

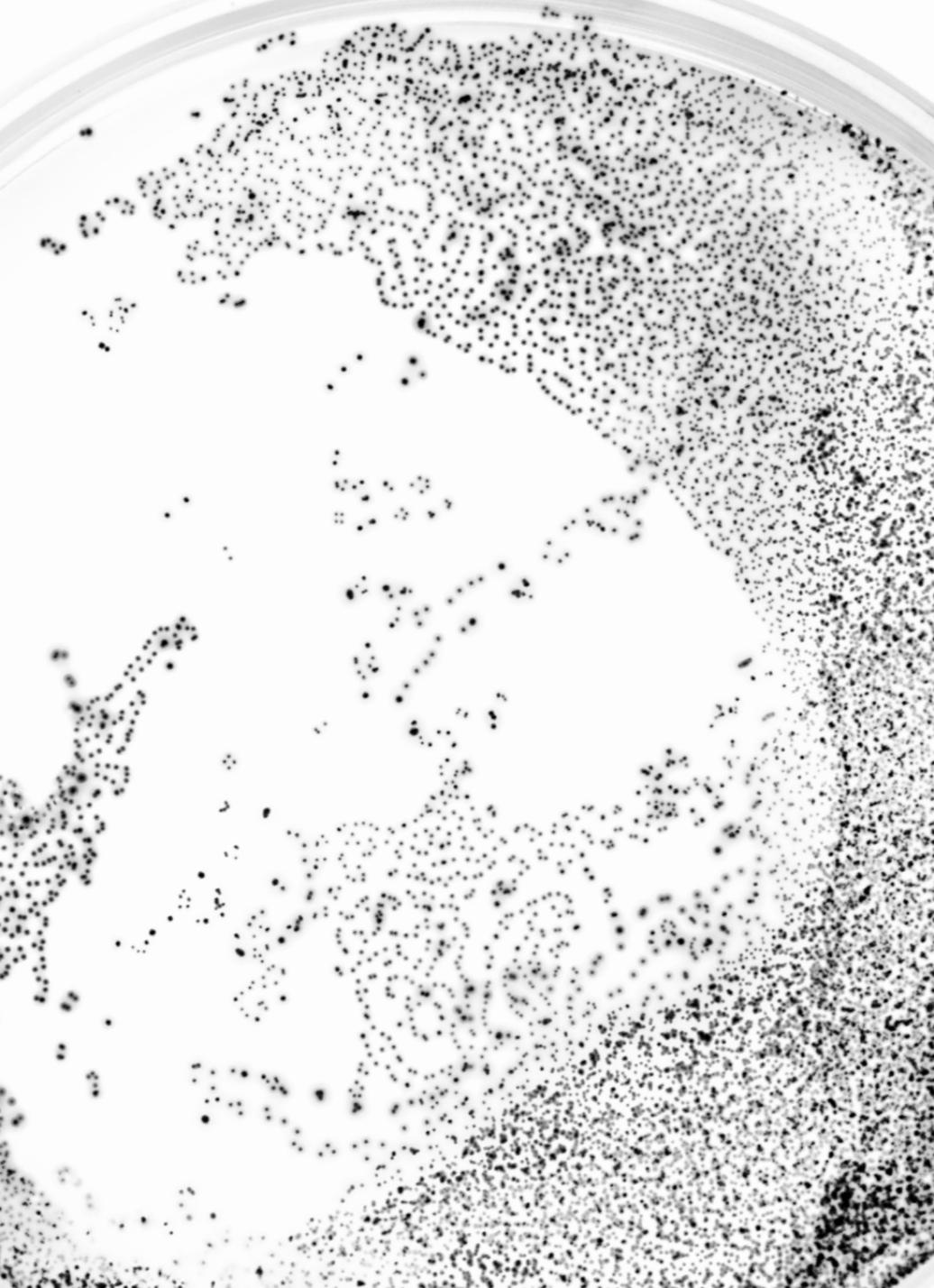


RE: ACTS

OUR RESPONSE TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

III

GOSPEL REACTION:
AN ACTION PERFORMED IN
DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE
DEATH AND RESURRECTION
OF JESUS CHRIST



READ ACTS 15

THE GROWING CHURCH HAD TO EXAMINE WHAT IT BELIEVED



YOU WILL REACT DAILY

TO WHAT YOU BELIEVE

.....

Our daily actions, thoughts, words, and choices all reflect what we believe is true in life. This is why what a person believes matters.

In Acts 15, the 1st Century Church found itself at a pivotal point of identifying what they believed about the nature of God and His plan for humanity. While on a mission journey, Paul and Barnabas encounter teaching they felt was suspect, but they were not sure how to handle it. *Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, before being appointed with others to go to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders with their questions. (Acts 15:2).* When they arrived in Jerusalem, they gathered with the apostles and began a long and diligent process of determining what the early Church believed was true. They began to develop

doctrine. These early disciples determined their beliefs, or Christian Doctrine, based on God's Word which gives us the nature of God and His plan for humanity. When their Christian Doctrine informed their daily living, the result was remarkable!

