

Essentials
CLASS



Week 1 – Who is God?

What do we need to know about God?

God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

He is the one and only all-powerful creator of the universe. We need a clear picture of who God is and who He isn't, because our view of God determines how we approach Him and can greatly affect our relationship with Him.

All sin has cost, and that cost keeps us away from God. He is perfect and He is just. He cannot allow us to be in His presence without our debt being paid. The cost was heavy, and it was one that only God Himself could pay. He loves us so much that He sent His son, Jesus, to save us from our sin and to set us free.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.
Romans 3:23, NLT

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.
Romans 5:8, NLT

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.
John 3:16-17, NLT

He sent His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us in this life. The Holy Spirit lives within us. He is our guide, our teacher, and our friend. He directs our journey to live a life of purpose, submitted to God. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't make you better than anyone else; it makes you a better version of yourself.

Our Teacher:

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative-that is, the Holy Spirit- he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.
John 14:26, NLT

Our Guide:

Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say,
“This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left.
Isaiah 30:21, NLT

Our Friend:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
2 Corinthians 13:14, NLT

What is your view of God?

Our view of God is often affected by our past relationships with our own fathers, or other men in our lives. Being aware of this can help us adjust to the truth of what the Bible says about God and be aware of our own misconceptions.

Common Misconceptions

Authoritarian God

- Belief that God is harsh and gets angry at us constantly.
- Have to do good in order to receive acceptance.
- Guilt is often a motivator.

Distant God

- Belief that God is distant, ignoring us, or doesn't really exist
- Can't have a relationship with a God who isn't paying attention to you

Critical God

- Belief that God is hard to please
- Rules based religion that is strict and hard to keep
- Can't possibly live up to the expectations

Action Steps

Ask the Holy Spirit these two questions:

- What am I doing that I should not be doing?
- What am I not doing that I should be doing?

Listen for His answer and make a decision to move forward in obedience.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of
everlasting life.
Psalm 139:23 - 24

Notes





Week 2

Our Relationship with God

We can live in relationship with God. Really! That's what He wants. He wants us to spend time with Him. God is our Father. He wants His children to know Him, not just through a set of rules to follow, but through a genuine, personal relationship. God gives us life. He gives us His Son, and He gives us Himself. It provides joy in our lives to know, pursue, love, and live in relationship with God our Father.

We are His Child

WE HAVE HIS ACCEPTANCE

God accepts us and loves us because we are His children, and He is the ultimate good Father. The invitation to be adopted into God's family is open and available to everyone through Jesus. So, through Jesus, not only are we God's children, but we are heirs of His kingdom, joint heirs with Jesus.

And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty
2 Corinthians 6:18, NLT

So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.
Romans 8:15 - 16, NLT

And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.
Romans 8:17, NLT

God Loves Us

WE HAVE HIS AFFECTION

God has unconditional affection for us. We can't do anything that will change that. He knows about our pasts and about our faults and He loves us anyway. Yes, it really is that simple.

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.

1 John 3:1

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow-not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

Romans 8:38

No power in the sky above or in the earth below - indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:39

God is Proud of Us

WE HAVE HIS AFFIRMATION

God sees us for who we truly are. He knows how He created us and sees our potential. He knows what we can become. We are, after all, His design and plan. He created us with certain gifts and talents that He chose for each of us specifically.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:10, NLT

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14, NLT

Action Steps

Spend time in the presence of the Father this week and work on your connection with Him. Don't worry about being formal. Just be real. Ask God to reveal His character to you and seek Him with all your heart.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal grey ruling lines. In the top right corner, there is a partial view of a light green circular sticker with a black outline. The word "WEEK" is printed in black capital letters on the sticker.





Week 3 – The Bible

The Bible is God's Word. It is composed of sixty six books of the Old and New Testaments. It is the inspired word of God. The Bible was given by God through chosen people and reflects the background, styles, and vocabulary of human writers. However, it is God's voice, constant and unchanging, speaking to a culture and a world that is always moving and changing rapidly.

