 2.

Habakkuk

This brief book reflects the development of a faith that God would provide for the nation. The person who is faithful to God is the person who will survive. Habakkuk 2:4 became a powerful theme in Paul's writings in the New Testament and the watchword of Martin Luther: "The just shall live by faith."

Rom 1:17; Gal 2:20; 3:11, KJV

Zephaniah

The theme of Zephaniah is the day of the Lord. Joel had pictured this day as a day of disaster from the Assyrians—not a day when everything would be put right for Israel, but a day when the hand of God would fall first upon his own people. Zephaniah applies this to the Babylonians and to Judah. The day of the Lord is the day of reckoning for Judah. But again, he does not leave the people without hope, for the day of the Lord clears the way for restitution and restoration of the people of God.

Nahum

Like Jonah this book centers on Nineveh. This time the message is that the city is about to be destroyed and the nation that dominated the world for 150 years is to be taken over by her enemies. This is the day of judgment for Nineveh. No tyrant nation can escape judgment.

Obadiah

This one chapter booklet records the vision of the prophet. It can be dated only from the content—condemnation and prophecy of total destruction of Edom, the house of Esau, for their participation with the Babylonians in the sack of Jerusalem. It is a reminder that the day of the Lord is coming for all people, and everyone is held accountable for their actions. In the end the house of Jacob will triumph.

Prophets of the Return

With the return of the exiles to Jerusalem following the edict of Cyrus permitting the rebuilding of the Temple, three prophets ministered to the people.

Refer to Resource 4-7 in the Student Guide.

Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the first group that returned under Zerubbabel. These prophets worked hand in hand with the priests and their interests were very similar to those of the priests.

Malachi appeared on the scene some 60 years later, and again his concern was largely with the Temple and the priesthood.

A possible 4th prophet was Joel. This little book is hard to date, but many scholars consider it to be one of the last to be written because it concludes with a Jerusalem that once again is available for pilgrimages.

Haggai

Haggai was concerned because the returned exiles were not paying proper attention to the rebuilding of the Temple. They were concentrating on the development of their own fields and the building of homes for themselves. He attributed the paucity of their success to the fact that they were not putting God first in their lives and their society.

Zerubbabel responded to the plea from Haggai, and construction of the Temple resumed. Haggai announced that when he put God first, at that point

God made him his signet ring. The emphasis is that when you put God first you receive God's blessing and you are able to imprint the name of God onto life. This became an important theme of Jesus—"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33

Zechariah

Zechariah echoes the message of Amos and Micah, reminding Israel that God wants a life of holiness and not ritual. The book opens with a vision of the world at rest under the rule of the Persians—the period of judgment is at an end. Now is the time for accomplishment, but as he warns Zerubbabel in 4: 6, this will be accomplished " 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." The purpose of the return is more than simply the reestablishment of Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Temple, it is a step toward the day of God's universal rule over all humankind.

Zechariah 1:7-17

Zechariah 14:16-19

Malachi

Malachi brings a call to obedience to the law of God. He opens with a condemnation of worship that is purely ritual and avoids fulfillment of the requirements of the law, much as Amos had said about worship at Bethel.

In his second chapter he blames the situation on the unfaithful priests who are willing to let people bring second-class offerings and sacrifices. The anger of God is revealed. He also is concerned about the stability of the family. He condemns marriages to women worshipping other gods, and makes the clearest statement in Scripture about the attitude of God toward divorce: "I hate divorce."

In the 3rd chapter Malachi calls for recognition of Yahweh's lordship of life, by insisting upon the payment of the whole tithe. How do you show that you have returned to God's ways? The answer is:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

Malachi 3:10

Many of the teachings of Jesus regarding putting the kingdom of God first and about placement of your wealth—"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," parallel this concept.

Matthew 6:21

Tithing from ancient times was paid to the owner of the property, and is the formal acknowledgment that the land belongs to the person receiving the tithe. Tithe to God is paid on everything, not just produce of the land. Malachi closes with the promise of the coming of the branch and the promise of the coming of Elijah to prepare for the "great and terrible day of the Lord."

Joel

Joel is possibly the last of the prophetic books to be written, and addresses interests that cover the whole period of the Latter Prophets. It is placed 2nd in the list of the 12, but it contains some remarkable prophecies.

Its focus is on the great Day of Judgment and salvation. He calls for repentance so that the judgment will not destroy the people. A unique prophecy is the statement from Yahweh: "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten." A refund on punishment?

Joel 2:25

After that Day of Judgment Joel announces a great outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the people that would bring renewal and transformation so that even the youth would see visions and prophecy. This is the passage (2:28) that is quoted by the apostles when the Spirit of God fell upon the Church on the Day of Pentecost. Joel cries out that this is the day to repent, "Multitudes in the valley of decision" and the Day of the Lord is near.

Joel 3:14

Lecture: Special Notes

(15 minutes)

There are a few prophetic concepts that we need to examine. They run through all the prophets and continue into the rest of Scripture. We cannot look at them all.

Refer to Resource 4-8 in the Student Guide.

The Role of the Prophets

The prophets who come to the fore in the Old Testament were not leaders of the normal worship services. That was the role of the priest and Levite who were hierarchical professionals. God called prophets so that they could be special messengers to bring a corrective word from Yahweh.

They came to the fore during the time of the kings, and especially when injustice and idolatry was being practiced. They usually confronted the leaders of the people—the priests and the kings.

There were many other prophets, some false, who are referred to only in the context of schools of prophets. We assume that the average person turned not only to the priests for guidance from God but came to the prophets because they saw them as people having unusual access to God.

Ezekiel 14:1

*Note the stories of 2 Kings 2
2 Samuel 7:1ff.*

Ezekiel did have leaders come to him, but this may have been as much because he was a priest as a prophet. David did consult Nathan about the construction of the Temple. Elisha especially seems to have also had a strong influence upon the daily life of the ordinary people. The work of the prophets was not all from God to humankind.

Justice

A primary concern of all of the prophets was justice. This was usually seen to be right action toward the underprivileged and vulnerable of society—the widow, orphan, poor, stranger, etc. Amos calls for justice to roll like a river and righteousness as a never-failing stream in 5:24 is a powerful presentation of this theme.

Perversion of justice was in the form of taking advantage of their weakness and vulnerability or accepting bribes to render unjust judgments. For the prophets injustice voided the efficacy of sacrifice and made a mockery of the worship of Yahweh.

Persistence in such iniquity made Yahweh turn up his nose at the sacrifices. Again Amos speaks words that are emphasized by those who followed him:

Amos 5:21-23

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.

For the prophet true worship was not what happened in the Temple, but what happened in daily life.

Sign Acts and Miracles

A peculiarity of the prophet was the use of personal actions to convey a message. Their lives as well as their words conveyed messages from God. In the record of the Former Prophets we often read of the

1 Kings 17ff

2 Kings 6:5; 2 Kings 4:16
2 Kings 5
2 Kings 6:12; 2 Kings 4:28-36

miracles that they performed. Elijah stops the rain. Elisha performed many miracles, including floating an axe head, awakening the barren womb, healing the leper, reporting the bedroom conversations of a distant king, and even raising the dead.

These were powerful demonstrations of their unique relationship to God. Such actions are not a part of the record of the Latter Prophets except as they occurred in visions. On the other hand the Latter Prophets were called upon to perform acts to symbolize God's intentions. These acts sometimes shook not only their personal lives but their families:

Hosea 2

- Hosea married a harlot to teach about God's love. He names the children "Jezreel"—(a battlefield), "Not pitied" and "Illegitimate."

Isaiah 20

- Isaiah walked naked in Jerusalem for three years to warn the nation that exile was coming.
- Isaiah gives his children unusual names like "A remnant shall return" (Shear-Jashub) and "Speedy is the spoil, quick the plunder" (Maher-shalal-hash-baz—the longest name in Scripture).

Isaiah 7:3; 8:3

- Jeremiah buries a sash in the banks of the far distant Euphrates and returns to bring the rotted cloth back to illustrate the people going into exile.

Jeremiah 16:2

- Jeremiah is told not to marry in Jerusalem as a condemnation of the city.

Jeremiah 27

- Jeremiah wore an ox yoke on his neck as he waked about Jerusalem to symbolize Nebuchadnezzar's domination.

Ezekiel 4:1-7

- Ezekiel was called upon to do the strangest things—cut off his hair, divide it into three piles, burn one pile, chop up another pile, scatter the third to the winds, but save a few hairs in his belt. This symbolized the destruction, death, and deportation of the people of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 4:1-16

- Ezekiel drew a map of the city and laid siege to it for almost a year and a half, eating little food—and that was to be cooked on human dung. On his protest God changed that to cow dung.

Many such acts would not be permitted in today's society, but for the prophets they made clear their total commitment to the proclamation of God's message. When we move into the New Testament we

find that Jesus performed great miracles and the disciples continued in that tradition. There were healings of all kinds, far more than anything that even Elisha had done.

What about sign-acts? Paul calls upon the followers of Jesus to present their bodies a living sacrifice. The same total commitment to God is expected. The greatest of all the sign-acts, however, is the one performed by Jesus who came to this earth, lived his life as a human and even suffered death on a cross, all to demonstrate the love of God for his sinful creatures.

Apocalyptic and Eschatology

The prophets called the people to repentance and warned them of disaster that was the consequence of sin. They saw history in the hands of God, who acted in accord with his nature and one aspect of that nature was to extend mercy to the repentant. They often prophesied concerning the future, often characterizing it as the day of the Lord.

The apocalyptic literature arose in a later day—during and after the Exile—and was preoccupied with a theology of end times that had all history pre-arranged by God, and over which humankind had no influence. Repentance is not a characteristic of apocalyptic, although faithfulness is.

Only Ezekiel and Zechariah of the Latter Prophets have some sections that are apocalyptic in nature. For the prophets God was going to bring judgment upon evil men and nations, and a new world of *shalom* for his own people. Judgment, however, began with God's people.

The Day of the Lord

The day of Yahweh is an expression born in the Prophets. It is the day when Yahweh appears to set things right. It is a day of judgment both on Israel and on the nations. It is not a day for rejoicing, but a day for howling and wailing. It is a day when the penalty cannot be escaped. The expression does not always refer to the same event. It is used in different contexts and in relation to different events.

- Joel uses it in connection with end times when “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

Joel 2:31

Isaiah 2:12

Isaiah 13:6
Obadiah 1:15

Amos 5:18, KJV

Ezekiel 13:5; Ezekiel 30:2-4

Zephaniah 1:14-15
Zechariah 14:1
Malachi 4:5

Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14;
1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10

- Isaiah uses it to speak of the penalty to the proud and as a day of reckoning for the enemies of the Almighty. Obadiah also refers to the enemies of God.
- Amos uses it in connection with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD!"
- Ezekiel speaks both of the failure of God's people and of the day of judgment upon the nations.
- The references in Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi may refer to end times, although Malachi's prophecy that the day will be preceded by the return of Elijah is taken by Christians to apply to Jesus.

The phrase reappears in the New Testament five times, and each time it is used in connection with the prophesied second coming of Christ and the judgment that will take place at that time.

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 4-9 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into groups of about 3 each.

In your group take the information in today's lesson, both from in class and your preparation and formulate at least two theological statements that you consider most important today. Outline what these statements tell us about blessing, discipline, judgment, salvation, or monotheism.

Write your statements on a board for the class to see. Compare your statements to those of the other groups.

Compare your statements to any similar issues in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene, especially the Articles of Faith (§1-22), Covenant of Christian Character (§27) and Covenant of Christian Conduct (§33-38) and the Current Moral and Social Issues (§903).

Add to your catechism any statements that you consider essential for the instruction of Christians. Re-evaluate your previous entries and modify them where necessary in the light of your added information.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Do you have any questions or comments concerning this lesson?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review:

- 2 Chronicles 7; 36; Lamentations 1; 3; Esther 2; 9; Ezra 1; 4; 9; 10; Nehemiah 1; 9; Daniel 1; 2; 7; 12; Job 1—4; 28; 31; 38—42; Psalms 1; 8; 14; 18—24; 27; 32; 34; 37; 40; 42; 46; 48; 51; 66; 72; 82; 90; 91; 96; 100; 103; 105—107; 119; 121; 125; 137; 139; 148; 150; Proverbs 1; 3; 8; 10; 16; 23; 29; 31; Ecclesiastes 1—3; 12; Song of Songs 1; 7; 8
- Prepare a list of at least 10 theological concepts these chapters seem to support or presume.

Read Part Two: Biblical Corpora and Books: “Wisdom Books” (NDBT)

Assign each student one of the sections.

Read the essays in NDBT on your assigned section and note 2-3 main points. Give copies to each of the other students. This can be done by email.

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
Job	Job	Job
Psalms	Psalms	Psalms
David	David	David
Proverbs	Solomon	Suffering
Ecclesiastes	Life	Vanity
Wisdom	Truth	Worship
Lament	World	Praise
Apocalyptic	Apocalyptic	Apocalyptic

Write a 2-page essay on the view of God reflected in the Writings, with particular attention to the Psalms, explaining any novel or emphasized perspectives not found in Israel's earlier literature. Be prepared to read your essay aloud in class.

Write in your journal. Reflect on the difference between the character of disobedience of many of the leaders of the Children of Israel and the character of obedience of the prophets.

Lesson 5

The Writings

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Writings	Lecture	Resources 5-1—5-4
0:35	A Modern Psalm	Class Activity	Bible Resource 5-5
1:00	The Writings	Lecture	Resource 5-6
1:15	The Writings	Guided Discussion	
1:40	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	Resource 5-7 Homework
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on at least 2 students to read his or her essay.

Return homework and collect essays.

Orientation

The Hagiographa or Writings, often referred to in the New Testament by the name of the largest book in the collection, Psalms, are a collection of a variety of literary pieces that have significant theological meaning. We want to undertake an overview of the major concerns presented in the

- Historical—1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah
- Apocalyptic—Daniel
- Story—Esther and Ruth
- Worship—Psalms
- Instruction—Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles

materials that make up the third sacred collection of the Old Testament.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- explain the theological foundations for the biblical theology of worship, wisdom, and apocalyptic
- give an overview of the theological issues related to the suffering endured by good people

Lesson Body

Lecture: The Writings

(25 minutes)

First we will survey the books in this collection and note the theological issues raised by each book. We will group them according to the type of literature involved because each kind of literature needs to be examined in a different way. In the second lecture section we will consider some of the theological issues that are addressed in these books.

Historical Collection

Refer to Resource 5-1 in the Student Guide.

The four historical books in the collection have a common theological objective. They elevate the Temple and the Scriptures. During the Exile Israel had no Temple and the Scriptures had become the primary guide for their lives. During the united kingdom and most of the divided kingdoms the oral advice of priests and prophets had been the recognized voice of Yahweh to his people. The reform of Josiah, based on the discovery of a manuscript buried in the wall of the Temple, is the first instance of the written word taking priority over the word as interpreted by the priests and prophets. After the Exile the Scriptures—the Torah, the Prophets and even some of the psalms—are recognized as the word of God to humankind.

2 Chronicles 34: 15ff

More people are learning to read.

1 and 2 Chronicles

These books are a rewriting of the history of Israel and Judah from the time of Samuel until the destruction of Jerusalem. Major emphasis is upon Judah and the Temple in Jerusalem. Custodians of the history of the Davidic line wrote the history, and stories inappropriate to David were removed. They measured the success or failure of all of the kings solely in terms of their faithfulness to the worship of Yahweh. All other stories were irrelevant to his faithfulness to Yahweh.

Example—David and Bathsheba

At the same time concerns that drove the prophetic writers in Samuel are not shared. 2 Samuel 4: 4 records Jonathan's son as Mephibosheth while 1 Chronicles 8: 34 records it as Meribbaal. The term *baal* was unacceptable to the prophetic writer because it recalled the name of the licentious god of the Canaanites, Baal. The prophetic writers had changed it to *bosheth*, meaning shame, emphasizing their dislike

for Baal. The worship of Baal was a fighting issue when they were writing.

Following David, the Chronicler continues to apply the same principle to all of the kings—they were good if they worshiped Yahweh and supported the Temple and its activities. They were evil if they did not. He said little about the evil kings, and this excluded much discussion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The books end with permission being given for the exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. This was the second chance that God was giving to his people. It is not surprising that the history of the nation was rewritten to make it relevant to the returned exiles in the difficult context in which they lived.

There is no softening of the seriousness of sin. It brings about destruction of the individual and of society. At the same time Yahweh is a God of *chesed*, and his loving-kindness, or mercy, or grace works toward a reestablishment of the covenant relationship no matter what sin has occurred.

Ezra

Ezra and Nehemiah are treated as one book in the Hebrew manuscripts, but they refer to slightly different times and have a different emphasis. Ezra, the leading figure of the first book, is still an important figure in Nehemiah. These two books pick up the history where Chronicles ends. They focus on the Temple and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The second Temple had been rebuilt by the first group of returned exiles who came back to Israel in 538 BC following the decree of Cyrus. They were led by Sheshbazzar and then by the governor, Zerubbabel, and encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. About 100 years later, during the time of Artaxerxes I, Ezra the priest led a second party back and led a reform that called for obedience to the Torah. The third group came some 20 years later with Nehemiah in order to rebuild the walls of the city.

The first 6 chapters of Ezra record the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstitution of the sacrifices and feasts. The documents involved in the authorization of the rebuilding are presented in Aramaic, not Hebrew, as is the rest of the book. The conflicts with the Samaritans, who had turned the city into the leading city of the area during exilic times, required the authentication of the authorizations from Persia. The highlight was the celebration of the Passover.

The second Temple had already been completed for 58 years when Ezra brought his group back to Jerusalem. His emphasis was upon adherence to the written word of God. He called the people to repentance and obedience. It is noteworthy that the people no longer knew Hebrew, the language in which the Scriptures were written, and that when the Scripture was read someone had to interpret it to the people in Aramaic.

The identity of the people of God is not to be found in national identity but in commitment to God's word. One of the painful aspects of this was his demand that the returned exiles divorce their foreign wives. It was a tacit recognition that the mother is of prime influence in the development of the religion of the home. If Israel was to be faithful to Yahweh, then Israel's homes had to be centers of loyalty to him because Yahweh's primary concern was not for performance of rituals in the Temple, but for righteousness in daily life.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a layman who served as cupbearer to the Persian emperor. He was a Jew who had risen to a place of influence and who led a party as governor to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls. When the walls were built and Jerusalem stabilized, he returned to the service of the emperor. He made a second trip as governor to check on developments in Jerusalem and on this trip he insisted on the observation of the law and the purity of the nation of Israel.

A Burden for Jerusalem

Nehemiah reveals how he acquired the motivation or burden to undertake the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. He had a concern for Jerusalem that is revealed in his questioning of Hanani and other men from Judah when they visited Susa the Persian capital. The sad news that they brought caused him to weep and mourn and to fast and pray. A burden was born in his heart, for these were his people.

Nehemiah did not hold himself aloof from other Jews, but called them brothers, and even emphasized his unity with all Israel when he prayed: "I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you" (Neh 1:6). This is a typical pattern for the development of a burden to do something about any situation—there has to be concern, there has to be information, and there has to be identification with those about whom you are concerned. In the New Testament we see Paul

1 Corinthians 16 records the collection that was to be taken to Jerusalem.

informing churches of the needs in Jerusalem, and the result is the taking up of an offering to assist these Jewish Christians by Gentile Christians who considered them brothers.

Reliance on God Through Prayer

The dominant characteristic of Nehemiah is his prayer life. When he was first informed about Jerusalem he prayed and requested help: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you" (Neh 1:5-6).

When the king asked what he wanted to do, his first act was to pray to the God of heaven and then he answered the king. When the work was threatened by the rulers of Samaria once again, "We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat" (Neh 4:9).

Nehemiah 6:9

When his enemies tried blackmail, stating that they would accuse him of setting up a rival kingdom to Persia in Jerusalem, Nehemiah again prayed for strength to complete the task. When the task was complete Nehemiah turned his attention to the reestablishment of Jewish religious practices among the people. Beginning in chapter 7 we have a record of his efforts. Returned priests are sought and proper Temple practices restored, and above all Ezra is called to read the Torah and bring guidance to the people. It culminated in a great feast of booths that recalled the early days of faith: "From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great" (Neh 8:17)

Careful Planning

Note the dates given in Nehemiah 1.

Nehemiah 2:5-9

Right from the start Nehemiah was careful in his planning. Before he addressed the king he had taken four months to think about the requirements for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. When the king asked what he wanted, he prayed, but he also had a detailed request ready—for authorizations and supplies. When he arrived at Jerusalem his first act was to properly greet the people. He did not reveal why he had come; he simply spent three days giving respect to the leaders of the existing community.

Nehemiah 2:11-18

Then he went out on his own to examine the situation and made careful note of the many problems that they would encounter in the rebuilding of the walls. Only then did he call together the leaders and explain why he had come and what authority and resources were available. The work began with the cooperation of all of the people in the city. The listing of those responsible for the various sections of the wall is fascinating, for it included the goldsmiths and even the perfumer.

External Opposition

Nehemiah had a pattern for dealing with the external opposition that Sanballat of Samaria stirred up. In chapter 4 we see two levels of opposition:

- taunts and threats, which were met by prayer and encouragement to work harder
- followed by Sanballat's enlistment of other nearby cities and threat of attack

The latter threat was met by the organization of an armed defense, so that every builder had weapons available for instant use. In chapter 6 Sanballat changed tactics to try to intimidate Nehemiah. First they called for him to meet them for discussions, but 3 times he refused to leave the work on the grounds that he was doing the work of the Lord. Then they accused him of sedition, which he prayed about and left in the hands of God. Finally they had a false prophetess announce a plot to kill him, and she advised him to fly to the Temple. His response was, "Should such a man as I flee?" (Neh 6:11, KJV).

Internal Opposition

Nehemiah's response to complaints from his own people was to investigate the complaints and set the wrongs right. Justice was important for peace. Chapter 5 records his condemnation of those who were taking unjust advantage of the situation, and his own efforts to alleviate the suffering of the returned exiles.

Establishment of Law and Order

The reestablishment of the covenant with its call for the observance of the Torah is the focus of chapters 8 through 10. A rebuilt city was not the objective of Nehemiah—it was the rebuilding of the faith of the people that was his objective. This was done in three distinct phases that provide the outline of the book:

- rebuilding of the walls and provision of protection for a stable society—chapters 1—7

- reestablishment of the Torah as the guide for conduct—chapters 8—10
- reformation practices of the people so that they lived in accord with the Torah—chapters 11—13

Apocalyptic

Refer to Resource 5-2 in the Student Guide.

Matthew 24

Revelation 1:3; 22:18-19

Apocalyptic was a form of literature about end times that thrived in Persia. The period between 200 BC and AD 200 was the time when apocalyptic literature flourished in Judaism and sparked an interest in apocalyptic that became a part of Christian writings even into the Middle Ages. Daniel is the first full-blown apocalyptic work in Scripture. There are also apocalyptic elements in the visions of Zechariah and Ezekiel. These two works have a strong blending of prophetic preaching. The Olivet Discourse is a New Testament apocalyptic writing, and Revelation, which has many ties to Daniel, is the major apocalyptic work in the New Testament. Revelation, the apocalypse of John, characterizes itself as prophecy.

Apocalyptic writing is characterized by visions and heavy use of symbols of all kinds. There are 2 types of apocalyptic writing, one dealing with history leading to the end time, the other dealing with visions of heaven. It is the first type that occurs in the Scriptures.

Daniel

Daniel consists of a series of stories about Daniel, some of which include apocalyptic-style visions that he had, and a series of visions. The apocalyptic nature of the book causes most scholars to place the writing, or at least the collection, of the stories and visions in the 2nd century BC, and not at the time Daniel lived. The stories in particular could easily have circulated orally along with the other Daniel stories that are included in the Apocrypha.

History writing became increasingly important under the influence of Greek thinking. The Septuagint reorganized the canon of the Old Testament to include history as a section and this organization is still in use today among Christians. Prophecy became increasingly understood as the ability to foretell history. Apocalyptic had appeal because its style takes events in history, whether past or future, and changes places and personages into symbolic elements that bring to the fore the spiritual battle being fought between good and evil.

Such symbolism is easily reattached to any period of history and highlights the good and evil forces at work. The objective is to highlight the spiritual nature of the struggle in which the people of God are involved, their need to remain faithful to God, and the fact that God is and will be victorious. God is in charge. “Hold to your faith and God will save and vindicate you” is the message. It is a message highly important to a powerless people under persecution, and therefore has appeal to the Jews and to the Christians during those eras when they were or are powerless and persecuted.

It contrasts with the message of the prophets in that it does not call for repentance that would change the direction of history—history is preset by God—nor does it call upon the followers of Yahweh to evangelize or bring blessing to the world about them.

Daniel’s presentation of history, understood as prophecy of the first and second coming of Christ, made 16th-century Christian scholars acknowledge him as the greatest of the prophets.

Theologically Daniel teaches that God is in absolute control of everything, that there is a spiritual battle going on between good and evil, and God will be victorious and will vindicate and keep the faithful.

Bertholdt in particular, in his commentary on Daniel, notes the great emphasis that Protestant scholars placed on Daniel as the greatest of the prophets.

Stories

There are two wonderful but very different stories in the writings.

Ruth

The setting of this story is Bethlehem in Judah and Moab. Famine in the hills of Judea drives the family of Elimelech to Moab for survival. There his sons marry and he and his sons die. His elderly widow, Naomi, is left with her two widowed daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Without other sons Naomi sends her daughters-in-law to their parents so that they might find other husbands and have an assured future. Ruth refuses to go with words that have become a classic commitment statement:

Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.

Ruth 1:16-17

Refer to Resource 5-3 in the Student Guide.

They return to Bethlehem where they live as the poorest of the poor, Ruth gleaning the heads of grain dropped by the reapers in accordance with the customs and law. Naomi sent her to the field of Boaz, a relative that she knew to be a good man, and Boaz, who had been impressed with Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, instructed that the reapers in her area be more careless than usual.

Most scholars recognize this as a common euphemism.

Naomi takes this opportunity to set in motion the levirate laws of marriage. She instructs Ruth to sleep with Boaz, as the nearest relative responsible to raise up children to inherit the rights of Elimelech. Ruth carries out the instructions, coming to Boaz while he was sleeping after the harvest feast, and lying down at his feet. When he wakes Boaz informs Ruth that he is not the nearest relative, but will take action on her behalf. She leaves in early dawn before others could recognize her.

Only the owner was entitled to walk in shoes in his tent or on his property. Moses was called upon to remove his shoes in acknowledgment that the land was holy because it belonged to God.

Boaz goes to the city gate, gathers 10 witnesses, and when the nearest relative passes through the gate, calls him to settle the matter of inheritance. The relative refuses when he realizes that the inheritance includes Ruth, and transfers right of ownership by handing over his sandal, the symbol of ownership. Ruth becomes Boaz's wife, and bears Obed, the grandfather of David the king.

The story gives a delightful insight into the customs of the time. It reveals the care for the poor and needy like the widow and orphan. It shows how justice in the gate worked. It tells us how property and responsibility rights were transferred. Perhaps the story was told during the time of David to soften the attitude of the Moabites toward David, who had conquered their country. Perhaps to indicate that outsiders can be accepted as loyal Israelites, worshipers of Yahweh. Whatever, it is a gem that reveals that not everything that happened during the time of the judges was a headlong dash toward evil. Here are lives lived in harmony with the covenant, with integrity and loyalty, responsibility and love. The commitment to each other and to God is like the commitment that is expected of believers in the New Testament.

Esther

Esther is unique in that God is not mentioned at all in the story. Interesting but subtle connections are inferred. Mordecai, the hero, is a Benjamite of the family of Kish. Haman is an Agagite. Is this Saul finally putting an end to the ghost of Agag, king of the

Amalekites? The setting is the Persian court during the reign of Ahasuerus—Hebrew version of Khshayarsha. Greek version is Xerxes. Greek historians who report similar events corroborate many of the events and details. Perhaps it is not really a story, but a play, for it divides easily into acts and scenes. Whoever wrote it knew many details about the Persian court. As a play it can be divided into three acts:

It is uncertain just what a gallows was in Persia. It may not have been a beam for a noose to strangle a victim. It could have been a post on which the body of the victim was impaled. The practice of impaling enemies to execute them or simply to display their heads is well attested.

Act I—Esther becomes queen, chapters 1 and 2. There are 4 scenes, the first relating how Vashti unjustly lost her position, the second relating the search for a new queen, the third records the gathering and presentation of the beauties from throughout the empire to the king culminating in the coronation of Esther, the cousin of Mordecai. She does not reveal her nationality. A subplot appears as Mordecai exposes a palace intrigue to kill Ahasuerus. The culprits are hung on a gallows.

Act II—Haman plots to kill the Jews, chapters 3, 4, and 5. Again there are 4 scenes. Haman who is proud of his favored position, is offended by Mordecai's refusal to bow to him, and vows vengeance on Mordecai and all Jews. His plan would enrich the king and would destroy all Jews. The king endorses the plan that labels Jews as enemies of the empire. Scene 2 describes the distress among the Israelites, and the efforts of Mordecai to inform Esther of the impending disaster. Scene 3 relates Esther's courageous acceptance of responsibility to attempt to divert the disaster. Scene 4 describes the trap Esther lays for Haman.

Act III—The triumph of Mordecai, chapters 6—10. Again there are 4 scenes. The first scene continues the subplot introduced in act I scene 4, and relates the humbling of Haman when he has to reward Mordecai for discovering the assassination plot. It is an omen of things to come. The second scene describes the exposure of a bumbling Haman as a fool and as the enemy of the queen, and his actions bring down the wrath of the King who orders his execution on the very gallows he has built for Mordecai.

The third scene describes the elevation of Mordecai as an advisor to the King and the defense he plans for the salvation of the Jews. Scene 4 relates the redemption of the nation and the institution of the Feast of Purim.

A footnote in chapter 10 refers the reader to the official records of the empire where the details of the events can be checked out.

In this book God is depicted as acting in much the same way that we see him acting today. There are no great miracles that sweep away the opposition, but rather God works through a faithful old man who refuses to surrender his beliefs, and through a courageous young woman who is deeply committed to her people, placing her own life at risk in order to save the nation. She accepts the responsibility thrust upon her by her circumstances. The hand of God is revealed in the remarkable timing of the subplot that predicts the fall of Haman, and in the statement of Mordecai to Esther: "Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esth 4: 14).

The word "God" may not be in the book, but the hand of God is always present, revealed through his people.

The Hymnal

Refer to Resource 5-4 in the Student Guide.

Psalms

The 5 collections that make up the Book of Psalms are a rich collection of the hymns of the Old Testament times. It is amazing that these ancient poems often so clearly express our spiritual and emotional needs and joys today. Many psalms are very ancient; some may predate David, the great psalmist of Israel. Others were written during or even after the Exile.

The psalms are usually studied according to their form. It is important to note what type a psalm is, whether it is the word of an individual or of the community, whether or not it is antiphonal, and what function it serves—praise, complaint, penitence, worship, instruction, etc. The specific historical setting out of which they arose, although informative, is usually not crucial to the understanding of the psalm. The origin of the headings is often questioned, and the meaning of some of the terms used is uncertain. The tunes and instruments sometimes named are not those we know and use today.

The psalms are an expression of theology. They reveal the beliefs of the singers of Israel. They are often instruments to teach theology to the people much as Charles Wesley centuries later wrote his hymns. The laments and complaints are the cries from the heart of the people revealing their pain and their understanding of what Yahweh could do for them.

There is considerable similarity between some of the psalms of Israel and those written by the Canaanites for the worship of Baal. There was probably some

borrowing of phrases and verses. But the only reference to Baal is to the Baal of Peor in 106:28 where the history of the failures of Israel is told. Many of the attributes of Baal are applied to Yahweh—governing storms, riding on clouds, providing fertility, etc.

Six of the 17 use Adonai which is translated Lord not LORD. The psalms are: 43, 44, 45, 49, 51, 52, 53, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 82, 114.

The word "Jehovah" comes from combining the written consonants for the word "Yahweh"—with the vowels for the word Adonai. This is to denote that Adonai should be read when the word "Yahweh" came up in the text, frequently as Yahweh Elohim—LORD God. In a few places Adonai Yahweh occurs and there the vowels for Elohim are inserted to indicate that it should be read as Lord GOD.

Psalms 104:30; 89:12, 47 are examples.

Ps 137: 7-10

Although there is no clear statement that there is only one God, it is clear that for the psalmists there is no God like Yahweh. Only 17 of the 150 psalms do not use the name of Yahweh, and all but 2 of those are in the second book of Psalms—42-72—a collection that ends with this statement: "This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse." The rabbinic custom of substituting the word *Adonai* for Yahweh, because the name was too holy to be pronounced, was not a consideration of the psalmists. They, as the prophets and Moses, were free in using the name, although David seems to have made less use of it.

The psalmist understood Yahweh to be in charge of all history, not just the events in the life of his own people. Psalms 22 and 47 make clear statements that Yahweh, God of Abraham, rules the nations, he is the King of all the earth. Repeatedly they refer to Yahweh as Creator, and therefore all-knowing and all-powerful. There is no way to escape from his presence:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

The psalmist believed that everything Yahweh does is right. His judgments are correct; his instruction is perfect and leads to life. Psalm 119 is an extensive acrostic that sings the praise of the Torah and the wisdom that Yahweh imparts to humankind through this instruction. The instruction of God brings restoration and well being and the worshiper keeps that instruction because he loves it.

Although Immanuel is not a title for God used in the Psalms, the concept of God with us permeates them. Yahweh delivers and protects—Psalm 91:15. He is the shelter, the rock in which humankind can take refuge—Psalm 18:2; 31:3. He is the shepherd caring for the sheep—Psalms 23:1; 28:9; 80:1. He is the general guiding in times of war—Psalms 18:34; 24:8. He is the vindicator of the righteous.

Blessedness is being where all is right and God's favor can rest upon you. The psalmist repeatedly promises to bless Yahweh, to live in such a way that it brings credit to the name of Yahweh. The psalmist's cry is:

Ps 103: 1-5, KJV

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The NIV modifies the Hebrew word *baruch* to "praise," losing some of the force of the word. Certainly the Psalms repeatedly call upon humankind to praise God, for he is worthy to be praised and worshiped. But the call to bless the Lord is a call to integrity, to live a life compatible with the salvation that Yahweh has extended. Living such a life in harmony with the instruction of God is true joy.

Psalms 16: 11; 19: 8

It is in this context of worship and blessing that the psalmist writes the Songs of Ascent—Psalms 120 to 134. They call on all the people of God to pause as they assemble at the festivals in Jerusalem, the holy city, to praise and worship Yahweh. The city is to be blessed by their devotion to their God.

Psalm 129: 8

Two words are very important to the psalmists: *qadosh* and *chesed*. Both apply to God. The first is the repeated statement that Yahweh is holy and everything about him is holy.

Holy name, 33: 21
Holy habitation, 68: 5
Holy hill, 2: 6
Holy heaven, 20: 6
Holy arm, 98: 1
Holy promise, 105: 42
I am holy, 86: 1
He is holy, 99: 5

This holiness demands justice and righteousness, and his instruction provides the guidance needed to practice justice and righteousness. Coupled to this is the second word denoting the steadfast love, the mercy, the grace Yahweh extends to his people who fail the expectation to be holy. A hundred times the psalmist announces that God is merciful: God has *chesed* toward his people. This is the foundation for the salvation that he extends. Yahweh saves because grace is in his character.

Note Psalms 83: 18; 86: 10; 104: 136: 4; 148: 13.

Even though Psalms does not contain a statement as clear as that of Isaiah that Yahweh is the one and only God, they do tell us that Yahweh stands alone, that he is the Most High, that he alone is excellent and that he is the Creator of everything. He does not share credit with other gods. The implication is that the gods other nations call gods are not in Yahweh's category.

Class Activity: A Modern Psalm

(25 minutes)

Refer to Resource 5-5 in the Student Guide.

You will need 4 groups for this activity. If there are 4 students in the class, each student is a group. If there are more than 4 students divide them, as evenly as possible, into 4 groups. If there are fewer than 4 students, you will need to make adjustments in the verse assignments as you see fit.

Read Psalm 107.

Each group is to work on your assigned verses. Write a modern version of the verses based on incidents or experiences familiar to today's culture in today's language.

Group 1—Psalm 107: 4-9

Group 2—Psalm 107: 10-16

Group 3—Psalm 107: 17-22

Group 4—Psalm 107: 23-32

If you have time, suggest phrases or language that could be used in the first 3 verses and the last 11 verses that would make the psalm more modern.

Be prepared to share your work with the class.

During the end of this section have the groups share their work.

Lecture: The Writings

(15 minutes)

Books of Wisdom

David was the great psalmist of Israel. He taught and worshiped, rejoiced and repented, prayed and mourned through his music. His tunes are unknown but his lyrics have survived. Solomon, his son, taught Israel through proverbs and sayings. Just as David motivated the collections of music so Solomon motivated the collection of wisdom materials. Both the Psalms and the wisdom writings have their roots in the Torah. They are practical advice on how to live out the Torah day by day, and the expression of the Torah in the music of worship. There are 4 books of this type in the Writings: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles.

Refer to Resource 5-6 in the Student Guide.

Job

Job is a complex book that has elicited a wide variety of interpretations regarding its meaning. It struggles with the age-old questions regarding suffering and evil. Its literary structure is a set of poetic dialogues with a narrative prologue and epilogue. Many scholars see the narrative sections as later additions to the speeches, but whatever may have happened in the compiling of the book it came into the canon with these narratives.

Job 1:6-12

The context that the narratives give, is that Job suffered because Yahweh and Satan (Accuser) entered into an agreement to test Job's motives and faithfulness to God. Job did not worship in order to get something from God but because he wanted fellowship with God. Satan then proceeds to strip Job of everything but his wife. Possessions, children, and health gone, Job sits in utter dejection on the city dump while his wife tells him to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9).

Job 42:7-8. This should make one careful about using some of the fine phrases of these men.

The dialogues consist of the "comfort" given Job by his three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, followed by a speech from a new arrival, Elihu, and concludes with a speech by Yahweh himself. Yahweh declares that the 3 friends did not speak the truth about God. Once Job's faithfulness was proven, the epilogue records that God gives Job twice as many children and twice the wealth that he had before.

Job 33:12-28

A basic assumption of Job's wife, his three friends, and Elihu was that *all* suffering is in some way related to sin. It is the consequence of sin, or as Elihu states it, it is to prevent one from sinning or to turn one to repentance. The belief that sin does cause suffering is endorsed throughout Scripture. The cycle of sin, suffering, repentance, and salvation in Judges strongly endorse that this is one cause of suffering. The error is to assume that this is the *sole* cause of suffering. Jesus had to rebuke his disciples when they asked: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus response was, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned: he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him" (Jn 9:2-3, NRSV). In this case Jesus states that suffering was an opportunity for the demonstration of God's love and power.

The narrative sections see suffering as a test of faith, as a part of a spiritual contest between the good God and the evil Satan. Job wants God simply because he wants God himself. "Naked I came from my mother's

womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21, NRSV). "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25, NRSV). This is the same confidence that Paul has when he declares: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39, NRSV).

Elihu comes the closest in his speech to addressing the role of suffering in salvation, although he sees it as a chastising or corrective measure. The suffering servant of Isaiah, and the sufferings of Jesus, who takes upon himself the sin of the world, are aspects that are not explored, although Job does reveal a concern for those in his family who may have sinned and offers sacrifices on their behalf. He does in this way identify himself with those who have sinned and takes responsibility for their sin.

Ultimately the Book of Job does not tell us why good people suffer—that is not the primary focus of the book. It does tell us that Job served Yahweh because Job wanted to know God himself. It was not what God could give or God could do that was the focus of Job's devotion, it was rather the very person of God that he wanted to worship.

Proverbs

Four collections of proverbs make up this book:

- Proverbs of Solomon 1—24
- Solomon's proverbs copied by the men of Hezekiah 25—29
- Sayings of Agur 30
- The Sayings of King Lemuel 31

They are the practical application of the Torah to everyday life. They are written in forms that lend themselves to oral instruction:

- pithy sayings—13: 7
- acrostics—31: 10-31
- number sayings such, as "six things, yes seven"—30: 24-31
- discourses—1: 10-19
- stories—7: 6-27

Their purpose is to teach righteous living. There are several themes throughout the book. Most of the teachings of Jesus in the Beatitudes are also found in

this wisdom literature and may have been the source of his statements.

The education of the next generation in the principles of the faith is a primary function of the priest in the Temple and the parents in the home. The wisdom writings elaborate upon many of the themes that occur in Scripture, setting them in the context of right living as wise living. Wisdom is the chief goal.

Wisdom

- Value of wisdom: Youth are instructed: "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor" (Prov 4:7-9). The proper application of knowledge to life is essential for success. The Torah provides the knowledge and proper respect for Yahweh, and his word is the starting point of wisdom. Wisdom is more valuable than gold, more precious than rubies. It is a shelter like money, but is superior because it preserves life.
- Origin of wisdom: So the wise man says: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov 1:7). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov 9:10). The wise man seeks knowledge and understanding, but the fool disregards wisdom. The fool is the man who believes that "There is no God" (Ps 14:1).

Proverbs 16:16: 8:11
Proverbs 7:11-12

The idea that wisdom originates from God and is attained by giving God his rightful place in life is a foundational concept, not only of the wise men but throughout Scripture. Part of the error of Eve was that she thought she would get wisdom from the fruit of the forbidden tree—Genesis 3:6. God gives wisdom and skill to the builders of the tabernacle—Exodus 28:3. Moses tells Israel that the person who observes the whole law of God will be wise—Deuteronomy 4:5-6. God gives Joshua a spirit of wisdom that enables him to lead the people—Deuteronomy 34:9. Solomon seeks wisdom from God and is given wealth and power as well—1 Kings 3 and 4.

- Wisdom as creator: Wisdom is understood to have its birth in God even before creation, and it is

wisdom that guided in God's creative activity—Proverbs 3:19. This personification of wisdom in Proverbs 8 is often perceived as a prophecy about Christ because it describes wisdom as intimately involved in the creative work of God. Wisdom has its roots in God and knows creation; therefore wisdom can give instruction and life—Proverbs 8:32-36.

- Wisdom of humankind: Agur starts his comments in chapter 30 with the acknowledgment that he does not possess the wisdom of God. He perceives God as the only one who has true wisdom, and people must link with God to have that wisdom. This concept is much like that of the apostle Paul when he discusses the wisdom of humankind and the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 1 and again in 3 where he states in verse 19 "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight."
- Wisdom through discipline: Wisdom is acquired by study of the instruction and precepts of God taught by the parents and leaders of the people—Proverbs 4:5-7. It is also acquired by correction and discipline—Proverbs 1:7; 29:15. If there is no correction, then foolishness reigns and disaster comes.

Dangers of Immorality

A major subject in wisdom literature is the relationship to the opposite sex. Immorality of any kind is condemned as foolishness. The wiles of the wayward woman are described in many lessons, and the sorry end of such affairs is declared. The warnings are many because it is a major problem in society—then and now. Accompanying this warning is often a warning about drinking and feasting to excess. As in our day these go together. The proverb in 29:3 states: "A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth." Wisdom is placed in contrast to immoral living. Wisdom is creative and brings joy and peace, while immorality is destructive and wasteful.

Appropriate Time

The coordination of right action with the appropriate time is important to the wise man. The wise person knows when to be quiet and when to speak. The wise person is willing to wait to be seated at a banquet, and does not take the honored seat. To do the right at the wrong time is as bad as doing wrong. On the other

hand, "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov 25: 11).

King's Rules

Proverbs not only addresses the ordinary man but also addresses the kings and those of the court. Chapter 25 is rich with advice on how to behave in the presence of the king and how to influence the king. Among other things: Evil men need to be removed from the court—Proverbs 25: 5. Patience and a soft tongue are most effective in persuading a ruler—Proverbs 25: 15.

Family Relations

Chapters 17—19 are rich with proverbs about family and community relationships. They warn about quarreling, encourage a man to find a wife and thereby gain favor with Yahweh, warn about laziness, and warn about gossip, bribery, and rebellion. Much advice is given about the selection of a wife—and none of it has to do with beauty or sex appeal—it all has to do with character. Since the culture of that day did not permit women to choose their husbands, no advice is given in that direction.

Proverbs 25:24; 27: 15-16

They encourage the exercise of discipline and training of children. The concluding chapter by King Lemuel, however, is a marvelous description of the role of the good wife in the family. There is nothing that such a woman cannot do. She shops, she farms, she sells, she provides food and manufactures clothing, she does real estate work and plants vineyards, she provides for the needy and provides protection for her family. Her husband becomes an important figure in providing justice. Such a woman is a "woman who fears the LORD" (Prov 31: 30).

Building Wealth

Another important theme is the building of wealth. Poverty comes as a result of laziness. Hard work, learning from each other, and careful planning builds wealth.

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man" (Prov 6: 6-11).

The primary assumption in this area is that the person who observes the law of God—which includes working hard, learning and planning—is the person who builds up his or her own and the nation’s wealth.

Control of the Tongue

The power of the tongue is recognized throughout Scripture. Two of the Ten Commandments involve prohibition of the improper use of the tongue—with respect to God and with respect to humankind—Exodus 20: 7, 16. The prophets warn repeatedly about lying and false witness. The Psalms have much to say about the use of the tongue and the mouth of the evil man—“Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit” (Ps 5: 9). Jesus used similar language when speaking to the scribes and Pharisees—Matthew 23 and Mark 7.

The evil of the tongue and the blessing of the tongue are both stated many times. In the list of the six seven things that the Lord hates three have to do with the tongue—lying, false witness, and sowing discord. The tongue used properly is like choice silver, gives health, is knowledge and is the tree of life.

Proverbs 6: 16-19
Proverbs 10: 20
Proverbs 12: 18

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes has much in common with Proverbs, although it is rather pessimistic in its worldview. It has much to say about politics. It sees political systems as oppressive, short-lived, corrupt, but necessary for order.

Ecclesiastes 3: 15-17; 4: 13-16;
5: 8-9; 7: 7-10

Wealth is perceived as empty when pursued for its own sake. It either does not provide personal satisfaction or it becomes a burden, for no matter how much you have it is never enough. At the same time he does agree with the wise man that only hard work and wise investments result in building wealth.

Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11, 18-26; 4: 4-8;
5: 10—6: 9

Wisdom is also empty if pursued for its own sake, but it is better than wealth because it does not disappear in hard times. It is, however, essential to know the limits of wisdom. He notes that often the wisdom of the poor man, even though it may have saved the city from ruin, is overlooked because people just do not pay attention to what the poor have to say.

Ecclesiastes 2: 12-17; 6: 10—7: 6;
7: 11-14

Ecclesiastes 9: 13—10: 17

The clearest understanding of the relationship of timing is given in the first and third chapters. There are cycles

in life that must be allowed to function, and success is living in harmony with those cycles that are a part of creation—sunrise, sunset, winds from the north and south, rivers flowing to the sea then return to the rivers, generations come and go. There is also a right time for action and knowing God who knows all time will enable you to do the right thing at the right time. Failure to act at the right time is failure.

The conclusion is that each person should live in harmony with his or her Creator from the time of youth, because in the cycle of things old age comes and your body and mind no longer function as they were intended. Chapter 12 is a beautiful poetic description of the pains of old age—poor sight, weak arms, bent backs, few teeth, fear of going out, poor hearing, fear of heights, loss of sexual drive, dropping things, and finally mourners in the streets. The preacher wants to be sure that eternal values are the guide for living in the real world.

Song of Songs

As expressed in NRSV.

The “Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s” means “Solomon’s best song.” Canticles is the Latin title. This delightful set of poems has caused a great deal of controversy regarding its meaning. For centuries the church interpreted it allegorically as a picture of the relationship between Christ and his Church. The New Testament does speak of the Church as the Bride of Christ but never refers to this book.

For the past 200 years the argument has been about whether this set of poems, which is full of symbolic and euphemistic language, is a drama of 2 or 3 persons or is a wedding ceremony. The two-character version states that it is a romance between Solomon and a girl he truly loves. The three-character version states that Solomon fails in his attempt to seduce a beautiful girl because of her love for a shepherd boy.

Refer to G Lloyd Carr. The Song of Solomon, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984 and S. Craig Glickman. A Song for Lovers, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976.

None of these explanations are fully satisfactory. A more acceptable view is that the songs are wedding songs, not ceremony, sung by the bride, the groom, and a chorus. Part of the reason we have difficulty with the song is that it uses metaphors of a culture that is not familiar to us today and in a cultural area that is highly sensitive.

What is clear is that this book deals with the love relationship between a man and a woman. Sexuality and love are fundamental aspects of human experience, and this book addresses how to live a

happy and good life in this area. Faithfulness, thoughtfulness, praise, loyalty, and intimacy are all aspects of that success. Such love beautifully pictures the love of God for his people and the love his people should have toward God.

Lamentations

These laments are attached to the Book of Jeremiah in the Septuagint, and reflect the cries of desperation of the prophet for his wayward people. It laments the destruction while acknowledging that the destruction is the consequence of sin. It is a lesson in taking troubles to the Lord in prayer. It faces up to the real situation that exists among the exiles and those who were left behind in the destroyed land.

Guided Discussion: The Writings

(25 minutes)

Allow for response and discussion.

Suffering

Note the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, the suffering of Job and the suffering of the old pictured in Ecclesiastes 12. *Are there any differences in these kinds of suffering? How do these relate to evil? Do they relate to the suffering of Christ on the Cross?*

Different Viewpoints

Compare the history of Israel as reported in Psalm 78, Ezekiel 20:5-36, and Acts 7:2-53. *How does the perspective and intent of the speaker influence the selection and use of historical data and of the literature form?*

Family

The family is the core social unit in the Bible.

Consider the following:

- The establishment of the first family in Genesis 3.
- The selection of the family of Abraham by God as the avenue for taking blessing into the world.
- The discipline and education of children as presented by the wisdom literature.
- The role of women as presented in the closing chapter of Proverbs.
- The relationship of man and woman presented in the Song of Songs.

What answers, if any, do these Scriptures have for us today regarding principles for the establishment of a Christian home? Do they apply differently to pastors as compared to laymen?

Patterns of Instruction and Worship

Having considered

- the emphasis on education of the next generation in the Wisdom Literature
- the charge to Israel to make sure that they teach the law diligently to their children—Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- the variety and functions of the Psalms, make a list of primary requirements of worship and primary concepts to be transmitted

What structures can be used to carry out these objectives?

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(15 minutes)

Refer to Resource 5-7 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into groups of about 3 each.

Take the information in today's lesson, both from in class and your preparation, and formulate at least two theological statements that you consider most important today.

Write your statements on a board for the class to see. Compare your statements to those of the other groups.

Compare your statements to any similar issues in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene, especially the Articles of Faith (§1-22), the Covenant of Christian Character (§27) and the Covenant of Christian Conduct (§33-38) and the Current Moral and Social Issues (§903)

Add to your catechism any statements that you consider essential for the instruction of Christians. Re-evaluate your previous entries and modify them where necessary in the light of your added information.

While you are not collecting these statements, you need to be paying attention to the development of the students' thinking.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on 1 person from each group to read 1 of their statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

- Prepare 6 to 10 theological concepts these books seem to support or presume.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Jesus Christ, Incarnation, Kingdom of God

Read Resource 5-8.

- Prepare 4 to 6 key ideas that you gained from the reading.

Bring colored pencils or highlighter markers to class—blue, yellow, green, red.

Write in your journal. What is your favorite Psalm? Why? How have the books from today's lesson made an impression on your life?

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 6

The Christ

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	The Christ	Lecture	Resource 6-1 Resource 6-2 Resource 6-3
0:25	The Baptism of Jesus	Small Groups	Colored pencils or highlight markers Resources 6-4 & 6-5 Resources 6-9—6-11
0:55	The Incarnation of the Eternal Word: John 1	Lecture	Resource 6-6 Resource 6-7
1:10	The Christ	Small Groups/ Discussion	
1:40	Formulation Statements/Catechism	Small Groups	Resource 6-8
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Bauckham, R.J. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.

Cullmann, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*. London, ²1963.

Dunn, J.D.G. *Christology in the Making*. London, ²1989.

Hurtado, L.W. *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Have students share their essays.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

The person and work of Jesus Christ are central to Christian theology. Apart from the risen Jesus and the conviction that he was the Messiah of Israel—the Christ, there is no plausible explanation for the existence of Christianity.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- explain some of the biblical foundations for New Testament Christology

Lesson Body

Lecture/Discussion: The Christ

(15 minutes)

Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth was born under humble circumstances in a small village of an occupied, client kingdom of the Roman Empire sometime around 5 BC. Most of his life was lived in relative obscurity. In AD 30, he died by execution as a convicted criminal, allegedly a threat to the Roman peace.

During his lifetime, Jesus had attracted a diverse band of followers, many of whom were persuaded by his words and deeds that he was the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic expectations. But when he was arrested and hastily put to death, most of his followers abandoned him, fearing that they might be the next victims. With him their hopes for a revival of the kingdom of Israel also died.

But in a remarkable turn of events, within weeks these same cowardly followers were publicly asserting their conviction that God had raised this Jesus from the dead. Within no more than two decades after his death, monotheistic Jews were insisting that Jesus was not only the long-expected descendant of David—the Christ—but, in fact, the Lord God himself, who had become fully human, and lived among them, to provide salvation for all who would accept him as such, even to the inclusion of pagans.

Only four fairly sketchy accounts of Jesus' life survive. The earliest of these was probably written almost 40 years after his death. It is striking how much space these accounts devote to the last week of his life. In fact, one scholar nearly a century ago suggested that the Gospels are essentially passion narratives with an extended introduction. But before there were Gospels there was "gospel."

The English word "gospel" customarily translates a Greek word that means "good news." The letters of the apostle Paul use the word to characterize the message he preached that in the death and resurrection of Jesus God offered salvation to all.

It seems likely that the Church's understanding of Jesus developed backwards. That is, the discovery of

the empty tomb and the sightings of the risen Christ caused the earliest Christians to reconsider everything they had thought about Jesus—and about God—the Law, and much more.

The conviction that God had raised Jesus from the dead persuaded them that the last days had dawned. The resurrection that was expected only at the end of time had already occurred, at least as applied to Jesus. He had returned to his Father and was expected soon to return in glory to vindicate their claim that he was Israel's Messiah and to usher in the kingdom of God.

The resurrection of Jesus caused Christians to see his crucifixion in an entirely new light. This was not a miscarriage of justice, an act of despicable violence, a tragic mistake. Somehow it was also within the eternal plan of God for human salvation.

And what kind of life had the Christ lived? What had he done and said? How had he been received by his contemporaries? Why did most of his Jewish contemporaries dismiss the claim of his followers that he was the Messiah? How was he born? And was his birth really the beginning of his story?

These questions and more were not answered overnight. The answers emerged only through difficult struggles to reconcile Jewish monotheism with the church's convictions about Jesus. These conclusions comprise what theologians call Christology—the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. The Church struggled for centuries to get it right. The ecumenical Christian creeds succinctly summarize these attempts to articulate adequately what the various biblical titles and confessions of Christ reveal.

Refer to Resources 6-1—6-3 in the Student Guide. Have the students read through the creeds.

Allow for response.

What are the key points that are affirmed in the creeds?

What points are repeated in all three creeds?

Is there any variance in the presentation or statement about the key points?

Students should be able to give answers based on the homework reading of Resource 5-8.

What are the biblical bases for these points?

Small Groups: The Baptism of Jesus

(30 minutes)

Refer to Resource 6-4 and Resource 6-5 in the Student Guide.

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.

Allow about 15 minutes for the students to work together and then call the class together to report observations and compare work.

A suggested response is located in Resources 6-9 or 6-10. Resource 6-9 is for use with a computer or color printer. Resource 6-10 is for black/white print.

After the students have given responses and ideas, you can refer them to Resource 6-11, which gives a summary according to the writer.

Lecture: The Incarnation of the Eternal Word—John 1

(15 minutes)

Refer to Resource 6-6 in the Student Guide.

Marsh, 94.

You may want to clarify for the students that "Word" with a capital letter refers to the Son of God; and "word" with a lower case letter refers to Scripture.

The Son of God—Word—we worship. We do not worship Scripture.

Each of the four Gospels has a unique starting point. Mark begins with John the Baptist and OT prophecies so as to present Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew begins with Abraham and the people of Israel, offering Jesus as the new Israel. Luke begins with birth narratives and the genealogy of Jesus traced all the way back to Adam—Jesus is the founder of a new humanity. John begins with the words of Genesis 1:1, before creation—Jesus is the beginning of the new creation. The Gospels all share the conviction that "the story does not begin with itself."

John 1:1 could not say, "In the beginning was Jesus." Despite the eternity of the Word—Son of God—there was a time when Jesus—the man—was not. It could not be said that something earlier became the Word. But "the Word became flesh," that is, became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

The profound, mind-boggling implication of this is that since the Incarnation God has not been the same. The changeless One changed. After John 1:14, "Word" as a personal designation never again appears in the Fourth Gospel. The Word—Son of God—is now present as the Incarnate One, and it is only as Jesus of Nazareth, that he is present at all.

Bultmann, 32.

The prologue does not explicitly identify Jesus and Word until verse 17. Obviously, John's concern was not to identify the Word as Jesus, but Jesus as the Word. Why? John aims to show that "in the person and word of Jesus one does not encounter anything that has its origin in the world and time."

Bultmann, 34.

John 1:1 insists both "the Word was God" and that "the Word was with God"—identified with and distinguished from God. John 1:13, 14, and 18 continue this paradox. This is not to imply, as some cults have insisted, that Jesus was only divine, "a god," as if "God" were a generic concept like "man"—this would be polytheism. Had this been John's intent, he could have used different words—*theios*, "divine," instead of *theos*, "God."

Bultmann, 38.

John expresses the paradox of revelation, "that in the Revealer God is really encountered, and yet that God is not directly encountered, but only the Revealer." This same paradox pervades the whole Gospel (cf. 10:30 and 14:28; 5:30 and 6:38; 5:21-27 and 14:9). The incarnate Word "is not a mediator between the world and the transcendent Divinity; he is God himself in so far as he reveals himself."

Have the students look at these verses in their different translations.

John 1:2-3 reinforces this by identifying the Word as the Creator—everything that exists is either creature or Creator. The creation, created and sustained by the Word, is God's creation and his revelation. As the prologue continues it becomes perfectly clear that the Revealer-Creator is also the Redeemer (Jn 1:9-13).

Refer to Resource 6-7 in the Student Guide.

Westcott, 4.

Note what a difference punctuation makes in the interpretation of John 1:3-4. The earlier view, reflected in the traditional verse division and the older translations, is the insistence that all of creation is the Word's doing—"And without him not one thing came into being that has come into being" (NRSV margin). The dominant view today is that the verse division should come after the first "being." This maintains the Word's creative role, but insists more forcefully that the Creator is also the Redeemer and the Revealer—"and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people" (NRSV).

John 1:4 insists that the Word is the "light of men," that is, Jesus reveals God through the medium of his gift of salvation-life. Humans experience redemption—the fulfillment of creaturely existence—only as they correctly understand the incarnate Word. Humans do not exist properly as creatures unless they

acknowledge their Creator and themselves as his creatures. The Word is the light. He enables the world to see and understand God and itself correctly. Only the gift of light—revelation—can give salvation-life.

John 1:5 summarizes much of John 3—12. The Word faces opposition, but light did not simply appear, it shines on (cf. 1:6 and 11; see 1 Jn 2:8). The light of revelation, most clearly and intensely focused in the man Jesus (Jn 1:14), does not cease to be light simply because some people, even the majority, choose the possibility of darkness. It is only because there is light that darkness can exist, for it is nothing other than the rejection of light.

Bultmann, 47.

Note that the fourth Gospel never explicitly refers to John as “the Baptist.”

See also 19-42.

John 1:6-10 almost parenthetically introduces John the Baptist as a historical witness to the Revealer and insists that John is not himself the Revealer, a point reinforced in John 1:19-42; 3:25-36. John 1:15 returns parenthetically to John’s witness to the pre-temporal Word as superior to himself. This emphasis may be a pointed response to the disciples of John, some of whom viewed him—rather than Jesus—as a Messianic figure.

The Word “came to . . . his own” (Jn 1:11) in the incarnation. That is, the Creator became a part of his creation, but more particularly he became one of the people of Israel (see Mk 6:1-6; Lk 4:16-30).

Those who received the Word (Jn 1:12) are the “we” of John 1:14 and 16. Those of us who believe receive Christ by accepting him “in obedience and faith as the envoy of the Father.” The privilege of Israel (Ex 4:22) is extended to all believers (cf. 5:43; 13:20; 19:6; 1 Jn 3:1-3). He gives to all the “authority” or “power” to become God’s children. Prevenient grace is not inherent, but truly a gift.

Bultmann, 57.

The relative pronoun “who”—in John 1:13—is plural. Therefore, this is not a reference to the miraculous birth of Jesus by the agency of the Spirit, but to the spiritual “new birth” of believers. The point of this verse is simply that humans may not within their own strength become or make children of God. Birth symbolism referring to the receiving (1:12) of new life by believers appears also in John 3.

Cf. 1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; see also Mt 3:9.

cf. Rom 8:3; Phil 2:7; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Jn 4:2; so Bultmann, 64.

See Brown, 31.

John 1:14 is the theme of the entire Gospel of John—“the Word became flesh.” By “flesh” John means “human nature as distinct from God.” What the word “became” means may be misinterpreted.

Allow for response.

When the Word became a human, did he continue to be what/who he was before?

Did the Word in becoming human become in any sense different than he was?

Was humanity only a garment that the Word assumed, or did he actually participate fully in a real and complete humanity?

Did he remain human even after he was glorified, or was the Incarnation a temporary “blip” on the screen of history? What is being affirmed here?

For a valuable discussion of how John 1:14 has been understood and misunderstood across the Christian centuries, see Westcott 11.

Bultmann, 62.

The Word's rejection is explained in John 1:14. The revelation event offends some. Most of his own creation, his own people, refuse to recognize themselves as belonging to their Creator and make themselves children of the world (15:19), or worse, children of the devil (8:44). The revelation event becomes the occasion of division. The issue is not what the Revealer teaches, but the Revealer himself. The teaching of the Incarnate Christ never renders him superfluous. The question remains: Will we will accept or reject him?

Bultmann, 56.

Bultmann, 65-66.

Because the Word became a human, the title Word never again appears in the Gospel as applied to Jesus. “The Logos is now present as the Incarnate, and indeed it is only as the Incarnate that it is present at all.” It is in his sheer humanity that he is the Revealer. Only believers see his “glory.” If it were not to be seen, there would be no grounds for speaking of revelation. But this is the paradox that runs through the whole gospel:

Bultmann, 63.

The [glory] is not to be seen alongside the [flesh], nor through the [flesh] as through a window; it is to be seen in the [flesh] and nowhere else. If man wishes to see the [glory], then it is on the [flesh] that he must concentrate his attention, without allowing himself to fall a victim to appearances. The revelation is present in a peculiar hiddenness.

Bultmann, 63.

In light of the Johannine Letters it would be particularly unlikely that the intent of John's reference to the Word's “living” among us in verse 14—literally, tabernacled or tented—was to suggest that the Word wore his humanity as a disguise, a tent that he set up and abandoned upon his return to the Father. The allusions are, instead, to the OT tabernacle—the meeting place of God and Israel, and to the temporary duration of the Word's stay on this planet.

See Talbert.

See 9:39-41.

John's concern in 1:14 is not with eyewitnesses in the historical or legal sense, for after all the "Jews" were such eyewitnesses, and they saw nothing. This seeing is through the eyes of faith (1 Jn 4:14). The concern is neither with a personal experience nor with a timeless idea, but with the transmission of a historical event—the fact and significance of the Incarnation.

Marsh, 110. See John 5:18; 6:46; 7:29; 16:27; 17:8.

The word "only" in 1:14 asserts the claim of absolute uniqueness to the revelation. Jesus Christ is the only one by whom God is known. "The reality of the incarnate Word is not simply that of the reality of his having a real body of flesh and blood, but of that body being the 'tent' or 'tabernacle' of the eternal God." Because he is "full of grace and truth," he is "the Author of Perfect Redemption and perfect Revelation." John 1:16 insists that the Christian life is based wholly on inexhaustible grace.

Marsh, 109.

Westcott, 13.

Bultmann, 78.

See Talbert, esp. 94.

John 1:17 introduces the central theme that unifies John 1:19—11:54. It is that Jesus, as the founder of a new religious community, supersedes traditional Jewish worship. Moses, as the representative of Judaism and the mediator of the Law, is superseded by Jesus Christ, through whom came grace and truth.

Marsh, 112.

John 1:18 agrees with Judaism of the invisibility of God, but moves beyond it in affirming that one has seen God—the Word—and the Word makes God known. The Greek word *hermeneuein*, "to make known," is the source of our word "hermeneutics," referring to the principles of literary interpretation. The Incarnate Word interprets God to humanity, making the invisible and obscure visible and intelligible.

Small Groups/Discussion: The Christ

(30 minutes)

The objective of the discussions is to get the students to wrestle with various facets of the New Testament teaching about Christ.

The class can be divided into small groups and each group can take one or two Gospel stories and examine them, or you may want to have all of the groups analyze the same stories.