Over the next six weeks, the sermons at Grace and the pages of this booklet will be dedicated to unpacking and applying core doctrine that we adhere to at Grace Community Church. Before we begin to swim into the deep ocean of doctrine, we must acknowledge that the sermons and this book will not provide a complete study of each doctrine because there is simply not enough time and space for a complete study. Nonetheless, our hope and prayer is for each of us to possess hunger and desire to know the nature of God and His plan for humanity and to let our beliefs sink deep into every nook and cranny of our life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. D. Jeffery". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke.

STUDY QUESTIONS

USING THIS STUDY

🔗 READ THE SCRIPTURE 5
TIMES A WEEK AND ANSWER
THESE QUESTIONS

DAY 1 - PRAY

Read through the passage, again if you've already done so. Spend time in prayer confessing your sin and asking God to help you understand what His Word says. Pray for humility and courage to be obedient to the truth He reveals. Pray for the Church as we study this passage together.

DAY 2 - OBSERVE

Write down any people, places, or things that stand out to you in this passage. What do you know about them? Are there any phrases that stand out?

DAY 3 - UNDERSTAND

What is the author saying? What message is he trying to convey? Write it in as few words as possible. What does it say about God? Humanity?

DAY 4 - REFERENCE

What other scriptures in the Bible address this same topic or issue? If you aren't sure, use some of the words or names you identified on day two and see if they appear anywhere else using a concordance, usually located in the back of any Bible.

DAY 5 - APPLY

What implications does this scripture have for your life? How does it apply? To you? To the culture around you? To the Church? Write down one application of this scripture and think of ways you can actively work to respond in obedience to God's Word.

5 X 5

⑤ PRAYERS

.....

One of the greatest moments in the book of Acts is the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-11). After the ascension, the disciples journeyed to Jerusalem and gathered together in the upper room. What must that conversation have been like? We can only imagine. But one thing we do know is they devoted themselves to prayer together in “one accord” (Acts 1:14). From this moment, we learn that the art of being disciples and making disciples is praying in one accord with each other. Therefore, this is exactly what we are going to do this entire year.

To pray in unity and with devotion, we are going to provide a structure that is congregation-centered yet with a personal bent. We are referring to this structure as our “5 x 5 Prayers.” Here’s how it will work:

5 PEOPLE

Choose 5 people, people who need to know God or who need to grow in God, that you will pray for during this portion of the Re:Acts series. Write them down below.

1	
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2	
---	--

3	
---	--

4	
---	--

5	
---	--

5 DAYS OF THE WEEK

Get into a rhythm in your life. The prayers don't need to be long, but they need to be consistent.

Please keep track of how God answers your prayers. We ask you to consider sharing your answered prayers by sending an email to 5x5answered@gcc.org.

Let's move together, as disciples, praying together for more people to make the name of Jesus known.

OBSERVE THE WORD

AS YOU STUDY:
QUESTION,
REACT, REPEAT

HEBREWS 4:12

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

.....

We believe in the verbal, complete inspiration of the Old and New Testaments and hold them to be the inerrant Word of God, the supreme and final authority.

“It’s one thing to know about the Bible, and it’s altogether another to have it dramatically transform your life.” - A.W. Tozer.

A recent study on interaction with the Bible showed that 88% of American households own at least one Bible and average over four Bibles per household. But the study also found that only 37% of Americans read their Bible at least once a week. As a pastor I consistently hear the same remarks regarding the Bible: “I believe the Bible, but I’m just not much of a reader,” or “I just do not understand it the way that others do,” or “I read it when I need some inspiration to get me through my day,” or “I don’t agree with all of it, especially some of its outdated teaching.”

To truly understand the Bible’s power and relevance for our life, we have to better understand the “why” behind it. What is God’s intention for giving humanity His Word, and what does it mean for my life? We must first understand that God, in His very nature, is a supreme communicator. Have you ever thought about God as a communicator? Through every sunset, every clear blue sky, every ocean wave, every breath that you’ve been given to breathe, God is communicating to you. We see this in the creation account when God brings all things into existence and does so through His words (Genesis 1). Eugene Peterson explains

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this important truth regarding God as a communicator like this: “The Christian gospel is rooted in language: God spoke a creation into being; our Savior was the Word made flesh.”

The Inerrancy of God’s Word

God has graciously provided us the very words of life, the Bible. The early Christians held firm to the belief that the Bible contains the very words of God, uniquely inspired and inerrant, incapable of being wrong. This is the foundation of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. The Protestant Reformers also believed the Bible to be the revelation of God’s truth to humanity, that God safeguarded the truth by controlling, through the Holy Spirit, the authors of the books of the Bible, keeping these authors from error and anything that was untrue. They believed the Bible was and is the inerrant Word of God, His masterpiece of communication to humanity. For God’s Word to be inerrant means that scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error.

An Inerrant Word Aids Inerrant Living

If we don’t take seriously this doctrine of biblical inerrancy, we run the risk of living a life that functionally ignores an infinitely generous gift that God alone has placed before us. God provided us His inerrant word so that we don’t err in how we live. His Word is designed to love us by protecting us. As John Piper helps us better understand,

“Truth leads to freedom (John 8:32), and error leads to bondage (2 Timothy 2:25–26). Truth saves (2 Thessalonians 2:10); error destroys (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Truth enlightens (Psalm 43:3; Ephesians 5:9); error deceives (Proverbs 12:17; 2 Corinthians 11:13). Truth gives life

(1 John 5:20); error brings death (2 Samuel 6:7). Therefore, God is concerned not only for his own glory in being a God of truth (Romans 3:7); He is concerned also for us when He guards His Word from error.”