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, NLT

Then He sent His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us in this life. The Holy Spirit lives within us. He is our guide, our teacher, and our friend. He directs our journey to live a life of purpose, submitted to God. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn't make you better than anyone else; it makes you a better version of yourself.

The Bible is not as hard as you think. It doesn't have to be intimidating.

If you take some simple steps, God will honor your commitment and the Word of God will become understandable. Make time and space in your life for God to speak and watch how quickly God uses His Word to transform your everyday life.

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

Hebrews 4:12, NLT

READING THE BIBLE

There are tons of options available to you when it comes to accessing the Bible. There are sermons, podcasts, and books. People are lining up to help you understand what the Bible says and what you should do with that information. This is not a bad thing and there is a place for that kind of learning. Sometimes it feels like it would be easier to let someone else spend the time reading, but honestly you would be missing out on what God has for you personally.

It's about a relationship. God wants a relationship with you. The purpose of the Bible is to help you discover the heart of God, and to become familiar with His love. As you read the Bible and see who and what God values, you get a better sense of who He is and what He wants for you.

MAKE THE BIBLE YOUR FOUNDATION

Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.

Matthew 7:24-27, NLT

MAKE IT THE FIRST PART OF YOUR DAY

We prioritize what is important to us! There is also no better way to start each day than by reading God's word and spending time with God.

So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

Romans 10:17, NLT

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

Psalms 119:105, NLT

MAKE IT A WEAPON AGAINST THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE

The Bible comes equipped with the hope, peace, and love we all need to get through this life. Its truth is timeless and speaks to our everyday lives.

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

Ephesians 6:13, NLT

Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:17, NLT

Action Steps

Make a commitment to set the foundation of your life in God's Word. Find and use a Bible in a translation you like, that helps you understand the Word better. Dedicate time each day to spend with God.

Notes





Week 4 - Prayer

Why We Pray

We pray so that we can connect with God relationally. That is not an easy concept to step into and can feel awkward in the beginning. But, God has built you for relationship. He wants you to be His friend. He has built you for an intimate relationship where the two of you talk, listen, laugh and even enjoy the occasional joke. That's what friends do!

Keep in mind it can be a relaxed natural conversation. You don't need any fancy formulas or perfect words.

Prayer is all about relationship with God. Period.

Prayer Tips

CONNECT WITH GOD RELATIONALLY.

Remember, He has adopted us as His children, so lean into that relationship. He wants to hear our thoughts, motives, feelings, and dreams. Pray out loud even. And relax, you're talking to God, who has infinite time, patience, and love for you. It's okay if it isn't perfect, or if you trip over your own words.

So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.

Romans 8:15 - 16, NLT

WORSHIP HIS NAME.

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

Matthew 6:9, NLT

This verse is Jesus demonstrating prayer to his disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray. We can learn from His demonstration also. It isn't a

Jesus started His prayer demo with respect and adoration for God. This puts us in the right mindset for prayer and sets a respectful tone for the conversation. We can talk to God as a friend, but it is good to remember we are talking to God.

I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever. I will praise you every day; yes, I will praise you forever. Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness.

Psalms 145:1-3

PRAY HIS AGENDA FIRST.

May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10, NLT

Praying for God's will and His agenda before our wants and needs helps us remember that He isn't a magic genie we can just call on for whatever we want and need. The Bible does say that we can come to God with the desires of our heart. He does care about what matters to us. These things are true. He wants us to come to Him when we are stressed because we have lost our keys. But that shouldn't be the only time or the only reason we pray.

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

Matthew 6:33, NLT

DEPEND ON HIM FOR EVERYTHING.

God is good. He is the ultimate kind and loving Father. We can take our concerns and worries to Him. And we should! He should be our first response when something troubling comes up, not our last resort. We can count on Him because he is worthy of our trust.

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

Colossians 4:2, NLT

Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Action Steps

Plan your prayer time. Determine a comfortable time and place that you can see yourself using every day. Pray and ask God to help you fully surrender anything you need to give over to him. Pray for a healthy, vibrant, daily prayer life.

