

Quest for Truth—En Pos de la Verdad

Eight Bible Studies for understanding God’s redemptive plan

Introduction

One of the effective evangelism tools that we are using in Latin America is a translation of the eight lessons in the evangelistic studies, “Quest for Truth.” In Spanish, the lessons are titled “En Pos de la Verdad.” Several have asked about these lessons and why they are so effective. Here is a brief response.

In fact, this little booklet serves several purposes. First, for those who would like to have a quick and easy overview of the content of the Quest for Truth Bible studies, here are one page summaries of the content of the lessons. Second, these summaries suggest a sequence for studying the Bible with someone who is interested in the Christian faith and message. That is, even without copies of the Quest for Truth studies, these summaries serve as a guide by suggesting an effective order for introducing biblical concepts and subjects. Third, it is hoped that these brief summaries will motivate a greater interest in the lessons and a greater appreciation for their effectiveness in evangelism.

The usefulness of these studies has been clear in my local church ministry. In one case, over a period of 11 years the local church saw 243 baptisms, many of which were the result of Bible studies using these lessons. In another ministry, the church experienced over 100 baptisms in a period of about five years. Many of these baptisms came as a result of home Bible studies in which these lessons were used. In one follow-up study, it was estimated that more than 80% of those brought to Christ through these studies remained faithful in attendance and involvement after five years.

One of the advantages of these studies is that they were prepared by Christians who understood psychology and motivation. A second advantage is that the studies combine apologetics and evangelistic teachings. A third advantage is that they are inductive studies that allow the student to draw conclusions rather than merely presenting “pre-digested” Bible teachings.

It is beyond the scope of this introductory page to list all of the benefits and advantages of these studies. The Christian who uses these studies for an extended time will recognize the benefits.

In Spanish, two additional lessons have been prepared using the same format. The general topics are the Holy Spirit and the End of the World. These lessons address primary needs in the churches in Latin America.

I pray that you will have great success in sharing the gospel to the glory of God, the advancement of the Kingdom, and the growth of the church.

--Bob Young

Additional training in the use of the materials is available, either through Quest for Truth (qfts.org) or from this author (bobyoungrsources.com).

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Lesson 1

Theme: Who is Jesus?

Guidelines for studying and understanding the Bible

Tell me about God. Who is this God I am supposed to serve?

God speaks to us today through his Word—through Jesus and the written word of God.

Introduction

One of the most important questions in the world is, “Who is Jesus?” Many people think he was just another man. Some, even in other religions, say he was only a prophet. A well-known religious group says he was a son of God, but not the Son of God. What does the Bible say?

Studying the Bible

Before we let the Bible answer our question, this lesson gives some basic guidelines for reading and understanding the Bible.

Understanding God

Most people who are interested in studying the Bible want to understand more about God. Who is this God I am supposed to serve?

I have thought about this question as I have asked myself what I would say to someone who had never heard of God and never read the Bible. How would I summarize the story of the Bible if I could spend a day with such a person? I would say that there is a Creator God who is different than any other gods. He is a personal God who wants to establish a personal relationship with his human creation, being whom he created in his image.

The Bible tells about a God who created the world and created human beings in his image. He is a God of love, but he is also a holy God. That means God is pure, and that sin cannot dwell in his presence. God is also a just God.

The Word of God

We will study more about this God who makes and keeps promises in other lessons, but in this first lesson, we will learn that God speaks to us today through Jesus and the word of Jesus. One can say that God speaks through his word, written and living, because Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the unique, sometimes translated “only begotten,” Son of God. He is in some sense God.

If Jesus is God, we must listen to him and obey him. What does it mean that Jesus is God? It does not mean that Jesus is God the Father. It means that Jesus is divine, that he has a divine nature. The Deity is composed of three persons who are by nature divine—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible never uses the word Trinity, but it does use the word Deity or Godhead.

Can we agree that we will use the Bible as our only religious authority in these lessons?

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Lesson 2

Are the Ten Commandments still valid?

Are we supposed to follow the Old Testament today? Do the Old Testament and the New Testament contradict one another?

Throughout the Bible, God makes and keeps promises (also known as covenants). God speaks today through Jesus in the new covenant (New Testament), the gospel.

Introduction

Many people want to know if we should obey the Ten Commandments, especially should keep the Sabbath (Saturday) or worship on Sunday. Some think that Sunday is a new Sabbath. Some religious groups worship on Saturday and teach that we should follow the Old Testament. What does the Bible say?

Understanding God

Let me continue my story about what I would want to say about God to a person who had never heard of God and never read the Bible. I would not only speak of a God who is by nature different than any other gods. I would also tell about a God who wants to establish a personal relationship with his human creation. He created us for such a relationship, and when sin entered the world (Genesis 1-11), God gave promises (established a covenant with Abraham) that would make it possible to restore broken relationships.