When we read God’s Word without listening intently, we are sabotaging His words to us.

An Inerrant Word, God’s Inerrant Plan: the Gospel

One of the most common views of the Bible is that it is an ancient book full of inspiring, but disconnected, stories. However, the stories we read in the Bible - such as David and Goliath, Daniel and the lion’s den, and Jesus walking on water, are more than just detached ancient records. The Bible is one book, composed by one Author, telling one grand story: God’s redemption and restoration of the world lost in Eden through direct intervention. This intervention climaxes in Jesus Christ who accomplished for us what we could not accomplish for ourselves: salvation. Every Biblical text must be placed in this bigger story to be understood. Tremper Longman III provides strong support to this point:

“We should never read Scripture in isolation from the whole Bible. While many human authors contributed to the Bible, God is the Ultimate Author of the whole. While the Bible is an anthology of many books, it is also One Book. While it has many stories to tell, they all contribute to a Single Story.”

We must ask every biblical text one question: “What does this tell me about the main story of the scriptures, which is salvation we have in Christ?” I encourage you to read your Bible and ask this question, and when you do, the Gospel will begin to shine from the pages of your Bible.

Jesus affirms the Gospel-centered nature of scriptures in his discourse with the two men who were traveling to Emmaus. Shortly after His crucifixion, we see these words ‘And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,’ (Luke 24:27, ESV). Josh Moody and Robin Weekes provide helpful commentary to Jesus’ message here,

“Notice that according to Jesus, all the Scriptures (which for Him was the Old Testament) are about Him...we must see that Christ is at the heart of Scripture... in other words, Jesus Christ is the key, which unlocks every part of the Bible. He is the lens through which all Scripture must be interpreted and lived.”

When you hold your Bible in your hand, you are holding: 66 books, 40+ authors, 1,500+ years, 10 civilizations, 3 continents, 3 languages, and one unified Gospel Story of Jesus Christ!

God’s Inerrant Word and Your Life

If God has provided us His inerrant word that serves as a safeguard so that we don’t err in life, and every text we read shows us more about Jesus, how does that change us on a day-to-day basis? The goal of reading the Word is not to master the content of the Word, but rather the goal is to be mastered by the Author of the Word.

Honestly examining your view of God’s Word is vital, because if God has provided His inerrant Word to us, then maybe at the root of many of our problems in life is simply that we do not know our Bible very well. As Charles Spurgeon once said, “A Bible that’s falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn’t.” Far too often we

charge into our busy schedules, appointments, and daily responsibilities swayed by self-sufficiency or a “get through the day” mentality when God has graciously provided us His words of life. His inerrant Word speaks to the core of our lives in a more realistic and honest fashion than any other piece of literature. Often we cry out, “God is silent!” but that cry is accompanied by a closed Bible. Martin Luther best summed up our need for God’s Word when he said, “The Bible is a remarkable fountain: the more one draws and drinks of it, the more it stimulates thirst.” Is this the Bible that you know? The first step in God’s Word coming alive in your life is to pick it up and with complete openness soak up His inerrant words.

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REACT	①	What do you believe about the authority of scripture? Why? What does scripture say? How does this impact or reflect your view of God? Why does it matter?										
5X5	⑤	Pray that God would open the eyes of your five to see and understand the value and absolute authority of God’s Word.										
STUDY	⑨	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Day 1</td> <td>Day 2</td> <td>Day 3</td> <td>Day 4</td> <td>Day 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pray</td> <td>Observe</td> <td>Understand</td> <td>Reference</td> <td>Apply</td> </tr> </table>	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Pray	Observe	Understand	Reference	Apply
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5								
Pray	Observe	Understand	Reference	Apply								

A grayscale photograph of a scientist in a laboratory. The scientist is wearing a white lab coat, safety goggles, and a hairnet. They are looking intently at a piece of equipment on a lab bench. The background is slightly blurred, showing other lab equipment and a clean, professional environment.

SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

TEST YOUR HEART

GENESIS 1:26

THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

.....

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What comes to your mind when you think about God, what He is like, what attributes He possesses, or how He interacts with humanity? All of us have views and opinions about who God is. You may question the validity of that statement by asking, “What about those who don’t believe that God actually exists?” Good question! But isn’t the belief and view that God doesn’t exist actually a belief and view of God in itself? We all have a theology of God, because the essence of theology is the way you view who God is, what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do in the future; therefore, we are all theologians regardless of our religious or non-religious affiliation.

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A.W. Tozer famously said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Maybe you view God as an angry father, a spiritual genie, or even a last-ditch lifeguard, each view catering to an immediate fear or need in our lives.

Does God care about what comes to our mind when we think about Him? Far too often we limit our view of God to our small, human perspective, and our view of God is often not truly who He is. What if we allowed our view of God to be completely shaped by His description of Himself?

