

MASTER THE CONTENT

OF SCRIPTURE



GOSPEL ESSENTIALS

THE FAITH

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PREFACE

The journey of discipleship is both a profound privilege and a divine calling. This book, *Master the Content of Scripture – Discipleship #1*, serves as a guide to deepen the reader's understanding of the essential truths of the Christian faith. It has been crafted with the prayerful intent to equip believers to grow in their relationship with God, live out their faith with conviction, and share the hope of the Gospel with clarity.

Based on the book entitled, Essentials of the Christian Faith by Norman L. Geisler, each chapter addresses important doctrines. Grounded in Scripture, the lessons provide clear, practical insights into living a life that honors God and reflects His glory. From new believers taking their first steps in faith to seasoned Christians seeking deeper growth, this book offers valuable tools for spiritual maturity.

May this tool inspire you to draw closer to the heart of God, strengthen your walk of faith, and empower you to disciple others as Christ commanded. Together, let us embrace the call to know Him, live for Him, and make Him known to the ends of the earth.

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LESSON 1

Overview

“The Dinner Table Debate”

Imagine sitting at your family dinner table when someone casually asks, “What do Christians have to believe to be real Christians?” Suddenly, what started as a relaxed meal turns into a verbal food fight. Grandma throws in the Ten Commandments. Your cousin argues, “Just love people.” An uncle quotes a meme. Everyone has opinions. But then silence falls... because no one really knows how to define what's essential and what's not.

Leading Question

Why is identifying the essential doctrines of the Christian faith crucial for unity, salvation, and truth?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

What Makes a Doctrine Essential?

According to Geisler, essential doctrines are not about opinion or preference—they are rooted in the gospel and necessary for salvation. These truths are defined both theologically and historically, found in the Scriptures and affirmed by early Christian creeds.

Key Passages (ESV)

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 – “Christ died for our sins... was buried... raised on the third day...”

Romans 1:16 – “The gospel... is the power of God for salvation.”

1 Timothy 4:16 – “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching...”

John 14:6 – “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...”

Key Ideas

Essential doctrines are those that make salvation possible—doctrines of justification, sanctification, and glorification.

The gospel requires belief in certain truths: the deity of Christ, His atonement, His resurrection, and our need for grace.

There are also two foundational doctrines that support all others:

Revelational Essential: The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

Interpretive Essential: The historical-grammatical method of interpreting Scripture.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Examples of Doctrinal Error

Jehovah’s Witnesses – Claim Jesus is a created being, not God.

Mormons – Teach there are many gods and that God the Father was once a man.

Christian Science – Redefines the Trinity as “Life, Truth, and Love.”

Oneness Pentecostals – Deny the Trinity, claiming God just appears in different forms.

New Agers and Occultists – Speak of Jesus as a spiritual teacher or “ascended master,” but not as God.

Why These Views Are Unorthodox

They reject biblical monotheism and the deity of Christ.

They undermine the Trinity or invent multiple deities.

They reject the gospel's essentials as defined in Scripture and affirmed by historical creeds.

They use allegorical or distorted methods of interpretation to twist Scripture.

Section 3: Application / Case Studies

Discussion Questions

Why is it dangerous to treat all doctrines as equally important?

How can identifying the essentials help us respond to false teachings?

What does it mean to hold doctrine with “conviction without compromise”?

Case Study Scenarios

Case 1: “The Symbolic Resurrection”

A friend at school says, “I believe Jesus' resurrection was symbolic, not physical.”

Is this belief consistent with Christian essentials?

How would you respond using Scripture and grace?

Case 2: “Doctrine Divides”

A youth group leader says, “Doctrine divides people. Let’s just focus on love.”

What is helpful in this statement? What is potentially harmful?

How would Paul or John respond?

Case 3: “Sabbath Salvation”

A YouTube preacher insists Christians must keep the Sabbath to be saved.

Is this a salvation essential?

How can we apply the principle of liberty in non-essentials?

Conclusion

Doctrine is not just a theological exercise—it’s the road map to eternity. Just like a pilot must know which controls keep the plane in the air, Christians must know which doctrines keep the faith on course. Essentials are not optional—they are life-giving truths. And if we don’t know what they are, we risk exchanging the truth of God for the opinions of man.

CHAPTER 2

The Inspiration of Scripture

“The Lost Letter from Dad”

Imagine you’re going through old boxes in the attic and stumble across a weathered envelope. It’s addressed to you... from your dad, who passed away years ago. You eagerly open it, hands shaking. The words are filled with his love, advice, and dreams for your life. It changes you. You carry that letter in your wallet from then on.

Now imagine someone walks in and says, “That’s just a random letter. Doesn’t mean anything.”

You’d protest, “But this is my dad’s voice! This matters.” That’s what Scripture is. Not just ink on a page—but the voice of our heavenly Father. And the doctrine of inspiration tells us we can trust that voice.

Leading Question

Why is it essential for Christians to believe that the Bible is inspired by God? What happens to our faith if we doubt its divine origin?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Nature and Necessity of Inspiration

Geisler argues that without the inspiration of Scripture, we have no authoritative revelation about salvation, God, or Christian doctrine. Inspiration guarantees that the Bible is not merely a human book but God's very Word.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...”

2 Peter 1:20-21 – “No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation... men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Hebrews 1:1-2 – “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”

Psalms 19:7-9 – “The law of the Lord is perfect... the testimony of the Lord is sure... the precepts of the Lord are right...”

Key Concepts

Inspiration is God-breathed—Scripture originates in God, not man.

It is both plenary (all Scripture) and verbal (down to the words).

Inspiration ensures inerrancy and authority.

Without it, no doctrine can be certain—not even salvation.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Common Denials of Inspiration

Geisler identifies numerous ways Scripture’s divine origin has been denied or distorted.

Liberal Theology – Claims Scripture is inspired only in a general, poetic, or moral sense.

Denial: It is not literally God's word. Refuted by: 2 Timothy 3:16.

Neo-Orthodoxy (e.g., Karl Barth) – Says the Bible becomes God’s Word when it “speaks to you.”

Denial: The Bible isn’t inherently inspired. Refuted by: 2 Peter 1:20-21.

Mystical Movements – Suggest spiritual experience is a higher authority than the written Word.

Denial: Scripture is not sufficient. Refuted by: Hebrews 1:1-2.

Modern “Red-Letter Christians” – Elevate the words of Jesus above the rest of Scripture.

Denial: Only parts of the Bible are authoritative. Refuted by: John 17:17 (“Thy Word is truth”).

Religious Pluralism – Argues the Bible is just one of many sacred texts.

Denial: Scripture is not unique. Refuted by: Isaiah 55:11; John 14:6.

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

How would your faith change if you thought the Bible had errors?

Why is belief in inspiration necessary for knowing truth with certainty?

