

OUR GOD

It sounds absurd and nonsensical to some. The claim that God can be known is not the message of Christianity - it's part of the foundation, the operating system, of Christianity. When God walked the shores of Galilee, He shocked His audience by playing with children. You can still hear their murmurings. How stunned they would have been if Christ had given them a lecture on the Creator's delight with people enjoying being with and talking to Him. But He did give that lecture! Everything He did was calculated to demonstrate that the God who created the Universe, created the Universe to display Himself to the prize of His creation: mankind. Every time Christ sat a child on His lap and laughed with that child - He gave that lecture about God again. Every time He went to a party with "sinners" He was lecturing about God.

This God wants people to relate to Him *on His terms*. He doesn't just want to be *a* God or even *the* God. He invites us to make Him *our* God. Through out the Old Testament we see this being modelled by His relationship with one nation: Israel. He was to be *their* God, and they were to be *His* people. "You are mine and I am yours" is a way of saying we are committed to each other beyond any mere contractual arrangement. It is a melding of hearts. It is called a *Covenant*.

One of the final things that God-Who-Became-A-Man did was to institute the *New Covenant*. No longer was God restricting His relationship Covenant to just one nation. Instead, the New Covenant would be based on grace, not race. Today, God to us is not merely *a God*, or merely *the God* - He is "our" God. There are five essential things that Our God does. Simply knowing these can make all the difference to either enjoying God or tragically *just* acknowledging Him as God.

A.C.

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Study 1

OUR GOD BLESSES

What we believe about God determines- (i) Our response to Him (remember the woman whom Jesus said had been forgiven much? She believed that God was a *forgiving* God.); (ii) Our response to others (we become like what we worship). If we believe that God is a God who always gives what people deserve, then we will respond to an injured person differently than a person who believes that God is a God of compassion who cares for the hurting.

The belief that God exists but has no interaction with His Creation is called *Deism*. But the Bible does not present God as being disconnected from His creation. On the contrary it presents God as a God who *blesses*...

One of the first things we are told about the Creator is that He “blessed” His creation (Genesis 1:22). To ‘bless’ is to *positively multiply*. Some translators render this word from the original Hebrew to mean *to make happy*. To be blessed is *to have multiplied reasons to be happy!*

1. Romans 5:8 wonderfully reveals God’s heart toward people and the motive for why He blesses anyone. What is the heart and motive of God toward people?

The love of God. We are ‘free’ to respond to it or to reject it. For some, the love of God has transformed them into a radically different person.

2. To what extent has God blessed His people? (Ephesians 1:3)

Life itself is a great blessing from God. We often fail to recognise our health as a blessing from God.

3. What else should we consider to be a blessing from God?

LESSONS FROM FISH AND LOAVES

4. Read Matthew 14:13-21. Why had such large crowds gathered to Christ? (Note verse 14)

5. Why did the disciples think they had a problem? (Verses 15 and 17)

6. Noting Matthew 14:16, why could Christ look at the same situation and not see what the Disciples saw?

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Jesus didn't think that the crowds would eat that much and if broken into really small bits, the 5 fish and the 2 loaves could feed them all. | c. Christ was looking at the situation through the possibility of God's blessing. |
| b. The Disciples were worry-warts. | d. The crowds had actually already ordered home-delivery pizza which was about to be delivered. |

7. How does Matthew 19:26 encourage us to see impossible situations?

This account of the 5 fish and the 2 loaves of bread feeding 5,000 men (plus women and children) illustrates what the blessing of God can do even in an impossible situation. Consider the following lessons from this story-

