

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

**A Simplified Look at a
Complicated Belief**

**Part 1
Sessions 1-3**

The Old Testament

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

Module 1: The Old Testament

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God calls Abraham and makes a covenant with Him

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UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

Part 1 – The Kingdom of God

Introduction – Terminology and Worldviews

Christianity

Christianity is a system of belief that makes certain claims about the nature of truth. It is an all-encompassing system that impacts the individual's beliefs about this life and the after-life.

Christian

A Christian means literally someone who follows Christ (Jesus). To be a true Christian implies a personal response to the claims of Jesus.

Bible


The Bible is the book that the Christian faith is based on. Christians believe that the Bible is God's word (that it contains His truth) and that it is the only authority for us to follow.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ (Jesus is a personal name; Christ is a title meaning "God's chosen one")

Church

A local church is literally a group of Christians who are committed to meeting together in one place. The word is also often used by people (although never in the Bible) to describe buildings where Christians meet.



View of the World:

Atheism (e.g. Marxism)

There is no God

Agnosticism (e.g. Confucianism)

We cannot know whether or not there is a God

Pantheism (e.g. some eastern religions, Islam (Sufism), Buddhism Judaism)

“God” is not separate from the Universe, but is an impersonal force in everything

Polytheism (e.g. Hinduism)

There are many gods who have power in certain places or areas of life

Deism (Not a religion but more an outlook on who God is)

God is personal, and separate from the Universe. He created the Universe and set it in action, but He does not intervene in the created world and cannot be known personally

Monotheism (Christianity)

There is one personal God who created the Universe, but He intervenes in the world in miraculous ways and can be known in a personal way by human beings

Key Questions:

- **What is the purpose of the Universe?**
- **What is mankind's purpose – why are we here?**
- **Is there a God, and if so, can we know what God is like?**

Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 – God and Man

The Bible is really the story of God and man, and to understand its message we need to realize what God is really like. The Bible does not try to prove that God exists – rather it opens with a statement that He does exist.

The Universe as God created it was a place of order and harmony – God looked at it and said it was.....good

Harmony with God as His King

Harmony with the universe

Harmony with one another

God's plan (the theme of the Bible)

God's people (harmony with one another) living in God's place (harmony with the universe) under God's rule (harmony with God) enjoying God's blessings.

Key Lesson:

God founded His Kingdom through Creation.

God is a spiritual personal being who created the Universe. He created mankind to know and love Him.

God's Kingdom means God's people living in God's place under God's rule enjoying God's blessings.

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Part 2 – The Harmony Broken

Satan – Temptation and Deception (Genesis 3:1-6)

The Bible does not clearly tell us about Satan's origin

a) Deception

-influencing people to believe thoughts or ideas that are not true
Satan used a clever trick to deceive Eve

b) Temptation

-influencing people to do wrong by making the wrong choice
seem attractive

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.
Genesis 3:6 NLT

-It was good for food

-It looked nice

-The fruit would give them wisdom

God has given us many good desires that help us live good lives, but we need to control these desires, otherwise we will use them in selfish ways without considering the needs of others. Each of these desires can lead to harm (sin) if they are not controlled.

Sin – rejection of God (Genesis 3:6)

Eve obeyed the snake, and Adam obeyed her. The decision they made was to disobey what God had said and make themselves king in God's place.

The results of Sin (Genesis 3:7-23)....

Harmony with one another broken....

Harmony with God broken....

Harmony with the Universe broken....

Key Questions:

- **How did God's perfect Universe come to be so imperfect?**
- **Why do human beings suffer and die?**
- **Why do so many people have no knowledge of God?**

Two Ways to Live (Genesis Chapter 4)

Sin passes to all men...

-(Romans 1:18-32)

Genesis Chapter 4 shows how sin passed to Adam's first sons, Cain and Abel. It revealed itself in Cain in two ways:

1. Wrong Worship...Genesis 4:7

-the real problem for Cain was a struggle in his heart – whether to do what was right or to give in to sin

2. Wrong Actions (murder)

a) Cain – The way of disobedience

-Cain gave in to sin and made his own choices about how to live.