How can Christians defend the inspiration of Scripture in a skeptical culture?

Case Study 1: “It’s Just a Human Book”

You’re in English class, and a classmate says, “The Bible is just an old book written by men. Like Shakespeare, but religious.”

How do you respond respectfully but firmly?

What scriptures might you share?

Case Study 2: “I Only Trust the Words of Jesus”

Someone tells you, “I don’t trust the Bible—just the red letters where Jesus talks. That’s all that matters.”

What does this say about their view of inspiration?

Why is this belief insufficient, according to 2 Timothy 3:16?

Case Study 3: “My Experience is My Authority”

A Christian influencer on TikTok says, “I know what the Bible says, but I just feel like God is saying something different to me.”

Why is this dangerous?

How does the doctrine of inspiration help guard against this error?

Conclusion

If the Bible is just human words, then we’re just guessing about God. But if it’s God’s Word—inspired, true, reliable—then we have a firm foundation for truth, salvation, and life. As Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

LESSON 3

The Literal Interpretation of Scripture

“The Case of the Misread Text”

A teacher once gave an assignment: Read the Declaration of Independence and explain it. One student wrote, “It’s about letting everyone do whatever they want.” Another said, “It’s a metaphor for freedom from emotions.” The teacher shook her head and said, “It’s about declaring independence from Britain. Literally. That’s the historical context. You can’t make it mean whatever you feel it means.”

Now imagine we treated Scripture the same way—as a poetic Rorschach test instead of a divine declaration. This is why the literal interpretation of Scripture matters. If the Bible is God's Word, then understanding what God meant is not just a preference—it's a priority.

Leading Question

Why is it essential for Christians to interpret the Bible literally, according to its historical and grammatical context? What happens when we don't?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Method That Preserves Meaning

Geisler explains that the literal-historical-grammatical method is the only consistent, God-honoring approach to Scripture. This method respects the text as communication from God through human authors, using language and context.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Nehemiah 8:8 – “They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.”

2 Timothy 2:15 – “Rightly handling the word of truth.”

Luke 24:27 – Jesus “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Galatians 4:24 – Paul uses allegory here, but clearly signals it, which proves that the norm was literal interpretation.

Key Ideas

Literal does not mean "wooden" or "ignoring figures of speech." It means reading Scripture in the plain sense it was meant to convey.

God communicates using grammar, syntax, and historical context—not riddles.

The literal method allows us to distinguish between doctrine and devotionals, between parables and proclamations.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Examples of Abandoning Literal Interpretation

Geisler warns that denying literal interpretation opens the floodgates to theological chaos.

Allegorism – Common in early Alexandrian theology (e.g., Origen), where every text is spiritualized or turned into a symbol.

Denial: God intended hidden meanings only the elite could unlock.

Refuted by: Nehemiah 8:8, 2 Timothy 2:15.

Liberal Theology – Rejects miracles by reinterpreting them symbolically.

Denial: The feeding of the 5,000 becomes a lesson in sharing, not a miracle.

Refuted by: Luke 9:10-17 (a factual narrative).

Modern Mysticism & Gnosticism – Suggests deeper, hidden knowledge is more important than the written Word.

Denial: Literal meaning is for “beginners”; true insight is mystical.

Refuted by: 2 Peter 1:19 – “We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed...”

Cultic Twisting – Jehovah’s Witnesses and other cults twist Scripture to suit their theology.

Denial: Scripture’s natural meaning is redefined by a group’s “authority.”

Refuted by: Acts 17:11 – The Bereans examined the Scriptures daily to see if Paul’s words were true.

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

What might happen if we treat Scripture as allegory or myth instead of literal truth?

Why is historical and grammatical context important for understanding doctrine?

How does literal interpretation protect us from theological error?

Case Study 1: “This Verse Means Whatever It Means to Me”

During youth group, someone says, “To me, this verse means God wants me to live my truth.”

What is the danger of this approach?

How do you lovingly steer the conversation back to the text's original meaning?

Case Study 2: “Noah’s Ark Was Just a Symbol”

A teacher says, “The flood is just a metaphor for inner renewal. It didn’t literally happen.”

How would you defend the historicity of the account?

Why does Jesus’ reference to Noah in Luke 17:26-27 matter here?

Case Study 3: “Paul Didn’t Really Mean That”

Someone on social media claims, “Paul’s writings about sin were cultural. We can ignore them today.”

How does literal interpretation respond to this claim?

What Scriptures affirm the authority of all biblical authors?

Conclusion

The literal interpretation of Scripture keeps God’s voice from being hijacked by human opinion. When we interpret the Bible according to the author’s intent and the context it was written in, we hear God’s meaning, not ours. As Geisler warns: when you abandon literal interpretation, you don’t just change the meaning—you change the gospel.

LESSON 4

God's Unity

“The Mistaken ID”

Imagine you're introduced to a new student at school. His name is Alex. Over the next week, three different people describe Alex: one says he's a genius, another says he's a troublemaker, and a third says he doesn't even exist. Confused yet? That's what happens when people describe God in wildly different ways—many gods, separate gods, or just a spiritual energy.

But the Bible is clear: there is one God. Not three gods, not millions, not a vague force. One God—united, eternal, and indivisible. And if we get this wrong, everything else in theology crumbles like a Jenga tower with the bottom piece removed.

Leading Question

Why is it essential for Christians to affirm that God is one? What dangers arise when we deny or distort God's unity?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Doctrine of One True God

Geisler explains that God's unity is not just an abstract concept—it's the very foundation of biblical monotheism and the starting point for all Christian theology.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Deuteronomy 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

Isaiah 44:6 – “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”

1 Corinthians 8:4 – “There is no God but one.”

1 Timothy 2:5 – “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men...”

Ephesians 4:6 – “One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Key Ideas

Unity means there is only one divine Being.

God is not divided or composed of parts—He is simple (without component pieces).

Unity does not contradict the Trinity—God is one in essence, yet three in personhood (see next lesson on Tri-unity).

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Examples of Heretical Beliefs

Geisler warns that many cults and false religions deny or distort the oneness of God.

Jehovah’s Witnesses – Believe in Jehovah as Almighty God and Jesus as a lesser, created god.

Denial: Two gods—violates monotheism. Refuted by: Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 10:21, John 1:1.

Mormons (LDS Church) – Teach that God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three separate gods among countless others.

Denial: Polytheism. Refuted by: Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 44:6, Deuteronomy 6:4.

New Age/Paganism – Often speak of a dual god/goddess force or many spiritual beings.

Denial: Dualism or pantheism. Refuted by: Romans 1:22-23, Acts 17:24-25.

Christian-Pagan Syncretism – Some try to blend Christian language with polytheistic or mystical theology.

Denial: Compromise on monotheism. Refuted by: 1 Corinthians 10:20, 1 John 5:20-21.

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

What difference does it make in your life to know there is only one true God?

