

Biblical Worldview

Introduction: Exploring the Basics of a Biblical Worldview

Every person has a worldview. Knowingly or unknowingly everyone wrestles to answer the following questions:

#1 Origin: Where did we come from?

#2 Purpose: Why are we here?

#3 Morality: How should we live while we are here?

#4 Destiny: Where do we go when we die?

To leave an answer blank is still an answer to the question. In this study and in all of life, we are looking for the truth. Truth is the most precious thing on earth. In the next fifteen lessons I will lay out stories from the Biblical narrative that give reason and evidence to the claim: Truth ultimately is found in and stems from a person, Jesus, whom you can love and be loved by, and by whom all other parts of life begin to make sense when seen with Him in view. As Francis Schaeffer said, “Christianity is not merely religious truth, it is total truth — truth about the whole of reality.”

But how can we find the truth? As is used in court cases by jurors and lawyers alike, the truth will correlate to what we know about reality and cohere with other truth claims made by the witness. The truth will be logically consistent (it won't make claims that contradict one another), it will be empirically adequate (it will match with what we can perceive with our senses) and it will be existentially relevant (it will match how we actually live our lives) (Zacharias).

Questioning is good and doubts are normal, but let us not be lazy in our pursuit of truth. And in the end may the truth that we find change the way we live our lives.

Lesson 1: Origin: Where Did We Come From? [Paddle, Weigh Scale]

The question of origins is so important because the answer to this question affects the answers of so many other questions such as: Why are we here? What does it mean to be human? and Where did suffering come from?

Because we can look around us and see, smell, touch, taste, and hear things that exist (a chicken for example), we are looking for more than just where did the chicken come from, the cause or creator for what we immediately see, but we are looking for the first cause or creator. We are looking for the first uncaused cause... something that is eternal and that didn't begin. All of the worldviews and religions can be simplified into three main categories as to how they answer this question.

#1 There is no god. Matter is eternal. The universe is a closed system where only nature exists. (Ex: Philosophical Naturalism and Scientism)

#2 There is a god/s or God. God is eternal. The universe was caused by a higher being who is distinct from his/ her creation. (Ex: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity)

#3 The universe is god. The universe is eternal. God is part of the universe.

The Biblical worldview falls into the second category, and the Bible claims to be God's revelation to mankind about Himself, us and the world. Even though the Bible was written over a span of 1,500 years on three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe) in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) by more than 40 authors, it is one unified story that shows how God's good kingdom was marred by sin and how God is redeeming it back through the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

The Bible begins with, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1 *NIV*). The Bible immediately makes the claim that a God exists and that this God is distinct from his creation. Understanding the nature of this God gives insight into the type of creation this God would create. Surprisingly, the claim that God exists is not followed up with a cosmological, teleological, or ontological argument for his existence. At the start of Genesis he simply exists and is acting. To understand why no argument for God's existence is made here,

we have to think about the audience of the writing. The book of Genesis is written as a historical narrative of events to a Jewish audience that would have already believed in God's existence. Few people in the original audience would have asked, "How do you know a god exists?" They may have fought over which god, or the nature of god, but probably not if there is a god. So what is the nature of this creating God who is the first uncaused-causer of all else?

First, God claims to own everything. "To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it." (Deut 10:14 *NIV*). [Paddle] It's kind of like my dad. He's been building this boat out of cedar strips in his garage for nine years. Who owns the boat? My dad. If he wants, he can paint the boat pink or blue. If he wants, he could take one of his paddles and break it in half. "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (Psalm 115:3 *NIV*). *Whatever pleases him!* In fact, this is one of the main reasons that so many people reject the existence of God; not for lack of evidence, but because they know that if a personal being created them then they would belong and be accountable to Someone.

Secondly, [Weigh Scale] God is perfectly loving and perfectly just. "God is love" (1 Jhn 4:8 *NIV*), and "His works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Deut. 32:4). However, as is seen in the scale and as it will play out in future lessons, these two character traits of God are in balance; He is not more loving than just, or more just than loving.

Thirdly, God is relational. Love is a trait that always has an object. You love something or someone. Because God is three in one, or three persons in one God (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit), He can and has been in an eternal loving relationship. I won't expound upon the trinity here, but the trinity shows how God could be eternally loving and always in relationship; the Father always has loved the Son, the Son has loved the Spirit and the Spirit has loved the Father, etc.

In conclusion, the Bible states that all that exists came from a God who is both loving, just and relational. He spoke everything into existence and because of such, He owns everything.

Lesson #2: Where did suffering come from?

All worldviews agree that humans suffer. We suffer from loneliness, sickness, other's greed, our own poor decisions, but each worldview gives a different origin story for where suffering comes from and how we can be saved from suffering. Usually worldviews have these three stories: a creation story, a fall story and a story of redemption (Percy). Let's quickly skim through the Bible's creation and fall story to help us answer where suffering comes from.