As we established last week, God is a supreme communicator who has plainly articulated in His Word who He is, what

He has done, and what He desires to do now and in the future. Philip Ryken explains, “To know God is to know Him as triune.” This means that God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – three in one. Although the term “Trinity” is not used in the scriptures, the concept is undoubtedly a biblical theme.

Understanding the Basics

The most basic doctrine of the Trinity is this: God is three persons, each person is fully God, and there is one God. We see this triune doctrine in the earliest part of the Bible when God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26). This says that humanity is created in “our” image, but who does “our” refer to? The only possible answers at that time in creation would have been angels or the triune God. The Word explicitly states in the next verse, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27). J.A. Medders, in his book *Rooted*, clarifies it for us this way:

“There is one God who exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God, working in perfect relationship with one another, eternally possessing the same divine substance. All three are simultaneously and equally omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (everywhere at all times), holy, loving, just, and all other attributes of God. We cannot elevate His threeness over His oneness. We cannot elevate one of the Persons over another. They are not set on a better-than-the-other totem pole; they are connected and dependent upon one another. He is three. He is one.”

Trying to comprehend the Trinity is a massive undertaking. It is complex and breathtaking, profound and beautiful, unique to Christianity and yet open to all humanity.

Why is a growing understanding of the Trinity important for life? If we want God's amazing and powerful work in our life, then we must better understand Him as Triune God.

God the Father

We read about God the Father many times in scriptures, not only affirming that He is Father but also describing who He is as God the Father. The New Testament writer James regards God as a Father when he states, "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17) Jesus refers to God as Father when He tells us that God the Father knows exactly what we need (Matthew 6:25-34), as well as when he says that God the Father holds us in His hands (John 10:29).

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The perfect gift-giver, the sufficient provider, and the giver of ultimate security, God the Father is the perfect prototype for all earthly fathers. Is this a truth that you desperately needed to hear today? Do you genuinely rest in His security, or is your life riddled with constant insecurity? God the Father has extended His hands to you and graciously offered infinite rest and security for you. This is who He is.

God the Son

In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul explains that Jesus is fully God and fully human, and that by Him all things have been created. We learn that Jesus holds all things together, and that in everything Jesus is preeminent, meaning that He is the most important of all important things and people. We learn that in Jesus the fullness of God dwells and that He is on a mission to reconcile all that is broken. We know that He accomplishes this mission by sacrificing His life in a brutal death on the cross and rising three days later, triumphant over death.

When you read this description of who God the Son is, does it draw you in to the Gospel story? Does it lead you to lay down your life in worship? David Martyn Lloyd-Jones sums it up for us, “There is something essentially wrong with a man who calls himself a Christian and who can listen to a truly evangelistic sermon without coming under conviction again, without feeling something of his own unworthiness, and rejoicing when he hears the Gospel remedy being presented.”

God the Spirit

God the Spirit is probably the most misunderstood person of the Trinity, but we must understand that God the Spirit is equally deserving of worship as God the Father and God the Son. Many churches and some Christians fall into one of two traps: making too much of the Holy Spirit or making too little of the Holy Spirit.

Making too much of God the Spirit happens when our theology of the Holy Spirit takes precedence over God’s gospel. For example, some believe that an individual cannot be saved until they possess specific gifts of the Spirit. How is this reconciled with the complete and finished work of Christ on the cross? Was Jesus’ atonement not sufficient? Of course not! It is vital for God the Spirit to be understood through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is an equally destructive view of God the Spirit which develops when we make too little of the Spirit. This happens when we live in awareness of God the Father and God the Son but ignore God the Spirit in our daily lives. How do we understand the importance of God the Spirit in our everyday living? Jesus provides critical insight regarding God the Spirit in John 14:16-17, 25-26, when He makes it clear that GOD the Spirit dwells in the life of one who has surrendered his life to HIM through belief in the Gospel. From the moment of salvation, the Spirit of God begins His transforming work in the life of a disciple of Jesus. While this transforming work tends

to be slow, it is powerful. Paul identifies this transforming work of the Spirit of God as the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23). As Jerry Bridges writes, “If we take seriously the Christ-like character traits we’re to put on, we see how impossible it is to grow apart from the power of the Spirit.”

God the Spirit desires to work in and through you today. In fact, the Spirit of God is the only way that you can live the life God has called you to live. He will bring to the surface the deep-seated issues of your heart in hope of transforming you into something new. The Spirit will provide opportunities throughout the day for you to be God’s hands and feet in your community. Call on the Spirit by daily praying something as simple as, “Give me the ears to hear what you want me to hear, the eyes to see what you see, the thoughts that you desire for me to possess, the actions that you want of me, and the words that you want to speak through me today.”

Right now, you are infinitely loved by God the Father, adopted in God the Son, and being molded by God the Holy Spirit.

REACT	④	What is your understanding of the Trinity? What do scriptures say? How does your understanding impact or reflect your view of God? Why does it matter?					
	⑤	Pray that God would move and work in the hearts of your five. Pray they would understand the love and power of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.					
STUDY	⑥	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Day 1 Pray</td> <td>Day 2 Observe</td> <td>Day 3 Understand</td> <td>Day 4 Reference</td> <td>Day 5 Apply</td> </tr> </table>	Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
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ASK GOD TO REVEAL HIMSELF

EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE



EPHESIANS 2:1-10

DEPRAVITY AND SAVING GRACE

.....