How does believing in God's unity help us understand salvation, worship, and truth?

How can you lovingly confront false ideas about God that deny His unity?

Case Study 1: “Many Paths, Many Gods”

Your friend says, “I think all religions are talking about the same God in different ways. It doesn't matter which one you follow.”

How does this challenge the doctrine of God's unity?

What Scriptures clarify God's uniqueness?

Case Study 2: “Jesus Can't Be God”

A visitor to your church says, “Jesus can't be God. There's only one God, and Jesus prayed to Him.”

How does the doctrine of unity support, not contradict, the Trinity?

How can you distinguish between unity in essence and personhood?

Case Study 3: “The Divine Mother”

A popular podcast claims God has a feminine counterpart and that true balance is worshiping both the Father and the Mother.

What is the theological danger of this idea?

How does it compare with Isaiah 46:9 and Romans 1:25?

Conclusion

God’s unity isn’t a philosophical trivia point—it’s the anchor of Christian belief. If there is one God, then His Word is final, His authority is supreme, and His plan of salvation is singular. To add to God or divide Him is not only theologically disastrous—it’s spiritually dangerous. As the Shema proclaims: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

LESSON 5

God's Tri-unity

“Three in One... Like Nothing Else”

A student once said, “Explaining the Trinity is like trying to hold water in a paper bag—it leaks at every corner.” Another chimed in, “I use ice, water, and steam to explain it.” The teacher smiled and said, “That’s creative. But the Trinity is not like anything in creation. Because God is not like anything in creation.”

The doctrine of God’s tri-unity doesn’t mean we understand it perfectly—it means we accept it faithfully because that’s how God has revealed Himself: One God, three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Leading Question

Why is the doctrine of the Trinity essential to Christian belief and salvation, and what happens when it’s misunderstood or denied?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The One God Who Exists in Three Persons

Geisler explains that the Trinity is not a contradiction, but a mystery revealed by God. It is essential because all three Persons are involved in our salvation.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Matthew 28:19 – “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 13:14 – “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Acts 5:3-4 – Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God.

Hebrews 1:8 – The Father refers to the Son as “God.”

Key Ideas

God is one in essence, three in personhood.

Each Person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—is fully and equally God.

The Trinity is not three gods (tritheism) or one person in three roles (modalism).

All three Persons are active in creation, salvation, and Christian living.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Historical and Modern Errors

Geisler identifies various heresies that distort the Trinity, many of which are still alive in cults and fringe groups today.

Arianism (Jehovah’s Witnesses) – Teaches that Jesus was created and is not fully divine.

Denial: Jesus is a lesser god. Refuted by: John 1:1, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:8

Modalism (Oneness Pentecostals) – Teaches that God is one person who appears in three modes.

Denial: The Father, Son, and Spirit are not distinct persons. Refuted by: Matthew 3:16-17, John 14:16-17

Tritheism – Teaches that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three separate gods.

Denial: Denies God's unity. Refuted by: Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 45:5

Subordinationism – Teaches that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are inferior in nature to the Father.

Denial: Rejects the co-equality of the Persons. Refuted by: John 5:18, Philippians 2:6

Swedenborgianism and Metaphysical Cults – Turn the Trinity into impersonal principles or cosmic energies.

Denial: Strips God of personhood and relationality. Refuted by: Acts 13:2, John 14:26

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

How does belief in the Trinity shape your view of God's love, relationship, and work in salvation?

Why is it dangerous to over-simplify or alter the doctrine of the Trinity?

How can we explain the Trinity in a way that is faithful to Scripture without falling into error?

Case Study 1: "Jesus Isn't God"

Your classmate says, "Jesus was a great teacher, but He never claimed to be God."

How would you respond using Scripture?

Why is Jesus' divinity essential for salvation?

Case Study 2: “God Just Shows Up in Different Forms”

A TikTok video teaches, “The Father, Son, and Spirit are just different roles God plays—like an actor with three masks.”

What error is this?

How does Matthew 3:16-17 clearly refute it?

Case Study 3: “The Trinity Doesn’t Make Sense, So I Ignore It”

A church friend tells you, “I don’t understand the Trinity, so I just don’t talk about it.”

Why should we still affirm what Scripture teaches, even if it's mysterious?

How does the Trinity show us God’s relational nature?

Conclusion

You can’t remove the Trinity without collapsing Christianity. God is love—eternally, because He exists in eternal relationship. He is our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Comforter—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God. Three Persons. All essential to the gospel. As the Athanasian Creed declares: “We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance.”

LESSON 6

Christ's Humanity

“The Superhero Who Never Slept”

Imagine your favorite superhero—maybe Superman or Captain Marvel—comes to school. They look human, talk like us, even dress like us (barely). But when lunchtime comes? They don't eat. When it's time for finals? They don't study. They don't get tired, cry, or even bleed. Eventually, someone asks, “Are you even human?” They smile and say, “Not really. I just look like it.”

Now think about Jesus. If He just looked human but wasn't truly human, then He couldn't represent us, suffer with us, or die for us. The humanity of Christ isn't just a detail—it's a doctrinal cornerstone.

Leading Question

Why is it essential to believe that Jesus was fully human? What happens to the gospel if Christ's humanity is denied?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

Christ: Fully God and Fully Human

Geisler emphasizes that Jesus was 100% divine and 100% human—possessing a true body, soul, and spirit, experiencing real human emotions and suffering.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Hebrews 4:15 – “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...”

John 1:14 – “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Galatians 4:4 – “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...”

1 John 4:2-3 – “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God...”

1 Timothy 2:5 – “...the man Christ Jesus.”

Key Human Traits of Jesus

Human birth – Born of Mary, grew from infancy (Luke 2:7, 52)

Human emotions – Wept (John 11:35), was troubled (John 12:27)

Human body – Felt pain, hunger (Luke 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), fatigue (John 4:6)

Human death – Truly died on the cross (Luke 23:46), not an illusion

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

False Teachings Throughout Church History

Geisler outlines several historic heresies that undermine the biblical doctrine of Christ’s humanity.

Docetism – Taught that Jesus only appeared to be human, like a ghost or phantom.

Denial: Jesus didn’t really suffer or die. Refuted by: 1 John 4:2, Luke 24:39

Apollinarianism – Claimed Jesus had a human body but not a human mind/spirit—those were replaced by the divine Logos.

Denial: Jesus wasn’t fully human. Refuted by: Hebrews 2:17, John 19:30

Eutychianism – Taught that Jesus’ human and divine natures merged into one new, third nature.

Denial: Jesus was neither truly God nor truly man. Refuted by: Colossians 2:9

Modern Denials – Some today claim Jesus was simply a spiritual teacher or prophet—not a real man in history, or that the resurrection was metaphorical.

Refuted by: Luke 24:39, John 20:27 Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

How does Jesus' full humanity help us relate to Him in our struggles?