Notes





Week 5 – Staying on the Right Path

Connection

Life is marvelous, wonderfully difficult and often complicated. It's a consistent series of highs and lows. We all need support, understanding, help, comfort, guidance and community. We were not created to live life in isolation. We are better when we are together and in real community.

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, NLT

Relationships are incredibly important, make sure they are the right ones! Choosing our relationships carefully is crucial for staying on the right path and for growing in our relationship with God. Who we spend our time with and rely on is incredibly important. Often, we become like the people we hangout with the most. So, be intentional, even picky about who you allow into your sphere of influence. Who do you seek advice from? Who do you spend most of your time with? Are they heading where you are going?

Ways to build right relationships

DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHURCH

Be there consistently. Meet people. Make a commitment. Show that you can be counted on.

DEVELOP GODLY FRIENDSHIPS

Join a Growth Group. Put in the effort to attend and get to know people.

DEVELOP YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH A TEAM

Join a serving team and get involved. Get to know the people you serve with and be dependable!

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.
Proverbs 28:17, NLT

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.
Ephesians 2:19-20, NLT

Spiritual Gifts

God beautifully equipped each of us with different skills and abilities. Each one of us has a unique personality and a set of skills and certain abilities that are ours and ours alone. God was very specific and intentional in His design of you. So, because of this, we each have a different set of spiritual gifts.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NLT

Identifying the unique ways in which the Holy Spirit has gifted you will help you find the ways you fit in and the way you can serve best.

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NLT

Action Steps

Take a spiritual gifts inventory to identify your spiritual gifts. Take steps to join a serving team and utilize your specific gifts. Take steps to build relationships with other believers.

"When is the best time to plant a tree? Twenty years ago. The second-best time is now." – anonymous

Now is the time for action.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. In the top right corner, there is a partial view of a green circular sticker. The sticker has a black outline and the word "WEEK" printed in white capital letters. The rest of the sticker is cut off by the edge of the page.





Week 6 - Sharing Your Faith & Resources

How to Share

CONNECT WITH PEOPLE

Build relationships with the people you encounter all the time. Get to know the people you work with, live near, or see every week at the gym. Be nice to the cashier that rings out your groceries or fills your prescriptions. Many more opportunities to talk about Jesus will be available to you if you already have the building blocks of a friendship in place.

SHARE YOUR STORY

The story of what God has done for you, what He has done in your life, is one of the best tools you have to impact people around you. It's your story, so it will be easy to remember and very well may be what God uses to help someone else see that God wants a relationship with them too!

You also demonstrate what you believe by living it out for others to see.

You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Matthew 5:14-16, NLT

INVITE THEM

Be in church consistently. Invite the people you are building relationships with to come to church and experience God too!

Generosity

REFOCUS YOUR ENERGY

Now that God has changed your life, it's time to refocus your energy. What takes up most of your time? Where do you spend your money? These questions can help you see where your focus is and what we are really working towards. Your goal should be to focus on what is truly important.

Don't store up treasure here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Matthew 6: 19-21, NLT

BE INTENTIONAL

Being intentional with both your time and money will help you be focused on others instead of ourselves. God has called you to be generous and to consistently look for opportunities.

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.

2 Corinthians 9:7, NLT

GIVE GENEROUSLY

Ultimately, we want God to be glorified for who He is and what He has done for us. He has amazingly and generously given us what we don't deserve and can't possibly repay. But we can give what we have. We can give back the resources He has given us. To varying degrees and specific to each person, He has given us all gifts and talents, time, and money that we can use to honor and worship Him.

Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

1 John 3:18, NLT

Honor the Lord with your wealth and the best part of everything you produce.

Proverbs 3:9, NLT

Action Steps

Make a list of people in your direct sphere of influence and begin intentionally showing them the love of God. Invite them to come to church with you.

Actively seek ways to be generous. Commit to directing your time and money towards the things of God.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal grey ruling lines. In the top right corner, there is a partial view of a light green circular sticker with a black outline. The word "WEEK" is printed in black capital letters on the sticker.