- 🕯 What initially looked wonderful (such a huge crowd of people) soon became a logistics problem (they had to be fed; there were in a desolate place; they had no apparent food supplies).
Sometimes we pray for the 'wonderful' without considering the logistics required to maintain this wonderful.
- 🕯 The Disciples didn't see much (any?) value in what they already had at their disposal (5 loaves of bread and 2 small fish).
We often downplay or underestimate what we already have at our disposal while we pray to God for something else.
- 🕯 When the Disciples offered even the little they had, God-in-the-Flesh was able to multiply it.
Receiving provision for our needs often begins when we give to God what we already have. Need more money? Need more time? Need more love? Give what you already have to God.
- 🕯 When Christ took the fish and the bread, He thanked God for it, blessed it, then broke it, and it multiplied.
We should not be too surprised if when we offer to God our lives, He may well thankfully take our lives, bless our lives, break our lives and multiply the effectiveness of our lives.
- 🕯 The Disciples had to collect basket loads of debris as a result of God's blessing.
Even in the midst of God's blessing there is still practical work to be done.
- 🕯 Notice the account of the second time Christ fed multitudes with fish and loaves in Matthew 15:34. How many loaves and fish did Christ use in the second feeding miracle? How basket loads of scraps were left over after each miracle? Christ asked these questions of His disciples in Matthew 16:9.

The Ephesian Church was the most written to church in the New Testament. We have a record of a message to the Ephesian church in Acts 20. We have two epistles written to Timothy (which are actually written to the Ephesian church). And we have Christ's letter to them recorded in Revelation 2. Thus, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is all the more interesting as it written to the most prominent church of the first century. His epistle is a prayer.

8. Based on Ephesians 1:3, from the outset what does Paul want the Ephesians to know?

God's blessing is on His children. It commences with: God's plan to save us (Eph. 1:4), to adopt us (Eph. 1:5), to connect us to His Beloved Son (Eph. 1:6), to redeem us from the Enemy's grip (Eph. 1:7), and to forgive us for all our sins (Eph. 1:7) We are blessed!

Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people, twice. In Matthew 16:9-10, Christ asks His disciples what they had learned from these two episodes. Comparing the two miracles we notice that when Christ had less fish and loaves, He fed more people and had more baskets of left-overs.

9. What perhaps is the main point that Christ may have wanted His disciples (and us) to learn from these two particular miracles?
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RESPONDING TO GOD'S BLESSING

History reveals that God has time and time again used ordinary and seemingly "insignificant" people to change the world. What set these people apart from others (who were more talented and able) was that they offered up to God their 'insignificant' gifts/talents/abilities/resources for Him to use.

10. When God blessed Abram, why did He say that He was blessing him? (Gen. 12:2)
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We are *purposefully* blessed. God blesses us so that we can bless others. Stewarding God's blessing is called *generosity*. A *generous* person is a *blessed* person.

11. Read Matthew 5:1-11 and list how the Cross-carrying-follower of the Crucified One is to live in order to position their life for God's blessing-
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We are to steward (manage) God's blessing, position our lives for God's blessing, and according to James 3:9-12 we should *speak* blessing as ones blessed by God. Knowing that our God is a God of blessing, we are to respond to our God in these three ways so that our God of blessing is most glorified.

Amen.

Study 2

OUR GOD SPEAKS

The Bible is the record of God speaking to mankind. It also bears witness that God is not a silent, distant, unknowable God. He speaks. But listening, or being “attentive”, to God requires discipline on our part. Some Christians regard the voice of God with too much flippancy and ascribe God’s voice to almost every decision they make. Equally flawed is the belief that God does not speak today. This hyper-conservative approach considers God’s Word to be the final revelation from God to mankind. But this is not what the Bible itself says...

Some people have the idea that when God speaks it is always *audibly*. As such they feel that God rarely if ever speaks today.

1. Read Hebrews 1:1. What does this verse reveal about how often God speaks and in what way He speaks?

In the Scriptures we find the record of God speaking to people in various ways.

2. Note from the following Scriptures how God spoke to people-

Genesis 3:9	
Genesis 15:1	
Genesis 20:3	
Numbers 12:6	
Judges 6:8	
Luke 24:27	
Romans 1:20	
John 12:28-29	
Acts 9:10	

*For God speaks in one way,
and in two,
though man does not perceive it.
Job 33:14*

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK?

Apart from some of the ways referred to in Scripture, God has 'spoken' to people through many other ways.