Why is it dangerous to deny any part of Christ's humanity (body, soul, or spirit)?

What does it mean for our salvation if Jesus wasn't truly human?

Case Study 1: "Jesus Had a God Body"

A church visitor says, "Jesus didn't really feel pain like us—He was God in disguise."

What does Scripture say about Jesus' suffering?

Why is this view wrong?

Case Study 2: "Jesus Was Just a Good Moral Teacher"

Your classmate says, "I don't think Jesus was divine. He was just a man—like Gandhi."

How does this deny not only Christ's deity, but also misunderstand His humanity?

Why does it matter that Jesus was more than a teacher?

Case Study 3: "Jesus Wasn't Exactly Like Us"

A Bible study leader says, "Jesus didn't really have emotions or a human mind. He knew everything."

How do we reconcile His full humanity with His divinity?

How do passages like Luke 2:52 and Hebrews 5:7 correct this view?

Conclusion

To deny Christ's humanity is to tear the heart out of the gospel. If Jesus wasn't fully man, He couldn't represent us, redeem us, or resurrect us. Scripture is clear: Christ was tempted, did suffer, did hunger, weep, grow, and did die for our sins. He is not just our God—He is our Brother, our High Priest, and our Hope.

As John wrote: "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God." (1 John 4:3)

LESSON 7

Human Depravity

“The Broken Compass”

A young explorer is given a compass and told, “This will always point you in the right direction.” Confident, he marches into the wilderness. But days later, he finds himself going in circles—starving, lost, and disoriented. The compass was broken the whole time. His sense of direction failed him.

In the same way, many people today say, “Just follow your heart.” But what if the heart is broken? What if our moral compass is misaligned? According to Scripture, that’s exactly our problem. We are not slightly off course—we are spiritually lost. And the doctrine of human depravity explains why salvation is not just helpful... it’s absolutely necessary.

Leading Question

Why is it essential for Christians to understand human depravity? What are the consequences of denying the depth of human sinfulness?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Depth of the Human Condition

Geisler emphasizes that human depravity does not mean people are as bad as they could be—but that sin has affected every part of our being: mind, emotions, will, and spirit. It means we cannot save ourselves—we need divine grace.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Romans 3:10-12 – “None is righteous, no, not one... no one seeks for God.”

Romans 5:12 – “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin...”

Ephesians 2:1-3 – “You were dead in the trespasses and sins...”

Isaiah 64:6 – “All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”

Jeremiah 17:9 – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick...”

Key Ideas

Total depravity means that sin has affected every aspect of human nature—not that people are incapable of good acts, but that they are incapable of pleasing God apart from grace.

Humanity is spiritually dead, not just sick.

This doctrine sets the stage for understanding salvation by grace alone.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

False Views That Minimize Sin

Geisler highlights theological errors that downplay or deny the doctrine of depravity.

Pelagianism – Taught that human beings are born morally neutral and can choose righteousness on their own.

Denial: Original sin is false; man doesn’t need grace to obey. Refuted by: Romans 5:12, Ephesians 2:1

Semi-Pelagianism – Says we can make the first move toward God, and then grace helps.

Denial: Human will is not dead, just weak. Refuted by: John 6:44, Romans 9:16

Liberal Theology – Claims people are inherently good and only need education or social reform to improve.

Denial: Sin is not personal rebellion but ignorance. Refuted by: Jeremiah 17:9, Isaiah 53:6

Modern Self-Help Christianity – Focuses on self-esteem, positive thinking, and human potential.

Denial: Avoids talk of sin, guilt, or judgment. Refuted by: Romans 3:23, Luke 18:13

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

Why is it important to view sin as rebellion against God, not just broken behavior?

How does understanding depravity deepen our gratitude for grace?

How can you respond to people who say, “I’m basically a good person”?

Case Study 1: “I’m a Good Person”

A friend says, “I haven’t killed anyone. I try to be kind. I think I’ll be fine with God.”

How would you respond biblically and gently?

What verses might you share to help them see the need for grace?

Case Study 2: “Just Follow Your Heart”

Your favorite influencer posts, “You’ll never go wrong if you follow your heart.”

How does this message conflict with Scripture?

What does Jeremiah 17:9 teach us?

Case Study 3: “We’re All Born Innocent”

In a small group, someone says, “People are born good. Society corrupts them.”

What does Romans 5:12 say about our spiritual starting point?

Why is this belief dangerous for understanding salvation?

Conclusion

If we’re just wounded, we might only need help. If we’re just misguided, we might just need a teacher. But if we’re dead in sin—we need a Savior. The doctrine of human depravity strips away our illusions of self-sufficiency and prepares our hearts to receive the astonishing gift of God's grace. Without this truth, the gospel becomes unnecessary. With it, grace becomes everything.

As Paul wrote: “But God, being rich in mercy... made us alive together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:4-5)

Lesson 8

Christ's Virgin Birth

“An Impossible Beginning”

A journalist once interviewed a world-class athlete and asked, “What was the moment that defined your journey?” The athlete smiled and said, “The day I was born—because I wasn’t supposed to live.” Doctors had predicted complications that would prevent him from surviving infancy. His very birth defied the odds.

Now imagine a birth that didn’t just defy the odds—it defied biology. No human father. No ordinary conception. Just the Word of God, a willing young woman, and the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit. That’s what makes the Virgin Birth of Christ not just miraculous—but essential to the Christian faith.

Leading Question

Why is the virgin birth of Jesus Christ essential to the Christian faith? What happens to our understanding of Christ’s nature and mission if we deny it?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Miracle of the Incarnation

Geisler emphasizes that the virgin birth is not an optional miracle—it is essential because it connects to both Christ’s divine origin and His sinless nature.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Isaiah 7:14 – “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Matthew 1:18-23 – “She was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.”

Luke 1:34-35 – “The Holy Spirit will come upon you... the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”

Galatians 4:4 – “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...”

John 1:14 – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

Key Ideas

Jesus was not conceived by man, but by the Holy Spirit—preserving His divine nature.

Born of a woman, He took on full humanity—without sin or corruption.

The virgin birth fulfills Old Testament prophecy and protects the integrity of Christ’s sinlessness and incarnation.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Attacks on the Virgin Birth

Geisler outlines common denials and distortions that downplay or reject the doctrine.

Liberal Theology – Claims the virgin birth is a myth or symbolic story invented by the early church.

Denial: No literal miracle—just poetic theology. Refuted by: Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:34-35

Naturalistic Explanations – Suggest Mary was mistaken, lying, or a victim of scandal.

Denial: The account is fictional or misunderstood. Refuted by: Matthew 1:18-20 – Joseph was going to divorce her quietly until reassured by an angel.

Skeptical Scholarship – Argues that virgin birth narratives were added later to make Jesus seem divine.