A Biblical worldview begins with this creation story. In the beginning a relational, loving and just God creates all that is real by speaking. As Hillsong writer Benjamin Hasting writes, "All nature and science follow the sound of [God's] voice." What this God creates is good. He creates gravity, seagulls and sunlight. Genesis says that it took six days to create everything, and then God created man and woman and placed them in a fully functioning, lush garden. God made them in His image and was in relationship (friendship) with them. Made in God's image means that many of our characteristics and ability reflect limited qualities of God: our ability to create, love, think, and act. Then, because God is perfectly loving He gives the man and woman that he is in relationship with a command to not eat from one tree: The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. C.S. Lewis, in his book Mere Christianity, helps explain why God give Adam and Eve a chance to choose something other than God and His goodness.

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong, but I can't. If a thing is free to be good it's also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes

possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata -of creatures that worked like machines- would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they've got to be free.

Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently, He thought it worth the risk. (...) If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will -that is, for making a real world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings- then we may take it it is worth paying.

If that is how this world was created, then what is the Bible's story about the fall?

(Remember that a worldview has the following components: creation, fall and redemption.) The fall begins in heaven. Lucifer, one of God's created beings, was the angel that was in charge of guarding God's glory. Lucifer, however, became full of pride and decided that he wanted to take God's place. God kicked Lucifer out of heaven with many angels who decided to follow Lucifer in rebellion against God. This same Lucifer, who is now called the Satan meaning adversary, appears in the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve to disobey God's command to not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When Adam and Eve break God's command we call that sin. And the penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Indeed, all of suffering had its seed in this moment, because when mankind sinned all of creation was placed under a curse (Gen 3:17).

Lesson #3: What about redemption? [Sinful Heart, blood square, coin, Weigh Scale]

When Adam and Eve sinned [Sinful Heart], God had to remove them from His presence because God is morally perfect. The Bible calls this moral perfection “holy”. God always does right and good, and God cannot have sin in His presence. So, though Adam would live 930 years until he died physically, Adam’s relationship with God died that very day. That doesn’t mean that God ceased to love Adam, but that sin ruins relationships.

Let’s take a look at the fall a little more carefully, because only when we grasp the gravity of the fall do we understand the wonder of redemption. [Coin] Adam had sinned against God and therefore had to die. This death would occur 1) relationally, 2) physically and 3) eternally (in the Second Death which comes in the after-life). Because God is perfectly loving, He desires to bring Adam back into relationship with Him, but, because God is perfectly just, He cannot just wink at Adam’s sin or forget that it happened.

The problem gets worse. [Flip Coin] Adam has sin that he needs to get rid of and he lacks righteousness (or perfection) that he can no longer attain. For example, Adam is in debt (sin), and he has no credit (righteousness) in his account. He doesn’t just need to break even; he needs \$100,000 in the bank.

[Weigh Scale] So how can a loving God restore a sinner into right relationship with Himself while meeting the requirements of His own justice? Answer: Find a person who has no sin, and therefore doesn’t need to die, who willingly will take the place of another so that sin can be paid for and justice served.

This plan of redemption was set in motion in Genesis 3:15, where God promises that a man born from a woman will crush the serpent’s (Satan’s) head, even though the serpent will strike the man’s heel. Interestingly, here in the garden, a picture of what Jesus would some day

do on the cross was given. See, Adam and Eve had hidden in the garden after they sinned, and when the LORD came looking for them they lied and felt shame. They had sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, and in one sense, they had something right... they did need a covering because God is too holy to look on sin, but leaves didn't picture (give a good enough visual aid) for what Jesus would some day do, so God killed an animal and made clothing from animal skins to cover them. It was the first time physical death had occurred and blood had run red. [Blood square over sin heart] What was needed to cover their sin was blood, because "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). The blood of the animal wasn't payment for Adam's sin; it was a foreshadowing of what was to come.

Lesson #4: Explain the Altar [Altar, lamb sacrifice, vegetable sacrifice, Garbage/Gold Scale]

So Adam and Eve were sinners; that is they had rebelled against God and now had hearts that were by nature infected with sin. This sin nature was passed on to their children, so that their first sons, Cain and Abel, were both born into the same sin condition (alienated from God and finding it very easy and natural to do those things that are against God's nature and that break relationships). After some time Cain and Abel brought gifts or offerings to God. [Altar] Cain brought the first-fruits of his land (vegetables and fruits). Abel brought the first of his flock. God looked at Abel's offering with favor and at Cain's offering without favor.