3. Note some of the following suggestions on how God speaks and discuss whether you or someone you know has ever 'heard' God through the following ways-

Art _____

Audibly _____

Books _____

Creation _____

Music _____

Songs _____

Thoughts _____

Visions _____

Preaching _____

In the book, *THE POWER OF A WHISPER*, by Bill Hybels, Wayne Cordiero writes in the Foreword that when he was a budding rock guitarist he had to tune his guitar by ear. On one particular occasion he was trying to tune his guitar in preparation for their band's performance at a music festival but was unable to hear his guitar over the volume of the band already performing. Since this was in the days before digital guitar tuners, he placed his ear close to the sound hole as he vainly tried to tune up. But he still couldn't hear it over all the noise from the festival. He then placed his ear against the sound-board of the guitar and was able to block out the other noise and hear his guitar. Wayne Cordiero uses this illustration to depict what listening to the voice of God is sometimes like. He says, God rarely shouts. He doesn't want to compete for our attention. He wants us to press our ears against the voice of God and *listen*.

4. Read Psalm 115:3-7 and Psalm 135:15-18. In what way is God contrasted with 'false gods'?

5. As God began to reveal Himself to the Israelites and to lay the foundation of the covenant that He would form with them, what did He require of them according to Exodus 15:26 (and what did He promise them if they did)?

6. Note Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22. What do these verses ask for? Since God asks for this, what does this tell us about hearing God's voice?

7. How does John 10:3, 27 imply that Jesus invites and even empowers His followers to hear Him?

In the Old Testament God frequently revealed His Word through prophets. During this era, the Holy Spirit would come upon people for an occasion. But when the New Covenant was established at the Cross it established a new relationship with the Holy Spirit. Instead of the Holy Spirit just coming upon a person for an occasion, the New Covenant involves the Holy Spirit dwelling within the redeemed.

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.
And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a
heart of flesh.*

Ezek. 36:26

The prophet Joel spoke of the difference that the New Covenant would make. He said that God would pour out the Holy Spirit on the Redeemed in a way that would enable them to hear from God.

8. Read Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:1-21 and state how these passages reveal which benefit of the New Covenant enables the Redeemed to more easily to hear from God than those under the Old Covenant -

9. Have you been hearing from God recently? If so, what do you sense God has been saying to you?

10. Do you think that most Followers of the Crucified One want to hear from Him?

Hearing from God is a dangerous exercise. God may challenge us to stretch. Perhaps you have sensed God speaking to you at some stage which meant doing something you were afraid to do, or to give more than you've ever given, or to take up a responsibility you're unfamiliar with. Successfully hearing from God is when we hear and *heed* God. May God help us each to hear from Him more certainly and to have the grace to heed what He is saying to us.

Amen.

Study 3

OUR GOD HEALS

God heals. The Scriptures contain and reveal some of the significant occasions when God healed people who were sick, diseased, or injured. It is easy to see why many people regard sickness as the result of sin and therefore divine judgment. From this perspective it is apparent why people would regard sickness as the opponent of God's will and conclude that God never wills for anyone to be sick. This kind of view of God and the Scriptures can lead us to feel condemned when we are sick, or even worse, to regard others who are sick as being especially punished by God. When Christ of Nazareth ministered, He regularly healed the sick and demonstrated God's compassion for the hurting by healing them. As Christ commissioned His disciples, He empowered them to heal the sick and thus continue to minister the healing ministry of Christ. When Christ graced the Church beyond the original apostolic band, He chose to gift the Church with "gifts of healings" which indicates that the ministry of healing is still for today.

1. Read the story of the healing of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. In what ways does this story reveal the Bible's theology of healing?

Some teach that the Cross (or, "The Atonement") of Christ was and is the basis for God to be able to heal.

2. What does Exodus 15:26 reveal about healing?

Thankfully, God has designed human bodies to ‘auto-heal’ to a limited extent. That is, under normal circumstances, our bodies have the amazing ability to repair themselves when we tear our skin, break a bone, get infected, or catch certain viruses. Sometimes God speeds up this recovery, sometimes He heals instantly.

3. What did the Psalmist know about divine healing according to Psalm 103 (and how might he have known it)?

God healed every major disease (except blindness) during the Old Covenant era.

WHY WOULD GOD ALLOW OR ORDAIN SICKNESS, PAIN, INJURY, OR DISEASE?