Denial: The doctrine was a theological “patch.” Refuted by: Galatians 4:4 – Paul affirms Christ’s unique birth decades before the gospels were written.

Cultic Distortions – Some cults claim Jesus’ conception involved a physical union with God or a pre-existing divine being.

Denial: Misrepresents the biblical account. Refuted by: Luke 1:35 – “The power of the Most High will overshadow you.”

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

Why did Jesus have to be born of a virgin to be both fully divine and fully human?

How does the virgin birth connect to Jesus' sinlessness and His ability to save?

What can we say to someone who believes the virgin birth is a fairy tale?

Case Study 1: “That’s Just a Symbol”

A classmate says, “The virgin birth is a beautiful myth that symbolizes purity—it’s not literal.”

How would you respond?

What Scriptures clearly affirm it as a real event?

Case Study 2: “It Doesn’t Matter”

Someone in youth group says, “It doesn’t matter how Jesus was born—it only matters how He died.”

Why is that view incomplete?

How does the virgin birth relate to the entire gospel story?

Case Study 3: “That’s Scientifically Impossible”

You’re in biology class and someone mocks the virgin birth as “scientifically impossible.”

How should you respond to the idea that miracles are invalid because they defy natural law?

How do you balance faith in miracles with critical thinking?

Conclusion

Jesus wasn’t born of a virgin because it was biologically convenient. He was born of a virgin to fulfill prophecy, bypass inherited sin, and demonstrate that salvation is from the Lord—not from human effort. The cradle of Christ is as holy as His cross. Deny the virgin birth, and you risk unraveling the entire fabric of the incarnation. Affirm it, and you stand in awe of a Savior who is both Son of Man and Son of God.

As Luke 1:37 declares: “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

LESSON 9

Christ's Sinlessness

“The One Clean Record”

Imagine you're applying for college scholarships. One requires a perfect academic and disciplinary record. No tardies. No missing assignments. No detentions. You laugh and think, “Well, I'm out.”

Then you discover someone offers you their spotless record—one without a single flaw—and says, “I'll take your mistakes. You take my perfection.”

This is what Christ offers us through His sinless life. He didn't just die for us—He lived for us, perfectly. And if Jesus had sinned even once, there would be no cross worth clinging to, and no Savior worthy of our trust.

Leading Question

Why is it essential that Jesus was completely sinless? What would it mean for our salvation if He had sinned even once?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Perfect Son of God

Geisler stresses that Christ's sinlessness is essential to His role as our substitute, our High Priest, and our Savior. If Christ had sinned, He would have needed a Savior Himself.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin...”

Hebrews 4:15 – “...yet without sin.”

1 Peter 2:22 – “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.”

1 John 3:5 – “...in him there is no sin.”

Isaiah 53:9 – “...he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”

Key Ideas

Jesus was tempted like us, but never sinned.

His moral perfection qualifies Him to be:

A spotless sacrifice (like the lamb in Passover)

A perfect High Priest who can intercede for us

A substitute who bears sin without deserving judgment

His righteousness is credited to believers at salvation.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Challenges to Christ’s Sinlessness

Geisler outlines historical and modern attempts to diminish or deny Jesus’ perfection.

Liberal Theology – Claims Jesus was morally advanced but not absolutely sinless.

Denial: He was a spiritual role model, but still fallible. Refuted by: Hebrews 7:26, 1 Peter 2:22

Islamic View – Respects Jesus as a prophet but not as sinless in the divine sense.

Denial: He was merely a man who served God. Refuted by: 2 Corinthians 5:21, Isaiah 53

Modern Skeptics – Say Jesus was a product of His time and likely shared in societal flaws.

Denial: Moral perfection is impossible, even for Him. Refuted by: 1 John 3:5, John 8:46

(“Which one of you convicts me of sin?”)

Fictional Portrayals (Media/Culture) – Depict Jesus as flawed or conflicted, often for dramatic effect.

Denial: His moral perfection is myth, not history. Refuted by: The consistent witness of Scripture across multiple books, authors, and centuries.

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

Why would a sinful Jesus be disqualified from being our Savior?

How does Christ’s sinlessness give us confidence in His teachings and promises?

What difference does His moral perfection make for our daily lives?

Case Study 1: “He Was Just a Good Man”

A classmate says, “Jesus was a good guy, but no one’s perfect—not even Him.”

How would you respond using Scripture?

What’s at stake if Jesus isn’t sinless?

Case Study 2: “Jesus Had to Learn to Be Good”

Someone claims, “Jesus probably struggled with sin like we all do. He just overcame it later in life.”

What does Hebrews 4:15 say about this?

How is temptation different from sin?

Case Study 3: “Being Perfect Is Oppressive”

You hear someone say, “This whole idea of perfection is toxic. What we need is authenticity, not holiness.”

How does Jesus embody both grace and truth?

How does His sinlessness liberate us rather than oppress us?

Conclusion

Jesus’ sinlessness is not just an admirable trait—it’s the very reason we can be saved. He lived the life we could never live and died the death we deserved. Because He was sinless, His sacrifice was sufficient. Because He is righteous, we can be declared righteous in Him.

As Paul says in Romans 5:19, “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

LESSON 10

Christ's Atoning Death

“The Exchange That Changed Everything”

Imagine someone committed a terrible crime and is sentenced to death. Then, a stranger steps in and says to the judge, “I’ll take the punishment. Let them go free.” It seems outrageous. Why would anyone do that?

This is what Jesus did for us. We were guilty—every one of us—and He took our place, bore our penalty, and paid our debt. His atoning death is not just a chapter in the gospel—it is the gospel. If we miss this, we miss everything.

Leading Question

Why is Christ’s atoning death central to the Christian faith? What would happen to our understanding of salvation if this truth were denied or distorted?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Cross as Substitutionary Atonement

Geisler explains that Christ’s death is not just an example of love or a martyr’s act—it is a substitutionary sacrifice, meaning He died in our place, satisfying the justice of God and reconciling us to Him.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Isaiah 53:5-6 – “He was pierced for our transgressions... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Romans 5:8-9 – “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1 Peter 2:24 – “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...”

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “He made him to be sin who knew no sin...”

John 10:11 – “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Key Ideas

Christ’s death was vicarious (He died in our place).

It was penal (He bore the penalty we deserved).

It was propitiatory (satisfied God’s righteous wrath).

It was redemptive (paid the price for our freedom).

It was reconciliatory (restored relationship between God and man).

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Errors and Misunderstandings of the Atonement

Geisler identifies several theological errors that undermine the meaning of the cross.

Moral Influence Theory – Claims Jesus died only to show how much God loves us, inspiring us to be better.

Denial: Ignores sin and justice. Refuted by: 1 Peter 2:24, Isaiah 53

Ransom-to-Satan Theory – Argues that Jesus paid a ransom to Satan.