What's happening here? Why does God favor Abel's offering [lamb sacrifice]? For the following reasons: 1) Abel's offering exemplifies a reversal of Adam and Eve's decision to not trust God. Adam and Eve trusted their own thinking and the claims of the serpent over God's claims. By offering an animal sacrifice, Abel would have been obeying God's prescription for the sin problem, therefore trusting in God, though Abel would have had little idea of what this animal sacrifice represented (Christ on the cross). 2) Abel's offering bleeds. Blood is an important part

of the visual aid. Remember, that there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood. The sacrifice needed to symbolize that a life must die for another life, even though an animal could never substitute for a man's life.

So why does God not look with favor on Cain's offering? Answer: Because Cain's offering isn't given in faith in God's plan for redemption and because vegetables don't foreshadow the bloody death of Jesus on the cross. [Garbage/Gold Scale] Cain's offering is similar to most nominally Christian people's worldview today. Cain brings an offering to God, but he comes in his own way. This may take on many different forms today, but among the most popular are the views that one can get to heaven by doing good works or by following a certain list of rights and wrongs. On the contrary, the Bible says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isa 64:6). The story of Cain shows us that God has a singular way to Him, His idea and His way. We are not allowed to just bring our best, be very sincere or try to reach God in our own way. [Altar with lamb sacrifice] Even in Genesis, any way to God outside of trusting in the sacrifices that foreshadowed Jesus's work would not bring God's favor.

Lesson #5: The Flood

To finish lesson 4's story of Cain and Abel, Cain ended up killing Abel because he was angry and jealous of his brother. Adam and Eve were the first parents to bury a child. Sin ruins relationship. Adam and Eve had another son named Seth, and it would be one of Seth's descendants who would be the promised deliverer of Genesis 3:15. However, for Adam and Eve's descendants, sin reigned in the hearts of men and mankind began to invent new ways of doing evil. Years later, this is what we read in Genesis 6,

⁵ The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Again, we see the punishment for sin being death. Again, we see favor being found by those who trust in God, which is a reversal of Adam and Eve's decision to not trust God. How do we know that Noah trusted God? Because his actions say so. God told Noah that He would flood the earth and for Noah to build an ark, and Noah did so.

Noah wasn't perfect man, and because of his perfect ways was saved by God. God gave Noah grace: unmerited/ unearned favor. Noah was saved because of God's grace by placing faith in what God said for Him to do. Noah's faith was seen in his actions and his salvation from God's flood was physical.

[Ark] Now here is an interesting connection from the story of the flood to the climax of the Bible's plot - Jesus on the cross. There was only one door to the ark and when the rain began to fall, God shut the one door. It is common today to believe in pluralism. Pluralism is "more than mere tolerance, religious pluralism accepts multiple paths to God or gods as a possibility" (GotQuestions). The Bible claims to be true in an exclusive way. The Bible is full of examples of God excluding other paths to Him other than those that come by faith in grace: 1) Adam and Eve weren't allowed to stay in the garden of Eden after choosing to disobey God's command. They were separated from God because they chose their own way. 2) Cain's offering

was not accepted by God because Cain didn't come by faith or with a sacrifice that reflected God's plan of redemption, and 3) anyone who didn't respond to Noah's preaching for 120 years died in God's wrath towards sin. The ark door can be seen to represent the door to God. It's open and all were welcome to be saved in God's salvation: the ark, but there wasn't another equally valid way to be saved: a different and equally viable ark. Jesus says, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved" (Jhn 10:9 *NKJV*).

After the flood receded and Noah and his family exited the ark, they sacrificed a lamb to the LORD. God placed a rainbow in the sky to be a symbol of his promise to never send a worldwide flood to judge the world again. Here, God reminds Noah and his family of his command to Adam and Eve in Genesis. "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). After killing all but eight people on the earth, God wants more people. What was wrong with the people He just killed? Remember how God is a relational God. He created people to be in relationship with Him. He didn't just want lots of people, but lots of people who enjoyed friendship with Him.

As God tells Noah and his family the same command, He adds to it. "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky" (Gen 9:2). Notice here that the curse of sin has affected both mankind and the world that mankind was supposed to govern as God's representative. Even the animal kingdom and the plants were affected by the curse. God's kingdom has been marred by sin, but God's plan of redemption extends beyond just redeeming men to redeeming all of creation. "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom 8:20-22).

Lesson #6: The Tower of Babel

Generations after the flood, descendants of Noah traveled East (a common direction in scripture for people moving away from God) and decided that they would not spread out and multiply, as the Lord had commanded. Rather they decided to build a tall tower [Tower] that would “reach the heavens” so that they could “make a name for themselves” and so that they would not be “scattered over the face of the whole earth”. Again man’s sin nature was to rebel against God and not trust Him. Trusting God at this point of history would have equalled multiplying and filling the earth.

As judgement, God confused their one-common language, and gave the people all the languages of the world. God also spread them across the earth.