There needs to be a time when the whole group can listen to the conclusions of each small group and draw up their conclusions.

Allow the students to suggest the passages for discussion. You may want to be prepared with a few suggestions in case the students are unable to come to agreement.

Read the exalted Christ-hymns in Philippians 2 and Colossians 1. Discuss what additional attention to these passages would add to the Christological data for the biblical catechism.

Small Groups: Formulation Statements/Catechism

(15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.

Refer to Resource 6-8 in the Student Guide.

Write out a statement about each aspect of Christ that you have noted in today's study. Organize them into a structure that you believe makes them teachable.

Update your catechism notes with those statements about Christ that should be included. Give thought to the nature of the catechism that you want to create. Should it be a collection of beliefs or should it take on characteristics similar to those in the ministerial course of study and be concerned with being and doing as well as knowing?

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on each of the students.

What one key idea will you take with you from this lesson today?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following biblical passages: John 14—16; Acts; Romans 8; Galatians

- Prepare 6 to 10 theological statements these chapters/books seem to support or presume.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Luke-Acts; Acts; Holy Spirit; Testimony/Witness.

You will need to assign a third of the students to read each of the resources.

Read **1** of the following Resources:

- Resource 6-12, "Pentecost: the Coming of the Holy Spirit—Acts 2"
- Resource 6-13, "Spirit-Inspired Mission—Acts 10"
- Resource 6-14, "The Spirit of Unity—Ephesians 4"

Write a 2- to 3-page paper summarizing the key ideas and theological teachings you learned from the NDBT reading and the resource reading.

Write in your journal. Reflect on what it means personally to you that "the Word became flesh." How has this lesson broadened your concept of "the Son of God?"

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 7

Life in the Spirit

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Life in the Spirit	Lecture	Resource 7-1—7-3
0:30	Homework Exchange	Small Groups	Homework Resource 7-4
1:00	Bible Study	Small Groups/ Discussion	Resource 7-5
1:45	Formulation Statements/ Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Dunn, J.D.G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today*. London: S.C.M. Press, 1970.

Fee, Gordon D. *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.

Montague, G.T. *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*. New York: Paulist Press, 1976.

Schweizer, E. "Pneuma, *ktl*" in TDNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 6:389–455.

Shelton, R. Larry, and Alex R.G. Deasley, . *The Spirit and the New Age: An Inquiry into the Holy Spirit and Last Things from a Biblical Theological Perspective*. Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1986. The following essays may be particularly useful: Bruce Baloian and John Hartley, "The Spirit in the Old Testament"; George Lyons, "The Spirit in the Gospels"; Wayne McCown, "The Spirit in the Book of Acts"; and Alex R. G. Deasley, "The Spirit in the Pauline Epistles."

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to give key points about John 14—16, Acts, Romans 8, and Galatians as they pertain to the Holy Spirit.

Return homework. The papers will be collected after the small-group time.

Orientation

This lesson is an overview of the emergence of the Christian Church and of the issues and instruction involved in its development with particular emphasis upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to explain the biblical foundations for pneumatology

Lesson Body

Lecture: Life in the Spirit

(20 minutes)

A remarkable development in the understanding of the Holy Spirit occurred between the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the spirit of Yahweh is generally little more than a metaphor for God's powerful, mysterious, unpredictable, and irresistible activity. The Spirit of God was understood as only the personal power of God in action, generally acting through human agents. Whenever God is personally present, his Spirit creates life, gives mental abilities, inspires prophets, equips rulers, imparts moral strength, and affects salvation.

The spirit is God working out his personal will toward religious and moral ends. The early Old Testament sources describe the experience of God's Spirit as an intermittent and temporary endowment of a few specially favored individuals, given to them to deal with a specific crisis. Only in late Old Testament texts is the Spirit described as a permanent endowment and is the hope held out of a future age marked by the presence of the Spirit with all people.

Refer to Resource 7-1 in the Student Guide.

The intertestamental period somewhat imprecisely identifies the 400 years following the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity and preceding the birth of Jesus. During this time Jewish rabbis began to think of the Spirit as in some sense distinguishable from God with a personal existence of his own. The rabbis used "Holy Spirit" as a personification representing God's presence in the world. But most Jews of this era considered the activity of the Spirit a thing of the distant past or the longed for distant future. Their age was one devoid of the Spirit. This view arose because of the widely held conviction that the Holy Spirit was first and foremost "the prophetic Spirit," the instrument of divine revelation and inspiration. Prophecy seemed to be defunct and since there was no prophecy, there obviously was no Holy Spirit either.

The appearance of the Spirit-endowed prophet, John the Baptist, led many Jews to expect the coming of the Messiah and the age of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament provides the basis for the belief that the Messiah would be uniquely endowed by the Spirit of

God (Isa 11:2) and that in the last days all Israelites would be prophets (Joel 2:28-29). But nothing in Judaism led anyone to expect a Messiah such as Jesus, nor prepared it for the Christian view of the Messiah as the Lord and Giver of the Spirit.

Although the New Testament was written in Greek and utilized the Greek term *pneuma* rather than the Hebrew *ruach* to refer to the Spirit, its background assumptions concerning the Spirit are Hebraic rather than Hellenistic. Thus, for example, there are no known references to a holy spirit in secular Greek literature nor was there any notion of the spirit as personal in Greek thought apart from Jewish and Christian influences.

The Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism cannot account for many of the Christian assumptions about the Holy Spirit; for example, that he is a person distinct from but closely related to God the Father and Jesus the Christ, and as such capable of the actions and reactions of a person—speaking, teaching, leading, etc.

In marked contrast to the Old Testament and Judaism, New Testament writers characteristically describe the Holy Spirit as the gracious and sanctifying gift of the risen Christ to the Church, not a reward for human righteousness already achieved. Furthermore, it was the uniquely Christian association of the resurrection-ascension of Jesus with the gift of the Holy Spirit that led to the conclusion that the Spirit was the anticipation, sign, or substance of the eschaton. That is, the last days had dawned. Christians insisted that they were already living in the age of the Spirit, who had come as a gift of the exalted Christ to the Church.

Promise of the Spirit: John 7; 14—16

In the portion of John's Gospel known as the Last Discourse (Jn 13:31—17:26), Jesus gathered with his closest followers at the Last Supper, leaving them with his "last will and testament." Jesus' Last Discourse served two major purposes. First, Jesus explained why His return to the Father was so important. Second, he gave consolation to the disciples he was about to leave behind.

Introduction

Try to put yourself in one of the disciples' places. You have left your family and livelihood behind to follow Jesus of Nazareth. Though "many of his disciples

Ernst Käsemann

turned back and no longer followed him" (6:66), you have held steady. In spite of opposition and misunderstanding you have not abandoned Him. How could you? Like Peter you have come to confess, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (vv 68-69).

But now you learn the shocking news. He is leaving you! Your world seems to be crumbling around you. At first you simply stare at one another in shocked unbelief (13:23ff.). And then come the questions. "Lord, where are you going?" (v 36); "Lord, why can't I follow you now?" (v 37); "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (v 5).

Anxious, frightened, disappointed, frustrated—the disciples need encouragement. And this is precisely what Jesus gives them in the first part of his Last Discourse (chapter 14). He reassures his followers in various ways that they will not be separated from him. The reassuring message of uninterrupted fellowship with Jesus was not intended only for his first disciples any more than his call to obey was for them alone. Both are for "whoever," for "anyone" who loves him (14:21, 23).

Refer to Resource 7-2 in the Student Guide.

1. **The Proof of Obedience** (14:15, 21-24). The disciples looked forward to a dramatic change in their relationship with Jesus. Soon he would not be present with them as before. But their mutual love did not need to change. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (v 15). His call to obey was not for the first disciples only, but for "whoever" loves Jesus (v 21). Even those of us who have never known Jesus in the flesh may experience his saving love.

The disciples knew from their Bible, our Old Testament, that real love was not an emotion but a bond of covenant faithfulness. Feelings of affection are not enough. Knowing what Jesus wants is not enough. The proof of love for Jesus is obedience. And the proof of obedience is love for Jesus and for one another (13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10).

God's love is not conditioned on my obedience. But love, to be experienced, must be mutual. I cannot *know* God's love until I return it. If I reject the supreme proof of God's love in the gift of his Son, I cut myself off from its saving benefits. If I truly love Jesus, I show my gratitude for his love by living so as to please him.

See 3:16; 1 Jn 2:5; 4:19; 5:3.

See *Leviticus 23:33-43*.

2. **The Promise of the Spirit** (7:37-39; 14:16-17, 25-26). The week-long Feast of Tabernacles reminded the Jewish people of the experience of their forefathers in the wilderness (7:2). It was celebrated in Jesus' day with elaborate water rituals symbolizing the Holy Spirit. This may account for Jesus' use of the imagery of water to proclaim himself as the true source of life (vv 37-38).

See *Isaiah 12:3; 55:1; Joel 2:28-29*.

The Old Testament hope of the coming age of salvation did not come until the end of Jesus' ministry (v 39). The Spirit came in connection with His death, resurrection, and ascension. As a result, those who believe in Jesus now receive the Spirit as the gift of the "glorified" Christ. Jesus is the source of the salvation-life the Spirit effects in us as believers. We in turn become, in a way, a source of "living water" for others (v 38). For it is through the gift of the Spirit that we are enabled to continue the mission of Jesus.

See *20:21-23*.

Five passages within the Last Discourse give special attention to the person and work of the Holy Spirit (14:16-18, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:4-11, and 12-15). In each the Spirit is identified as the "Paraclete." Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Mediator, Encourager, and Advocate are all possible English translations. But no one translation is entirely adequate. Let's look briefly at these Paraclete passages.

Refer to Resource 7-3 in the *Student Guide*.

Who is the Paraclete?

He is the Spirit of Christ. Jesus calls him "another" Paraclete, implying that he himself is the first Paraclete (14:16; see 1 John 2:1). Jesus is the "truth" (14:6). The Paraclete is "the Spirit of truth" (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Because the Paraclete is also the Spirit of God, He is "the Holy Spirit" (14:26). The Paraclete is the gift of the Father to believers in response to the request of the glorified Jesus (14:16). Thus, the Father sends the Paraclete in Jesus' name (14:26). Or, Jesus himself sends the Paraclete from the Father (15:26; 16:7).

See *14:12, 18-24*.

What is the work of the Paraclete?

First, his assignment is to represent Jesus to the disciples after Jesus' departure. Unlike Jesus, the Paraclete would be with them forever (14:16; 16:7). And, he would not only be with them, but in them, sharing with them his salvation-life (14:17, 19). Thus, Jesus' departure should have been an occasion for them to rejoice rather than sorrow (14:1, 28; 16:6). It was to the disciples' advantage

that Jesus should go away so that the Paraclete could come (16:7).

Second, the Paraclete teaches disciples “all things.” But this does not suggest that education is unnecessary for Christians. The Spirit reminds them of “everything” Jesus taught them (14:25-26). As the Spirit of truth, He guides disciples “into all truth.” That is, he reveals to them the truth about Jesus. He exalts Jesus. He reveals to them “what is yet to come” (16:13). This does not mean that the Spirit is a source of new revelations. Rather, he is the disciples’ guide to a fuller and more adequate understanding of Jesus.

See 2:13-22; 4:8, 31-38; 6:60-69; 7:37-39; 13:7; 16:16-33.

Who may receive the Holy Spirit?

He is a gift reserved for believers only. “The world cannot accept him” (14:17). This does not imply that the world cannot become believers. The world cannot receive the Spirit and continue to be unbelievers. All who turn from unbelief to faith in Jesus receive the eternal life of the Spirit. Those who trust and obey Jesus, who return his love, cease to be “world.” They are born anew of the Spirit (v 15).

See 3:3, 5, 8, 16-17; 14:22-24.

Why do we need the Holy Spirit?

We must have the Spirit of Christ if we are to live the Christian life. We cannot do it alone. But Jesus has given us his Spirit not only to save us. The Spirit empowers believers to be agents of salvation. The Paraclete helps us bear witness to Jesus (15:26-27). He shatters the world’s self-confidence. He convicts it of the error of its unbelief in Jesus (16:8-11). He condemns its sin of unbelief. He convinces the world that Jesus and his followers are correct. And he makes possible the conversion of the world (3:16-17). The Spirit enables the Church to persuade the unbelieving world to change its mind. He creates the Church. He enables Christians to serve as his agents in continuing the work of Jesus—the salvation of the world.

Return to Resource 7-2 in the Student Guide.

3. **The Presence of Jesus** (14:18-20). Because of the work of the Holy Spirit, the presence of Jesus is a present reality to believers. Jesus assured his original followers that he would not leave them alone and unprotected as “orphans” (v 18). He said, “I will come to you” (v 18). And He kept his promise.

In the Resurrection appearances he came to them (Jn 20 and 21). But he has not come to us in the

same way he did to them. We are among “those who have not seen [the Risen Christ] and yet have believed” (20:29). And yet we are “blessed” and more, for because he lives, we live (v 19).

See Acts 2.

In the pouring out of his Spirit—that we celebrate at Pentecost—Jesus came to them. But the coming of his Spirit to us was not marked by wind, fire, and tongues. And yet because he gave his Spirit to them, they were empowered to take the gospel to the ends of the world. Because they were faithful, others heard, believed, and told the story. And others heard, believed, and told. And so on, until eventually the good news came to us. Because believers still receive the Holy Spirit, we may know the personal presence of God the Father and God the Son (14:20-21). Through the Spirit, God makes the believer’s heart His home (v 23).

Jesus still keeps his promise. Because he has been faithful to his word in the past, we believe he will keep his promise to the end. He said, “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (v 3). We live now, between the Resurrection in the past and the Second Coming in the future. Between the great events of life, most of life is pretty “everyday.” What we need is not constant ecstasy. What we need is not more high points in our lives. What we need is stability and tranquility. Is this possible? Jesus’ answer is Yes.

4. **The Peace of Jesus** (14:27). Although Jesus would soon go away, He would not leave his followers alone. He did not promise them trouble-free lives. He did not leave them wealth or power. The heritage he bequeathed them was “peace” (v 27). The inheritance of peace is as surely for us as is the gift of the Spirit.

Jesus’ peace had nothing to do with the absence of conflict. The Romans continued their oppressive rule of Palestine even after the coming of the Holy Spirit. His peace had nothing to do with the end of emotional turmoil or with feelings of well-being. Jesus’ departure was not canceled. The disciples would know the loss of their beloved Lord, and later, of other loved ones.

Jesus’ peace is not a guarantee of happiness and good fortune. His peace is the gift of salvation brought by the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere in the Gospel of John salvation is described as eternal life, truth, light, or joy. The experience of salvation, however it

See 17:6-19.

may be described, does not exempt believers from the troubles of earthly life (16: 17-33). Believers are in this world, even if they are not of this world. Jesus offers hope. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (16: 33).

Jesus says that the world does not give such peace. Perhaps, he implies that the world's so-called peace is not peace at all. Or, that apart from him there can be no peace. This is as true in the personal realm as in the political. We cannot simply decide not to be fearful, not to let our hearts trouble us. Self-discipline is not the prescription for peace. It is but one consequence of Christ's gift of peace.

Sometimes it seems that when things are at their worst, when our discipline is at its weakest, we are most sorely tempted to abandon our faith. When our worlds are falling apart, when we're losing our grip on life, we may cling to his promise. The Holy Spirit brings the presence of Jesus close to encourage and strengthen us when we need him most. And where he is, there is peace. And since he is the Truth, his peace is no illusion.

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(30 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each. One student representing each of the 3 resource readings that were read for homework.

Refer to Resource 7-4 in the Student Guide..

If time allows, have the groups report to the class. If the class is small and only has 1 group, have them write a written response to the critique of the classmates.

Collect the homework papers and responses.

You are to read each other's papers. One objective is to learn from each other about what the other read and studied. The other objective is to challenge and critique each other's work.

Mark the places where it is not clear what is being said. Mark places where good points have been clearly stated. Point out places where and why you disagree. Make comments about how they could make the paper better.

After you have read what your fellow students have written about your paper, give a response/defense. Discuss what you have learned.

Small Groups/Discussion: Bible Study

(45 minutes)

The objective of the discussions is to get the students to wrestle with various facets of the New Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit.

Divide the class into 3 groups and assign each group 1 of the Bible passages.

Refer to Resource 7-5 in the Student Guide.

Have each group give a report.

Discuss for the remaining time what additional attention to these passages would add to the pneumatological data for the biblical catechism.

In your group read the assigned passage.

- Romans 8
- 1 Corinthians 12—14
- Galatians 3—5

Concentrate on Paul's teaching about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

You will have 20-25 minutes to read, discuss, and prepare a brief report to share with the entire class.

Individual Work: Formulation Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

You may want to allow students to work together on these statements.

Update your catechism notes with those statements about the Holy Spirit—his person and work—that should be included in your complete catechism.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to read the formulation statements that they wrote.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Read: The following sections of NDBT: Creation; God, Holy Spirit; Incarnation; Jesus Christ; Theophany. Prepare theological concepts that the reading seems to support.

Study the first three Articles of Faith in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene.

Write: Summarize your current understanding of the biblical basis for the belief that God is Trinity, 2- to 3-page essay.

Write in your journal. Is the Holy Spirit real in your life? Do you tend to think more in terms of Father and Son and your relationship with them?

Unit 3: Unifying Theological Concepts

Lesson 8

The Creator God

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Homework Exchange	Small Groups	Homework Essay
0:30	Homework	Class Discussion	
0:40	The God of Creation	Lecture	Resources 8-1—8-9
1:30	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	Homework
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Anderson, Bernard, ed. *Creation in the Old Testament*. London: Fortress Press, 1984.

Fergusson, D. *The Cosmos and the Creator: An Introduction to the Theology of Creation*. London: SPCK, 1998.

Franks, R.S. *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. London: Duckworth, 1953.

Gunton, C.E., ed. *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997.

Illingworth, J.R. *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1909.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Return Homework.

Orientation

The Bible opens with the creation event. From the standpoint of the structure of the canon, this is the foundation without which nothing would be possible. Creation is by God, and creation includes not just the formation of humankind but the bringing into being of everything. Before creation there was nothing but God. This theological fundament does not appear in the recorded thinking of humankind until millennia after creation.

Adam and Eve, who had the initial privilege of strolling in Eden with God himself, make no statements about who God is and even rejected His authority over their lives. The Scripture record indicates that very few, even down to the time of Abraham, had any kind of fellowship with God. Certainly the extant archaeological data from those ancient days indicates that the common concept of the “civilized” world was that there were many gods each with their own finger in the creation pie. The canon of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures presents a very different set of beliefs.

Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, and Egyptian records from the time before Abraham indicate a variety of beliefs about creation and the interaction of humankind with the gods. Different gods were responsible for various facets of creation, and each had control over various aspects. The Egyptians held that the cycle of seasons was the result of murder and resurrection. Mesopotamians thought humankind was made to meet the needs of their gods. They had gods of war, gods of fertility, gods of storms, etc.

There is no attempt in the Old or New Testaments to prove that God exists, or to prove that God interacts with mankind. Both testaments assume God’s existence and consider God’s involvement to be the key to life and events. The Old Testament records His name as Yahweh, a name that in time was considered too sacred to pronounce, so LORD was used instead. The New Testament has no transliteration into Greek of Yahweh, only the use of the word Lord—*kurios* κύριος. In both testaments there is agreement with the statement given in Hebrews 11:6: “Whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (NRSV). The psalmist simply considers those who deny the existence of Yahweh God to be fools.

Psalms 14:1-2; 53:1

Although the one and only creator God, Yahweh, is the subject that dominates Scripture, it is obvious that

Genesis 5: 18-24

many of those who worshiped Yahweh thought that there were other gods. In the pre-Flood era we know little of the beliefs of the average person, but we do know that a few communicated with God—Enoch with great success.

The majority lived according to their own evil desires. Abraham clearly understood Yahweh to be the supreme God, for he addressed Him as: "The LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth" (Gen 14:22) and "O Sovereign LORD" (15:2). The form of address does not make clear that Abraham believed that there is no other God but does make clear that if there are other gods, Yahweh is the greatest of all.

Note Romans 5:6 in Paul's argument that Christ is the fulfillment of the hope of the past.

A careful examination shows us that revelation and guidance, into the way of life that God desires, was gradual. Taken step by step the people of God learned the lessons so that "at just the right time," God was able to expose His ultimate saving truth through His own Son, Jesus the Christ. A survey of some elements in this historical development of the people of God may help us to understand that our own relationship with God is a growing, living relationship marked by critical events.

This is perhaps the clearest when we look at the record of the kings. Far more attention is given to the moral and ethical facets of royal lives than to conquest and administration. Apart from David and Solomon the emphasis is more upon the interaction of kings with prophets. Even long reigns that were stable and in worldly terms highly successful are simply ignored. Jeroboam II who ruled the Northern Kingdom from Samaria for 41 years—a year longer than David's rule—merits only the note that he restored the boundaries to approximately the same area as David's kingdom. Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, ruled Judah for 55 years—longer than any other king, and merits only the notation that he was the most evil of all the kings. Uzziah, who ruled Judah for 52 years, is known primarily for the fact that he died in the year that Isaiah had his great vision of

The modern obsession with history and historicity leads us to look at the Scriptures as if they were written for historical purposes. Certainly, if we want to trace the history of the development of the understanding of God by the Israelites, we would need to examine Scripture in this manner. Many scholars have done this and have concluded that a full-fledged monotheism that allowed for the existence of only one God was not a part of Israel's common beliefs until after the Exile, and that it probably had its birth during the time of Isaiah.

However Scripture and tradition place the birth of this concept with Moses. It is not our purpose to examine the history of the development of the idea, but rather to see how Scripture portrays the concept of God. If we follow a historical perspective, we tend to miss the fact that the scriptures are primarily theological in structure, focusing on development of the spiritual nature of the people of God.

Once we have examined the statements that you have prepared in your essays, we want to look at the beliefs about God and His nature in the Old Testament and note how the New Testament writers applied these to Jesus and developed the concept of God. Our focus will not be on the development of the concept of God in the

the Holy God in the Temple. The administrative, war, and political aspects of the kings are often noted to be "in the books of annals of the kings of Israel."—or of Judah (1 Kings 14: 19, 29; 15: 7, 23, 51; 16: 5 etc.) They are not the concern of the sacred writings since they do not reflect the spiritual development of the people of God.

Old Testament but rather will examine some of the most important views. We will look at these concepts starting from the place in Scripture where they are most clearly stated.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- examine the growing biblical revelation of the nature and character of the one and only God, the sole Creator of the universe
- be able to explain the biblical foundations for the Christian understanding of the mystery of our Triune God

Lesson Body

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into pairs. You can choose the pairs or have students select their partners.

Exchange your Trinity paper with your partner. You are to read the paper and make appropriate marks and corrections.

Mark the places where you disagree with the other's conclusions and explain why in writing.

Mark the places where you consider good insights were made and explain why in writing.

Return the paper and comments to the owner.

Prepare a written response to the other person's critique.

Class Discussion: Homework

(10 minutes)

Allow the class to interact with these questions.

What did you learn from the previous activity?

Did you get good comments/ideas?

Will those comments/ideas help you clarify what you think?

Will it make your ideas stronger than before?

Collect homework.

Lecture: The God of Creation

(50 minutes)

It is no accident that the story of creation has been placed at the beginning of the Scriptures. It is there not only because this event is the historical beginning of the story of humankind and the universe, but it is there because it is the foundation for all that we can know about God and for the relationship that we can have with God. It is the base for all of our theological understanding.

Ever since Greek historians brought to our attention the importance of learning from the past and placing this into a philosophical structure that can explain it, scholars have tended to view Scripture as historical

record. This emphasis became especially strong in modern critical scholarship. Historical criticism tried to use Scripture to reconstruct the history of Israel, and questioned the validity of Scriptures that did not fit into or contribute to the historical process.

The initial conservative response to the critics was to try to defend the historicity of Scripture. Both sides tended to miss the reality that the concern of Scripture was not with the establishment of a flawless historical record. Scripture was written to give an understanding of the relationship that humankind can and should have to God. The selection of elements like narratives, sermons, hymns, judicial statements, letters, and teachings were all made to contribute to our understanding of who God is and what God wants of us. Now this in no way means that the Scriptures are historically invalid. It simply means that they were collected and written from and for a theological reason. The creation record must be approached from this perspective.

If we are seeking to understand who God is, creation informs us that we cannot understand more than he reveals in his creative act. There is no indication of the essence of God apart from creation. God's Spirit moves, hovers, and broods over the chaos of non-existence. God speaks a word and the power of the word accomplishes its purpose. This is described in the creation story and affirmed in Isaiah 55:11: "My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

There is no indication in the creation story of how word and spirit and God are interconnected. They can even be understood as anthropomorphic expressions used to enable limited humankind to grasp some aspect of who God is. The legitimacy of using such expressions in connection with God is readily seen in the statement that God created humankind in his image. Humans have a spirit that comes from God and humankind can speak a word that also has consequences attached. Even with the arrival of Jesus we have no additions to this basic information, only a clarification regarding the word of God.

Note that when blessings were given there was no way to take them back. This can be seen in Isaac's blessing of Jacob. Even though it was given as a result of the deceitful act of Jacob and his mother, Rebecca, Isaac could not take it back but had to settle for a different blessing upon his firstborn and favorite son. Genesis 27 especially verse 32ff.

The most powerful presentation of Jesus as God is given in the opening of the Gospel of John, where Jesus is clearly identified as the Creator of the universe. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him

was life, and that life was the light of men" (Jn 1:3-4). Jesus is the source of life and the source of instruction, for he is the Light. He is the word that brought everything into being. No stronger statement can be made that identifies Jesus as God. This is the word that became flesh and lived among us.

The creation story reveals or intimates many different aspects of the nature of God as he relates to his creature, humankind. Although the foundation for these concepts rests in creation, the exposition and elaboration of the concepts often occurs in other sections of Scripture. It is quite clear that everything that God does is good. He did not do evil in creation. Everything was good, very good, an indication of the character of God.

It is also clear that God established a relationship with humankind. He gave them responsibilities and established the Sabbath, a holy day in which they can rest in God as God rests. It is important to remember that this fellowship with God, this worship of God, precedes the fall of humanity. It is part of the perfection of the way God would relate to humankind.

Implicit in creation is also the expectation of obedience, which is the acceptance of the authority of God, and the acceptance of the beneficial nature of the law that God gave to humankind. God had the interests of humankind at heart in placing restrictions upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We cannot consider all of the aspects of God that are revealed in Scripture in this brief lesson. We will concentrate upon some key aspects that led to the recognition that Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God.

The One and Only God

The creation stories declare that creation was the work of one God. The second story makes sure that we understand that, God is Yahweh who declared himself to Moses and called out Abraham. We can make the implication that there are no other gods from those accounts since they open with the declaration that Yahweh made everything in heaven and earth. But these poetic and narrative accounts are not concerned to stress that point. They stress that it is the God of Israel who is the Creator. The whole Torah has little to say apart from these stories about creation.

Refer to Resource 8-1 in the Student Guide.

Abraham and Melchizedek acknowledge that the God Most High whom they serve is the Creator—Genesis 14:18-22. The only other references to the Creator in the remainder of the Torah is in the song that Moses sings to Israel:

Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation. Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, **your Creator**, who made you and formed you? (Deut 32:1-6).

The reference is not to the creation of the universe but to the creation of Israel. Deuteronomy 4 also refers to Israel as the nation that God brought into being—a unique act that Moses declared was unknown since the creation of man in the beginning. When others use creation to emphasize God’s power and knowledge, Moses uses the creative act of God in bringing Israel into being, acts that were fresh in the minds of the listeners, as the evidence of Yahweh’s unique power and knowledge. His concern was that the people would abandon all other gods and worship Yahweh alone.

The Ten Commandments open with the instruction that Yahweh is the only God that they should worship. The *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6 following the reiteration of the Ten Commandments declares in no uncertain terms that Yahweh is one. He is not a pantheon of gods. He stands alone. The declaration became the foundation for the belief that there is only one God, and that God is Yahweh. Furthermore it declares that Yahweh requires total commitment of body, soul, spirit, and mind to him. This is the declaration that Jesus quotes as the greatest of all commandments.

Matthew 22:37

The dominant issue in the books of the Former Prophets is the issue Moses tried to get through to Israel—Yahweh must be worshiped exclusively, and he holds all power. Joshua in the covenant renewal record of the 24th chapter calls upon Israel to put away other gods and worship only Yahweh.

Elijah was the champion of Yahweh, making clear to Israel that Yahweh, not the fertility and storm god Baal, was the real god. The challenge was to Baal's supposed control of the rain and the power of the storms. Baal could not provide rain for three years and neither could he strike with the lightning bolts for which he was famous. Yahweh could and did. The response of the people was "Yahweh, he is God" (1 Kings 18:39, paraphrased).

It is easy for us to read back into these events the clear idea that there is only one God, Yahweh. Moses and Elijah may very well have believed that truth, but their concern was to get people to follow the guidance of Yahweh and not indulge in the sinful practices promoted by other forms of worship.

It is in the prophecies of Isaiah that we have, for the first time, clear enunciation of the fact that there is only one God and that all others called gods are not gods at all. The prayer of King Hezekiah, who was trusting in God with the encouragement of Isaiah when the Assyrians were sweeping through and defeated even the Egyptians, that makes the declaration:

It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God (2 Kings 19:17-19).

See also Isaiah 37: 18-20.

In Isaiah 40 the prophet reminds the people that Yahweh is ruler of heaven and earth and cannot be represented by idols of wood or gold like the false gods of the nations. Again in 44 Isaiah mocks those who take wood that they use for fuel and make an image and call it a god. There is only one God. Despite his teaching, a hundred years later Jeremiah and Ezekiel are faced with a people who were turning to other gods and even say that their problems are the result of failure to worship those gods.

Jeremiah 44: 18

Stories from the Exilic period in the Book of Daniel do not emphasize that the God of the Jews is the only God. They do emphasize that He is the God of Gods, the one who has dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, the Most High God, and the Living God. It is in Nehemiah that the Levites sing out, building on Psalms like 86, "You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry

*Daniel 2
Daniel 5
Daniel 3
Daniel 6*

Note the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7 with its references to Yahweh as the God of the Jews.

John 5:44, 1 Corinthians 3:7; 1 Timothy 1:17; Jude 1:25

John 1

Refer to Resource 8-2 in the Student Guide.

host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you" (Neh 9:6). To the returned exiles there is only one God, even though the rulers of the empires of the world may have recognized Him as only the God of heaven.

To the New Testament writers there is only one God—their God. They at times specify him as the "only God." John in particular notes that he is the one and only Creator of all that is, the Word, the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us as Jesus. Paul in his preaching at Athens played upon the idea of the "unknown god" in order to present the resurrected Jesus to them, but there is no equivocation with the idea that Jesus is the one and only God.

The Otherness of God

The very word "God" expresses that this person is not human. God does not share the limitations of humans. God is in the heavens, and that tends to imply that he is far from humankind. Scripture recognizes that God is above us, far above us, but he also is with us. Scripture uses the contrast between God and humanity to reveal his otherness. Anything that we are is but a faint image of him.

After the fall of humankind even that image is distorted. God is the owner and source of power, knowledge, goodness, holiness, truth, justice, mercy, peace, love, and all else that is good. Humankind is weak, ignorant, evil, unjust, merciless, murderous, and all else that is bad, unless they turn to God and follow God's ways with God's help. The implication of the creation stories is that God created humanity with the intent that they would share in all the wonderful good things that flow from the character of God. But humankind, by the assertion of their will over God's instruction, chose to rely upon their created limitations rather than trust God's limitless goodness. The likeness to God that was a part of creation is dealt a deathblow.

As we follow the life of Abraham we see that he tried to be obedient to God and trusted that God had his best interests at heart. It was this trust that was "counted as righteousness" by God. Abraham was not righteous in and of himself but was considered to be righteous because of his faith in God. This is the fact that brought the apostle Paul to his recognition of the role of faith in our relationship to God.

Genesis 15:6

Romans 4:3-5

Exodus 33

Moses recognized his limitations and turned to God with a request that God teach him his ways so that he could lead Israel. He then requested that he be allowed to see the glory of God but was informed that no human could see the face of God and live. But God did say: "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Ex 33:19).

Note Psalms 25:4; 51:13; 67:2; 119:26 and the same theme in a statement that occurs in Isaiah 2:3 and Micah 4:2.

This cry for the guidance of God, instruction in the ways of God, occurs repeatedly, especially in the Psalms. David in Psalm 139 stresses the difference between God and humanity. God is everywhere—you cannot get away from him. He is in the heavens and in the deeps and on the far side of the sea. In darkness or light God is there. In verse 23 he requests God to search out his life and cleanse away any wickedness. It is a cry for restoration to a semblance of the image of God, a participation in the goodness of God, and a removal of the evil that makes humankind utterly other than God.

But the New Testament brings in greater revelation of the fact that God is other and yet with us. This otherness of God is best seen in Jesus. On the one hand He is human, came as a baby, lived on earth in a poor home, shared the many problems and pains of humankind. He seems familiar as a descendant of Abraham, of the genealogy of David. He attended synagogue like all other good Jews of his time. He worshiped at the Temple and interacted with the scholars even as a child. He walked on his own two feet and ate barley bread and fish like every common man. He cried at funerals and went to wedding celebrations. He was one of us.

But on the other hand he was not at all like us. He healed the sick, even the lepers. He commanded the winds and waves and they obeyed him. He changed water to wine. He fed multitudes with five loaves and two fish. He raised the dead. These clearly identified him as a person with links to the divine, but the prophets who were anointed by the Spirit of God also did similar miracles.

But what was even more remarkable about Jesus was that he forgave the sinner, he transformed the lives of evil men and women, and he did not sin. He was born of woman but the testimony is that he is the Son of God. He was owned of God at His baptism. The 3 chosen disciples saw him in a touch of his glory on the

mountaintop. He said to the disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). The title, God with Us—Immanuel—fits this God-man.

Certainly Jesus reveals that God is utterly other than humanity, but he also reveals that God wants us to become like him. The Kingdom of God, ushered in by the work of Jesus, is the way of togetherness with God and an end to separation from God. The Jewish leadership saw his claims as blasphemy, for they recognized that Jesus was essentially declaring himself to be one with God. Such a claim would have been acceptable to the pagan cultures of that time, but totally unacceptable to those who believed that there was only one God. They did not understand even the Messiah to be God, but rather thought he would be a Davidic style ruler carrying out the instructions of God.

Refer to Resource 8-3 in the Student Guide.

Psalm 16:2. The precise translation of this verse is difficult, for the meaning of the Hebrew is unclear, but most translators follow Jerome and the Targums.

The Good God

From the very first act of creation, what God does is good. Goodness flows from him.

- God gives good promises—Joshua 23:14
- Leads into a good land—Deuteronomy 8:7
- Apart from him there is no good thing—Psalm 16:2
- His messengers carry good news and good tidings—Isaiah 52
- He instructs those who follow him—Psalm 25:7-8
- He does good to those who take refuge in him—Psalm 34:8
- He forgives

Even in Lamentations we hear that Yahweh is good to those whose hope is in him—Lamentations 3:25. One of the great promises in the New Testament is the statement of the apostle Paul, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8:28), reinforcing this concept that goodness flows from God to all who will receive it. Peter also reminds Christians that they have tasted the goodness of God (1 Pet 2:3).

Such statements give a clear implication that God himself is good. It is Micah who declares God's definition of goodness: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8). Goodness is justice practiced with love as one walks in fellowship with God.

The simple statement of the fact of the goodness of God, "Yahweh is good" or "God is good," occurs almost

exclusively in connection with the worship formula introduced, according to the record of the Chronicler, when David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem: "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (1 Chr 16:34).

2 Chronicles 5: 13

It links the goodness of Yahweh to his *chesed*. The goodness of God means that he eternally seeks the best for those in covenant with him. Solomon repeats the formula at the dedication of the Temple. This powerful formula is used repeatedly in the Psalms. It appears to have been the chant that echoes after every declaration about God.

It is the concluding statement of the thanksgiving hymn, Psalm 100. In Psalms 105 and 106 it is the opening statement, and the structure of these Psalms indicates that the formula was repeated after each statement in the same way that it is repeated in Psalm 136. There was no question in the minds of the worshipers but that God is good, and that his goodness meant that they could have a deep and rich relationship with him.

Jeremiah makes use of the formula when he declares that Yahweh will reestablish worship in desolate Jerusalem and once again there will be singing and marriage and thanksgiving and the cry, "Yahweh is good; his *chesed* endures forever." (Jer 33:11, paraphrased).

Also in Luke 18: 19.

In Mark 10:17 we read of a conversation between Jesus and a man who ran up and knelt before him. He addressed Jesus as "Good rabbi." Jesus' response was to ask why he called him good since no one is good but God alone. This might be construed to mean that he did not have the right to be called good, but we do not read that Jesus rebuked him for kneeling respectfully or worshipfully before him. Jesus accepted the man's reverence and seemed to be simply reminding him that he had applied a mark of divinity to Jesus. Jesus applied the adjective to himself when he declared, "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:14). The quality of goodness, reflected through sinlessness and compassion, are hallmarks of Jesus, the one who enabled the good news of the gospel.

Holy God

Refer to Resource 8-4 in the Student Guide.

Part of that which makes God different from humanity is the fact that God is holy. It can be considered a primary element of his otherness. But to emphasize his holiness in the context of otherness tends to neglect

the realization that God's holiness is revealed in his dealings with humankind. In the canonical arrangement of Scripture the first time that the word "holy" is used is not as a characteristic of God but as the result of God making the Sabbath day a holy day. Clearly holiness proceeds from God and is necessary for the fellowship with God that he intended with the establishment of that holy day. The day of fellowship with the holy God is so important that the Ten Commandments ban work that day and the Torah goes so far as to decree that those who work on that day should be put to death. God is serious about his desire to have fellowship with us, and to provide us with the holiness and life that proceed only from him.

Exodus 31:13-17

Anything or anyone that approaches God needs to be holy. The ground upon which Moses stood in the desert is holy ground—God was there. Throughout the Torah the holiness of God is a prominent aspect of his nature. Yahweh declares repeatedly: "I am the LORD, who makes you holy" (Ex 31:13). The Book of Leviticus emphasizes the need for holiness, and the priests had to be cleansed and made holy before they could serve in the tabernacle, and they were to be careful to maintain lives consistent with holy living. Repeatedly the statement is made to priests and people: "Be holy because I am holy" (Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26). This is the truth that Peter quotes when he insists that all Christians should be holy—1 Peter 1:15-16.

Exodus 3:5

*Also Leviticus 20:8; 21:8; 22:3;
Deuteronomy 28:9.*

The high priest, the one who represented all Israel before Yahweh, was to wear a golden diadem on which was engraved "Holy to the Lord." Moses in his final sermon to Israel, repeatedly reminds them that they are to be a people holy to Yahweh. Holiness belongs to God but God wishes to share it with humankind and to create for himself a holy people.

Exodus 28:36

The holiness of God and of all that belongs to him is assumed but not directly mentioned through most of the time of the Former Prophets. Joshua had told the Israelites that they could not serve Yahweh because he is holy. His holiness meant that sin was incompatible with his presence and would bring about their destruction. The prayer of Hannah when she asked for a son at the gate of the tabernacle is one of the rare occasions when such a reference is made.

Joshua 24:19

1 Samuel 2:2

The Philistines were also overcome by the threat to them of the presence of a truly holy God and decided to return the Ark that they had captured in battle to Israel before the God destroyed them completely.

1 Samuel 6:20

There are, however, an abundance of references to the holy dwelling, holy hill, holy throne, holy temple, holy ways, and etc. of God throughout the Former Prophets and especially in the Psalms.

King David, in his song when he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, calls upon Yahweh to save Israel so that they can sing praises to his holy name. His first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem had been aborted because of the death of Uzzah. Years later, when he had gathered vast quantities of gold, brass, stone, and timber for the construction of the Temple that his son Solomon was to build, he again praises the holy name of Yahweh, the one who keeps his promises, and made a covenant with him. Certainly David respected the name of Yahweh, but whatever the danger of having the holiness of God in his proximity, he wanted that closeness, and rejoiced in it.

There is one book of the Latter Prophets that forcefully presents God as holy. That is Isaiah. Repeatedly he calls Yahweh "the Holy One of Israel" (Is 1:4). Once he substitutes "Holy One of Jacob" (Is 29:23). The use of this title is not exclusive to Isaiah but is used by other prophets and in Psalms. The messianic Psalm 89 emphasizes the covenant with David, and promises that he will cry out "You are my father, my God" (Ps 89:26), and that Yahweh will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. All of this "once for all, I have sworn by my holiness" (v 35), says Yahweh. The essence of God is holiness, and his covenant out of which he expresses his love is rooted in that holiness. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel refer to the actions of the Holy One as arising from his holy character. He will not allow his holy name to be defied and gives salvation to his people as evidence of his character.

Psalms 71, 78, 89, 99

Jeremiah 51:5; Ezekiel 20; 28:22, 25; 36:22; 39:37

Habakkuk addresses "My God, my Holy One" as a person whose "eyes are too pure to look on evil" (Hab 1:13). Joel and Zechariah look forward to the day when the holiness of God will have penetrated this world, make Jerusalem holy to such an extent that even the bells of the horses will be inscribed with the words written on the diadem of the high priest: "Holy to Yahweh" (Joel 3:17 and Zech 14:20).

There is no question but that throughout the Old Testament the central revelation of the character of God is his holiness made known through his power and the smoke of his glory and given expression in his righteousness, love, compassion, and above all by his *chesed*. This emphasis makes all the more remarkable

the change that takes place when we look into the New Testament.

The title: "Holy one of Israel" or of Jacob, does not occur in the New Testament. Only in Mark, Luke, and John do the words "Holy" and "God" appear in the same verse. In Mark 1:24 and Luke 4:34 the title "Holy One of God" is used by the demons who recognize Jesus, and they are silenced by Jesus before they are cast out. This has become a title for the Messiah, the one who comes from God. In Luke 1:35, Mary is told by the angel that the Holy One who would be born would be called the Son of God. She was to be the mother of the Messiah.

Peter, speaking for the disciples in John 6:69, says to Jesus, "You are the Holy One of God." These verses make clear that Jesus was understood to share the holy essence of God and to have proceeded from God. It is tempting to see the change from "of Israel" to "of God" as evidence of the opening of the door of salvation to all people and not just Israel, but it is unlikely that such a thought was the intention of any who used the title, rather they were simply identifying Jesus as the promised Messiah.

The Epistles repeatedly call upon the followers of Jesus to be sanctified, to be made holy. We have noted in the Old Testament this desire of God to share his holiness with humankind. The New Testament declares that in and through Jesus Christ this desire can and has become a reality in the life of believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:10

Paul opened his first Epistle to the Corinthians with the declaration that they were called to be holy. He declares to the Thessalonians that they are witness to the fact that he and his companions lived holy, righteous, and blameless lives when they were with them. Such references can be multiplied. Throughout his letters Paul emphasized the need for believers to be transformed into holy persons by the grace of God.

Hebrews 12:14

In Hebrews the call is given to make every effort to live in peace and to be holy because without holiness no one can see the Lord. The truth expressed so often in the Old Testament—where it declares that anything or anyone coming into the presence of God must be holy—is still expressed in the New Testament. But now it has become possible through the mediation of our Great High Priest, for God to share his holiness with us.

It is in the Book of Revelation that we have a return to the emphasis upon the holiness of God. Once again we

Revelation 4:8

hear the refrain as in Isaiah, "Holy, Holy, Holy," coming from those who stand before God. This time it is linked to the eternal being of God "who was, and is, and is to come." In 15:4 it is noted that only God is holy, but in chapter 20 we see that his followers have been endowed with his holiness. They have become priests of God and Christ.

Refer to Resource 8-5 in the Student Guide.

All of these statements emphasize that Jesus shares the holiness of God and that God has achieved his desire of being able to share his holiness with humankind. But the most remarkable difference in the use of the word "holy" between the Old Testament and the New is its application to the Spirit. Only three times in the Old Testament is the Spirit of God called the Holy Spirit

- Psalm 51:11 where David asks God to forgive his horrendous sins and not remove his Holy Spirit from his life
- Isaiah 63 where in verses 10 and 11 Isaiah reminds Israel that they rebelled against the Holy Spirit who had been placed in the midst of the camp

Whereas most of the Old Testament references are to the Spirit of God, the New Testament abounds with references to the Holy Spirit. This essence of God has come to humankind in and through the Spirit.

*Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35
Luke 1:15*

Luke 10:21

Matthew and Luke both state that the Holy Spirit effected the conception of Jesus. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit when he prays after the return of the disciples from their evangelism-training mission.

John 3:5ff

John 4:23

In the Gospel of John Jesus rarely uses the title Holy Spirit. He uses Spirit often and clearly is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus is dominated by the need of those who would be in touch with God to be born of the Spirit. It is in his conversation with the woman at the well of Sychar that Jesus reminds us that God is Spirit and those who want to worship God must do so in spirit and in truth.

John 20:22

In John 16 he reminds the disciples that he has to leave so that he can send the Counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send. He identifies him as the Spirit of truth who will guide the disciples into the truth. The giving of the Spirit of Jesus is recorded as following the Resurrection when Jesus appeared to the disciples and gave them peace, breathed upon them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit." The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church is recorded in the opening chapters of Acts.

The Book of Acts abounds in so many references that it has been popularly stated that the book should have been named the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the letters that Paul wrote he acknowledges that it is the Holy Spirit that has given guidance and imparts this new life. In Romans 14:17 Paul declares: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is life in the Spirit that is the life that God would have his followers to live.

The collective force of the Old and New Testament references to God, to Jesus, and to the Spirit binds them together in holiness and as spirit, while at the same time it preserves a separate identity for each one.

Refer to Resource 8-6 in the Student Guide.

The Great I Am

Many times within Scripture God identifies who he is. When God made a covenant with Abraham he stated, "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans" (Gen 15:7, paraphrased). Again Yahweh appeared to Abraham and announced "I am God almighty; walk before me and be blameless" (17:1). Similar statements are made several times to Jacob: "I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham" (28:13).

*Exodus 20:1
Psalm 81 for example*

Who God is, is defined by what he has done and what he asks humankind to do. We see this in the preface to the Ten Commandments and frequently in the Psalms. One of the most frequent statements is "I am the LORD [Yahweh]," or "I am your God." Throughout Exodus there is frequent use of the statement for it establishes God's right to give instruction to his people. "I am the one who heals you." "I am the one who brought you out of Egypt."

Isaiah 41:4

The high point in the call of Moses came with the giving of his mysterious name: "I was/am/will be who/what I was/am/will be" (Exodus 3). Yahweh is our best rendering of this name. It is this Yahweh who sends Moses. It is this mysterious timeless aspect of God that is emphasized in Isaiah. God is there from the first generation to the last generation. He encompasses them all. Again Isaiah relates: "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God" (44:6).

He rules, he saves, he is all-powerful, he is timeless, and he is the only God. This is the statement that is

Revelation 1:17

Revelation 2:8

Revelation 22:12,13

repeated in the book of the Revelation of John. The giver of the messages to the seven churches is the one who is the first and the last. But in Revelation this one who is first and last is the one who died and came to life again. Jesus is clearly being identified as God who is the Redeemer, Yahweh Almighty, the One apart from whom there is no god. Revelation concludes with the promise that the one who is First and Last, Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End will come back to the earth to give judgment.

But the identification of Jesus as the eternally existent is not the only "I am" that links Jesus to God. The "I am's" of Jesus recorded in the Book of John have many parallels with the "I am's" of Yahweh in the Old Testament.

- I am the bread of life—John 6. Jesus is identifying himself as the bread that God sent from heaven to feed the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. The initial giving is recorded in Exodus 16 where it is clear that God is the Giver of the bread.
- I am the light of the world—John 8:12. There are frequent references, especially in Psalms to the fact that God is the source of light. "Yahweh is my light and my salvation" is the praise of Psalm 27. God is the Creator of light. Once again Jesus identifies himself as having the same quality as God.
- I am the Son of God—John 10:36, quoting from Psalm 82:6. He avoids the condemnation of blasphemy by using the same concept that Luke uses in the genealogy of Jesus, which concludes with "Adam, who was the son of God."
- I am the good shepherd—John 10:11. Jeremiah reminds Israel that the day will come when the one who has scattered Israel will bring them back and be their shepherd. Ezekiel has a great deal to say about the false shepherds who will be replaced by Yahweh himself. He will find the lost and bind up the injured, shepherding the flock with justice and providing protection from their enemies, keeping them from being scattered. This is the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep.
- I am the resurrection and the life—John 11:25. This statement made to the two sisters, Mary and Martha, preceded the resurrection of Lazarus, a demonstration of Jesus' lordship over life and death. In the Old Testament Yahweh is seen as the Giver of life. This is not true only of the creation story, but was one of the aspects of the covenant given in Deuteronomy 30.

Jeremiah 31:10

Ezekiel 34

Jeremiah 21:8

Jeremiah reminded them that the acceptance of the covenant with Yahweh was the source of life. But it is in the wisdom literature of Psalms and Proverbs and even in Job that we have the frequent affirmation that the source of life is God. From his beginning is the tree of life so that whomever finds wisdom finds life. Once again we have ties between Yahweh, the Spirit, and Jesus, for Yahweh gives life by breathing the spirit into man and death occurs when the spirit is taken away. All three are involved in the life-giving process.

*Psalms 145:17
Psalm 19:7; 119:142
Genesis 2:7*

- I am the way, the truth, and the life—John 14:6. The concept of being the way to God is rather unique to Jesus. Yahweh does lead his people and brings them back to himself, but Jesus alone is the door or the way to God. He is the gate of the sheepfold as well as the way that leads to the Father. Yahweh is identified in the Old Testament as the one whose ways are true, his teachings correct, and he is the Giver of life.
- I am the true vine—John 15:1. In the Old Testament Israel is viewed as the vineyard of God. Yahweh is not pictured as the vine, but as the owner of the vineyard. Jesus makes the father the caretaker of the vineyard, and himself the rootstock for the vineyard. He is the source of life. That concept we have already noted to be one associated with Yahweh.

Jesus identified himself during his life on earth as the “I am” when he declared to the Jews: “Before Abraham was, I am!” (Jn 8:58). He is the eternally existent one.

God Who Is Love

The concept that seems to be emphasized the most among Christians today is that of God as love. Certainly this is the emphasis of John, especially in the Epistles. No writer makes a clearer statement that loving God and loving your fellowman are essential for the follower of Christ, and that the person who does not live such love is definitely not of God.

Refer to Resource 8-7 in the Student Guide.

It is in John where we read the statement of Jesus that is the best known verse in Scripture: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Jesus himself is that gift of love. It is also from Jesus’ statement that we get the interpretation that loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving our neighbor as yourself is the truth upon which all the Torah and Prophets are based, and that they can be summarized by the

Matthew 22:40

statement: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Mt 7:12).

In the Old Testament there are two words that we need to examine in order to understand the love of God. The first is the root *ahab*. This word carries many of the same meanings as the English word "love" but is used much less for sexual activity and sensual attraction, and much more for the deep sense of caring for another person or thing. It is not used for sexual intercourse. The word *yada*, usually translated know, is used for that. The worshiper loves the instruction of God. Love is at the heart of the covenant between David and Jonathan—a covenant to protect and care for each other's families when that is needed. The dominant concept of *ahab*, love, is that of wanting to be in the company of and to care for another person.

Psalm 119:97 for example

The covenant was recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 18, renewed in 20, and carried out by David in 2 Samuel 9 when he took care of Mephibosheth/Meribaal, son of Jonathan

The second word that we need to understand is *chesed*, the word we have already noted several times. It is most frequently translated in NIV and KJV as "mercy." RSV translates it as "steadfast love." It is Micah who binds *ahab* and *chesed* together in his powerful statement: "What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8).

In the New Testament the best example we have of the meaning of love is the sacrifice Jesus made for us, giving his life that we might be freed from death, the penalty of sin. And the best explanation we have of the meaning of love is in 1 Corinthians 13 where Paul explains, ἀγάπη, love, this way: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (vv 4-8).

These terms imply that both in the Old and New Testaments we must understand the love of God to be deep concern for the well-being and development of his people and himself. One of the evidences of this is that Yahweh exercises discipline over those whom he loves: "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Prov 3:11-12).

It is essential to remember that this love is rooted in a holy God in whose presence evil and sin cannot endure. This is truly a tough as well as an enduring and compassionate love. We see it expressed in Jesus,

who minced no words and acted strongly when dealing with sin in God's house and among those who claimed to be God's people, but who granted forgiveness to those who came searching for truth.

Attributes, Names, and Characteristics of God

We want to select and examine briefly some of the attributes of God that contribute to our understanding of God as triune and of the relationship between these persons.

Refer to Resource 8-8 in the Student Guide.

The God of Abraham, the Personal God

Frequently in the Old Testament and even in the New Testament, God is referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of your fathers. The intent is to make clear that Yahweh is no stranger. He was worshiped by those who were the source of the nation. He is known. In the New Testament it had become a source of great pride to be a descendant of Abraham.

Jesus emphasized that the true children of Abraham were those who followed God the way Abraham followed God—that the spiritual identity with Abraham was of far greater importance than the physical genealogy. John the Baptist had also warned his listeners that they could not hide behind their genealogical connection to Abraham.

John 8:39

In John 8 we have a confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders who first protest that Abraham is their father, and when rebuked by Jesus because they are not acting like Abraham they affirm that God is their Father. Jesus' response is that their father is the devil, not God.

All-Knowing God

We cannot take time to explore all the Scripture statements about the knowledge of God. Certainly the fact that God is Creator means that he was understood to know everything about creation, for after all he made it.

We have already noted several times that the wisdom teachings in Psalms and Proverbs rest upon the belief that the source of wisdom and understanding is Yahweh, who knows all and provides knowledge and guidance through his Torah, his instruction. God's Law

is perfect because God understands everything and therefore gives the proper guidance.

In the New Testament we see Jesus as the One who is applying the principles of the Law to the lives of his followers. The instruction he gives requires much more than the Law of the Old Covenant, for he requires that his followers have a change of heart. He taught that those who loved God should observe the spirit of the Law and not just the letter of the Law. He told them to return good for evil, cease anger, cease lust, let every yes mean yes. He gave them a new commandment: "Love one another; as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34, KJV).

Matthew 5:44
Matthew 5:21-22
Matthew 5:28
Matthew 5:37

Yahweh, the Creator, provides instruction in the Old Testament. Jesus the Creator provides instruction in the New Testament, but Jesus tells us that he had to leave so that the Counselor could come and be the master Teacher who would guide his followers into all truth. The Holy Spirit becomes the Teacher of all disciples. Once again the roles of the persons of the triune God are intertwined.

John 16:13

All-Powerful God

The Old Testament is full of testimony about the power of Yahweh. The fact that he is Creator means that he has immense power. The sending of the Flood and the scattering of people by confusing their language each demonstrate different aspects of his power. The plagues in Egypt demonstrate that he is far more powerful than any of the gods of the Egyptians. Pharaoh was made ruler to become a demonstration of the power of Yahweh.

Exodus 9:16

The preservation of Israel in the desert for 40 years was a great manifestation of his ability to provide for any need. The conquest of Canaan demonstrated his power to bring in desert tribes and have them conquer established nations. David's kingdom was established on the route between two of the greatest powers on earth at that time—Mesopotamia and Egypt. David attributed his victories to the power God gave.

Job praises the power of God who brought forth all of the creatures of the earth and controls all of the forces of the earth. Elijah demonstrated the power of God over the rains and over Baal. Elijah, as a man of God, called fire down from heaven upon the cohorts that came to take him to the king.

2 Kings 1:1ff

The prophets pled with kings not to trust in alliances and weaponry but rather to trust in God. Hezekiah did and discovered that God had the power to protect Jerusalem. It is not without reason that the psalmist and the prophets so often spoke of Yahweh's power and called Yahweh the Almighty, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, Sovereign Lord, and other such appellations.

Micah 3:8

God did not keep his power to himself. Micah testified that he had power by the strength of the Spirit of God. Isaiah explains this in these magnificent words:

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isa 40:28-31, NRSV).

In the New Testament the final liturgical statement in the Lord's Prayer acknowledges that power belongs to the Father, but over and over again it is clear that Jesus holds power. He calms the sea and commands the winds. He heals the sick and raises the dead. Matthew 9:6 reminds us that Jesus healed so that people would know that he had power to forgive sins. This is a power that belongs only to God.

Jesus also told the disciples in Matthew 24 that the day would come when they would see the Son of Man coming in power. The implication is that he would be wielding power in a different way than during his life on earth. But power for Jesus was not just for his life on earth or for his future return. He states, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Mt 28:18), as the preface to the Great Commission that sent the disciples into all the world to proclaim the gospel. Again Jesus does not keep power to himself but tells the disciples after his resurrection to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8, NRSV). This power would enable them to be witnesses for Him.

Here again we see power in the hands of Yahweh, power in the hands of Jesus, power bestowed through the Holy Spirit. All three are involved with power.

The King of Kings

Refer to Resource 8-9 in the Student Guide.

Judges 8:23

1 Samuel 16:13

God as King is a common concept in the Old Testament. Initially Israel had no earthly king, but was led by those raised up and appointed by God. When the Israelites tried to get Gideon to serve as their king, his response was that he would not be king, God should be their ruler. When the people cried out for a king to lead them, God allowed this, reminding Samuel that the people were not rejecting Samuel but were rejecting God as King. Centuries later Hosea speaks for the Lord and states, "So in my anger I gave you a king and in my wrath I took him away" (Hos 13:11).

2 Samuel 7

Human kings were not God's initial plan for Israel. Remarkably, after the failure of Saul whom God had ordered Samuel to anoint, and the rise of God's appointed king, David, God makes a covenant with David to make of him a dynasty that would rule forever. When Solomon fails, most of the kingdom passes to others, but the dynasty continues in Judah.

When Judah is on the verge of collapse, the prophets recognize that this is a spiritual dynasty and begin to speak of a messiah who would come like David and restore the fortunes of God's people. The concept of God as King was hardly spoken of in the Former Prophets but is pronounced in the hymns of worship. The psalms known as the enthronement psalms reflect an intertwining of the concept of King with that of God. Psalm 24 praises him as the King of Glory. Psalm 47 lauds him as Yahweh most High, the great King over all the earth. Psalm 84 calls him Yahweh Almighty, my King and my God.

Jeremiah 8:19 and 10:7

God is also recognized as King in the writings of the prophets. Isaiah falls stunned before God and calls out, "Woe is me" because he has "seen the King, [Yahweh] Almighty" (Is 6:5). Jeremiah also calls Yahweh the King in Zion and the King of the nations. He likes to use the phrase, "King whose name is [Yahweh] Almighty" (Jer 46:18). But Jeremiah also speaks of the day when Yahweh will raise up David and make him king. He will be the righteous branch of the stump of David who will rule perfectly over Israel.

Jeremiah 30:8 and 23:5

Ezekiel 37

This return of David is one of the themes in Ezekiel as well, and his emphasis is that David will unite Israel so that they will be one people, one nation with one shepherd. Daniel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi all make reference to Yahweh or the God most High as the one who has dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth, but it is Zechariah who gives us the remarkable

prophecy: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech 9:9).

The New Testament has several statements that Jesus is the King, the fulfillment of the promised restoration of David. The prophecy of Zechariah is noted as fulfilled in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. In the Gospel of John, Nathaniel is reported to have said at the time of joining the disciples, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (Jn 1:49).

The majority of the discussion of Jesus as King came during the trial and Crucifixion. The accusation that the Jewish leaders brought to Pilate was that Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews. Pilate accepted that accusation as the basis for the Crucifixion and posted the charge above the head of Jesus on the Cross despite the complaints of the Jews. To the Jews Jesus did not fit their understanding of the Royal Messiah who would rule over them.

The concept of God as the eternal King over all the earth appears in the New Testament benedictions—"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever" and "God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim 1:17; 6:15). Both of these titles are applied to Jesus in the book of Revelation where the Lamb is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Yahweh holds the title of King in the Old Testament and Jesus holds the title in the New.

The title "King of Kings" does not appear as a title of God in the Old Testament, although "Lord of Lords" occurs in Deuteronomy 10:17 and Psalm 136:3.

Revelation 17:14; 19:16.

God the Husband

In the Old Testament the Book of Hosea provides us with the strongest picture of God as the Husband of Israel. The sign act that is the life of the prophet and his wayward wife provides the picture of a husband whose love is so great that he forgives and redeems the one who has abandoned him. Hosea is not alone in using this concept. In Isaiah 54:5 we read: "For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth."

Jeremiah in 3:14 and 31:32 uses the same image of Israel and Judah as an unfaithful wife to God. In Ezekiel we have the story of Jerusalem pictured as a child that has been discarded as unwanted on a dump and rescued, cleaned, dressed, and cared for until grown and then made his own bride by a covenant with

Ezekiel 16

God. Unfortunately the rescued child is not a faithful bride.

Revelation 19, 21, 22

In the New Testament it is the Church that is the Bride, and Jesus is the One who is redeeming and transforming that Bride so that he can present her to himself pure and unspotted even though she had been sinful and unclean.

God the Father

*Deuteronomy 1:31
Psalm 68:5*

The concept of God as Father seldom occurs but is not unknown in the Old Testament. Even in Deuteronomy Moses notes that God carried Israel like a father carries a child. In Psalms we read that God is Father to the fatherless and that God is "my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior" (Ps 89:26). Isaiah calls the coming child who is born to govern, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is 9:6). The application of names to the Messiah speaks of the relationship that exists between the Messiah and the one named. The implication is that the coming Messiah has all of these characteristics of God. Malachi also applies the name father to God in his argument that because God is the creator we all have him as our common father.

Malachi 2:10

The concept of God as Father comes into full meaning in the New Testament, for it is the name that Jesus most commonly applied to God. The Gospels record Jesus using that name 178 times, and the rest of the New Testament uses Father another 74 times. God is Father and Jesus is the Son. The Father is in heaven, is perfect, is unseen, knows the needs of people, forgives, feeds, extends mercy, is Lord of heaven and earth, loves the Son, raises the dead and sent the Son. The Father does not judge but leaves that to the Son. From an early age Jesus acknowledged God as his father and was astonished that Mary and Joseph did not know to look for him in the Temple. Jesus submitted to the will of the Father in Gethsemane. But the Father is the one who raised the son from the dead, gives the Spirit to those who follow Jesus, and who shares his throne with the Son.

*John 5:22**Luke 2:49**Luke 22:42**Galatians 1:1
Ephesians 1:7
Revelation 3:21*

Summary

When we look at all of this material we see that there are many characteristics and actions that are common to Yahweh/God/Father, Jesus/Son and the Holy Spirit. Humankind was created in the image of God and that image was lost or at the least very seriously damaged by the Fall. Jesus, the last man Adam as Paul called

him, is the perfect spiritual image of God, so much so that he told his disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9), even though John records that Jesus previously said that he was the only one who had ever seen the Father. Jesus is the best image we have of the goodness and nature of God.

The Blessings

The beautiful blessing of Numbers 6:24-26, NRSV—"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace"—was certainly a part of the heritage of the Church, but it acknowledged the work of God understandably without any recognition of the persons of God. God is the source of security, God is the source of grace, and God is the source of well-being.

Early in the life of the Church we see the development of Christian blessings that emphasized the relationship and work of the persons of God, the relationship that we have come to know as the Trinity. In Romans 15:13, NRSV Paul gives this blessing: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." The role of the Holy Spirit is emphasized and so is the role of Jesus, for believing is believing in the salvation that comes through Jesus.

In Hebrews 13:20-21, NRSV we have this magnificent blessing, "Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

The emphasis is our relationship to God and Jesus as well as the growth that is essential to every Christian that takes place in the covenant relationship. But the blessing that ties Father, Son, and Spirit together is that of 2 Corinthians 13:14: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

We do need to remember that the attempt to prescribe or limit each of the members of the Trinity is doomed to failure, for our theological structure is simply our attempt to come to grips with the boundless God who is our Father, our brother, our Lord, our Counselor, our King, and our most wonderful Savior.

Scripture presents us with two realities. The one is God and the other is creation. Creation is the handiwork of God. All that we can know of God comes to us through observation of his creation or his word and action. Creation is the theological foundation for knowing God and the relationship between God and humankind. We cannot know more of God than he reveals through these sources that he has chosen to share with us.

Scripture repeatedly reminds us that we cannot take the measure of God. We cannot even measure his creation. The fullest possible revelation of God for us created beings is revealed in Jesus Christ, the Creator God who became man. The Gospel of John plunges into this identification in its first verse: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The revelation, once God is revealed in Jesus, has led the Christian Church into the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the best explanation of the Creator God that the Church has been able to formulate from the revelation provided to us. It emphasizes the mystery, the fact that we have only a minuscule knowledge about God, and yet have the marvelous knowledge of his redeeming and saving steadfast love. At the same time we always need to remember that when we see him face-to-face we may discover that many of our carefully constructed theological formulations are hopelessly inadequate.

Small Groups: Formulation Statements

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.

Take the information in today's lesson, both from in class and your preparation, and formulate at least two theological statements that you consider most important today.

Write your statements on a board for the class to see. Compare your statements to those of the other groups.

Compare your statements to any similar issues in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene, especially the first 3 Articles of Faith.