We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death which is separation from God. We believe that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, lost and without hope except for His sovereign mercy and grace.

There is a long-standing story from the early 1900's about an inquiry sent out from the English newspaper, *The Times*, which stated, "What's wrong with the world today?" Daily, we experience the brokenness of the world through wars, murder, corruption, prejudice, poverty, broken relationships, and more.

The Bible provides critical insight into our concern for the world around us. Rewind to the beginning of time when God reveals His unmatched creativity in shaping and forming all things "good." (Genesis 1:31) In that moment, all the earth was functioning just as God intended! We've never experienced this kind of perfection because of what takes place just two chapters later: the fall of man.

The Fall of Man

Genesis 3 describes the sobering event that changes everything: sin enters into the world, and everything that was created in its perfect form is now broken. From that moment on, the world began to operate in a way that God did not intend. Whether it's the injustice suffered by the lowly, the corruption of a government, the physical or emotional pain of an abusive husband, the prejudiced actions towards one of a

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different skin color, or the multitude of lies that can paralyze us, we all feel the harsh sting of a broken world.

James Sire, in his book *Naming the Elephant*, explains that all men and women of all cultures throughout history have asked four essential questions: 1) Who am I? What is the nature, task, and purpose of human beings? 2) Where am I? What is the nature of the world and universe I live in? 3) What's wrong? What is the basic problem, or how do I understand evil? 4) What is the remedy? How is it possible to overcome this broken world? A proper grasp of biblical theology is important because biblical theology helps us understand that all the evil in this world exists because of sin, and sin exists because of the fall.

Sin Enters

If sin is the source of all evil in the world, where did sin originate? Sin entered the story first in heaven, in the immediate presence of God. The thought, the wish, the will to resist God arose first in the heart of the angels. Peter explained in 2 Peter 2:4, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”

Then we see Satan approach Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden with the temptation to give in to sin (Genesis 3). This is where we get the Doctrine of Depravity, the belief that from the moment of the fall and throughout all of human history, every human operates in and lives in the total brokenness of a sinful nature. The Apostle Paul gives us one of the best explanations of depravity in Romans 5: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) This is where theologians get the term “Original Sin,”

which means all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being.

Soren Kierkegaard, in his book *The Sickness Unto Death*, defines sin as building your identity—your self-worth and happiness—on anything other than God, not as much on “doing bad things” but on “making good things into ultimate things.”

In response to the question sent to *The Times*, an English poet and theologian G.K. Chesterton responded, “Dear Sir, I am. Yours, G.K. Chesterton.” Chesterton’s response is challenging because the vast majority of us want to place the blame on everyone around us and believe that we are the exception to what is wrong with the world.

Consider the Apostle Paul’s words to the Christians in Ephesians 2:1-3. He essentially says, “Dear Sirs, the problem with the world is us.” Nothing levels the playing field like sin does. We are all sinful and broken.

Redemption for All

If Ephesians 2 stopped at v.3, all humanity would be in a very dark and hopeless place. Yet Paul doesn’t stop at v.3, and the way he begins v.4 is remarkable. God’s solution to our depravity is not for us to avoid major sins or sins that hurt people.

God’s solution is two words: “But God.” In the following verses, Paul declares, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5). The story of the Gospel is a story of redemptive grace which makes the story of your life a story of redemptive grace! God wanted you to be His, and He was willing to pay a price. (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Christ was willing to pay the price when you were at your lowest point, and Christ has proclaimed that no one will ever love you more than He does. Christ was willing to pay the price for every sin you've committed, for no sin is bigger than the cross. Christ paid the price to redeem you, the wayward and lost and broken and sinful you.

Because God has redeemed you, you are forgiven and free from your depravity. You are new and righteous in His sight. It is God's grace at the beginning and at the end that redeems us so that when you and I come to lie upon our death beds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us is the thing that helped us in the beginning: not what we have been, not what we have done, but the grace of God in Jesus Christ! The Christian life starts with grace, it continues with grace, and it ends with grace. By the grace of God I am what I am.

REACT



What is your understanding of depravity and sin? What do scriptures say? How does your view of depravity and sin impact or reflect your view of salvation and God? Why does it matter?

5X5



Pray that your five will come to understand the weight of sin as well as the infinite grace of God.

STUDY



Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

LEVITICUS 11:44-45

HOLY LIVING

.....

We believe that Christians are called to live a holy life of service and testimony for the glory of God and the well-being of their fellow man.

There never lived a man who was too holy, and there never will live a man who will imitate Christ too closely. Throughout the pages of the Bible, there is a consistent call for a disciple of Jesus to pursue holy living. How would you define holy living? What if you were approached and asked, “Why does God place a high premium upon holy living, and what does that mean for my life?” How would you respond?

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There are many passages in the Bible that discuss holy living, but Leviticus 11 is the introduction. “Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:44-45). We often skip Leviticus as it can be confusing; however, in the context of this passage we see God forming the people of Israel into a nation, a people set apart for Him, different but attractive to a hurting world, who will bless the nations and reflect God.