Not only does the story explain the origin of the many languages that are spoken today, but it reiterates the problem that mankind faces. It is probable that the tower was a ziggurat that was created for religious purposes. The work that went into building the ziggurat was incredible, and (it is thought by some) that worshippers would have to climb the tower to the top to sacrifice to their god. Several points can be learned from the lesson of Babylon, and they are as follows:

#1 Being sincere isn’t enough. I imagine many of the workers on this building project were sincere in their devotion to their religion. They worked many hours and sacrificed back and sweat to see the tower built, but God wants obedience to Him that stems from trusting what He says rather than trusting in our own ideas about God, or simply working really hard.

[Garbage/Gold Scale]. Good deeds cannot outweigh sin. Being sincere isn’t enough, because sincerely believing that drinking a bottle of what appears to be water will be good for you, doesn’t change that if that bottle has cyanide mixed in that it will do your body harm.

#2 Being spiritual isn't enough. Many people are spiritual, but according to scripture, only those who trust in God's plan for redemption are saved. Going to a church, reading a holy book, praying, meditating, or doing good works cannot save a man from his sins, because sin requires death as its payment, not spirituality.

In conclusion, the Tower of Babel is part of the story of the fall, and the multitude of languages represents a judgment on mankind because of their sin. However, this story also leads up to the story of the cross. Fifty days after Jesus died, Jesus's disciples were sitting in an upper room waiting for the Holy Spirit and praying when a sound like rushing wind and tongues of fire appeared over their heads. The disciples then were miraculously able to speak the gospel to the many Jews from differing language groups and be understood by all of them though they had no prior knowledge of these languages. On the day of Pentecost we see a reversal of this story, a part of God's redeeming work of all of creation.

Lesson #7 Abraham and Isaac

After the Tower of Babel, few people followed the Creator-God. Many people invented new gods to worship, and some worshipped what they did not fully understand as gods, like the sun and the moon. God chose out of this culture one man with whom to have a relationship with. Remember: God is a perfectly loving, perfectly just, relational God. This man's name is Abram and his wife is Sarai. Abram is told by God that he will have many descendants, but at the time of the promise, he and his wife have no children. Abram believes God and it is credited to him as righteousness. [Two sided coin: problem] Remember the coin. We have something that we don't want: sin and its death penalty; and we don't have something that we desperately need: a righteousness equal to Gods. Here in Genesis, God says that He credits (or puts into

Abram's account) righteousness, not for having done great and mighty spiritual deeds, but because he reversed the decision that Adam and Eve made. Abram trusted God.

Now up to this point, I've pointed out how each person's trust translated into action. Well, God tested Abram. After his son was born thirteen years after God makes the promise to give a son to Abram, God tells him to take his son, Isaac, up a mountain and sacrifice him, Isaac, the son of the promise. Did Isaac deserve to die? Yes, Isaac was a sinner like all mankind. Abram deserved to die, but Isaac could not die in Abram's place because Isaac had his own sins to account for. What was God doing?

Well, when Abram and Isaac travelled up the mountain, Isaac recognized that they had brought with them fire and wood for the altar, but no sacrifice. Abram says, "Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together" (Gen. 22:8). Abram then tied up Isaac, laid him on the altar [Isaac on the altar] and then raised a knife in the air to plunge it into his son. But before his arm came down, an angel of God called to Abram, "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Gen 22:12). When Abraham looked up, he saw a ram [sheep] caught in the thicket. The ram was killed in Isaac's place on the altar [Slain sheep on altar]. The ram was Isaac's substitute... a sacrifice that died in his place where he deserved to die.

"So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide" (Gen 22:14). Why? Because God would do exactly what he stopped Abraham from doing. God the Father would see Jesus, God the Son, slain on a wooden altar [the cross] to die as a substitute for sinners.

In conclusion, think about our original sin problem. How can a perfectly just [perfectly just tag] God execute justice on sinners whom he loves [perfectly loving tag], when the penalty for sin is eternal separation and what He wants is close relationship? Answer: By Jesus living a sinless life, which means he never had to die, but then willingly dying as a substitute in the place of sinners who trust in Him. You know how Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide? Well, it is very likely that where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac is the same mountain where God sacrificed Jesus. Indeed, the Lord did provide [heart with blood square] a sufficient covering for sin.

Lesson #8 Passover

Isaac, the promised son that Abraham waited for thirteen years to finally see, had two sons, who had more children, who had more children. Now Abraham had been promised by God more than just having many descendants. Abraham was promised that the promised deliverer spoken of in Genesis 3:15 would be one of his descendants. Indeed, God's plan of redemption for the whole world would come from one of his descendents. This blessing of being in the lineage of the promised deliverer was passed from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah and so on and so forth.

Eventually Abraham's descendants ended up as slaves in the land of Egypt. God used a man named Moses to lead the Israelites, Abraham's descendants, to leave Egypt, but there was one problem. The Pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites did not want to let them go. God had met Moses by appearing in the form of burning bush that didn't burn up. God revealed a little more of his nature to Moses. He told Moses that his name is "Yahweh", which roughly translates to "I am", or "I am the self-existent one". As we saw at the very beginning, every worldview believes in something that is eternal. God here claims to be the first uncaused-cause, or the

thing that had no beginning and was the beginning to everything else. God is eternal and needs nothing to exist.