This lesson is a key to the development of the catechism. You will probably want to prepare several statements regarding the Trinity for inclusion.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on the students.

Name a key point from this lesson that will help you in your ministry.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Genesis 1–3; Exodus 32; Jonah. Prepare at least 6 theological statements that these passages would support.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Adam and Eve, Atonement, Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Grace, Guilt, Justice and Justification, Love, Mercy/Compassion, Redemption, Repentance, Righteousness, Sacrifice, Salvation, and Sin.

Write a 3-page salvation essay entitled “What the New Testament Teaches About Becoming and Remaining a Christian.” Give particular attention to the human need for salvation and God’s means of dealing with the problem of sin.

Assign a third of the class to each of the resources.

Read **1** of the following:

- Resource 8-10, “The Sin of Ingratitude—Psalm 107”
- Resource 8-11, “Bad News/Good News—Romans 1–3”
- Resource 8-12, “God’s Love Undoes What Sin Destroyed—Romans 5”

Write a 1- to 2-page summary.

Write in your journal. Reflect on how this module is deepening your relationship with God.

Lesson 9

Sin and Salvation

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Sin and Salvation	Lecture	Resource 9-1
0:20	Homework Exchange	Small Groups	Homework Essay
0:40	It All Began with Rebellion	Lecture	Resource 9-2 Resource 9-3
0:55	Homework Exchange	Small Groups/ Discussion	Homework Summary
1:40	Formulation Statements/ Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Bowe, Barbara E. *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality*. Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, chapters 3, "The Riddle of the World," and 4, "The God of Blessing and Salvation."

Reread Lesson 6 with an eye for the soteriological implications of Christology.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to give key points that they learned from the reading in NDBT.

Return homework. The essays and summaries will be collected later.

Orientation

An examination of the nature of sin and salvation throughout Scripture is essential to any biblical theology. God created humans with a measure of real freedom. We are free to make responsible choices. But we are not free to choose the inevitable consequences of our choices. God's love for us is demonstrated supremely at the Cross, where God became both priest and sacrifice, where God suffered the consequences of human sin and offered the gift of life to all who were willing to trust him and receive it.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- explain the biblical foundations for the Wesleyan understanding of sin and salvation

Lesson Body

Lecture: Sin and Salvation

(10 minutes)

Christians believe that Christ became human to make God known and knowable to rebellious human creatures who by turning their backs on God did not enjoy a life-giving relationship with him. The human problem Christ came to remedy was, in a word, "sin."

Refer to Resource 9-1 in the Student Guide.

Well over 50 different Hebrew and Greek terms cover the broad range of meanings associated with the biblical concept "sin." In the biblical tradition sin always concerns dysfunctional divine-human relationships due to human malfeasance or failure. These biblical terms employ metaphorical imagery to characterize this relationship gone wrong in a variety of ways.

Sin may involve either being or doing wrong. Sin may mean missing an intended target, stepping over the line, rebellion, failure, falling down, false living, injustice, going astray, and disrespecting God. But it may also entail being unclean, corrupt, crooked, wicked, desperately ill, or indebted to God. Of course, not every instance of the English word "sin" should be taken to imply all of these possibilities.

Sin involves a failure to be and do what God expects of humans. To violate the Law willfully is to rebel against and oppose God. Thus, to know the Law is a gracious gift of God. For a failure to do what God wants through ignorance or unintentionally is still a failure to comply with God's will.

Since sin consists in acts of disobedience, there are many sins. But sins arise from a basic perversion of persons whose entire lives are disoriented. Sin is generally an expression of idolatry—whether of self or of dependencies that occupy the place in one's life reserved for God alone.

As a revelation of God's will, Law simultaneously defines what God wants and indicts sinners for their failure to conform to his expectations. Neither Old nor New Testaments suggest that the Law can do more than point out the problem of sin; it cannot remedy it. Only God can do that.

If the basic human problem is sin, the Bible makes clear that the inevitable result of sin is death. Perhaps, the plight of sin can best be understood in light of its solution. If what God expects of sinners is an acceptance of his gracious provision for sin in the human response of repentance and faith, sin amounts to a refusal to trust God. Thus, to sin is to betray him, to be ungrateful to him, or to be disloyal to him. Sin is a violation of the trusting relationship of obedience and dependence God expects of his human creatures.

The seriousness of sin may also be seen in its solution. Israel's sacrificial system exacted in the victim a representative death of the sinner as the required solution, even in the case of unwitting sins. Christians believe that in Christ God himself died, assuming personal responsibility for human sin. What more could demonstrate at once the ultimate seriousness of sin and the full measure of God's love?

Salvation, God's solution to human sin, is not merely a negation of its consequences. Salvation restores humankind to the intimate relationship with God intended in the creation. In a right relationship with God, humans may enjoy the fullness of life God intended from the beginning.

Before we begin our survey of several theologically rich biblical narratives, we need to remind ourselves that God did not get "saved" between the Old and New Testaments. Popular notions notwithstanding, the God of the Old Testament is not a sponsor of unrealistic demands and vindictive judgment, while the God of the New Testament is a sponsor of mercy and love. The Bible presents the same God throughout. In both Testaments God demands obedience and graciously provides humankind with all they need to do so. If anything, the New Testament suggests that God's expectations are even more, not less, rigorous since the coming of Jesus Christ.

See Acts 17:30-31.

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into pairs.

Read and mark your partner's essay. Mark those places where you disagree with the other's conclusions and explain why in writing. Mark what you consider important insights and explain why in writing. Point out places where the ideas were clearly stated. Offer suggestions that would make the essay better.

Collect the homework essays.

Read the critique of your essay. Discuss where you agree or disagree.

Lecture: It All Began with Rebellion

(15 minutes)

Genesis 3

It comes as something of a surprise and curiosity to many Christians that the first appearance of the word “sin” in the Bible is Genesis 4:7. We might have expected it in the familiar story of the Fall in Genesis 3. But the word “sin” does not appear there; nor, incidentally, does the word “Fall.”

It is not the disobedience of Adam and Eve, but Cain’s murder of his brother, Abel, that the Bible first describes as “sin.” In Genesis 4:7, sin is described in a striking metaphor of a wild beast stalking its human prey to his dwelling, lurking outside, ready to pounce upon and consume its unsuspecting victim.

That we presume the notion of sin in Genesis 3, where the term never appears, suggests that we bring to our reading of the Bible definite ideas about sin. And perhaps it also should serve to remind us of how much we bring to the Bible, what we have been told and retold, without checking it out for ourselves.

In this instance, we are in good company. In Romans 5:12-21 the apostle Paul uses the word “sin” to describe the behavior of Adam and Eve.

The opening chapters of Genesis describe the beginnings of nature and humanity in two different creation accounts (Gen 1:1—2:3 and 2:4—3:24). The second of these consigns humankind to an idyllic garden, with every human need met by the provision of God. This included the provision of intimate human companionship (2:20-25), ongoing fellowship with God (3:8), and life given by God (2:7) and sustained by the presence of the tree of life (2:9; 3:22-24). In this garden paradise humankind were given meaningful work to do:

- Intellectual—naming the animals; 2:19-20
- Physical—tilling the garden; 2:5-8

The story of the Fall recounts how God’s creatures second-guess and misjudge God and disobey his only explicit command. Before God appears on the scene and pronounces judgment—and he does eventually—human disobedience sets in motion a series of dire consequences. They experience shame. They are alienated from God and hide from his presence. They are afraid of God. They are alienated from one

another—they refuse to accept responsibility for their actions and blame one another—and ultimately God—for their disobedience. The narrative strikingly demonstrates a conviction that emerges repeatedly throughout the Bible: Sin is its own punishment.

The God Who Changes His Mind—Exodus 32 and Jonah

And, yes, there are some passages that seem to insist on the contrary, e.g., Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:25; see also Jer 4:28; 15:6; Ezek 24:14; cf. Hos 13:14; Zech 8:14-15. All of these, I think, stress the dependability of God, not his inflexibility.

Refer to Resource 9-2 in the Student Guide.

See Ex 32:12, 14; Num 23:19; Deut 32:36; 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 90:13; 135:14; Jer 18:8, 10; 26:3, 13; 42:10; Joel 2:14; Amos 7:3, 6; Jon 3:9; 4:2.

Exodus 32 is not an exceptional passage; the Old Testament frequently refers to God's repenting. God is not only theoretically free to change his plans, but there is ample evidence that he actually does so. If God is not free to change his mind, he is not God. And yet, God is not fickle. He is definitely dependable. Because he keeps his promises, he can always be counted on to act graciously, redemptively—with dynamic integrity, not unbending rigidity.

What happens if we take God's freedom seriously? What if we admit that the Old Testament reports that God "repents" on occasion? Do not misunderstand "divine repentance." The Hebrew word translated "repent" in the golden calf incident and elsewhere in the Old Testament as applied to God's activity does not imply that God had sinned and needed to turn from it. It refers instead to his reluctance to follow through on his threats of judgment—to his change of attitude and behavior toward sinners.

The Book of Jonah contains only one prophecy—"In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!" (Jon 3:4, GL). There is no explicit condition attached—unless the people of Nineveh repent of their sins. But because they do repent and because God is faithful to his character of redemptive love, God repents—he relents and changes his mind. Nineveh is spared—to Jonah's dismay. The reluctant prophet is scandalized by this "gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing" (Jon 4:2, NRSV). This is no exception, but the norm. The Bible suggests that God consistently "changes his mind" about threatened judgment in response to people who repent of their sinful ways.

But if God's people turn from obedience to rebellion, God is also free to change his mind about the blessings of salvation he has promised them. Despite his gracious deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, despite the miraculous victory at the Red Sea, and despite the covenant established at Mt. Sinai, Exodus 32 suggests that God was prepared to destroy his

Exodus 32:10

unfaithful people. He is a God of uncompromising holiness. There is no reason to believe that God was only joking when he urged Moses to get out of his way so that his wrath could burn hot against rebellious Israel to consume them and establish a new people with Moses as the founding father. God was prepared to begin again with Moses as the faithful remnant of this faithless and fickle people of promise.

Exodus 32:13

And yet the golden calf incident is ultimately a reminder that God also repents in response to the prayers of the righteous in behalf of unrepentant sinners. God's threatened judgment on rebellious Israel is assuaged by Moses' intercession: "O LORD . . . turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people" (Ex 32:11-12, NRSV). Remember your promises to Abraham and his descendants. "And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people" (v 32:14, NRSV). In response to Moses' intercession, God revealed his glorious character to Moses: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet but by no means clearing" the unrepentant (34:6-7, NRSV).

Refer to Resource 9-3 in the Student Guide.

All this suggests that, as John Wesley suggests, God does things in response to prayer that He would not otherwise do. And if God is genuinely free to change his mind in response to our prayers, the implications are mind-boggling. If God has granted us the freedom to persist in rebellion or to repent of our sins, many popular notions about God are in need of revision. If changing one's mind is authentically possible—whether God's mind or ours, then the future is not a finished script written in timeless eternity and only played out in time.

God is powerful enough to make people do whatever he wants—to shape the future as he sees fit. But in giving humankind real freedom, God has chosen to surrender the possibility of controlling the future. God is not limited in his ability to know; He knows all that is knowable. But the future is open to change, because an almighty, infinitely patient God chooses to be redemptive!

God freely chose to limit himself by creating. All that exists that is not God is his creation. Creation has a beginning and will have an end. God did not have to create; he chose to do so. He did not have to give humankind freedom; he chose to do so. But God's

choices, like ours, bring with them inevitable consequences, which even he must live with. Even God cannot have his cake and eat it too. Even God cannot create and have no creation. Even God cannot grant humans authentic freedom and control the future absolutely. But that's his choice. He didn't have to limit himself. But the Bible suggests that he did, freely, graciously. So with Paul we say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" (2 Cor 1:3, NRSV).

The Bible implies that God is not pleased with the way most of us have misused our freedom. His heart is broken by the inevitable consequences we set in motion by our rebellion. But in his mercy he has not yet given up on us, nor on his dangerous experiment with freedom. He has not ceased to be God because his creation has not turned out as he would have preferred.

God is omnipotent; he can do all that he chooses to do. He is omniscient; he knows all that he chooses to know. What God chooses not to know is not knowable. God is eternal; he can wait as long as it takes to accomplish his purposes. God is redemptive; he is absolutely free to be responsive to his creation. He is free to change his mind without being fickle.

Creatures live within the bounds we call history. The Bible witnesses to God's free choice to make himself known in redemption and judgment within the events of human history. The Exodus events happened at a particular point in time—not in some timeless eternity—and to a particular people—Israel. God the Son became incarnate at a particular time, in a particular place, as a particular person—Jesus of Nazareth.

To the extent that God involves himself in human history, he accommodates himself to the fact that history is played out one event after another. The future is not written in granite. Apparently, names can be both added to and blotted from the Book of Life. People once "saved" can be lost; and those once lost, can be saved. We are not simply playing out some eternally prescribed and divinely foreknown script. Because God has determined that his ultimate purposes for this world will be achieved by persuasion—or coercion, only if necessary—predictive prophecy is possible. But virtually every prophecy about the future comes with an explicit or implicit asterisk attached—"unless."

*Exodus 32:32; Revelation 3:5;
22:19*

Ezekiel 18

God has chosen to act in ways that are responsive to what his creatures choose to do. And because he is faithful to his character, because he keeps his promises, even God is to a certain extent *predictable*. But God must be free in order to keep faith with fickle people and yet fulfill his promises.

And so we have come full circle back from Mt. Sinai, by way of Nineveh, to Mt. Calvary. "As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God. But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal [of ownership] upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" that he keeps all his promises (2 Cor 1:18-22, RSV).

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Thank you, Lord, for changing your mind! Because, if you didn't, we wouldn't have a prayer!

Small Groups/Discussion: Homework Exchange

(45 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each. In each group there should be 1 student that represents each of the resource readings from the homework assignment.

In your group share with each other your summary paper that you wrote covering the resource that you read.

Ask each other questions.

Find places where there is theological agreement. Find areas where there might be tension or a need to find agreement.

Be prepared to share your findings.

Allow about half the time for small groups and then bring the class together to summarize what they have learned.

Challenge the students to think about implications of what they say or think.

You might write key ideas on an overhead or white board as the class is presenting ideas.

Collect homework.

Individual Work: Formulation Statements/Catechism

(15 minutes)

Take the next several minutes and add formulation statements concerning this lesson to your list.

How do you perceive that they can be added to a catechism?

After you have worked on your own statements for a few minutes you may share your work with someone else and gain insights from each other.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on a few students to share some of their formulation statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the Book of Hebrews and Deuteronomy 1—6. Prepare theological statements that these passages would support.

Read the following sections of NDBT: Circumcision, Covenant, Election, Exclusion, Kingdom of God, and Temple.

Do an exhaustive concordance study on the Bible's use of the term "covenant." NIV uses "covenant" and "treaty" to translate the Hebrew *berith*. Write a 3-page essay summarizing what you learned from this study and your readings.

Write in your journal. Reflect on the prayer from the lesson.

Thank you, Lord, for changing your mind! Because, if you didn't, we wouldn't have a prayer!

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 10

The Covenant Relationship

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:05	Introduction to Covenants	Lecture	Resource 10-1 Resource 10-2
0:15	Homework Exchange	Small Groups	Homework Essays
0:40	The Covenant Relationship	Lecture	Resources 10-3— 10-10
1:20	Sermon Outlines	Class Activity	
1:45	Catechism	Small Groups	Resource 10-11
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Clements, R.E. *God and Temple*. Oxford, 1965.

Dumbrell, W.J. *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984.

Fuellenbach, J. *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989.

Klein, W.W. *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Koester, C.R. *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature and the New Testament*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989.

Lehne, S. *The New Covenant in Hebrews*. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990.

Marshall, H. *Kept by the Power of God: A Study of Perseverance and Falling Away*. London: Epworth Press, 1969, reprint Carlisle, 1996.

McComisky, T.E. *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985.

McKelvey, R.J. *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Pinnock, C.H. *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989.

Robertson, O.P. *The Christ of the Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

Lesson Introduction

(5 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to share a key idea that they gained from the NDBT reading.

Return homework.

Orientation

The covenant is the primary symbol in Scripture for the relationship between God and His people. This lesson is an examination of the various covenants and the system established for the maintenance of the covenant relationship—the tabernacle or Temple system.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to explain the biblical foundations for understanding the concept of covenant and its expression as a life of worship

Lesson Body

Lecture: Introduction to Covenants

(10 minutes)

The covenant is the primary symbol in Scripture for the relationship between God and his people. Essentially a covenant is an agreement between two entities that establishes their relationship to each other. There are many different types of covenants in Scripture. The Hebrew word *berith* covers treaties and agreements of several types. The most common is a covenant between humans and God, but there is frequent use of it as a treaty between nations. That is most probably the origin of the meaning of the word. It could also be used for a strong agreement between two people. In the New Testament *diatheke* is used to translate *berith* and also carries the meaning of a last will and testament.

Galatians 3:15

Refer to Resource 10-1 in the Student Guide.

The Hittite Covenants

One of the most detailed resources for understanding a covenant is the collection of Hittite covenants. These are treaties between the Hittites and other nations. Some are parity treaties making peace agreements. Others are treaties imposed upon their vassal states.

The main elements are:

- First comes the identification of the person or persons making the covenant and the statement of the relationship between them.
- Then come the stipulations or requirements—the dos and don'ts.
- These are followed by the penalties—the benefits if the agreement is kept and the curses if it is broken.
- Finally the relevant gods are called upon to witness the agreement.

These elements can be readily detected in many of the covenants in Scripture, although there are some significant differences in the covenants made by God.

Covenants in Scripture

There are a variety of covenants in Scripture. We want to mention these because they are indications of the seriousness of such relationships, although the primary covenant of interest to us is the series of covenants that God makes with Israel and the Church.

Personal Covenants

Genesis 31:44ff

Note the making and renewal of this covenant in 1 Samuel 18:3-4 and 20:12ff.

Genesis 21

Genesis 26:26ff

Some are between two people. Jacob and Laban made a covenant between them that they would not cross the pillar Mizpah to do harm to each other. They called upon Yahweh to witness their covenant. David and Jonathan made a covenant that they would not harm each other and would care for each other's families. This was a cause of distress to Jonathan's father, Saul, who wanted to destroy David. Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba. It was sealed with sheep and cattle and gave Abraham the right to live in the area. This covenant was renewed with Isaac.

National Covenants

Exodus 34:12, 15; Deuteronomy 7:2; 23:6

1 Kings 5:12

1 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 16

Isaiah 33:8; Ezekiel 17; Hosea 12:1; and Amos 1:9

Ezra 9:12

The Israelites were warned not to make covenants with the people who lived in Canaan, the land Yahweh was giving them. If they did, it would be a spiritual snare to them, so they were to destroy the inhabitants. In Joshua 9 we read of the covenant that they did make with the deceitful Gibeonites, and in Judges 2 Joshua reminds them that they violated that command and aroused the anger of Yahweh. Solomon made a covenant with Hiram of Tyre who had befriended his father David.

Later on some of the kings formed alliances through covenants, taking their cue from Solomon, and thought that such agreements would bring security. It is also clear that the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Babylonians all imposed vassal covenants on Israel and Judah, although these are often only inferred from the actions of the kings.

Ezekiel, Hosea, and Amos all speak of these covenants. They see them not only as binding but also as evil. Tyre is to be punished by Yahweh for breaking her covenant with the house of David. Ezra warns the Israelites, after the return from Exile, not to make covenants with the surrounding nations because that will weaken the nation. The New Testament political situation was quite different, and no mention of treaty covenants is made.

Yahweh's Pre-Israelite Covenants

Hosea 6:7

The majority of references to covenant are to the ones that God made. Hosea announces that Israel has broken their covenant with God just like Adam broke his covenant with God. This is the only direct reference to a covenant with Adam. Following the Flood Yahweh makes a covenant with Noah and the world. He promises that water will not destroy the entire world

Genesis 9

again. The covenant is between God, Noah, and all living creatures. The sign is the rainbow. This is a commitment on the part of God and reveals God's mercy in preserving a family and ensuring the continuation of life on earth. The only stipulations are that humankind is not to eat blood when they eat meat. Everything was placed in the care of humankind including the responsibility to populate the earth and to destroy anyone who sheds the blood of humankind.

Genesis 9:5

Yahweh's Covenants with Israel

The first of these is the covenant with Abraham. This forms the foundation for all of the later covenants. God chooses with whom he will make a covenant. The only stipulation for Abraham in this covenant is to obey—to leave his homeland and follow where Yahweh leads. The sign of acceptance of the covenant is the circumcision of all males. Without this acceptance the person is outside of the covenant.

Genesis 15 and again Genesis 17 spell out the details of the covenant.

The commitment of Yahweh is to make of Abraham a great nation, to give him a promised land and to make him the source of blessing to all the nations of the world. God promises this covenant to Isaac and Jacob as well. It is the basis for the claim of the Israelites to all the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Gen 15:18).

Matthew 3:9

When God approaches Moses to rescue his people from Egypt, it is because he "remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob" (Ex 2:24). Even in the New Testament the Jews asserted that they were the children of Abraham. This was the foundation for their covenant relationship to God.

The Sinai covenant, established under the leadership of Moses, is a detailed development of the covenant that God made with his people. The form in which it is presented has many links to the form of the Hittite covenants. You see it in the brief statement of the Ten Commandments and in the lengthy structure of the entire Book of Deuteronomy. It is this covenant that gives its name to the Old Testament, for it dwarfs all the others in the Old Testament. It is the spiritual realization of this covenant that becomes the new covenant, the culmination of covenant, in the New Testament.

In both the Old and the New Testaments the relationship of God with his people is a covenant relationship. Subsidiary to this covenant is the covenant that is referred to in the books of Numbers,

*Malachi 2:4ff, Nehemiah 13:29;
Jeremiah 33:21*

Leviticus 2:13

Jeremiah, Malachi, and Nehemiah—the covenant of life and peace with Levi. The instruction God gives in Numbers 18:19 calls this a covenant of salt. It is part of the promise that certain portions of the sacrifices belong to the priests and Levites for their sustenance. Salt was to be included with all the grain offerings. Also subsidiary to this covenant is the covenant with David who served as king over the people of God. The spiritual realities of these two covenants merge into the new covenant in the blood of Jesus.

The covenant relationship has to be maintained and reaffirmed. The tabernacle, which later became the Temple, provided for the maintenance of the covenant and for its re-establishment when broken. Renewal ceremonies are recorded on several occasions. Deuteronomy and the opening of Joshua record a renewal prior to the taking of Canaan by the Israelites coming out of the desert.

2 Kings 22ff

A covenant relationship is not transmitted genealogically, but by the acceptance of each generation. Joshua 24 records a renewal at the close of the life of Joshua. During the reign of Josiah we again see a restoration of the proper worship of Yahweh and a return to the covenant. The same kind of action takes place under Ezra and Nehemiah upon the return of the exiles to Jerusalem.

*Refer to Resource 10-2 in the
Student Guide.*

Isaiah 28:14ff.

Other Covenants

Several other covenants are mentioned, for the taking of a vow by a group was seen as a covenant. Isaiah warns the scoffers who rule in Jerusalem that their “covenant with death” would be annulled and they would be destroyed.

Malachi 2:14

It seems surprising that marriage is rarely presented in Scripture as a covenant. Malachi makes the only reference to marriage as a covenant. When we look at marriage in biblical times we tend to think that they understood it as the ownership of the woman by the man. A closer look reminds us that marriage is not presented as an agreement or covenant between two parties but as the union into a single whole. A man leaves father and mother to cling to his wife. Perhaps we should understand that the covenant element is present in the betrothal.

Genesis 2:24

Marriage is the culmination of the covenant and the beginning of the union. This would also fit Malachi’s statement that she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. It would also mean the Marriage

Supper of the Lamb becomes the climax of the covenant between Jesus and the Church, the point at which the Church becomes one with her Lord.

The Nature of Covenants of God and Covenants of Mankind

The covenant form is perhaps the strongest of all forms of relationship described in the Scriptures. Even so a covenant is only as strong as the nature of the parties making the covenant. Kings broke covenants when it was to their advantage, just as the Tyrians broke their covenant with the house of David. This was why humankind called upon the gods to witness their covenants and to send disaster upon those who broke the covenant.

Conquerors imposed covenants and warned of the punishment they would inflict upon those who failed to keep the imposed covenant. When the conquered felt strong enough, they threw off such covenants. A covenant with Yahweh is based upon the strength and character of Yahweh. This makes it different, for the essence of his character is life and love.

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(25 minutes)

*Divide the class into pairs.
Students should not always be
paired with the same person.*

Exchange your homework papers with your partner.
Read and mark your partner's essay.

Mark those places where you disagree with the other's conclusions and explain why in writing.

Mark what you consider important insights and explain why in writing.

Return the marked papers with your comments.

Prepare written responses to your partner's critiques.

*Give the students about 20
minutes to work and then call for
reports as to what they have
learned from each other.*

Collect homework.

Lecture: The Covenant Relationship

(40 minutes)

Refer to Resource 10-3 in the Student Guide.

Romans 4: 13ff

Probably the most beautiful example of this is the statement of Ruth and her acceptance into the family that produced David and Jesus—Ruth 1: 16ff.

The Covenant with Israel

Initiation of the Covenant

Yahweh is the only One who can initiate a covenant with humanity. Humankind, the fallen creature, has no basis for making such an approach. It is Yahweh's option. The covenant is *offered* to Abraham and Abraham responds with acceptance, obedience, trust, and worship. Unlike the covenant with Noah and the world—a commitment by God that came into being regardless of the response of Noah—this covenant came into being upon the obedient acceptance of it.

This was a covenant that targeted the transformation of the participants and a restoration of fellowship with Yahweh. It is given by grace. This fact is the basis for Paul's later interpretation of the relationship of Christians to God. We see that it was a covenant not only with Abraham and his offspring but also with those who were willing to accept the covenant and become a part of the family. We have noted that a large group joined Israel in departing from Egypt. This makes clear that essentially this is a spiritual covenant offered by the grace of God.

The Character of the Covenant

The covenant is not dependent upon Israel, but upon Yahweh. Repeatedly we see Yahweh acting, not because of the goodness of Israel, but rather despite the sins of Israel, to restore the covenant relationship because of His character. Ezekiel 20 is a good example because it relates a cycle of salvation, worship, backsliding, consequences, and then we read repeatedly, "But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations" (Ez 20: 14, NRSV).

This is what makes the covenant with Yahweh so different from covenants between nations and individuals. The character of Yahweh is holiness, merciful love expressed in the orderliness of law, power and authority, and life. It is the expression of all that is good and the condemnation of all that is evil. *Chesed* is the motivating force in the relationship.

Acceptance of the Covenant

Genesis 17:9-27; Exodus 12:44, 48; Leviticus 12:1-5; Joshua 5:2-7

Note Genesis 17:25 and 34:14-24, as well as the notations that anyone wishing to partake of the Passover must first be circumcised. Exodus 12:43-49.

Leviticus 26:41; Jeremiah 6:10; Ezekiel 44:7ff

Note Acts 15; Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 6:15

Refer to Resource 10-4 in the Student Guide.

God gave Abraham male circumcision as the mark of the person who had accepted the covenant. Several other ancient nations practiced circumcision, and the meaning to them is uncertain. Some, like the Greeks, were hostile to the act. In Israel this was a spiritual act of submission to Yahweh. It was to be performed on infants of eight days, or later in life in the case of those who joined Israel as adults.

Nothing in life was considered to be more important than the continuation of the family. Acceptance of the covenant brings submission even in this area of life. Acceptance of this sign becomes an act of faith in God. Even in the Old Testament the act of circumcision is noted to be spiritual. The Law and the Prophets reminded Israel that it was the heart, the mind, and the ear that needed circumcision.

Under the new covenant circumcision was a major issue as the Church came into being. It was only after much argument that the Church accepted that the true circumcision was spiritual and meant the transformation of the heart and mind. The profession of Christ as Lord then became the essential mark for the Christian and physical circumcision, so objectionable to the Greeks, was deemed unnecessary. This decision did accelerate the development of an identity for Christianity separate from Judaism.

The Purpose of the Covenant

When God approached Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, as well as in the formation of Israel, he declared "I will be your God." This statement is repeated when God speaks to kings and when the prophets make their pronouncements. Yahweh was not only making possible the restoration of a right relationship with humankind but also actively seeking that relationship. God was seeking out those who would worship him. It is not because God needed something from us, but because it is only in this relationship that humanity is fulfilled. The God of *chesed*, the God of love seeks the full realization of the potential of his creature.

Certainly God promises to bless Abraham and to make of Abraham a great nation and to give to them a homeland. The physical descendants of Abraham quickly took that to be their privilege. They were the blessed. They possessed the land. If the Israelites patterned their lives by the covenant, then all would be well with them.

Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you (Deut 8:6-10).

The immediate effect of observance of the covenant, of worship of Yahweh, would be a good life, for the covenant was made with them by the Creator of the world and enables them to live in harmony with the world that he had made. Conversely, the passage cited goes on to remind Israel that failure to live by the covenant would bring failure to the efforts of the disobedient.

Note Hebrews 11:9-10; Matthew 3:9; John 8:39ff; Galatians 3:7

The New Testament writers saw the ultimate promise of land as the spiritual home in the new heavens and the new earth, and the vast nation as the true believers in the God of Abraham. They tended to ignore that a purpose was given to the call of Abraham—he would become a blessing to the nations and through him all the nations would come to blessing themselves.

The covenant came into being both to provide opportunity for true worship and to make possible the restoration of fellowship. Israel was to be the worshiping community and the vehicle for that restoration. Under the new covenant this mission became dominant.

Under Moses, Yahweh provided the tabernacle, a place of meeting between God and humankind, to enable the covenant relationship to grow and develop in the life of the people of God. It was an intensely symbolic structure, at first thought to be symbolic as the plan for the Temple, expressing the meaning of the various parts of the Temple, but in the new covenant the full meaning of the symbolism is realized in the life of Jesus and his Church.

Admission to the Covenant Fellowship

“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure

heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false" (Ps 24:3-4). The problem for those who have accepted the covenant is that they do not qualify for admission into fellowship with God. We are sinners. God has offered the covenant and we are willing to accept the covenant, but our hands are dirty, our hearts impure, we worship our idols and tell our lies. The alternative to clean hands and a pure heart is sacrifice.

Genesis 8:21

In many of the ancient cultures sacrifices were understood as the feeding of the gods. Even in Scripture 42 times the burnt sacrifice is called a "sweet savour" (KJV) or "pleasing aroma" (NIV). The first mentioned is the thanksgiving sacrifice Noah made. Such offerings brought to God that express thanksgiving, gratefulness, and joy are pleasing to God.

Most of the sacrifices, however, related directly to atonement for sin. The Passover lamb, the scapegoat, the sin offerings, the offerings of the Day of Atonement, these were the sacrifices that enabled the sinner to enter into the house of the Lord. The blood of the sacrifice was shed instead of the sinner's blood. Saul lost the kingdom because he wanted to present great sacrifices to God, and lost sight of the fact that in so doing he was disobedient and actually sinned by the bringing of sacrifices. Samuel's statement: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:22), makes clear that the objective of God is an obedient fellowship with him.

In order to enter the presence of God sin must be dealt with. A sacrificial offering had to be brought to the gate of the courtyard and placed upon the altar. Hands had to be washed to free them from the grime of life in the world. Only then, with cleansed hands and heart, could the worshiper be a part of the fellowship.

It is significant that both items necessary for dealing with the problem of sin and the dirt of life are placed in the courtyard of the tabernacle. The prime responsibility of the court of Israel was to care for sin, recurrences of sin, and the many mistakes of fallen humankind. Only in this way could fellowship with each other and fellowship with God be established and maintained. When the Court of Israel becomes the Court of the Church under the new covenant we see that this responsibility to make the altar and washbasin available to all who would enter the fellowship remains a prime responsibility of the Church.

The altar must always be available to deal with sin, never was the fire to be allowed to expire. Forgiveness was always to be there for the repentant who wanted to get under the blood. The washbasin was routine, the daily cleansing of that which is brought into the presence of God, made necessary by life in the dirty world in which humankind lives.

Life in the Covenant

The covenant was not a prayer book or set of rituals for worship. It does clearly state the obligations of mankind to Yahweh, but the emphasis of the covenant has to do with the way in which the followers of Yahweh conduct their lives.

Refer to Resource 10-5 in the Student Guide.

The Covenant Guides All Living

The tabernacle was placed in a unique location. Holy places were traditionally on the tops of mountains. Such locations were believed to be closer to heaven. It took effort to get to the tops of most mountains. They were remote and often cloud covered. Volcanic mountains spewed smoke, and this marked them as holy. In Mesopotamia the people built mountains, ziggurats, upon which they erected their Temples.

In Canaan the high places were often mountaintops. This tradition was not ignored in Scripture. Moses went up the holy mountain to receive the instruction of Yahweh. Jesus took his disciples to the top of the mountain at his transfiguration. The Temple was built on the highest part of Jerusalem. The place designated for the sacrifice of Isaac was on the mountain. Certainly mountains could be holy places. In most of the ancient religions what took place on the mountains by those who worshiped was designed to bring prosperity to the worshipers. It was the manipulation and appeasement of the gods in order to get those things that the worshipers wanted and prevent those that they did not want. The way you behaved toward the god on the mountain had no connection to the way in which you behaved toward humankind once down the mountain.

The location of the tabernacle of Yahweh, his meeting place with humankind, was not on the top of a sacred mountain, nor at some distant point from the people. It was at the very center of the camp. It was at the center of the daily life of the people. The covenant with Yahweh did set the sacred at the heart of the secular. It had huge impact upon daily life. The way in which you treated your neighbor, the poor, the alien, the

weak, your rulers, your wife, your children, your slaves, and even what you ate and drank was all impacted by the expectations of covenant living. Righteousness was not upheld by the presentation of sacrifices or performance of rituals, but was “to act justly and to love mercy (*chesed*) and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

The Covenant Functions in Grace

The primary symbol of the covenant is the ark of the covenant—that special seat and container that represented the throne of Yahweh in the midst of his people. Hovering over the throne were the cherubim symbolizing the glory of God. Emanating from the ark was the fire and smoke of the presence of God, expressions of his glory and power. Certainly Israel had seen marvelous demonstrations of the glory and power of God in the plagues, the Exodus, at Mt Sinai, and in the pillar of fire and cloud that led their way. The people wanted such demonstrations and often desired, and still desire today, to claim such power. We forget that the glory and power emanate from the throne.

The focal point of the ark was the throne of Yahweh. This was the seat of *chesed*—the mercy seat—the symbol of the steadfast love of God for humankind that is made most clear by the atonement for sin. It is significant that it is not the judgment seat of God. The unique essence of *chesed* is the desire of Yahweh to enable his people to re-establish a right relationship when they have broken the covenant. Without that grace humankind would be doomed.

Attention is drawn to this very dramatically in Joshua 24. Joshua calls upon the people to make a choice, to abandon the idols of their ancestors and worship Yahweh alone. He makes the declaration that his family will serve Yahweh. When the people respond that they, too, will serve Yahweh Joshua says: “You cannot.” The issue is that sinful men cannot keep the covenant and will bring discredit upon the name of Yahweh. They will break it and incur the penalty of the anger of a God who guards the integrity of his character. The people respond by throwing themselves upon the *chesed* of Yahweh: “Nevertheless we will serve Yahweh.”

Joshua 24:19

Joshua 24:21, paraphrased

Yahweh’s relationship with his people is based upon this grace that provides salvation, redemption, and restoration. He disciplines, tests, and thereby strengthens his children. He provides guidance and

Note John 3:17.

instruction. His focus is not condemnation and judgment, but salvation and fulfillment. This is so wonderfully fulfilled in the coming of Jesus—he who came not to condemn the world but to save the world. Jesus becomes the ultimate demonstration of the *chesed* of Yahweh in his compassion for the sick, poor, and needy, and his salvational death upon the Cross.

Deuteronomy 30:19; Jeremiah 21:8

There are consequences to observance or non-observance of the covenant. Those that keep the covenant are blessed. Those who break the covenant bring upon themselves a curse. Deuteronomy 11:26-28 states: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.” The repetition of the statement in Deuteronomy and by Jeremiah gives the contrast as a “way of life and a way of death.”

Refer to Resource 10-6 in the Student Guide.

The Principles of the Covenant

Within the ark were placed three items that represented major aspects of the covenant—the very principles upon which the covenant was established. They were the tablets of the Law, the pot of manna, and the rod of Aaron. We will be looking at these in detail in the next lesson, but we need to outline their role in the covenant here.

Exodus 24:7

Deuteronomy 6:4ff

The Law

The primary stipulations of the covenant were written upon the two tables of stone that were placed within ark. Every one of the 10 addresses either the relationship with God or that with humankind. These were the summary statements. Elaboration took place in the Book of the Covenant and later in the Deuteronomic sermon. Further guidance for ritual needs and the priests were provided especially in Leviticus. The confession of faith, the *Shema*, summarizes the relationship to God.

Matthew 19:16ff

To this was added, “love your neighbor as yourself” by later rabbis, and the combination was quoted by Jesus as the summary of the whole law. Many times the reason for following the instructions is simply “I am Yahweh.” The Law is given by the Creator, is in harmony with creation and enables both restoration so that sinners can live in creation, and guidance so as not to conflict with the principles of creation.

Matthew 5: 17, 18

Jesus noted that the Law will only end when “heaven and earth disappear.” The Law is linked to creation, for its principles come into being with the act of creation. The Torah—the five books of Moses—provides guidance for life. Their context is ancient Israel in the desert and settled in Canaan.

Psalm 119 has several examples of this phrase, and the whole book frequently refers to the many benefits of the law of Yahweh. The same praise of the guidance given by the Law is true of Proverbs.

The principles are stated in forms and laws that make them relevant to the issues of life in those times. The principles, expressed in statements like the Ten Commandments, do not change, but the application to guide conduct must be restated again and again. One of the key roles of the prophets was to apply the guidance of Yahweh to the activities of people and kings in their times. The primary role of the wise men was to clarify the Law as it applied to daily life. Once the worshiper discovered that the function of the law was not restrictive but enabling, they cried out, “Oh how I love your law.”

Essentially the Law reveals the values of Yahweh. He values truth and justice, mercy and kindness, honesty and integrity, peace and well-being, righteousness and holiness, humility and service. Observance of the Law elevates and promotes such values. Yahweh hates lying, hatred, covetousness, murder, slander, conniving, fornication, licentiousness, and all else that would threaten good values. The worshiper of Yahweh accepts and lives by the values of God.

The Manna

Exodus 17 relates that victory was only achieved when Moses was holding up his hands. It was not achieved by the men doing the fighting.

God provided sustenance—bread and water—for the Israelites in a setting where feeding a multitude was impossible. Water came from the rock. Bread fell from heaven. These were clear demonstrations that the well-being of the nation rested not upon their efforts but upon their relationship to Yahweh. Placing the pot of manna into the ark of the covenant symbolized the recognition that the worshiper of Yahweh is secure only as he or she trusts in him. During the wanderings their dependence upon Yahweh was demonstrated by the fact that they won battles when calling upon him but failed when they relied upon themselves.

Over and again the prophets reminded kings that security lay in obedience to God and not in their cleverness, their chariots, or the strength of their armies. David dared to face Goliath because he trusted in Yahweh, and believed Yahweh to be the supreme power. The word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel was: “ ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (Zech 4:6).

John 6:41

*Matthew 4:4, quoting
Deuteronomy 8:3
Matthew 6:33*

Jesus, who identified himself as this bread that came down from heaven, told the tempter that sustenance, security, came from “every word that comes from the mouth of God.” He reminded his disciples that they should seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness and then food, clothing, and shelter will be given.

The manna thus becomes the reminder that life in Christ, being in the center of the will of God, is the most secure place that humankind can find.

The Rod

*Found in Numbers 16 and 17.
Exodus 6 ff gives the genealogy of
Levi. Korah was of Kohath, a
member of the same family group
as the father of Aaron and Moses.*

One of the ugliest stories in Scripture is the story that ends with the placement of the rod of Aaron in the ark of the covenant. Korah and his friends, 250 leaders of Israel, objected to Aaron’s serving as the only high priest, and his family serving as priests while the other descendants of Levi could only serve in the lesser position of Levites. He and his supporters felt that this was unfair and prejudicial to them, for after all, all of the followers of Yahweh were holy. They wanted to take a turn to serve as priests and confronted Moses with their demands.

Dathan and Abiram, leaders of the Reubenites, the firstborn clan, supported Korah. The next day Moses gave them opportunity to burn incense at the Tent of Meeting. They gathered their supporters and prepared for the task, and the glory of Yahweh appeared. Moses ordered all the people to get away from the tents of the rebels, the ground opened, the tents, supporters, and families of the rebels fell into the opening and the ground shut upon them while fire consumed the 250 who were offering incense.

The level of opposition to Moses and discontent with his leadership is revealed in the response of the Israelites. They were angry and accused Moses of murdering the people of Yahweh. God sent a plague and Moses intervened, standing between the living and the dead, and stopped the plague. There were 14,700 dead.

Each tribal leader was requested to bring the rod that represented their authority and give it to Moses. These were placed in the tabernacle, before the Lord. In the morning the rods were examined and the rod of Aaron had budded and held blossoms, young and mature almonds. All acknowledged that Yahweh held authority and could give it to whomever he pleased.

Numbers 20:8

Submission to authority was difficult for Israel. Moses himself disobeyed when he struck the rock. He was told to simply speak to it to get water. Consequently, he was barred from entry into Canaan. Saul lost the kingdom when he chose to impress the people with captives and sacrifices when God told him to destroy the Amalekites. Uzziah, the good king, was struck with leprosy when he presumed to offer incense.

The list could go on and on. Jesus submitted to the authority of the Father. The ultimate submission was to go to the Cross—"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). The covenant requires acceptance of the authority of Yahweh. We do not hold authority. He holds all authority.

The Maintenance of the Covenant

Refer to Resource 10-7 in the Student Guide.

Exodus 25 and 26, the chapters that describe how the tabernacle was to be built, frequently use this phrase: "according to the plan shown you on the mountain."

The tabernacle was given to Israel as a place where Yahweh could be worshiped. It was an intensely symbolic structure. The symbolism is so strong that many early critical interpreters thought it might simply be an invention of the priests to explain the meaning and functions of the Temple. The instructions given to Moses for the building and rituals of the tabernacle do make clear that it is symbolic, but that in no way means that it was not built and used during the desert wanderings.

*John 2:19
1 Corinthians 3:16ff; 6:19; 2
Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21;
and Revelation 3:12*

The plan would influence the Temple structure, although there are elements in the Temple structure that are not in the tabernacle. The New Testament gives a spiritual meaning to the structure, first linking it to Jesus and then to the believer and the Church.

The Courtyard

A courtyard surrounded the tabernacle. This was the Court of Israel. In the courtyard were two items of furniture: the altar and the washbasin. It was in this courtyard that people came to pray, to worship, and to seek forgiveness for their sins. It was a place where the Scriptures were taught, the guidance of Yahweh was sought, choirs sang, and offerings were presented. The primary responsibility cared for in the courtyard was making sacrifice upon the altar.

It was the place where the worshipers could receive atonement for their sins. The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice cleansed the sinner. The focus was on the restoration of a right relationship with God and with others. All who entered the courtyard used the

washbasin. There sacrifices were washed and the hands of the worshiper were washed. The symbolic washing was to remove the grime of life from the hands of the worshiper. It was the tacit recognition that the world is a dirty place and everyone needs to clean up his or her hands. Again the emphasis is upon getting and keeping relationships right with others. In the Church, the new Israel, the primary responsibility is to bring people to the altar, the foot of the Cross, where the blood of the sacrifice of the precious Lamb of God can wash away sin. The Church also carries the responsibility to provide the opportunity to keep relationships right with all people.

Refer to Resource 10-8 in the Student Guide.

The Tabernacle—the Holy Place

The tabernacle was made up of two rooms. The outer room was the holy place and the inner room was the holy of holies. The veil separated—closed off—the inner room where the blinding glory of God radiated from the ark of the covenant. It was made from the best materials available by the best workmen. When dealing with Yahweh, the best that the people of God have is required. So much was given for the work that Moses had to stop the people from bringing more.

Exodus 36:6

The priests serviced the holy place. Three symbols were in the room: the lamp, the golden or incense altar, and the table of showbread.

The Lamp

Leviticus 24:1-4. It is interesting to note that in the story of the call of Samuel, the boy sleeps in the holy place and the remark is made that the "lamp of Yahweh had not yet gone out." Whether this means that Eli and his sons were neglecting their responsibilities, or whether the Leviticus ruling is a later ruling, or whether it means that Yahweh had not yet forsaken Israel is debatable. 1 Samuel 3.

The lamp was tended twice a day, the wick trimmed and the best of the oil used to refill it. The flame was not to be allowed to go out. The priests were to tend them continually so that the lamps on the golden lamp stand would burn continually. Oil and fire were considered to be symbols for the work of the Spirit of God among humankind. The psalmist and the wise man see the lamp as providing guidance for life. The instruction of God, the word of God, is the lamp that guides the direction a wise person takes.

The Torah or Law of God is the primary sourcebook for instruction. Moses impressed upon the Israelites as they were about to enter Canaan that the Law was to be taught to the next generation and was to be the guiding force in each personal life and each home:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie

them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deut 6:6-9).

The responsibility to teach the Law to the next generation permeates Scripture. Psalms and proverbs were used to help provide such instruction. Monuments were set up to stimulate questions that provided the opportunity to talk about what God had done and what he requires. Teaching was an important part of the ceremonies like the Passover and the covenant renewal ceremonies. By New Testament times the synagogues had been formed, and they were primarily places where instruction in the word of God could be given. The rabbi, an important office in New Testament Israel, was simply a teacher. Paul reminds us that the Law is the schoolmaster who leads us to Christ.

Galatians 3:24 (KJV)—NIV translates paidagogos as "put in charge."

The lamp is the reminder that there must be a continual learning experience in the lives of the believers. They are to be directed by the Spirit of God. Jesus reminded his disciples that the Spirit would guide them into all truth and the Spirit would guide them as to what to say. This is a relationship with the Spirit of God that requires our attention to his word and the light he sheds upon our way. In the Old Testament the priests mediated the guidance given by the Spirit. The worshiper could take this word and make it a part of his or her life. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is given to the believer, and the relationship should be cherished far more.

John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13

The Golden Altar

The second piece of furniture in the holy place is the golden altar. The brazen altar is the altar where the sacrifices were made in the courtyard. Incense was to be placed on the golden altar each morning and each evening, and was to be fired by coals taken from the brazen altar. Incense was used as the symbol for prayer.

This was the opportunity for communication with God and for acknowledgment that Yahweh is the One who supplies every need. He is the One to whom the Israelites could turn for help. The Psalms in particular are full of statements about Yahweh as the Shelter, the Rock, the Protection, the Savior, the Healer, and the Strength. He is the shepherd who cares for every need. He provides protection from the sun that smites by day and the pestilence that walks in the darkness. He gives the rain to all, the just and the unjust.

Yahweh is the source of everything and the One to whom we turn with our petitions. He is the only One deserving of our praise. Prayer is a major facet of New Testament life, and the prayer Jesus taught us brings to the fore the various aspects of this relationship we are privileged to have with God:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Mt 6:9-13).

Matthew 6:6

Jesus reminded his disciples that prayer is that which takes place between the individual and God. It takes place in the closet. Beautiful public prayers run the danger of being displays of pride and human ability, done for the praise of men instead of being communication with our almighty Father. The regular use of the golden altar is the avenue for communication with God. Here we make known our petitions for ourselves and for others. Here we seek first the Kingdom, the will of God. Here we bring our thanks and praise before him. As with the lessons of the lamp, the petitions and praise are also lifelong activities. We remain dependent upon God from conception to death, and then he has made it possible for us to enjoy eternity with him.

Table of Showbread

Instructions are given in Leviticus 24:5-8

The third item of furniture in the holy place is the table of showbread. It was on this table that the Bread of the Presence was placed each Sabbath—12 loaves each made of two-tenths of an ephah of flour. This was taken from the best of the tithes and offerings brought by the people. The loaves represented the tithes and offerings of the 12 tribes. At the end of each week the priests were to eat the bread in a holy place because these were the most holy part of the offerings that were designated for the support and care of the priests. The loaves were to be replaced with freshly made bread each week.

Once again we are looking at a continual process. This activity was to be repeated regularly. It was the recognition that everything came from Yahweh. He is the owner and has made his followers the stewards of it all. Tithing was used throughout the ancient Fertile Crescent and the neighboring nations as recognition of ownership rights. Tithe was paid to the owner, the king, the lord, the Temple, whomever had authority

over that piece of land. Yahweh had already made clear that not only the land was his but everything on it. Tithing was to be of crops and cattle. Even the firstborn of every family belonged to him, for he owned it all. He is the Master. The table is the constant reminder that the presence of God is with his people as they acknowledge his Lordship over their lives.

One of the most familiar passages of Scripture on tithing, Malachi 3:10, links the blessing of God upon his people to their willingness to bring in the tithes. This is not some magic relationship between a ceremony and success but rather the acknowledgment that God is the One who can make the most of life.

Matthew 23:2; Luke 11:42

When Jesus addresses the tithing issue he denounces the Pharisees who see tithing as proof of their personal righteousness while he saw their unrighteousness in their neglect of justice and mercy. To Jesus everything must be understood to be a resource for God to use if a person wanted to “be perfect.” This was his word to the rich ruler, and he was sad that he and all rich men have such difficulty getting into the kingdom of God.

Matthew 19:21ff

It is striking that Jesus addressed the issue of how we use our resources, especially our financial resources, more than any other subject. Jesus did not accept the popular concept, then and now, that only one tenth belongs to God. Jesus insists that everything should be at God’s disposal. We are simply stewards of that which God puts into our hands. The tithe is just the acknowledgment of his Lordship. It does provide “food in my house” as Malachi 3:10 states, but its meaning is much deeper, for the presentation of the tithe is not in the courtyard—the Court of Israel/the Church—but in the holy place.

Proverbs 15:15, 30; 17:22

It is an essential part of the maintenance of our relationship with God to acknowledge his Lordship and to obey his instruction. God must have authority over every purse. The bread on the table was sprinkled with sweet incense, for it is given not reluctantly but eagerly and joyfully with praise and thanksgiving. Such giving is like a feast, and brings joy and healing. God loves a cheerful giver. Ananias and Sapphira discovered the danger of treating giving as a means of self-glorification.

Acts 5:1ff

Refer to Resource 10-9 in the Student Guide.

The Tabernacle—the Holy of Holies

The veil separated the two rooms of the tabernacle. This is the only part of the Temple that was changed by the death of Christ. In the old covenant access to

God was only through the high priest, and then only once a year on the great Day of Atonement. In the new covenant the true High Priest opened the way for all believers to have direct access God.

The ark of the covenant was within this inner room. This was the most glorious of the rooms, lined with the finest of tapestries and filled with the glory of God. In the old covenant the room was remote, barred from access even by the priests. God in his holiness could not be approached without great danger. In the new covenant the Temple is understood to be the believer. God will only live at the core of the believer's life, He will not set up his throne anywhere else. He brings his throne of grace into the core of life along with his values, his authority, and his resources. This is the ark of the covenant.

We have already examined the mercy seat and the contents of the ark, and will be returning to the Law in the next lesson.

Covenant with David

There is another covenant that we need to examine. Yahweh made a covenant with David. God announced that he would establish the house of David—his descendants would rule the people of God forever. When Israel first demanded that Samuel give them a king, Samuel took this as an insult to his own family even though he had to recognize the failings of his sons. They were no better than the sons of Eli. Yahweh stated: "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" (1 Sam 8:7, NRSV). God permitted an earthly king to be the ruler of His people.

Saul failed as king. David was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to take his place. David waited to claim the kingdom until Yahweh removed Saul. He would not lift his hand against the anointed of Yahweh. During this waiting period David acted admirably despite very difficult circumstances. Saul was insanely jealous. But it was not at this time that God made the covenant with David.

Rather the covenant was made

- after David had succeeded to the kingdom and captured the city of Jerusalem and made it his capital
- after he had expanded his influence from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River

1 Samuel 24: 10

- after he had brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, and when he wanted to build a house for Yahweh

God denied him the privilege of building a house, but God promised to make of David an enduring house. This was his covenant with David. God gave to the house of David the privilege of ruling his people.

Tragically, Solomon—the most promising of all David's children—broke the rules of the covenant with kings. David had struggled to unite Judah and the rest of Israel. Solomon's faithlessness tore the kingdom apart. The two kingdoms eventually fell because of continued faithlessness and the rejection of living the covenant.

It appeared that the covenant with the house of David had ended, for the kingdom of Judah was no more. The prophets, however, had introduced a new dimension to the concept of the covenant with David.

Covenant Transformation

Through the centuries the Israelites—as a theocracy, a disorganized rabble, a united kingdom and then as Judah and Israel—failed to keep the covenant. Over and over again Yahweh rescued them from disaster and disciplined them with corrective actions. Israel was the first to suffer the consequences of exile as promised in Deuteronomy. Judah followed a hundred years later.

But the prophets announced that Yahweh was not done with his people. Ezekiel even noted that Yahweh could resurrect dry bones and turn them into a great people. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets declared that the day was coming when Yahweh would establish a new kind of covenant with his people. His would be a covenant that replaced stone with flesh and wrote the law on the tables of the heart.

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares

the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jer 31:31-34).

This became the promise of a qualitatively different relationship with God.

The Covenant with the Church

There is a great wealth of material on the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. The term was applied to prophets, priests, and kings, for all were anointed for their task. The prophets had much to say about the coming Messiah, and they linked the concept to servanthood and to the Davidic dynasty. In Judaism the concept of a messiah who was king of a nation living in a geographical area according to the pattern of David became the dominant concept. Jesus did not fit this concept.

Refer to Resource 10-10 in the Student Guide.

The focus of all of the Gospels is to make clear that the mission of the Christ is to accomplish spiritual salvation, the inner transformation of those who are the people of God. But this Messiah is unique in his relationship to the covenant. Abraham received and accepted a covenant from Yahweh. Moses received a covenant from Yahweh and led Israel in the acceptance of the covenant. David also received a covenant from Yahweh. Jesus did not receive a covenant from God in a vision or by going up a mountain. Jesus made a covenant with his disciples and future believers. Jesus initiated this new covenant. He is the Lord of the covenant.

The Synoptic Gospels all record that Jesus established the new covenant with his disciples when he celebrated a last meal with them at the Passover season the night he was arrested. There are no stipulations made for the covenant, but simply the direction to participate in it and the statement that his blood was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20

In the Gospels the covenant that is dominant is the covenant that makes possible a right relationship with God. In the Book of Acts the old covenant is referred to by Peter when he delivered a sermon in the Temple following the healing of the lame man, and by Steven in his defense before the Sanhedrin.

Acts 3:25; 7:8

The difference between the old covenant and the new covenant is highlighted in Acts by the controversy over circumcision and the affirmation that circumcision is not needed in order for the Gentiles to be a part of the Church. The spiritual meaning of the physical elements

of the covenant comes to the fore. This is even more evident in the letters of the apostle Paul.

Romans 11:25

In Romans he emphasizes that the new covenant, the fulfillment of the purpose of the old covenant, is to take away sins. When he disciplines the Corinthian church over the matter of the Lord's Supper, he reminds them that this is not a feast at which they could be gluttons, but rather it is the symbolic acceptance of the new covenant in the blood of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:25

In his second letter he notes that the new covenant is of the Spirit and not a legal imposition. It is the source of life. Under the old covenant there was no real understanding of what it meant because clarity only comes with the acceptance of Jesus Christ. Paul is not saying that there is no connection between the old and new covenants but rather that the new covenant is the reality that the old covenant symbolized. The life that we receive in Jesus Christ is the life that was intended in the giving of the covenants.

2 Corinthians 3:15-17

Melchizedek held his position not on the basis of inheritance but by appointment. Note remarks on the Amarna tablets.

It is the Book of Hebrews that elaborates the New Testament understanding of the covenant. Jesus, the appointed High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, is priest forever, the firstborn of God. As such he is the guarantee of a better covenant.

Hebrews uses better rather than new, emphasizing the superiority of the covenant that Christ has made over the old covenant that was imperfect because it was symbolic and not the real thing. Jesus not only is the guarantee but also is the One who assists in the maintenance of the covenant instead of the priests, for he is the true High Priest, and he is the sacrifice that provides the blood that really takes away sin.

Hebrews 8 and 9 elaborate this argument.

This is the fulfillment of the promise made through Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to make a new covenant that would be written on the hearts and minds of the faithful. The new covenant makes the old one obsolete. The old covenant had laws and ceremonies that had to be repeated over and over, because the way to God was not yet open. But with the coming of Christ the reality arrives and Christ enters the holy of holies only once, this time with his own blood, and the reality that the ritual represents is completed and does not need to be repeated.

We are offered a covenant that brings life and peace, that establishes righteousness and truth, that enables the transformation of heart and mind so that the Christian life can display the love and the mercy—the

holiness of God. It is an eternal covenant given by “the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20)

Class Activity: Sermon Outlines

(25 minutes)

Prepare an outline for a sermon series based on the covenants. Select texts and describe what you want to accomplish in each sermon.

After 15 minutes exchange your outline with another student.

Write up your comments on the sermon received in the exchange and share them with that student.

Small Groups: Catechism

(10 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.

Refer to Resource 10-11 in the Student Guide.

If you consider that the covenant is an important concept regarding the relationship of Christians to the Lord, what is the best way to bring the issues of the covenant into the catechism?

How would you use covenant to reorganize a catechism? Traditionally the catechism has been a list of intellectual beliefs.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students.

Name one insight from this lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review 1 and 2 Corinthians and James. Prepare theological statements that these books would support.

Read the following section of NDBT: Law, Faith, and Obedience.

You may allow the students to select the sermon to be read or assign half the class to each sermon.

Read **1** of John Wesley's two sermons on the nature and purpose of the Law Resource 10-12 **or** 10-13. Write a 1-page summary/response.

Write: Select an appropriate biblical passage and sketch out the beginnings of a sermon on the subject of the Law and the Christian.

You may allow the students to make their own selection or you can assign.

Preparation for the opening activity: Read the following passages and imagine the setting in which they occurred. Prepare an outline of how you would act out **1** of the pronouncements, in the setting you have imagined.

- Covenant with the Gibeonites—Joshua 9: 1-16; 2 Samuel 21: 1-14
- Establishment of Taxes by Solomon—1 Kings 4: 1-28
- Situations Brought Before the Judge—1 Kings 3: 16-27; Matthew 25: 14-30; Exodus 21: 33—22: 4

Write in your journal. Write a covenant between you and God as you feel led and directed by God.

Lesson 11

Law, Security, and Authority

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Role Playing	Class Activity	Homework
0:30	The Law, Security, and Authority	Lecture	Resources 11-1—11-4
1:05	Sermon Ideas	Small Groups	Homework
1:15	The Law	Lecture	Resources 11-5—11-8
1:45	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Alexander, T.P. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Banks, R. *Jesus and the Law in Synoptic Tradition*. Cambridge: CUP, 1975.

Harrison, R.K. "Law in the Old Testament," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmens Publ. Co., 1979-88.

Lehne, S. *The New covenant in Hebrews*. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990.

McComiskey, T.E. *The Covenantal Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985.

Wright, N.T. *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to share what they learned from the Wesley sermons.

Return homework.

Orientation

In this lesson we will examine the three foundation stones upon which the life of a person in covenant with God needs to be established, and especially how they are interpreted in the writings of the New Testament.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to explain the biblical foundations for understanding the place of Law and the roles of obedience and faith in the Christian life

Lesson Body

Class Activity: Role Playing

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into 3 groups. Each group should represent 1 of the 3 areas from the homework.

Examine the outlines you have prepared and develop a scene for a play from the outlines. Your play should be 2-3 minutes in length.

In 10 minutes each group will present their play to the class.

What are the ways in which Law is created then and now?

Lecture: The Law, Security, and Authority

(35 minutes)

There is a great amount of information for this lecture. You will want to select what would be most helpful to your students.

At the heart of the tabernacle was the ark of the covenant. It represents what covenant living is about. The room where it is located is a place of holiness and glory and also the place from which the love of God—steadfast love, agape love, loving-kindness, mercy—emanates and makes possible the covenant.

Throughout the Old Testament we see how God extends his mercy through discipline and salvation to His people. In the New Testament we see that this seat of love is destined to reside at the heart, the core of the believer. In the Old Testament guidance for covenant life came from the Law, required obedience and implicit trust of life into the hands of God. In the New Testament the principle of Law, love, is enthroned in the believer's life, and obedience and trust are again necessary for the maintenance of the covenant relationship. The three items representing Law, obedience, and trust were placed in the ark of the covenant—the Ten Commandments, the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron. All originate with Yahweh, and all he graciously gives to those who walk with him.

The Law

The terms that are translated as "Law" have a variety of meanings in the Scriptures. In the New Testament the term *nomos* is the word used when speaking of almost all aspects of the Law. It could mean the Laws of the Romans or the rulers of the land, the five books

Refer to Resource 11-1 in the Student Guide.

of Moses—the Torah—or the legal stipulations of the Old Testament whether moral or cultic, or the Laws developed by the rabbis from their understanding of the Torah. The context provides the clues for the correct understanding. It is important to sort out which kind of Law is being spoken of especially when reading Paul's Epistles.

In the Old Testament two words dominate. *Mishpat* is used most often and is usually translated as judgment or Law or statute. *Torah* is used only a little less and usually means the instruction, teaching, or Law of God. It came to mean the first five books of the Old Testament including the narratives. *Torah* is more than decrees; it is guidance that can come from decrees or from observing God's action in the lives of those whose stories are related to us. Three other words are also used: *mitsvah*, *chaqaq*, and *dath*. They usually meant commandment or charge, inscription or decree, and imposing a sentence respectively.

Law in Old Testament and New Testament Times

Incorporate the results of the opening plays into the presentation of the forms of Laws that occur in Scripture.

Law Forms

In the Old Testament we have two different forms used for the presentation of Law. Whenever Laws are written or announced they have to be understandable to the people receiving those Laws. For this reason the forms used in the Old Testament were the forms in which Law was presented in their times. Legislative bodies such as we have today, such as the House of Lords and the Commons in Great Britain, or the Senate and House of Representatives in the United States, just did not exist.

Egyptian pharaohs and Mesopotamian kings had counselors and advisors, but they made the Laws. The Medes and Persians had a somewhat more sophisticated system, the Greeks had their forum and the Romans had the Senate. These were forerunners to our present legislative bodies, but none played any part in the Old Testament society. Throughout the Old Testament dictatorial rulers issued decrees. Some of the best examples of these decrees are found in the Hittite treaties where the requirements are stated as positive or negative decrees—"You shall" or "You shall not." These are called apodictic Law. We see this form of Law in the Ten Commandments. Many of the principles that underlie the legal system of Israel are stated in this form.

There is another type of Law that is more plentiful in the Old Testament. It is in the form of a judgment given by a court of Law. This could be the court of the king or a court held in the gate of the city. The famous Hammurabi Law Code is a record of case Laws from the court of King Hammurabi. It provided guidelines for those hearing cases in other parts of the kingdom. It was Law made by the judge. The most common place for such Laws to be formed was in the gate of the city where the elders of the city would be asked to sit down and consider a case. These are called casuistic Law. When it is written up it takes the form of a conditional statement and a consequential statement often using these words: "If . . . ; then . . ." Much of the Law, and most of the application of principles to life in the Old Testament times is in this common form.

We have an example of the way that justice in the gate works in the last chapter of the Book of Ruth. Boaz stops in the gate and calls upon elders to sit with him in order to witness a case. The flexibility of the levirate Law can be seen in the fact that the genealogy of David does not run through Elimelech but through Boaz. The ruling, however, is not written up, but the judges are the witnesses that the transfer of the shoe that signified the right of ownership was made.

Moral and Cultic Law: The Laws of Creation and Salvation

Refer to Resource 11-2 in the Student Guide.

When one starts to read the Laws you soon become aware that there are some Laws that apply to what happens in the tabernacle or Temple and the practice of the cult. Others apply to the way in which people conduct themselves in society. We call these groups of Laws the cultic and the moral Laws. There is little separation of the two kinds of Law in the Old Testament, for a requirement of the cult was moral behavior.

The New Testament writers did refer to these Laws in different ways. They saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law. He did this by enabling his followers to live according to the moral Law, and by being the perfect fulfillment of all that the cultic Law symbolized. If morality is understood as living according to the intention of God in his act of creation, and if cultic Law is understood as all that pertains to the salvation or restoration of humankind, then we can reclassify them as creation Laws and salvation Laws.

Shalom is a very important concept because it is the result of obedience to the Law. When Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:40) it was because they did not recognize what was needed to have peace and were about to suffer the consequences of that failure.

This distinction helps us to recognize that the proper worship of God is included in the creation intent even though it is also a part of the cult. It also reminds us that the Law of God, whatever the format in which it was presented to humankind, is not the product of some heavenly legislative body but is direction on how to live in *shalom* with creation. *Shalom*, usually translated peace, meaning not stillness but everything being as it was intended to be.

This was the promise of the angels at the birth of Christ and the gift that Jesus gave to his disciples— Luke 2:14, John 14:27. Also when Jesus stated that he came to fulfill the Law he drew the link between Law and creation by tying the end of Law to the end of this present creation—Matthew 5:18.