4. In what way does Deuteronomy 32:39 counter the idea that God never wills for anyone to be sick or unwell?

5. Tick which of these reasons could be why God might allow or even ordain sickness-

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because He is cruel and nasty | <input type="checkbox"/> To make a person a stronger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because He knows it will work for the benefit of the afflicted | <input type="checkbox"/> Sickness may just be the ‘Law of Decay’ (Rom. 8:21) at work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because He loves to make people sick | <input type="checkbox"/> To keep doctors and Mercedes Benz salesmen in a job |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> To cause us to hope for our resurrection |

Sickness, pain, injury, and disease can be used by God for His glory. We may not always appreciate how this is possible (especially when it is us who is sick - or even worse: when it

is our loved ones). It's too easy to be too simplistic about sickness by claiming that it is "of the devil" or "because of sin" or "an ancestral curse".

6. Read the account of healing in John 9:1-34. What insights about divine healing do we get from this account?

(Note the Disciples' original question; Christ's response to them; Christ's method of healing; the investigation; the 'Biblical' basis for the Jews' skepticism; the use of a miracle to convert someone.)

JESUS & HEALING

7. What does Matthew 8:16-17 and Acts 10:38 reveal about Christ and healing?

Some people have concluded that Christ always heals or always wants to heal someone. This idea doesn't seem to appreciate that divine healing is an act of God's grace.

8. Read Second Corinthians 12:7-9 and discuss whether Christ always heals those who pray for it.

You may notice that in the above passage, the grace of Christ that heals also enables people to cope with illness. Some very charismatic Bible teachers argue that if a believer has faith and is filled with the Holy Spirit, they can not get sick.

My greatest discovery about health, prosperity and spiritual blessing was the text 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." ... What's the first word? 'Beloved.' Say it, say, I'm beloved of God.' Look up and tell Him, 'God, I'm Your beloved. I'm going to quit hating myself. And, God, You want me to prosper and be in health, even as my soul prospers.' Now, don't you feel better? That's got healing in it, friend! Healing for you, the person, your total self. And the whole of God's power is back of His wish for you to be well and have your needs met."

Oral Roberts, "A Daily Guide To Miracles And Successful Living Through Seed-Faith"

“Healing in the Atonement” refers to the idea that when Jesus died on the Cross, He died to save people from sin and to take upon Himself the effects of sin (namely: sicknesses). Proponents of this idea cite Isaiah 53:5 and First Peter 2:24 to support this view. “Healing In The Atonement” is also referred to by saying- *Jesus died for your sins and sicknesses.*

9. The Gospel of Matthew shows more than any other of the other 3 Gospels that Jesus was the fulfilment of what the Old Testament prophets foretold of the Messiah. How does Matthew 8:16-17 counter the idea of *Healing In The Atonement*?

Before the Cross, no-one was “regenerated” (that is, ‘born-again’ or ‘saved’). The Redeemed under the Old Covenant had to have *looking forward* faith, while the Redeemed under the New Covenant have to have *looking back* faith. Salvation is only possible because of the Cross. But healing is different. God healed before the Cross as an act of His grace and continues to heal as an act of grace. But this is not the teaching of “Word of Faith” teachers such as T.L. Osborn-

“Sermons, pictures, lectures, education, hospitals, and institutions have never, nor will ever bring the masses of heathen to the feet of Christ, but the simple demonstration of God’s miracle power will, and is turning them to the true Christ by millions. I have personally seen more souls saved in a single night, preaching the gospel of healing for soul and body than during the entire seven years I preached only forgiveness to the sinners...Sin and sickness need be borne only once. And since it is written that Jesus Christ has already borne them, then you need not bear them. If you bear them, then Jesus’ bearing of them was entirely in vain, seeing that you have not been benefited. But I declare, that since Jesus bore them, you and I need never bear them and so by His stripes we are healed’ and through His blood we have ‘remission of sins.’”

T.L. Osborn, “Healing The Sick and Casting out Devils”

But upon closer examination of 1Peter 2:24 (which talks of Christ bearing sins) it becomes apparent that the “healing” Peter is referring to is ‘spiritual’ healing, that is, *it is salvation from sin*. This becomes even more apparent when we read the next verse (1Peter 2:25). But if we accept that healing is in the Atonement, then we have to ask why then some sick people are not healed. Two proponents of this view state that their reasons why people are not healed-

“Healing does not fail because of the will of God, but because of the unbelief of his children.”