The God of the Bible makes and keeps his promises. He made promises to Abraham which pointed to Jesus. He made an agreement with the nation of Israel, giving them his Law and the Ten Commandments. God never gave the Ten Commandments to Christians, only to Israel, that is, to the Jews. God wants relationship, but he wants it to be mutual so that people follow him willingly and not by force.

Human beings are free moral agents. Of all the creation, we get to choose whether we will worship and glorify God or not.

Comparing two covenants—the Old Testament and the New Testament

The covenant with Israel was conditional, based on Israel's acceptance and obedience, and the covenant was broken again and again. The covenant with Israel was incapable of establishing an eternal relationship between God and his human creation. Therefore, God established a new covenant to replace the former covenant (Hebrews 8-9). The new covenant in Jesus fulfills the promise to Abraham (Galatians 3), and makes the previous covenant, the Old Testament, useless.

Can we agree that we will use the New Testament as our religious authority in these lessons?

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Lesson 3

Is there a day of judgment coming?

What went wrong in this world? Is the world we know today the world as God intended it to be?

Am I too bad to be saved? How can I please God?

God solves our sin problem through Jesus' death on the cross, which is the message of the gospel.

Introduction

Some people, even Christians, do not accept the idea of a day of judgment because they believe a God of love could not reject anyone. What does the Bible say?

Continuing the story

Genesis 3 tells us that sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve believed and obeyed a lie. As a result, human beings were separated from God. Remember that sin cannot be in the presence of a holy God. Separation from the human creation made in his image, made for fellowship with him, was never God's plan, so God began to develop a plan to restore the broken relationship. He chose to do this through a process of re-creation.

Thankfully, in the new covenant, based on the sacrifice of Jesus, God forgives our sins in Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus is powerful enough to forgive every sin. Every person can be saved through Jesus, but only if one accepts the sacrifice of Jesus and becomes an imitator of Jesus. Christians, the word means those who are like Christ, imitate or participate in the gospel.

Understanding God

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross shows the extent of God's love and what he will do to restore the relationship he desires. Remember that God wants mutual relationship. He loves, wanting his human creation in response to love him. He will not establish a one-way relationship. Relationship with God demands that we respond to God's love in faith and obedience.

The holy God of heaven is gracious and loving, but is also holy and just. He cannot simply ignore sin, but he can forgive sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Son. He wants a personal, mutual relationship that honors and glorifies him for who he is, according to his nature. He wants us to respond to his love. He wants to re-create us in Jesus as new creation. He wants to make us like Jesus.

God will forgive your sin

In this lesson, we study numerous Bible passages that describe what people in the first century were told to do to receive the forgiveness of sins. Certainly God will honor the same kind of obedience today to forgive our sins.

Can we agree that God will forgive the sins of those who obey the commandments and instructions we read about in the New Testament?

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Lesson 4

What kind of life does Jesus want his followers to live? Who will go to heaven?

This lesson focuses on the radical nature discipleship, a life of commitment to God.

Introduction

Across twenty centuries of church history, what it means to follow Jesus has been defined in different ways. In reality, some modern versions of Christianity require very little to be a Christian. That was not the case in the first century. To be a disciple of Jesus meant to follow a radical lifestyle, and often to experience death. What does Jesus want from his followers?

More about God

The all-powerful, sovereign, creating God is also a personal God who wants to establish a personal relationship with his human creation. That possibility was ruined with the entry of sin to the world. But God has acted by grace to restore relationship, making possible our re-creation as new creation in Christ, in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). God wants to be recognized according to his nature; he wants to be worshiped according to his nature, that is, according to who he is, according to his nature and not according to human nature. God wants mutual relationship. God wants human beings to respond to his love. These concepts summarize what we have learned about God to this point: recognize God, respect (worship) God, respond to God, relate to God, relate to other human beings, and reflect God's glory.

Discipleship and Commitment

Living out the reality of our relationship with God is demanding. Christianity is not a Sunday-only, one day a week commitment. The word used again and again is "daily." In the minds of many people, even some who claim to be Christians, the teachings of the Bible about discipleship are too radical. But Jesus talks in terms of sacrifice and crosses; he talks in terms of rejection and misunderstanding.

In this lesson we study various Bible texts that show the importance of commitment and faithfulness. It is important to start with a firm commitment to Jesus, it is equally important to maintain that firm commitment throughout our lives.

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Lesson 5

We cannot do it alone, and God does not expect us to be Christians in isolation.

How do I find a church? How can I know which church is most like the church we read about in the New Testament.

What is God's purpose for the church?

Introduction

Many people think that one church is as good as another. Some even think one religion is as good as another. The New Testament clearly shows what the early church was like. We can understand its practices, its worship, and its commitment. We can learn and understand how people became part of the church in New Testament times. What does the New Testament say about the church?