Salvation or Cultic Law

Refer to Resource 11-3 in the Student Guide.

The Laws that provide salvation for Israel are all a part of the cult, and all were fulfilled by the death of Christ. These salvation Laws no longer needed to be acted out because now the meaning of that which they symbolized was revealed and now Christ needs to be accepted as our salvation. Not all cultic Laws are salvation Laws. Some have to do with the worship of God. We want to look at these Laws and note those cultic Laws that provide us with continuing guidance.

Necessity for Obedience

Abraham received a call to follow Yahweh. He obeyed. Following where God leads is the essence of receiving the gift of salvation. To follow Yahweh he did have to turn his back on the worship patterns of his ancestors, but that does not bring salvation. Salvation comes with turning to God and accepting the fellowship that he offers. In the life of Israel we see a series of events that provided the gift of salvation. These are familiar to us from the Book of Exodus.

God prepared and sent a deliverer—Moses. He interceded on behalf of the people even though the people themselves were reluctant to accept his intercession. They even blamed him for adding to their problems. God demonstrated his overwhelming power over all that humanity considered powerful. The culmination was the selective death of the firstborn of humans and animals throughout Egypt. At this point obedience to the instruction of God was essential, for only those who were in the houses protected by the blood escaped the angel of death. As Jesus said,

“Follow me.” Failure to follow leaves us in the position of refusing to use the only door to God.

Necessity of Remembrance

The Passover, with the sacrifice of the lamb and the protection of the blood, became the memorial of the event. Salvation was available only to those who were under the blood. The annual reenactment of this event was a requirement for Israel. Deliverance was made available by the Passover but was only accomplished when Israel turned their back on Egypt and moved into the unknown with God. Even at this early stage of their new relationship with Yahweh we see the lack of faith and obedience of Israel.

They turned on Moses and Yahweh when they saw themselves trapped by the sea and the pursuing Egyptians. Only God’s *chesed* preserved them and brought them through the sea. They were no longer slaves groaning under the abuse of the Egyptians they were now free but still groaning—now about the hardships of the desert life. The Passover, the Exodus, and the trek to Sinai had made them the people of God, but they had a long way to go to be what God wanted them to become.

Certainly Christians see that the blood of Christ frees from the bondage of sin, for he is the Passover Lamb that was slain for us, but the blood will not avail if we do not turn to him and walk where he leads. Jesus initiated the covenant with the Last Supper that commemorates his death for us, his action of salvation on our behalf. He tells us that we must remember—remind ourselves and bring to the attention of our children—this salvation by the reenactment of the Lord’s Supper.

Luke 22:14ff; 1 Corinthians 11:20ff

The Priesthood

At Sinai, Israel was given instructions on how to live properly, but also a system was established to restore relationships when sin or error occurred. The Levites were chosen as the intermediaries between the people and God, representing the role of the first born son who had responsibility for the family. They had no other responsibilities—no land was given to them, no inheritance except the service of Yahweh.

The head of the Levites was the Aaronic priesthood, led by the high priest, Aaron who was assisted by his sons. They carried the responsibility to take the offerings to the altar, to care for the candlestick, the table, the

The Book of Leviticus outlines many of the duties and rules of the priests and Levites. Exodus records the holy clothing for Aaron and his sons in chapter 28, their washing, anointing with blood upon the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe, and their partaking of the meal of atonement in chapter 29, and the duties in the tabernacle starting in chapter 30.

*Chapters 4 and 5, and 7 and 8
focus on the role of Jesus as the
High Priest. He is called by this title
16 times in the book.*

incense altar, and to sprinkle the blood. Only the high priest could take the blood of the sacrifice into the heart of the tabernacle—the holy of holies. This he did once a year on the great Day of Atonement. The Book of Hebrews presents Jesus as the fulfillment of all that the high priest should be.

Jesus was far superior to the high priest. They and their descendants were chosen to represent the first born, he, the firstborn of God was appointed as Melchizedek was to be priest forever. They had to be cleansed from sin; he is sinless, needing no cleansing. They had to repeat the ceremonies over and over because the sacrifices they presented were simply symbolic; he presented the sacrifice once and for all because he presented the true sacrifice of his own blood.

He not only entered the holy of holies but also did away with the veil that separated God from humanity. The role of the priests was to enable the Israelites to follow Yahweh. The role of Jesus, our Great High Priest, is to enable Christians to walk with God. Although we need no longer go to the priests, for Christ has enabled us to be priests who can enter the holy place, we still have to go to our High Priest to experience the saving and sanctifying blood of the sacrifice he made.

The Sacrifices and Offerings

The priests were responsible to accept the offerings of the people and to present them at the altar. There were a wide variety of offerings.

One of the first was an offering of materials for the building of the tabernacle. It was a commitment by the people to the establishment and maintenance of their relationship with Yahweh. This offering and the offerings of praise and thanksgiving were the normal expressions of the people toward their God but did not relate to restoration from sin and error.

It is also noteworthy that the tithes are not listed as an offering, nor were they sacrificed upon the altar. The loaves placed on the table in the sanctuary as the recognition of God's authority over life represented the tithes.

A study of the various offerings is very complex. Even in the Torah we do not have full explanations of the meanings of all of the names given to the offerings, nor does our English vocabulary have perfect matches for the various Hebrew and Greek terms. Many times

offerings were sacrifices and are called such. At this point let us note simply the following things:

- The fire on the altar was never to be allowed to go out. It was to burn continually before the Lord—Leviticus 6: 12-13. There must never be a time when the sin offering could not be presented. Forgiveness was always available.
- The sin offering was the primary offering, and often accompanied by other offerings like the burnt offering. The sin offering ranged from the sacrifice of bulls, goats, and sheep by the rich, down to turtledoves for the poor and even a tenth of an ephah of flour for the very poor—Leviticus 5: 11. This poor offering was the normal accompaniment of the normal daily sacrifice—Exodus 29: 40—except that oil and incense were excluded because it was a sin offering itself. No one was excluded from presenting an offering.
- Sin offerings were presented whenever a person recognized that they had committed a sin. The distinction between the sin and trespass offerings is not always clear, but the implication is that any wrong deed knowingly done needs a sin offering and unwittingly wrong actions require the sin or trespass offering when a person realizes that it is wrong. Leviticus 4 outlines several such situations. The blood was shed for such wrongs when they were recognized.

Throughout the New Testament Jesus is recognized as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the perfect sin offering and is available to all whenever and wherever humankind would repent—turn from sin and turn to God. He is our sin offering in all cases, and his offering has to be accepted just as the sacrifice had to be brought to the altar. We must not forget that joy and thanksgiving and praise to God, acknowledgment of his holiness, His power and love and greatness need to be a continual part of our worship. There is no need for blood sacrifices, but there is a need for the giving of ourselves in joy and praise to him.

Day of Atonement

The great Day of Atonement was the annual event that took the accumulation of sin known and unknown by the nation and sent it out of the camp. Blood was shed and the high priest carried it into the holy of holies and sprinkled it before the throne of God. This was the act that gave validity to the many sacrifices that had been made throughout the year. On that day no person was

to do any kind of work under penalty of excommunication.

The atonement could not be earned. God gives it. This is the day that the Book of Hebrews focuses upon in its explanation of Jesus as the Great High Priest who enters once and for all into the holy of holies with his own blood. The death of Christ upon the cross is the Day of Atonement for the Church. It is a far greater day than the Old Testament day for on the day Christ died he not only took his blood before God to seek atonement for our sins, he ripped out the barrier and made direct access to God available to all humankind.

Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45

The sacrifice takes place at the altar that is in the court of Israel. The blood is taken into the sanctuary itself by the high priest and sprinkled there to make it clean. Just so we come to the foot of the Cross in the midst of the people of God, but only Jesus himself can penetrate into the heart of the new believer to apply the saving and sanctifying blood. The work of Christ has transformed the Day of Atonement into the Christian festival that begins with Good Friday and its pain and climaxes with the great joy of the Easter resurrection.

The Washing

The washbasin was an important part of the maintenance of the covenant relationship. No priest could enter the sanctuary without washing hands and feet. Sacrifices had to be washed. The dirt of life, even the dirt from the Court of Israel, had to be removed before entrance into the presence of God. The injunction included "lest they die," a most serious warning.

Exodus 30:19, 21

It is dangerous to enter the presence of God without recognizing the need to keep things right with others. Jesus seems to have emphasized this when he told his disciples: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24).

Believers in Christ today still need this washing, this willingness to walk in humility before God, recognizing that the dirt of the world clings to us and can easily be accepted as normal if we do not regularly wash it off. Refusal to wash could mean death for a priest, and refusal to put wrongs right endangers our souls today. Restitution, which is one aspect of washing and of

repentance, is not a popular word or concept in the present era but is an essential for right living with God, our neighbor, and our own lives.

Contamination

Not all of the cultic Laws were related to things that took place in the tabernacle or Temple. A whole group of these Laws related to keeping the body and mind clean and healthy. Those who dealt with the dead, touched diseased people, touched animals that had died in the field, or even had participated in the destruction of a house contaminated by mildew or mold had to go through a decontamination process.

Leviticus 11, 13, 14, 17, and 21 is full of instructions about differing cases.

Maintaining the physical health of the community was important. The decontamination became more vigorous when social structure was threatened. A child who struck a parent or was totally unruly was taken before the elders and killed. Murder was dealt with in the same way. Provision was made for the person who accidentally killed another to live in a city of refuge, but if the man was found guilty, he was to be turned over for execution.

Deuteronomy 21:19ff

Numbers 35:11

Normally the prison was the place where people were held until the trial was settled. Holding people long term in prisons was a luxury that rulers avoided.

It is well to remember that there were no reform schools or remedial education and few prisons available until very recent times. Similar harsh penalties are still in use in some countries.

*Deuteronomy 7 and 8 state this many times.
Deuteronomy 13:6ff*

The harshest, and for us often the most uncomfortable actions were those taken to protect the pollution of the heart and mind. Yahweh warned that if the nation turned to the worship of other gods, the consequences would be disastrous. Any person who promoted the worship of other gods was to be killed.

Deuteronomy 7ff

It was this same concern for protecting Israel from spiritual pollution that is the motivation for the total destruction of the people of Canaan. The danger of the introduction of idolatry through intermarriage with women from Canaan or of close association with people who served such gods could only be stopped by such radical action. Israel failed to carry out these instructions, and history shows their demise and exile.

Haggai 2:11-13

It is in this area that we see great contrast with the new covenant. Haggai relates the rules of contamination under the old covenant very clearly. If you touch or are touched by that which is unclean, the clean becomes unclean. If the holy touches something, it does not make what it touches holy. What a contrast with the New Testament.

With the river of living water flowing from within, the follower of Christ can go into the midst of the unclean and bring that which cleans. The power of the gospel in the kingdom of God transforms those it touches and is not contaminated by their uncleanness. Now we can take blessing wherever we go—to the Gentile, the leper, the sinner or whomever. No longer is it necessary to wrap our robes about us and fear contamination from the world, for the power of God within us, the holy love of God he gives us, not only withstands the contamination but also offers redemption to the unclean.

It is only the presence of the river of living water flowing from within us that enables us today to safely go into unclean situations, and it is absolutely vital that the connection to this source be tended. The message of the true vine in John 15 emphasizes that we must cling tightly to the root, Christ Jesus, or we lose the source of our living water and dry up and become worthless. For the Old Testament worshiper of Yahweh it was important to avoid contact with that which would contaminate the heart and mind. For the New Testament worshiper of the Triune God it is most important to be rooted in the source of life so that when it is necessary—for the proclamation of the gospel, or in the circumstances of living—to contact evil, we do not become contaminated but are able to bring blessing, overcoming evil with good.

Creation or Moral Law

Refer to Resource 11-4 in the Student Guide.

One of the premises for understanding the moral Law is that it arises not from the action of a legislative body, but from the very act of creation. Its foundation is that there is only one God, the God who created the universe and all in it. It is an expression of his character, and his character is love. The summary of the meaning of obedience to the whole Law is, as we have noted several times, to love God with your total being and to love your neighbor as yourself. This is true in the Old and the New Testaments. The moral Law is an expression of this love in the context of creation. Isaiah 40 opens with the poem about the Creator, the One who is limitless in power and knowledge, tireless in pursuit of justice. He is the ultimate Judge and the Giver of life and strength to those who call upon him. His ways are supreme.

Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 9:10

The wise man tells us that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning point for wisdom. To fear Yahweh is to respect and obey his instruction and thus give him his

*Proverbs 14:27; 19:23
Proverbs 15:33; 22:4; 10:27
Proverbs 1:7; 2:5; 15:33*

Psalms 19:9; Proverbs 16:6

Isaiah 11:2-3

Isaiah 33:6

John 4:24

*Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7,26; 1
Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:4; 1
Thessalonians 3:13, 4:7; 2
Timothy 2:21; Titus 1:8; Hebrews
12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:5; 2
Peter 3:11*

Habakkuk 1:4

rightful place in life. The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life that lengthens the life span, the source of wealth and honor, and instruction in knowledge and wisdom. It is pure and everlasting in itself and enables the obedient to avoid evil. The great prophet Isaiah reminds us that the coming Messiah is one who delights in the fear of Yahweh, and that Yahweh himself is our sure foundation and therefore the fear of Yahweh is the key to the rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. All of this emphasizes that the secret to successful living is to follow the instruction that God has given, and the heart of that instruction is the moral Law. Yahweh's moral Law arises from his creative activity. It is living the way that humanity was created to live.

The Ten Commandments are the concise summary of the moral Law. They can be reduced to the two greatest commandments—Love God with all your heart, soul, body, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Those who live in this way are in harmony with God and with creation. This is the true worship of God, worship that arises from the spirit and from truth. This is the way that the love and the holiness of God are expressed through the life of the believer. God insists that his followers must display his holiness, a holiness that is not their own but is given when cleansed by the blood and filled with his Holy Spirit.

Prophets and the Law

The prophets use the word "Law" only 37 times. Their primary emphasis was upon the failure of Israel and her leaders to observe the Law. On the one side Israel and Judah were idolatrous and were roundly condemned. On the other they failed to do justice and indulged in corruption. This was also condemned. Amos cried out: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24).

The Law and justice are bound together and injustice paralyzes the Law. Micah summed up the requirement of God in the magnificent statement: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8). Hosea went so far as to accuse Israel of treating the Torah as "something alien" (Hos 8:12). In his opening chapter Isaiah even tells the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah to listen to the Law of the God of Israel.

*Jeremiah 6: 19; 9: 13; Ezekiel
22: 36
Lamentations 2: 9; Ezekiel 7: 26

Jeremiah 8: 8; Ezekiel 22: 26*

The Law was not just for Israel, it had bearing upon all nations. In the second section of the book he announces: "The Law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations" (Is 51: 4). Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel understood the tragedy that overtook Israel and Judah to be the result of forsaking observance of the Law of God. Again both cry out that the Law is lost to Israel and the leaders of Israel distort the Law for their own ends even to the extent of making false copies of the Law. To the prophets continuation in the blessings of the covenant could only take place when the people were obedient to the Law that God had given to them.

Wisdom and the Law

The Book of Psalms opens with praise for the man whose delight is in the Law of Yahweh and who thinks about the Law day and night. Psalm 19: 7-11 gives a wonderful summary of the Law:

The Law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 119: 165

Proverbs 13: 14

Proverbs 28: 9

Psalm 119 is the lengthy acrostic hymn in praise of the Law. It is the source of wisdom and knowledge, the guide for daily life, strength in the time of confrontation by evil men, and the proper focus of the learner. Breaking the Law leads to destruction, but keeping the Law gives great peace. The Law enables a person to live experiencing right relationships with others. Wisdom literature insists that the Law is the source of life and knowledge. It brings hope and strength. The person who worships God loves his Law for it is the source of guidance, the fountain of life. If a person turns from the Law, then their prayer becomes an abomination.

Jesus and the Law

We have already looked at Jesus' statements on the Law. He was in all things obedient to the Law but also was in conflict with some of the interpretations of the

*Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:22, 27;
Luke 4:36*

Law in his day. When he spoke, it was not to quote rabbinic interpretations of the Law but he spoke with authority. In the Sermon on the Mount he did not declare the Law invalid, but took it to the root of what was spoken about. Murder arises from hatred. Adultery arises from lust. Jesus insisted that the Law must be applied at the root cause in the mind and not just in the action.

Matthew 23:13ff

He was in no way a legalist and strongly denounced those who observed the letter of the Law and not the spirit of the Law. He disagreed with perverted teachings about the Law, such as taking the money that should be used for the care of aged parents and giving it to the Temple.

Matthew 15:3-6

Jesus was also in disagreement over the traditional interpretation of the Sabbath. To him it was not an imposition upon men but rather a gift that would bring blessing to humankind. This was a point of serious tension for the legalistic religious leadership of the Jews and motivated them to kill Jesus.

Mark 2:24-3:6

But Jesus also affirmed that not the smallest part of the Law would be abolished until all was fulfilled and the present heavens and earth were done away. He continued to state that those who taught that the Law could be ignored would be least in the kingdom of heaven, while those who taught that the Law be observed would be great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-19

Clearly Jesus declares that the Law is valuable instruction for life. He himself is never recorded as breaking any of the Torah, although he was rightly accused of breaking some of the traditions of the Jews. His emphasis in speaking of the Law was on the moral or creation aspects of the Law.

Paul and the Law

The apostle Paul goes to great pains to clarify a misunderstanding of the Law by the Jews of his day in, the Book of Romans. It is helpful to keep in mind that Paul had only one Greek word to use whether he was speaking of the Torah, the cultic or salvation law, or the moral or creation related law. The context has to provide an understanding of the law being explained.

Paul makes clear that the observance of the Law cannot accomplish salvation whether you are thinking of observance of the cultic or moral Law. It is God who provides salvation to those who have faith in Him, faith in Jesus Christ. Faith and salvation precede the Law.

This is the point of his argument regarding Abraham, who received the covenant and is counted as righteous because he believed. Abraham preceded Moses and the giving of the Law.

He goes on to insist that the cultic law was a representation of the work of Jesus who is the reality behind that Law. Faith in Jesus is therefore all that is necessary for salvation. God's grace, his *chesed*, is great enough to care for all our sins and we can marvel at it because we can observe the transformation of evil persons into good persons. But God forbid that we should take this as license to break the moral law.

The moral Law is at the heart of the covenant that Jesus makes with us when we believe. It becomes the principle out of which we function in every aspect of our lives. As a Pharisee Paul had believed that he could become righteous by observing the Law, but after he met Christ Paul recognized that Christ is the only one who can make a person righteous. This was a radical reorientation of his life that brought about recognition of the real truth that the Torah held—the instruction that leads us to Christ.

Note Galatians 2: 19-21.

Galatians 3: 24. A good discussion of Paul's emphasis in Romans is in William M. Greathouse, Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness.

Small Groups: Sermon Ideas

(10 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.

In your group share your sermon ideas from the homework assignment.

Work together on illustrations and phrases that might help the sermon starters move closer to complete sermons.

Collect homework.

Lecture: The Law

(30 minutes)

Refer to Resource 11-5 in the Student Guide.

Law and Culture

When we read these ancient Laws we need to recognize that they address the issues of their times. Laws are written to give guidance for real situations. We are familiar with laws that have been in statues and ordinances of some nations for centuries and now have no meaning.

The societal, religious, cultural, economic and technological differences between Biblical times and the present are tremendous. It should not surprise us

that many of the Old Testament laws appear very strange to us. In order to understand what God was teaching his people, we need to understand the laws in *their* setting and not in ours. Then we need to do what Jesus did when he applied the Law—go to the root of what it is talking about. We need to find the principle that is being applied and consider that principle in the context of our society and life today. The moral principles involved will carry through, but the specific injunctions may be irrelevant. For example:

Deuteronomy 22:8

- They were instructed to put a fence around the roof of the house. Of course this does not apply to the sloping roofs we build of grass or tile or shingles today in order to cope with rain and snow. It applies to the flat roofs that are still traditional in that dry part of the world, and on which people did much of their work. The principle is that a homeowner is responsible to provide protection for those on the roof, just as we are responsible to provide protection for those on balconies or other high places. It is the same principle that requires covering a pit that has been dug.

Exodus 21:33

- They were instructed to stone to death a child that was incorrigibly disobedient and disrespectful to his parents. The foundation of stability in society was the family, and a threat to that stability cannot be tolerated. Western societies today have better means of bringing correction to wayward children, but it is no less important today to discipline children and to preserve the integrity of the family. The most radical instructions related to the prevention of contamination are those relating to the extermination of the Canaanites mentioned before, a protection from the contamination of the spirit and mind.

Leviticus 21:18-21; 20:9

- They had elaborate procedures for dealing with those who were diseased or had died. The persons who may have been contaminated by contact with the sick or dead or even a house infected with mold that could not be removed, had to present themselves to the priests and had to follow their instructions regarding washing and quarantine. Such instructions seem strange and meaningless to us today since we have soaps and detergents and fungicides and antibiotics and a myriad of other chemicals and medicines to deal with contamination. Nevertheless it is still essential to protect society from the physical contaminants that endanger life.

Leviticus 11, 13, 14, 15, 17 all have examples of the instructions that a priest must give when faced with various kinds of pollution. They involve washing and staying apart from others for a length of time or even permanently.

One of the important factors that we need to recognize is that the instruction of God—which includes the instructions that Jesus has given us—are not only directives that will enable us to live spiritually, but gives instruction for our relationship to other people and to the world in which we live. God intends for us to be able to do right in every circumstance and situation of life. It is the intention of our Good Shepherd that his sheep experience abundant life, the life of perfect *shalom*. It thus becomes our responsibility to listen to the teacher, the Holy Spirit, who will guide us through scripture into all truth throughout all ages and in all situations.

The Law and the Covenant—The Union of Eternal Values, Eternal Security and Eternal Authority.

Refer to Resource 11-6 in the Student Guide.

The giving of the Law was central to the establishment of the covenant with Israel. It provided the guidance for covenant living. The covenant was made by God and given by his grace to Israel. Acceptance of the covenant meant living in accord with the law of God. It was the handbook, the manual, or the instruction for covenant life. The idea of the covenant was to make life possible, because life is only possible when God is present since God is the source of life and light, knowledge and wisdom, holiness and love. The covenant extends all of these benefits to humankind. Circumcision of all males was the mark of the submission of the followers of Yahweh. The presence of God with his people was symbolized in the ark of the covenant.

Love Everlasting

The ark was the representation of the holiness, the glory, and the power of God, but this also was a declaration that Yahweh's throne as he works among his people is a throne of *chesed*—everlasting love, grace and mercy. What was referred to as the “mercy seat” in the King James Version of the Bible is the *kapporeth*. This word is unique to the ark, but of the same root as the word for atonement.

NIV calls it the atonement cover, for it served as the base upon which the cherubim stood and as the lid for the container. Atonement of sin is the ultimate act of mercy to the sinner and displays the *chesed* that is the steadfast love or mercy of God as nothing else can do.

Joshua 24

Chesed was the force that enabled the covenant to exist in a sinful world among sinful people. Without the mercy seat there could be no atonement, no forgiveness, no repentance, for all have sinned. This is what Joshua meant when he told the Israelites that they could not serve Yahweh. They would break the covenant and the awful penalties of separating from God would fall upon them, but because of Yahweh's merciful character that stands between the sinner and destruction of that which pollutes His holiness, there is hope. Yahweh himself acts in compassionate love to provide a way back.

The throne of mercy rests upon three things that have been placed in the ark:

1. *The Tables of the Law*

The Law is the manual giving guidance on how to live properly. It brings to the fore the values upon which creation is based—love, righteousness, holiness, truth, justice, purity, integrity, responsibility, fellowship, and worship. God, who is the source of all, is the only one to be served and worshiped. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness he refused to bow to the values of Satan and replied "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only' " (Mt 4: 10). Jesus refused to set aside the principles and values of the eternal God in order to have momentary success. We have already discussed Law at some length and will not expand on it here.

2. *The Pot of Manna*

The manna is evidence that God is the provider for all needs of life. God gave water and bread and meat during the wilderness days. The clothes they wore did not decay and their shoes did not wear out. Yahweh made clear that he is the provider of all that is needed. During the conquest of Canaan it was clear that God is the one who gives victory.

Deuteronomy 29:5

The prophets warned the kings over and over that they should not trust in treaties or horses and chariots, but that they should trust in Yahweh, for he is the source of security, the source of life and strength, and the supplier of every need.

Jesus reminded us in the Sermon on the Mount that the secret of having what is needed in life is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. This is the essence of faith. It is the sure confidence that if I place myself in the hands of God, God will accomplish his purpose in and through me.

3. *The Rod of Aaron*

Accepting that someone else is in authority has always been difficult for humankind. We have already looked at the ugly story of Korah's rebellion that led to the placement of the rod in the ark. Rebellion against authority goes back to Adam and Eve. They asserted themselves as the authority over against God. They accepted the serpent's insinuation that God did not have their best interests at heart and made their own decision to violate the Law God had given them. Rulers have an intense problem with authority, for they tend to see themselves as the final authority.

We have some examples in Scripture of leaders who recognized that they were under authority.

- Joseph never lost sight of the fact that God was the ultimate authority.
- Moses was keenly aware that he was under the authority of Yahweh and repeatedly sought the guidance of Yahweh when problems were faced.
- One of the remarkable aspects of David was his submission to the authority of Yahweh. He refused to kill Saul when he had the opportunity, because Saul was the anointed of Yahweh.
- When Satan asked Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple and force God's hand, Jesus replied: "You shall not test the Lord your God." He would not challenge the authority of God.
- Paul, when confronted by the vision and voice from heaven yielded to the authority of Jesus, the very one he had been persecuting.
- The disciples left all—fish, nets, tax office, whatever—and accepted Jesus authority over them.

The guidance of God does not take effect in our lives unless we have faith that God is the almighty and unless we accept that authority, responding in obedience.

These three things—law, sustenance and authority—come from God and are available to us when we become followers of the Lord of lords.

A Pattern for the Christian Life

The tabernacle is a remarkable set of symbols. It was the pattern for the Temple, but Jesus took it as the pattern for himself. He is the perfect meeting place of

Refer to Resource 11-7 in the Student Guide.

John 2: 19ff

God with humankind. Paul reminds us that this is what we are intended to be: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's Temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor 3:16). A closer look at the way in which the tabernacle was used helps us to recognize our proper relationship to God. Here is a summary of the pattern:

Centrality of the Tabernacle

The location of the tabernacle at the center of the camp rather than on some high "sacred" place emphasizes that God wants to be at the center of the life of his people. He refuses to take a peripheral role in life.

Quality of the Tabernacle

The quality of materials and workmanship required emphasizes that God will receive only that which is our best. He is insulted by the giving of leftovers or that which is damaged. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and must be respected as such. At the same time nothing was requested that was not a possession or ability of the people. God does not require "the best" but "our best."

Entrance Requirements

The fact that there is a fence about the courtyard and a gate where entrance can be refused is a reminder that when we come to God it must be either to seek forgiveness by claiming the blood of the Lamb, or because we have already claimed the cleansing of the blood and our hands are clean and our hearts are humble. This has nothing to do with coming through the door of the church but rather applies to membership in the Church, the family of God.

Court of Israel—the Church

A courtyard where Israel could gather surrounded the tabernacle. Later, when the Temple was constructed, additional courts were provided, a court for women and a court for the gentiles. These are not a part of the symbolism. The Court of Israel becomes the court of the New Israel, the believers in Jesus Christ—his Church. Many things happen in the courtyard.

- *Activities in the Courtyard*
This is the place where people came to pray, as Hannah prayed for a son and was given the promise of Samuel. This is where the choirs sang

and the Torah was taught. This is where offerings were brought to give thanks and praise to the Lord. Prophets sometimes preached in the court, and it was where Jesus taught, where babies were dedicated, and people were blessed. Many activities involved in the worship of the Lord took place in this courtyard. The church is the proper place for all such activities.

- *Furniture in the Courtyard*

1. Washbasin

It was recognition that dirt attaches itself even to those who are trying to serve God, and that such dirt needs to be removed.

Perhaps this can best be understood as the need we have today to keep ourselves clean before God and each other. It is not a matter of sin, not even of sins committed in ignorance. This addresses the spirit of humility that recognizes that we made mistakes and blunder and that apologies need to be made and responsibility needs to be taken for that which has happened. Failure to clean up can endanger our spiritual lives. Any tendency of those who have been washed in the blood and filled with the Spirit of God to ignore the mistakes and blunders of life, and treat them as irrelevant is life threatening.

2. Altar

The altar is the central furniture of the courtyard. It is the place where the sacrifice is made and where sin is dealt with by the application of the blood. This was the primary work of the priests.

The New Testament emphasizes that the sacrifice was not some magic act, but a representation of the gift of forgiveness and life through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. This is the central message of the gospel, the primary function of the Church. Jesus has opened the way into the fellowship of the kingdom of God if any person will repent and accept the cleansing of the blood of the Lamb.

The altar together with the washbasin stand within the courtyard as the constant reminder that the primary task of the Church is to help people get right with God and at the same time right with each other and at peace with oneself. Only then can humankind do what

God created us to do—worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The Tabernacle Structure

Refer to Resource 11-8 in the Student Guide.

We have already noted that Jesus referred to himself as the Temple, and that Paul recognized that the believer was supposed to take on the characteristics of the Temple. The symbolism is thus a pattern of what the Christian ought to be. Certainly we do have two rooms in our lives. Psychologists have in modern times made much of the levels of the human psyche. The tragedy of fallen humankind is that the inner room is the seat of all the filth that the individual wishes to conceal, and lacks the glory of the inner room of the tabernacle. But this is not what God intends and God has made possible a transformation of the believer into a proper Temple, fit for the dwelling place of God.

Holy Place

The holy place was the outer room. The priests entered it on a daily basis so that they could tend to the lamp, the incense altar, and the table. These are things that need to be tended in the life of the believer. The apostle Peter in the second chapter of his first Epistle reminds us that believers in Jesus are priests. It is our responsibility to tend to such matters—bringing people to the altar, the foot of the Cross and tending to the affairs of the holy place—the lamp, the golden altar and the table.

Seven-branch lamp stand

These lamps had to be filled with oil twice each day and were never to be permitted to go out. The light must always be burning. The oil was the best of the perfumed olive oil. Both the oil and the fire are symbols often used for the Holy Spirit. The lamp sheds light, and the role of the Spirit is to guide into truth. The lamp thus addresses the need to be taught by the Spirit through the use of Scripture on a continual basis. We do not stop learning and growing in our relationship with God. It is a daily and continual relationship. We must not put out the Spirit either deliberately or through neglect, but must allow its light to shine upon all that we do. This is the gift of life that comes to us, the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit through all of the various means of grace.

Incense Altar

The golden incense altar was kindled twice a day with coals from the brazen altar where the sacrifices were made. The sweet incense filled the holy place throughout the day and night. Symbolically incense has long been recognized as a symbol for prayer—the privilege of talking with God. The privilege is made possible by the sacrifice given on the altar. Without the gift of the Lamb of God there would be no possibility of speaking with God.

But prayer is also the recognition that God is the source of all that we need. It is to Him that we make our petitions, petitions of intercession for the salvation of others, petitions for our daily bread, our daily needs. It is to Him that we give our praise and voice our thanksgiving, for He is the giver of all that is good. We praise and we petition and we listen. Again this is a daily affair, for as Paul reminded us our prayer should be without ceasing. God should be the one with whom we talk about every aspect of our lives.

Table of Showbread

The table was where the bread, made of the offerings and tithes of the worshipers, was placed each week. It was sprinkled with sweet incense. But tithes and offerings, as we have noted previously, are not given because of the need for support of the clergy or the need of the poor or for festivals. Rather they are given in praise and thanksgiving to God and in acknowledgment that we are stewards and God is the owner of everything.

This is something that has to happen in the life of the believer, just as communication with God and the teaching of the Holy Spirit take place in the life of the believer. There needs to be that regular acknowledgment that God is in charge of everything I possess and can have anything that he needs. Acceptance of the authority of God often is most difficult when it comes to finances, but rejection of his authority keeps any person out of the kingdom of God.

Holy of Holies

The inner room was the most glorious of all. In the life of the believer God transforms this place of darkness and deceit into the abode of his glory and light. It should be the Holiest place, the cleanest place, the most beautiful place in a believer's life. What a person thinks in his heart is the real test of character. God would dominate this inner sanctum with his perfect love.

Ark of the Covenant

There is room for only one piece of furniture in the holy of holies and that is the throne of God. Any other throne must be taken out to make room for the King of kings. Self has to go if God is to reign. His presence fills the place and brings it glory and honor. From it flows grace, truth, mercy, and peace. The astonishing fact that God would consent to make humankind his residence; that he would work through our broken mouths and frail bodies; that he would transform our vile heart into his glorious merciful throne room; is simply beyond our understanding. It is the expression of his love and care for us.

Veil of Separation

One aspect of the tabernacle is radically different under the new covenant. The veil is gone. No longer is there a barrier that prevents the believer from standing before the throne of God. Access to God is available to all believers. No longer are there two rooms in life, but they have been transformed into one place, a place with unity and peace, a life lived in Christ and Christ in me.

Salvation and New Life

If this is a picture of what God wants to happen in my life, how does it come about. The New Testament tells us to believe on Jesus Christ. It speaks of salvation, repentance, and forgiveness. Jesus told Nicodemus: "You must be born again." Salvation, repentance, and forgiveness are all effected at the altar. That is where we come to seek release from the sin that binds us.

But the blood that was shed on Calvary is taken into the tabernacle itself and used to cleanse the place. This is the essential step in the transformation of the believer into the Temple of God. This is the new birth, the introduction of spiritual life into our being.

This enables life in Christ to begin with the guidance and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. He can teach us and lead us into all truth, as he wants to do. This personal relationship needs to be cherished and nurtured throughout the day for all of life. The Lamp of the tabernacle is lit.

It also enables us to approach the throne of God for our needs and to offer him our praise and thanksgiving. We can consult with him about every aspect of life and every concern. We recognize that

God is the Creator, the source of all our needs and the one that we want to put first in our lives. The incense is burned upon the altar.

It also means that we recognize that Jesus is Lord and that that means he is in charge of every aspect of life, including what he has placed in the hands of his steward. We tithe and give offerings to acknowledge his authority over us and to express our joy to him. The bread is placed upon the table.

Collectively this is what we are talking about when we talk about getting saved. It is a transformation of the way in which we live, of who guides our thinking and to whom we give our allegiance.

This experience of salvation is the start of a new way of living, and our growth and development in these areas should not cease but should continue throughout life as we learn more of our Lord and his ways. We call this growth in grace.

Inner Transformation

But there is more. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary also rent the veil that separates us from God. The blood not only cleanses the outer room but is carried into the inner room and there works a marvelous transformation. It is no small thing to give God access to that inner room where our secret life is concealed. It is no small thing to allow him to tear out that veil and remove the foul contents of the room, including our personal enthronement of self. But it is only when we allow him access and his blood to cleanse that room, that his throne can be established at the core of life.

That brings about a great inner transformation, for then his *chesed* love, his compassion, mercy, and grace, become the motivation out of which I live my life. His values that gave birth to his Law become the values that I hold. I love the Law of love. His resources that enabled the creation of the universe become the resources upon which I depend. I feast upon the manna. His authority that controls the universe becomes the controlling force in my life and gives me authority to be his witness.

This is what we speak of as sanctification—as the infilling of the Holy Spirit, as receiving Perfect Love, as heart purity—for all of these address that total yieldedness to God that enables the veil to be removed and the throne of God established by the work of the

Holy Spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. When this happens then God is able to really work on making us into his holy Temple.

The Source of Blessing

But why, why would God do this? One day we will know, but now we know only a part. He loves us and he loves all others. Ezekiel gives us a wonderful vision of the blessing that flows from the life of the transformed Temple. The book of this priest speaks much about the Temple, but in the closing section we have the vision of the inspection of the new Temple. It is the Temple of the new covenant.

The evil actions of the priests that brought about the departure of the throne of God from the Temple is related in Ezekiel 8. The inspection of the new Temple is related in the last nine chapters of the book—40-48. It is intriguing that as Ezekiel goes with the man who uses the measuring tools to check the Temple, they measure only one room and not two in the sanctuary itself. The incense altar stands right before the ark.

When it has been thoroughly checked and everything is as it ought to be, Ezekiel witnesses the return of the glory of God to the Temple. When God is present then a river begins to flow. It begins in the Temple itself and grows as it flows bringing fruitfulness, trees of healing and sustenance and life. It transforms the desert and when it reaches the Dead Sea it transforms that sea, giving it life.

The Temple pours forth blessing just as Jesus said: "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14). And again: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (7:37-38).

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(10 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.

In your group develop a series of statements regarding Law, obedience, and faith that could be a part of the catechism. Discuss these as a group.

Revise your catechism to include any statements that you consider are essential for the development of Christian love, obedience, trust, and worship.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to read one of their formulation statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Psalm 4; Mark 6—8; Luke 24; John 17; Acts 3; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 1; 1 Thessalonians; Hebrews 12; 2 Peter 1; 1 John 3. Prepare theological statements these books/passages would support.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Holiness, Love, and Peace.

Assign a third of the class to each of the resources.

Read **1** of the following resources:

- Resource 11-9, "Holiness Overcomes Uncleaness—Mark 6—8"
- Resource 11-10, "Peace Be With You—Psalm 4, Luke 24, Acts 3, Hebrews 12, 1 John 3"
- Resource 11-11, "Growing Love—Philippians 1"

Write a 1-page summary.

Write in your journal. How will you apply what you have learned in this lesson to your life?

Lesson 12

Holiness, Peace, and Love

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Holiness	Lecture	Resource 12-1—12-6
0:40	Scripture Comparison	Small Groups	Resource 12-7
0:55	Sanctification and Servanthood	Lecture	Resource 12-8
1:10	Homework Exchange	Small Groups /Discussion	Homework
1:45	Formulation Statements and Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Greathouse, William M. *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998.

Lyons, George. *Holiness in Everyday Life*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1992.

_____. *More Holiness in Everyday Life*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1997.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to report on key ideas that they learned from their review/reading of Bible passages and NDBT.

Return homework.

Orientation

The Old Testament uses, among other terms, the concepts *shalom*, *chesed*, and *qadosh* to express a growing awareness of the nature of God and His expectation of humankind. These concepts are given even greater meaning in the New Testament by *hagios*, *eirene*, *agape*, and *charis*, among others. An important change between the Testaments is the transition from emphasis upon protecting one's personal holiness to conveying holiness into contaminated life.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to explain what Nazarenes mean by "scriptural holiness"

Lesson Body

Lecture: Holiness

(30 minutes)

The lecture material may be used selectively. You may not have time for everything that is provided. You know your students and what their needs are. Use what is helpful and informative for their needs.

Refer to Resource 12-1 in the Student Guide.

Refer to Resource 12-2 in the Student Guide.

Scriptural Holiness

The biblical meaning of “holiness” is to be discovered by careful study of the Bible itself. We must not forget: Wesleyans recognize four major sources of doctrinal authority: Scripture, Christian tradition, experience, and reason. But we also insist that whatever is not contained in Scripture is not to be made an article of faith. The Bible must be the bedrock foundation for any biblical doctrine of holiness.

Biblical theology distinguishes what the Bible teaches from that which depends on other authorities. We cannot begin with our holiness theology and go to the Bible for proof-texts that seem to support our pet views and still claim to preach “scriptural holiness.” The scriptural doctrine of holiness is to be discovered inductively, not deductively. That is, it must be based on generalizations derived from a wide array of specific biblical passages. It is not legitimate to begin with our doctrinal conclusions and cast about for proof-texts to validate them. By a careful selection and organization of passages, it is possible to claim biblical support for almost any opinion, no matter how true or false.

Cults have demonstrated that it is possible to prove almost anything by this proof-texting approach. We cannot impose our theological conclusions about holiness on the Bible and honestly claim that the Bible is the source of our faith and practice. What the Bible says is not the last word in our theology; it is the first word. What the Bible says must be interpreted and applied. Tradition, experience, and reason will inevitably contribute to our theology, but they must not circumvent the clear teachings of Scripture.

To define “scriptural holiness” we must begin with words. But this is only the beginning. To understand the precise meanings of words, we must study them within their various biblical contexts.

The English words “holiness” and “holy” come from the Germanic—Anglo-Saxon—roots of our language. In old English holiness referred to the state of being “whole” or “healthy.” “Sanctify” and “sanctification” come from

the Romance—Norman-Latin—origins of English. The Latin verb *sancifico* meant “to make sacred,” that is, “to set apart for the service of the gods.”

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the abstract noun *qodesh* is usually translated “holiness.” Its use in contrast to the “profane” or “common” suggests that its essential nature is derived from the sphere of God. Thus, to speak of the “Holy One”—using the adjective *qadosh* as a noun—is to refer to God. The Hebrew verb *qadash* means “to make holy” or “to sanctify.” The temple is called *miqdash*, the “holy place” or “sanctuary.”

Strangely enough, the Hebrew word *qodesh*, from this same word group, refers to male and female temple prostitutes. From the Canaanite perspective, these were priests and priestesses set apart for the worship of the god Baal and his mother-consort Asherah, whom they called “Holiness.” From Israel’s perspective such “holy men and women” in Canaan’s idolatrous fertility religions was far from morally upright. Their “holiness” consisted solely in their total devotion to their perverse gods. Their corrupt morality matched that of the deities whom they served. Given the very different literary contexts of these Hebrew terms, it would be inappropriate to translate them, despite their common origin, with the same English words.

In the New Testament, “holiness” usually translates the Greek word *hagiosmos*. The word *hagiosmos* is derived from the adjective *hagios*, which means “holy.” Thus, holiness is the quality or state of being holy. To be holy is to be “set apart,” “unique.” “Sanctification” translates the Greek word *hagiosyne*. The noun, also derived from *hagios*, refers to the act or process by which one is made to be or recognized as holy.

The plural form of the adjective *hagios* becomes the noun *hagioi*, which we customarily translate “saints.” It obviously refers to “holy people.” Thus, we might translate the verb *hagiazō*—“I saintify” or “I holify.” But standard practice calls for “I sanctify” or “I make holy.”

Scripture refers to God as “holy” for two reasons. The first derives from what theologians identify as his transcendence. That is, he is utterly distinct from his creation. He alone is the Creator; all else that exists is his creation. He is unique; there is only one God. Second, God is uniquely just and loving in his dealings with his creatures. That is, he is holy in his being and behavior. God alone is holy in this underived sense.

People may be holy in the derived sense that they belong to God, the uniquely Holy One. "I am the LORD, who makes you holy" (Ex 31:13; Lev 22:32). "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy . . . I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Lev 11:44-45). "You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own" (20:26). It is expected that God's people will behave in a manner consistent with their special calling to know him and make him known. "Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:15-16).

The sheer number of references in the Bible to "holiness" terminology makes it impossible to survey all of them here. So, how do we proceed? How do we go about establishing a biblical basis for a doctrine of holiness?

Sometimes we Nazarenes have held our distinguishing doctrine up to ridicule because we've preached entire sanctification from inappropriate texts. It is unreasonable to expect that every passage that uses the word "holiness" or "sanctification" should teach every aspect of holiness doctrine or refer to a second work of grace.

Refer to Resource 12-3 in the Student Guide.

Consider John 17:19, for example. Here Jesus' High Priestly Prayer includes the words, "I sanctify myself." No one imagines that Jesus claims to cleanse himself from original sin or fill himself with the Holy Spirit. We do not presume that Jesus' sanctification was a second work of grace, subsequent to his conversion from a life of sin.

- In John 17:19 Jesus' self-sanctification refers negatively to the paradox of being in the world but not of the world (11-14).
- Positively, it refers to his unswerving commitment to the mission for which the Father sent him into the world (3, 8, 18, 23, 25, 26).

Jesus would not avoid the task of making God's love fully known, although it would mean his death on the Cross.

Jesus' prayer for the sanctification of his disciples—and for those who were to believe because of them—in John 17:17 must be understood in this same light. At the very least, "holiness" must involve wholehearted commitment to God's costly redemptive mission—a commitment made on behalf of the people of the world, but without compromise to the world's values.

This passage does not exhaust all the Bible says about “holiness,” but we cannot claim to preach “scriptural holiness” unless we include what it teaches here.

To refuse to preach holiness “where it ain’t” is not to restrict ourselves to those passages in which explicit holiness terminology appears. The essential content of scriptural holiness may be found in substance in passages in which none of these terms appear. This is not simply the view of a holiness partisan.

The terms “holiness” and “sanctification” are noticeably absent from Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Instead it refers to the freedom from the slavery to sin that comes from keeping in step with the Spirit. In a recent book by a leading publisher from the Reformed Tradition, William M. Ramsay writes: “Galatians is not about ‘*justification* by faith,’ as Luther and his followers through the centuries have believed. It is about *sanctification* by faith. It is not about how one gets sins forgiven. It is about how one is to live when that initial forgiveness has been received.”

Refer to Resource 12-4 in the Student Guide..

William M. Ramsay, The Westminster Guide to the Books of the Bible. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, 425.

It is not the terminology, but the meaning of the terms that is decisive. Holiness is a crucial biblical teaching. But it is “the whole tenor of scripture,” not any single passage or any pet interpretation of Scripture, that proclaims scriptural holiness.

If we begin our study of holiness with the Bible, not with anyone’s favorite theology—not ours, not the Baptists’, not the charismatics’—where would we end up? And where in the Bible should we begin? We could begin with Genesis and read through to Revelation. But a concordance may save us some time by pointing out where the terms “holiness,” “sanctify,” “sanctification,” etc., appear in the Bible. This would allow us to see how each of these passages uses these terms in context. But nearly 900 references makes this no simple task.

A quick inspection of the concordance reveals that most New Testament references to holiness terminology are found in the letters of Paul. Of these, the majority of the references to sanctification are in 1 Thessalonians. If terminology proves anything, 1 Thessalonians must be a crucial document in any account of the biblical understanding of holiness. The frequent and explicit holiness terminology in this brief letter is particularly noteworthy. There are more references to “holiness” per square inch here than anywhere else in the entire Bible. Since time does not permit us the luxury of an exhaustive study, 1

Thessalonians seems an appropriate place to begin. And so, without further delay, let us undertake a brief study of holiness in Paul's letter known as 1 Thessalonians.

Entirely Sanctified—1 Thessalonians

The Historical Context of 1 Thessalonians

See 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 5-8; 2:1-14; 3:1-6; Philippians 4:16; and Acts 17:1-10; 18:5.

Sometime around AD 50, during Paul's so-called second missionary journey, the apostle came to Thessalonica accompanied on his visit by his associates Silas and Timothy. Paul describes the circumstances of his visit in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

Paul assigns to God alone the credit for the courage that enabled him to preach under such circumstances (2:2; 1:5; 2:13). And so it was God who was responsible for the remarkable conversions of these pagan Gentiles from their former idolatry (1:9).

We do not know for certain how long Paul ministered among the Thessalonians. It must have been for no less than a few weeks (Acts 17:2), but may have been several months. During his stay Paul plied his trade of tentmaking (1 Thess 2:9). And more than once his generous Philippian church sent him financial assistance to support his mission in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16). He stayed long enough to establish an affectionate relationship of mutual trust with his converts (1 Thess 1:5-7; 2:6-8, 10-12, 19-20), but not long enough to be convinced they were ready to be left on their own when he was forced to leave the city.

The new church in Thessalonica developed quickly and in an exemplary way. But opposition forced Paul to move on prematurely (Acts 17:5-10; 1 Thess 2:17—3:10). How much time passed between his departure and this letter is impossible to know, but it must have been no more than a few weeks or months. Paul writes of the emotional stress surrounding his forced separation from his converts and of his frustrated efforts to return to Thessalonica, which caused him to send Timothy as his envoy (2:17-18; 3:1-5).

Timothy's mission to Thessalonica was a complete success. His return to Paul and his report of their perseverance as Christians is the immediate occasion of Paul's first Thessalonian letter (3:6-10). Paul was overjoyed by the news Timothy brought of the Thessalonians' faithfulness. Although he had nothing but praise for them as Christians, he was still concerned that their faith was somehow deficient. He

sent the letter we know as 1 Thessalonians as a substitute for the face-to-face visit he longed and prayed for. It seems reasonable to presume that he wrote what he would have said had he been there in person.

Refer to Resource 12-5 in the Student Guide.

1 Thessalonians is an occasional letter, written in response to a real-life situation. It is not simply a sent theological treatise. It has all of the usual features of letters written during the Hellenistic age and Paul's other letters, with one exception. Normally Paul offers thanks to God for his readers following his opening salutations, only to move on to other matters at hand. But here thanksgiving seems to be the matter at hand. 1 Thessalonians 1:2 through 3:13 is concerned entirely with thanksgiving to God for the faithfulness of these new Christians. Even when Paul turned to encouragement and exhortation in chapters 4 and 5, Paul's overflowing gratitude for the Thessalonians was obvious.

Paul's letters are not theology textbooks. There are no logically organized sections devoted to such topics as the doctrine of God, anthropology, hamartiology, or soteriology. The theology found in Paul's letters is pastoral and occasional, not systematic. Paul writes as a concerned founding pastor to recent converts who need encouragement. But pastoral theology is real theology. And occasional theology often gives more attention to sanctification. 1 Thessalonians also offers instruction on the important theological topics of divine election and eschatology. Space constraints require that we treat only briefly the latter doctrines.

Election. It is difficult to miss Paul's emphasis on the doctrine of election as he rehearses the impressive evidence of the Thessalonians' call and conversion to Christ (1:4; 2:13). Their faithfulness was all the more impressive because they knew that living as Christians in a hostile environment would not be easy. They knew of Paul's sufferings (2:2). And he had given them fair warning that they, too, would suffer for their faith (3:3-4). Their endurance of suffering made them imitators of Paul and his colleagues, of the churches in Judea, and of the Lord Jesus himself (1:5-6; 2:14). What's more, it made them examples of perseverance for believers elsewhere in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7-10)—both northern and southern Greece.

It is Paul's celebration of these tangible expressions of the Thessalonians' election and vital Christian faith that prompt his three-chapter thanksgiving (1:3).

Among other things (1:5-10; 2:1-16), their faith, hope, and love demonstrate their divine election (1:4).

Paul offered no criticisms of the Thessalonians' Christian conduct, even though they were recent converts from paganism; he offered only praise. He made a special point of encouraging them to continue in the way of life they were already pursuing (4:1, 9-10; 5:11). The Thessalonians' conversions were not at all deficient. They were genuine, even exemplary, Christians.

Yet, despite Paul's confidence in them, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (3:2-5). Paul considered it possible that the Thessalonians, despite God's election and the genuineness of their conversions, might lose their faith and be lost.

Eschatology. Paul's concern that the Thessalonians might lose their faith was not because of the inadequacy of their conversions, but because of the contingency of salvation. Salvation is not only a past event and a present experience but also a future expectation (1:9-10; 5:5-10).

Christians live "between the times." Christ's death in the past makes salvation universally possible. To make salvation individually personal, he invites people to turn from their old lives of sin to the service of God and lives of holiness. Those who accept his invitation in the present already live with him as children of that future day when salvation will be complete. Only then will believers be "forever" with the Lord (4:17). In the meantime, they are called "to live lives worthy of God, who calls [them] into his kingdom and glory" (2:12). Salvation in the fullest sense is a future hope—something we will receive, if we remain faithful in the present.

See 2 Thess 2:13-15.

Paul discusses such aspects of eschatology—the doctrine of "last things"—as the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, and final judgment. But he does not do so merely to satisfy the curiosity of his readers. Eschatology describes the ultimate goal of election—final salvation. God's call to salvation in the past and the prospect of divine judgment in the future are important motivations for holy living in the present.

The doctrine of eschatology is an important reminder that the time for second chances eventually runs out. It is also a reminder that only in heaven is our time of probation past and our destiny sealed so that we may

live forever with the Lord. Those whose doctrine of "Eternal Security" leads them to insist, "Once saved, always saved," are partly right. The problem is: We are not saved in that eschatological sense until we hear the pearly gates click closed behind us.

Holiness. The doctrine of sanctification, as 1 Thessalonians presents it, is intimately related to the doctrines of election and eschatology. God calls believers to lives of holiness as the essential preparation for life in eternity with a holy God. This is clear from Paul's two prayers for the sanctification of the Thessalonians in the letter. Between these two prayers, Paul appeals to the Thessalonians to allow God to sanctify them (3:12-13; 4:1-12; 5:23-24).

Summary

Refer to Resource 12-6 in the Student Guide.

It is impossible to demonstrate all that Holiness churches have said about entire sanctification on the basis of 1 Thessalonians alone. But neither Wesley nor Wesleyans have ever claimed that their theology was based exclusively on this or any other scripture. Experience, tradition, and reason are essential supportive sources of this and every other Christian doctrine. And the Bible has much more to say about holiness than what we find in 1 Thessalonians. But there is much in here that lends support to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification. Although there is much more we could say, this much is obvious on the basis of 1 Thessalonians:

1. Sanctification is something God longs to do in the lives of believers. God calls believers to live holy lives and can be trusted to provide the ability to fulfill what his call requires through his gift of the Holy Spirit. God is not content that pagans simply become believers. He wants them to turn from their old lives to demonstrate their new allegiance to him. God wants believers to be sanctified. Holiness in the present is an essential prerequisite for the glorious future God has planned for his holy people.
2. But sanctification is not automatic, as if God will do it apart from human cooperation and self-discipline. Believers must learn to control themselves. Those who allow God to sanctify them please him and do his will. They stand blameless before him. Those who reject his call to holiness put themselves in line for divine punishment.

If lives of holiness were the inevitable result of Christian conversion, much of 1 Thessalonians would

be unintelligible. Why was Paul concerned that genuinely converted believers might be lost? Why did he send Timothy on his mission to establish the Thessalonians in their faith? Why did he pray for their sanctification? Why did he exhort them to live lives of holiness? Apparently, human choices and commitments are essential conditions of God's ongoing sanctifying work in the lives of believers.

3. A single sanctifying moment will not suffice. Growth in sanctification entails an ongoing process. This requires the continued cooperation of believers, as the repeated exhortations "to do this / so more and more" imply. Paul's prayer that God might sanctify these believers "entirely" cannot be taken to suggest otherwise. The scriptural evidence supports the Wesleyan distinction between sanctification that is initial, entire, and final.
4. The Lord is the source of the continuing "increase and overflow" of love in the lives of sanctified believers. "Most commentators . . . assume from the use of holiness terminology in 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3, 4, 7; 5:23 that a process of sanctification beyond conversion is in view here." This is the hallmark of the life of holiness: growth, maturing, and progress in the Christian life, particularly in love.

David Peterson, Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness, New Studies in Biblical Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 61. Peterson, however, disagrees.

F. F. Bruce (1 & 2 Thessalonians, Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, TX: Word, 1983, 82) correctly observes that "chastity is not the whole of sanctification, but it is an important element in it, and one which had to be specially stressed in the Greco-Roman world of that day." And we might add, in ours as well.

Love is not to be confused with the passionate lust of pagans. In fact, Paul makes a special point of emphasizing that sanctification involves the disciplined exercise of one's sexuality. Clearly love is more than a feeling. To love others is to refuse to use them for selfish ends or to take advantage of them. On the contrary, it involves a commitment to live responsibly in all relationships. Those who know they are unconditionally loved by God, and who have committed their lives completely to him no longer live for themselves alone or according to the values of this pagan world.

Paul proceeds from that theological assumption that the character of Christians is foundationally different from that of pagans because of the character of God. Pagans behave as they do because they do "not know God." Christian morality involves living "a life worthy of God, who calls you" not only "into his kingdom and glory" in the future, but "to holiness" in the present (2:11-12; 4:7, RSV). Paul insists that the God who called Christians also made them worthy of his call and enabled them to fulfill their every good resolve (2 Thess 1:11-13).

5. God's sanctifying activity affects the Christian's entire being—one's "whole spirit, soul and body" (5:23). It involves a "through and through" cleansing of every dimension of life. Sanctification cannot be restricted to inner motives. It expresses itself in tangible outward behavior. It would seem to renovate both the character and conduct of believers. It begins in our hearts, but it must eventually emerge in what we do with our hands. It is not restricted to the religious aspects of human life; Paul emphasizes its counter-cultural transformation of the most secular realm of the ethical life—the sexual behavior of believers.
6. Sanctification is expected to be a reality in the lives of believers prior to Christ's return. The expression "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" should not be taken to suggest that sanctification comes as a result of the second advent or only in the article of death. After all, Paul prays that believers should be "kept blameless" in preparation for the end, not "made blameless" because of it. Paul's prayer must be answered prior to the Second Coming, if entire sanctification is the prerequisite for glorification. Sanctification should be expected in this world and not only in the world to come.

Conclusion. Although we are persuaded that the Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of sanctification coheres with an objective reading of 1 Thessalonians, honesty compels us to admit that other interpretations are possible. Wesleyans need not hesitate to refer to their distinguishing doctrine as "scriptural holiness." It rests on no one biblical book or proof-text, but on the whole tenor of Scripture. Whatever else the message of "scriptural holiness" involves, it must include the challenge of 1 Thessalonians. God expects moral integrity of his people, because he has given his Holy Spirit to enable them to live exemplary, Christlike lives in this world as they prepare for the world to come.

Small Groups: Scripture Comparison

(15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.

Refer to Resource 12-7 in the Student Guide.

Call on the groups to read their versions.

After you have compared and discussed the similarities and the differences of the 4 versions for each passage, write your own version that would speak to today's young adults.

Lecture: Sanctification and Servanthood

(15 minutes)

John 13—16 reports that when the disciples of Jesus were devastated by the news of his approaching death, he comforted them with a promise. He promised not to abandon them, despite his return to the Father. He promised to send them the Holy Spirit as one like himself, to give them strength and courage to continue the work he began. He offered a union of love between himself and his disciples and among all his followers, enabling them truly to be the people of God. He promised them peace. In chapter 17 the discourse changes from promise to prayer.

John allows us to eavesdrop as Jesus faces his holy Father in prayer! Listen in, along with Jesus' most intimate disciples, to his open prayer for all of them, and us. Because the disciples are present when Jesus prays, the prayer is not only intercession but revelation. The prayer reveals the priest's obedience to the Father as it represents the disciples before Him.

Jesus prays on behalf of believers only. But he also prays in the interests of the world. For he prays that Christians may be so united that the world may become believers. Just as he set himself apart for his mission—the salvation of the world, so he prays that we may be set apart for ours. The end of his earthly mission only marked the beginning of the Church's mission.

Christ offers no privilege that is not at the same time a responsibility. He gives us his Spirit, not merely to comfort us. He enables us to live in the union of love, not merely to give us company. He sanctifies us, not merely to share his holiness. Christ commissions us to serve, to complete his work in the world.

Our scripture focus is upon Jesus' High-Priestly Prayer, as John 17 has been known since the 5th century.

Refer to Resource 12-8 in the Student Guide.

Mission Accomplished—17:1-8. The opening section is his prayer for himself (17:1-8). His mission complete, Jesus prays that his Father will glorify him. Clearly the hour of glorification is the event of the Cross (3:14-15; 8:28; 12:30-33; 13:31-32; and 19:30). In the closing verses (17:24-26) He prays that his disciples may share in this glory. Between these sections Jesus intercedes for his disciples and for those who have come to believe in him through their message.

Conserved in the World—17:9-12. Jesus prays exclusively for disciples. They alone have accepted his message and have come to believe that he was sent by the Father to make God known (17:8). This was why he came. So he intercedes for the disciples, that they might be conserved as believers. To pray for the conservation of the world as it is would be unthinkable. Jesus' ultimate concern is that the world, too, might become believers. But this will take place only as believers fulfill their mission in the world (vv 20-23). Thus, Jesus prays for believers only (v 9). He does so, not because He does not love the world, but because He does (John 3:16).

Jesus describes believers as those given him by the Father (v 9). Here he refers to what theologians call prevenient grace. Believers are not merely those from among the world who choose on their own to become Christians. Before we had any thought of God, God was thinking of us. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot keep ourselves. But we can accept God's gracious offer of salvation and obey his word (17:6).

When we accept the gift of salvation, we are set apart from the world as God's property (vv 9-10). As Christians, we belong to God, but we are not translated immediately to heaven. We continue to live in this world. The Christian life is lived out in a human body, not in some disembodied spiritual existence. It is lived out on this planet, not in "Never-never Land." And, unfortunately, the old saying is true, "This world is no friend of grace," or of graced people. Thus, Jesus prays that the Father will protect his property.

In the opening verses of his prayer, Jesus prayed that the Father might glorify the Son (vv 1-8). In verse 10b He suggests that he has already been glorified to a certain extent by the disciples' response of faith to his mission. Believers show the success of his mission. The glory Jesus seeks is not selfish, but the means by which more people will be drawn to believe.

Jesus' earthly sojourn is nearly complete. His death will be the means by which God's glory will be fully revealed. Jesus is about to return to his Father. But the disciples will remain (v 11a). For them to complete their mission, for them to bring glory to Christ, for them to be conserved as believers in the world, would require the Father's protection.

Jesus requests his "Holy Father" to "protect them by the power of [his] name" (v 11b). God's name

represents him, just as Jesus represents him. His name is his revealed character. Thus, Jesus simply asks God to keep believers safe and saved. By addressing God as "Holy Father" Jesus prepares for his further request for the disciples' sanctification in unity with one another. The words "holy" and "sanctify" are related. To sanctify is to make holy or to set apart for holy use. Sanctification is not a "thing." It is a relationship of unity with the Holy One that makes possible a similar relationship with other believers.

At the center of the Christian faith is the conviction that God may be known only by his revelation in Jesus Christ. The Father and Son are one, not in the sense that they are indistinguishable, any more than believers are indistinguishable. The Father and Son are one in that they are both truly God and fully agree on their purposes. Believers are one when they share the same divine mission.

Jesus prays that his Father will continue the protection of the disciples, which Jesus himself had given them during the days of his earthly ministry (v 12). All the disciples had remained faithful with the exception of Judas. Apparently the salvation of the rest of the disciples continues to be in peril. To conserve them, to protect and keep them safe, is to keep them from returning to the world and being lost. Outside the Church, apart from the faithful community, there is no salvation.

In verse 12 Judas is not mentioned by name but is simply identified as "the one doomed to destruction." It is very difficult to explain the next phrase, "so that Scripture would be fulfilled." Was Judas ever truly a disciple? Apparently so. Jesus prays that the others will not become lost like he. Did Judas freely choose to betray Jesus? Was he simply the helpless victim of a prophecy that required one of the disciples to be a betrayer and the fickle finger of fate just happened to fall on him? Was Judas specifically predestined to be the betrayer? John does not answer these questions. Thus, whatever answer we may give must arise from our understanding of the general tenor of scripture, not from this passage.

Protected from the World—17:13-16. In verse 13 as throughout the Last Discourse, Jesus describes His forthcoming death as a going to his Father. He also explains why he allows his disciples to overhear his prayer. The reason is "so that they may have the full measure of [His] joy within them" (v 13). Joy must emerge from within Christians. We cannot expect the

See 13:8, quoting Psalm 41:9.

See 15:11; 16:20-24.

world to give us its approval, if we are truly followers of Jesus. In fact, he says that we can expect the world to hate us (v 14).

Jesus was soon to leave the world to return to his Father. He was in the world, but not of the world (vv 4, 11, 13, 14, 16). But the disciples were remaining in the world, although they were no more of the world than he. To be “in the world” is simply to live on this earth as a human being. To be “of the world” is to live according to the values and standards of the people who have rejected God.

Jesus and his disciples simply didn't fit in. They were square pegs in a round hole, so to speak. They marched to the beat of a different drummer. To so reject the world's ways is to assure rejection by the world. Just as the world hated him, so the world hated his disciples (v 14; 15:18-19). This is another reason for his prayer for their protection.

Jesus prays for the safety of the disciples on this earth, not their escape from it (v 15). The word in Greek translated “the evil one” could refer to Satan or simply to evil. In any case, disciples require protection, not only from Satan, but from his agents—the world's evil people and their evil ways (v 15). The death of Jesus pronounces judgment on Satan (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He is powerless to harm disciples who have God's help (1 Jn 2:13-14).

Sanctified for the World—17:17-19. Jesus wants the disciples not only to be conserved *in* this evil world but also to be committed to change the world for good. He wants them not only protected *from* the world but also sanctified *for* the world. Thus, he turns from prayer for the disciples' protection to prayer for their sanctification.

See 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

See John 1:1-14.

The NIV has “set apart” for sanctified.

The agent of sanctification here is not clearly identified as the Holy Spirit—as so often in the New Testament—but “the truth” (v 17). And who or what is the truth? Jesus' explanation, that God's “word is truth” is of little help. Who or what is this word? It is unlikely that the reference is to the Bible. It could refer to the message of God that Jesus announced and which the Bible reports (vv 6, 14). But a more personal agent seems to be intended. The “word” could refer to Jesus Christ—Logos. Jesus says that he is the truth (14:6). He describes the Paraclete as the Spirit of truth (v 17; 16:13). Ultimately, God is the Sanctifier. He is the One who sanctified Jesus for his mission in the world (10:36).