Richard Vineyard, Assemblies of God In America

“The only thing in existence that can limit the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is our unbelief.”

Kathryn Kuhlman

Thus, many sick Christians have been condemned for their *lack of faith* when they are not healed because of this poor understanding of what the Bible says about healing. By understanding that healing is an act of God's grace, such condemnation can be avoided.

CHRIST'S COMMISSIONING

10. Compare Christ's *Charge* in Matthew 10:1 with Christ's *Commission* in Mark 16:15-18. What similarities are there between the two, and why do you think this is?

11. Curiously, there is no record in the Book of Acts that God would heal the sick. Based on Acts 4:7-12, how did the Apostles regard the role of healing in their ministry?

In Acts 5:12 there is an interesting expression about how God used the Apostles to heal the sick- "*by the hands of the apostles*". It seems that it was a common practice to "lay hands" upon the sick being prayed for to symbolise that healing flowed *from* God and *through* the apostles *to* the sick.

12. How does First Corinthians 12:9 reinforce that healing should be seen as a gift (grace) rather than a "right"?

13. What does James 5:14-16 say that the sick (the context seems to indicate, "dying") believer should do in some circumstances?

Our ultimate healing is not merely physical. It is *spiritual* in the sense of our broken relationship with God being healed through Christ's Atonement. This is not to undermine physical (temporal) healing, but it is to understand its importance from an eternal perspective. When we pray for people to be healed and God responds in His grace by healing them, God is glorified - thus, He has supplied a "sign" and a "wonder" to point people to the ultimate healing of our souls. There is no "law" of, or "right" to, healing. It is the result of God's grace which is activated in the recipient through God-given faith (Gal. 3:5).

Because we worship a God who heals we should pray for the sick to be healed, ask God to heal us when we are sick, and invite others to pray for us when we are sick.

Amen.

Study 4

OUR GOD SAVES

Salvation is far more than just being made fit for heaven. In fact, if heaven or hell is all that motivates someone to accept Christ, while this is great and commendable, they have not yet come to fully realise what their salvation actually entails. Salvation is fundamentally about a relationship with God. Without it, there can be no relationship with God. But once 'saved', a person not only receives a heavenly destiny, they are made new, transformed, redeemed, adopted, and sanctified. We will begin to explore the richness of these words in this study. I also hope that we will both grow in our deep appreciation for God has done for us through Christ *and* feel a growing burden for those who do not yet know Christ. Salvation enables us to identify God as "our God".

1. If you have become a Christian, can you describe your conversion experience?

2. If you have been converted to Christ, in what ways has your life changed? Can you share an example of this kind of change?

Salvation is an experience of sorts. Some people have dramatic salvation (conversion) experiences, for others, their conversion experience is rather ‘uneventful’. But salvation always begins by God drawing a rebel and that rebel yielding to God. It is a very dangerous place to be to think that you are saved when you have no basis to think this. Only those who have surrendered to Christ have a reason for thinking they are saved.

3. Note who initiates salvation according to Ephesians 1:4-
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Those of us who have come to Christ, may be able to look back at their journey to Christ and see God’s leading and providence in “setting us up” to become Christians. When we read Ephesians 1:4-5, it becomes apparent that God has a plan for those He calls and saves. But when did this plan begin?

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, the first man was created morally perfect - that is, he was created without sin and with the capacity *not to sin*.

4. According to Genesis 1:27, what made mankind unique compared to the rest of creation?
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5. But despite this amazing advantage, something went wrong? What was it? (Gen. 3:6)
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6. According to Romans 1:30, what were some of the results of this act?
-

After Adam and Eve rebelled, God came down in the cool of the day to walk with man, as He had been doing. But Adam hid. *Sin causes us to try to hide from an All-Present and All-Seeing God!* But when mankind committed cosmic treason, God announced His plan of Redemption in Genesis 3:15 in which God declared that it would be the “Seed of the woman” (Jesus) who would *crush the serpent’s head* even though the serpent (Satan) would *bruise His heel*. Theologians refer to this as the “Proto-Evangelium” (the *first announcement of the Gospel*).