This God tells Moses to ask the Pharaoh to let His people go. Pharaoh says, “No!” and then God sends a plague, and then Pharaoh says that he has changed his mind, but ends up making the Israelites stay as slaves. This happens nine times! The last plague (the tenth) is when the Passover happens. See, God tells the Israelites that He is going to kill the firstborn [Firstborn and man] of every house. By now, hopefully, you see that because everyone is a sinner, everyone rightfully deserves death. But there is a way that the firstborn doesn’t have to die... you probably guessed it... a substitute sacrifice that foreshadows what Jesus will do on the cross. The Israelite families [house with blood on the doorposts] are to kill a male sheep, a lamb that isn’t sick or blemished. When they kill it, they aren’t to break any of its bones. Then they are to paint the doorposts with blood. Symbolic? Absolutely! They are to eat the meat and then spend the evening trusting that when the angel of death comes during the night to kill the firstborn of every family, God’s way of redemption will keep them from judgment. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt” (Gen 12:13). Even Egyptians who followed this way could be saved from the death of their firstborn, and even Israelites who didn’t follow God’s way would lose their firstborn. Life and death wasn’t based on ethnicity, age, economic status, good deeds or bad deeds, but based in faith that resulted in obedience in God’s way of redemption.

In the Bible, sin is often compared to slavery. Whether it is a sugar addiction or a pornography addiction, sin takes good things that God created (sugar, sex, etc.) and seeks to use them in a way unintended by God. Food cannot console my soul. Sex cannot be the purpose of life. God freed Israel from their physical slavery from the Egyptians, but after the Israelites were free in the Sinai desert they revealed that they were still slaves... slaves to idols

who still had mastery over them. The Israelites still needed to have the idols of their hearts removed before they would be fully free. When Jesus came, he did many miracles to free people from physical illness and crippling conditions, but most of his work was to free people from the slavery that they were in to sin. See, sin affects both our inside and our outside. Worshipping God is the key to becoming free from addiction and slavery.

It starts with understanding what happened hundreds of years later on the same day of the year when Israel was celebrating the feast of Passover to commemorate the Israelites leaving Egypt. On the day that the Passover lamb (male, no blemish, no broken bones) was killed, so was Jesus. In fact, when Jesus was first introduced in John 1:29, a prophet said of Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Jesus, was God the Father’s Passover Lamb. Just as death should have come to the first born in the house, so now death would come to Jesus, God’s firstborn son (Jesus is eternal and never had a beginning so this title for Jesus is about position rather than biological relationship). Jesus is the one who dies in our stead.

Lesson #9 The Law

After the Israelites left Egypt, they traveled the long way to the land promised to Abraham (the land of Canaan). First, they traveled to the Mt. Sinai where Moses had originally met with God manifesting himself as a burning bush. Here God would reveal more of his nature to mankind, because how could man know God if he did not choose to reveal himself?

At Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses and the estimated two million Israelites laws to help the Israelites know how to live now that they would be in relationship with God Himself. Of the 613

laws that are found in the first five books of the Bible, [Ten Commandments] ten were written on stone here on Mt. Sinai and given to Moses to bring to the Israelites.

These ten commands were meant to bring freedom. Each command benefits relationship. The first four commands help people understand how to be in relationship with God, and the following six commands discuss how to have good relationships with others. Why does God call us not to have any other god that we worship? Because no other god exists besides Yahweh. All idols (false gods) make slaves of us for we were made to glorify God. In short, God commands are given to us because he loves us. But don't think that his love negates his justice. When Moses left the people to go up the mountain for forty days and receive the Ten Commandments, the people made a golden calf idol and then sinned in all sorts of ways. After Moses gets back down he says, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor'" (Ex. 32:27) So, yes, God gives us the command to not lie, for example, because he loves us, but he holds us who break God's law responsible. Remember: the penalty for sin is death.

It's important to notice what standard has for his laws. God wants perfect obedience to his laws at all times both in our actions and thoughts. To sin once is to be guilty of breaking the whole law. [Man hanging from a rope with ten strings + scissors illustration] James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10). How many times do I have to lie in order to be a liar? Twenty? Nineteen? No, once. Jesus explains in Matthew that the law included our thoughts, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt 5:28). That is why Paul wrote in Romans, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10). Rapper Lecrae writes in his song "Truth",

“Some people say that God ain't real 'cause they don't see how a good God can exist with all this evil in the world. If God is real then He should stop all this evil, 'cause He's all-powerful right? What is evil though man? It's anything that's against God. It's anything morally bad or wrong. It's murder, rape, stealing, lying, cheating. But if we want God to stop evil, do we want Him to stop it all or just a little bit of it? If He stops us from doing evil things, what about lying, or what about our evil thoughts? I mean, where do you stop, the murder level, the lying level, or the thinking level? If we want Him to stop evil, we gotta be consistent, we can't just pick and choose. That means you and I would be eliminated right? Because we think evil stuff. If that's true, we should be eliminated! But thanks be to God that Jesus stepped in to save us from our sin! Christ died for all evilness! Repent, turn to Jesus man!