Be holy. It’s hard to miss how straightforward God’s command is, yet we struggle with living it out. The Barna Research Group conducted a study on Americans and the concept of holy living, and their findings are fascinating. When asked to describe what it means to be holy, the most common reply was, “I don’t

know.” Of those who identified as “Born Again Christians,” only 46% believed “God has called them to holiness.” The study concluded, “The results portray a body of Christians who attend church and read the Bible but do not understand the concept or significance of holiness, do not personally desire to be holy, and therefore do little, if anything to pursue it.”

The Holiness of God

Could it be that we struggle to define holy living because we have a limited understanding of God’s holiness? Notice how God concluded his call to holy living in Leviticus 11: “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” What does it mean for God to be holy? The essence of God’s holiness is that He is separate from us and unlike anything we can imagine.

When our youngest son was 3 years old, he unwaveringly requested us to sing the great hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty” each night before he went to bed. He loved the hymn! But I soon realized that singing this hymn was equally about my heart as it was for my son. I would sing those words, “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God almighty...” each night, but I did so with little awareness as to what I was singing. Never did I stop and consider what was coming from my mouth and what it really means for God to be holy. This was a far cry from the experience Isaiah had with God’s holiness.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah witnesses the angels around the throne of God, and they are crying out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3) Three times the angels refer to God as holy, but what does this mean? Jerry Bridges provides some helpful insight here:

“Such a threefold repetition in Hebrew indicates the highest possible degree or, as we could say, the infiniteness of

God's holiness. What is infinite? The distance to the known edge of the universe is said to be about thirteen billion light-years away. Stated in miles, that would be about 78,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. To save you counting, that is twenty-one zeros! Seventy-eight billion, trillion miles. That is an exceedingly vast distance, but it is not an infinite distance. Infinite means without limits and immeasurable. Only God is infinite, and He is infinite in all of His glorious attributes. But it is only His holiness that is given the threefold ascription "holy, holy, holy."

Our Unholiness

There are times in life when we live and view ourselves as much bigger and more powerful than we truly are, and there are times in life when we are right-sized and get a glimpse of how very small and weak we are. For example, have you ever stood at the base of Pikes Peak in Colorado or at the shore of the ocean? In that moment of looking up at Pikes Peak's 14,000-foot elevation, you will undoubtedly feel small. Why does a massive structure like Pikes Peak right-size us, but the infinite holiness of God doesn't shrink us an inch?

First, we tend to have a deluded view of God's holiness. A.W. Tozer explains, "God's holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable... Holy is the way God is. To be holy He does not conform to a standard. He is that standard."

Second, we tend to have a deluded view of ourselves. The Puritan John Owen said, "There are two things that are suited to humble the souls of men... a due consideration of God, and then of ourselves. Of God, in his greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty and authority; of ourselves, in our mean, abject and sinful condition." Instead of taking an honest

assessment of our brokenness and nothingness, we play the comparison game in hopes of feeling better about ourselves. We justify our lack of holiness by comparing ourselves with those whose behavior is less holy than ours. Notice that we rarely if ever involve God in our comparison game, because deep down we know He would dominate.

The comparison game isn't the only way that we deal with our lack of holiness. Sometimes, we drift into isolation because we are paralyzed by the guilt and shame of our unholiness. Do you tend to keep conversations at a surface level? You only talk about your kids, your career, your hobbies, and your lawn, and you never let people in to the messiness of your life. Is preserving your reputation more important to you than living in transparent community that seeks sanctification in Christ?

This is where Isaiah is a great example for us as to how we embrace the infinite holiness of God and our infinite lack of holiness. After getting just a small glimpse of God's holiness, Isaiah responds, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5) An authentic response to God's holiness produces a desire to live holy lives, and God's holiness refines out of us our old desires.

Holy Living

How do we grow in holy living? We must first understand that holy is not something we are told to be to arrive at a religious "status," but holy living is something we give our lives to, because holy is what we already are! The greatest motivation for you and I to live holy lives is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We don't seek holiness out of shame, or the possibility of feeling guilt when we stumble, or because we know that we are supposed to be living holy. God has given us a much more

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sufficient motivation. Scripture tells us, “For our sake he made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ, in his infinite holiness, took on the dirtiness and darkness of our hearts, often referred to as “The Great Exchange.” Jerry Bridges sums it up in this remarkable way, “God took our sin—even that which causes immediate distress— & charged it to Christ. He took His perfect righteousness & credited it to us.” Jesus didn’t die for us because we were holy; he died for us to make us holy! You are fully loved and accepted by God not because of your trying to live holy but because of Jesus’ holiness and sacrifice for you. Do we truly understand that right now, our standing before God is the perfect and holy life of Jesus, which means we are free from the guilt and condemnation of sin and are sufficiently clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ? Why is this vital to grasp? God has cleansed us and freed us to live a holy life that glorifies Him and points to the world to Him! Therefore, the anthem of our life should sing out, “Be holy, as He is holy!”