Jesus prays that God may sanctify the disciples. What does this involve? It is doubtful that the full meaning Holiness people customarily associate with the term “sanctification” can be assumed in this context. For whatever its meaning as applied to Jesus in verse 19 would seem to apply to the disciples in verse 17. Certainly, Jesus does not cleanse himself from inherited depravity nor baptize himself with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, his self-sanctification had as its purpose the sanctification of the disciples (17:19). What then does sanctification mean here?

Negatively, Jesus’ self-sanctification meant obedience literally unto death. For disciples it must mean an end of self-sovereignty. Verse 18 seems to explain sanctification’s positive content. As the Father had sent Jesus into the world, so he had sent the disciples into the world. That is, Jesus gave his disciples the same mission in the world God had given him (20:21). Sanctification seems to refer to being set apart for a holy mission. To be sanctified here is to be committed to doing the work of God in the world and to be made ready to do so. In order to serve the world, disciples must be set apart from the world to belong to God alone. The sanctified community serves best as an inviting alternative to the world, not just a “nicer” imitation of it.

United in Love Before the World—17:20-23. Jesus extends his prayer to include not only the original disciples, but believers of all time (v 20). The ultimate goal of his prayer is not for the disciples’ conservation, protection, and sanctification. These are means to an end. And so is his prayer, for them to be one. He prays that they may be united in God “so that the world may believe that [the Father] sent [Jesus]” (v 21).

The unity of disciples is not man-made. The source and model of their unity is the eternal unity of Father and Son. Jesus gave them the glory that his Father gave him, so that they might be one. The Father indwells him; he indwells them (vv 22-23). In verse 23 Jesus repeats his request in somewhat different words, “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you loved me,” The most important witness—the Church can bear to unbelievers—is the silent witness of loving unity among Christians. Lacking this, our words are worthless.

We would all do well to emphasize the things we hold in common with our fellow Christians and diminish the

things that separate us. But the ultimate goal of Jesus' prayer is not the creation of a superchurch, a single denomination. Ecumenism can tempt us to compromise distinctives that should be preserved. Full unity must await the return of Jesus at the end.

The one great intention of Jesus' prayer is that the Church in the world should remain faithful and grow. His ultimate goal is to increase the number of believers. But for this goal to be achieved the disciples must be conserved, protected, sanctified, and united. Apart from the fulfillment of these prayer requests, the world will continue in its unbelief. We have been commissioned by Christ to serve as Christ served. He prayed for us that we might not only be sustained in our faith but also succeed in our mission. How are we doing, Lord?

Small Groups: Homework Exchange

(35 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each. One student representing each of the 3 resources to be read for homework.

If time permits, have each group report.

Collect homework reports.

In your group read each other's summary papers.

Share with each other the key points of what you read and how they might relate to the summary reports from the other 2 resources.

Individual Work: Formulation Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

You may want the students to share their ideas with each other.

Write statements pertaining to this lesson that can be used in a catechism.

Remember that you will be developing a catechism for different age groups.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on students to read their Formulation Statements for this lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review Matthew 8, Mark 5, Galatians 5—6, 1 Corinthians 5, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 & 2 Peter, and 2 Timothy 3—4. Prepare theological statements that these books/chapters support.

Read from NDBT: Church, Discipline, Humility/Pride, Wisdom, 1 Peter, 2 Peter

Write an essay on this hypothetical situation: The spouse of a member of your church board has just given you credible evidence that this board member has been having an affair with another member of your congregation. Identify the biblical basis for the course of action you would propose to take in dealing with this difficult issue.

Assign half the students to each of the homework resources.

Read **1** of the following resources:

- Resource 12-9, "The Disciple-Ship"
- Resource 12-10, "Disciplined to Discipline"

Write a 1-page summary.

Write in your journal. Reflect on Jesus' High Priestly Prayer as it relates personally to you and your ministry. Is "holiness" just another word in theology or is it the life you live?

[This page intentionally blank]

*Unit 4: The Concepts of Warning,
Evangelism, and Discipline*

Lesson 13

Discipline and Discipleship

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Introduction to Discipline and Discipleship	Lecture	
0:20	Essay Exchange	Small Groups	Homework
0:50	Making Disciples	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 13-1
1:25	Summary Exchange	Small Groups	Homework
1:45	Formulation of Statements/ Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to share some of the insights that they gained from the homework reading.

Return homework.

Orientation

A primary role of the prophets was the warning of leaders and people, urging them to repent and recording the consequent actions taken. The disaster of exile that eventually befell Israel and Judah is presented as the discipline exacted by God for their disobedience. The Old Testament also emphasizes the training of youth in the ways of God.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to offer some biblical guidelines for discipline and discipleship

Lesson Body

Lecture: Introduction to Discipline and Discipleship

(10 minutes)

The biblical concept of discipline covers a broad range of meanings. It may refer to the training/education required to know God and to do the right thing. Or, it may refer to the reprimand/punishment for failing to do so. Thus, this lesson inevitably overlaps with the subject matter of both Lessons 10 and 14.

The familiar Hebrew term *torah*, normally translated “law,” actually means “instruction.” Thus, in the OT discipline is an aspect of the covenantal relationship between God and his people. OT discipline generally has the character of parental discipline, motivated by love and intended to form the character of the children—with God as the parent and Israel as the child.

See Joshua 7.

In the early part of the OT period, discipline was generally conceived as a corporate experience, affecting the entire community. The sin of Achan brought the death penalty to his entire family. The Ten Commandments insisted that the punishment for rejecting God for idols would extend to the third and fourth generations.

See Exodus 20:4-6.

See 2 Samuel 11—13.

David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the arranged murder of her husband proved to be disastrous not only for David but also for 4 of his children. The Deuteronomist presents this divine discipline as the fulfillment of David’s own pronouncement of judgment.

See 2 Samuel 12:5-6.

Similarly, the loss of nationhood and the resulting exile of Israel and Judah are presented as corporate judgments upon both nations for their failure to comply with the terms of the covenant they freely agreed to accept.

See Deut 29—30; 2 Kings 17; 24:20.

See Amos 7.

The prophets’ characteristic message was an announcement of impending judgment on the nation for their refusal to repent and return to God. Amos quarreled with God about the severity of Israel’s judgment until he realized that the disaster that was about to befall them was an inevitable consequence of their self-destructive choices. Habakkuk questioned God about the justice of his use of a wicked nation like

Babylon to bring judgment on Judah. The prophets anguish over the righteous individuals who seem unjustly victimized by the historical judgment of the nation as a whole.

Although contemporary Christians are similarly troubled by the apparent unfairness of corporate discipline, it does have certain advantages. It opens a redemptive possibility and provides a signal warning to the remnant of the nation that survives, of their need to repent, an opportunity unavailable to those who are its victims. Isaiah 40—55 recognizes the redemptive potential of undeserved suffering. Only the eternal disciplinary suffering of hell seems to have no redemptive purpose.

See Ez 18; Jer 31:27-34.

See 1 Cor 11:27-32.

By the 5th century BC, however, the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah, speaking for God, announced a new covenant based upon the principle of personal responsibility for one's own sins. This is the dominant emphasis of the NT, although the corporate dimension remains.

See Matthew 16:24.

"Disciple" is a common designation of the followers of Jesus. They are learners/apprentices who have accepted the discipline of denying themselves to follow him. Hebrews 12 presents the suffering that accompanies discipleship as divine discipline intended to be redemptive and to form our character as children of God. The NT assumes that the Christian community will assume the responsibility of disciplining its members for the good of both the individuals and the Church.

Delivered to Become a Disciple—Mark 5

The story of the exorcism of Legion follows the stilling of the storm in Mark. Jesus' boat landed in the Gentile territory of the Gerasenes. There he was met by a demon possessed man who assumed the posture of worship and correctly acknowledged that Jesus was the "Son of the Most High God." But he also begged Jesus to leave him alone (5:6-7). By telling the story of Legion as he does, Mark reminds us that even religion can be demonized. It seems that religious people sometimes imagine that, if they correctly identify Jesus, he will not meddle in their lives.

Whether modern readers conclude that Legion's symptoms were due to cruel demonic forces, chemical or physical disorders in his brain, or complex psycho-emotional causes, Jesus' miraculous cure of the man is truly striking. Jesus did not ask the man to believe nor

was he put off by the man's pleas to be left alone in his misery. Jesus asked the man only for his name, for a confession of the source of his bondage.

Despite the miserable failure of all previous attempts to tame the man, Jesus succeeded in transforming him. Jesus did not merely confine him—he converted him. Jesus did not drive him away—he drove away the source of his problems. Jesus did not further bind him—he freed him from his bondage. Jesus took one who was chronically mentally deranged, whom no one before had been able to contain much less cure, and completely transformed him. And yet these mighty deeds were not enough to arouse faith in those who insisted on proof.

We can only guess why the townspeople asked Jesus to leave. We have less difficulty understanding why the miracle-man begged to go along with Jesus.

But Jesus refused Legion's request. Obviously, there is no stereotyped definition of discipleship. Earlier in Mark, four fishermen were called to leave their families (1:16-20). Here, a man is sent home to his family against his wishes. Discipleship is never on our terms. It is not self-fulfillment. Followers of Jesus must surrender to his sovereign authority in their lives.

Discipleship is not about me, but about how the Good News can best be passed on to others. I cannot tell you precisely what becoming and living as a disciple may involve for you, except for this—it will demand the surrender of your way for his. But it is only in the center of God's will that there is freedom from the insanity of sin and the freedom to love others, not just to lock them up or to drive them away.

Small Groups: Essay Exchange

(30 minutes)

Divide the class into pairs and have them exchange the essays that they wrote on discipline.

You are to read and mark each other's essay on dealing with a board member who is having an affair. Mark those places where you disagree with the other's conclusions and explain why in writing. Mark what you consider important insights and explain why in writing.

Allow about 20 minutes for this.

Return the marked papers with your comments. Prepare a written response to the critique.

Call the class together and discuss what they learned. Compile a list of the biblical passages that emerged as the most important resources.

Collect homework.

Resource 12-10 makes the statement: The “sinful nature” is not a thing, although it really exists. But it exists as a reality by virtue of a distorted relationship between the flesh and the Spirit.

Let’s take a moment to illustrate this.

To illustrate this point, ask the students to fold their hands and place them in their laps. Then, invite them to stand up and again fold their hands and place them in their laps.

Be prepared for smiles as they realize they can’t do it while standing.

A lap is real, but it exists only for those who are seated. It is the result of a particular relationship between our legs and the trunks of our bodies. If you were to sit down again, your laps would suddenly reappear.

The analogy of the lap may be applied to the Christian life. God has put us into a right relationship with himself—put us on our feet, so to speak. And he has called us to walk in the Spirit (Rom 8: 1-17). As long as we do so, our “lap” does not exist. Sit down again and there it is as before.

The power of sin—the so-called “carnal nature”—from which we have been set free is no more a “thing” than is a lap. But its reality is just as undeniable. But in an upright relationship with God, we are free to fall in step with the Spirit or sit back down in the mire from which we were raised.

Perhaps this illustration offers the most satisfactory answer possible for the perennial question, “How can entirely sanctified Christians, who have been cleansed from inward sin, come under its power again?”

The answer is simply that this “sin” is not a thing, like a rotten tooth that can be extracted and disposed of. This “sin” exists as a distorted relationship with God. It exists whenever someone surrenders sovereignty of himself or herself to anything other than God. The ever-present threat of sin’s return exists by virtue of the inescapable fact that we cannot get away from ourselves.

Lecture/Discussion: Making Disciples

(35 minutes)

2 Timothy 3 and 4

How is the Christian faith to be transmitted from one generation to the next? As Paul faced the inevitability of his death, he prepared his young successor to continue his mission. He urged Timothy, "Guard the good treasure entrusted to you. . . . And what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well" (2 Tim. 1:14; 2:2, NRSV). What can we learn from Paul's attempt to preserve the legacy of the past and adapt it to the demands of the future?

2 Timothy 3:10-17 is in many ways a summary of the entire letter up to this point. It stresses again Paul's long friendship with Timothy, his model of faithfulness, the inevitability of suffering, his appeal for Timothy to remain faithful, and his need to confront the false teachers. This serves as the basis for Paul's final appeal in 2 Timothy 4:1-8. If Paul's message was to survive into the next generation, Timothy would have to take up the baton and continue the race.

See 1:3—3:9.

See 1:6 and 3:14.

Refer to Resource 13-1 in the Student Guide.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 urges the younger generation to learn from two reliable external sources:

- First, the godly examples of Christians of the previous generation (3:10-13; cf. 1:8-13; 2:9-10)
- Second, the application of the message of Scripture to life (3:14-17)

Without inner personal resolve these authorities will not be enough. Thus, if the Christian gospel is to survive the perversions of false teachers, faithful preachers must keep at the task no matter what (4:1-5). And they must remain loyal to their trust to the end (vv 6-8).

Learn from Worthy Examples (3:10-13)

Paul sent Timothy to the Philippians with this recommendation: No one was as much like himself as Timothy (Phil 2:20). "As a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel" (Phil 2:22). Paul had earlier sent Timothy to Corinth with similar praise. "I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 4:17).

Thus, in 2 Timothy 3:10 Paul could say to his young disciple, "You . . . know all about" me. Timothy knew Paul from close, personal observation: The content of his "teaching." The conduct that was his "way of life." The life "purpose" to which Paul had committed himself—that he lived by the cardinal triad of Christian virtues: "faith, patience [in hope, and] love" (v 10). And he knew the "persecutions" and "sufferings" Paul had endured and how the Lord had spared his life through them all (v 11).

Timothy knew that even as Paul wrote this letter, he was suffering for faithfully preaching the gospel (1:11-12). He had noted Paul's earlier appeal, "Do not be ashamed . . . But join with me in suffering for the gospel" (v 8). "I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day" (v 12). Paul was convinced that God could be trusted. But as he faced death, his concern was that Timothy should be just as trustworthy. "Guard" what I have "entrusted to you" (v 14).

Also, 1 Thess 3:3-4; Rom 8:14-17.

Paul offered Timothy no optimistic fantasy that following his example would be easy. On the contrary he warned, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12). False teachers seem to have chosen the easier path; they are not only deceivers, they are deceived (v 13). The path of "suffering" leads to "eternal glory" (2:9-10).

It is not for comfort or convenience that one becomes and remains a Christian disciple. 2 Timothy 3:14-15 offers two reasons for remaining faithful to one's calling. The first reason is "because you know those from whom you learned it" (v 14). This points back to the godly example of Paul in verses 10-13. But it must also refer to the "sincere faith" of Timothy's "grandmother Lois and . . . mother Eunice" (1:5).

The legacy of the older generation is preserved for the younger by learning from their worthy examples. There is much to be gained by reading the biographies of Christian saints of a bygone day. But better still to cultivate an intimate friendship with a saint closer at hand. Would that a saint could recommend us as Paul did Timothy.

But no person, however saintly, should be blindly followed. Saints are not "gurus" but rather mentors and models. Paul insists, "Follow my example, *as I follow the example of Christ*" (1 Cor 11:1, italics added).

Apply the Scriptures to Life (3:14-17)

Paul gave Timothy a second reason for continuing in the path of discipleship. It is because “from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures” (v 15, NKJV). The books we call the Old Testament were the only Scriptures available to the Early Church. It was not long, however, before Christians began to read Paul’s letters and the four Gospels with “the other Scriptures” (2 Pet 3:16).

See 2 Pet 1:20-22.

Paul does not recommend learning Scripture for its own sake. We are to study with one goal in mind. “The holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ” (2 Tim 3:15). The point of the affirmation in 2 Timothy 3:16 is not to prove that “all Scripture is God-breathed.” The divine inspiration of the Bible was uniformly taken for granted by Jews and early Christians who read it. The ambiguous Greek phrase might be translated, “All Scripture inspired by God is also useful.” In any case, this is the point of the passage.

Our focus should be on the usefulness of Scripture. It is “useful” because God inspired it. And it is “useful” in theory and practice, in both positive and negative ways. *Positively*, it is a source of normative “teaching” and the authority for “training in righteousness.” Scripture teaches us what we should believe and disciplines us as to how we should behave (1 Tim 4:6, 13, 16; 6:3; Titus 2:12). *Negatively*, Scripture is useful for “rebuking” false teaching and “correcting” wrong conduct (see 2 Tim 4:1-5). As a result of attending to Scripture, Christians are made completely adequate to the task of doing what is morally right (3:17; 2:21; Titus 1:16; 3:1).

The legacy of Paul, the other apostles, and the inspired writers of the Old Testament is enshrined in the Christian Scriptures. The Bible functions as the “constitution” of the Church. If Christianity is to be passed on faithfully across the generations, each generation must attend anew to these foundational documents. They do not come with contemporary interpretations and applications attached. The call for Timothy and his successors to “continue in what you have learned” does not require the mindless appropriation of the practices or interpretations of the past. You are to “continue in what you . . . have become convinced” is true (3:14).

Persevere in the Difficult Task (4:1-5)

In light of the exemplary models of the saints and the emphatic mandates of Scripture, Paul leaves us with five solemn charges. It is not upon his apostolic authority alone that he makes these pleas. It is to the Judge of the universe that we will finally answer for how we build on the foundation of the past. We cannot be untrustworthy “in view of” Judgment Day, when Christ’s “appearing” establishes God’s eternal “kingdom” (4:1).

See 1 Cor 3:10-17.

See 1 Tim 6:11-16; Titus 2:11-13.

Paul left Timothy with five charges (v 2) especially relevant for those who are called to “preach the Word” (v 2) or to “do the work an evangelist” (v 5), as Timothy was. Each of us must “discharge all the duties of [our] ministry” (v 5). Thus, the **first** charge is to proclaim the message (v 2, NRSV). **Second**, we must be prepared (NIV) and persistent (NRSV). We must keep at whatever task God has given us. We must be on stand by, available to fulfill our assignment, whether or not it is convenient (v 2). The third, fourth, and fifth charges refer back to the uses of Scripture in 3:16. We are **third** to correct (NIV) and convince (NRSV); **fourth**, to rebuke; and **fifth**, to encourage. Because of the urgency of these charges, we are to fulfill them “with great patience and careful instruction” (v 2).

See Titus 1:13; 2:15.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 explains why Timothy—and we—must be firmly resolved. The task will be difficult. It may entail “hardship” (v 5). The reason for the charges in verses 1-2 is the opposition of the false teachers of “the last days” (3:1-9). Our task is made more difficult because many so-called Christians have an appetite for unwholesome teaching. They crave doctrinal “junk food”—teaching “to suit their own desires” (Phil 3:17-21; Heb 5:11-14; 1 Cor 3:1-4). They seek out teachers and preachers willing to satisfy their appetite for the new and sensational.

Doctrinal junk food—teachings, programs, or literature that sounds good and is currently popular, but has no depth or does not require one to really examine his or her life and make changes.

Stay Faithful to the End (4:6-8)

Paul’s valedictory address is reminiscent of the words of the risen Christ to the church at Smyrna: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10, NRSV).

Paul had been pouring out his life as a living sacrifice to God for more than three decades (Rom 12:1-2; Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6). He must have known that his departure for “home” from the Mamertine prison would be by way of the executioner’s ax. But as he reflected

on his ministry, he saw not defeat, but only victory ahead.

His ministry, for all its struggles, had been an exhilarating athletic contest. Far from being disqualified, his leg of the marathon-relay was nearly complete. He had been loyal to his trust. He had only to await the recognition of the One whose opinion alone mattered—"the Lord, the righteous judge." But the heavenly prize was "not only" for him. It is for "all who have longed for [Christ's] appearing" (4:8). But first we must run our laps in the race.

Paul held the baton with outstretched arm. The outcome of the race was soon to be in Timothy's hands.

Look over your shoulder, young Christian, the older generation is approaching us faster than we think. The faith has been passed along for nearly two millennia. You must take the baton and pass it on. You can't blow it now!

You may not have time to discuss all of the questions. Select those most beneficial for your group.

Allow for discussion and response. Challenge the students to think and support their responses.

Can you think of other ways to help assure that the Christian faith is successfully transmitted across the generations?

Are you in an accountable, intimate relationship with an older or more mature Christian? If not, why not? If not now, when?

What are you doing to guard what has been entrusted to you?

Discuss the dangers of treating exemplary Christians as "gurus."

What difference does it make that Paul's canon of Scripture was both larger (plus the Apocrypha) and smaller (minus the New Testament) than ours?

How do we avoid the futile Fundamentalist "battle" over the nature of inspiration while maintaining a high view of Scripture? Is it possible to be on the right side of the "battle" and miss the point—unswerving allegiance to the biblical faith? How do we avoid turning the Bible into a "paper pope"?

Consider:

- *word of God (lowercase w) refers to the Bible—a tool for instruction and inspiration*
- *Word of God (capital w) refers to Logos, Son of God—to be worshiped*

Discuss the dangers of failing to appreciate the fact that the Bible must be interpreted and applied in ever new contexts. Can you give some examples of failing to recognize this dynamic dimension to the authority of Scripture? What of the danger of going to the opposite

extreme and neglecting the timeless norms espoused in the Bible?

What are the benefits of living with an awareness that we must face judgment for our actions? What are the potential dangers?

Discuss the apparent epidemic of Christian craving for doctrinal "junk food." Are you a "junk food junkie" in this sense?

How are you doing in the race? Is your head lifted up, looking with expectation for Christ's coming? Are you losing your grip on the faith? Is your zeal for the contest growing dim? Are you looking for ways to assure that you pass the baton successfully to the next generation?

What hope can you offer those who seem to have blown it? Whose children seem lost to Christ and the Church at present? Who have let down their guard and have poorly modeled the faith? Do you know any good resurrection stories?

Small Groups: Summary Exchange

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2 students each. One student for each of the assigned resources to be read and summarized.

In your group read each other's summary of the assigned resource. Ask each other questions. Learn from each other.

Discuss what points were present in all of the readings.

What were the distinct points of each?

What were the key ideas that will impact your ministry?

Call the groups together to report on their discussion.

Collect the summary papers.

Individual Work: Formulation of Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

From the discussion that you had in your groups, the reading that you have done, and the material presented in this lesson, write out 6 to 10 formulation statements that could be used in creating a catechism.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on the students to read at least 1 of their statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review biblical passages: Psalm 37, 49, 73; Matthew 13, 25; Luke 16; 2 Thessalonians; Revelation 16—22. Prepare theological statements that these passages would support.

Read the following sections in *NDBT*: Apostasy, Death and Resurrection, Eschatology, Evil, Hardening, Hell, and Judgment.

Do a biblical concordance study on the concepts of hell, eternal damnation, divine wrath, judgment, etc. Summarize your results in a 3-page essay. Your essay should give some attention to these questions: Why does the OT mention nothing about postmortem judgment? Why are there no references to hell in Paul's letters?

Assign a third of the class to each of these resources.

Read **1** of the following resources

- Resource 13-2, "Judgment Day Separates"
- Resource 13-3, "Judgment is Reversal"
- Resource 13-4, "In the Judgment Evil Is Eternally Destroyed"

Write a 1-page summary.

Be prepared to discuss the advisability or inadvisability of preaching on the subject of eternal damnation to a modern audience, AND the problem of undeserved suffering.

Write in your journal. Reflect on the difference between discipline and punishment. Who are the people in your life that have positively shaped you by their discipline and holding you accountable? Have you ever thanked them?

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 14

When Humans Go Too Far

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	When Humans Go Too Far	Lecture	Resource 14-1
0:25	Homework Summaries	Small Groups	Homework
0:45	Judgment Is the Feast of Consequences	Lecture	Resource 14-2—14-4
1:10	Homework Essays	Small Groups	Homework
1:30	Preaching Judgment and Suffering	Guided Discussion	
1:45	Formulation of Statements/ Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Crenshaw, James L. "Theodicy" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992, 6: 444-47.

Dixon, Larry. *The Other Side of the Good News: Confronting Contemporary Challenges to Jesus' Teaching on Hell*. Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1992.

Guthrie, Donald. "The Future" in *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981, 790-892.

Johnston, Philip S. *Shades of Sheol: Death and the Afterlife in the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.

Ladd, George Eldon. "Eschatology" in *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, 193-210, 298-308, 550-68.

Ladd, George Eldon. "Judgment" in *The Last Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 87-102.

Purkiser, W.T., Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. "The Divine Judgment," "Beyond the Judgment," and "The Collapse of Evil" in *God, Man, and Salvation: A Biblical Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977, 658-68.

Turner, Alice K. *The History of Hell*. San Diego: Harcourt & Brace, 1995.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on students to report what they learned from the reading of NDBT.

Return homework.

Orientation

Despite the unimaginable patience of God, the Bible insists that even he has his limits. Eventually, destruction comes as the inevitable consequence of humanity's stubborn impenitence in a universe governed by a just God. But in the meantime, the Bible recognizes that the evil actions of individuals and nations have far-reaching consequences that adversely affect far more than the perpetrators of the evil. As a result, even good people suffer and die. Biblical authors are not content to resign themselves to the cynical reality: Life is not fair. They insist that God will right all wrongs. They appeal to a wide spectrum of explanations of precisely how he will do so. The most prominent biblical solution to the problem of evil in the NT involves a retributive judgment—with hell the punishment of the wicked and heaven the reward of the righteous. This lesson focuses its attention on the dark side; Lesson 19, on the bright side.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- offer some biblical insight as to the fate of the finally impenitent and the special problems this presents for Wesleyans
- articulate examples of the Bible's approach to theodicy

Lesson Body

Lecture: When Humans Go Too Far

(15 minutes)

Lesson 14 overlaps considerably with Lessons 13 and 15. You would do well to review both before you teach.

See the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees.

The only clear reference to resurrection in the OT.

Theodicy—a system of natural theology aimed at seeking to vindicate divine justice in allowing evil to exist

Refer to Resource 14-1 in the Student Guide.

See Luke 1:46-55.

One role Scripture consistently assigns to God is that of Judge. In a world of fallen, sinful creatures, life is seldom fair. Psalmists fret over the injustice of the righteous suffering while the evil prosper. But they take heart in the fact that God is the Judge. Job struggles to make sense of his undeserved suffering, but finds hope in postmortem vindication by his redeemer (Job 19:25).

During the second century BC, observant Jews were martyred while renegades prospered by the decrees of the wicked Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes making the practice of Judaism a capital crime. It was during this era that Jews first entertained the notion of resurrection from the dead—some “to everlasting life,” and others “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2) as a solution to the problem of theodicy.

The conviction that God is the Judge of the entire world is one basis for the Christian hope that injustice will one day be dealt with fairly and finally. Scores will be settled equitably. The tables will be turned right side up at last. Those who were persecuted for doing right will finally receive the reward they deserve. And their evil persecutors will find themselves the victims of the torments they meted out on others.

Biblical redemption always has a negative counterpart. When Israel was freed from slavery in Egypt, the Egyptians lost their slaves. Mary reflects a truth affirmed throughout Scripture in the so-called Magnificat: God exalts the humble by scattering the proud, lifts the lowly by bringing down the powerful, and fills the hungry by sending the rich away empty. Her son makes the same point when he insists that those who would be great must become the servant of all, that those who save their lives will lose them, that the last will be first, etc.

As the Creator of the universe, God is ultimately responsible for all that exists. Some earlier biblical traditions, unconcerned for secondary causes, seem willing to make God the source of human misfortune—the mute, deaf, and blind are so because of God’s decree (Ex 4:11). Evil spirits (2 Sam 16:14-23; 18:10;

19:9) and temptation (2 Sam 24) are incited by the Lord. But later biblical authors cautiously distance God from evil by appealing to intermediate causes (see 1 Chr 21; Jas 1:12-16). Others are content to insist that evil and suffering may become the occasion for calling attention to God's ability to redeem, save, heal, and transform (Gen 50:20; Jn 9:1-3).

**Evil and Good Exist Side-by-Side—for Now:
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

You might suggest that the students open their Bibles to this passage as you talk about it.

The parable of the tares illustrates the relationship between the present and the coming final judgment. A good parable, like a good joke, is ruined if any explanation is necessary. If a parable fails to illustrate, it is not a good parable. Unfortunately, because we were not part of Jesus' original audience, we do not take for granted the same things they did. *We* need some explanation, if *we* are to "get it."

Matthew reports that on the same day Jesus spoke this parable, he had faced bitter opposition from the scribes and Pharisees. They explained his exorcisms as due to the power of Beelzebul (Mt 12:24). By means of parables Jesus pointed out the absurdity of such a division in Satan's kingdom, before assuring them that if his exorcisms were, on the other hand, the work of God's Spirit, "then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (v 28). "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (v 30).

In the late first/early second century AD Christian writing known as the Didache, the metaphor of gathering is used to refer to the future bringing of the Church into God's eternal Kingdom.

The attitude one takes toward Jesus will be decisive for their treatment in the age to come. He calls for a clear distinction between good and evil. On the Day of Judgment, evil people are to be condemned for their evil, while good people will be justified (vv 34-36). Jesus indicts sign seeking, predicting judgment based on his audience's response to him (vv 38-42). Those who are rightly related to him do the will of God (vv 46-50).

The parable of the sower told earlier in the chapter calls Jesus' friends and foes alike to self-examination (13:1-9): "He who has ears, let him hear." This is not just a good story. Its implications must be taken seriously. Jesus next deals more specifically with those who gather with him in Mark 4:26-29 and with those "who scatter against him" in Matthew 13:24-30.

The Kingdom is not compared to a man, but to either the experience of "a man who sowed good seed" or to the resulting situation—the harvest. Good seed refers to seed that is healthy and free from contamination.

Good seed should produce a harvest relatively free of weeds. "Weeds" probably refers to tares, the bearded darnel or mock wheat, which resembles wheat in its earlier stages of growth but clearly reveals its true character at harvesttime.

The enemy literally is identified as those who hate the owner of the field. In the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, it refers to the enemies of Israel. We might have expected to see the term "evil one" instead of "enemy," as in Jesus' explanation of the parable (13:38). But as Jesus observed in Matthew 10:36, one's enemies are sometimes those of one's own household.

Similar expressions occur in noncanonical apocalypses such as Levi 10:2; 2 Baruch 13:3; 27:15; Enoch 1:3-9; 2 Esdras [4 Ezra] 7:36.

The expression in 13:39, "the end of the age/world," is peculiar to Matthew among the Synoptic Gospels. The expression coincides well with the popular understanding of the harvest as the initiation of the New Age.

The abstract noun "scandals"—causes of sin—is used here to refer concretely to those who cause others to sin. They scandalize others, potentially causing their spiritual ruin. The cursed are those who not only sin themselves but also cause others to do so.

Matthew 13:43 quotes Daniel 12:3, where "they will shine" metaphorically refers to the sun emerging from behind the clouds. In this present age of darkness, the distinction between good and evil people is clouded. The true character of both is not obvious until the judgment (1 Jn 2:28—3:3).

The parable is primarily a warning against premature weeding, if we ignore its allegorical interpretation. If the field is the Church, the wheat refers to true believers. And the weeds are sinners within the Church. The command to "let both grow together until harvest" is a prohibition against judging sinners—perhaps warning against excommunication. But this is clearly not the main point in the interpretation in 13:36-43.

Jesus insisted that in his ministry the kingdom of God had come. Many of his followers had heard the message of John: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2, RSV). John had warned those who claimed to be children of Abraham, yet did not bear the befitting fruit, that the Kingdom for them meant impending judgment, not good news. It would entail their separation from the righteous, and their final destruction (vv 7-12).

If we take the interpretation seriously, this parable repeats John's warning, but with the added note that the time of judgment has been delayed. With the coming of Jesus, the end times have dawned, but the God ordained moment for the separation of the just and unjust has not arrived. Opportunity to repent remains (Lk 13:6-9). The Kingdom is present, but not complete—it is here, but not fully here.

The main point of the parable is that the reign of God becomes absolute only at the time of harvest—after the last judgment. In the meantime, discordant elements are present within God's kingdom. The insurgency against the rightful ruler continues. The kingdom of Jesus, the preacher of repentance, continues until his return as Judge. Only then will the reign of God be total and all opposition silenced.

In the meantime, the followers of Jesus must be patient. We need to avoid the simple equation of the kingdom of God with the Christian Church. The Church, like the world, presently contains both bad and good people. The parable warns disciples against false security. But it is more than a warning; it is an invitation. Jesus invites all who will hear to become a part of the Kingdom, to do the will of God now.

Jesus' high priestly prayer identifies his followers as "not of the world," before he petitions: "Keep them from the evil one" (Jn 17:14-15, KJV).

Allow for response.

Since the end of the age is coming, what are the practical implications for Christians who expect to enter into eternal bliss?

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness" (2 Pet 3:11, RSV).

Small Groups: Homework Summaries

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students—1 representing each of the 3 resources to be read for homework.

In your groups read each other's summaries of the resource that they read. Ask each other questions. Learn from each other. Look for areas where your readings agreed or made similar points. Look for areas where there might be differences.

If time permits, ask the groups to report.

Collect homework papers.

Lecture: Judgment Is the Feast of Consequences

(25 minutes)

Have the students turn to this passage in their Bibles.

Refer to Resource 14-2 in the Student Guide.

See 11:18.

See 7:9-10.

Revelation 19

Revelation 17:1—19:21, in which Rome is described as a great prostitute, judged for seducing people to worship the emperor; provides the context for understanding this passage. The victory songs of Revelation 19:1-4 celebrate the judgment of this new “Babylon.”

Revelation 19:5-21 develops in greater detail the theme announced by the seventh trumpet in 11:15-19—God’s universal sovereignty. In chapter 11 the 24 elders sang hymns announcing the time to reward the faithful and punish the wicked. Here, the faithful join this chorus. Their reward consists of an invitation to attend the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. In stark contrast, the punishment of the wicked consists in a quite different, grizzly feast in which they are the menu (19:11). By this means the destroyers of the earth are destroyed.

The Wedding Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-10)

John heard a great multitude singing in response to the invitation of the 24 elders to praise God. This huge crowd must be the innumerable throng of the redeemed. Revelation 19:6-8 is the victory song of “all” God’s servants “both small and great.” The tumultuous song of the redeemed overpowered all other sounds.

The shout of the crowd began with the Hebrew call to worship, “Hallelujah!” That is, “Let us praise Yahweh!” This call, frequent in the Psalms, appears only in Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 in the NT. The reason for this summons to praise was because our Lord God Almighty reigns. “The reign of the Lord . . . has begun” (NJB).

The song of praise continued with three self-summons to praise God. First, Let us rejoice. Second, Let us be glad. Third, Let us give God glory.

The basis for the summons is described from two perspectives.

- First, “the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb” (GNB; 19:9). The Lamb, of course, is John’s favorite designation for Christ.

- Second, his Bride has made herself ready. The imagery of the Church as the “bride of Christ” appears also in Matthew 22:1-14; Mark 2:19-20; 2 Corinthians 11:2; and Ephesians 5:22-32. Old Testament prophets used the metaphor of marriage to describe the covenant relationship between God and his people (Hos 2:16-22; Is 54:5-6; 62:5; Jer 2:2; Eze 16:6-14).

The bride’s readiness was symbolized by her wedding dress (Rev 19:8). It is described as “dazzling white linen” (NJB). In the Old Testament clean garments symbolized holiness (Gen 35:2; Isa 52:1; 61:10; Zech 3:4; Rev 3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 14). Her wedding gown was given her to wear. The Church’s holiness is a gift Christ made possible by his saving death (7:14). And yet fine linen also represents the righteous acts of the saints. These are the “good deeds” (GNB) “done by God’s holy people” (NCV). Christian holiness is a gift that must be preserved by lives of obedience to Christ. But even obedience is possible only because of God’s extravagant grace.

John’s imagery is fluid. The gown is both Christ’s wedding gift and the deeds his people do (Eph 2:8-10; Phil 2:12-13). So also the Church is both the Bride and the invited guests (19:9).

An angel has repeatedly been the interpreter of John’s visions (19:9; cf. 1:1; 10:8-10; 17:1, 3, 7, 15). Here he pronounces the fourth beatitude of the book of Revelation. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! (Rev 1:3; 14:13; Lk 14:15). The “invited” guests are the Lamb’s “called, chosen and faithful followers” (Rev 17:14).

The “wedding supper” is the “meal” (NCV) that celebrates the union of Christ and his Church. In biblical imagery the banquet frequently symbolizes the reign of God. Revelation never states when the marriage, much less the “wedding supper,” takes place. This much is certain. The Church anticipates this meal whenever it partakes of the Lord’s Supper.

See Isa 25:6; Mt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 14:15-24; 22:28-30.

The angel’s message concludes with a paraphrase of the Hebrew “Amen.” He confirms the reliability of God’s promises in the visions of chapters 12—19: “These words of God are true” (NJB).

In response to this affirmation, John “bowed down at the angel’s feet” (19:10, NCV). He was about “to worship him,” when the angel warned, “Do not do it!” Angels, as mere fellow-creatures of humans—not gods,

See Col 2:18; Heb 1:5-14.

were not to be worshiped. Idolatry was a danger even within the Church's worship. The angel was, like John, a fellow servant of the one true God. Faithful humans and angels share in common the testimony of Jesus. That is, both possess and preserve "the truth that Jesus revealed" (12:17, GNB). This is the call to *worship God* alone.

The reason for the angel's call was because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. It is not clear whether the testimony is "about Jesus" (NCV) or what "Jesus revealed" (GNB). In either case it is "the essence of prophecy" (NLT). What the Spirit inspired was nothing more or other than "the testimony of Jesus." Genuine prophecy pointed people to the revelation of God in Christ. Its concern was not speculation about the future or preoccupation with heavenly revealers. It was an invitation to worship God alone.

The Feast of God's Judgment (Rev 19:17-21)

Refer to Resource 14-3 in the Student Guide.

See 14:14-20; 16:12-16; 17:12-14.

Revelation 19:11-21 announces the fate of those who steadfastly refuse to worship God. It describes the Second Coming using imagery borrowed from Ezekiel's vision of the defeat of Gog and Magog (chapters 38—39). Despite the imagery, Revelation reports no battle. The Second Coming only completes the victory begun at the Cross. The self-sacrificing love of the Lamb inevitably defeats all the forces of evil. The "final battle" concluded before it began.

John betrayed no interest in vengeance or violence. The punishment of the wicked was necessary if God was to establish justice in the world. But neither God nor John delighted in judgment. And yet John knew there could be no salvation apart from God's judgment of evil.

Revelation 19:17-18 issues an invitation to a quite different grizzly banquet of the consequences of rebellion against God. It visualizes judgment as the self-destructiveness of evil.

See Matthew 10:32-33; 11:21-22; 12:41-42.

Revelation's picture of Jesus as Judge is not incompatible with the Jesus of the Gospels. He insisted that future salvation or damnation depended upon a person's response to his appeal to accept the good news of God's kingdom. Those who refused God's saving rule did so to their loss. Because the human response to Jesus is decisive for salvation, he is the Judge. The prospect of judgment was good news to John's readers. It assured them that God would

destroy the destroyers of the earth (11:18), thus making this earth a fit place for his saving reign.

John's vision turned to another angel standing "in the sun" (19:17). This angel cried in a loud voice to all the birds "flying high in the sky" (19:17, NLT). In contrast to the invitation to the banquet of salvation announced in verse 9, the call of this angel is to a gruesome funeral banquet. "Come, gather together for the great supper of God." The invited guests are vultures and the menu is carrion—carcasses of the vanquished foes of God. This crass imagery is borrowed from Ezekiel 39:17-20.

The purpose of the invitation is so that scavengers might dispose of the flesh, literally "fleshes"—the corpses, of God's enemies (19:18; see 19:21; 17:16). These included kings (see 1:5; 17:2; 18:3), human rulers opposed to God. Also included were their generals, warriors, and cavalry—horses and their riders. Ordinary citizens—all people, free and slave, small and great—unimportant and important—were also among the victims of judgment. Christ brings an end to all rebellion against God.

Revelation 17:17 has already announced the conclusion of the final battle against the beast and the false prophet described in the remaining verses. "The Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings" (19:19). Joined with these arch-enemies of Christ are those whose doom was announced in verses 17-18: the kings of the earth and their armies.

See 1:5; 17:2, 12-14; 18:3.

"The beast" embodied all the forces and powers who presumed to usurp the sovereignty that belonged to God alone. John's first readers almost certainly identified him with the Roman Empire and its emperor. But later generations of readers have not been mistaken in seeing the beast in similar anti-God pretenders.

According to Revelation 16:16 the final battle occurs at "the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." But this must certainly symbolize Golgotha. For before the final battle begins Christ's garment is "a robe dipped in blood" (19:13; see Isa 63:1-3). This is not the blood of his vanquished foes, but his own blood (see Rev 1:5-7; 9:9-10). The decisive battle was fought and won by the Lamb on the Cross.

Refer to Resource 14-4 in the Student Guide.

The first result of Christ's victory is the capture of the beast and the false prophet (19:20). This "false

See Rev 13; 14; 16; and 17.

See 16: 14; 20: 10.

prophet” is the one who performed miracles on the beast’s behalf. Revelation 13: 11-14 described him as “another beast,” who looked “like a lamb, but . . . spoke like a dragon.” He encouraged the idolatrous worship of the beast. John’s original readers must have understood these references as pointing to the Asian priesthood that promoted emperor worship.

See 2 Thess 2: 9-12.

“The false prophet” embodied all the deceptive signs and wonders of false religion. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The deluded masses of John’s day worshiped the Roman Emperor. But behind him stood the more sinister reality—“the Dragon.”

Both “the beast” and “the false prophet” were human agents of Satan. The “beast” might represent anything that demands the ultimate allegiance that God alone deserves. And the “false prophet” would represent false religion or perverse value systems and social structures that turn people away from the worship of God to idolatry in any of its forms.

See Rev 14: 10; 20: 10, 14-15; 21: 8; cf. Dan 7: 11.

These agents of Satan were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This “lake of fire which burns with brimstone” (NASB) must refer to what is popularly called “hell.” “Two members of the evil satanic trinity are thus eliminated;” only the dragon remains (see ch 20).

See Rev 1: 16; 2: 12, 16; 19: 15; cf. Isa 49: 2.

See 19: 19.

Christ’s only weapon was the sword that came out of his mouth. This again suggests that the war he waged was the “battle” for human allegiance. John assured his readers of the certain triumph of Christ over all opposition.

This grizzly imagery graphically reminded John’s readers of the self-destructiveness of evil. Modern readers might think instead of cancer. This dreaded disease exists by destroying its host in a process that inevitably brings about its own destruction. So it is with evil.

Small Groups: Homework Essays

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into pairs.

Read each other’s essays from your concordance study. Mark places where you feel that statements are clear and well-documented. Mark places where you disagree or find difficult to follow. Write out reasons for your markings.

Write out a response to the critique that was given.

Discuss what you learned from each other.

Collect the homework papers.

Guided Discussion: Preaching Judgment and Suffering

(15 minutes)

Allow for discussion.

Challenge the students to go deeper than easy answers.

Have you ever preached a sermon on eternal damnation? Why? Why not?

What makes it difficult in this present time—especially to the younger generation—to preach damnation?

Are we missing something?

Is there a better approach?

How do you handle the problem of undeserved suffering?

Have you had personal experience that you would be willing to share?

Individual Work: Formulation of Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

Write down 6 to 10 statements that can be added to your catechism statements concerning the information that you have learned from your reading, discussions, and lectures from this lesson.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to read their formulation statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Genesis 37—50; 1 Kings 8; Jonah; Psalm 137; Matthew 5—7; 27:3-8; John 21; Acts 6; and Revelation 2—3. Prepare theological statements that these books/chapters would support.

Read the following sections in NCBT: Apostasy; Compassion; Forgiveness and Reconciliation; Mercy; Repentance.

Search the Internet, collections of illustrations, and classic literature—such as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*—for stories of the transforming power of forgiveness, divine and human, that seem to shed light on biblical theology. Summarize several such stories and bring them with you to class next time.

Write in your journal. Listen to the “Hallelujah Chorus” by Handel. Reflect on all that you feel as you listen.

Lesson 15

Forgive and Forgiven

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Forgive and Forgiveness	Lecture	Resources 15-1—15-7
0:30	Stories of Forgiveness	Small Groups	
0:45	Old and New Testament Forgiveness	Lecture	Resource 15-8 Resource 15-9
1:15	Bible Study	Small Groups	Resource 15-10
1:45	Formulation of Statements and Catechism	Writing	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Baum, G., and H. Wells (eds). *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

Behm, J., and W. Würthwein. "Forgiveness," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol 4, 975-1008.

Derrett, J.D.M. *Law in the New Testament*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970.

Goppelt, L. *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981.

Martin, R. *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989.

Snaith, Norman H. *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*. London: Epworth Press, 1944.

Taylor, V. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. London: Macmillan, 1948.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

In pairs have the students read each other's work.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

This lesson concentrates upon the gift of forgiveness through the mercy of God, the necessity to accept responsibility for one's own actions—and those of his or her people—the link between our forgiveness of others and the forgiveness we receive from God. The role of repentance, confession and restitution in leading to forgiveness and its goal of reconciliation are also examined. Vengeance and judgment are noted as the prerogative of the all-knowing God.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to summarize the Bible's theology of forgiveness, divine and human

Lesson Body

Lecture: Forgive and Forgiveness

(20 minutes)

Refer to Resource 15-1 in the Student Guide.

Forgiveness is one of the central concepts in the Bible. Salvation is only possible because God in his mercy is willing to forgive the sinner. "Forgive" and "forgiveness" are words that do not occur nearly as frequently as you would expect given the importance of the concept to Scripture. One of the main reasons for this is that in the Old Testament in particular forgiveness usually occurs in the context of the mercy—the love or *chesed*—of God. Forgiveness is not talked about or theorized about nearly as much as it is reported in the accounts of the life of God's people. We want to explore first the vocabulary of forgiveness and then look at the Old and New Testament laws relating to forgiveness. Most of our time will be given to the exploration and discussion of the stories that help us to understand the very nature of forgiveness.

One evidence of the complexity of the word problem is that the three words translated as "forgive" or "forgiveness" in the Old Testament are rendered by a score of Greek words in the Septuagint. The same words and their cognates are translated in other ways as well. A variety of words are used to express the concept.

Forgiveness is the action of the one who has been wronged. Mercy is the prerequisite for the granting of forgiveness. Repentance is the prerequisite required of the wrongdoer. Restitution and confession are the actions that validate true repentance. Reconciliation is the result of the granting of forgiveness. We will look briefly at some of the words used in Scripture to present these terms.

The words that we are going to look at can be explored in detail in Rudolf Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and Botterwick's *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*.

Refer to Resource 15-2 in the Student Guide.

Forgive, Pardon, and Forgiveness

There are four roots in Hebrew that are translated as "forgive" or "forgiveness." The most common of these—*nasa*, "lift away"; *salach*, "send away or let go"; and *machah*, "wipe away or erase"—have as their

common concept separating the fault or sin from the person who has sinned by the person sinned against. This is the role of sacrifice given at the altar. In Isaiah 25: 18 we read that the day will come when God will wipe away all tears. Forgiveness is granted to those who repent.

The word *kaphar* is also used for “forgive,” and it brings to our attention the aspect of covering the sin, making it disappear. When sin is forgiven, it is covered. The first occurrence of this is the covering that God makes for Adam and Eve after they have sinned. The covering that they attempted to make for themselves was inadequate, so God made a covering for them. The covering provides protection from the danger that the exposed sin would bring. This aspect of the protection God provides from the consequences of our actions is seen

- when God covers Moses with his hand as he passes by to keep him from death by exposure to the holiness of God (Ex 33:22)
- when we are covered by his wings, a favorite concept of the psalmists (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; etc)
- in the tenth plague of Egypt (Ex 12:13) and in the New Testament when we are covered by the blood

The New Testament shares this dual aspect of forgiveness with words that indicate the removal or destruction of sin—*apoluo*, “let go away”; *aphiemi*, “send away”; and *exaleipho*, wipe away—in the first case and by using *charizomai*, “being gracious to” in the second. Sin is removed, but it is removed because God extends his grace and mercy to the sinner. Only the offended party can give forgiveness.

Aphiemi is the word used in the Lord's Prayer.

Mercy and Grace

God forgives because He is loving and merciful. Four Hebrew words are often translated as “mercy” or “love” and are used to emphasize this aspect of God’s character.

- *Ahab* is the most common root used for love or affection, and God loves his people and his people love him. It describes the affection and concern that one person has for another.
- *Chesed* is the most important word for us in this context, for it is the merciful love that is based in the covenant. It is the desire to assist the person at fault to return to and remain in the blessings of the covenant relationship. It is essentially the manifestation of a forgiving spirit. It is willing to set aside or rectify the wrongs done so that the relationship can be re-established and continue.

Refer to Resource 15-3 in the Student Guide.

- *Chanan* expresses the extension of graciousness toward the offender. This is the most common translation of the word.
- *Racham* is a word that can be translated in a variety of ways. The root is associated with the womb and has sometimes been linked to the change of the name of Abram to Abraham. It carries the meaning of compassion as well as love, mercy, or even pity. The root is also used for a maiden.

In the Greek New Testament text

- *Oiktirmon*, simply means mercy or tender mercy. It is the extension of clemency toward the offender.
- *Eleeo*, is also used to express compassion for or extending mercy to another.
- *Charis*, is the word most often used for the extension of the grace of God to others. It is given freely by God and can be secured in no other way. It is a gift.
- *Ayapao*, is the most common verb used to speak of love being poured out upon another person. It is not extended only to those who are following God, but is extended to all persons, including all of us who have offended God. It is the basis for granting mercy.

Refer to Resource 15-4 in the Student Guide.

Repent and Repentance

The Hebrew word *nacham* is sometimes used for the penitent person. It carries with it the concept of being comforted or relieved of a burden. It is addressing the release that comes when one is truly repentant. The primary word for repentance is *shub*. This basically means a change of direction. The sinner is heading the wrong way and when he or she repents he or she turns toward God and salvation. The real emphasis of repentance is turning toward God.

Of course this means also turning away from evil, but there is only regret, not repentance, if a person only turns from evil. Psalm 23:3 make use of this word usually used for "repent" when it states, "He restores my soul," indicating that the Good Shepherd gives back the soul. It highlights the fact that repentance is positive, not negative.

The Greek terms used in the New Testament further elucidate this. *Metamelomai*, is the kind of "repentance" that Judas had after he betrayed Jesus and is best translated as remorse. The end result of such remorse is not salvation, but in his case was despair that led to suicide. *Metanoeo*, is the word most

frequently used for “repentance” and implies that the repentant has had a total change of mind. The direction of their thinking has shifted from the value system of the world to the value system of the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:5 is one of the best expressions of this new direction.

Refer to Resource 15-5 in the Student Guide.

Restitution

Restitution, the rectifying of the wrong done whenever that is possible, is an action that always accompanies true repentance.

- The Hebrew word *temurah*, usually translated as restore, is rooted in the concept of exchanging for something of equal or greater value. Most of the time the Law indicated that thieves had to give back double value of what they had taken. Even negligent persons were responsible for damages that they had caused and had to restore the value.
- *Shalom* shares its root with the word for peace, *shalom*, and carries the meaning of restoring to the way that things ought to be. Peace is understood not as quietness but as the state of rightness. There is peace when everything is as it ought to be.
- We have noted above that *shub*, is used in Psalm 23, not for humankind returning what was taken or setting right what they did wrong, but as God returning humankind to the state that they ought to enjoy.

In all of this there is not the implication that restitution brings about forgiveness, but rather that a refusal to set things right indicates that repentance has not taken place and forgiveness has been rejected by the one to whom it is offered. Forgiveness is accompanied by the effort by both parties to bring things back to the way they ought to be.

In the New Testament

- *Apodidomai*, which means to give back, is the one used by Zacchaeus when he commits to returning that which he has seized. He commits to a fourfold restitution, twice the amount that was considered proper for thievery. This is evidence that he was truly wanting to set things right. Jesus noted that salvation had come to his house.
- Other words such as *apokatastasis*, and *apokathistemi*, often translated as “restore” are usually used in connection with physical healing
- *Katartidzo* is the word that Paul uses when he reminds Christians that we have a responsibility to restore a fallen brother to a healthy spiritual state (Gal 6:1).

Luke 19:8, cf Exodus 22:4ff

Refer to Resource 15-6 in the Student Guide.

Sixteen occurrences of confession in relation to sins committed and 41 occurrences of praising God. The various forms of the root, *halal*, are the ones used the most for praise.

Confess

The other aspect of the repentance that accompanies forgiveness is confession. In Leviticus 5 we read that the person who has sinned must make confession, acknowledgment of that sin, before they can present a sacrifice for atonement and forgiveness. It is not possible to secure forgiveness for a sin that is not acknowledged. It is interesting that the only Old Testament word for confess, *yadah*, is used much more frequently in connection with praising God.

This probably is because the root is connected to the root for hand, *yad*, and both confession and praise appear to have been related to raising up the hands. In the New Testament the words *homologeo*, and *exomologeo*, are used to express the same relationship between confession and forgiveness. One of the clearest statements is in 1 John 1:9-10: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." Refusal to recognize the fact that we are sinners makes it impossible to receive forgiveness.

Romans 10:9-10: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved," helps us to see the link that is made between trust in God, acknowledgment of who God is, and our forgiveness that results in our salvation. It also reveals that the speaking out about God's character, the praise of God, is an integral part of salvation. The emphasis in this case is not on confession of sins committed but on the public recognition that Jesus is Lord.

Refer to Resource 15-7 in the Student Guide.

Reconciliation

The goal of forgiveness is the restoration of the relationship that we should have with God and with others—the establishment of true *shalom*, true peace. This is expressed by the concept of reconciliation—being brought back into the right kind of relationship. The concept is strong in both Testaments.

In the Old Testament

- *kaphar*, to conceal or atone
- *ratsah*, to make pleasing
- *chata*, offering for sin

With the exception of *ratsah*, the emphasis is upon covering up that which is offensive in order to make possible restoration of the relationship. The blood of the sacrifice accomplishes the covering. *Ratsah* is used when the Philistines refuse to allow David to participate in the final battle with Saul for fear that he would take that opportunity to kill Philistines in order to regain Saul's favor, or reconcile himself to Saul (1 Sam 29:4).

In the New Testament the words

- *Apokatallatto*, *katallasso*, and *diallattomai*, all carry the meaning of transformation. The blood of Christ accomplishes this transformation.
- The word *ilaskomai*, used in Hebrews for the work of the high priest carries much the same meaning as the Old Testament words.

What we see in the New Testament is recognition of the real transformation of the person who has been forgiven that accomplishes through repentant turning to God a restoration of the relationship humankind should have with God.

Small Groups: Stories of Forgiveness

(15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each.

In your group share with each other the best forgiveness story that you know. It may be a personal experience, or from a friend or family member.

What Bible passage best relates to the story?

Lecture: Old and New Testament Forgiveness

(30 minutes)

Now that we have noted the various terms that impact the concept of forgiveness that brings about reconciliation we want to see what we can learn from a variety of instances in scripture where forgiveness takes place.

Refer to Resource 15-8 in the Student Guide.

Old Testament Instructions and Pleas

Forgiveness for Sins Committed

Leviticus 4 lists a variety of instances where sacrifices for atonement are made and following the making of the sacrifice it is stated "they will be forgiven." These cover a range of sins from deliberate wrongdoing

through sins of neglect and sins of ignorance and even accidental actions that were sinful.

Numbers 15:22 elaborates upon the forgiveness of unintentional sins on the part of the whole community. In each case forgiveness comes after the sin has been recognized and atonement made. Admission of guilt and acceptance of atonement are prerequisites for forgiveness.

David's plea for forgiveness in Psalm 51 is one of the strongest in Scripture. The psalm reflects the internal chaos that takes place in the sinner and cries out for forgiveness and transformation. It is a plea for mercy based on God's *chesed* and recognition of guilt even from conception. It is a commitment to not only observe the law but to teach the way of God to others if restoration to the joy of the presence of God is possible. It is the offer of a true sacrifice—the broken and contrite heart that God will not despise.

Many of the passages in Leviticus deal with the sacrifices brought by the individuals at the time they have acknowledged their sins. The specific nature of the required sacrifice depends at times upon the sin that has been committed. Restitution that simply returns the same value is not adequate. The sacrificial animal is a further expense to the sinner. Designated portions of the sacrificial animal become a part of the support structure for the priests. Only the men came into the courtyard, and they were the ones who had to present the sacrificial animals to the priests.

This did not mean that they were the only ones in the family who could commit sin. This meant that the sins of other members of the family were the responsibility of the head of the family. And likewise as seen in the case of Achan's theft of goods from Jericho, the resulting death penalty included the whole family (Josh 7:1). These were harsh penalties associated with deliberate refusal to observe known law. They were typical or even light in the era in which they were decreed. What they do make clear is that the basic unit in Old Testament society was not the individual man, woman, or child, but the family and/or nation.

Corporate Guilt

The corporate concept was not restricted to the family. A family was a part of one of the 12 tribes or of the Levites. The tribes were a part of the nation of Israel. Sins committed by a part of the whole make the whole guilty and require atonement for all the tribe or for the

entire nation. Representatives of the tribes placed their hands upon the sacrificial bull as it was killed to signify the involvement of their tribe in the sin. The great Day of Atonement was the day on which the sins of the nation of Israel were recognized and sacrifice made for the forgiveness of the nation and reconciliation of the nation with God.

Leviticus 16 outlines many of the aspects of the atonement that secures forgiveness and restoration of Israel. Verse 17 specifies that the high priest carries out the sprinkling of the blood for himself, his household, and the whole community of Israel. Verse 34 explains that this ceremony has to be repeated every year for the sins of the Israelites. The Day of Atonement is linked to other social activities that occurred in the seventh month. It was to follow the harvest and be a celebration of the harvest. It was to be followed by the remembrance of deliverance from Egypt by living for a week in crude temporary shelters made of tree branches.

Scripture also shows that the sin of the leader of the people affects the entire community. When David sinned by taking a census in violation of the instruction of God, it was the whole nation that suffered. David pled with the Lord to stop the suffering of the nation and took personal responsibility for the sin. His sacrifice upon the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite brought an end to the nation's suffering. It was in this context that David refused to give to the Lord a sacrifice that cost him nothing and insisted on paying in full for the cattle and wood that Araunah offered as a gift (1 Chr 21:13).

Forgiveness Withheld

A striking contrast to the assurances of forgiveness is the instances cited when God refuses to forgive. Moses warns Israel that if they rebel, Yahweh will not forgive. In Exodus 23:21 Yahweh notes that He will appoint a leader and rebellion against that leader will not be forgiven because the name of Yahweh is in him. God's name signifies that he is a representative of Yahweh. In Deuteronomy 29:20 we read that curses will fall upon the one who refuses to keep the Law, Yahweh will not be willing to forgive, and Yahweh's wrath and zeal will burn against such a person. In Joshua 24:19 Joshua warns Israel that they cannot serve Yahweh because He is a jealous God and will not forgive rebellion.

There are instances when forgiveness was denied. Saul asked for forgiveness but it was refused (1 Sam 15:25). Yahweh was not willing to forgive Manasseh because he had filled Jerusalem with blood (2 Kings 24:4). God could not forgive Jerusalem because there was not one righteous person in the city (Jer 5:1-7). Both Isaiah and Jeremiah asked God not to forgive (Is 2:9; Jer 18:23). Hosea, a prime example of the forgiving mercy of God toward Israel, is told to call his daughter Lo Ruhama, for God would no longer show love to Israel by forgiving them (Hos 1:6). Analysis of these passages reveals that true repentance is required for forgiveness.

There are also instances where the wronged cry out to God asking that He will not forgive. It is startling to hear the great prophet Isaiah call upon God to refuse forgiveness to the house of Jacob because of their worship of idols (Is 2:6-9). It is even more startling to hear Jeremiah ask God to refuse forgiveness to those who tormented him (Jer 18:23). These are indications of the stress under which they lived, and they lived without the indwelling presence of the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. These are a recognition of the fact that God is gracious and readily extends forgiveness, a fact that clashed with their anger at those who were doing wrong or had injured them. The Book of Jonah displays the resentment of Israel over the fact that God is even willing to forgive those who have injured them. What a contrast to the forgiveness that flowed from the cross of Christ and the pleas for forgiveness that flowed from His servant, Stephen.

Intercessory Pleas

Contrasting with the cries for vengeance we have great intercessory prayers. Several times Moses stood between an angry God and the sinner—usually Israel but once his own sister, Miriam. In Exodus 32:32 he makes the dramatic plea: “forgive their sin—but if not blot me out of the book you have written.” Forgiveness was granted, but the consequences of their sins still impacted their lives.

Abraham pled for Sodom and Gomorrah but failed because in those cities not even 10 righteous men could be found (Gen 18). Solomon’s prayer of dedication was a plea that God would forgive the sins of the nation when they rebelled against Him (1 Kings 8). The prophets frequently pled before God for forgiveness for the people, and before the people for repentance toward God. Such pleas were made because they knew that Yahweh functioned in harmony

with His character and at the heart of His character was the love that extended *chesed* to humankind.

Foundation for Forgiveness

Chesed is the Old Testament word that gives us the basis for forgiveness. The loving-kindness, the mercy, the steadfast love, that flows from the very person of God reaches out to humankind offering a new start, a clean slate. Sins are forgiven, evil is forgiven and grace is extended. Acceptance of that forgiveness is signified by a change of direction, repentance, by the bringing of the sacrifice of blood that enables the remission of sin.

The theophany in which Moses is privileged to see God, related in Exodus 34:5-7, contains a declaration by Yahweh that reveals *chesed* as the source out of which forgiveness flows while at the same time it affirms that there are consequences to evil behavior that echo into the lives even of great-grandchildren. Confession, humility, and repentance are the actions that enable adoption of the people as the inheritance of God.

Forgiveness of the Remnant

One of the oft-repeated characteristics of the restored remnant of Israel is that they are a forgiven people. Isaiah speaks of the abundant pardon that God extends to the repentant (Is 55:7). Jeremiah affirms this fact and declares over and over again that under the new covenant Yahweh will “forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34, NRSV). Joel also affirms in the concluding statement of his book that God will pardon the bloodguilt that previously had not been pardoned. God’s remnant will be a forgiven people.

Requests for Human Forgiveness

There are no direct instructions in the Old Testament to forgive others. Nevertheless one of the characteristics of the wicked man is that he refuses to show mercy (Ps 109). Appeals for forgiveness are rare, as are appeals for mercy from other than God. Saul did ask Samuel to forgive him and return with him so that he could worship God. Samuel refused, but this was a matter of sin and Saul’s rebellion against the instruction of Yahweh. Abigail hurried out to appeal to David for forgiveness for her husband Nabal, who had refused David’s request (1 Sam 25). Taking vengeance is implied to be wrongdoing, while forgiveness is right.

Refer to Resource 15-9 in the Student Guide.

Forgiveness in the New Testament

There are few areas where the distinction between the Old and New Testaments is more evident than in the area of forgiveness, even though it is clear that the concept and reality of forgiveness in both Testaments are based upon the same truth. During the intertestamental period the Old Testament declarations about forgiveness had resulted in a strong Jewish theological tenet that only God can forgive sin.

John the Baptist appealed to his listeners to be baptized as a sign of their repentance so that they could know forgiveness of their sins (Mk 1:4). Luke reminds us that the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus is the mission of the Church (Lk 24:47). The first Christian sermon recorded, that of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, states: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Forgiveness is at the very heart of the gospel.

Jesus Forgives Sins

The angel assured Joseph that he could take Mary as his wife because the child she carried was of the Holy Spirit and is to be called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins (Mt 1:20-21). Jesus is to come as the One who can remove sin. Jesus' own declaration, "Your sins are forgiven" (9:2) brought him into conflict with the leaders of the Jews. In their minds it was tantamount to a declaration that he is God, and they were not prepared to acknowledge that fact. Most of these statements are made in the context of healing, but Jesus specifically states that the healing is done "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (9:6). The healing is done to affirm Jesus' authority from God, his oneness with the Divine.

In Luke 7 the context is different. Jesus forgives the sins of the woman who washes his feet. Forgiveness is recognized as the motivation for love of God. It is interesting that Psalm 130:4 states that God's willingness to forgive is the motivation for the fear of the Lord. Love of God and fear—proper respect—of God are linked. Love, respect of God, mercy—*chesed*—is shown to be the foundation upon which forgiveness rests.

Jesus Instructs His Disciples to Forgive Sin

There are several contexts in which Jesus instructs His followers to forgive. The best known is in the Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6 adds the comment in verses 14 and 15 that make clear that refusal to forgive others prevents the receipt of forgiveness extended to you. The Luke 11:4 version of the Lord's Prayer states, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." Mark emphasizes the same truth when he quotes Jesus: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mk 11:25).

Jesus reminded the disciples that Jewish tradition had taken the law to mean: "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy," but he was correcting this perception with the instruction to love your enemies (Mt 5:43). Forgiving those who sin against us is an integral part of such loving. Peter voiced the concern of the disciples when he asked "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (18:21). Luke records that Jesus had said forgive seven times in a day. Matthew records that Jesus said "not seven times, but seventy times seven" and then told the story of the servant who lost his forgiveness because of his unforgiving response. Forgiveness was to be a mark of the way of life of a follower of Christ.

John records the commissioning of the disciples following the Resurrection (Jn 20:19-23). They are instructed to receive the Holy Spirit and commissioned to do the same work that Jesus had done—"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Included in this commission is the unique statement: "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Protestant scholars, noting the use of the passive tense, usually interpret this to mean that the disciples are commissioned to preach the gospel, which in turn results in the forgiveness of sins if people accept the gospel. Catholic scholars see this as the charge given to the disciples that priests carry out when they hear confession. What is clear is that the followers of Christ are to be a part of extending forgiveness, both through their way of life and through their witness to Christ.