THE UNFOLDING PLAN OF REDEMPTION

When God exposed mankind’s sin, He slew an animal (Gen. 3:21). This established the practice that sin demanded *atonement by blood*. This idea of atonement was developed formally after God delivered Israel from Egypt and instituted the Sacrificial Laws (also referred to as “the Law of Moses” or “the Mosaic Law”). Each of the different types of animal sacrifices illustrated an aspect of Christ’s coming sacrifice.

<p>Bull Offering (Exodus 29:10)</p>	<p>A bull was a working animal used in agriculture for its strength. The sacrifice of a bull was typical of Christ the Mighty One doing the work of salvation. The sacrificed bull was taken “outside of the camp” (Exodus 29:14; Heb. 13:11) just as Christ was to be crucified <i>outside of the gate of the city</i> (Heb. 13:12) at Golgotha.</p>
<p>Lamb Offering (Exodus 29:38)</p>	<p>The sacrificial lamb had to be young, firstborn and without blemish. This represented Christ, who was crucified as a young man at the age of 33. He was also the “Firstborn” (Romans 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6). And Jesus, called “the Lamb of God” was without sin (blemish).</p>
<p>Meal Offering (Exodus 29:40)</p>	<p>“Meal” is a mixture of fine flour and oil. It accompanied blood sacrifices. The flour represented Christ’s humanity, His flesh, while the oil represented the Holy Spirit. It foreshadowed that Christ would be filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit.</p>

7. How does Colossians 2:7 describe the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant?

A “Type” is a person, thing, place, or ceremony that foreshadows and represents something greater. Every Old Covenant sacrifice, ceremony, food law, was a *Type* of Christ and His work. The study of Old Testament Types is called *Typology*. There are several Old Testament characters who were also Types of Christ.

8. Which Old Testament characters were typological of Christ and how?

9. Based on Mark 7:19 and Colossians 2:16, are we still obliged to keep the Old Covenant Food Laws? Explain-
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THE COVENANTS

God is not interested in casual relationships. To have a relationship with God you must enter into a covenant with Him. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. When two people formed a covenant with each other they agreed to give each other access to their belongings - "What's mine is now yours." They vowed to protect each other. They vowed to keep whatever conditions they set for the covenant. They would then merge their names. Their covenant was celebrated with a feast (where an animal was slain) before witnesses where the terms of the covenant were announced and publicly agreed to.

10. Based on Hebrews 8:13, when Christ established the New Covenant, what happened to the Old Covenant?
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11. Under the Old Covenant only the Priests could minister that Covenant, but based on 2Corinthians 3:6 who is able to minister the New Covenant?
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CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

12. Based on Ephesians 1:7, list two results for the saved because of Christ's sacrificial work-
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Reading through Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1, you'll find a brief list of some of the benefits that belong to the Redeemed because of Christ's saving work. These include-

- Life - Eph. 2:1-5 - (we were spiritually dead) -
- Freedom - Rom. 6:17 - (we were in bondage to sin) -

- Light - Col. 1:13 - (we were in the dark) -
- Forgiveness - Col. 1:14 - (we were guilty) -
- Reconciliation - Col. 1:20-22 - (we were enemies of God) -
- Justification - Eph. 1:4 - (we were convicted of wrong and deserved to be punished) -
- Sanctification - Col. 1:10- (every desire we had was to rebel against God's Laws) -
- Adoption (we were orphaned and fatherless)-
- Heirdom - Eph. 1:11 - (we were destitute with no destiny) -
- Glorification - Rom. 8:17 - (we had no hope that things would ever get any better, in fact, our future was only bleak).

RECEIVING REDEMPTION

We shouldn't think of salvation as God doing His part and us doing our part. Salvation is from beginning to end: the work of God alone. God is the One who calls (Rom. 8:30). God is the One who grants the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8). God is the One who enables repentance (Acts 5:31; 11:18). God is the One who makes new (2Cor. 5:17). Yet when God saves a person He does so *invisibly*. That is, while God is doing something in our heart all we feel is that something is happening in our heart. Without necessarily realising that God is drawing us to Himself we begin to see things differently. This is called *conviction*. Have you experienced the conviction of your sin?