Denial: Misunderstands to whom the price was paid. Refuted by: Colossians 2:15 – Christ triumphed over Satan, not paid him.

Example Theory – Says Jesus died only as a role model for suffering or sacrifice.

Denial: Reduces the cross to inspiration, not salvation. Refuted by: Romans 5:9-10, Hebrews 9:22

Liberal Theology – Often denies that God's wrath needed to be satisfied at all.

Denial: Rejects substitution and judgment. Refuted by: Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

What does it mean that Jesus died “in our place”?

How should Christ’s death affect the way we view sin and forgiveness?

Why do people find the idea of substitution or sacrifice offensive or unnecessary?

Case Study 1: “God Is Too Loving to Punish Sin”

A friend says, “I don’t believe God would require anyone to die. He’s too loving for that.”

How do you respond with both truth and compassion?

What verses show both God’s justice and love?

Case Study 2: “The Cross Is Just a Symbol”

Someone in your class says, “The cross is just a symbol of hope, not something to be taken literally.”

How would you explain that the atonement was an actual event with real consequences?

What's lost if we treat the cross as only metaphorical?

Case Study 3: "I'm Not That Bad"

A student says, "Why would Jesus need to die for me? I'm not perfect, but I'm not a criminal."

How does Romans 3:23 and Isaiah 53 challenge this thinking?

How does understanding the cost of atonement magnify God's grace?

Conclusion

The cross is not just the climax of Jesus' life—it's the cornerstone of our salvation. Jesus didn't come to merely inspire us. He came to redeem us. Without His atoning death, there is no forgiveness, no peace with God, and no hope for eternity. As believers, we boast in the cross not because it flatters us, but because it saved us.

As Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14:

"Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

LESSON 11

The Bodily Resurrection of Christ

“The Empty Casket”

Imagine attending a funeral. The music plays, the flowers are arranged, and the people are grieving. But when it’s time to view the body—the casket is empty. At first, people panic... but then the loved one walks in, alive and well. Not a ghost. Not a myth. Alive.

This isn’t just a story—it’s the foundation of Christianity. The tomb was empty because Jesus rose again, bodily. If the resurrection didn’t happen, Christianity collapses. But if it did? It changes everything—past, present, and future.

Leading Question

Why is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ essential to the Christian faith? What are the consequences of denying it?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme (15 minutes)

He’s Alive — The Body That Left the Grave

Key Teachings:

The Resurrection Was Physical, Not Just Spiritual

Luke 24:39 – “See my hands and my feet... touch me... a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

John 20:27 – Jesus invited Thomas to touch His scars.

The Tomb Was Empty

Matthew 28:5–6 – “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.”

The same body that was buried was raised.

Witnessed by Many

1 Corinthians 15:3–8 – Over 500 eyewitnesses saw Jesus alive after His resurrection.

Jesus appeared multiple times, to different people, in different places.

Resurrection Is Proof of Jesus’ Divinity and Victory

Romans 1:4 – Declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.

Romans 4:25 – He “was raised for our justification.”

The Resurrection Guarantees Our Future Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:20–22 – Christ is the “firstfruits” of those who have fallen asleep.

What happened to Jesus is the preview of what will happen to all believers.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials (10 minutes)

If Christ Did Not Rise — What’s at Stake?

Common Denials & Refutations:

The Resurrection Was Spiritual, Not Physical

Refuted by Luke 24:39 — Jesus clearly said He had a physical body.

Hallucination Theory - Says disciples just imagined seeing Jesus.

Refuted by 1 Corinthians 15:6 — Hallucinations don't happen to 500 people at once in multiple locations.

Swoon Theory - Says Jesus didn't die but fainted and later revived.

Refuted by John 19:34 — A spear pierced His side; the Romans confirmed His death.

Myth or Legend - Says resurrection stories were added later.

Refuted by early Christian creeds and eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15 was written within 20 years of the event).

Islamic View - Claims Jesus was not crucified, and someone else was substituted.

Refuted by the unanimous testimony of all four Gospels and the historical evidence of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies (13 minutes)

Because He Lives — Our Hope Is Alive

Case Study:

“Ava's Fear”

Ava says, “I believe in God, but I'm terrified of dying. How can I know for sure there's life after death?”

Discussion Questions:

How does Christ's resurrection answer Ava's fear?

What's the difference between wishful thinking and confident faith?

How would you explain 1 Corinthians 15:55–57 to someone who fears death?

Real-Life Scenario:

Your friend says, “Jesus may have risen spiritually, but I don’t think His body came back to life. That seems primitive.”

How would you explain that the bodily resurrection is necessary, not optional?

LESSON 12

The Necessity of Grace

“The Unpayable Debt”

Imagine a teenager receives a credit card. He doesn't understand how interest works. Over time, the debt builds—\$10,000, \$20,000, \$50,000. Eventually, the bill comes due. He panics—he can't pay. Then a stranger steps in, writes a check, and says, “I've paid it in full. You're free.”

That's grace. We owed a debt we could never pay. God, in His love, paid it for us. But here's the catch—many people today still try to earn it. The Christian life doesn't begin with grace and then move on to effort—it depends on grace from beginning to end.

Leading Question

Why is grace necessary for salvation and the Christian life? What happens when people try to earn what only God can give?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

Salvation by Grace Alone

Geisler teaches that grace is not just one option—it's the only way we can be saved. Grace means “unmerited favor”—a gift we don't deserve and can't earn.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Ephesians 2:8–9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith... it is the gift of God, not a result of works...”

Titus 3:5 – “He saved us... not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...”

Romans 11:6 – “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works...”

Romans 3:24 – “...justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

John 1:16–17 – “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

Key Ideas

Grace is God's initiative, not man's achievement.

We are dead in sin and cannot save ourselves (Ephesians 2:1).

Grace is free to us, but costly to Christ.

All attempts to earn salvation or keep it by works nullify grace.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Grace Under Attack

Geisler identifies false teachings and religious systems that distort or reject the doctrine of grace.

Legalism – Teaches that salvation or sanctification is achieved by keeping laws or rules.

Denial: Grace must be supplemented by human effort. Refuted by: Galatians 2:21, Romans 4:4–5

Pelagianism – Argues that humans are born morally neutral and can choose good without divine help.

Denial: Grace is helpful, not necessary. Refuted by: Titus 3:5, John 6:44

Sacramentalism (when misapplied) – Suggests that participating in rituals can automatically confer grace, regardless of faith or repentance.

Denial: Grace becomes mechanical rather than relational. Refuted by: Romans 10:9–10, Acts 3:19

Self-Help Christianity – Emphasizes personal improvement, moral performance, or “being a good person” over repentance and trust in Christ.

Denial: Replaces the cross with effort and self-esteem. Refuted by: Luke 18:13–14

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

Why do so many people resist the idea of grace?

How does the doctrine of grace change the way we treat others?