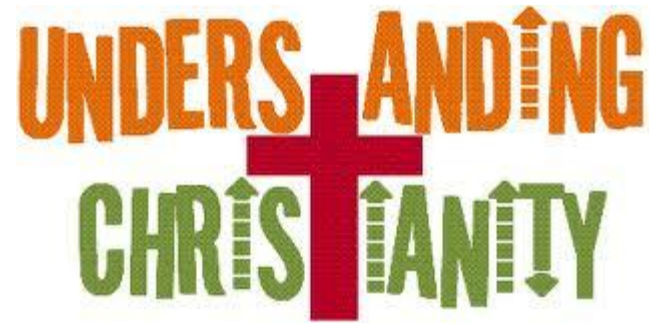
b) Abel – The way of faith

-Abel obeyed God and worshipped Him in the way that God expected.

As we read through the Bible we will see that there have always been people who lived both of these two ways

Key Lesson:

God's Kingdom was destroyed through man's sin (rebellion against God) All human beings are born with sin. Sin separates us from God, leads to wrong worship and wrong actions, and eventually causes death. There are two ways to live: disobedience (rejecting God) and faith (seeking God)



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The Old Testament

CORE VALUES

- Authentic
“Say what you really think”
- Safe
“No Judgment”
- Interactive (Q&A, Participation)
“You get out what you put in”

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Part 3 – Judgment and Grace, Sacrifice and Covenant

The story moves on (Genesis Chapter 5)

-Genesis Chapter 5 tells about the descendants of Adam through his third son, Seth.

-The life-spans of these men are extraordinarily long by modern standards (from 777 to 969 years), but this prolonged life can be explained by considering the following facts:

-There were less people alive

-There were probably less infectious diseases

-God had not yet imposed a shorter limit on man's life

God's Judgment and Grace (Genesis Chapter 6:1,3)

-describes rapid population growth and limits the human life-span to 120 years.

¹Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them.

³Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years."

The Great Flood (Genesis 6:8, 7:1)

-Genesis 6:8...But Noah found favor with the LORD.

-Genesis 7:1 When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous."

-he found "favor" with the Lord. God's favor is also known as grace – it is undeserved by any person, because we all have sinned.

Key Questions:

- **Will God ever stop the suffering that is in the world?**
- **Will He judge those who do wrong?**
- **Is there any hope for the world to get better?**
- **Can God's Kingdom be rebuilt?**

Sacrifice (Genesis 8:15-9:7)

-The first thing Noah did when he came out of the boat was to sacrifice some animals and birds (8:20). This principle of worshipping God through sacrifice runs through the Old Testament

God's Blessings and Covenant (Genesis 9:8-17)

-Covenant

-Contract between two or more people

-The Bible is a covenant document

-The word "testament" is Latin for covenant

-God introduced some new freedoms and rules for mankind:

-Man can now eat meat (2-3) – before this time human beings must have been vegetarian

-Man must not eat meat with its lifeblood still in it (9:4)

The Founding of the Nations (Genesis 9:18-11:32)

-However, as we read on in Chapter 9 we learn that despite God's covenant, the problem of sin had not gone away as Noah's son Ham dishonors his father.

-However, sin continued to reign in mankind, and in Chapter 11 we see mankind's sin becoming so great that God had to move to limit man's destructiveness again.

-So, God confused the languages of the people causing different groups to speak different languages, and scattered the nations over the earth (11:7-9). Since then there has been distrust and conflict between nations and cultures.

-This event is significant, because it tells us something very important:

Man is not able to make this world perfect through his own effort, even if all the nations work together in unity. Because of sin (which shows itself in pride and greed), even the best political ideas will ultimately fail if they do not recognize God as ruler over all.

Chapter 11 finishes with another line of descendants of one man – this time of Shem. One of these sons, Abram, will be the next great figure of the Old Testament.

To be continued....

How God will restore His Kingdom, and how He will finally deal with the problem of sin, Who could be the perfect sacrifice for sins?

Key Lesson:

There is hope for God's Kingdom to be restored because of His Grace, God is holy and He must judge sin, however, He is also gracious and wants to save and forgive those who have faith in Him.

God will restore His Kingdom through Covenant, and will forgive sin on the basis of sacrifice.



Must there be good and evil in order to have a conscience?

1 Peter 3:16

But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.

1 Tim 1:19

Cling to your faith in Christ and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked

What is the difference between temptation and challenge?

James 1:13-15

And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts any else. 14 Temptation comes from our own desires which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death

Why was knowing good and evil not part of God's plan for Adam and Eve?

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. Genesis 3:6 NLT

God's challenge to Adam and Eve was _____

Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve was _____