13. What instruction does Romans 10:13 give to those experiencing the conviction of their sin?
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When you are experiencing the conviction of your sin God is looking for you to acknowledge your guilt and call out to Him for forgiveness.

14. What promise does First John 1:9 give for those who call out to the Lord for the forgiveness of their sins?
-

Because salvation is entirely the work of God, the Bible uses one word to sum it up: *Grace*. *Grace* is unique to Christianity among all of the world's religions (all other religions demand effort or 'works' from their adherents). God's offer of salvation by grace is available to everyone, but not everyone will accept it. Because salvation is by grace, it makes Christianity the *easiest* religion in the world. Because salvation is by grace, it makes Christianity the *hardest* religion in the world.

15. How has your life changed since you were saved?

16. Since we are saved, how should we relate to the unsaved according 2Corinthians 5:20?

If you are unsure of your salvation then please be reconciled to God (note Philippians 2:12). If you have called upon the Lord for forgiveness and received the gifts of faith and repentance then we are called to become increasingly devoted to the Lord and to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God and His Word. May God help us to do this.

Amen.

Study 5

OUR GOD DELIVERS

I'd never heard of deliverance ministry before I attended a Pentecostal church. My introduction to 'deliverance' was confusing to say the least. I was taken to Richmond Temple, near central Melbourne, one Thursday night where I heard about demons of depression, demons of alcoholism, demons of nicotine, demons of gambling, that the Evangelist then offered to deliver people from. As well as this chorus of demons, the Evangelist informed us that we may also be afflicted by ancestral curses due to sins that our fathers or grandparents may have committed. This was my introduction to "Deliverance Ministry". Since then, I've come to experience the reality of the demonic realm, but also a greater truth: God delivers. And a major part of that truth is that we can avoid the need for the deliverance if we accept responsibility for our lives and live under God's protection. We will examine the Biblical presentation of God as Deliverer.

Some people claim that the Devil is just a mythological creature. Even some Christians are now questioning whether there ever was really a personal Devil. Curiously, in regions of the world where occult and witchcraft practice is common, it is hard to find Christians confronting this type of opposition who share this uniquely Western skepticism about the Devil! The spiritual realm is a very real reality in the Two Thirds World (places like Africa, India and Asia often referred to as 'The Third World'). Some Liberal Western Theologians dismiss the Bible's portrayal of Satan as a personal being by claiming that the Bible merely represents evil and temptation in the form of an imaginary being called: the Devil (Satan).

1. In what way does Job 1:6-12 indicate that Satan is indeed a real (spiritual) being?
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2. Reading Matthew 4:1-11 can we reasonably think that Jesus did battle with an ‘idea’? Explain your answer-
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In the prayer that Jesus taught His Disciples to pray, He gave them (and us) several things to pray daily.

3. Note the last part of Matthew 6:13. In what way do you think that the first part of this verse is linked to the second half of this verse?
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In one sense deliverance occurs at the moment of salvation. It means that someone is taken *from* somewhere *to* somewhere else.

4. According to Colossians 1:13 where were we spiritually before being saved and where have we been delivered to?
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To “deliver” means to *rescue or restore*.

ABOUT SPIRITUAL WARFARE

5. With whom does Ephesians 6:12 say that we war spiritually with?
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By noting the context of Ephesians 6 we can see that Spiritual Warfare has a lot to do with our relationships. In Ephesians 1, it discusses our relationship with God. In Ephesians 2, it discusses our relationships with people of different ethnicity to us. In Ephesians 3, it discusses our relationships with those within the church. In Ephesians 4, it discusses our relationships with those in leadership within the church. In Ephesians 5, it discusses our relationships with those in our home (particularly our spouse). In Ephesians 6, it begins by discussing our relationship with our children (or parents). It seems that relationships are a prime target for spiritual opposition.

6. In what way do the various pieces of spiritual armour relate to our primary relationship with God, and our other relationships? (Eph. 6:11-18)
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As we walk in right fellowship with God through having the Word of God renew our minds, inform our decisions, guide our steps, protect our hearts, fill our mouths, fuel our faith, God is able to *constantly* deliver us.