REACT	④	What is your understanding of how we are to live? What do scriptures say? How does what you believe impact or reflect your view of God? Does it matter?				
	⑤	Pray that your 5 would see God’s transformation in your life for His glory, that they would be drawn to the Gospel.				
STUDY	①	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
		Pray	Observe	Understand	Reference	Apply



LET HIS LOVE
TRANSFORM
YOUR LIFE

REACT TO THE GOSPEL

1 JOHN 3:8

SATAN AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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We believe that Satan and his demons are about the business of attempting to destroy the power and work of Christ, as well as the authority of the Word of God.

Addressing the issue of Satan and spiritual warfare can be fascinating and at the same time unnerving. Part of us wants to know more about Satan, and part of us is spooked by Satan. There seems to be very little middle ground when it comes to Satan and spiritual warfare. Our hope is for this study to serve as an honest and biblical approach to better understand who Satan is and the abundance of power, because of the Gospel, that believers possess when combating Satan and his schemes.

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Who Is Satan?

When you think of who Satan is, how would you describe him? Our culture often depicts him as a little guy running around in red spandex with horns on his forehead, a nicely trimmed musketeer goatee, and a pitchfork, occasionally popping up on your shoulder in an attempt to talk you into doing something you know is wrong. I think we've sold Satan short of his true nature. In the Scriptures, we find that Satan is the personal name of the head of demons. He is a real, spiritual power and force that has a presence in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, we read that Satan stood against Israel and David (1 Chronicles 21:1). In the New Testament, we find Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:10). The

Scriptures also give alternative names for Satan such as, “the devil” (Matthew 4:1), “the serpent” (Genesis 3:1), “Beelzebul” (Matthew 10:25), “the evil one” (Matthew 13:19), “ruler of this world” (John 12:31), and “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

God’s Word leaves little doubt that Satan is a real, spiritual being who is living and active until Christ returns and brings His complete restoration of all things (Revelation 21:1-8). There are two common errors when thinking about Satan. One error is to completely disregard his existence, and the other is to feel an unhealthy fear about him. Ironically, these two views of Satan serve as evidence of his activity because both are false and unbiblical views of Satan, which is what he wants.

What is a healthy, biblical view of Satan for a believer in Christ? A healthy, biblical view of Satan is two-fold. First, it is one that sees Satan for who he is – the father of lies, the prince of darkness which includes sin and death. He is *roaming the earth looking for someone to devour* (1 Peter 5:8) through temptation, deceit, and disillusionment. Second, a healthy view sees Satan through the lens of the Gospel. In the Gospel, Satan was dethroned as the father of lies in your life. You are now set free from Satan’s dominion! You now belong to Jesus, and nothing can ever separate you from Christ.

How We Combat Satan’s Temptations

Although a believer in Christ stands fully secure in Christ, this doesn’t mean that Satan forfeits his activity. We know this to be true because Satan didn’t cease tempting Jesus even though he knew that Jesus could never be defeated (Matthew 4:1-17). In my life, I’ve never witnessed some sensational, made-for-television activity of Satan. I’m not saying these activities don’t happen, but this doesn’t seem to be the most

common approach Satan uses. Instead, Satan's temptations often appear to be intent on knocking us a degree or two off course from following Jesus. Satan creates a distraction from Jesus here and a distraction from Jesus there, tempting us to question God, especially in areas that God has already firmly declared His truth in our lives.

Remember the way that Satan used this method with Jesus in the wilderness when he questioned Him, "If you are the Son of God..." (Matthew 4:3). By using the term "if," Satan attempted to knock Jesus just a degree or two off his Gospel mission. A few verses before this, we see that God the Father had already confirmed Jesus' identity, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) Do you see how Satan sought to place a question mark where God had already declared truth? It doesn't appear that Satan has abandoned this method. Do you find yourself buying into the lies of Satan? Has he knocked you off just a degree or two from focusing on Jesus?

Recently, I found myself in this very situation. My family and I had traveled back to my hometown, and during our visit I decided to go for a run in the neighborhood where I grew up. During my run I stopped by the home where my best friend lived, and as I stood in front of his old house, I began to experience an overwhelming sense of guilt and shame for the things I had done there when I was a teenager. In my guilt and shame I thought, "What if the church, the church that I now pastor, knew the horrible things I did in that house?" Thankfully, as I stood in the middle of this residential street, I heard another voice proclaim, "This is not who you are now!" Because of the Gospel, I am now a redeemed son of the living God! Because of the Gospel, I am a new creation! And because of the Gospel, I stand in the righteousness of Christ, not my past unrighteousness!

The key here is this: We don't combat Satan by anything we do, but rather by what Jesus has already done. We must place our trust and confidence in the sufficient work of Christ on the cross, believe that we are securely God's, that God's plans are the best, and that His Spirit is alive and active within us at this very moment and forever. May our confidence be found in Christ just as Martin Luther proclaimed, "The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him! One little word (the Gospel) shall fell him."

REACT



What do you believe about Satan? Why? What does scripture say? How does your understanding of Satan impact or reflect your view of God and the Gospel? Why does it matter?

5X5



Pray against Satan's lies in your life and the lives of your five, that you would hold fast to the truth of the Gospel.

STUDY



Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

REVELATION 21:1-5

THE FUTURE HOPE OF A BELIEVER

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We believe in the bodily resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, the righteous to everlasting communion with God and the unrighteous to everlasting separation from God.