Why is it dangerous to add “just a little bit of works” to grace?

Case Study 1: “You’ve Got to Do Your Part”

A church member says, “Yes, we’re saved by grace, but you’ve got to do your part if you want to stay saved.”

How would you respond?

How do Ephesians 2:8–9 and Galatians 3:3 speak to this?

Case Study 2: “Being Good Is Good Enough”

A classmate says, “I believe if you try your best and live a good life, God will accept you.”

What’s missing in this view?

How can you explain the difference between goodness and grace?

Case Study 3: “I’ve Failed Too Much for God to Love Me”

A friend confesses, “I’ve messed up so many times. God couldn’t forgive me.”

What does grace say to someone overwhelmed by guilt?

What stories from the Bible might you share to encourage them?

Conclusion

Grace isn’t a soft doctrine. It’s a soul-shaking truth. We don’t deserve it. We can’t repay it. But God gives it freely—through Christ. Any attempt to earn salvation is an insult to the cross. But receiving grace humbles us, transforms us, and fills us with hope.

As Paul declared in 2 Corinthians 12:9:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

LESSON 13

The Necessity of Faith

“The Bridge You Must Cross”

A group of hikers arrives at a deep canyon. The only way across is an old suspension bridge. Some stand at the edge, admire it, and say, “It looks strong.” Others take pictures of it, talk about how it was built, even write songs about it. But only one person dares to step out and walk across.

That’s the difference between belief and faith. Faith is not admiring from a distance—it’s stepping onto the bridge. According to Scripture, faith isn’t optional; it’s the only way to cross from death to life.

Leading Question

Why is faith absolutely necessary for salvation? What’s the difference between knowing about God and trusting in Him?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

Faith: The Instrument of Salvation

Geisler emphasizes that faith is not a work, a feeling, or a leap in the dark. It is trusting in Christ alone for salvation. Faith is the means, not the cause, of salvation.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Ephesians 2:8–9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith...”

John 3:16 – “...whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 5:1 – “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God...”

Hebrews 11:6 – “Without faith it is impossible to please him...”

Galatians 2:16 – “...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Key Ideas

Faith is trust—not just mental agreement, but personal dependence on Christ.

Faith is how we receive grace, not why we receive grace.

Faith has three parts:

Knowledge (knowing the gospel)

Assent (agreeing it is true)

Trust (relying on Christ personally)

Faith unites us to Christ and His righteousness.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

False Views of Faith and Salvation

Geisler outlines errors that minimize or misplace faith.

Universalism – Claims all are saved eventually, regardless of faith.

Denial: Faith isn’t necessary for salvation. Refuted by: John 3:18, Hebrews 11:6

Religious Formalism – Substitutes rituals, traditions, or church membership for faith.

Denial: Faith can be replaced by performance. Refuted by: Romans 10:9–10

Faith in Faith – Treats faith like a magical force: “If you just believe hard enough, it will happen.”

Denial: Emphasizes the strength of faith rather than the object of faith. Refuted by: Mark 11:22 – “Have faith in God.”

Emotionalism or Mysticism – Reduces faith to a spiritual feeling or subjective experience.

Denial: Truth and trust are unnecessary. Refuted by: Romans 10:17 – “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

What’s the difference between believing that Jesus existed and placing your trust in Him?

Why is it important that faith is in Christ, not in our own efforts or feelings?

How can we know that our faith is genuine?

Case Study 1: “I Believe in God, Isn’t That Enough?”

A student says, “I believe in God, I just don’t think you need Jesus or church to be saved.”

How does John 14:6 challenge this view?

What’s missing from their understanding of biblical faith?

Case Study 2: “I’m Trying Hard to Believe”

A friend says, “I’m trying to have faith, but I don’t feel like it’s working.”

What does this say about their focus?

Why is the object of our faith (Christ) more important than the strength of our faith?

Case Study 3: “My Faith Feels Weak”

Someone admits, “I don’t always feel strong in my faith. Maybe I’m not really saved.”

How would you encourage them using Romans 5:1 and John 10:28?

What’s the difference between saving faith and perfect faith?

Conclusion

Faith isn’t just a step—it’s the only path to salvation. It’s not how strong your faith is, but who your faith is in. Christ is the solid rock, and faith is the open hand that receives His gift. We are not saved by working, feeling, or earning—but by believing.

As Paul writes in Galatians 2:20:

“The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

LESSON 14

The Bodily Ascension of Christ

“When the Hero Walks Offscreen”

In the final scene of a movie, the hero finishes the mission. The world is saved. The danger is over. And just before the credits roll, the hero walks offscreen—not to vanish, but to continue the story elsewhere.

That’s what happened at the ascension. Jesus didn’t disappear. He didn’t retire. He returned—to glory, to authority, to begin His heavenly ministry on our behalf. His bodily ascension is not the end of His work. It’s the continuation of His mission in a new place and power.

Leading Question

Why is the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ essential to Christian doctrine and the believer’s hope? What would be lost if it were symbolic instead of real?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

Ascended in Body, Reigning in Power

Geisler emphasizes that the ascension was a physical, visible event in which Christ rose bodily into heaven. It confirmed His completed work on earth and launched His ongoing role as intercessor, priest, and King.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Acts 1:9–11 – “He was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight... This Jesus... will come in the same way as you saw him go.”

Luke 24:50–51 – “He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.”

Mark 16:19 – “He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.”

Hebrews 4:14 – “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens...”

Philippians 2:9–11 – “Therefore God has highly exalted him...”

Key Ideas

The ascension was bodily, not symbolic or metaphorical.

It affirmed Christ’s completed earthly work and His ongoing heavenly ministry.

He is now exalted, enthroned, and interceding for believers.

The manner of His return will mirror His ascension (Acts 1:11).

The ascension guarantees access to the Father and prepares the way for His second coming.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Attempts to Undermine the Ascension

Geisler identifies theological distortions that minimize or deny the significance of the bodily ascension.

Spiritualization of the Ascension – Claims the ascension was just Jesus “living on in His followers’ hearts.”

Denial: No real, bodily event occurred. Refuted by: Acts 1:9–11, Luke 24:51

Gnostic Rejections – Reject physical resurrection and ascension; only spiritual truths matter.

Denial: Matter is evil; Christ couldn’t rise or ascend physically. Refuted by: John 20:27, Acts 1:11

Liberal Theology – Reduces the ascension to myth or religious symbolism.

Denial: No historical event took place. Refuted by: Mark 16:19, Hebrews 9:24

Secular Skepticism – Dismisses the ascension as ancient superstition.

Denial: No miracle occurred; Jesus' body was lost or stolen. Refuted by: The eyewitness testimony of Acts 1 and the connection between ascension and Christ's later heavenly intercession (Hebrews 7:25).

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

Why did Jesus have to ascend bodily into heaven rather than simply vanish?