God's purpose for the church

God's purpose for the church is clearly stated in Ephesians. God's purpose for the church is to unite every person under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Christ is the head of the church. Every spiritual blessing is in the church. God puts saved people in the church; Jesus purifies and saves the church. The saving work of God is done in Jesus Christ. The saving work of God is impossible apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the head of the church, so that the New Testament says to be in Christ is the same thing as to be in the church, the body of Christ.

In the church are all spiritual blessings, God's selection, adoption as sons; redemption, and the revelation of God's eternal purpose. In the church are salvation and peace with God. The church is God's dwelling place through the Holy Spirit.

The church described in the New Testament

Remember that God wants to be worshiped according to his nature, not according to human desires. That means that the Bible is our only guide to understand what God wants and what he rejects. We can be a part of the church described in the New Testament.

God wants us to be part of his church, to share fellowship and worship with other Christians.

Can we agree that the New Testament is our guide to understand the nature of the church and to understand the details of worship and membership?

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Lesson 6

How can I obey God? What does God want me to do? Should I be baptized again?

Can someone show me the way?

How can I take hold of the new life in Christ?

Introduction

The good news of the gospel is that God has provided the power for our salvation through Jesus Christ. This is a message to be preached, received, believed, obeyed, and held firmly (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). One of the most important questions of our lives is, "Have I obeyed the gospel?"

Remembering the nature of God

Because of his love, holiness, and justice, God has made it possible for us to be restored to relationship with him through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. He wants to be recognized as God. He wants to be respected and worshiped. He desires restored relationship with his human creation. He also desires our loving response in a mutual relationship. He makes us like him, so that we reflect his glory.

The new life in Christ

The new life in Christ is described as the death of the old man and the birth of the new man. This new life in Christ connects with the gospel of Jesus Christ at every step. As Jesus died, was buried, and was raised, we also die, are buried, and are raised (Romans 6:1-6). We participate in the gospel, knowing also that we will participate in the final resurrection. The new life in Christ is not just for heaven, it is a reality in our lives each day.

In this lesson we study again the wonderful story of God's redemptive plan. We will study what the New Testament says concerning obeying the gospel and taking hold of new life in Christ. New life in Christ is what we really want, is it not? The good news is that it is possible for you and for me.

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Lesson 7

The God of grace, the price is paid!
Has God really done all of that for me?

Introduction

God by grace has made possible our salvation. Grace says that the price has been paid. When we consider the many blessings we have in Christ, we naturally ask, "Has God done all of that for me?"

The God of the Bible

The God of the Bible is not like any other god that human beings have ever known. The all-powerful, creator God of the Bible is also a personal God interested in our well-being. He does not take advantage of his human creation. He desires relationship. God wants to be recognized and to be worshiped according to his nature. All of nature participates in the recognition and worship of God; only human beings have the option to choose: to recognize God and to worship him, or not.

God in Jesus has made possible the restoration of relationship. He acts by grace; he desires our response by faith. (This lesson and the next lesson show how these two concepts are connected in God's eternal plan and purpose.)

Understanding grace

Grace says that God initiated our salvation when we did not deserve it (Romans 5:1-11). Grace does not say that God does not desire any response on our part. Grace does not say that God does not want us to live Christian lives and to reflect the glory of God.

Grace says that God did what we could not do for ourselves. God made possible the restoration of relationship. Grace does not say that every person is automatically included whether they want to be or not. That is a belief system known as "universalism." God makes possible what we must accept. That is why the Bible says, "by grace through faith."

In this lesson, we study God's grace. In the final lesson, we will study how grace and faith work together to bring God's redemptive plan to reality in the lives of the disciples of Jesus.

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Lesson 8

What does it mean to be a person of faith?

How can I know that I am faithful, journeying to heaven?

Introduction

God saves us by grace through faith. What does it mean to be a person of faith, fulfilling the purpose for which God has prepared me? How do I become a part of his workmanship, allowing him to work in me and through me to do his will?

Reflecting God's glory

All human beings have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sinful human beings do not automatically reflect God's glory. God makes it possible, but we have to desire it and accept it. Reflecting God's glory is the final part of the story. Remember the progression: recognize God as God, respect and worship God according to his nature, respond to God's gift in Jesus to reestablish relationship, reflect his glory.

Faith and works

The Bible talks about works in different ways: works of the law, works of merit, and works of faith. When one reads about works in the Bible, one must study and understand the context in order to know what kind of works are being talked about.

Faith works; faith acts. Faith is made evident by the things faithful people do. Works of faith are the result of faith; works of faith are not meritorious. We do not come to deserve salvation because of what we do.

Conclusion

My sincere hope is that you have enjoyed the study of God's redemptive plan. We are seeking the truth of God, ultimately revealed in Jesus who is the truth.

I encourage you to put into practice what you have learned.

If you are interested in additional Bible study, the person who has given you these studies can help you continue your study of God's word.