Within the American Christian culture today, there seems to be a persistent fascination with end times. We read books, engage in debates, form end times charts, and even guess about when it will take place. Granted, none of this is necessarily wrong because there should be a fair amount of pursuit, for every believer, to know what Scripture says about the future of the world. Yet what appears to be the result of our understanding of the future isn't as much unwavering hope as it is fear, uncertainty, pessimism, worry, anger, and paranoia. When the Apostle Paul addressed eschatology, the study of the last days, he never used it to scare people into fearful living, but rather he leveraged eschatology in a way that was much more life-giving:

“But we do not want you to be uniformed, brothers...for this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”
(1 Thessalonians 4:13, 16-18)

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Paul's purpose was to inform and encourage! As Jeff Medders says in his work *Rooted*, "If eschatology is not encouraging and life-directing, it's not biblical."

A Lens for Your Future

How do we adopt a more biblical way of viewing our future and the future of the world? The answer is to seek to view all of life as God views all of life, and He views life through the lens of the Gospel. The Gospel is not only a collection of truths to be believed, but it is also an astounding story to be experienced. Four words help create a Gospel lens for viewing our future and the future of the world.

The first is creation. Genesis 1 says that in the beginning God created all that exists, creating all things right and good. This includes the cosmos, earth, creatures, humanity, etc... The great implication here is that in this period (Genesis 1 and 2), everything that God has created is functioning the way God intended for all of His creation to function.

The second word is fall. Genesis 3 describes the sobering event that changes everything. Sin enters the world, and everything that was perfectly created is now broken. The effects of the fall are easy to spot; just look around and you'll see how sin entered the world in the form of corruption, poverty, oppression, prejudice, relational dysfunction, suffering, pain, death, etc...

The third term is redemption. Scripture says, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4-5) God was never in a panic when the fall occurred. God's redemptive plan has always been in motion, and the apex of His redemption story is His son stepping down into the mess

of broken humanity and offering redemption through His grace. Did you notice that Paul says Jesus' timing was perfect? (Galatians 4:4) Jesus didn't come a moment too early nor a moment too late; He came at exactly the right moment.

The final word is restoration. The restoration of all that was broken by the fall culminates in Christ's final return. (Revelation 21:1-5) When He comes, God's people will know of no more death, cancer, injustice, poverty, shame, abuse, addiction, hatred, and idolatry. Sam Storms puts it this way: "The eschatological hope of the Christian is inescapably earthly in nature. God's ultimate aim in the redemption of His people has always included the restoration of the nature creation." A restoring work by God, for His people and His creation, will be sufficient for all of eternity.

Because of the Gospel, this is your future! The disciple John got a glimpse of your eternal future and shared, "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him." (Revelation 22:3) Your future is one of complete transformation into Christ-likeness, completely restored and freed from sinful nature. Your future is one of eternal worship where we will stand in the complete glory of God, singing as we have never sung before, worshipping without difficulty because of the mere beauty and glory of God.

As the Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards proclaimed, "If we can learn anything of the state of heaven from the Scripture, the love and joy that the saints have there, is exceedingly great and vigorous, impressing the heart with the strongest and most lively sensation of inexpressible sweetness, mightily moving, animating, and engaging them, making them like to a flame of fire." In the restoration of all things, every day will be the best day, and everything sad will come untrue.

Your Future and Your Today

How does your incredible future effect your life now? How you live today communicates everything about what you believe your future to be. With the security of your future comes freedom from the things of this world, certainty of your future, freedom from a life of insecurity, freedom from people and circumstances defining you, peace that overwhelms fear, worry, and pressure, an ability to live with whole-life generosity, and an urgency to make disciples now. Does your life reflect a forward-looking theology?

REACT	④	What do you believe about your future? Why? What do Scriptures say? How does your understanding of the future impact or reflect your view of God? Why does it matter?					
5X5	⑤	Pray that your five would see and grasp the future hope that you live in.					
STUDY	⑥	<table border="1"><tr><td>Day 1 Pray</td><td>Day 2 Observe</td><td>Day 3 Understand</td><td>Day 4 Reference</td><td>Day 5 Apply</td></tr></table>	Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply			

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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APPENDIX

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

30 Days to Understanding the Bible by Max Anders

The Big Picture by Tommy Nelson

Living By the Book by Howard Hendricks

THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Fathered By God by John Eldridge (God the Father)

King's Cross by Tim Keller (God the Son)

Forgotten God by Francis Chan (God the Spirit)

DEPRAVITY AND SAVING GRACE

The Great Exchange by Jerry Bridges

The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning

The Prodigal God by Tim Keller

HOLY LIVING

The Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul

The Knowledge of the Holy by A.W. Tozer

Transforming Power of the Gospel by Jerry Bridges

SATAN AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Victory In Spiritual Warfare by Dr. Tony Evans

Satan's 10 Strategies Against You by John Piper
(desiringgod.org)

THE FUTURE HOPE OF A BELIEVER

Heaven by Randy Alcorn

The Gospel as Center (The Restoration of All Things,
Sam Storms) edited by Carson and Keller

Rooted by J.A. Medders and Brandon D. Smith

BEING AND MAKING DISCIPLES

YOU WILL
LIVE OUT WHAT
YOU BELIEVE