New Testament Forgiveness and the Law

Even though the emphasis in the New Testament is upon a lifestyle that copies the merciful, forgiving lifestyle of God, the principles upon which forgiveness is based are acknowledged as essential.

- Jesus came to bring forgiveness and take away the sin of the world. This was the announcement of John the Baptist and is repeated throughout the New Testament. It is the dominant message in the Book of Acts. John notes in his first epistle that “your sins have been forgiven on account of his name” (1 Jn 2:12). Forgiveness under the Law was based on the character of God. God saved and forgave not because of anything that humankind did, but because of his name.
- Under the Law a blood sacrifice was required for atonement. Hebrews 9:22 reminds us that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. When Jesus established the new covenant he said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28). Paul frequently reminded believers that it was through the blood of Christ that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace. Forgiveness is extended because of the grace, the *chesed* of God.
- Repentance and confession remain as prerequisites for forgiveness. It is impossible to turn to God for forgiveness without turning to God, and turning to God is repentance. 1 John 1:9 confirms that forgiveness is given to the one who recognizes that he or she is a sinner.

The Unforgiven

In the Old Testament we noted several instances where sins were not forgiven. People wanted forgiveness in order to secure the blessing or guidance of God but did not want to change their ways. In the New Testament there are two categories given where forgiveness is unavailable. The first we have already noted—if you refuse to forgive then you cannot receive forgiveness, for forgiveness is dependent upon accepting a forgiving way of life. The second is noted in Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; and Luke 12:10: Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It cannot be forgiven in this life or eternity. To reject the Holy Spirit is to reject the person of God who brings conviction, instruction, guidance, and cleansing into our lives.

Forgiveness originates with God, and rejection of the Holy Spirit prevents the salvation offered through Jesus Christ our Lord from reaching our lives.

Small Groups: Bible Study

(30 minutes)

Refer to Resource 15-10 in the Student Guide.

The objective of this time is to get the students to wrestle with various facets of the truth of forgiveness. The class can be divided into small groups and each group can take one or two stories and examine them, or you may want to have all of the groups analyze the same stories.

There needs to be a time when the whole group can listen to the conclusions of each small group and draw up their conclusions.

The following passages have been selected because they display or contrast various aspects of forgiveness:

1. Before the giving of the Law we have interesting examples of forgiveness in
 - Esau's forgiveness of Jacob—Genesis 32—33
 - Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers—Genesis 42—46, and especially 50
2. Contrast the aspect of forgiveness in the story of Jonah, the story of Esther, Psalm 137 and the deaths of Jesus and Stephen—Luke 23 and Acts 7
3. Compare the forgiveness available through Jesus in the lives of Peter and Judas.
4. Compare the role of forgiveness in the sign act—marriage to Gomer—of Hosea with the letters to the seven churches.

Writing: Formulation of Statements and Catechism

(10 minutes)

Write out a statement about each aspect of forgiveness that you have noted in today's study. Organize them into a structure that you believe makes them teachable.

Update your catechism notes with those statements about forgiveness that should be included.

Give thought to the nature of the catechism that you want to create. Should it be a collection of beliefs, or should it take on characteristics similar to those in the ministerial course of study and be concerned with being and doing as well as knowing?

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on the students to respond.

Name a key point from this lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Exodus 33—34; Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 5—7; Nehemiah 9; 2 Chronicles 30; Psalms 77; 86; 103; 111; 116; 145; Joel 2; Jonah; Matthew 18—25; Luke 15 and 19; and Romans.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Blessing, Faith, Faithfulness; Gentleness, Grace; Healing; Hospitality; Mercy/Compassion; Poor/Poverty; and Ruth.

Assign a third of the students to each of the resources.

Read **1** of the following:

- Resource 15-11, "The Grumbling Graced"
- Resource 15-12, "The Ungrateful Son"
- Resource 15-13, "What Shall I Do Now?"

Write a 1-page summary.

Write in your journal. Reflect on the power of bitterness when people refuse to forgive.

Lesson 16

Freely Received and Freely Given

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Freely Received and Freely Given	Lecture	
0:25	Homework Summaries	Small Groups	
0:50	Grace Is a Party	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 16-1 Resource 16-2
1:45	Formulation of Statements/ Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Esser, H.H. "Grace, Spiritual Gifts" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 3 volumes. Edited and translated by Colin Brown and others. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Guthrie, Donald. "Grace" in *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981, 602-40.

Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

O'Brien, Peter T., and David G. Peterson. *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.

Yancey, Philip. *What's So Amazing About Grace?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on the students to share insights gained from NDBT reading.

Return homework.

Orientation

The covenant relationship believers enjoy with God is not earned, only accepted. It is granted from the nature of God's own character, his name. Acceptance involves participating in covenant life and mission—taking up the Cross and making disciples of all nations. The Hebrew terms translated "grace" and "mercy" in English are most often identical. Although, they are different terms in Greek, their meanings overlap considerably because of the influence of the Old Testament. As synonyms, they fill approximately the same semantic space—they communicate essentially the same concept. Thus, this lesson overlaps considerably with Lesson 21.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- offer a full-orbed survey of the biblical theology of grace

Lesson Body

Lecture: Freely Received and Freely Given

(15 minutes)

It should be fairly obvious that there is no such thing as “grace.” Grace does not exist! At least not in the same way that rocks and trees, the scent of lilacs and the taste of chocolate, the sound of a symphony and the feel of a cold mountain stream exist. We cannot see it, smell it, taste it, hear it, or touch it. Of course, the same could be said about love and other conceptual terms. Grace is only an abstraction—an idea, a concept—until it is expressed in particular actions.

How do abstract ideas become tangible deeds? And how do we know what actions deserve the label “grace”? The Bible defines grace as the essential way in which God relates to humans. We see the grace of God in action in the story of God in relation to the people of God.

As the Strong One, God voluntarily comes to the aid of the weak. His help is an undeserved gift—favor, benevolence, condescension. The gift may take the form of forgiveness, a restored relationship of friendship, love and acceptance, time to repent, a mission—work to do and the wherewithal to do it, salvation, healing, blessing, power to act, care, etc. The supreme expression of the grace of God is the gift of himself—the gift of his Son and of his Spirit.

All that is required of the recipient of grace is the necessary humility and willingness to receive the gift—faith. But faith in God is not simply believing that he exists. Openness to God and dependence on him are necessary prerequisites of faith. Faith means trust in and loyalty to God. But as a response to grace, faith and obedience to God are both merely tangible expressions of gratitude.

Real gratitude is not just a feeling or attitude; it must be a response in kind. That is, those who are truly grateful for their inclusion in the covenant of grace prove it by loyalty to the God who invited them to share in the covenant community. Gratitude for God’s forgiveness is demonstrated by extending that same forgiveness to others. Those who have received comfort, give comfort. Apart from the evidence of

gratitude, grace is given in vain. Those who truly know what it means to be graced live graciously. If they do not, they prove that they did not truly receive grace or they did not adequately understand it as a gift that keeps on giving.

Because concepts are often difficult to grasp, they may often be best understood by way of stories. Many parables of Jesus help us catch a glimpse of God's grace and the appropriate human response to it. Most of them involve money—a gift we understand well, even if we think we never have enough of it. Consider a sampling of some parables of grace.

The Ungrateful Servant—Matthew 18:23-35

Have the students turn to this passage in their Bibles.

In Matthew's setting this parable readily interprets itself. In chapter 18, Jesus addressed the questions of the disciples regarding their place in the kingdom of God. He instructed them to seek humility as the only route to greatness (vv 1-4). Sin against their brothers and sisters was to be avoided at any cost (vv 5-9). No effort was to be spared in restoring the backsliding brother to the fellowship (vv 10-20). "But how far can this careful seeking and forgiving go?" was Peter's natural question. "Is seven times enough?" Jewish law required forgiveness for the same offense only three times, after which no further necessity to forgive remained—on the basis of Job 33:29 and Amos 2:6. But Jesus answered, "There must be no limit to your forgiving one another. Let me tell you a story to illustrate my point" (Mt 18:22-23, GL). Then he proceeded to relate this parable.

The kingdom of heaven is not like a king but may be compared to the case of a king's accounting. The "king's servants" are not mere domestic aides but high-ranking government officials. The astounding amount of the first servant's debt reveals this. During Jesus' time, a young slave sold for one talent. The annual revenue of Herod the Great from Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea amounted to less than 900 talents. A talent was a weight of between 60 and 75 pounds. The value of one silver talent was about 10,000 denarii. Since the average working man earned a denarius a day, to earn 10,000 talents would require 50,000 lifetimes. Furthermore, 10,000 was the largest number for which there was a name in Greek; and the talent was the highest measure of weight. Undoubtedly Jesus intended the magnitude of the debt to be understood hyperbolically—this was a debt beyond imagination, which one could never hope to pay off. "Zillions of dollars," we might say.

The indebted servant was brought out of prison to settle his account before the king. The suggested enslavement of the entire family could hope to realize no more than 10,000 denarii, a mere pittance in comparison to the enormous debt of 100,000,000 denarii. Since the Law forbade the selling of Jews except for theft, and then their wives were not sold, Jesus' story referred to a punishment only a Gentile king could exact. The servant pled for release and patience, making the impossible promise, "I will pay you everything" (v 26, RSV). But the king's grace far exceeded his servant's request. Ignoring the "promise" of repayment, he simply forgave the debt completely.

As the servant left the king's presence, fully pardoned, a free man, he saw a fellow-servant in the street and recalled his unpaid debt of 100 denari. He seized him by the throat with the threat, "Pay what you owe me or I'll have you put in prison till you do!" (vv 28-30, paraphrased). The fellow-servant begs for patience in identical words to the words the forgiven debtor had used himself. But the promise he had made in verse 26 was impossible to fulfill, while that made by his fellow-servant in verse 29 might have been. But the freed man did not respond in kind—he extended no grace.

When their fellow servants saw this incongruity, they were shocked and dismayed. When word reached the king, literally, "the lord," he called his forgiven servant. Addressing him as "wicked/evil," he reminded him of the divine necessity that he had neglected: to reciprocate grace. His forgiveness was canceled, and he was delivered to prison to be tortured until his entire debt was repaid. Given the magnitude of the debt, the punishment would be endless.

Jesus concludes the parable with a threat: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (18: 35, RSV). Jesus teaches the necessity of unlimited forgiveness of one's "brother/sister"—whether a fellow believer or merely a fellow human being. Such forgiveness was the only fitting response to the Father's gracious forgiveness.

We are to see ourselves in the great debtor who received the message of forgiveness. The test of true discipleship, life in the Kingdom, is the willingness to extend to others the forgiveness we have received. Because God's forgiveness is without limits, so must ours be. If we reside in the kingdom of grace and demand our rights, God will be compelled so to deal with us.

Disciples who in ignorance or forgetfulness of their own guilt become harsh, unforgiving, and cruel to others will be judged on the basis of justice without mercy. Our response to forgiveness is the determining factor in God's treatment of us at the Last Judgment. The parable combines an exhortation and a warning.

The parable is an important warning that forgiveness is not as easy or cheap as it may at first appear. The canceled debt did not simply disappear. By forgiving his servant, the king assumed the debt himself. In the story of God, the Cross should silence the notion of cheap grace.

To be forgiven brings the responsibility of being forgiving. We may not purchase God's forgiveness by forgiving others, but forgiving is an essential condition of his receiving God's forgiveness.

The route from estrangement to reconciliation is through the door of repentance into the unending hallway of forgiveness that leads to eternal salvation. Grace is not the doorway into the life of discipleship. It is the air disciples breathe. It is the room in which we live as forever forgiven sinners who demonstrate we recognize this by forgiving those who sin against us.

See Rom 5: 1-5.

Small Groups: Homework Summaries

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each—1 representing each of the resource reading assignments.

To continue the study of parables on grace, share with each other the parable that you read for homework.

Read each other's summaries, ask questions, find repeated themes/ideas, look for new insights, learn from each other.

Lecture/Discussion: Grace Is a Party

(55 minutes)

Have students turn to Romans for this lecture.

Refer to Resource 16-1 in the Student Guide.

If you want to spend more time in discussion and less time in lecture, you can point out the summary of Romans in Resource 16-1 and begin the lecture on page 16-9 with "Paul—the Ambassador."

Romans has the usual beginning like all of Paul's letters, only with more expansions than usual, perhaps because he is writing to people most of whom he has never met and to whom he is a stranger. Romans 1:16-17 is transitional, concluding the letter's opening and announcing the theme of its body. The letter's opening prepares us to expect a letter in praise of the gospel—the good news of God's gracious intervention in history in the person of Jesus Christ to give salvation life to everyone who will receive it by faith, the response of trusting obedience to this gospel.

The body of the letter, however, begins in 1:18—3:20 with the announcement of the bad news of God's righteous judgment against sin (2:16)—wrath directed against responsible sinners, both Gentiles and Jews, both downright sinners and "upright" sinners (vv 25-29). The advantage of the Jew over Gentiles is one of historical priority in God's plan, not partiality (1:16; 2:9-11). The conclusion of this discussion highlights the universal problem of sin and the urgent need of all people for the gospel.

God's solution to the problem of sin is the concern of 3:21—8:39. God "justifies" sinners who receive the benefits of the saving death of Jesus Christ (3:21—4:25). Since God does this freely, as an act of pure grace (3:21-26), there is no room for humans to boast of their achievements (vv 27-31). This is not an entirely new movement of God in his relation to human beings, nor is it in violation to Scripture as the story of Abraham illustrates (4:1-25).

See Lesson 9.

Chapters 5 through 8 spell out the consequences of justification as a fulfilling life in the present—peace, reconciliation with God, love, and bright hope for the future (5:1-11). Believers may enjoy freedom from death (vv 12-21; 8:18-39), freedom from sin through sanctification by the Holy Spirit (6; 8:1-17), freedom from law (ch 7). All that is available in fact must be appropriated by faith in a decisive act of total surrender to God to be experienced. God can be trusted to keep safe what we commit to him. He will not let us down.

Chapters 9 through 11 respond to a question that might be raised to God's faithfulness. What about Israel, God's earlier people? Didn't he forsake them? Paul answers NO. Their problem was disobedience and rebellion, not unfaithfulness on God's part. And God still has some plans for Israel. He doesn't give up easily (11:26, 32).

Consequently, Romans 12:1—15:13 calls for Christians to:

- make themselves available to God
- be sanctified for his purposes
- use the gracious gifts he has given them
- extend the love they have received to all—even enemies
- live as responsible citizens
- accept freely even those who are different from us, just as Christ accepted us

In 15:14-33 Paul announces his travel plans, which may help clarify why he wrote the Romans. The letter closes with a lengthy collection of greetings to all those he knows from his travels who are now residents in Rome, and a warning.

Paul—the Ambassador

Imagine representing the foreign policy of God! Paul had this awesome assignment as an apostle, an ambassador of Jesus Christ. As he wrote his letter to the Romans he was preparing to leave for Jerusalem with “disaster relief” for the impoverished church there. He was also making plans for an evangelistic mission to Spain, with a brief layover en route to the capital of the empire.

See Rom. 15:17-33; 1:8-13.

To succeed in his mission the assistance of the Christians in Rome was vital. But all was not well there. Political unrest and ethnic rivalries had eroded the unity of the community. Romans is an ambassadorial letter, urging reconciliation of the divided parties. The gospel, the “power of God to salvation,” was God’s means of extending his reign over his rebellious creation.

See 13:1-7; 14:1-7; Acts 18:1-2.

Refer to Resource 16-2 in the Student Guide.

Good News—You’re Invited (Rom 1:1-7)

Good news! God is throwing an “eternal party” and everyone’s invited. Even the Gentiles—those who were once on the list “not to invite”—are now welcome.

“Called to be an apostle.” God had invited Paul to be His special representative to make sure the formerly excluded got the good news of their invitation. What an assignment—persuading the outcasts from grace that this wasn’t a mistake! According to Paul’s own testimony, it took a lot of grace. “We received grace and apostleship” (v 5).

And what a party! It had been a long time in preparation. Prophets had been expecting it for centuries. The Guest of Honor was to be none other than Jesus Christ. He was born in the family on the right list. But, it was at his insistence that those on the other list should be invited. It took a lot of grace “to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith” (v 5).

How can an invitation to obedience be good news? How can this be about grace?

You are loved by God! He proved His love by sending His Son to show you how to live. And die! He proved His power by raising Jesus from the dead. Trust me—no, trust him! He won't let you down. He has power enough to make obedience possible. "You also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ" (v 6). You are "called to be saints" (v 7).

Imagine, an invitation to belong to God's forever family! That's good news. But, a saint! Who? Me?

Yes, a saint. Saints are God's special people! They belong to Him. He has special plans for them. You've heard the saying, "Birds of a feather flock together." Well, those who remain God's special people take on a family likeness. They become holy as He is holy. Yes, a saint!

God's planning a party and you're invited!

The tragedy is that some still don't know they're invited. If you do know, you're invited to tell them. No, you are expected to tell them. Grace empowers you to share the Good News.

Good News: You Can Change (1:8-13)

This is a very diplomatic introduction, don't you think? A faith that had made the headlines! Objects of the apostle's constant prayers! The dream vacation spot! The Chamber of Commerce couldn't have said it better.

But how do you suppose the Romans responded to Paul's gentle reminder of their need for revival? Paul was using his grace of apostleship; how were they using their grace? Did they "hear and heed" the apostle's invitation to put their faith into practice in "the obedience that comes from faith" (v 5)?

It's near the end of Romans before Paul talks about his travel plans in detail—his long-awaited apostolic visit to Rome. But here in 1:11-13 he announced three purposes for that visit.

- First, he longed for them to be established (v 11).
- Second, he hoped they would be encouraged by their mutual faith (v 12).
- Third, he wanted them to be enlisted as envoys of God, inviting the unevangelized to join God's kingdom (v 13).

The demand to be established is not an invitation to a self-improvement program. It's all about grace. Romans makes it perfectly clear that no one grows

See 16:2- 26.
See 4:20.

stronger by working harder. It's all about grace. It is only God who is able to establish us to live the gospel obediently. Abraham proves that a faith that grows stronger gives all the credit to God. Faith is not the same as optimism. It is trust in the God for whom nothing is too hard, who gives life to the dead, and who calls into existence the things that do not exist (4:17).

The invitation to trust and obey is a call to be all God's grace enables us to be. To be established is to have learned to trust him alone. It is a call to rely on the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead (vv 4-5). That's why the message about Jesus is called gospel — good news. And that's why Paul urges us to renewed commitment to the gospel. This life of grace is a "spiritual gift" (v 11).

See Rom 12:3-5.
See Rom 14:7; 15:14-16.

To be established requires not only God's grace but also encouragement by the faith of others. We are part of the same body and all need to grow strong together. God has given us one another to encourage one another in the faith.

Illustration: Some of the giant Redwoods of California are over 300 feet tall and more than 30 feet in diameter. Although most trees have root systems equal in size to their tops, the redwoods' are surprising small and shallow. To survive, they always grow in clusters. In these groves, their roots become interwoven. Like the redwoods, when we encourage one another, our lives become intertwined, strengthened, and stabilized.

See 15:24-32.

For Paul to succeed in his mission required a revived and united Roman church. Because we are enlisted as envoys of God, we put our graces—our time, our money, our talents, and our prayers—where our commitments are. We are called to follow the One who came not to be served but to serve. Our character and conduct are reshaped by the One whose call we answer.

See 1 Pet 2:9-10.

Salvation is a vocation, not a vacation. Paul uses the language of *call* rather than the language of *conversion* to describe the Christian life (1:1, 5-7). We come to God "by invitation only." We are called from the world to be God's people in the world and for the world. We look forward to the "party," but the invitations must go out. We are not immediately translated to heaven upon our conversions. Our task in the meantime is to extend the "Foreign Policy of God" to the profane precincts of life. The calling of every Christian is to live out the

prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10).

Good News—No Strings Attached (1:14-17)

See 1 Cor 1:1.

Paul's service as an ambassador of Christ was not as a volunteer. His invitation to serve was a draft notice. He was a slave of Christ, obligated to preach the gospel to all strata of Roman society.

See 13:8-10; 2 Cor 5:14-21.

Evangelism is not an option. It is a compulsion motivated by love for Christ and those for whom Christ died. Perhaps Paul's claim, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" was a mild rebuke of the Romans for their reluctance to confess it boldly, inviting all who would hear it to faith.

What is the "gospel"? The word means simply "good news." Its source is God. Its subject is Jesus Christ. Preaching is not the "gospel" but is simply putting it into words. And why is the "gospel" good news? Not because it's new. It was old news in Paul's day. It is good news "because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (v 16).

The gospel is the operation of a power, not the presentation of an idea. It is not a doctrine, timeless truths, or religious ideas. It is not a human invention but a divine intervention. It is not an announcement; it is a gracious activity—the activity of God sending his own Son to do what the Law was powerless to do (8:3; 3:19-20). The powerful activity of grace was enough to effect a resurrection. Grace is not simply an exhibition of power, like a fireworks display. It is purposeful power, made known in a story about God and his love for people—all people. This is the gospel.

See 5:9; 13:11.

The gospel is for salvation. Salvation is future deliverance in the final judgment. It's God's "eternal party" to which everyone's invited. The celebration begins as soon as we accept the invitation, even though the "party" itself is not yet in full swing. The gospel has the power to transform the present as we await the future. It's like Christmas in a house with children. When the calendar turns to December, Christmas is still weeks away, but it's already being enjoyed, eagerly anticipated, and celebrated in the present.

Those who accept the invitation to salvation are put right with God now. Those who respond obediently with faith in the Good News enter the redeemed community that awaits redemption (8:18-25; Phil

3:20, 21; 2 Cor 3:18). The Church is the creation of the gospel.

The gospel's scope is universal. It is for everyone who has faith (2:11; 3:22, 28-30; 10:11-13). And yet unity in Christ does not mean uniformity. The Good News did come to the Jews first. Israel's unbelief opened the door of the "party" to those on the "wrong list." Faith comes through the hearing of the gospel (v 17) and requires that the gospel be heard and obeyed. There is but one God. All human beings are sinners. The good news is that God saves sinners who trust Him (3:21-26; 4:5).

The gospel is the power for salvation to everyone because "in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed" (v 17). God's faithfulness to His sinful creation is shown in His willingness to bring about a new creation, to justify those who don't deserve it. There are no stings attached. It "is by faith from first to last" (v 17)—from God's faithfulness to our response of faith. Faith is simply taking what God's grace freely offers. There are no strings attached. Obedience is saying, Thank You with our lives.

Allow for response and discussion.

Challenge the students to think beyond the surface level.

Is every Christian an ambassador for Christ? Do we represent heaven well?

How is the plan of salvation like God's foreign policy?

How does enthusiasm for the gospel contribute to the unity of the Church? Is your church enthusiastic about the gospel? Are you?

If you don't like the author's explanation, why do you suppose Paul wrote a letter like Romans? Does your explanation account for all the contents? Even chapters 9—11?

What do you think of comparing "salvation" to a "party"? If you don't like the comparison, do you have a better illustration? One that would make sense to the average 21st-century pagan in your neighborhood?

Are you willing to call yourself a saint?

Is spiritual growth/spiritual formation a self-improvement program? Are you growing stronger spiritually? What's the evidence? Are you established? What's the evidence?

Whose faith has encouraged you lately? Whose faith have you tried to encourage?

How have you made yourself accountable to other Christians? How is your life intertwined with your fellow believers in ways that sustain and support your mutual faith?

How is every believer called to be a minister? Have you been enlisted? Have you signed up for duty in the harvest? How does Jesus determine the character of your service?

What are the advantages of using Paul's language of vocation (calling) to talk about the Christian life as compared to our language of conversion (saved, born again, etc.)? The disadvantages? How are you trying to live out these petitions of the Lord's Prayer?

How does the obligation to tell the Good News fit with the title of this section—no strings attached? Is this a contradiction to the notion of grace?

In what ways do we show ourselves ashamed of the gospel?

Did you read Romans 5:9 and 13:11? What do they imply about salvation? Is it present or future? In what sense is salvation both present and future? How has the hope of future salvation transformed your present?

What is the importance of recognizing that the Church is the creation of the gospel and not vice versa?

How do you reconcile the universality of the gospel—for everyone—and its particularity—for the Jew first?

Do you agree: "Faith is simply taking what God's grace freely offers. There are no strings attached. Obedience is saying, Thank You"? Explain.

Does it make any difference where you place the emphasis in Romans 1:17? "The righteous will live by faith." or, "The righteous will live by faith." or, "The righteous will live by faith." or, "The righteous will live by faith." or, "The righteous will live by faith." or, "The righteous will live by faith."

Individual Work: Formulation of Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

Write 6 to 10 statements that reflect this lesson to be included in your catechism.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to read 1 or more of their statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Exodus 20—21; Leviticus 19; Deuteronomy 6—9; 22; Amos; Matthew 5—7; Acts 10; Romans 12—15; 1 Corinthians 8—11; 13; Galatians 5—6; Ephesians 4—6; Colossians; James; and 1 John. Prepare theological statements that these chapters/books seem to support.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Deuteronomy; Adultery; Anger; Childlessness; Clothes; Covenant; Discipline; Freedom; Grace; Holiness; Hospitality; Law; Love; Man and Woman; Marriage; Obedience; Poor/Poverty; Repentance; Righteousness, Justice, and Justification; Sabbath; Sin; Tradition; Wisdom; and Word.

Survey the *Manual's* Covenant of Christian Character and The Covenant of Christian Conduct and the biblical rationale for them offered in the *Manual*. Write an essay titled "A Biblical-Theological Rationale for Changing/Reinforcing the Ethical Principles of the Church of the Nazarene."

Read Resource 16-3. Write a 1-page summary/response.

Write in your journal. Does your life reflect the joyous party of God's grace? How can you change?

[This page intentionally blank]

Unit 5: Practical Relationships

Lesson 17

Biblical Ethics

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Biblical Foundations of Christian Ethics	Lecture	Resources 17-1—17-8
0:55	Homework Essays	Small Groups	Homework
1:20	Biblical Ethics	Guided Discussion	
1:45	Formulation of Statements/ Catechism	Individual Work	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Furnish, Victor Paul. *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*. 2nd rev. ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

_____. *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1978.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*. Trinity University Monograph Series in Religion. Volume 3. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989.

Hayes, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation. A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996.

McQuilkin, J. Robertson. *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1995.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Rasmussen, Larry L., and Bruce C. Birch. *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life*. Philadelphia: Augsburg-Fortress, 1989.

Sampley, J. Paul. *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning*. Philadelphia: Augsburg-Fortress, 1991.

Schrage, Wolfgang. *The Ethics of the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.

_____. *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: the Ethical Authority of the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on 2 to 3 students to share his or her summary from the resource reading.

Return homework and collect resource summaries.

Orientation

How does one distinguish

- right and wrong
- good and evil
- better and best

practices on a biblical basis?

Proper and improper relationships to

- God and idols
- between men and women
- between persons and possessions

are the three most prevalent topics throughout Scripture. Observance of propriety is essential to overcome this greatest threat to the greatest satisfaction in life—good relationships.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- summarize the Bible's approach to personal and social ethics and morality

Lesson Body

Lecture: Biblical Foundations of Christian Ethics

(45 minutes)

Lesson 17 overlaps considerably with Lessons 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 21. You would do well to review these before you teach. In fact, you would do well to review all of the lessons to date. The following lecture material does not focus directly on the specific content of biblical ethics. Instead, it is an attempt to suggest by principles and examples how one moves responsibly from biblical theology to its moral implications.

Living Ethical Lives, a module of the Modular Course of Study is a more complete treatment of ethics as a branch of philosophy.

See Exodus 21. Those who make such claims would most likely not have survived to adulthood had the law been applied to them.

Consideration of the biblical foundations of Christian ethics raises several significant questions:

- How are average Christians, who are not experts in biblical interpretation, theology, or ethics, to appropriate the Bible as a significant resource for ethical discernment?
- How are they to allow it to play a significant role in their moral decision making?

Some readers, acquainted with the Bible from private devotional reading, Sunday School lessons, or sermons, may take the answers to such questions too much for granted. They claim to base their lives on the Bible, but are unable to articulate just which passages support which ethical norms. Thus, for example, they oppose abortion and identify themselves as favoring “right to life” causes, while also favoring capital punishment and preemptive war; and see no incongruity in their stance.

They can cite chapter and verse in support of the death penalty but fail to notice the range of crimes justifying it, including adolescent insolence. Or, they believe the Bible’s teaching on the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit clearly makes smoking a sin. But they see nothing immoral about overeating at an all-you-can-eat buffet, despite being 50 pounds overweight, suffering from hypertension and borderline diabetes.

Others, who have read the Bible with more critical eyes, consider the Bible an unlikely source of ethics. They realize that our ethical concerns are markedly different from those of first-century Christians. Thus, they wonder how much moral guidance they should expect from a book that struggles over the morality of eating food offered to idols (1 Cor 8—11) but can offer no moral guidance on stem-cell research. Or, from a book that prohibits women from teaching men (1 Tim 2), and urges wives to be submissive to their husbands (Eph 5), while insisting that male and female are one in Christ (Gal 3).

Can such ancient documents actually speak meaningfully to the moral issues of today? And, if so, what is the nature of Scripture’s moral authority for

contemporary Christians? If the Old Testament and New Testament have moral relevance for us today, how is it relevant?

Refer to Resource 17-1 in the Student Guide.

It may help us to know what the community—first addressed by Matthew’s Gospel—understood “turning the other cheek” required of powerless victims of an occupying totalitarian government. But our challenge is to determine what the phrase might require of Christians facing radical Islamic terrorism. Inevitably we ask questions unforeseen by biblical authors. How can biblical texts legitimately provide answers to questions beyond the scope of their author’s original intentions? How can the meaning of a specific scriptural passage exercise a controlling influence over its meaning and application now? Before attending to such questions, allow me to clarify what I mean by biblical foundations of Christian ethics. My concern is primarily with the use of the Bible in ethics, not particularly with the ethics in the Bible.

The role of the Bible in Christian ethics is intimately related to the nature of biblical authority and the practice of biblical interpretation. Christians of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, in agreement with the church generally, accept the Bible as not only the authoritative and normative source of its faith but also of its ethical practice. But it is far more difficult to describe *how* the Bible does, or should, function in this role than *that* it is asserted.

Refer to Resource 17-2 in the Student Guide.

The Nature of Biblical Authority

1. The authority of the Bible is *derived*. The Bible is not God, it is not the fourth member of an expanded holy quartet—Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Bible. The Bible is the historically relevant word of God written in human words. Its authority arises from its canonical status—the Church’s recognition of this anthology as the fully inspired word of God. The adverb “fully,” like its synonym “plenary,” suggests that the Bible’s divine message is to be found in its wholeness, not in any of its parts divorced from the whole.

The conviction that the divine message of the Bible inerrantly reveals the will of God in all things necessary for our salvation also calls for explanation. It should be noted that “inerrantly” is an adverb, not an adjective; it describes what the Bible does, not what it is. Nazarenes do not assert that the Bible is inerrant or infallible; this may be affirmed only of its divine source—God.

Nevertheless, God's self-communication, his effort to make himself and his will known, fully succeeded in accomplishing the purpose he had in mind. We affirm that this is true, in spite of the inevitable limitations imposed upon him by the necessity of employing human language and by his choice to use human agents to execute the actual writing of Scripture.

2. The Bible has a unique significance for Christian ethical discourse. Christians rightly consider Scripture the final authority for morality. The content of Christian ethics is not always clearly distinguishable from that of non-Christian ethics; the distinctive dimension is to be found in the ethical motivation and the source of its moral norms. Apart from appeal to the authority of Scripture, it is debatable whether an ethic may be considered truly Christian. But the problem remains as to how this authority actually functions.
3. The Bible's authority is not absolute or exclusive. It has a necessary primacy among normative authorities, but it is not alone self-sufficient. The Bible itself and church practice acknowledge other sources of ethical insight. Wesleyans, in particular, have been explicit about this, appealing to the "quadrilateral"—tradition, experience, and reason as well as Scripture as sources of moral norms. Among these four, Scripture is the court of last appeal, the "norming" norm. But it is not always clear how the Church should bring scriptural resources into dialogue with nonbiblical sources of ethical insight while still maintaining theological and rational integrity.
4. The Christian assertion of the primacy of Scripture is a confessional stance, not one based on an empirical or objective evaluation. That is, the Bible cannot be proven to be the final authority in matters of ethics; the Christian claim is a matter of faith. Only as Scripture actually functions authoritatively is Christian ethics Christian.
5. The functional authority of Scripture acknowledges its diversity. For example, it is necessary to speak of biblical *views* of war, not of a uniform and thoroughly consistent *view* of war. The same could be said of other areas of moral concern, for example, how Christians should address the problems of wealth and poverty. To acknowledge such diversity is not necessarily to allege that contradictions exist within the Bible. It is only to

take seriously that the Bible as an anthology developed over many centuries. Its constituent parts offered timely moral guidance for its first readers. But not every timely word is obviously timelessly relevant to subsequent generations of readers. The reality of scriptural diversity, because of its complexity, requires a more nuanced appreciation of the nature of biblical authority.

Pragmatic Challenges to Biblical Authority

Refer to Resource 17-3 in the Student Guide.

The Bible is not of one piece. It did not drop from heaven to earth on golden tablets as a finished product, hermetically sealed against the vicissitudes of human history. Although Christians debate concerning the nature of inspiration and the extent and manner of God's role in the authoring of the Bible, virtually all agree that it was written by numerous human authors who brought with them their respective talents and handicaps, assumptions and prejudices, faith and failures. These authors addressed their various communities of readers, both believers and unbelievers in diverse situations, confronted with a broad spectrum of pressing problems. They spoke words of comfort and hope to the afflicted, and of judgment to those who comfortably afflicted them.

Scripture itself testifies that God addressed people in the midst of changing and diverse historical and cultural settings. One need not accept the concept of progressive revelation to concede that God's concern to communicate with humankind compelled him to speak not only in a language they could understand but within an intelligible cultural milieu. He addressed people as they were and where they were in an attempt to lead them where he wanted them to be. To do this required him to adopt and adapt existing ethical practices.

Consider a few examples of the problem of diversity from the New Testament letters. As we read these letters, we must self-consciously remind ourselves that, in spite of the immediacy with which they seem to address us at times, we're reading someone else's mail. Whatever message they have for us must be determined by first considering the message each author intended for his original readers. This is the task of biblical interpretation. Our attention to the differences between the original setting and ours must be self-conscious, because we tend to make such distinctions far too naively and arbitrarily.

None of us has undertaken a search for the apostle Paul's cloak, parchments, and younger colleague Mark, in an effort to take them to him before winter as 2 Timothy requests (4: 9, 11, 13, 21). The historical distance between Paul and us in this instance seems so obvious that obedience seems uncalled for.

But what are we to make of the instruction in 1 Timothy that women must learn in silence in church, neither teaching nor having authority over men (2: 11-15)? Why should this be taken to imply that women should not be ordained or serve as pastors? What if women learn? Must they still remain silent? Is this instruction from 1 Timothy just as historically and culturally conditioned as that in 2 Timothy? May we safely ignore it? Judging by our practice, at least, Christians of the Wesleya-Holiness tradition have generally thought so. Our conviction has been: If God calls and equips a woman for ministry, who are we to stand in her way?

In the early 20th century, long before it became vogue, fully a third of Nazarene elders were women. Cultural pressures in recent decades have decreased that number to less than 3 percent. Some, who have only recently joined the denomination from different theological backgrounds, unaware of this history, mistakenly presume that women preparing for ministry are motivated by the modern women's movement. Their unreflective appeals to passages like 1 Timothy 2: 11-15 have made the role of women in ministry a hotly contested issue it never was in the beginning of the denomination. Who is compromising?

Virtually all Christians concede that certain commands of Scripture are so time-bound as to be inapplicable in the modern setting—the purity laws of Leviticus come immediately to mind. Disagreements arise as to which commands these are and how they are to be recognized as such. The diversity of Scripture makes it necessary to distinguish between its authority and the authorization to move from Scripture to moral claims.

On what grounds do we claim that Scripture authorizes, justifies, or sanctions a given moral claim? We may agree that Scripture is authoritative and still differ widely on whether a given passage provides sufficient and appropriate warrants for a specific moral claim. For example, does the fact that the Old Testament reports that Yahweh authorized ancient Israel to engage in war provide a warrant for the modern practice of warfare? Or, does Jesus' absolute

prohibition of personal revenge provide a warrant for a pacifist stance?

Refer to Resource 17-4 in the Student Guide.

Biblical Authority Authorizes

Perhaps we need to clarify what we mean by biblical authority. Authority provides a sufficient and meaningful basis for action. Authority is more than a list of positive and negative commands. It gives freedom to act within a range of options. Thus, the authority of a local preacher's license is not to order one to preach. Rather, it authorizes one to choose to fulfill the usual functions associated with professional ministry. One with such a license is an authorized person, freed to act—subject to the authority of the Church that stands behind such documents.

In one sense, biblical authority is like the so-called physical law of gravity, which gives us certain freedoms and also sets clear limits to that freedom. One can attempt to defy its authority, but not without consequences. Authority defines the nature of reality—the source and limits of the freedom it authorizes. The crucial realities informing the biblical worldview are the God of the Bible, the biblical story, and the people of God.

This paragraph summarizes Christopher J. H. Wright, "Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology" in Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation. Ed. Craig Bartholomew and others; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004, 124-29.

One problem confronting the use of Scripture in ethics is the same as that complicating its use in biblical theology and preaching—the remarkable dominance of the narrative or story form. The command form, which would on the surface seem to be the key source for ethics, occupies a comparatively small space within the biblical literature. Some recent interpreters, however, have seen narrative material as the most fruitful source of ethical reflection.

The Bible guides our journeys, they say, by the stories of faithful people who have journeyed with God, culminating in the story of Jesus' journey, which led him to the Cross. Stories are different from commands—they have a different impact on us. A good story encourages us to reflect on ourselves and ask deeper questions about who we are and where we are going. A command, on the other hand, does not invite reflection but orders us to act. A choice between the two modes does not seem to be necessary. Both are essential, and neither is without its difficulties. The command mode is flawed by a tendency to treat the Bible as if it were a book of rules.

Applying Scripture to ethics is unnecessarily restricted if we limit ethics to rules and Scripture's contribution to

it as moral norms. Scripture is too complex to limit its usefulness to a treasure trove of moral lessons. It is an anthology, not a single book, a diverse collection by a variety of authors who offer their unique witness to God, their part of the story, and their witness to and for the people of God in their assorted contexts. The Bible employs many ways of telling us who we are and what we are called to become. Virtually every book of the Bible has a moral aspect to it, but moralizing may be the least helpful way of presenting that aspect.

The Exemplary Role of Jesus

Too many attempts to exploit the narrative mode for ethical reflection are marred by excessive dependence on imagination and speculation. Utilization of narrative material for ethics calls for a distinction between what Scripture merely reports and what it recommends. That Judas betrayed his Lord and committed suicide would scarcely recommend such behavior to me, given the negative light in which the New Testament presents him. But what about Peter? His prominent role in the Gospels has led some to consider him an ideal disciple. But it is necessary to insist on a distinction between what is typical and exemplary.

Refer to Resource 17-5 in the Student Guide.

The exemplary role of Jesus is obvious throughout the New Testament. Christians are called to imitate his example, not only implicitly in the Gospel narratives but also explicitly in other non-narrative New Testament material. Nevertheless, a distinction between reflective imitation and mindless copying is called for. Obviously, a wooden and detailed imitation of everything Jesus did—remaining single, wearing sandals, going unshaven, being homeless—is clearly not the point.

Most Christians agree that Christlikeness, that is truly biblical, must include “the cross.” But what does it entail to follow this example, which Jesus explicitly requires of all would-be disciples—acceptance of the cross. Does it require the actual experience of execution on a wooden gibbet? Would a gallows, firing squad, electric chair, gas chamber, or lethal injection be a close enough approximation? Or is this still too literal? Would it be stretching things too much to identify putting up with an irritable roommate, a distasteful job, or a toothache as a “cross”?

The New Testament itself offers some guidance as to what reflective imitation of the Crucified One might involve. Attention to the exemplary model of Christ in this respect is a frequent theme in the letters of Paul.

Thus, Paul identifies the surrender of his personal freedom or apostolic rights in order to minister more effectively to the needs of his converts as imitation of Christ

The Gospels characterize the perils of the life of discipleship, the abandonment of personal security in obedience to Christ, as imitation of his acceptance of the cross. The self-abandoning love that moved Jesus to accept the suffering of the Cross is the object of imitation in John and the Johannine Epistles. Accepting undeserved abuse as Jesus did in his passion is the object of imitation in 1 Peter.

A more subtle implication of the example of Jesus calls for looking beyond specific events in his life to the Christ event as a whole. Reflective imitation of Jesus invites us to think about choices and social problems in the light of what Jesus means and to make decisions in this light. Biblical ethics and biblical theology must be closely related. Ethical insights and norms should arise naturally from imaginative reflection on the major themes of biblical faith.

What happens to our view of biblical ethics if we take seriously the systemic character of evil in our fallen world and the cosmic scope of redemption in Christ? Surely, we would recognize that evangelism—narrowly conceived as “soul winning”—is too truncated a vision of the Church’s mission to the world. God’s concern is not so narrow as to salvage sinful, disembodied spirits from everlasting hell. His concern comprehends the whole person. Resurrection faith has implications for the whole of family life, social relations, and in fact the whole universe. God’s plans for the eschatological future may serve as models for the shape and goals of our social mission in the present.

See 1 Cor 15:57-58.

The Bible and Non-biblical Authorities

There is a clear conflict between the theory and practice of biblical primacy as it relates to moral decision making. In practice, the relationship between the status of the Bible as the norm and other lesser sources of authority is more transformational than dialogic. This is so, in part, because the starting point for ethical discourse is usually a contemporary issue demanding resolution and not the Bible.

Apart from the most basic matters of personal morality, our most pressing contemporary moral issues have arisen as a result of uniquely modern developments. The possibility of nuclear holocaust, the

problems of toxic waste disposal, the technology of genetic engineering, and the problems associated with artificial birth control, mass media, global terrorism, etc., simply did not exist during the biblical period. Consequently, they are not directly addressed by the Bible.

Non-biblical authorities raise these and other issues, which Christians seek to address, by turning to Scripture for relevant solutions or insights. They not only raise the issue but also set the agenda for the moral discussion, documenting as they do the causes and proportions of the problem. On modern issues that the Bible does not directly address, biblical authority serves less as a source of content than as an agent of control.

Refer to Resource 17-6 in the Student Guide.

The Practice of Biblical Interpretation

In practice the Bible's influence on Christian moral discernment and decision-making is meager. If the Bible is actually to be an ethical resource, the church-at-large needs to be more adequately equipped for the task of biblical interpretation. It needs a more adequate understanding of the character of the biblical witness. There is remarkable diversity and variety within the Bible. The form and context of a given scriptural passage are as important as its material content. Biblical authors intimately unite doing and being.

The Church also needs a more disciplined method for the study and use of the Bible. The practice of biblical interpretation is not the exclusive domain of pastors and Bible professors. Laypersons can become responsible biblical interpreters and conscientiously apply the interpretive conclusions of experts. Modesty and flexibility—a willingness to abandon preconceived ideas when the evidence demands and to suspend judgment when the evidence is weak—are essential virtues.

Some interpretations are not as good as others. Interpretation is not simply a matter of choosing among competing opinions. It calls for thoughtful consideration and weighing of the evidence. Because biblical interpretation is a human endeavor, finality and certainty are impossible. Nevertheless, subjectivity need not reign. Some interpretations are more probable than others. Some interpretations are so improbable as not to deserve serious consideration. Thus mature and serious students of biblical interpretation consult the views not only of

commentaries likely to agree with their point of view but also of those that are likely to disagree. There is nothing to fear from the truth, even if it is found in unexpected places.

Evangelical Christians seem particularly fearful of interpretations that challenge their previous theological and ethical views. For them exegesis often becomes an effort to explain away apparent contradictions to their view of the faith, rather than an honest effort to explain what the Bible says. Those Christians who make the highest claims for the Bible's authority seem afraid to let it actually function as an authority.

Those who know God do not necessarily know Scripture well enough to qualify as authorities. Beware of interpretations based on alleged spiritual insight. To defend a given interpretation "because the Spirit told me so" is to make latter-day revelations more decisive than the ancient Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is not a substitute for either indolence or ignorance. The Spirit does not compensate for laziness or lack of information. There is no substitute for serious study. The Spirit's role in biblical interpretation is to confirm and endorse the truth found as a result of serious, disciplined study. He will not contradict the plain sense of Scripture.

It is far too easy to bend the Bible to our own benefit not to pursue a thoughtful, disciplined approach to its utilization in ethics.

Existing Approaches for Relating Scripture to Christian Ethics

Existing approaches for relating Scripture to Christian ethics might be categorized in any number of different ways. The following typology attempt to integrate and evaluate the insights of the diverse attempts into five discrete models.

Refer to Resource 17-7 in the Student Guide.

Handbook

Fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals tend to equate biblical ethics and Christian ethics. They assume that Scripture provides a unique, revealed morality that speaks to every situation Christians face without ambiguity. The Christian's task is simply to find the biblical principles and specific rules relevant to an issue and do as Scripture commands.

This approach takes biblical authority with utter seriousness and is properly critical of allowing cultural norms and values that might compromise Christian ethics. Nevertheless, it has several serious flaws. It is far too simplistic. It overlooks the complexity of contemporary issues and problems, while failing to take seriously enough the historical distance separating the present from the historical period during which the Bible was written. It does not take the whole Bible and its historicity seriously enough. By concentrating on its rules, commands, and prohibitions, major portions of the Bible are ignored. By uncritically equating biblical with Christian ethics, it tends to be unaware of the extent to which its presuppositions and cultural biases have colored its allegedly literal reading of Scripture.

Antique

Very liberal Christians effectively consider biblical ethics to be irrelevant for Christian ethics. Because of the diversity of Scripture, its antiquity, and the—as yet unfulfilled—eschatological expectations that thoroughly color its ethical demands, they treat the Bible as a “White Elephant.” Other criteria of judgment are to be discovered in the contemporary situations of life to determine right and wrong.

This approach takes the problems of Scripture and of the contemporary situation seriously. But its assessment of Scripture overstates the problems. It effectively leaves Christians on their own with no guidance as to the criteria for determining which among the diverse contemporary norms are correct and Christian. These two extreme approaches have little to commend them in the judgment of the majority of scholars addressing the question of the relationship between the Bible and ethics.

Medium

So-called neo-orthodox theologians assign a mediating role to the Bible in relation to ethics. Scripture is not to be understood to *be* the word of God but to *become* the word of God to the serious reader. The command of God is not identical with the content of Scripture, although it reveals the prominent lines of his will. Scripture bears witness to God, who may choose to speak through Scripture, to call for specific obedience, which leaves no room for reflection, application, interpretation, or justification. The concrete command of God is discovered in the context of the church family, at work, and in government.

This approach properly warns against the dangers of legalism and self-justification. It also avoids the oversimplification of the first model. But it fails to explain how commands become specific, especially in the face of moral dilemmas, or how we are to distinguish the command of God from other voices calling for obedience.

Model

Hauerwas in particular.

A number of contemporary scholars have stressed the role of the Bible in the formation of Christian character. The focus of this approach is not on moral decision making but on the process of character formation. Scripture's role is to shape the moral character, identity, perspectives, dispositions, and intentions of the Christian and the Church. Special stress is placed on the communal aspect of character formation as opposed to individual identity. Its discovery of the biblical assumption that *doing* arises from *being* causes it to diminish the Bible's role as a "problem solver" in favor of its role as a "people transformer."

The emphases on the Christian community as the context in which ethical discernment should occur, on character formation, and on the necessity of taking the whole Bible seriously, not just its rules and laws, have much to recommend this approach. However, it remains vague, how one moves from biblically formed character to specific moral decisions.

Resource

The Bible is a resource for normative reflection. This approach recognizes that, because there is no one-to-one correspondence between the biblical material and many contemporary moral dilemmas, biblical-theological reflection is necessary. Yet it also assumes that Scripture may provide norms, rules, principles, and presuppositions necessary for moral decision making. Scriptural resources establish dispositions for or against particular courses of action, making it difficult to take an opposite course.

Obvious examples would include the scriptural presumptions against killing and lying. There are imaginable situations that might call for an exception to these presumptions. But exceptions should remain genuinely exceptional, be adequately justified, and never made the foundation for rules or principles. Some principles may be so strong as to allow no exceptions. Problems arise, of course, when one is

faced with genuine moral dilemmas, necessitating a choice between two evils, such as lying or killing.

This approach takes seriously both the need for the Bible in moral decision making and its content. It leaves room for the diversity of Scripture and the difficulties of modern moral dilemmas. Yet, it establishes no clear method for moving from reflection on the biblical text to moral decisions and actions. How does one avoid rationalizing or distorting ethical reflections as a result of the unconscious influences of contemporary presumptions? How does one distinguish principles and rules that should be considered absolute and timeless from those that are temporary and relative?

From Biblical Principles to Appropriate Conduct

Refer to Resource 17-8 in the Student Guide.

Despite the ever-present temptation to legalistic excesses, especially within the Pietistic Holiness tradition of which the Church of the Nazarene is a part, there is ample justification for biblically based rules, even for mature Christians. But life's situations are so unique that it would be impossible to anticipate every moral contingency. This is the advantage of principles over rules. But principles require persons whose cognitive maturity makes them capable of principled thought—the ability to construct and grasp broad generalizations based on similar, although not identical, cases. Through reflection, biblical stories may give rise to principles, which operated in God's dealings with his people long ago, and which, by analogy, may still provide ethical guidance today.

An Example Based on Acts 10

Chapters 10, 11, and 15.

Take, for example, the familiar story of Peter's housetop vision of unclean animals, which persuaded him to preach the gospel to Gentiles, despite his previous scruples. The incident is so crucial for Acts' defense of the Gentile mission that it is mentioned three times. The narrative offers no explicit rules or principles. What it does provide is the basis for a theological insight, "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality" (10:34; RSV). But this insight has a moral force so profound that it compels Peter to act.

The consequence of Peter's response and God's confirmation of the soundness of his new insight quell the critical objections of his peers steeped in their own similar prejudices (11:1-18). Those today who

seriously reflect on this story risk having their own prejudices challenged by the vision of an impartial God (10:34). At this level the story serves to form Christian character.

The operative principle is not simply “impartiality”—that all people equally deserve a Christian’s respect and concern. It is the principle of the imitation of God—that our actions should be coherent with those of God.

The basic principle assumed here—that believers ought to imitate God—is stated explicitly in many biblical commands. For example, “Be holy, for I, the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 20:26, paraphrased). And implicitly in many crucial biblical stories. God’s gracious deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt is urged as the motivation for Israel’s gracious dealings with aliens and orphans (Deut 24:17-18). God’s forgiveness of our trespasses motivates, enables, and so requires us to forgive those who trespass against us. It is also an ethic of love—“We love because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). But the love ethic is Christologically grounded: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12, RSV). Christian love must express itself concretely in specific self-emptying, other-oriented behaviors.

That Christians do/should love one another is a point frequently and forcefully made in the NT: Rom 12:10; 13:8; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:2; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess 1:3; Heb 10:24; 1 Pet 1:22; 3:8; 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 14, 16, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; and 2 John 5.

A Homely Example from Deuteronomy 22

Dr. Lyons writes, “As a teenager growing up in my very conservative home church, I began to question the unwritten rule that Christian women should not wear slacks. This rule was faithfully observed—by all the good sanctified ladies in the congregation—until cultural trends finally won out in the mid-1970s. The only biblical proof-text I recall being used to support this prohibition was Deuteronomy 22:5: ‘A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.’

“At first, the moral implications seemed obvious enough: women shouldn’t wear pants and men shouldn’t wear dresses. No one had to tell me not to wear my sister’s skirt. Yet I could not escape the memory of those *Nu-Vu* posters from Sunday School class depicting biblical scenes in which men and women alike wore dresslike robes.

“I’ll never forget the perplexity of coming across the context of this passage about gender-specific clothing for the first time in my private devotional reading. Particularly troublesome was the nearby passage,

Consideration of the context never really seemed necessary as I merely listened to sermons. In fact, I recall hearing a topical

Mother's Day sermon based on the text, "The Lord has need of them." My pastor gave us lots of good reasons why Christian mothers were a necessity. But he never bothered to tell us that his text was from Matthew 21:3 or that "them" referred, not to mothers, but to a donkey and her colt.

Deuteronomy 22:8—"When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof." A standard dictionary was enough to explain that 'parapet' referred to a fence.

"Although none of the devout women in my home church wore slacks, no one's house had a fence around its roof—not even the parsonage. And so I puzzled over the application of the one command and the neglect of the other.

"And then another *Nu-Vu* memory came to my rescue. All of the houses in those biblical scenes were small and flat-roofed. It did not take much research to learn that such roofs served as auxiliary sleeping areas during the hot, dry Palestinian summer months. Thus, parapets were essential safety equipment for such houses. No one could possibly have slept on the steeply pitched Midwestern houses I knew, which were designed to shed frequent summer rain and winter snow. So was the ancient command irrelevant in Illinois? Or was there an underlying principle that might be applied more broadly? Was God concerned not only about people getting saved and sanctified but also that the houses should be safe places to live?

"And what was I to make of the passage about men's and women's clothing? A little research about Canaanite fertility religions and temple prostitution suggested that this issue was not really about clothing but about what it represented. In this light, the principle of maintaining distinctions between the genders and the strong revulsion within Israel's law for homosexual practice suggest that this passage might still have relevance, although not so simple as the one we were harangued about in my home church during the 1950s and 1960s."

Conclusion

In one sense, every lesson in this module on biblical theology has more or less obvious ethical implications. The principles and examples suggested in this introduction to the biblical foundations for Christian ethics may serve as a launching pad for your own reflection on the imperatives implicit in the themes of biblical theology.

Small Groups: Homework Essays

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into pairs.

Read each other's essay. Give careful consideration to the presentation and the ideas presented. Mark the places where you disagree with the statements and state why. Mark the places where the ideas were not supported. Mark the places where you feel that the argument was clear and well-documented. Ask each other questions about the papers.

Collect homework papers.

Write out a response to the critique of your paper.

Guided Discussion: Biblical Ethics

(25 minutes)

You may want to write down some of the themes as students give response to give some direction to the following question.

Use the examples in the lecture as a basis for initiating the discussion.

Again you may want to make a list for the class to see.

Consider cloning, stem-cell research, euthanasia, poverty, medical care, violence, terrorism, war, etc.

Think about a few of the major biblical theological themes treated in earlier lessons.

What ethical principles come to mind as implicit in each theme?

What are some current events that call for thoughtful reflection from a biblical-theological perspective?

What biblical principles ought to be taken into consideration in coming to a Christian position on these issues?

Individual Work: Formulation of Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

From your reading, discussions, and the ideas presented in the lecture write 6 to 10 statements to be added to your catechism statements.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to read 1 or more of their statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following biblical passages: Genesis 17:1-8; Exodus 20:8-11; Psalm 90; Ecclesiastes 3:2-8; Zechariah 12—14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4; Galatians 4:1-7; Hebrew 3:7-15; 1 Peter 1:19-21. Prepare theological statements that these verses/chapters seem to support.

Read the following articles in NDBT: Time, Wisdom

Prepare 10 thought-provoking but factually based questions, over the assigned reading and provide model answers to these questions. A good question should require more than a one-word answer.

Write in your journal. Reflect on your response to this lesson. Were there areas of resistance? Were there moments of enlightenment? How will this lesson make a difference in your life and ministry?

Lesson 18

Wisdom and the Secret of Time

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	When the Time Had Fully Come	Lecture	Resources 18-1—18-4
0:35	Homework Questions	Class Activity	Homework
0:55	Theological Considerations of Time	Lecture	Resources 18-5—18-11
1:25	Formulation Statements	Writing	
1:35	Catechism	Small Groups	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Banks, R. *The Tyranny of Time*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997.

Barr, J. *Biblical Words for Time*. London: Allenson-Breckinridge Books, 1969.

Brower, K.E. and Elliot, M.W. (eds.). *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in Bible and Theology*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Cullman, O. *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

In pairs have the students read each other's homework.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

This lesson is *not* a study of how the biblical presentation of time relates to the present-day scientific understanding of time as one dimension of a complex universe, but rather it's purpose is to expose the various biblical uses of time and in particular its relationship to wisdom and the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scripture informs us that Jesus came in "the fullness of time." The concept of choosing the right time for an event is as important as the strength of righteousness in wisdom literature. Both of these concepts run throughout Scripture.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- summarize the Bible's approach to God's timing and its place in salvation
- be able to articulate the role of wisdom in the life of the believer

Lesson Body

Lecture: When the Time had Fully Come

(25 minutes)

Time

Time is a concept that appears with creation. The cycles of years, months, and days and the progression of life through the seasons are all established by the act of creation. Time is related to living within creation. There is no philosophical or mathematical discussion of time or any attempt to determine its relationship to matter, space, and eternity. These are modern questions that have perplexed physicists who understood time as a fourth dimension and more recently have explained it as one of several dimensions. Scripture only touches the fringe of such concerns when it places God in a unique relationship to time.

Currently physicists are arguing that time is the fourth of possibly 11 dimensions needed in order to explain their understanding of the movement of particles within the electrons, protons, and neutrons of atoms.

The words used to express time are varied, but the focus is always on the relationship of time to people. The variations are largely due to the many different ways in which time impacts life.

Periods and Points of Time

One of the most common ways in which time is used in Scripture is with reference to various and different periods of time. The names of those periods can also be used to specify specific points in time.

Refer to Resource 18-1 in the Student Guide.

All the Old Testament references in the King James Version translated "hour" are translated as "time" or "day" in the NIV, and the only use of "hour" in the NIV—Ecclesiastes 9:1 indicating time of death—is translated as "time" in KJV.

- The hour is not a time period of importance in the Old Testament and is translated in a variety of ways. It is used in the New Testament usually to indicate a point in time but also as the occasion of a momentous or difficult event such as Mark 14:35 when Jesus asks that the hour pass from him and is quoted as saying, "Take this cup from me."
- The day, sometimes designated as evening and morning since the Hebrew day started at sunset, is based upon the relationship of the earth to the sun. Days were simply numbered except for the seventh day, which was the Sabbath. The word "day" is frequently used as "day of" in order to specify an event—battle, judgment, wrath, redemption—or the eschatological day of Yahweh. In the plural it is

often used to refer to the period of time in the past—days of old—and most commonly to the period when some recognized ancient person lived.

- The week, made up of seven days, the last of which was the Sabbath, was an important time period. The focus of the week was the Sabbath, the day set aside for worship. It should also be noted that male children were to be circumcised on the day after they had completed their first week of life—the eighth day. The Sabbath cycles are probably the most theologically significant cycles of time in Scripture.
- The period that the month represents is more complicated, for it is tied to the cycle of the moon but adjusted in order to fit the annual solar cycle. Most references to a month are to a specific month named by number. In Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Kings four Canaanite month names are used. Babylonian month names appear in Nehemiah (3), Esther (12), and Zechariah (1). Later the Jews adopted the Babylonian names and used them in their calendar. Hosea uses “month” most likely to refer to the New Moon Festivals, but the only euphemistic use of “month” is Jeremiah’s reference to mares in heat (Jer 2:24). The New Testament refers to “month” only 4 times—two in Luke 1 when recounting the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary, and two in Revelation. Revelation 9:15 indicates that four angels had been ready for the task at this specific time—this “hour, month, day, year.”
- The year is another important period of time. Most references either establish a chronology, the age of an individual, or length of rule of a king. All of the religious festivals were held on an annual basis, although they were adjusted to coordinate to the monthly cycles. The most important of the festivals was the Day of Atonement for the sins of Israel. It was the day on which the high priest could enter the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice. The Prophets and the New Testament did use the term “year” in an eschatological sense. They spoke of the year of freedom, the year of redemption, and the year of punishment. Luke records Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth as “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
- The use of terms like “morning,” “midday,” and “evening” are usually straightforward references to the various segments of the day, and in the Old Testament are the dominant divisions of the day.

*Ezekiel 46:17, Isaiah 63:4;
Jeremiah 11:23.*

The New Testament tends to follow the hour structure of the Roman world.

Cycles of Time

Refer to Resource 18-2 in the Student Guide.

The repetitiveness of the various time cycles is seen as one of the indications of the faithfulness of God. He established evening and morning and the rising and setting of the sun, and these go on throughout time. Twice in Scripture irregularities in the cycle are noted, and affirmed as special signs from God. The first was when the sun and moon stood still when Joshua asked them to, so that the battle could be completed (Josh 10), and the second when the shadow moved backward on the steps of Ahaz as a sign for Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:29). The affirmation is that God controls the sun and all cycles associated with it.

The lunar cycle is recognized, but it was not as dominant as it was among many of Israel's neighbors. The new moon was one time when regular sacrifices were to be made, and during the time of King Saul these occasions were important. Only in Psalm 81:3 is the full moon noted as a significant time. Hosea does not see the New Moon Festival as a blessing. For those who practice evil it is a curse that will devour them (Hos 5:7).

The cycle of seasons was important socially and religiously, for the festivals occurred annually and several like the First Fruits and Harvest were in direct connection with the various seasons.

The cycles associated with the Sabbath were the most important. By New Testament times the ritual observance of the Sabbath had become foundational in Jewish thought. Other aspects of the Sabbath cycles such as letting the land lie fallow every seventh year, or observing a Jubilee with the restoration of property to the original owners and release of slaves, were not emphasized and there is little evidence that these practices were observed. Nevertheless the concept of Sabbath was important both in the Old and the New Testaments. We will examine its theological role.

Generation

Refer to Resource 18-3 in the Student Guide.

*4—the number of man
10—the number of completeness*

Just what is meant by the time period of a generation is not always clear. The wilderness wanderings, 40 years, are often used to indicate that this is the standard period of a generation, and certainly the combination of 4 and 10 as symbolic numbers would support such a conclusion.

One aspect of the problem is that we are not sure about the mathematical system in use in ancient times. It is possible that in Abraham's time the base for numbers was 6 and 60, which was normal in Mesopotamia, instead of our normal base, 10. This would considerably reduce the number of years.

The genealogical tables, other than those of the pre-Israelite period, indicate that it was often 40 years before a man had a child. The renewal of the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15: 13 includes 2 statements that challenge this assumption. The first, verse 13, states that Abraham's descendants would be in Egypt as slaves for 400 years. The second, verse 16, states that they would return to Canaan in the fourth generation. It raises many questions about the temporal meaning of generation.

A similar problem arises when Matthew 24 is examined where Jesus relates a series of events that will take place. These events include the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, part of a listing of signs that will occur before His return, and the statement that follows: "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" (Mt 24: 34). The word is not exclusively a standardized time between the birth of a man and the birth of his firstborn. Neither is it just the average length of a person's life. As a time period designation it can have a variety of meanings related to the concept of a generation.

Chronology and Progression of Time

Throughout Scripture, and especially in the Old Testament, attention is given to the order of things in time. Genealogies, especially those of the ancients, give the length of life and age of the father at the time of the birth of the firstborn son. When judges and kings appear on the scene, the start and end of their reigns is almost always given, and after the division of the kingdom it is given in relation to the reign in the other kingdom. Many of the events recorded in the books of the prophets are placed in specific time slots. Ezekiel the priest is unique in that he precisely dates each of his visions. They began in the fifth year of his exile, the year of his call to be a prophet.

The exodus from Egypt is referred to as a focal point in the progression of time for Israel. Abraham had been told that his descendents would be slaves in Egypt for 400 years. When the building of the Temple began it was noted that this was 480 years after the exodus. It is interesting that Stephen and Paul are the two who seem most interested in noting spans of time in the life of Israel. Both included these in their sermons, but they are not precise. Paul tells us that it was about 450 years from the descent into Egypt until the establishment of the kingdom; and 430 years from Abraham to the giving of the Law.

Symbolic Periods of Time

Jeremiah 29:11

Daniel 9:2

When time is associated with numbers, the meaning may be symbolic and not chronological. The most common is 7, the cycle associated with the Sabbath, which is then applied to years to get the sabbatical year and seven sevens to get to the Jubilee year. The time from the Exile until the punishment of Babylon was to be 70 years. Daniel takes this to 70 weeks of years until the coming of the Redeemer.

The next most common is the number 40. Associated with years it usually indicates the full span of a generation. Associated with days it was complete time for a man, thus Jesus was tempted after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness. Many would also understand the 1000 years of Revelation 20 as symbolic of a complete period of time.

Wisdom and Time

Refer to Resource 18-4 in the Student Guide.

The concepts of time are found in all of the forms of literature in Scripture, but are clearly articulated in the wisdom teachings. Wisdom literature places considerable emphasis upon time, particularly from the standpoint of knowing the proper or appropriate time. The whole focus of wisdom literature is to guide the “son”—the learner—in the proper application of the principles of the Torah to the details of daily life. This involves the proper use of time under the guidance of the Creator, the one who knows all about time. The “fear of Yahweh”—which is the proper respect for Yahweh—becomes the foundation for the gathering and timing of the use of knowledge with wisdom.