WHAT GOD DELIVERS FROM

7. What are some of the things that Psalmists said that God delivered His people from?

Psalm 34:17

Psalm 37:40

Psalm 138:7

Whatever situation you find yourself, or even get yourself into, God is able to deliver you! If you are being overwhelmed by something in your life or circumstances now, you can call out to the Lord for deliverance.

WHO GOD DELIVERS FROM

“Deliver us from the Evil One”, Jesus taught His Disciples to pray. Jesus did not want us to be complacent about the Devil. The Apostle Paul would write to the Corinthians that Christians were not ignorant or unaware of the Devil’s schemes (2Cor. 2:11).

8. When Jesus told Peter the words of Luke 22:31, how must it have reinforced that Satan was more than an impersonal force and that we should not be complacent about him?

The word ‘Satan’ is Hebrew for “*adversary*”. It is believed from Scripture that Satan was once a glorious angel who was either a cherub or an arch-angel.

9. Based on Second Corinthians 11:14, why might it be difficult to recognise Satan?

10. How does Peter describe Satan in First Peter 5:8?

11. What insight into the Devil did Jesus give us in John 8:44? (Note John 10:10)

12. How does Paul describe the Devil in First Corinthians 10:10?

Biblical scholars debate Old Testament passages which may be talking about the origins of Satan's fall. For example, Isaiah 14:12-14 may be referring to the fall of the Satan. If this is the case, as some Commentators believe, then it shows us that Satan, "Lucifer" (*Daystar*), attempted to overthrow God in Heaven. Similarly in Ezekiel 28, the prophet is railing against the King of Tyre but then seems to allude to the real power behind this evil King from verses 12 to 14 describing him as an "anointed cherub". While it could be that the prophet is using this language in a strained fashion to continue to refer to the King of Tyre, no where else in Scripture is a man referred to as a cherub. The other curious aspect to this is the reference to this cherub being in Eden. It's hard to see how this could be referring to the King of Tyre. Yet we know from the Genesis 3 account of the Garden of Eden that Satan was indeed present in Eden.

13. And in Revelation 12, a chapter which was both historical and prophetic, who is Satan described and word-pictured as? (verse 9)

The opening verses of this chapter (Rev. 12) describe the Dragon sweeping a third of the stars out of Heaven.

14. Based on Revelation 12:7, why is it reasonable to assume that the stars of Heaven actually refer to 'angels' who are now fallen?

It appears that Lucifer may have had authority over a third of the angels of Heaven who aligned themselves with him in his treachery.

15. In the wisdom and plan of God it seems that God chose to deal with some of these angels immediately. According to Second Peter 2:4, what did God do to some of them?

JESUS HAS DELIVERED US

16. Some Christians are given to worry that they may be under a curse because of a sin that their (fore)father(s) may have committed. How does Galatians 3:13 allay any fears that we are subject to the curses described in the Law of Moses? (Prov. 26:2)

17. What affect did Christ's finished work of atonement and redemption have on the Devil? (1John 3:8)

The spiritual armour which the Apostle Paul described in Ephesians 6:11ff is what Christ has already provided for the believer.

Helmet of salvation- a renewed way of thinking.

Breastplate of righteousness - a heart made whole with renewed desires for God

Belt of truth - truth surrounds the core of our soul and makes us ready to live differently

Shoes of the Gospel - we are ready to share the good news about Jesus Christ

Sword of the Spirit - the Scriptures in our hearts and minds

Shield of faith - walking in obedience to God and His Word despite our circumstances.

If you wear your spiritual armour, you are spiritually impenetrable! Despite what some televangelists have told you, you don't create this armour by speaking it into your life - no - Christ has already provided it for you. But we must walk in our deliverance. We should not walk in a way that entertains temptation and sin (Eph. 4:1).

Our God does not abandon us in times of trial and hardship. Our lives will not be immune from such things. But God promises to deliver us through and even from these things gaining victory over us. This is what Christ taught us to pray. This is what the apostles experienced, even unto their deaths. This is what many of your brothers and sisters are experiencing right now. If you have been delivered and are enjoying the blessing of God on your life, you are in a great place to minister God's deliverance to another struggling brother or sister. May the God who delivered us, keep us delivered, and deliver us from this life into the next so that we may be with Him for eternity.

Amen.

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