Lesson #10 Priest and the Tabernacle

Remember how the garden of Eden was: Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. God dwelt with man, but when sin entered the picture, Adam and Eve were removed from the garden and from God's presence. One key themes of scripture is God's dwelling with mankind. Remember that God wants to be in relationship with mankind. So, now that Israel was to have a special relationship with God, how could God dwell with them being that the Israelites sinned all the time?

The answer is in an elaborate visual aid: the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a tent where God's presence would sometimes dwell. People would bring a lamb [lamb] to the priest, a chosen representative of God who knew how people needed to approach God and how people could be right with God and who would act as a mediator. The person bringing a sacrifice for

their sins would place their hand on the head of the lamb to symbolize that this animal was dying in place of - as a substitute - for the man whose hand was on its head.

Here is an interesting connection to the cross. The Israelite approaching God the Father could not just approach God any way that he wanted. Approaching God incorrectly meant certain death, because God's holiness consumed (in literal fire) those that approached inappropriately. So God placed his manifested presence in the furthest room back in the tabernacle, called the Most Holy Place, behind a huge veil that separated anyone from seeing or going back there. Why would God separate people from Himself with a veil? Because God loves us and knows that if we approach Him in the wrong way we would be consumed. But wonder of wonders, when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn in two.

The veil was torn because Jesus opened up the way into the Most Holy Places. Because Jesus had once and for all satisfied the sacrifice needed for the sins of the world, men and women were now free to approach God by trusting in Jesus's finished work on the cross. In the tabernacle the priest was a sinner too and had to sacrifice for his own sins. Jesus, however, is the perfect mediator between God and man. Imagine going to the tabernacle without a sacrifice and then the priest laid down on the altar and slit his own throat. Jesus, our high priest, sacrifices himself on our behalf.

In conclusion, no more sacrifices need to be made. All sacrifices pre-tabernacle, in the tabernacle, and temple pointed towards the greatest sacrifice: the perfect Son of God laying down his life for sinners.

Lesson #11 The Bronze Serpent

During the years that Israel wandered in the desert, Israel encountered the holiness of God in many ways. One of those ways was in judgment for breaking God's laws. One day Israel complained to God's delegated authority, Moses, and accused him of bringing him up from Egypt to die in the wilderness. The Israelites were grumbling against the LORD. Then the Lord [perfectly just tag] sent fiery serpents in to bite the people. This was God's discipline of his people; however, "God's disciplines are always with love imbued, a love that seeks ever our ultimate good" (Vincent). God's disciplines were meant to bring people to repent. Repent is a word that means to change your mind, to pull a U-turn, or to go in the opposite direction. And some of the Israelites, after having been bit by a serpent, begged Moses to intercede on their behalf.

They confessed their sin, or they agreed with God that what they had done was sin. [Snake on a Pole] "And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze^[a] serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live" (Num 21: 8-9) Here is an example of faith. If you believed in God and his messenger Moses, you would obey and look at the bronze serpent and live. If you didn't believe, you may try other remedies or pray to other gods, or ask God to save you a different way. In the end, those who looked were healed, and those who didn't look died.

The New Testament authors referenced this story and compared it to Jesus being raised up on a [Cross and tomb] cross (like the bronze serpent raised up on the pole). "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever

believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:14-18).

Lesson #12 Dagon and other gods

Although there is only one true God, history is full of many gods. Egyptians worshipped the sun-god Ra, the Philistines worshipped the half-fish, half-man god Dagon, and today we worship football, money, sex, success, work, status and leisure. An idol is anything that is worshipped: a false god. We are always worshipping because we were made to worship God. No one doesn't worship. We are like a hose on full blast. You can point it at the car or the garden, but the water keeps coming (Driscoll). You can worship God or something else, but you are always worshipping.

Now back to the plot line of the Bible. Years go by after the incident with the fiery serpents, and Israel finally arrived in the promised land. One day when the Israelites were in battle with their neighbors, the Philistines, when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant - a golden box which was usually kept in the Most Holy Place and where God manifested his presence. The Philistines are elated to think that they have captured the Hebrew's God, but they have a lot to learn about Yahweh.

First, God is omnipresent - everywhere present at the same time, so that even though God chose the Ark of the Covenant as a special place to dwell amongst his people, God was not bound to any icon or statue. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands" (Acts 17:24).