It is often noted that wisdom literature does not concentrate on the ceremonies associated with the Law, particularly laws relating to redemption. This is not its purpose. Wisdom does not address the activities of the Temple but does address the activities of daily life. Wisdom addresses redemption in terms of maintaining good relationships with your neighbor. It shows how to apply the creation and redemption principles to daily life.

We will now look at some of the major emphases of Wisdom.

Integrity

A prime aspect of the character of a wise person is that person’s integrity, the correlation of word and deed. The wise man tells us that when a word is

spoken it is essential to keep that word, even if it means hurt to the person who gave the promise. This is the essence of honesty and of truth. Jesus, the epitome of wisdom, reminds us that the source of anything other than absolute integrity is the evil one. There is no period of time when integrity is out of order.

Sexual Morality

A major emphasis of both Old and New Testament wisdom is the corrupting effect of immoral living. Extensive wisdom lectures warn the young man of the dangers of yielding to uncontrolled sexual passion, and the importance of avoiding those situations where temptation occurs. In the wisdom expressed in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus follows the pattern of the wise men, for he instructs us to avoid looking at temptation because adultery really occurs in the mind. Jesus also extends forgiveness to the transformed immoral person and accepts them into fellowship, an aspect missing in Old Testament wisdom where the seductress is consistently condemned.

Neither the Old nor New Testament wisdom treat the sexual relationship as intrinsically evil. They see it as one aspect of good creation. Great emphasis is placed upon finding a good wife, and the value of a good wife, and the sensual and intimate aspects of courtship are promoted in the Song of Solomon. Even Paul warns that a home can be damaged if the sexual act is denied without the willing participation of both parties in such abstention. A man at war with his wife will have difficulty when he wants to approach God in prayer.

Ethics

Acting in accordance with standards based on the Torah ethics is not done abstractly but primarily in terms of the way in which you treat your neighbor. Lying, stealing, haughtiness, and pride are all actions that are denounced. Praise, generosity, and kindness are the standards that are promoted. The Sermon on the Mount and stories such as the robbery en route from Jerusalem to Jericho reveal that the perspective of Jesus is much the same as that of the Old Testament wisdom writers.

Injunctions and warnings are given to judges to encourage fair treatment of all and avoidance of the corruption that comes from bribery. The way in which you treat the vulnerable—the widows, orphans, and

strangers—reveals your commitment to ethical behavior. In all cases the behavior has to coincide with the time when that behavior is needed. There is an implicit relationship to timing. Assistance is rendered when it is needed.

Hard Work

The so-called Protestant work ethic has its roots deep in the wisdom literature. Laziness and idleness are consistently condemned. The emphasis carries over into the New Testament with the concept of “redeeming the time” (KJV) or “making the most of every opportunity” (NIV). The emphasis is not on keeping busy but rather on working toward the accomplishment of a purpose. The ways of ants are suggested as a guideline. Even when the call comes to follow Jesus it is in terms of involvement in His purpose—“take up the cross.” In the kingdom of heaven those who have been faithful are rewarded by being given more responsibilities.

There is a tension here. Work, which might be seen as the consequence of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, is perceived by the wise man as the purpose-fulfilling norm for the six days preceding the Sabbath. The contrast is very clear when we look at the pessimism of Ecclesiastes, where work for the sake of accumulating riches is noted to be empty of meaning—pure vanity. The rich and the poor, the lazy and the hard worker, all end up the same way because they have not remembered their Creator.

God First

Apart from the declaration that the proper respect for God is the foundation for wisdom, we have the remarkable advice at the conclusion of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Live it up while you can, because the time will come when you will not enjoy life. In the midst of this seemingly sarcastic advice comes the reminder that the actions of life will be judged and that the physical pleasures of youth have no real meaning. This is followed by the advice to turn to the Creator while young when you can really enjoy the relationship with Him.

Repeated warning is given that aging brings loss of ability and makes it difficult to establish and enjoy the relationships that we should have. Jesus’ advice to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness is a much more positive declaration of the same truth—satisfaction and meaning come not from goods

accumulated or physical experiences, but from our relationship to God. Well-being will follow.

Timing

Ecclesiastes 3 opens with a list of things that have their appropriate time. A wise person knows the times and uses them accordingly. The secret of knowing the right time is knowing God. This can be applied to every area of life. The most important area is recognition of the right time in relationship to God. Jesus accused the leaders of the Jews of failure to know the times. Their presuppositions about the nature of the Messiah meant that they failed to recognize the meaning of what was happening in their very midst. Jesus had come from heaven when the time was right, he and ushered in the new covenant.

Understanding Suffering

A basic assumption shared by the Torah, the Prophets, and the wise men was that a consequence of sin is suffering. Suffering follows sin. If you sin, then you can expect suffering in your future. The problem was that good men sometimes suffered and evil men sometimes prospered. The latter could be understood in the way that the destruction of Babylon and of the Canaanites was understood—that the evil being done was not yet full—and therefore the time of consequence had therefore been postponed to a future date. For Babylon this was to be 70 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and for the Canaanites destruction would come with the conquest under Joshua.

The problem of good men suffering was more difficult and is the subject of discussion in Job. The prose and poetic sections together declare that Job did not suffer for any sin he had done, but because it served a point that God wanted to make in His heavenly council. It does make clear that all suffering is not the result of the suffering individual's sin. When Jesus healed the man born blind, he noted that the blindness was to provide opportunity to glorify God. Isaiah gives deep meaning to suffering as he presents the true servant of God who suffered because the sins of others were being carried. This is the context for the understanding of the sufferings of Jesus on our behalf.

Class Activity: Homework Questions

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into two teams. Have them spend five minutes selecting the 10 best questions from among those written by their members. Have a member of each team pose one question to a volunteer from the other team. Repeat the process until each person has asked and answered a question.

If the person does not answer the question adequately, the other members of the team may consult and offer a better answer for half credit. The facilitator will serve as the final judge as to the adequacy of an answer. The team with the most points at the end of the 30 minutes wins.

Perhaps the losing team will treat the winners after the class session—coffee and soft drinks?

Lecture: Theological Considerations of Time

(30 minutes)

In the next few minutes we want to examine five of the ways in which Scripture uses time theologically.

Appropriate Time

The wisdom concept that there is an appropriate time for everything is not essentially theological. To do or say the right thing at the right time is true wisdom, while doing or saying the right thing at the wrong time is foolishness and out of harmony with God. The belief that God knows all the right times, and judges in accordance with the observance of the right time, is theological. Typical of the wise men, there is no listing of the right time for prayer, sacrifice, repentance, praise, or any of the religious ceremonies in the listing of times in Ecclesiastes 3. Is the writer separating the secular from the religious? Probably not. Is the writer ignoring this area because failure to pray or sacrifice at the proper times is widely recognized as sin and perceives it to be wisdom's task to remind followers of Yahweh that failure to observe the appropriate times in any area of life is also wrong?

The phrase "not yet" occurs in Scripture and usually indicates that from the perspective of the writer the

Refer to Resource 18-5 in the Student Guide.

Ecclesiastes 3:17

fact that was being mentioned had already come to pass, although in the narrative it had not. In some cases this meant that the proper time for the event had not arrived, although in the case of Pharaoh it was an indication of his unwillingness to accept defeat. In a few cases it means that it had not happened up to the time of the writing.

Many different expressions like “due time” and “fullness of time” convey the idea that something had not yet happened because the proper time had not arrived. The concept occurs as early as the covenant with Abraham when God relates a delay in giving Canaan to Abraham’s descendants because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen 15: 16). In some cases the implication is that persons had not yet reached the point where action needed to be taken—as in the above reference and in the delay of the Second Coming related in Matthew 24. Over and again the Gospel of John notes that Jesus could not be touched or did not go to Jerusalem because it was not the right time.

In the Old Testament we have several injunctions that tell the Israelites to set the stage for an appropriate time to teach their children. Teaching was supposed to take place in the homes at the times of the feasts, but monuments of stone were to be erected to stimulate the questions of the youth.

One of the most common time-related concepts is the idea that the right time has arrived and action now will be taken. These times are set and known by God alone.

- Jeremiah states no one can set time for God—Jeremiah 50: 44.
- The Babylonians were destroyed when their time had come—Jeremiah 51: 33.
- Esther was queen when her time came—Esther 4: 14.
- Ezekiel warned Jerusalem that her time of punishment had come—Ezekiel 7.
- Daniel in his visions places them at their appointed time—Daniel 11: 29.
- Paul tells us that Jesus arrived when the time was right—“in the fullness of time”—Galatians 4: 4.
- The Synoptic Gospels relate that Jesus went to Jerusalem to face death when the right time had arrived. Most such references have an eschatological meaning.

Eschatological Time

Refer to Resource 18-6 in the

Student Guide.

Amos 5:17-24

Isaiah 13:6

Ezekiel 30:3
Joel 2:11

The eschatological use of time-related terms is common particularly in the Prophets and in the New Testament. The people of Israel wanted the day of the Lord to come because they thought it would be a day of vengeance upon their enemies, but as Amos warned it would be a day of judgment upon Israel. Isaiah told the people to wail because it would be like destruction from the Almighty. Ezekiel was more comforting to the exiles when he told them it would be a day of doom for the nations. Joel called it great and dreadful. For all the prophets it was a day to be feared.

1 Peter 4:17

In the New Testament, both in the parables of Jesus and in the Epistles, we are warned over and again that it is a day that will come unexpectedly and we need to be ready at all times. Again, although it will be judgment of all, Peter agrees with Ezekiel that The Day of Judgment begins at the house of the Lord. Jesus warned the disciples that those who rejected the gospel message would be treated more harshly than Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment.

There is an implication of a cyclical eschatological event in the way that the coming events are tied to the past. The Day of Judgment is a return to the kind of thing that happened at Sodom. The return of Christ will be in a time like the time of Noah. These declarations about the day of the Lord and those announcing the return of Jesus use "day" and "year" as the markers of the great eschatological events.

Efforts of many scholars through the ages to turn them into specific chronological periods, usually related to the time in which that scholar lived, have failed and tended to make a mockery of the great events that they wanted to highlight. The words of Jesus that he emphasized so often still stand: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mt 24:36).

The Time Is Now

Refer to Resource 18-7 in the Student Guide.

Throughout Scripture there is the basic understanding that we live in the present, should remember and learn from the past, should plan for our descendants to remember the great events of our present, but that we look forward to the future. The consistent call from the Torah, the Prophets, and the wise men is for action in the present.

- We are to obey the law now.
- We are to repent of our sins now.
- We are to speak the proper word now.

It cannot be any other way.

Hosea called upon the people to sow righteousness and reap in mercy, to break up their fallow ground because it is time to seek Yahweh (Hos 10:12). Joel's great vision of the multitudes in the Valley of Decision who are about to be overtaken by the decimation of evil that accompanies the day of the Lord is a powerful motivation for repentance now (Joel 3). Jesus' parable of the 10 virgins again warns that now is the time to get things right, for when the now of the coming of the bridegroom arrives it is too late (Mt 25). Paul quotes Isaiah's statement that a day of salvation is coming and emphatically tells the Corinthians, "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2).

During Jesus' conversation with the woman at Sychar's well, he gives the disciples a reminder that salvation occurs in the present. Using the image of the harvest that comes at the end of the summer, he points to the people streaming toward them over the verdant springtime green fields and tells them, "The fields are ripe for harvest" (Jn 4:35). It is a powerful reminder that the proclamation of salvation cannot be put off into the future. The writer of Hebrews pleads, "Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today" (Heb 3:13). We only have this present moment in which to act. We must live in the now.

Eternity

Refer to Resource 18-8 in the Student Guide.

There are two basically different ways that eternity is understood in Scripture. The one is the concept of a very long time or enduring for all time, and the other is that eternity is something outside of the boundaries of creation. At times it is difficult to know which of these concepts is the intention of the writer. When words like *lanetsach* or *tamid* or a phrase like *kol hay yamim* are used in the Old Testament, it is clear that the writer means "for all time," "continually," or "all the days" respectively.

The uncertainty arises with the use of the variations of *olam* in the Old Testament and *aiona* in the New Testament, and these are the most common words translated as "eternal," "everlasting," "forever" or "eternity." In the Old Testament "forever" is the most common NIV translation and hundreds of times implies "throughout all of time." Canaan was to be Israel's heritage forever (Ex 32:13). The stones by the banks of the Jordan at Jericho were to be a memorial forever (Josh 4:7). The Lord would be witness between David and Jonathan forever (1 Sam 20:23).

The list could go on and on regarding things that would be enduring but do not carry an implication of continuation beyond the realms of time. Sometimes it is also used to speak of enduring punishment of various types. Naaman's leprosy would cling to Gehazi and his descendants forever (2 Kings 5:27). The psalmist often asks God why punishment is going on forever.

What God does and what God is, is enduring and consistent. This seems to be the implication of the frequent use of the term in connection with the covenants that God makes and His *chesed* that lies at the heart of the covenant.

The chronicler and particularly the psalmists loved to use the expression. It indicates that this is the way God is. This is the way God always acts. He remembers his covenant forever—for a thousand generations! This is a part of His character. Since God exists apart from time, the term tends to carry some meaning that goes beyond time. Both the psalmist and the chronicler liked to emphasize the long-lasting aspect of God by using phrases like "forever and ever" or "from everlasting to everlasting." The phrase strongly emphasizes the enduring aspect of the subject, but does not necessarily project it into a sphere before or after time. It may carry some meaning like "from the beginning to the end."

The wisdom Psalm 49 addresses is the fact that even the richest and most powerful die and their home is the grave forever. It is a very difficult psalm to translate and most versions follow the Septuagint or Syriac texts because the Hebrew is so obscure. Verse 9 indicates that it is impossible to ransom your life, live forever, and not see the pit. The implication is that there is some kind of existence beyond life. Verse 14 is perhaps the most difficult and although NIV, KJV, and NASB are similar, the translations of RSV and the NEB reveal the problems. What does come through clearly in the 15th verse is that God redeems the soul even from Sheol. Forever seems to go beyond physical life.

The conclusion to the blessing Jacob gave to his sons—Deuteronomy 33:27—is interesting because it combines *kedem*, meaning what is before, with *olam*. NIV translates it: "The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." This places God before and under, a support not tied to the limitations of creation.

Isaiah reveals even more remarkable beliefs when he speaks of the One who is coming to rule on David's throne and notes that he will establish righteousness and justice from that time and forever by the zeal of Yahweh Almighty (Is 9: 7). He states that "[Yahweh] Almighty . . . will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will [destroy] death forever" (Is 25:6-8). Isaiah sees eternity as something that nullifies death—a removal of the destiny of humankind who was born to die. These are the forerunners of the New Testament concept of eternity.

Compare 2 Samuel 23:5; 2 Samuel 7:11ff; 1 Kings 11:11.

We must note that "forever" may be conditional. The covenants were conditional upon the observance of the covenant. Genesis 17: 14 clearly implies that any male not circumcised has broken the covenant—it no longer is valid for that person. A similar condition was attached to the covenant with David, who had an everlasting covenant with God. When Solomon broke the covenant, only a portion of the kingdom remained with the house of David.

In the New Testament we do have references using *aionas* that imply an understanding of eternity as a long time. Paul and Peter's letters, the Book of Hebrews, and especially Revelation frequently use the phrase "for ever and ever" to stress this aspect. In the letters this usually occurs in benedictions. In Revelation it can refer to everything from creation to the eschatological kingdom of God. "The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Rev 11: 15). The NIV tends to translate the word as "forever" when it refers to a long period of time.

- The Messiah will reign forever—Luke 1: 33, 55.
- A son belongs to a family forever—John 8: 35.
- Christ who is God over all is to be praised forever—Romans 9: 5.
- Believers get a crown forever—1 Corinthians 9: 25.
- In Hebrews almost everything that Christ is and does is forever—Hebrews 6: 20; 7: 3; 7: 28; 10: 14

But it is not from such New Testament references that we get a clear new meaning to eternity.

Many uses of the terms related to *aionas* in the New Testament are translated as "eternal" or "everlasting" in NIV. Together with *aphthartos* (incorruption) and *athanasia* (deathlessness) and their cognates these reveal two different understandings of the eternal. The first is of life after death—such as Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 15.

Many of the references in the synoptic gospels seem to refer to eternal life with this meaning—Matthew 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 16:9—and those that refer to eternal punishment do refer to post death events—Matthew 18:8; 25:41, 46. It is in the writings of John that we confront clear evidence that eternal life is understood to be a qualitative difference in life that can be a part of the believer's life in the present. John 3:15-16 relates eternal life to belief. Verse 36 makes clear that eternal life is already in the possession of the believer. Jesus tells the woman at Sychar's well that drinking of his water results in an internal spring of water welling up to eternal life (4:14).

John 6:54 reminds us that those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ already have eternal life, and they will be raised on the last day—tying the idea of eternal life now possessed to eternal life yet to come. Jesus defines eternal life as knowing the only true God and Jesus sent by God (17:3).

Paul, who contrasts death as the wages of sin with eternal life as the gift of God (Rom 6:23), also links possession of eternal life to the present explaining that commitment to God leads to holiness that results in eternal life (v 22). Those who have eternal life live life in harmony with the very holiness of God. This is the life we live now as John reminds us: "The Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 Jn 5:20).

The Sabbath Cycles

Refer to Resource 18-9 in the Student Guide.

The last of the time concepts that we will examine in this lesson is the Sabbath cycle. We have noted several times that the work of creation ended with the establishment of a holy day on the seventh day. In that day God rested and fellowshiped with His creatures. The day became the appropriate time for creation to forget about tending to their needs and their work and instead tend to the relationship that they enjoyed with God himself. One day in seven is set aside for this wonderful privilege and purpose. It is not given a special name, simply a day when God rested, *shabbath*. It provides the root for the whole concept of Sabbath—a day of rest and fellowship with God. This rest was shattered by the rebellion of the first pair who then found themselves living in a world where thorns and thistles, pain and sorrow made for unrest.

The Manna and the Sabbath

After the first creation story that ends in Genesis 2:3 and all through the centuries in which the ancients and even the patriarchs of the Jewish nation lived, there is no mention of the seventh day or the Sabbath. There were those who enjoyed some fellowship with God, but such contact occurred at uncertain intervals. There was no longer a time set aside for the worship of the Almighty Creator of the universe. That was the situation until Israel came out of Egypt. Rescued from the bondage of slavery and while they were still on the way to the mountain, Israel was given the opportunity to enjoy the Sabbath relationship.

Exodus 16

So even before the Law was given to Moses on the top of that mountain, God used the gift of manna to instruct Israel in the importance of setting aside a day in which they could forget about themselves and rest in the wonderful relationship that God was offering them. The manna came for six days and had to be gathered each day. Anything left over for the next day would rot—except on the sixth day when they could gather enough for two days and it would remain edible for the seventh day. It required a recognition of their total dependence upon and need for trust in God. Moses explained: “The LORD has given you the Sabbath” (Ex 16:29). The cycle was now established in Israel and linked to the life-giving manna, the bread that came down from heaven.

The Sabbath and the Law

When Israel reached the sacred mountain, God gave them the Law. Incorporated into the 10 statements of the Law is the instruction to observe the Sabbath. Four of the 15 verses of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 are statement and explanation of this law. It was a day to be kept holy. It was a day when work should cease—for everyone in the household including the servants. Its importance was tied to the very act of creation and the setting aside of a day as a day of rest for God, when he could fellowship with his creation. The injunctions regarding the Sabbath centered on resting, including even resting from the preparation of elaborate meals, for no fire could be made.

But at the same time it was a holy day and a day of celebration. The concept was not negative but positive in terms of the relief from hard work that it brought. Leviticus 23:3 stresses that it was to be a day for sacred assembly—the gathering of the people. This was a practice that carried much the same force as the

circumcision of the males, for Yahweh instructed Moses to tell the Israelites: "It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days [Yahweh] made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested" (Ex 31:17).

Routine Worship

The keeping of the Sabbath day became a part of the routine of Israelite worship and culture. In the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles little is mentioned of the Sabbath, not because it was not observed but because it was simply routine. In 2 Kings 4:23 the Shunamite woman's husband asks her why she wants to see the prophet, because it is neither new moon nor Sabbath. In 2 Kings 11 and 2 Chronicles 23 Jehoiadah the priest makes use of the changing of the guard on the Sabbath to overthrow Athaliah and place the legitimate king, the child Joash, on the throne. 1 Chronicles 9:32 mentions the work of the Kohathites who prepared the showbread for presentation each Sabbath. Only Psalm 92 declares that it was specifically written for use on the Sabbath, and may have been reserved to use on that day exclusively.

The prophet Isaiah notes that the person who keeps the Sabbath is blessed (Is 56:2). Amos noted the complaints of the merchants who were unable to make money, let alone practice their cheating ways on the Sabbath (Amos 8:5). Jeremiah scolds Israel because they have not been keeping the Sabbath properly and warns of the disaster that will come, while observance of the Sabbath would bring blessing (Jer 17). Ezekiel notes that the gate of the perfect temple is to be open on the Sabbath for the Prince to make his offerings. Nehemiah called for the observance of the Sabbath in the newly re-walled Jerusalem (Neh 9:14; 10:13). He disciplined those who were breaking the Sabbath and enforced its observance. This indicates the increased emphasis that was being placed upon the Sabbath after the exile to Babylon, an emphasis that grew until by New Testament times the observance of the Sabbath was of great importance.

We should note that the laws of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy all placed emphasis upon the observance of the Sabbath and called for harsh measures, even the death penalty for those who did not keep the Sabbath. Rabbinic law did allow for dealing with emergencies on the Sabbath.

The Sabbatical Years

Refer to Resource 18-10 in the Student Guide.

The concept of Sabbath not only occurs in connection with the week of seven days but was extended to the concept of the seventh year being holy. This was the sabbatical year in which the land was to be allowed to rest. There was to be no sowing or even pruning. The owner simply ate what came up naturally on the land. Again this was a commitment to rest in or trust in Yahweh. This idea of a sabbatical year occurs only in the priestly records and there is no evidence in Scripture that the plan was actually observed. Leviticus 26 concludes with warnings to Israel of the cost of disobedience to the covenant and to the observance of the Sabbath. Verse 34 specifically states that Yahweh will send the people into exile and during that time the land will be desolate and enjoy the Sabbaths that had not been observed. In Chronicles this opportunity for the land to have a Sabbath is coupled with the exile for 70 years prophesied by Jeremiah.

2 Chronicles 36:21; Jeremiah 25:11,12; 29:10

The Jubilee

Another development from the concept of the Sabbath is the very special day or year that follows 7 weekly Sabbaths or 7 annual Sabbaths. The 50th day after a festival Sabbath was a very special day, the day for the feast of the firstfruits. In the NT this became the Day of Pentecost. This festival was celebrated every year as one of the most important in the religious life of the Jews. It was the time for the presentation of the fruit of new beginnings. Certainly this was a good time for the start of the proclamation of the gospel by the newly formed church, the fruit of the incarnation.

Leviticus 23:16

The 50th year, the year of Jubilee, is elaborated in Leviticus 25. Rules and exceptions for the resting of the land, and particularly for the return of land and buildings to the original owners, are spelled out. Freedom is to be given to those Israelites who have been sold into slavery, both parents and children. Again, we have no clear record of these rules being followed by the Israelites. What these do make clear is the concept that the seventh day or the seventh year, one in seven, is the time that should be devoted to the development of trust in and fellowship with God.

The New Testament and the Sabbath

In the New Testament we discover that Jesus had a different view of the Sabbath from the view that had been developed by the Jewish leaders. Following the pattern used by Nehemiah, they had turned the

Sabbath into a rigid sacred event. The tendency of Jews was to admire, observe, and almost worship it. They had multiplied the rules regarding what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. Life-and-death matters were the only work permitted. The disciples were fortunate that the walk from the Mount of Olives to the city was within the limits of a Sabbath day's walk.

One aspect that Jesus, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the priests agreed on was that the Sabbath was a time to gather in the synagogue or Temple, read Scripture, and worship. Paul continued this practice, for Acts records that in their travels he usually met with the Jews on the Sabbath, either in a Synagogue or in their usual gathering place if there were no synagogue.

Jesus' basic understanding of the Sabbath was that it existed for the benefit of humankind. Mark records Jesus' view clearly as "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). All four Gospels record incidents where Jesus' view caused him to clash with Jewish leadership over the Sabbath. His disciples picked and ate grain as they walked through a field on the Sabbath. To the Jews this was a violation of the rule that you cannot harvest or thresh on the Sabbath. Jesus rejected their petty criticism and declared that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

The criticism continued and moved into the area of doing good on the Sabbath. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record a discussion over whether healing was lawful on the Sabbath with Jesus, citing the allowed rescue of a sheep that had fallen into a pit affirmed that it was. He decreed, "Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Mt 12:12; Mk 3:2ff; Lk 6:6ff). Jesus then healed a man with a withered hand, angering the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Luke goes on to record two additional instances where Jesus healed on the Sabbath.

John also records clashes over the Sabbath. In the first the attention of the Jews was drawn to a man carrying his mat. This was a gross violation of the Sabbath laws. When they discovered that Jesus had healed him and told him to pick up his mat and go home, they confronted Jesus and were further angered that Jesus not only healed but declared that he was the Son of God with the authority of God. John notes that they were so angry they wanted to kill Jesus. Two other healing instances are cited in chapters 7 and 9.

There is no sense in which Jesus brushed aside the importance of taking the Sabbath as a time for fellowship with God, but it is very clear that He perceived the day to be one established for the benefit of humankind and that it was perfectly right to do good and care for necessities on the Sabbath.

It is also interesting to note that just as sin shattered the Sabbath relationship of the Garden of Eden, so sin sent the Son of God, the Savior of the world, into the grave on the Sabbath. It was a new beginning, with the shattering of the wages of sin, that took place on the next first day of the week.

The Sabbath Rest

Refer to Resource 18-11 in the Student Guide.

The Book of Hebrews explains many of the rituals of the Old Testament in light of the coming of Christ and gives us an interpretation of the Sabbath in chapters 3 and 4. Its reference point is the barring to entrance into Canaan when Israel rebelled at Kadesh Barnea. Quoting Psalm 95: 11, based on Deuteronomy 12: 9, the writer discusses the failure of Israel to gain the rest that God intended for them in Canaan. They did not understand the ways of Yahweh, nor did they accept His dominion even over Canaan and as a result there was no rest for them. He notes that God had prepared for a day of rest on the seventh day of creation, so the rest for the people of God has been ready since the beginning.

He notes further that Joshua was not able to take them into that rest, which it referred to something more than happened in the conquest of Canaan. We are the ones who can enter into the rest by ceasing from our own works and accepting the work of Christ our High Priest. This is the rest of faith in Christ Jesus. The essence of the Sabbath then is the fulfillment of that fellowship we can have with God through Christ Jesus our Lord. It is the total commitment to Him, walking with Him and in obedience to Him. He is our helper, our enabler. The whole treatise that follows these chapters is on the role of Jesus as the perfect High Priest, the one who truly has the power to take us into the very presence of God and who enables us to enjoy that fellowship. The Sabbath is thus participation in the fellowship symbolized by the sacred seventh day.

The Culmination of the Sabbath

The Book of Revelation, which lays before us the end of time, does not mention the word "Sabbath." The book begins with "the Lord's Day," that vibrant day

that expresses the new way that is opened to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. It concludes with the arrival of the new heavens and the new earth, the New Jerusalem that descended from the skies. This symbolizes the true home of the believers with the 12 apostles as the foundation and the 12 sons of Israel as the gates. There is no Temple because it is not needed—God himself is there.

There is no sun or moon because they are not needed—God himself is the light. The solar and lunar cycles are ended, for now we fellowship with God face-to-face. The rest, the peace that passes all understanding, that begins when we invite Christ to rule our hearts and minds, reaches its climax with this wonderful event, enabling us to bow before the very throne of God Almighty. The Sabbath, the reality of total rest in God, has arrived. Humankind can once again enjoy fellowship with God as was intended in creation and in the establishment of the Sabbath on the seventh day.

Writing: Formulation Statements

(10 minutes)

If your room does not have blackboards or whiteboards, you will need to provide large sheets of paper that can be posted on the walls or flip chart paper.

Write out the key concepts that arise from this lesson.

After you have written your statements, write them on the board for all to see.

Compare your statements with the others.

Rewrite your statements, making improvements.

Small Groups: Catechism

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.

Discuss with your group your progress in the development of formulation statements and the modifications that you are making.

Offer suggestions to each other.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students.

How would you summarize God's timing and its place in salvation?

What is the role of wisdom in the believer?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Isaiah 9—12; 24—27; John 14; Romans 5 and 8; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5; Philippians 1 and 3; 1 Thessalonians 4—5; Hebrews 11—12; 2 Peter 3; Revelation 16—22. Prepare theological statements that these chapters seem to support.

Read the following sections in *NDBT*: Death and Resurrection, Eschatology, Glory, Heaven, Hope, Judgment, Kingdom of God, Life, Revelation (the book), Reward, Salvation, and Worship.

Assign a third of the class to each of the resources.

Read **1** of the following:

- Resource 18-12, "Messianic Hopes"
- Resource 18-13, "Resurrection of the Dead"
- Resource 18-14, "God with Us"

Write in your journal. Reflect on how this lesson has helped your understanding of many passages of Scripture.

Lesson 19

Future Hope

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Future Hope	Lecture	
0:20	Homework Summaries	Small Groups	Homework
0:50	Apocalyptic Hopes	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 19-1 Resource 19-2
1:45	Formulation of Statements/ Catechism	Individual Groups	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Dunning, H. Ray, ed. *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995.

Guthrie, Donald. "The Future" in *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981, 790-892.

Ladd, George Eldon. "Eschatology" in *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974, 193-210, 298-308, 550-68.

_____. "The Kingdom of God" in *The Last Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 103-19.

McDannell, Colleen, and Bernhard Lang. *Heaven: A History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1988.

Purkiser, W. T., Richard S. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. "The Future in Salvation History" in *God, Man, and Salvation: A Biblical Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977, 612-75.

Turner, Alice K. *The History of Hell*. San Diego: Harcourt & Brace, 1995.

Witherington III, Ben. *Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Wright, N. T. *New Heavens, New Earth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to report on their reading of NDBT selections.

Return homework.

Orientation

Eschatology, “the doctrine of last things,” describes the goal of God’s saving purposes for his creation. It defines the believer’s hope—what they confidently expect God will do in the future. The term “eschatology,” coined during the 19th century, traditionally treats topics associated in Scripture with the end of the world. These topics include the coming of the Messiah, the kingdom of God, the resurrection of the dead, eternal life, the age of the Spirit, the final judgment, etc. This lesson treats eschatology from the perspective of both testaments. Including the Old Testament provides Christians with an encouraging reminder that part of what was once only a distant dream has already been realized in Christ. In both English and Greek “the end” may refer to a conclusion or to an intended goal. Christ is/will be the end of history in both senses.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- summarize the main strands of biblical eschatology

Lesson Body

Lecture: Future Hope

(10 minutes)

Lesson 19 overlaps considerably with Lessons 6, 7, 13, and 14. You would do well to review these before you teach.

Christian hope is not so much fixated on a place—heaven: as upon a person—Jesus Christ. As the old hymn by C. F. Butler puts it, “Where Jesus is, ‘tis heaven there.” The Bible never refers to the future hope of believers as heaven. Our hope is that “we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess 4:17).

Matthew expresses the conviction that the birth of Jesus means that God was with us (1:23), that whenever even a few Christians meet he is present (18:20), and that he is with us until the end of the age (28:20). Both Matthew and Mark insist that with the coming of Jesus and his triumph over Satan in the wilderness, the kingdom of God in some sense has already arrived (Mt 4:17; Mk 11:15).

Luke reports Jesus’ claim that his ministry fulfilled ancient prophecies (Lk 4:16-21; cf. Isa 61:1-2). In John, Jesus refers to both eternal life and judgment as present realities (3:16-21). Acts insists that the coming of the Holy Spirit marked the dawning of “the last days” (2:16-21; cf. Joel 2:28-32). Paul saw Christ as the fulfillment of all God’s promises (2 Cor 1:20), his resurrection as the beginning of the end (1 Cor 15:20-28), and the Spirit as the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gal 3).

Early Christians believed that they were already living in the age of fulfillment—the prophetic promises of the Old Testament were realized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in his gift to the Church of the Holy Spirit. Although the kingdom of God had already come to some extent, they learned from Jesus to pray, “May your kingdom come” (Mt 6:10, NLT). Thus, early Christians also looked forward with anticipation for consummation of the present age with the return of Christ and the dawning of the new order.

The passing of less than a century led some Christians to lose faith in this eschatological vision—“Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Pet 3:4, NRSV). Nearly 2000 years of church history have dulled the sense of the imminence of the Second Coming for most contemporary Christians. We formally maintain the doctrine, but how does it impact our daily lives?

See Rom 8: 18-25

Far too often we have gone to extremes. Some preachers offer frequent and wildly speculative sermons on the end times—most of which prove to be mistaken in time. Others, wishing to steer clear of such lunacy, seldom or never preach about the blessed hope (Titus 2:13), except at funerals. And then the focus is on the personal and individual, but not the corporate (we, the Church as a whole) and cosmic (the universe, the entire created order) dimensions of eschatology.

Has the Church of our day become so enmeshed in this world that we have lost a taste for the new order God has promised (2 Pet 3)? Or, do we share the vision of Father Abraham, who “was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10)? Or, of Moses, who “regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Heb 11:26)? Or, of the Christians of western Asia Minor who traded “Babylon” and their earthly lives for the promise of a New Jerusalem (Revelation)?

All who prepared for the Second Coming across 20 centuries and eventually died without seeing it, came to the end of their personal world. And so will we. Every life history has an end—sooner than anyone expects. No one leaves this world alive. We are all terminal; we simply do not know how long we have in the “hospice” we call earthly life. But do we live with vibrant hope while we are alive?

Popular notions about “hope” are quite different from the Bible’s teaching. Hope is not merely optimism about the future. The fact is: Christians have troubles.

Despite a steadily declining percentage of church attendance, despite their half-hearted responses to the demands of the gospel, recent surveys suggest that nearly all Americans expect to go to heaven, by-and-by, when they die. But the Bible offers no basis for such fanciful hopes. Sad to say, as the old African-American spiritual reminds us, “Ever’body talkin’ ‘bout Heaven ain’t goin’ there.”

What is to make us think that genuine Christian hope is any more trustworthy than wishful thinking? Paul’s answer is simple and to the point: The hope God inspires for a bright future “does not disappoint us, for God has [already] poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God’s gift to us” (5:5, TEV). Christian hope for the future is based on God’s already proven love for us in the past. We can

trust God's promises because he has already delivered far more than we had any reason to expect. "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (Rom 8:32, RSV).

Small Groups: Homework Summaries

(30 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students, 1 student representing each of the 3 resources to be read.

In your group read each other's summaries. Ask each other questions about what was learned. Find out what the key theological teaching was in each of the passages.

If there is time, have the groups report.

Collect homework papers.

Lecture/Discussion: Apocalyptic Hopes

(55 minutes)

Refer to Resource 19-1 in the Student Guide.

Isaiah 24—27

We turn to excerpts from Isaiah 24—27, the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse. Its name derives from its similarity to the Book of Revelation—Greek: *apokalypsis*. Here the prophet exploits all the resources of poetic symbolism at his disposal to paint his portrait of "the day of the Lord." Just as "every dog has his day," so God will have his "day" of ultimate victory.

Apocalyptic writings have been called "tracts for hard times." In them the prophet asserts his confidence in Yahweh's control of history. They encourage the faithful that justice will prevail. This confidence prevails even when believers must experience their share of undeserved suffering in the time of divine judgment poured out indiscriminately on the deserving majority.

The Lord's Banquet (25:6-9)

Mt. Zion is hardly a "mountain" by comparison to peaks in the Rockies, Alps, or Andes. But its importance to ancient Israelites was not measured in feet or meters. Zion's hill, as the earthly residence of Israel's God, was unique. For it was here in the Jerusalem Temple that he had chosen to make his presence known.

"This mountain" was not simply the shrine of Israel's national deity. From here the God of the universe held court (see 24:23). "The LORD Almighty" in Hebrew is

Kaiser, 78.

Yahweh sebaoth, literally “Yahweh of hosts.” The title identifies Israel’s God as King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods. Whatever gods people imagined might exist, the whole host of them were under the control of Yahweh. He was “the Lord of all the powers and forces which form and control this world” and possessed all the necessary “power to make his will prevail in this world.” He is One and he is Almighty!

See Phil 2:6-11

Not everyone shared Israel’s monotheistic faith. Not everyone acknowledged the sole sovereignty of Yahweh as the one true God. The task he had given his covenant people was to make him known. “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6). “I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that . . . [all] men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other” (45:5-6). “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. . . . Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength’” (vv 22-24).

Coronations of kings in the ancient world were accompanied by great banquets. Such feasts were attended by the royal family, noblemen, and the elite of society (see 1 Kings 1:9, 25). The myths of Israel’s Canaanite neighbors told of feasts for the gods. But at Yahweh’s enthronement “all peoples” would be invited (25:6; see Mt 22:1-14). Banquets also accompanied wedding celebrations (see Jud 14:10). Early Christians conceived of the heavenly banquet as the consummation of the union between Christ, the sacrificial Lamb, and his Bride, the Church (Rev 21:9). Thus, final salvation is “the wedding supper of the Lamb” (19:9).

“Teetotalers” are those who do not drink alcoholic beverages—originally, those who drank tea only.

This is explained in Jer 48:11 as “wine left on its dregs, not poured from one jar to another,” allowing it to improve with age.

The feast described in 25:6 includes a remarkable menu. In a culture in which meat was a rare delicacy, “rich food,” “the best of meats” indicate that the host spares no expense. We “teetotalers” are embarrassed by the accompanying drink—“aged wine,” “the finest of wines.” Should we begin practicing a speech to our angelic waiter, excusing ourselves and requesting a pitcher of water from the celestial river? Or should we rush out to our neighborhood liquor store to get a head start on the festivities? Before we do either, let us recall that this is poetic symbolism, not prosaic literalism.

To what reality does the symbolic language about Yahweh's banquet point? The invitation in Isaiah 55:1-3 suggests that it is a fellowship meal celebrating the renewal of the covenant and the spiritual blessings it brings (see Ex 24:1, 9-10). "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you."

The banquet is a celebration of salvation, which we are persuaded has already begun. Recall: Jesus' first miraculous sign, marking the dawning of the new age of salvation—turning water into "choice wine" (Jn 2:1-11). The characteristic scene in the Gospels—Jesus, eating with his followers. And the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels—his feeding of the 5000. For Christians the Lord's Supper celebrates our present and future communion with our Lord. As we eat and drink at his table we celebrate the presence of salvation, accomplished in his saving death and anticipating its completion at his second coming.

See Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18; 1 Cor 11:26.

The Hebrew word for death is "mot." "The imagery is borrowed from Canaanite mythology," which depicts the god Mot, "Death," as an insatiable monster feeding on its victims. But in Isa 25:8, Death, the great swallower, is swallowed by Yahweh.

Isa 3:9-11; 5:8-25; 6:5; 10:1-11; 18:1; 24:16.

In Babylonian mythology (see the creation epic, Enuma elish IV, 28) the god Marduk (see Jer 50:2) made a garment disappear and reappear at a banquet of the gods as a demonstration of his power. Here Yahweh demonstrates his power by swallowing the garments of death.

See Is 54:4-10.

See Ezek 37:11-14.

And what will God eat at his banquet? Verses 7-8 announce his universal intention to "swallow up death" and its consequences. The frequent "woe" speeches in the earlier chapters of Isaiah should not be forgotten. They warned of coming judgment with the foreboding wails of the funeral procession. Here the end of all that is associated with the funeral proclaims the coming of an age of salvation.

This prophecy may not originally have been an Old Testament anticipation of the New Testament faith in personal resurrection from the dead. But it becomes that in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 and Revelation 21:4-5, thanks to Christ's resurrection. Instead it may only have announced the end of "the disgrace" of exile—the death of the nation (25:8). If so, it had the same intention as Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. The good news for the original hearers of Isaiah 25:6-9 may have been no more than a restoration of the nation and a return to the land of Israel. The brief psalm of trust in 25:9 expresses the thanksgiving of

the faithful remnant (“we trusted in him”) for Yahweh’s deliverance (“he saved us”) of the nation from exile. “Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Only those whose meat it is to do the will of God (Jn 4:34) will enjoy a part in the messianic banquet. Only those who trust in the Lord alone will dwell in the coming celestial city of God. Salvation has only begun. We await its consummation. Will we share a part in God’s ultimate victory, or be among its victims?

The Lord’s City (26:1-6)

This vision looks forward to “that day” when the delivered exiles will have returned to Judah from Babylonian captivity. When “no longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise” (Is 60: 18). The setting of God’s new start for his redeemed people will be a new Jerusalem.

Later apocalyptic literature sees the New Jerusalem as the celestial city of God (see Rev 21).

See Ps 48: 12-13.

See Ps 24: 3-10.

The prophet sees the city and its temple rebuilt so that the sacred festival calendar may once again be observed (26: 1). Worshipers again stream to Yahweh’s earthly dwelling place. The prophet envisions the ritual by which faithful pilgrims seek and are granted entrance into the temple (26: 2).

See Jer 4: 4-15.

The previous generation had trusted in vain that the presence of the Temple in their midst insured them against the threat of judgment, no matter what they did. “Zion theology” had made idols of the holy city and its Temple. But God’s judgment came upon them just as the true prophets had warned. The returned exiles may rejoice in the restoration of their national existence, the rebuilding of its religious shrine, and the restoration of its rituals. But the prophet reminds them, “God makes salvation,” not the city. God is the source of “perfect peace” not the Temple. Thus, he urges his people, “Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal” (Is 26: 4).

Literally, “peace peace”; see Jer 6: 14; 8: 11; 23: 16-17.

National security was to be found only in Yahweh, not in the compromising political alliances. Judah’s kings had sought security through alliances with Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. When the exiles returned, all these empires lay in ruins. Yahweh is the great leveler—humbling the proud and exalting the downtrodden (vv 5-6). National morality is not a matter of indifference to him. It is “the righteous nation,” “the nation that keeps faith,” that enjoys the well-being—“peace”—Yahweh alone brings.

See, for example, Isa 11:4; 25:4; Ps 14:6; 35:10; 82:3; 140:12; Prov 14:31; 19:17; 22:22; Jer 22:16.

Refer to Resource 19-2 in the Student Guide.

See 5:30; 8:21-22.

The imagery of birth pangs is frequently used in the Prophets to describe the anguish accompanying the destruction of Judah and the experience of the exile. See Isa 13:8; 37:3; Jer 4:31; 6:24. In apocalyptic literature "the birth pangs of the Messiah" (see 1 Thess 5:2) referred to the necessity of suffering for the righteous before the dawning of the eschatological "day of the Lord" (see 1 Thess 5:2).

Judah was neither the first nor last nation to place her trust in undependable sources of security. Military might, democratic government, petroleum reserves, natural resources, economic strength, NATO, and even slogans like "In God We Trust" may become idols. We cannot close our eyes to the plight of the poor and oppressed, even those in the remote corners of our shrinking planet. If we do, we can rest assured that we will face judgment from the God who has made himself their protector. Unless ours is the Lord's city, we build in vain (Ps 127:1), even on Mt. Zion.

The Lord's Salvation (26:16-21)

Invasion by foreign superpowers brought great distress to the people of Israel and Judah (26:1). Assyria and Babylon were instruments of God's discipline for his people. The anguish of exile was like the birth pangs of a woman in labor. With one exception. No child was born to make the mother forget her discomfort. Human efforts to make sense of the national tragedy failed. All their attempts to return to Palestine and restore the nation were in vain. Only when God intervened would deliverance come. Although the nation was as good as dead, God would restore them. As in Isaiah 25:8, the imagery of resurrection in 26:19 refers to the reconstitution of the nation. Mere prose cannot convey the pathos of the confession of human impotence expressed in verse 18: "We were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth; we have not given birth to people of the world."

What will it take for us to learn this lesson? We cannot save ourselves. We cannot keep ourselves saved. We cannot improve on the salvation that is God's alone to give. In him alone is our salvation and security. Just as surely as Romans 7 illustrates the miserable failure of human efforts at self-justification and self-sanctification, this passage reminds us that national revival and renewal are beyond our grasp. All our striving brings only "wind." But even if we can barely whisper a prayer, we may come to God. "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him . . . for he will freely pardon" (Isa 55:6-7). Hear his plea, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth" (45:22).

When the prophecy of Isaiah 26:16-21 was first spoken, the people of Judah were still languishing in Babylonian captivity, the punishment of God. These

See Is 10:24-25; 54:8.

words brought them hope in the dark days that remained “until his wrath . . . passed by” (v 20). Deliverance would come, but not before he had punished the nations he used to execute his sentence of judgment on his wayward people. They, too, would know the sting of his justice.

And what of us who, like the Judean exiles, live “between the times”? We know that the age of final salvation has dawned with the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. And yet, we also know that the days of our exile in an alien land are not yet over. Some of us have taken too literally the consolation of the closed doors of a cloistered existence (v 20) isolated from the world to which we are to be salt and light. Some have forgotten where our true home is. We have grown, too, at home in “Babylon.” Some of our brothers and sisters still writhe in the anguish of oppressive governments and economic deprivation. When Jesus returns, when “the day of the Lord” fully dawns, will he find us faithful and waiting?

Allow for response and discussion.

Challenge the students to think beyond the easy answer.

May we, like the prophets, interpret contemporary events in our day as evidence of God’s judgment or salvation expressing itself in history? What is the problem with doing this?

What’s the problem with the “agnosticism” that refuses to consider which side God is on in contemporary events? How would we interpret events in Eastern Europe since 1989? How about events in the Middle East? The People’s Republic of China? The United States?

What does it mean to “live between the times.” How is our present salvation inferior to the future salvation we await? How are the two similar? What are the dangers of living on probation?

Do we have our own brand of “Zion theology”?

How do you interpret the symbolism of the eschatological banquet?

Other than Daniel 12:2, many biblical scholars doubt that there are any Old Testament passages that clearly hold forth faith for resurrection and life after death. What passages could you cite to the contrary?

See 1 Cor 15:54-55 and Rev 21:4-5.

How do you account for the New Testament’s use of Old Testament passages referring to the return from exile to support the Christian doctrine of resurrection from the dead?

Individual Work: Formulation of Statements/Catechism

(10 minutes)

You may want to allow students to work together.

Write out a statement about each aspect of hope that you have noted in today's study. Organize them into a structure that you believe makes them teachable.

Update your catechism notes with those statements about eschatology that should be included. Give thought to the nature of the catechism that you want to create. Should it be a collection of beliefs or should it take on characteristics similar to those in the ministerial course of study and be concerned with being and doing as well as knowing?

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to read some of the formulation statements.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following biblical passages: Psalm 18—19; Matthew 5—7; 8:5-13; 19:16-21; 20:20-28; Philippians 2:1-13; James 3:1-12; 1 John 4:13-21. Prepare theological statements that these verses/chapters seem to support.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Holiness; Humility and Pride; Righteousness

Identify a mature Christian who has modeled to you a life well lived. Interview that person, asking what biblical passages and principles guided his or her major life decisions. Take verbatim notes on the answer. Summarize and evaluate your interview in about 2 pages.

Make a list of criteria that you would use to determine who should be called great and list biblical characters that fit your criteria.

Write in your journal. Reflect on your sense of hope. Do you tend to be optimistic or pessimistic in most areas of life? How does that affect your faith?

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 20

The Way to Perfect Life and True Greatness

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Perfect and Great	Lecture	Resources 20-1—20-3
0:30	Interviews	Class Activity	Homework
0:50	Biblical Concepts of Perfection and Greatness	Lecture	Resource 20-4
1:05	Criteria for Greatness	Guided Discussion	Homework
1:20	Biblical Guidance to Perfection and Greatness	Lecture	Resource 20-5
1:40	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Greathouse, W.M. *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness*, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998.

Turner, George A. *The Vision Which Transforms: Is Christian Perfection Scriptural?* Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964.

Wesley, John. "The Way to the Kingdom," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd edition, 14 vols, 5.

_____. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *Works*, 11.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on each of the students to share one idea that they gained from the reading of the Bible passages or from NDBT.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

"Perfect," "holy," and "great" are three adjectives that scare Christians. They carry with them an aura of pride and haughtiness that appears incompatible with a Christlike life. "I am perfect" or "I am holy" or "I am the greatest" are statements we leave to arrogant kings like Nebuchadnezzar or braggadocios individuals like the world champion boxer Muhammad Ali. It threatens our piety to observe the clear command from on high to be as perfect as God and to be as holy as God. We marvel that Jesus instructed his disciples on the path to greatness. But it is essential that we set aside our false piety and listen to the word of God, for we are created in the image of God and his intention is that we should be like him.

The consistent emphasis upon this fact throughout both Testaments indicates that this is not some magic transformation that will take place when we die, but rather is an expectation for life in the now. Death moves us from the limitations of the present world into the very presence of God, and that is also a transformation.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to describe the biblical concept of perfection and greatness

Lesson Body

Lecture: Perfect and Great

(20 minutes)

The concepts of perfection and greatness are related in Scripture. Many different Hebrew words are used to express the concepts. The King James Version uses the word "perfect" to translate a variety of terms that more recent versions prefer to translate with words like "complete," "mature," "integrity," "understanding," "whole," "proper," "accurate" and the like. The KJV translates as "great" words that are translated also as "many," "more," "might," "plentiful," "abundant," "honored," and "heavy." We will examine only a few of the terms, including those that are most frequently used.

Refer to Resource 20-1 in the Student Guide.

Perfect in the Old Testament

The roots that are used most frequently to express some form of perfection are *shlm*, which carries the primary meaning of whole and proper, and *tm*, which carries the concept of complete integrity and rightness. None of these words imply the absolute flawless perfection that we tend to associate with the word "perfect." Neither are the words simply indicative of maturity, although that is an element of the completion aspect of the words. They imply that the subject is as it ought to be and not deformed or flawed. Certainly God is given these characteristics and we recognize that in Him they have their fullest and most perfect meaning.

Tam

Tam and its cognates are the words that the KJV most frequently translates "perfection." It can carry a meaning of integrity, wholeness, and completeness along with perfection. Noah and Job are characterized as living in accord with this principle of integrity and perfection. When Yahweh appeared to Abraham in his 99th year, Yahweh instructed him to walk before Him and be *tamim*. The psalmists frequently use the word to characterize and upright, wise, faithful, and obedient person.

Gen 6:9; Job 1:8

Genesis 17:1—*tamim* is a plural form of *tam*

Psalms 18:30, 32; 19:7; 37:37; 64:4

It is quite clear that the word implies righteous living. It has to do with the current and expected behavior of human beings in their relationship to God and to

others. The expectation not only emerges after the giving of the Law, but is present even in the pre-Flood era.

This is in marked contrast to the expectation of being holy. The only time before Moses that the word *qadesh*—make holy—appears is in connection with the establishment of the Sabbath in the first creation story, where the NIV translates it as “made it holy” and the KJV translates it as “sanctified” in that context. Being holy—that is being set apart as property of Yahweh, committed to Him—was a privilege that came with the establishment of the Sinai covenant.

Shalem

Another frequently used root for perfection is *shlm*. This is the same root that is used for the standard greeting, Shalom, which is most frequently translated as “Peace” and is usually accompanied by “unto you.” It is a blessing, calling for things to be as they ought to be in the life of the one to whom *shalom* is extended. The root of this second most common word associated with perfection implies that the proper state of being—maturity, relationship, completeness—has been or is to be achieved.

Once again it is primarily a matter of the establishment and maintenance of a right relationship with others. This is a matter of honesty in your business dealings as well as to “walk in his—Yahweh’s—statutes, and keep his commandments.” The kings of Judah were evaluated in terms of their *shalem* with God.

Deuteronomy 25:15

1 Kings 8:61

Isaiah 38:3

1 Chronicles 28:9

1 Kings 15:3

1 Kings 15:14

1 Chronicles 12:38

- Hezekiah argued for his healing on the basis that he had done what was right and had walked before Yahweh in truth and with a heart of *shalem*.
- David charged Solomon to walk before God with a perfect heart but unfortunately it is recorded that his wives turned his heart away from Yahweh and his heart was not perfect with God.
- King Abijam was not perfect of heart.
- Asa was perfect of heart even though he did not remove the high places where other gods were worshiped.

This word is used of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers that came to Hebron to crown David as king of all Israel.

Summary

Several other words are also translated as “perfect” at times and carry the meaning of full understanding, being finished, fully prepared, or complete. All of the

words taken together reveal that there is an expectation in the Old Testament that human beings would behave with integrity that produces the kind of relationships that will result in the well-being of the person, the family, the nation, and above all in the relationship with God.

Perfect in the New Testament

The terminology in the New Testament is also quite varied. The most commonly used words are:

Refer to Resource 20-2 in the Student Guide.

Akribos

Luke 1:3

Acts 18:26; 23:15, 20; 24:22

The term *akribos*, which implies a perfection of accuracy, is often translated as “perfect.” This is the term used by Luke in the preface of his Gospel written for Theophilus. He is asserting the accuracy of his record. Luke uses the word again several times in Acts when he is describing the clarity and accuracy of the presentation of the gospel by Paul. The word is not used to describe the character of a person other than to assert that the person gives accurate information.

Teleios

Matthew 5:48

Matthew 19:21

John 17:23

Romans 12:2

1 Corinthians 13:10

Galatians 3:3

Ephesians 4:13

Philippians 3:12

By far the most used word for perfection is *teleios* and its cognates. They imply the perfection of being finished, ended, mature, or complete. This is the root used by Jesus when he tells us to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Jesus used it again when he told the rich young ruler that if he wanted to be perfect he should sell what he had and give it to the poor and follow him. He used it again when praying the great high priestly prayer for us requesting that we be made perfect—one with the Son and the Father.

The apostle Paul uses the root many times. In Romans he uses it only in connection with the perfect will of the Father. In the Epistles to the Corinthians the root appears several times in different contexts. Paul addresses Corinthians who are perfect and yet speaks of the time to come when the perfect will come and the partial can be done away. Maturity and completeness seem to be the import of these words.

He ridicules the Galatians because they are turning to the flesh to be perfected. He tells the Ephesians that we all need to become perfect attaining the “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” To the Philippians he writes that he is not perfect and encourages those “of us” who are perfect to “press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” Paul goes on

Colossians 1:28

to say that God will reveal to you anything that is not in harmony with the mind of Christ. In Colossians Paul reminds them that he and Epaphras are working hard so that they will be perfect in Christ.

Hebrews 2:10, 5:9; 9:9

Hebrews 6:1

Hebrews 7:11,19; 10:1

Hebrews 12:23

In the Book of Hebrews the root occurs often. It is used of Jesus who was made perfect through suffering. It is used to encourage believers to move beyond repentance into the full life in Christ. It is used to remind the readers that perfection cannot be attained through the Levitical priesthood and the Law. It is used of the spirits of just men at the General Assembly and church of the firstborn. It is used to remind us that the faithful servants of God from Old Testament times would be made perfect together with us.

James 1:4; 2:22

James 3:2

1 John 4:17-18

James and John also use the root in their Epistles. James argues that faith is perfected by works and we are perfected by patience. He notes that the mark of the perfect man is the control of the tongue. John links perfection to love and fearlessness. It is very clear that perfection, maturity, and completeness are expected of the follower of Christ, and that they are achieved only through the relationship that can be established with Jesus Christ.

Katartidzo

The word *katartidzo* also needs to be noted. KJV translates the word in a variety of ways—"perfect," "mend," "prepare," "restore," "fit properly," "be perfect" and "be joined perfectly." In Luke 6:40 (KJV) Jesus states "every one that is perfect shall be as his master." NIV translates this "fully trained." In 2 Corinthians 13:11 (KJV) Paul says farewell to the Corinthians with these words: "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." NIV translates it "aim for perfection" while RSV uses "mend your ways." Hebrews 13:20-21 (KJV), in the concluding blessing, prays for the "God of peace . . . [to] make you perfect" while NIV and RSV use "equip you with everything good."

1 Peter 5:10 (KJV), also in a concluding blessing, prays that the "God of all grace . . . make you perfect." In this case both NIV and RSV choose to translate "restore." It seems obvious that there is no one English word that conveys the scope of the meaning of *katartidzo*. But at the same time it is clear that the leaders of the apostolic church were deeply concerned that God would accomplish this restoration, this perfection, this training in the life of the believer.

Great in the Old Testament

Refer to Resource 20-3 in the Student Guide.

The words translated as “great” in the Old Testament seldom refer to moral greatness. The two most commonly used words are *gadol* and *rab*. The first is closest to our English word “great,” indicating large size or weight or power. *Rab* is used to indicate abundance, much, a large quantity. The only connection that these words seem to have to moral greatness in humans is to the lack of it, for they are frequently used to describe the great sin and sins of Israel and of Judah or of kings and nations. They are used to describe those who are rich, strong, or important and therefore powerful in society. They are also used to describe the greatness or power or strength and wisdom of God. In Proverbs we do have several links between greatness and wisdom and the greatness of Solomon is tied to his wisdom and understanding.

Proverbs 24:5
1 Kings 4:29

A third root, *kbd*, is sometimes used to express greatness or heaviness, but is most frequently translated “glory” and used to describe that aspect of Yahweh; or “honor” where it is used of God and humankind. It is also used for the organ we call the liver. It is common in languages for an attribute or emotion to be associated with a bodily organ. In Hebrew the heart was the seat of inner thoughts, while in Greek it was the seat of emotion. Zulu and Siswati languages associate courage with the liver. It would seem that a similar link between *kbd* and being honorable or glorious might be indicated here. When Solomon chose wisdom to rule God’s people instead of wealth, longevity, or the death of his enemies Yahweh gives him wisdom and adds wealth and *kbd*—honor. The Book of Proverbs frequently associates *kbd* with wisdom and at times also links it to humility.

1 Kings 3:13; 2 Chronicles 1:11

Proverbs 15:33; 18:12; 22:4;
29:23

Great in the New Testament

Three Greek words are usually translated “great.” They are *megas*, also translated as “large,” “mighty,” and “strong”; *polus*, also translated as ‘many,’ ‘much,’ ‘abundant’ and ‘plenteous’; and *meizon*, a comparative also translated as “elder.” The words are used in much the same way as in English.

One of the striking differences to the Old Testament use of “great” is the absence of applying the adjective to sin. There is no occurrence of “great sin” in the New Testament although this is one of the common uses in the Old Testament. There is New Testament reference

to great faith, great joy, great glory, great power, great wealth, great distress, and more.

Luke 1:15, 32

Another more significant difference is the use of the word as a noun as was stated of John and Jesus: "He will be great." In both cases greatness is attributed to the relationship to God. Jesus links the greatness of an individual to the observance and teaching of the commandments of the Law and His instruction to love your enemies. Jesus also links greatness to servanthood.

*Matthew 5:19; Luke 6:35
Matthew 20:26; Mark 10:43*

Class Activity: Interviews

(20 minutes)

Call on the students to share with the class the results of their interviews with people that they consider "great."

Lecture: Biblical Concepts of Perfection and Greatness

(15 minutes)

We have looked at words used to convey the concepts of perfection and greatness in the Bible. Now we want to look at significant instances where perfection and greatness are presented in the lives of biblical personages.

Old Testament Personages

There are several Old Testament figures who need to be noticed. They lived in a variety of different times and societies, and not all of them were of the family of Abraham.

Enoch, Noah, and Job

Refer to Resource 20-4 in the Student Guide.

Enoch was noted as a man who pleased God and walked with God. Noah and Job are noted as perfect or persons who pleased God. All lived in societies that predated the giving of the Law to Moses. Noah was obedient to God even under very unusual circumstances. He went against the licentious flow of society in his day and stood for truth. The very wealthy Job regularly made sacrifices even to cover the sins that his partying children may have committed. He was declared blameless and upright, a man that feared God and shunned evil. He claims to have been generous to the poor and needy, and God himself testified to his perfection. It is obvious that the perfection of these men had nothing to do with observance of the Mosaic

Law but everything to do with the relationship of an obedient life that they maintained with Yahweh. Hebrews 11 speaks of these men as great men of faith.

Abraham

Abraham was instructed to walk before God and be perfect—blameless (Gen 17: 1). He, too, lived before the giving of the Law. The record of his life reveals that this childless man told half-truths about his wife more than once because he feared for his life, even though God had promised to be with him and make of him a great nation. Here again we see that being blameless or perfect is not a matter of being flawless in every aspect, nor of keeping the details of the Law that had not yet been given, but of maintaining a right relationship toward Yahweh. It was obedience and faithfulness, or as Hebrews 11 puts it, it was “by faith.”

Joseph

Joseph, also from the pre-Law period, presents us with an exemplary character with the testimony that the Spirit of God guided him. He makes the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11 not because of his personal character but because of his prophecy of the exodus and his request to have his bones moved to Canaan when that event took place several hundred years later. Joseph was not specifically stated to be perfect or blameless and yet he is presented as one of the most ethical, most noble, and the most obedient of the Old Testament characters. Nothing in the biblical record of his life would indicate that he acted out of malice toward others or out of disrespect for God.

Joseph may have been a bit of a braggart as a child, but given the importance of dreams in religious life of his day, it is difficult to fault him even in that area. Joseph became the savior of his family and because of that the savior of the nation. The whole pattern of his life during the time of his tribulations was characterized by the oft-repeated statement, “And the LORD was with Joseph” (Gen 39:2). This quality of being a man of God is tied to the maintenance of his relationship to God that included conduct in harmony with character of God.

Leaders in Israel

None of the great leaders or prophets of the united or divided kingdoms are called perfect. These were all people who had the Law to guide them. The expectation was obedience to the instruction of

- Yahweh and presentation of sacrifices to cover failures both known and unknown.
- Moses was revered as the great lawgiver of Israel and as the meekest man on earth.
 - Elijah was the prophet who shared with Enoch the unique privilege of moving into the presence of God without experiencing the normal destiny of all humankind.

Numbers 12:3; Exodus 24:12

2 Kings 2:1ff

Numbers 20:11-12; 1 Kings 19:2ff

These two were privileged to stand upon the Mount of Transfiguration with their Lord, Jesus. Mental, moral, or physical flawlessness were not the measure of their lives. Both men had moments of disobedience or discouragement with resulting consequences. Obedience to the instruction from on high through the Law and through direct personal guidance was the criterion for measuring their success.

Isaiah 6

- Isaiah, one of the greatest of the prophets, acknowledged his own imperfection when he caught a glimpse of the perfect holiness of Yahweh. It took the burning coal administered to his lips by the messenger of God to relieve him of the doom that confronted him.

The Perfect King

David was chosen because God looked for “a man after his own heart” (1 Sam 13:14). As shepherd, obedient son, giant killer, and respectful servant of the king we have no difficulty seeing him in that role. But later with all of his flaws and sins exposed—lust, adultery and murder among them—we tend to marvel that he is not perceived as a disobedient and evil man. To be sure his sins did have consequences. The first child of Bathsheba died, his sons were known for incest, rape, and murder. Two sons attempted coups, Absalom with considerable success at first.

Despite all this when God meets with Solomon in a dream the record states: “And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life” (3:14). Again we read God’s word to Solomon: “As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did” (1 Kings 9:4). A third time we read this even more remarkable statement, which was part of the condemnation of Solomon: “And his heart was not fully devoted [*shalem*] to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been” (11:4).

In the record of all of the subsequent kings of Judah it is normal to find a positive or negative comparison to

David like this: "Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done" (15: 11). Clearly David was considered the canon for the measure of kings. He was perfect even though flawed and sinful. How could this be? We need to remember that *shalem* is not flawlessness or sinlessness, but rather the maintenance of a right relationship toward God. If that relationship is maintained, then there is peace. An essential in the establishment of the relationship is obedience and repentance, the acknowledgment of sin and acceptance of the blood of the sacrifice. David is never recorded as one who turned to other gods. He is recorded as one who accepted correction, repented, and sought forgiveness.

Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 12: 7

Old Testament Great Men

If we were making a list of the great men of the Old Testament, it would probably be a long one. "In college," Ted Esselstyn writes, "I made a list of those I thought were great: Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Malachi. How did I arrive at this list? As a historian I look for important concepts they contributed, feats of accomplishment, and their use of outstanding abilities, and because I am a believer this is tempered by their relationship to God.

"It is interesting that when the greatness of Old Testament personages is discussed in the New Testament it is in the context of comparing them to those New Testament personages who are greater. It is also interesting to note who is referred to this way in the New Testament: Jonah, David, Solomon, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. Two of them are not on the list I once made. These New Testament names represent Old Testament people who were thought to be great by the Jews of Jesus' day. They were considered great seemingly because of their role in the formation and development of the Jewish nation."

Guided Discussion: Criteria for Greatness

(15 minutes)

Invite students to present their criteria for greatness and the list of biblical individuals they have made.

If possible compile an agreed list of criteria.

Compile a list of Biblical individuals.

How would you decide who is great?

Lecture: Biblical Guidance to Perfection and Greatness

(20 minutes)

Several commands appear in Scripture that we find difficult to accept. One of the most difficult is Leviticus 20: 7-8, "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy." Peter cites the passage in his statement: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16). Another is Jesus' statement: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Again Jesus advised, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave" (Mt 20:26-27). To be holy like God, to be as perfect as God, to be slave to all; these seem not only impossible but at first look the third even seems to be contradictory.