When the Philistines brought the Ark of the Covenant back to their cities they placed it inside of a temple to Dagon, a half-fish half-man deity. What really exists when people worship false gods? In this case, you have three real things and one false. There really was a statue [Dagon Statue] or wood or special stone, there really existed a set of beliefs about a god who didn't exist, but, lastly and very importantly, the Bible warns that the worship of idols is truly the worship of demons. "Am I suggesting, then, that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not God. And I do not want you to be participants with demons" (1 Cor 10:19-20 *BSB*).

Now something happened after the Philistines set the Ark of the Covenant in the temple of Dagon. The next day they found that Dagon [Fallen Statue] "had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place" (1 Sam 5:3 *ESV*). "But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, uand the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him."

What is going on here? God is showing the folly of idols. First, a god shouldn't need to be protected. Secondly, a god shouldn't need to be picked up off the floor. Thirdly, a god should fall apart. The hands of Dagon breaking off symbolize his inability to act or do anything, and Dagon's head falling off symbolizes that he is no god with no authority. Dagon is broken to pieces in front of the symbol of Yahweh: the Ark of the Covenant. While Dagon needs fixing, Yahweh is acting in "enemy territory". This is important to note: God sustains the universe everyday and acts within the universe. He is not a God far off.

So what happened to the Ark? God gave many people in the Philistine cities tumors and plagued them with disease carrying mice [?]. Eventually the Philistines sent the Ark back to Israel, and the story continues a little more. When the Ark returned to Israel [on an unguided cart being pulled two cows that had calved and which had their calves taken away from them] some of the men from Israel looked into the Ark. The Bible says, “ But God struck down some of the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they looked into the ark of the LORD” (1 Sam 6:19 *NIV*). The people say, “Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God?” (1 Sam 6:20).

In conclusion, the lesson to learn here is that God is holy and when treated with contempt, He can take care of Himself. He doesn't need anything or anyone to protect Him. You cannot capture God, nor gain the upper hand on Him. Even the Israelites, the people whom God chose to have a special covenant relationship with, were still held accountable if they did not treat God as holy and come to Him trusting in His plan for redemption. God is not to be taken lightly.

Lesson #13 The Shepherd

The Promised Deliverer eventually did come, but He was not like many expected Him to be. The Messiah (which means anointed one, or chosen for a special task and usually anointed with oil to symbolize the specialness) was God Himself. Israel anticipated a ruler to come from the lineage of Abraham and David that would reign as King of the Jews and rule the world from Zion (the mountain where Jerusalem is built upon), but Jesus didn't fit their expectations.

Let us recount the ways that Jesus being the Messiah may have caught people off guard. Jesus was 1) born as a baby, 2) to a non-wealthy family in a manger. 3) He was God

Himself. 4) He didn't overthrow the Roman empire. 5) He was humble. 6) He desired to rule in people's hearts first. Jesus is coming back and will rule the world from Zion some day, but that day hasn't happened yet.

Jesus was the promised to deliver mankind from the sin penalty, and he was on mission to reveal to the world who God was. Jesus was God in human flesh. To do so, Jesus made a play on God's personal name, "Yahweh" which means "I am". Jesus is not only claiming to be God, but is using comparison to help us grasp the nature of God. Jesus's seven metaphors were as follows:

1. I am the bread of life
2. I am the light of the world
3. I am the door of the sheep
4. I am the good shepherd
5. I am the resurrection and the life
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life
7. I am the true vine

[Shepherd in the sheep pen's door] "So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [...] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jhn 10:7, 9 *ESV*). All people have one of the following two identities: "In Adam" or "In Christ". Either people take after their forefather Adam in rebelling against God and live according to his sin nature, or they have been identified with Christ and are a part of his people, which he compares to a flock of sheep. He is the door. He protects his people from the dangers outside, and only through Jesus do people get in. He is exclusive in the way that no one can come into the "flock" except through him, but is inclusive in the way that he accepts all who come through Him in faith in who He is and what He has done. Rapist,

murderer, religious hypocrite, homosexual, thief, liar, prostitute, glutton, abusive father, arrogant person... all are welcome to have their sins paid for at the cross and receive a new identity = saint, "In Christ" or set apart one.

Lesson #14 The Cross and the Tomb

Remember the parts of a worldview: creation, fall and redemption. The Biblical narrative all points forward to this: Jesus's death and resurrection. If you could prove that Jesus never died or never rose again, you could prove Christianity to be false and the Bible to be nothing more than a book with teachings and stories. This is the climax of the Bible and this is what separates Christianity from every other religion in the world.

During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods' appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Jewish covenant, and the Muslim code of law -- each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional (Yancey).

Let's begin.

What was the problem? [Two sided Coin] Man had sin with its consequence of death that he couldn't escape, and needed a righteousness equal to God's that he couldn't earn.

What was the answer? Jesus lived a sinless life. From birth, Jesus never broke any of the 613 commands in scripture, therefore Jesus had the righteousness equal to God's that we needed and Jesus never needed to die because he never sinned. So, here is the great exchange as written about by John Piper,

So, God has what we need and don't deserve — righteousness; and we have what God hates and rejects — sin. What is God's answer to this situation?

His answer is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died in our place and bore our condemnation. "By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he [God] condemned sin in the flesh" ([Romans 8:3](#)). Whose flesh bore the condemnation? His. Whose sins were being condemned? Ours. This is the great exchange. Here it is again in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#): "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

God lays our sins on Christ and punishes them in him. And in Christ's obedient death, God fulfills and vindicates his righteousness and imputes (credits) it to us. Our sin on Christ; his righteousness on us.

We can hardly stress too much that Christ is God's answer to our greatest problem. It is all owing to Christ.

When Christ rose from the dead on the third day, it was though the check cleared the bank. God's wrath had been fully satisfied for sin. No longer does any wrath remain for people who trust in Jesus who then sin.

No wrath is awakened in God at my sin, because Christ appeased it to say so again, God's heart pulses only with passionate grace, that jealousy wants me back in his embrace. God does see my sins and He grieves at them so, for when I am sinning His love I don't know. He even will send me some heart rending pain, so I'll learn new ways and His holiness gain, but God's disciplines are always with love imbued, a love that seeks ever my ultimate good. [...] Deserve it, I don't... not on my holiest day, but this is salvation and here in I'll stay - Milton Vincent

Lesson #15 Review

Let's review some of the stories one more time from the beginning:

[Paddle] God created the world by speaking, and just like my father who is building a boat, because he made it, he owns it. God is the creator-owner of everything that exists including you and me. He is a perfectly loving [tag] and perfectly just [tag] God who desires relationship with his creation.

[Sinful heart] When Adam and Eve chose to sin against God, they received death as penalty. Leaves couldn't cover their sin, instead God made animal skins because the

blood [red blood square] spilling would foreshadow Jesus's death on the cross. Adam's relationship with God died that day, and Adam eventually died physically; however, those that die physically not trusting in God's plan of redemption die what is called the Second Death; they are separated from God for eternity in the after-life in physical, conscious torment.

[Altar with vegetables] We learned from the story of Cain and Abel that we cannot come to God with good intentions or in another way. God rejected Cain's sacrifice because it wasn't given in faith or trust in what God said. Vegetables don't foreshadow Jesus's blood atoning (or covering) for the sins of the world. [Altar with lamb sacrifice]

[Ark] Mankind rejected their intended purpose: to glorify God ("God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him" (Piper)), and instead lived in increasing sinfulness. God's judged the earth and gave mankind what they deserved (wrath/ death), but saved Noah and his family by showing them grace (undeserved favor). All were warned and could have entered the boat (salvation), but at a certain point in time God shut the door. Jesus is offering salvation to all who come to Him, but there will be a day (at our own death) where the door will be shut.

[Tower of Babel] Some of Noah's descendants worked hard and were very spiritual, but God judged them by confusing their language and spreading them across the earth. God does not accept hard work or being religious as a substitute for trusting in His plan for salvation.

[Passover with firstborn and man] God chose Abraham to have a covenant relationship with. Abraham's descendants became slaves in Egypt, and God used 10 plagues to

show His power and to humble the false gods of the Egyptians. During the last plague, God killed the firstborn in every house unless the family followed God's plan of salvation. The family needed to kill a male lamb and paint the blood on the doorposts. Jesus is our passover lamb and just as the angel of death pass over the house because the death penalty had already been served by a substitute, so God's judgment passes over us because [Cross and tomb] all of God's wrath was poured out on Jesus.

[Bronze serpent] Just as the bronze serpent was raised, so Jesus was raised, so that all who look to Jesus in faith will be saved. It doesn't matter where you are coming from; it just matters who you are placing your faith in.

[Ten commandments and the man dangling from a string with ten knots] God gave laws to protect relationship with God and others. We all break at least one of God's commands, which makes us "not good" people. [Garbage/Gold Scale] Our good deeds cannot outweigh our sin. Like a rope cut at any one of the knots, the man falls. God requires perfection, not just good church attendance.

[Cross and Tomb] Jesus died on a cross because God is a just God and those that he wanted to be in relationship with had the death penalty. In order to be perfectly just [just/loving scale] God's wrath towards sin had to be fully satisfied, and because he is perfectly loving, God the Son (Jesus) willing was whipped, beaten, mocked and crucified as he took the sins of the world on Himself. Jesus did not just call people to "get saved" but to live free. He called people into an ongoing relationship with Him that was defined by us obeying Him, because He knows how we can glorify God and what is best for us. After Jesus rose from the tomb, He commanded that his followers do life with other

people in a way that helped others learn about his teachings, and become followers of Jesus themselves.