Biblical Expectations

We have already noted that the Old Testament expectation of holiness and perfection relates not to an absolutely perfect life but to the maintenance of a right relationship of commitment to and walking with God. We want to remind ourselves of some of the secrets of that relationship.

Refer to Resource 20-5 in the Student Guide.

Psalmist's Advice

The great teaching psalm states: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Ps 119:11). Knowledge of the Torah, the instruction from God, is of primary assistance in discovering what sin is and how to live to avoid it. In Galatians 3 Paul reminds us that the Torah is like the schoolteacher who leads to an understanding that we can be justified by faith in Christ Jesus. In those days the control of the schoolmaster over the pupil was very strong and continued until the individual graduated. The receipt of justification by faith in Christ was the graduation certificate, and that meant that the justified were no longer under the rod of the schoolmaster although they still could make use of his knowledge. What a privilege this is that we not only have justification by faith in Jesus but information that helps us to discover that justification and to grow in our relationship to Him.

Micah's Classic Statement

The prophet Micah, contemporary of Isaiah, gives the classic Old Testament statement of the requirements

for the people of God. Times were very difficult with impending doom descending upon Israel and Judah from the powerful Assyrian empire.

People in the countryside were terrified because they knew that there was no defense possible for the little villages and small towns in which they lived. They came to the prophet to try to discover how to move Yahweh to help them. They were prepared to make great sacrifices, even to sacrifice their firstborn, their most precious heritage. Micah takes them back to the basics with this statement: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8). God has provided knowledge of what is good and God expects 3 things:

- **Act justly** or do the things that are right and good. This is obedience to the principles of good that God has revealed. The principle still holds, when we follow Jesus we keep his commandments. We follow his instruction.
- **Love mercy**—*chesed*. Legalistic observance of the Law is not the objective. This mercy, grace, or kindness is the willingness to extend to others a helping hand to meet their need, just as God has extended His mercy and grace to us. Jesus took this principle further and gave a new commandment regarding love, that our love should be patterned after his love for us.
- **Walk humbly with your God.** Moses was noted as the meekest of all men. We see from his life that humility had nothing to do with weakness. He was a man who started his primary ministry at 80 and provided forceful leadership until his death at 120. We have noted earlier that he was also a man who dared to stand between God's anger and the sinning people of Israel, telling God, "Over my dead body." He was the servant who protected the people he led, with his life if necessary.

John 13:34

Numbers 12:3

Exodus 32:32

One of the keys to understanding this passage is the phrase "with your God." It is a walk with God, a walk that follows his ways and his desires. We join with him going where he would go. No wonder that Jesus said, "Come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mt 16:24, paraphrased). The walk with God is a walk in which we serve as he served.

Jesus' Standard of Love and Commitment

It is clear that there is no conflict between the classic statement of Micah regarding pleasing God and the teaching of Jesus regarding being a part of the kingdom of God. Jesus expected true righteousness, the observance of the spirit of the law. Jesus expected true love for God that is only possible when we love others. This love functions in an attitude of forgiveness and mercy. Jesus expected his followers to participate in the work of the Cross, to follow him and take the good news of the kingdom of God to the entire world.

There is a difference though. Micah addressed people who found the standard too daunting and who failed. Those from the Northern Kingdom went to exile at that time, and the people of Judah followed a century later. Jesus addressed his followers with the good news that the Kingdom had arrived and they would have power from on high to help them live out this standard of love and commitment. Yes, real forgiveness would be available through His blood, and yes, the Holy Spirit would be sent upon the believers to empower them to righteousness, love, and a life of service.

Control of the Tongue

There is an African proverb that says, "Do not strike the tongue, it was given to defend yourself." It has been used in defense of lying, arguing that lying is normal. It certainly is a true recognition of the reality of life in this world, but it also is in direct conflict with the standard Jesus set when he instructed us to mean what we say all the time. Jesus declares that lies told even when not under oath are of the evil one. Jesus also reminds us that the character of a person is revealed by what comes out of their mouths.

Matthew 5:37

Matthew 15:11

Isaiah

It is interesting that the great prophet Isaiah, when confronted by a vision of the glory of God, immediately became aware of the failings of his lips. His recognition of his uncleanness was in terms of his words. It was the touch of the coal from the altar to his lips that rectified the situation and enabled him to hear the call of God and function as an obedient servant of God.

James

The third chapter of James also discusses the role of the tongue. James declares that the man who can control his tongue is a perfect man with control over

the whole body. He prefaces the remark with the statement: "We all stumble in many ways" (Jas 3:2). RSV renders this "We all make many mistakes." The issue with James is that the focus of our attention needs to be on the control of our lives through the control of the tongue, for the tongue is like a fire from hell. It is impossible for a human being to tame the tongue. If we stopped reading at this point, we would conclude that the gospel has no remedy for the tongue, but James does not end there.

He explains that what is needed is a change of heart. What comes out of the mouth should be a reflection of what is in the heart, and the wisdom from above is "first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (Jas 3:17). The remedy is given in chapter 4: "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (v 2b). In essence he is stating that the control of the tongue, the mark of a perfect person, comes only by the change of heart wrought through the transforming work of God.

Control of the Mind

Philippians 2: 1-11

Paul addresses the issue in a different way in Philippians. He is appealing for a mind-set that is Christlike. He describes the mindset as one of service—servanthood. Jesus did not simply strip himself of his divine privileges when he came to earth, but he took the character of a servant. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to be physician to the sick. This is the mind-set that Paul calls for among the believers. Work for the good of others. It is important that we understand that true servanthood is not simply taking orders blindly in a worldly military type tradition, but it is addressing the needs of those we contact. The good servant seeks out the welfare of those whom he serves. Jesus responded to appeals for help, but we do not see him taking orders from his disciples. When Peter tried to order him to avoid the Cross he replied, "Get behind me, Satan." The focus of servanthood is meeting the needs of others as we walk with God. It is seeing life and people the way God sees them.

Servanthood and Greatness

Jesus stated that greatness was to be found in being a servant. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mt 20:26). We tend to see this as a guide for religion and the church but as irrelevant to "real life." Instead it is a declaration of one of the foundation principles for society. Greatness arises from

meeting the needs of people. Merchants that have what people need are the ones who succeed. Doctors who are successful in healing are the ones who succeed. Lawyers who win cases draw more clients. Jesus is giving us important advice. The pastor who meets needs and makes his or her people a success is the great pastor. The teacher who enables students to surpass him or her is the great teacher.

Be Perfect

Matthew 5:48

Jesus told his listeners to be perfect, just like your Father in heaven. The context is the treatment that God gives to all people, sinners and saints alike. Rain falls on the just and unjust, the sun rises on the good and the evil. Perfection is behaving in the same kind and loving way to all people. But Jesus also told the rich young ruler that he could enjoy this kind of perfection in the now of his life. It was just a simple thing: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21). Perfection belongs to those who take the road with Jesus. The Book of Hebrews advises us, just as Jesus advised the rich ruler, to get rid of everything that would hinder us and "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb 12:1).

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.

In your group formulate your statements on perfection and greatness and share them with each other.

Incorporate the statements that you feel would best express an understanding of the role of perfection and greatness to the requirement for Christians to be holy.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students to share the statements that they wrote.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

You can assign half the class to each of the resources or allow the students to choose.

You may have a better idea of another film that may be used to illustrate a biblical-theological theme. You may want to limit the selection and have only 2 groups.

You can allow the students to choose which title to view or assign. You may need to check your area as to the availability of the titles.

You will need to make arrangements for a video player for the next lesson.

According to how many videos/DVDs to be viewed you will need to tell the groups how long a clip to select.

Review the following Bible Passages: Exodus 34; Ruth; Jonah; Luke 1; John 13; Romans 9—12; Ephesians 2; Philippians 2; and 1 Timothy 1. Prepare theological statements that these chapters/books seem to support.

Read the following sections in NDBT: Blessing, Faith, Faithfulness; Gentleness, Grace; Healing; Hospitality; Mercy/Compassion; Poor/Poverty; and Ruth.

Read **1** of the following:

- Resource 20-6, "Covenant Loyalty—Ruth"
- Resource 20-7, "Mercy—Romans 12"

Write a 1-page summary.

Rent and watch **1** of the following videos/DVDs:

- *Babette's Feast*
- *Tender Mercies*
- *Unforgiven*
- *Les Miserables*

Those who select/assigned the same title will need to work together—by email correspondence or group meeting—preparing a brief synopsis of the film watched. Select a short film clip that is the real key to the biblical/theological theme. Select a student to present the synopsis and film clip to the entire class.

Write in your journal. Reflect on your life in relation to the biblical concepts of perfection and greatness.

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 21

Commitment to Compassion

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Commitment to Compassion	Lecture	Resource 21-1
0:15	Reading Summaries	Small Groups	Homework
0:40	Thank God for Mercy	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 21-2
1:00	Film Synopsis	Class Activity	Homework
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Esser, H.H. "Mercy, Compassion" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 3 volumes. Edited and translated by Colin Brown and others. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on students to report on the key points from their NDBT reading.

Return homework.

Orientation

In the Bible, God's mercy is expressed as compassion expressed to his people based on his unswerving loyalty to his commitment to their covenant relationship, even in the face of human disloyalty. The story of Ruth is a prime example of this Godlike commitment to a new way of life in human relations. The concept of commitment at any cost permeates the Scriptures and reaches its apex in the commitment of Christ to the Cross.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- describe everyday Christian living on the basis of steadfast love, mercy, or a lifestyle of compassion

Lesson Body

Lecture: Commitment to Compassion

(5 minutes)

Refer to Resource 21-1 in the Student Guide.

In numerous biblical self-descriptions of God, the word “mercy” figures prominently. His covenant relationship with Israel is a commitment to act with compassion on their behalf. This is mercy. It is not about deserving; but it is about keeping promises. So it can be expected of him. God has taken the initiative and voluntarily obligated himself to care for his people. Mercy is God’s faithfulness seeking the well-being of his people. It is not a disposition but a tangible demonstration of his loyalty to and solidarity in relationships. This is divine love and kindness in action. This is what grace does. All of these terms significantly overlap in meaning within the Bible.

God expects humans to mirror such loving-kindness in their relationships with one another. The prophet Micah insists that what God really wants from humans is not religious rituals. “He has told you . . . what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (6:8, NRSV). One of Jesus’ Beatitudes announces God’s blessing on those committed to a life-style of compassion: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt 5:7, NRSV).

A mutual commitment to compassion forms the basis for community life among the people of God. But mercy extends beyond community boundaries to meet the needs of the helpless and marginalized of society. The word translated “alms” in the NT is the same term translated “mercy” elsewhere (6:1-4). Acts singles out Dorcas (Acts 9:36) and Cornelius (10:2) for their extraordinary commitment to compassion.

The supreme biblical model of mercy is to be found in the other-oriented life, and saving death of Jesus Christ. His life as a servant is demonstrated repeatedly in his miracles motivated by compassion for the afflicted (Mk 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; 8:2; etc.). Those who come to Jesus for help; beg “Have mercy on me” (Mt 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; Mk 10:47; 48; Lk 17:13).

Jesus’ washing of his disciples’ feet dramatized in advance his supreme expression of love shown definitely at the Cross. Paul marvels at this unexpected

show of mercy, extended even to Gentiles, who were formerly outside the boundaries of the covenant (Rom 15: 7-13).

Small Groups: Reading Summaries

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into pairs. One person representing each of the resource reading assignments.

Read each other's summary.

Ask each other questions. Learn from each other about what you each learned from the resource reading.

If there is time, you can bring the class back together to discuss these questions.

How were the readings different?

What were the common messages?

Collect summary papers.

How do they support each other?

Lecture/Discussion: Thank God for Mercy

(20 minutes)

Refer to Resource 21-2 in the Student Guide.

See Galatians 1:13-24.

See Philippians 3:4-16.

See 2 Corinthians 5:16 and Galatians 3:13.

See Romans 1:5.

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Paul cannot resist giving thanks to God for the gift of the gospel. All his letters closely associate the gospel with Paul's personal reception and proclamation of the Good News (1:11). In fact, he considers himself a singular example of the message of God's saving grace for sinners (v 16). Paul contrasts his life before and after his encounter with the gospel (vv 12-13).

Paul was once a blasphemer. He had considered the crucified Jesus from a merely human point of view as a false Messiah under the curse of God. The one Paul now knew as his "Lord," he had once considered a liar and a false prophet. This blasphemous view of Jesus led Paul to persecute the followers of the Nazarene.

Although Paul was an undeserving persecutor and a violent man, God showed him "mercy" (v 13). God called Paul to preach the gospel despite his past. For Paul, the evidence of divine "grace" (v 14) was that God made him "equal to the task" (TEB) of serving as a preacher of the gospel (v 12). God's call to serve him is at once an implicit promise to empower the called to enable them to accomplish the assigned task.

Even in his pre-Christian days, Paul was not a self-conscious rebel against God. It was misguided zeal for the Law, not rebellion, that led him to his blasphemy, persecution, and violence against Jesus and his

See Acts 26:9-23.

followers (Gal 1:13-16; Rom 10:1-4). Because he “acted in ignorance and unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13), he was open to correction by God. Thinking he was doing God a favor, Paul discovered that he was destroying the people of God.

Paul's obedience to the call of the risen Christ on the Damascus Road was not inevitable. He might have been “disobedient to the vision from heaven” (Acts 26:19). But he was not. God did not show Paul mercy because he deserved it—that would not be grace. But grace extended must be accepted to be experienced.

God offers mercy to all. But to receive it, we must turn from rebellion to receptivity. We must be open to the possibility of change. And when confronted with the call to do so, we must obey. Grace brings with it “faith and love” (1 Tim 1:14). Grace gives sinners the capacity to trust God and to lead trustworthy lives. It enables those who receive God's love to return it by a commitment to a lifestyle of compassion.

The first trustworthy saying of the five found in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8) appears in 1 Timothy 1:15. Its message, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” sounds like a creedal confession (cf. Lk 19:10). This is something we can believe in and proclaim with confidence. The purpose of the Incarnation was to provide salvation for all who would receive it.

A profound personal sense of unworthiness accounts for the claim that Paul was “the worst” sinner of all (1 Tim 1:15-16; cf. 1 Cor 15:8-10; Eph 3:8). Note that he insists, “I am the worst” of sinners, not “I was.” This is not because Paul was guilty of habitually sinning. But he never forgot that he was a sinner saved by grace. There is no state of grace that frees disciples from the need to pray, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us” (Lk 11:4, GL). John Wesley's dying words were, “I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me.”

The undeserved favor of God shown in Paul's life made him an example of the saving power of the gospel. That God showed such unlimited patience with him should encourage others to believe that they too might “receive eternal life” (1 Tim 1:16).

This expression of Paul's gratitude for the gospel concludes with a formal doxology. “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1:17; cf. 6:15-

16). We may apply this message intended for Timothy to our lives because we serve the one God who rules all ages.

Allow for response.

How do we—should we—express thanks to God for the gospel?

How should we lead our congregations to thank God for the gospel?

Considering Paul's pre-Christian description of acting out of ignorance, how would he view people today who live contrary to what we believe?

How should we work with them?

How should we pray for them?

Class Activity: Film Synopsis

(55 minutes)

Call on each of the groups to present the synopsis and film clip from the video/DVD that they viewed.

Allow the students to ask questions of the each other.

Work with the students to arrive at the heart of the message and biblical/theological theme that is represented.

You may want to write down on an overhead or board the ideas that are suggested.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using popular media as a teaching device in a church setting?

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on students to give a formulation statement that would reflect what they learned from this lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Review the following Bible passages: Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 34; Psalm 37; Isaiah 53; Ecclesiastes 3:12-13; Luke 6; Romans 7:14-25; 1 John 2; 1 Peter 3:8-17. Prepare theological statements that these verses/chapters seem to support.

Read the following articles in NDBT: Evil, Serpent, Suffering, Poverty/Poor, and review the article on Sin.

Write out formulation statements covering the material from Lesson 21 that can be added to your catechism.

You may need to find out in advance if the films are available in your area. Many church libraries have these films or others that could be substituted.

Rent and watch the A&E story of the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer or the Billy Graham movie *The Hiding Place*. Summarize how Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Corrie ten Boom did or did not act on the basis of sound biblical principles.

Write in your journal. Reflect on a time when someone reached out to you in loving-kindness. When was the last time that you saw someone in need and responded in loving-kindness?

[This page intentionally blank]

Lesson 22

Overcoming Evil

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Overcoming Evil	Lecture	Resources 22-1—22-4
0:25	Video Review	Small Groups	Homework
0:45	Joseph	Small Groups	Resource 22-5
1:10	New Testament Response to Evil	Lecture	Resources 22-6—22-10
1:40	Formulation of Statements	Small Groups	Resource 22-11
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Suggested Reading for Instructor

Blocher, H.A.G. *Evil and the Cross: Christian Thought and the Problem of Evil*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Wenham, J. *The Enigma of Evil: Can We Believe in the Goodness of God?* Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1985.

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on several students to report on what they learned from the Bible reading.

Return and collect homework.

Orientation

The New Testament teaching of overcoming evil with good is a radical departure from the understanding of ancient cultures and finds itself in conflict with many concepts even today. There are growing roots for this new understanding in the Old Testament concept of justice and constructive discipline. It builds on the concept of responding in faith and trust.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- be able to describe the resources of biblical theology for dealing with the problems of evil that are inevitable in a fallen world

Lesson Body

Lecture: Overcoming Evil

(15 minutes)

The objective of our study in this lesson is to discover the biblical principles involved in overcoming evil. In order to do this we will need to examine how biblical writers understood evil.

- What is evil?
- Where did it come from?
- Is it a part of creation?
- Is it eternal?

These are the kinds of questions that have been asked for millennia, but they are not necessarily the questions that are addressed in Scripture. Some of the questions that are addressed are:

- How did evil get into the good world?
- What is evil?
- What effect does evil have upon humankind and the relationship to God?
- How do you avoid evil?
- How do you get rid of evil?

Refer to Resource 22-1 in the Student Guide.

Evil Enters Creation

The first creation account makes it clear that everything God created is good, very good. The second creation account gives an explanation of how evil entered into the good world Yahweh created in Eden. The possibility of evil is established by the existence at the very heart of the garden—alongside the tree of life—of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

If we think of the first story, one might wonder why this tree includes good, since everything that has been created and therefore everything that the Adamic pair knew is declared very good. But this is a separate story, not designed to establish the theological belief in the goodness of creation. The second story does talk about things being good, but in reference to the fruit available from the trees as good for food, and the gold of the land of Havilah as good, and the fact that humankind is alone as not good.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the focus before a helpmeet for Adam is created and again after her creation. It accents the connection between good and evil. The tree with its *potential* to know good and to know evil is a part of creation, but such knowledge

is only potential and not a part of the creative act. It is in the act of response to the temptation that knowledge of evil occurs.

Evil does not appear as the result of the creative act of God, but as the result of the rebellious act of humankind—as a result of sin. A wide range of “evils” flow from this act—hostility and war between the serpent and mankind; pain and sorrow; agricultural difficulties; banishment from the garden; return to dust in death; replacement of the partnership between man and woman with domination; jealousy; hatred; murder.

Evil and the Serpent

The record of the arrival of evil in the world includes the role of the serpent. The specific identification of the serpent with Satan does not take place in the Old Testament. This identification is made in the Wisdom of Solomon, an apocryphal book written during the intertestamental times. The identification appears in the New Testament in the Book of Revelation. There the serpent is the devil or Satan “who leads the whole world astray” (Rev 12: 9) and who will be overcome and bound for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:2

Throughout the Bible serpents are associated with evil and sin, and control over them a sign of spiritual power. Jesus gave his disciples such power and we see it in action when Paul was bitten on Malta. Moses was empowered to turn a rod into a snake before Pharaoh, a sign the magicians were also able to do, and his superiority was demonstrated when Aaron’s snake swallowed those of the magicians. God sent snakes as a punishment for the rebellion of the Israelites and salvation came only after Moses make a bronze serpent and placed it on a pole. Jesus cited this as a symbol of his own death that would take sin and place it on the Cross. Our salvation comes from looking to the Cross just as the Israelites looked to the pole on which the serpent was placed. Paul reinforces this symbolism when he declares that Jesus became sin for us.

Mark 16: 18; Luke 10: 19; Acts 28: 4-5

Exodus 4: 3ff and Exodus 7: 9ff

Numbers 21

John 3: 14

2 Corinthians 5: 21

The Spiritual Sphere and Evil

When the serpent is introduced as the tempter in the Garden of Eden it is presented as one of the creatures of God, not as a spiritual being. Angelic beings make their appearance as guardians of the way to the garden after the Fall, but nothing is said about their creation or the nature of their existence. The focus of

Scripture is on humanity and our relationship to God, not on the nature of the spiritual realm. That realm is always depicted as beyond our comprehension and glimpses of it are either presented in anthropomorphic or symbolic terms throughout the Old and New Testaments. The serpent, which is presented throughout scripture as a symbol for evil, becomes Satan, the accuser and tester of humankind in the spiritual realm, and eventually the personification of evil in the spiritual realm. In the New Testament Satan is the outright enemy of God, destined for everlasting fire prepared for him and his angels.

Matthew 25:41

The name Lucifer does not appear in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts. The name was introduced in the Latin Vulgate in the 4th century.

How Satan became evil is barely a concern of the writers of sacred script. Isaiah 14:12 has been cited as a reference to the fall of Satan—Lucifer, the shining one—from a high position in heaven. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the primary influence on such interpretations and on many of our ideas about the fall of Satan that we tend to think we get from the Bible! The Isaiah verse is a part of a denunciation of Babylon and does not refer to Satan.

Satan as the Tempter

Refer to Resource 22-2 in the Student Guide.

The identification of the serpent with Satan or the devil introduces the concept that encouragement to do evil—but not evil itself—is introduced from the spiritual world. Satan is seen as the accuser, the tempter, who tests the mettle of those following God, and who eventually is pictured as the personification of evil. In Job Satan appears simply as the accuser, one who has access to the council of God. The opening and closing sections of the book give Satan this role and make clear that Job survived the test of his faith and received blessings.

*Isaiah 27:1; Jeremiah 51:34;
Amos 9:3*

On the other hand the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos associate the serpent with harm, chaos, and evil. This is the role of Satan in Job, for he caused injury of all kinds to Job in order to test Job. The role of Satan and evil spirits as tempters and as doers of evil is expressed in various ways.

1 Samuel 16:14ff

- In Samuel God sends an evil spirit to torment Saul after he was rejected as king. Saul's sin had opened the way for such evil to affect his life. We might interpret this as a madness or depression as a result of rejection.

James 1:13,14

- James makes sure that we do *not* understand such temptations to be the work of God, for he emphatically states that God does not tempt

anyone to sin, but temptation arises from our own normal and perverted desires. James does not mention Satan or demons in regard to temptation.

- By contrast the apocalyptic writers, especially in the Book of Revelation, see the believer simply caught in the evil that arises from the spiritual battle with evil. Satan is more than the tempter or instigator; he is the commander of evil forces. It is clear in the eschatology of Isaiah, Daniel, and Revelation that the serpent, the devil, Satan, will be destroyed at the end of time. This perspective is widely accepted in the New Testament, for *poneros* frequently carries the meaning “evil one” and not the abstract evil meaning. Modern translations of the Lord’s Prayer read “deliver us from the evil one.” The statement of Jesus against swearing an oath, “Let your yes mean yes and your no mean no,” he explains as necessary because anything more is from the “evil one.”

Matthew 6:13

Matthew 5:37

Daniel 10:12ff records the difficulties Michael, a chief prince of the angels, faced from the opposition of the prince of Persia. He was not yet finished fighting the spiritual battle.

- In Daniel the forces of evil are arrayed against the angels of God who have to struggle through their opposition in order to answer the prayers of Daniel.
- Paul reminds us that the battle against evil is a spiritual struggle: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12, KJV). He continues with the encouragement to put on the armor of God to prepare for the assault of these evil forces.

At the same time the implication in all of these cases is that these forces cannot cause a person to be evil, but can simply tempt and encourage to sin and the evil that flows from sin. The temptation is not evil, a fact made clear by Satan’s temptation of Jesus at the start of His ministry.

Evil and Suffering

Refer to Resource 22-3 in the Student Guide.

Throughout the Old Testament *ra* is used not only for evil deeds but also for events that are disastrous. It does not matter whether humankind or nature causes it. Pain, sickness, and death are all considered evil in some context or other. Suffering is the result of such evil. The connection of suffering with evil and sin is stated from Adam through Noah and emphasized in the blessings and curses that accompany obedience or disobedience to the Law.

Job 7:28-30; 9:1-22

Clearly both Job and his “comforters” considered that suffering was the result of sin, and Job was perplexed because he knew that his suffering was not the result of his sin. He therefore felt that the suffering was unjust, and was frustrated because you cannot argue with God who made everything and knows everything.

The prophets consistently warned that the sinful and evil ways of the people—and not just the Israelites—would result in suffering, pain, and death. Even Isaiah when he spoke so beautifully of the Suffering Servant did not break this connection. He noted that the sufferer was taking on himself the consequences of the sinful deeds of others. This is the picture of suffering that we have in the life of Jesus, the sinless One who became sin on our behalf to save us from sin. He suffered that we might live.

Ezekiel 18

The concept of suffering occurring as a demonstration of God’s glory or loyalty to God—introduced in Job, and referred to by Jesus when he healed the man born blind—is rare! Suffering is usually connected to evil, not necessarily to the sin of the sufferer. The exiles blamed their ancestors for the evil that had befallen them. It was a complaint made to evade their own personal involvement in the evils that had overtaken Judah, and was rejected by Ezekiel. In the apocalyptic writings the suffering of saints has little or nothing to do with their own actions, it is the result of persecution of the good by evil men and evil forces. This view of suffering occurs frequently in the New Testament. Jesus told his disciples that it would happen.

Matthew 5:44; Luke 21:12; John 15:20

Root of Evil

Refer to Resource 22-4 in the Student Guide.

The reading on evil in the *New Bible Dictionary of Theology* emphasizes correctly that evil does not have independent existence but is a perversion with sin as the root of evil. It is very real, but its reality does not belong to itself—it belongs to the good that has been corrupted and perverted. Humankind was created good with freedom to choose, and evil emerged with the perverse use of that freedom, which resulted in slavery to sin.

More is said about the relationship between men and women in Scripture than about any other topic.

The perversion of the marriage relationship spawns bondage to lascivious sensual depravity. Warnings regarding this behavior abound throughout Scripture. The anger of God was stirred against the world at the time of Noah, and against Sodom and Gomorrah because of the perversion of sexuality and prevalence of violence.

Money and possessions are the second most mentioned topic in Scripture. Timothy is warned that love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim 6:10), and Jesus warns that you cannot serve both God and money (Mt 6:24).

The perversion of stewardship spawns bondage to covetousness, greed, and selfishness. Such evil pushes both God and neighbor aside in its effort to elevate and gratify self. The principles that form the foundation for life are rejected and in their place the arrogance of evil arises.

Small Groups: Video Review

(20 minutes)

Divide the class into two groups based on the video they watched. Assign each group to discuss their evaluations of the lives of Bonhoeffer and ten Boom and their biblical rationales for these evaluations.

Have a representative from each group summarize their discussions for the entire class.

Discuss the similarities and differences between the conclusions of the two groups.

Discuss in your group the video that you viewed. Evaluate the lives of the individual and also give your biblical rationale for the evaluation.

Select one person from the group to summarize the discussion for the other group.

Small Groups: Joseph

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each.

Refer to Resource 22-5 in the Student Guide.

For the first 15 minutes work through the story of Joseph, grouping the story into acts—favoritism, dreams, sold by brothers, Potipher's household, etc.

Make a listing of the bad things that occur in each act, identify to what extent these bad events can be viewed as evil, and note the response of the individuals involved.

What conclusions can be drawn regarding your understanding of the nature of evil, its development, its relationship to sin, and its relationship to God?

In the last 10 minutes your group will share and defend your conclusions with the class.

Lecture: New Testament Response to Evil

(30 minutes)

We want to study the path by which we overcome evil and glance at some biblical behaviors that exemplify patterns for overcoming evil. We have spent some time with the remarkable story of Joseph who experienced the onslaught of evil from his brothers and his owner.

Without the assistance of the Law—which was given centuries later—and long before the gift of God in Christ Jesus was known, he maintained a positive faith in God, recognized that only God could render just recompense, and demonstrated his confidence in God's ability to make all things work for good. It is a pre-law Old Testament story in which New Testament responses are exhibited. It appears to be in stark contrast to one of the dominant Old Testament and the final New Testament solution—destroy that which is evil.

Destruction of Evil

Refer to Resource 22-6 in the Student Guide.

The ultimate solution to evil repeated many times in Scripture is its destruction. Over and again a remnant was rescued from destruction to continue the existence of a people who would love God.

- The Flood at the time of Noah is the first such mass destruction of humanity with a remnant that was saved.
- Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of the destruction of a community that had become too evil to be allowed to continue to exist, but even there one man and his two daughters were rescued from destruction.
- The occupants of the land of Canaan were also to be destroyed, but this time not by an “act of God” but by the actions of His people. They were not destroyed, and the result was a festering evil corruption among the people of God that eventually brought about their own destruction by conquest—with a remnant saved through exile.

This answer to the destruction of evil was not always on a national or societal scale.

- Murderers were to be destroyed—Numbers 35: 16-17.
- Adulterers were to be destroyed—Leviticus 20: 10.
- Idolaters were to be destroyed—Deuteronomy 13: 1-5.
- Even incorrigible children were to be destroyed—Deuteronomy 21: 18-21.

These were radical solutions to serious problems that endangered the well-being of the family or the nation. Exodus 21, Leviticus 20, Numbers 35, and Deuteronomy 17, 21, 22 are chapters that abound in announcements of the death penalty for various sins. The key to the severity of the penalties is found in Deuteronomy, where many times the death penalty is accompanied by the words: “You must purge the evil from Israel” (Deut 17:12). This is the very phrase used

Judges 20:13

by the Israelites when they requested the Benjamites to surrender those who had raped and murdered the Levite's concubine.

Acts 5:1ff

We tend to think that such radical solutions are the exclusive property of a ruthless Old Testament God, for we are much more comfortable with a loving God that extends limitless forgiveness regardless of our actions. We forget or ignore the destruction of Ananias and Sapphira for their attempt to deceive Church, or the injunctions of Jesus to cut off a foot or a hand or pluck out an eye rather than go to hell.

Matthew 5:28-30; 18:7-9; Mark 9:42-47

Revelation 20:3

Apocalyptic writers picture the ultimate destruction of evil as coming at the end when the old creation together with the evil that has corrupted it is removed from existence. The evil in earth and the evil in heaven are done away, not just shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years but cast into the everlasting fire, the second death, for ever and ever.

Genesis 12:4ff

Banishment was an alternative solution that was applied in some cases.

- This was the solution applied to Cain, who was banished from the fellowship of the family and sent into exile.
- The same solution was applied to those contaminated with diseases such as leprosy.
- It was this solution that was applied to the nations of Judah and Israel—God using the Assyrians and Babylonians sent them into exile.
- This was also the recommended New Testament solution to be applied to the believer who sinned and refused correction.

Matthew 18:15-17

This solution is used by Amish Christians today, including the use of a temporary banishment following repentance as a disciplinary measure.

The focus, like death, was the removal of evil from the family or community. Judah and Israel were also returned to the land of Israel following their 70 years of exile. In such cases the punishment that was applied was perceived as a disciplinary correction of society.

Refer to Resource 22-7 in the Student Guide.

Genesis 4:6-7

Preventing Evil by Doing Good

Consistently throughout the Scriptures the ideal way to keep evil from happening is to do good. This was the advice that was given to Cain. If he would do what was right, then there would be acceptance and no problem. The Law set out the right things to do as well as penalties for not doing right, but the whole idea of the giving of the Law was to let people know what was right.

The Deuteronomist relates Moses saying, “I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed” (Deut 30: 15-18). Israel was given the option of knowing and doing right. This would bring blessing into their lives, their nation, and their society.

The Prophets consistently called upon Israel and Judah to change their ways, to repent and start to do that which is right. A change of direction would change the direction of their lives and instead of reaping the evils that they had earned they might be forgiven and be able to enjoy good. The Book of Isaiah opens with dire warnings to the people of God. Destruction is coming because of their evil, but, “Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isa 1: 16-17). This is the avenue to change the situation and receive blessing rather than evil.

The people came to Micah with their fears about the coming disaster and asked what they could give God to stop the coming evil. They thought that they could buy favor by making greater sacrifices—even the sacrifice of their children. Micah’s response was, “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8). This theme is repeated consistently by the prophets, but only rarely was there a response.

The prevention of evil consequences through repentance was a major part of the problem of Jonah. He was instructed to preach disaster on Nineveh, but he knew that God is merciful and if there were repentance then the consequences would change. He did not want to deliver the message because their repentance would make him look like a false prophet and because he did not want Nineveh to receive mercy.

Jonah 4:2-11

Cleansing from Evil

Refer to Resource 22-8 in the Student Guide.

1 John 1:7-9

*Exodus 29:19ff
Leviticus 16*

The primary means for dealing with the source of evil was the sacrifice for sin. From the New Testament perspective the sacrifices all pointed to the death of Christ on the Cross. It is his blood that cleanses from all sin and unrighteousness. The Old Testament laws governing the sacrifices required the application of the blood for cleansing. It was used to cleanse the priests, cleanse their garments, and cleanse the holy place and holy of holies. This action, symbolic of the cleansing power of the blood of “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29), removes sin and sends it away on the scapegoat.

Throughout the Old Testament this symbolic action is repeated over and over, and sinners who acknowledged their sin and brought sacrifice received forgiveness for that sin. The annual ceremony of cleansing for the nation and the expulsion of the scapegoat was the seal upon the sacrifices made throughout the year. Leviticus 16 makes very clear that the blood is applied to make atonement and cleanse so that “before the LORD, . . . you will be clean from all your sins” (Lev 16:30).

Hebrews 9:24-28

As Hebrews informs us, Jesus has made this sacrifice once and for all. But Jesus has done even more. By sending to us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our lives and effect the cleansing of the inner person, He has empowered us to consistently follow the leading of the Holy Spirit—a leading that always moves us toward God and away from evil in our personal lives—a leading that enables us to face and overcome evil when it presents itself before us.

Leviticus 14 and Numbers 8 and 19

John 11:55

The cry for inner cleansing is heard in the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms. There are regulations for ceremonial cleansing with water for those who handled the dead, women whose menstrual period was over and those who were healed of leprosy or other ailments that had resulted in temporary banishment from society. There was also the ceremonial cleansing that took place before the feasts and especially the Passover.

All of these were external cleansings, many of which we would acknowledge today as having sound health reasons, but primarily symbolic of the cleansing of the person—making the person acceptable to God and His people. There is also recognition in the Old Testament that cleansing needs to be more than symbolic and needs to take place within the individual.

- Psalm 139 closes with the beautiful appeal for God to search our heart and mind and expose all the wicked ways in them so that He can lead into the way everlasting.
- Psalm 51, David's cry when he repented of the sins he committed with regard to Uriah the Hittite, uses the same cry for God to search out his heart and mind and to "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (v 2), and "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (v 7).
- Jeremiah had prophesied the cleansing from sin of the remnant that would be restored—Jer 33:8.
- Ezekiel, when he prophesies the reestablishment of the people in the Holy Land, notes that Sovereign Yahweh will cleanse the people from all impurities and idols, from all sins and backsliding and they will then "be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek 36:25, 33; 37:23). It is the promise of a new day in which the people of God will be freed from sin. This is the day proclaimed in the New Testament.

Throughout the New Testament freedom from sin for those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord is the joyful news. A New Israel comes into being—those who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. The cleansing from sin and removal of evil from within the Church does not remove Israel from those who turn from Christ, nor does it remove evil in the world. Paul explains to the Ephesians that Jesus works at cleansing his Church by "the washing with water through the word" (Eph 5:26). It is the knowledge of the word of God—the Torah, the instruction of God—coupled with the empowerment that comes through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, that enables the Church to be cleansed. The picture of the Bride as the New Jerusalem in the closing chapters of Revelation describes her in her perfection.

There has been a tendency at various times and places in the Church to interpret corporal punishment as a primary means of cleansing from evil. This has been strongest when philosophical beliefs emphasized that the body is evil while the spirit is good. That concept is not biblical, for it is clear that Scripture declares that creation is good. There are many verses that have fed that theology. Chastisement as a form of correction and discipline is endorsed strongly. The history of Israel recounted in Scripture notes that over and again God used other nations to chastise Israel and bring her back into the fold.

*Over the past 500 years there has been some very bad interpretation of what the rod is, and how it was used by a shepherd. A very good interpretation can be found in W. Phillip Keller's A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23. The rod was **not** used to beat the sheep.*

The writers of Proverbs repeatedly affirmed that the use of the rod was essential for the upbringing of a child. The application of the rod does all kinds of things:

- Gets foolishness out of children—Prov 22: 15
- Corrects the fool and those without understanding—Prov 10: 13; 26: 3
- Imparts wisdom so that the child will bring honor and not shame to the family—Prov 29: 15
- Will deliver the soul of the child from hell—Prov 23: 13-14

The concept of flagellation as a means of cleansing becomes even stronger in Proverbs 20: 30, where it states: "Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being." This was the kind of validation that was sought by those Christians who followed a philosophy that perceived the body to be evil. They totally missed the remarkable fact that in the New Testament the only time that Jesus used a whip in his teaching was when he cleansed the Temple. Stories of rabbis who used the rod freely on their scholars abound, but there is no record of Jesus using a rod on his disciples or on any who came to him for instruction or healing. He did not strike down those who came to him, but reached out even the leper and the dead.

The Christian Response to Evil

In the New Testament we have a major change in emphasis on dealing with evil that can be seen in statements like "Love your enemies" (Mt 5:44). This does not mean that the roots of the new emphasis are not in the Old Testament. There are examples in the Old Testament of calls to do good to those who do evil toward you. We have looked at the remarkable story of Joseph that reveals all kinds of evil and the responses that were given. He certainly did good even to those who did evil to him.

The wise men taught, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Pro 15: 1). Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylonia that included this instruction: "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer 29: 7). The effect of a positive response to the evil that comes out was not lost on the Old Testament writers. The focus, however, was different.

Refer to Resource 22-9 in the Student Guide.

Throughout the Old Testament the objective was to carve out of the world that is sadly contaminated with evil, a people of God who would live their lives doing good. Evil within the boundaries of the people of God had to be destroyed or removed. Every measure was to be taken to protect from contamination. You can see the formal development of this objective in the Jewish avoidance of Samaritans and Gentiles. Jews did not associate with Samaritans. Even the shadow had to be avoided. Peter's own Jewish perspective meant that he had to have a vision to prepare him to go to a Gentile home and fellowship with Cornelius.

Even in Jeremiah's admonition the motivation for doing good in the towns of Babylonia is because the exiles themselves will prosper. The concept was to get clean and then take every measure to protect yourself from contamination by sin. The Pharisees took this very seriously, carefully and legalistically defining sin and contaminants.

The Christian Mission and Evil

The focus in the New Testament shifts. The followers of Jesus are called to His mission, called to "take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). The mission of Christ has been announced in various ways:

- To Joseph: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21).
- To Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (Jn 3:16-17).
- To the grumbling Jews: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51).
- To the scornful Pharisees: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick . . . I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:12-13).

The mission of Christ was to bring transformation into an evil world, and his followers are called to participate in this glorious and powerful mission. The emphasis of the relationship of the follower of God to evil is changed. It is no longer to be an attitude of self-protection but one of helpful outreach. The follower of Christ is transformed by the blood of Christ and

empowered by the coming of the Holy Spirit. This enables the follower to carry out the mission.

One way Jesus spoke of this was: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). The ability of the believer to produce the fruit of the Spirit and impact the world depends upon the closeness of the to Jesus himself. He is the source upon which we depend, and that source provides power to overcome evil.

Jesus' Guidance for Response to Evil

Jesus gave us many instructions that would not be possible to perform if we did not have His presence with us. The sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7 is full of such instructions:

- Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles
- If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.
- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

The response of Christians to evil acts directed at them is to accept and forgive and seek the well-being of the one doing the evil. This is in stark contrast to so many of the cries in the Old Testament; pleas for God to take vengeance upon those who had done harm to Israel.

Paul and Peter are together in their encouragement of Christians to respond positively when they experience evil. Peter expresses this beautifully in these words: "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet 3:9).

Returning blessing for evil or overcoming evil with good changes the situation in which you are involved. In the New Testament we see this lived out. Paul, jailed, sings in jail. When God enjoys his singing so much He releases him from his chains and opening the prison Paul keeps everyone there, protecting the life of the jailor. The jailor becomes a follower of Jesus Christ.

Again when Paul was shipwrecked on Malta the whole crew, including the soldiers who had wanted to kill him and the other prisoners for fear that they might escape, were rescued from the sea due to Paul's

Refer to Resource 22-10 in the Student Guide.

Compare to Romans 12:17-21.

Acts 16:19ff for the story

Acts 27:21ff

prayers. This was part of the power of the Church to change the world in that day.

Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29

Another aspect of Jesus' guidance relates to the spiritual war with evil. When dealing with demons Jesus tied the war to prayer and fasting. It is one of the few references Jesus made to fast and is unlike other responses to fasting. John the Baptist's disciples once questioned him because His disciples did not fast, or at least did not fast enough to suit the critics. His response was, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast" (Mt 9:15).

Most modern translations remove fasting from this context because the manuscripts for Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29 differ. The manuscripts considered to be the best do not include the Matthew verse and the word "fasting" is omitted in the Mark reference. The references to fasting are viewed as later additions to the text at a time when fasting was a popular spiritual practice. Regardless of the validity of these arguments, it is clear from the Mark reference that Jesus considered prayer to be a vitally important part of the battle to overcome evil in this world.

Christian Avoidance of Evil

Mark 7:20ff; Luke 6:45

Even though Christians worked to overcome evil with good, they were still taught to avoid evil of every kind. It is very clear in the Gospels and the Epistles that Christians are called upon to do what is right and good. Jesus taught them that evil comes from within and evil men do evil because it comes from their hearts; good men do good because their hearts are good. The followers of Christ were to be holy, good, righteous, like their Father in heaven.

Ephesians 6:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:3

2 Timothy 6:10

Paul warns Christians over and over not to let evil have a place in their lives. "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (Rom 6:12). "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good" (12:9). "I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (16:19). He told the Corinthians, "In regard to evil be infants" (1 Cor 14:20). Paul also acknowledged that this was a spiritual struggle against the evil one and the spiritual forces of evil. Christians were well advised to flee from evil desires by concentrating on the pursuit of righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

James pointed to the tongue as a great danger. He called it a “restless evil, full of deadly poison” that no man can tame (Jas 3:8, NRSV). The man who could control his tongue is a perfect man. Victory was possible only because Christians had the help of the Spirit of God.

Forgiveness of Evildoers

The Christian way was to avoid evil by turning from evil and seeking good. If evil acts are done to you, the response is to forgive and bless. Even in today’s world such behavior is rare. The response of many so called Christians to the destruction of the World Trade Center towers by evil men was more of an Old Testament call for vengeance rather than the New Testament extension of forgiveness and blessing. We hear Jesus being nailed to the Cross and crying out, “Father, forgive them” but it is only transformed lives that have been filled with the Holy Spirit that can make a similar response.

In Acts we have the record of one whose heart and life were wholly in line with Jesus. Stephen, accused of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin, stunned them all, first because his face was like the face of an angel, and second because of the power of his witness. The servants of evil were so angry they stopped their ears and dragged him out. He was stoned. He died. But before he died he prayed “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell upon his knees and said, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60). He was concerned that even those who stoned him would have the opportunity for salvation. Among the guilty stood young Saul, devout Pharisee, but now touched by the power of good to overcome even the most twisted evil.

Small Groups: Formulation of Statements

(15 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 3 students each.

Refer to Resource 22-12 in the Student Guide.

Make a list of the essential points about evil that need to be taught to young or new Christians.

Formulate the statements that you might want to add to your catechism.

Do statements about the origin of evil and the existence of evil in the eternal realm need to be included in your list of beliefs?

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on several students.

Name a key idea from this lesson.

How does this idea affect your ministry?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Read 1, 2, and 3 John.

Review your notes on each of Lessons 1 through 22 and prepare a 3-page typed summary of the entire module. Your summary of each lesson should have each of the five components. Please, follow these instructions:

1. Give each lesson a one- or two-word title that captures its essential emphasis for you.
 2. For each lesson, compose in your own words a topic sentence—from 10 to 20 words—that summarizes the biblical theme surveyed.
 3. For each lesson, list three supporting biblical passages—the book and chapter—that in your opinion provide the most important scriptural basis for each theological theme surveyed.
 4. Identify the Article of Faith—or occasionally more than one article—for which each lesson provides the biblical foundation.
 5. For each lesson, write a thought-provoking question that might serve as the basis for an in-class discussion of the contemporary implications of this biblical theme.
- Do not think of the suggested page limit legalistically. It is fine if your summary is a bit longer or shorter, so long as it adequately fulfills the assignment.
 - Make enough copies of your summary to be able to give one to your instructor, keep one for yourself, and provide one for each member of your class.

Write in your journal. Have you been exposed to the idea that Satan is the personification of evil? What do you think of the idea? How do you respond? How much of what we think about the devil comes from Milton's *Paradise Lost*?

[This page intentionally blank]

Unit 6: Review and Conclusion

Lesson 23

Review

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Biblical Theology	Lecture	
0:15	Theology of Johannine Letters	Lecture	Resource 23-1
0:30	Module Summary	Small Groups	Homework
1:05	Student Questions	Guided Discussion	
1:35	Preparation for Catechism	Small Groups	Formulation Statements
1:55	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on students to give 1 key theme from the reading of the letters of John.

Return homework.

Orientation

The Bible is not a systematic theology by any stretch of the imagination. And yet it is theologically interested and motivated throughout. This lesson will briefly review each section and each lesson of this module, in an attempt to survey the more prominent biblical themes. It will also consider how these themes have continuing relevance for the life of the Church and individual believers.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- identify the more important features of biblical theology
- make progress in moving from theological affirmations to practical contemporary relevance

Lesson Body

Lecture: Biblical Theology

(5 minutes)

Our approach to biblical theology in this module has been largely thematically organized. In its attempt to survey the major themes of the Bible, it has often failed to respect the theological integrity of the various biblical books that comprise it. The Bible is simply too rich in its diversity to do justice to everything.

But such analysis is the necessary preparation for synthesis. Medical students must have practice dissecting cadavers before they perform surgeries on living human beings. By cutting donated dead bodies apart they are better able to keep their patients alive and treat them holistically, not as a mere collection of limbs and organs. In much the same way, those preparing for the “care of souls” must be equipped to analyze the Bible.

Preachers prepared to analyze the Bible must be like good farmers. Farmers need to know the analysis of the feed they give their livestock. But the animals do not eat analysis, but real food. Just so, biblical theology should help pastors recognize that their task is not to feed their congregations dry-as-dust analysis. People need spiritual food to thrive and grow.

Sometimes we over value immediate relevance. Youth pastors, for example, seem preoccupied with giving their teens guidance for surviving the tumultuous years of adolescence. They focus session after session on relationships—guidelines for dating, for example. But most of the lives of these teens will be spent as married adults, who will not be dating, but working, managing a household, and being informed citizens.

Perhaps we would do better to think of church “youth groups” as the “training camps” for adult Christian life. In football, for example, those who hope to make the team are put through their paces—doing things they will never do in a real game—wind-sprints, push-ups, weight-lifting, running laps around the track, navigating through old tires, etc. None of this seems immediately relevant to football. But it is designed to get the team, and its players in game-shape, prepared for whatever eventuality it might face.

Just so, those who preach biblically with appropriate theological sensitivities, do not intend to guess what each member of their congregation needs to hear that week. Few, if any, have the gift of such discernment. They preach out of the conviction that the timely and timeless truths of the Bible exposed faithfully over time will equip the church for their life in the world.

Most of what we have considered in these lessons will never be preached from your pulpits. The goal of these lessons has been to prepare you to think about the Bible theologically, not to take the place of your own study of the Bible. Sometimes the lessons have been intended to summarize the various aspects of significant biblical themes. Sometimes they have been designed to model the process and results of biblical theological reasoning.

It is not enough to insist that immediate relevance is overvalued. It must also be insisted that preachers owe it to their congregations to point out the obvious contemporary implications of the biblical passages from which they preach week after week. Relevance does not determine the selection of a given text for preaching. But an effort should be made to point out at least some dimensions of the relevance of every text, even those that seem irrelevant on the surface.

The genealogies of Genesis may not seem very relevant to us. But they are a concrete demonstration that the divine blessing of fertility—"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth!"—was not withdrawn because of human disobedience. In a culture that treated sex as divine, this insight mattered then, as it does now. Sexuality and fertility are among God's good gifts to his creatures. To make an idol of sex or to treat it as somehow dirty and out of place in the lives of the truly spiritual are equally unfaithful to biblical theology.

The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 makes several significant theological points. Jesus is a Jew—the Son of Abraham. Jesus is a descendant of David—qualified to be the Messiah in terms of human descent. That women are mentioned, and that these particular women are mentioned are noteworthy. Jesus' conception under "suspicious circumstances" is consistent with his heritage. He was born into a family of sinners to be its Savior. Luke's genealogy makes a point of identifying Jesus, not for his Jewishness, but for his humanity—the Son of Adam. But as such, he is also the Son of God and founder of a new humanity.

The tedious recounting of the chaotic events of the divided kingdoms may leave us struggling to keep straight whether Hezekiah preceded Josiah, or was it the other way around? And how do we ever keep straight all of those Jer-something-or-others? But the theological point seems clear enough: God's blessing rests upon those who obey him. Those who disobey can expect only eventual disaster. God takes good care of his children.

Of course, if we think theologically, it will not take us long to see the dissonance of this theological insight and the reality with which Job struggles. How are we to make sense of the life of a righteous sufferer? And then our minds race to the story of Jesus, who is misunderstood and rejected and executed. And Jesus is the unique Son of God. So how is it that God cares for his children?

Biblical theology does not spare us from the difficult task of thinking about the implications of the Bible for contemporary life. But it does set the agenda. It raises the issues. It forces us to struggle to decide which biblical insight is relevant to which current situation. It will not allow us to start with our issues and go mining for biblical gems with reckless abandon, without consideration of the historical and literary context from which they were taken. We cannot then cut and polish these gems in jewelry of our creation and claim them as biblical.

It is not enough to recite trite biblical truisms as if they are timeless formulas that fit every person in every situation. The Bible offers no one-size-fits-all panacea. We cannot claim that our rearrangement of a collection of biblical verses selected to fit our preconceived idea is truly biblical. Far too often preachers take a text and immediately depart from it. They import witty ideas from all over into their sermons and tickle their congregation's ears.

The goal of this study of biblical theology is to offer guidance on how serious attention to the Bible can provide a sufficient basis for Christian faith and practice. Biblical theology is not intended to make systematic theology unnecessary. It is to provide the exegetical basis for a more comprehensive theological enterprise. Without this foundation, no theology can claim to have any authority beyond the ingenuity of the theologian.

Lecture: Theology of the Johannine Letters

(15 minutes)

The letters known to us as 1, 2, and 3 John seem to arise from the same community that cherished the Fourth Gospel. There, you will recall, Jesus identifies love for one another as the distinguishing mark of his disciples. The Johannine letters show us what happens when the “Church of Love” experiences a church split. How do we to reconcile our theology with the realities of church politics? Overly simply put, this seems to be the situation in the background of these brief letters.

Actually, 2 and 3 John seem to be real letters, but to whom? And why are such mundane letters included in the NT? The only plausible explanation seems to be their longstanding association with 1 John. But 1 John lacks all of the features normally associated with ancient letters, most familiar to us from the letters of Paul. It seems more closely to resemble a rambling sermon.

1 John is considerably less random than the other so-called New Testament letter that is also more appropriately called a sermon—known to us as James. 1 John, at least, moves back and forth between two obvious themes: Christology and ethics. Like Hebrews (another supposed letter that calls itself “a word of exhortation”—a sermon) 1 John emphasizes both the full humanity and the full deity of Christ. And like Hebrews, it stresses the practical implications of theology.

Refer to Resource 23-1 in the Student Guide.

Christology

Although 1 John takes for granted the same high Christology we would expect from the Johannine tradition, its emphasis is clearly upon the humanity of Christ. It insists that anyone who denies that Jesus Christ was and remains fully human is antichrist. Many average Bible readers would be surprised to learn that the only appearances of the term “antichrist” in the NT are found in 1 and 2 John—and nowhere in Revelation. And these Johannine letters insist that there are many antichrists, and that these antichrists have already come. Go figure!

Soteriology

Apparently related to 1 John’s emphasis upon the humanity of Christ is its emphasis upon the death of Christ as the means of salvation. The fourth Gospel

prepared us to think of “the hour” of Jesus as a “lifting up” in two senses: crucifixion and exaltation. But unlike Paul and Hebrews—and to a lesser extent Matthew and Mark—the fourth Gospel does not appropriate the OT’s sacrificial imagery as a way of making sense of the Crucifixion. Its doctrine of the atonement seems to resemble Anselm’s moral influence theory.

True, the Johannine Jesus is the Lamb of God, specifically the Passover lamb. But this is really not a part of the sacrificial system, but the main course of the family’s festival meal. 1 John, however, draws significantly from the OT language of sacrifice to clarify the connections between Christology and soteriology—the necessary connections between the person and work of Christ and the divine means of human salvation.

Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology addresses the question: What is the nature and mission of the Church? 1 John treats this only indirectly. Its concern is not theoretical but practical. How is the Johannine community that remains after the departure of a group of former members to be what Christ called it to be? Scholars refer to those who left as secessionists, because of their withdrawal from the community. Most conclude that they left for theological reasons. It is difficult to reconstruct the theology of the secessionists, in part, because 1 John focuses its attention more on the needs of those who remain than on the errors of those who left. But most interpreters seem to presume that their heresy was marked by several features.

Heresy

Heresy in the Early Church was not merely a matter of holding a mistaken opinion on some settled point of doctrine. It was concerned primarily with espousing a personal opinion so strongly that one was willing to separate from other believers over these differences. Certainly, not everything the secessionist believed was in error.

Docetism

The high Christology of the secessionists seems to have made them unable to accept either the genuine humanity or the reality of the death of Christ. Thus, they are often also called “docetics,” because they considered the humanity of Christ to be only an

appearance—from the Greek *dokeō* = I seem/appear. His apparent humanity was only an illusion, a disguise, a temporary garment disposed of after his earthly ministry, a brief blip on the screen of eternity. We get an inside view of such thinking from the apocryphal Acts of John.

Gnosticism

Perhaps the secessionists were also proto-gnostics, who despised the material world in the interests of the spiritual. Perhaps they were merely thoroughgoing Hellenists, who shared the views of most Greco-Roman thinkers that eternal gods were neither born nor died. Only inferior deities, the demigods, shared in such experiences of mere mortals. If Christ was the eternal God, he certainly was not born as a real human nor did he really die.

Ethics

1 John places strong emphasis upon sin and righteousness. The secessionists seem to have had a view of their own spirituality that made them exempt from sin by definition. Because of their exalted spiritual standing, their human behavior was of virtually no consequence to them.

Perfectionism

The secessionists seem to have imagined that sin was only a matter of one's inner spirit. And so they were convinced they were beyond sin. Only lesser Christians need be concerned about such physical failings.

On the contrary, 1 John insists that righteous ethical conduct arises inevitably from a sound Christology. It defines righteousness almost exclusively in terms of love, not in terms of spiritual experiences. This is not entirely surprising for a community that identifies mutual love as the new commandment of Christ.

But 1 John seems to presume that those who deny the reality and relevance of the humanity of Christ dismiss the demands of love for other humans as well. Just as Christ laid down his life to provide salvation, so genuine believers lay down their lives for one another. Ethics is not just a matter of hidden inner intentions, but of actual conduct.

Refer to the second page of Resource 23-1 in the Student Guide.

Eschatology

Connecting 1 John's concerns for Christology and ethics is its emphasis upon eschatology. Although the Fourth Gospel emphasizes a largely realized eschatology, 1 John stresses a fairly traditional futurist eschatology, including a focus on the Parousia—the second coming of Christ. The life of Christ serves as the model for the ethical life—to “walk as he walked.” And the return of Christ serves as the motivation for ethical seriousness—to “purify themselves as he is pure.”

Hamartiology

1 John also reflects significantly on the nature and remedy for human sin provided by the death of Christ. A superficial reading of the book leads most casual students to find irreconcilable contradictions on the subject of sin.

- On the one hand, chapter 1 insists that no one can claim to have no sin.
- But chapter 3 is equally insistent that no one who sins can claim to be a child of God.
- Chapter 2 insists that the death of Christ is the means of salvation for the entire world.
- And yet chapter 5 discourages even praying for one who has committed “a deadly sin,” whatever that is.

How are we to make sense of this important and difficult theological issue? What is sin? And does it matter for Christians?

Spirituality

The emphasis upon the Spirit in the fourth Gospel is obvious, especially in chapters 14–16. And we might expect other books within the Johannine tradition to sing the same tune. But every time 1 John mentions the work of the Spirit in Christian experience, it seems to back off and stress again that Christological orthodoxy and ethical purity—specifically mutual love—are far more essential than any alleged spiritual experience.

Conclusion

The bold headings may have given the mistaken impression that 1 John is a systematically organized theological treatise. It is not. These categories are convenient labels that may help you organize your thinking as you study the Johannine letters.

The narrative framework of the fourth Gospel provides its organizational logic. That of 1 John is much more difficult. It is possible to label almost every paragraph of the book as either Christological or ethical in its emphasis. But its variations on these themes require us to resort to other theological categories as well.

The “theo-logic” that organizes 1 John is that theology and life are inseparable, any way you look at it. Those who fail to take the humanity of Christ seriously do not take the humanity of others seriously either. Their problem is not simply heresy—a mistaken and divisive view of Christ. It is a failure to love. It is a failure to take seriously this failure as the most serious of sins.

What we have attempted to do with the Johannine letters might be considerably expanded. But perhaps this much is sufficient to illustrate how one proceeds to discover biblical theology inductively, one book at a time.

The task of extending this procedure to the entire Bible is so monumental that it will never be completed in one lifetime. We must be satisfied to connect a few of the dots, hopefully enough to get some sense of what the completed picture might look like.

Now it’s your turn. What have you learned from your study of biblical theology?

Small Groups: Module Summary

(35 minutes)

Divide the class into 2 or 3 groups.

Compare your summaries, noting agreements and disagreements.

One person from each group should act as recorder on the major agreements and differences that emerged from your summary comparison.

Compile what you consider the five best discussion questions from among your group members.

Have the recorders report the groups’ agreements and differences.

Collect the discussion questions.

Collect homework summaries.

Guided Discussion: Student Questions

(30 minutes)

From the questions that the students prepared, lead the class in a discussion.

Discuss the adequacy of both the questions and the answers.

Small Groups: Preparation for Catechism

(20 minutes)

Allow the students to work in pairs or individually if they prefer.

Be familiar with the next lesson so that you can answer questions about that they might have.

In preparation for the next lesson in which we will discuss and form a plan—catechism—for each of the four target groups:

- Children
- Teens
- New Believers
- Refresher Program

Begin to mark your formation statements as to the appropriate target groups.

Statements may be appropriate for more than one group.

Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

Review

Call on each of the students.

Name one insight from this lesson.

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Read the following and write a 1-page response addressing how they contribute to or guide a catechism.

- *Manual* Articles of Faith
- *Manual* Covenant of Christian Character and Covenant of Christian Conduct
- Resource 23-2

Organize the formulation statements that you have been making each lesson into four approaches to the development of strong Christians:

- Essentials for children
- Essentials for teens
- Essentials for new members
- Refresher course for existing members

Examine some existing catechisms and discipleship training books—NPH lists many for youth and children as well as adult studies, examples include:

- *Discovering My Faith, Word Action*
- S.M. Miller, *I Believe*
- R.D. Troutman, *This Is My Church; Basic Christian Beliefs*
- J.W. Eby, *What Christians Believe*
- Stan Toler, Don Walters, Don Casey, *Growing Disciples*

Write in your journal. Reflect on where you are today in your journey of Christian maturity compared to where you were when this module began.

Bring your journal to class for evaluation. The instructor will be looking through your journal to assess the faithfulness to the assignment and the organizational method that was followed. The instructor will not be reading all the entries but will glance through and spot-check the seriousness of the entries.

Lesson 24

Catechism

Lesson Overview

Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:10	Catechism for Children	Small Groups/Guided Discussion	Formulation statements Resource 24-1
0:35	Catechism for Teens	Small Groups/Guided Discussion	Formulation statements Resource 24-1
0:55	Catechism for New Believers	Small Groups/Guided Discussion	Formulation statements Resource 24-1
1:15	Catechism for Refresher Program	Small Groups/Guided Discussion	Formulation statements Resource 24-1
1:40	Module Evaluation	Reflection	
1:50	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

Lesson Introduction

(10 minutes)

Accountability

Call on each student to report on the catechism/discipleship book that he or she reviewed.

Return homework. Make arrangements for returning the last homework assignment—Catechism.

Orientation

This lesson is planned to draw together what has been learned from the course by finalizing the development of a catechism.

Learner Objectives

Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.

Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- have the opportunity to bring together the most important aspects of Christianity and form them into a plan of instruction for the development of the congregation that is being served
- be able to evaluate their own attempts to communicate biblical theology in language intelligible to children, youth, and adults in their cultural setting

Lesson Body

Small Groups/Guided Discussion: Catechism for Children

(25 minutes)

Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.

Refer to Resource 24-1 in the Student Guide.

While the students are working in their groups, check each student's journal. You do not need to read each entry. You are looking for faithfulness to the assignment and the seriousness that went into the entries. Journaling is a required component of the module.

Allow 10-15 minutes for the class to work together to produce a catechism for children.

Select one student to be the recorder for the ideas and to write the ideas on a board, flip chart, or computer projection.

You may want to select a student who has a call to children's ministry to be the recorder for this section.

There may need to be several revisions before agreement is reached.

The development of a catechism has been an ongoing part of this course. During this session we want to draw together our concepts of what we are expecting in the development of the Christian life. We will discuss and form a plan—catechism—for each of the four target groups: children, teens, new believers, and refresher program.

We will first look at what we are expecting for children. What do we expect children to know, to do, and to be? You may want to divide the children's group into pre-school and elementary age-groups.

Then in your group try to come to an agreement for a program—catechism—based on what each of you has prepared throughout this module.

You will have 10-15 minutes to work together in your group and then as a class we will work together to produce a catechism.

Remember for this first section we are looking only at a catechism for children.

Small Groups/Guided Discussion: Catechism for Teens

(20 minutes)

Have the students continue to work in their small groups.

Continue to evaluate student journals.

We will now move forward and work on a plan—catechism—for teens.

We will look at what we are expecting for teens. What do we expect teens to know, to do, and to be?

Then in your group try to come to an agreement for a program based on what each of you has prepared throughout this module.

You will have 10 minutes to work together in your group and then as a class we will work together to produce a catechism.

Allow 10 minutes for the class to work together to produce a catechism for teens.

You may continue using the same student as the recorder or have a different student—who has a call to youth ministry—be responsible for this section.

There may need to be several revisions before agreement is reached.

Small Groups/Guided Discussion: Catechism for New Believers

(20 minutes)

Have the students continue to work in their small groups.

Continue to evaluate student journals.

We will now move forward and work on a plan—catechism—for new believers.

We will look at what we are expecting for new believers. What do we expect new believers to know, to do, and to be?

Then in your group try to come to an agreement for a program based on what each of you has prepared throughout this module.

You will have 10 minutes to work together in your group and then as a class we will work together to produce a catechism.

Allow 10 minutes for the class to work together to produce a catechism for new believers.

You may continue using the same student as the recorder or have a different student—who has a call to new believers—be responsible for this section.

There may need to be several revisions before agreement is reached.

Small Groups/Guided Discussion: Catechism for Refresher Program

(25 minutes)

Have the students continue to work in their small groups.

Continue to evaluate student journals.

Allow 10-15 minutes for the class to work together to produce a catechism for a refresher program.

You may continue using the same student as the recorder or have a different student—who has a call to maturity in the body of believers—be responsible for this section.

There may need to be several revisions before agreement is reached.

Each student should have a copy of the final catechism.

We will now move forward and work on a plan—catechism—for a refresher program.

We will look at what we are expecting for growing/maturing believers. What do we expect believers to know, to do, and to be?

Then in your group try to come to an agreement for a program based on what each of you has prepared throughout this module.

You will have 10 minutes to work together in your group and then as a class we will work together to produce a catechism.

In our catechism have we covered all that is important in the life of the Christian and in the life of the Church?

Reflection: Module Evaluation

(10 minutes)

Allow the students to have an opportunity to write out an evaluation of the module and the instructor.

You may want to provide a form for the students to fill out.

Lesson Close

(10 minutes)

Review

Call on the students.

What has been the most significant part of this module that will help you in your ministry?

Assign Homework

Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.

Commit to be a lifelong learner of the Bible and its message.

Closing

Close in a time of prayer for each of the students.