What is Jesus doing right now as a result of His ascension?

How does Christ's ascension give believers hope in daily life and in death?

Case Study 1: "Jesus Lives in My Heart—That's What Matters"

A Christian influencer says, "It doesn't matter whether Jesus actually ascended. What matters is He lives in us."

What truths are missing in this view?

How does Acts 1:11 challenge this thinking?

Case Study 2: "He Finished His Work—Why Does It Matter Where He Went?"

A friend asks, "If Jesus rose from the dead, wasn't that enough? Why emphasize the ascension?"

What important roles does Christ take on after His ascension (Hebrews 4:14, Romans 8:34)?

How does the ascension point to His ongoing priestly work?

Case Study 3: “Jesus Is Gone. So Are We On Our Own?”

Someone says, “Jesus ascended, so now we’re just waiting around until He comes back.”

What does the ascension teach us about the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7)?

How is Jesus still active in the life of believers today?

Conclusion

The bodily ascension of Christ isn’t a footnote—it’s a launch point. Jesus didn’t just leave—He ascended to rule, to intercede, and to prepare a place for us. He is alive, reigning, and returning. The story didn’t end with the resurrection. It moved from earthly victory to heavenly authority.

As Hebrews 7:25 proclaims:

“He always lives to make intercession for them.”

LESSON 15

Christ's Priestly Intercession

“Your Defender in the Courtroom”

Imagine you're on trial for a crime you truly committed. The evidence is stacked against you. But just as the sentence is about to be passed, the judge pauses. Your defense attorney stands up—not only did he pay your fine, but he continues to defend you, intercede for you, and plead your case daily before the court. Every time you fall short, he reminds the court: “It’s already been paid.”

That’s what Jesus does for us—not just once on the cross, but continually in heaven. His intercession is ongoing. It’s not a one-time act—it’s a lifeline for every believer.

Leading Question

Why is the ongoing intercession of Jesus Christ essential for believers today? What would happen if He were not still interceding for us?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Ongoing Work of Our High Priest

Geisler explains that Christ’s priestly intercession is one of the most comforting and often overlooked doctrines. Jesus didn’t just save us in the past—He sustains us in the present.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Hebrews 7:25 – “He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Romans 8:34 – “Christ Jesus... is at the right hand of God... interceding for us.”

Hebrews 4:14–16 – “We have a great high priest... let us then with confidence draw near...”

1 John 2:1 – “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Hebrews 9:24 – “Christ has entered... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”

Key Ideas

Christ’s priesthood is eternal—unlike Old Testament priests, He never dies or needs replacement.

He intercedes continually, not to “re-earn” forgiveness, but to apply His finished work.

His role as advocate means He defends us against accusations (Revelation 12:10).

His presence before the Father ensures our access, security, and confidence as believers.

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

Errors That Minimize or Misunderstand Intercession

Geisler points out that many traditions and teachings have clouded or contradicted Christ’s unique role as intercessor.

Priestly Substitutes (e.g., Human Mediators) – Some traditions insert saints, popes, or priests as necessary go-betweens.

Denial: Jesus alone mediates. Refuted by: 1 Timothy 2:5 – “There is one God, and one mediator... the man Christ Jesus.”

Doctrinal Neglect – Some Christians affirm Christ’s work on the cross but overlook His ongoing heavenly ministry.

Denial: Intercession is often forgotten, though vital. Refuted by: Hebrews 7:25

Modern Mysticism – Emphasizes direct spiritual experiences without needing Christ’s intercession.

Denial: Replaces Christ's priestly role with internal “divine access.” Refuted by: Hebrews 4:14–16

Self-Sufficient Spirituality – Assumes we don’t need help from anyone—even Jesus—once we’re saved.

Denial: Undermines our ongoing dependence on Christ. Refuted by: John 15:5, Romans 8:34

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

What comfort does it bring to know Jesus is praying for you right now?

How should Christ’s intercession affect your prayer life and confidence before God?

How can we guard against relying on human mediators or self-sufficiency?

Case Study 1: “I Don’t Feel Close to God Anymore”

A student shares, “I feel like I’ve messed up too much—God’s done with me.”

How would you explain Jesus’ ongoing intercession (Hebrews 7:25)?

How does 1 John 2:1 give hope in failure?

Case Study 2: “Can’t I Just Pray to a Saint or an Angel?”

A friend says, “My family prays to saints to help them talk to God.”

What does 1 Timothy 2:5 teach about who our only mediator is?

How would you kindly explain the difference between reverence and misplaced trust?

Case Study 3: “Jesus Is Done—It’s Up to Me Now”

A youth group leader says, “Jesus died for you. Now it’s your job not to mess it up.”

What’s missing from this view?

How does the ascension and intercession of Jesus show He’s still at work?

Conclusion

The cross wasn’t the final act—it was the beginning of Christ’s heavenly ministry. Right now, this very moment, Jesus is interceding for you. Not because God needs reminding—but because we need reassurance. Our salvation is not a one-time transaction—it’s a living relationship with a Savior who stands before the Father on our behalf.

As Hebrews 4:16 invites us:

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...”

LESSON 16

Christ's Bodily Second Coming

"When the King Returns"

Imagine a kingdom where the rightful king has gone away to prepare for his return. While he's gone, rumors swirl—"He's not coming back," some say. Others claim, "He already returned... in secret." Some even try to take his throne. But the king promised: "I will return—and every eye will see me."

That's the promise Jesus made. And unlike every politician, emperor, and influencer who promised change and faded away, His return is certain. The Second Coming is not wishful thinking—it is God's plan for history's finale.

Leading Question

Why is the bodily return of Jesus Christ essential to the Christian faith? What are the consequences of denying or distorting this doctrine?

Section 1: Biblical Basis for the Theme

The Return of the King—Visibly and Bodily

Geisler emphasizes that Christ's return will be literal, visible, and bodily—not spiritualized, symbolic, or secret. It is the final stage of salvation (glorification) and the climax of redemptive history.

Key Bible Passages (ESV)

Acts 1:11 – "This Jesus... will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Matthew 24:30 – “Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man... and they will see the Son of Man coming...”

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 – “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command...”

Revelation 1:7 – “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him...”

Philippians 3:20–21 – “...we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body...”

Key Ideas

Christ’s return will be bodily—just as His ascension was.

It will be visible to all—not a hidden or spiritualized return.

His return brings final judgment, reward, and restoration.

It is the fulfillment of the hope that sustains Christian endurance (Titus 2:13).

Section 2: Unorthodox Denials

False Views of the Second Coming

Geisler identifies several ways this essential doctrine has been denied, spiritualized, or twisted.

Spiritualized Return (Liberal Theology) – Claims Jesus returns “in our hearts” or as a symbol of renewal.

Denial: No literal event will happen. Refuted by: Acts 1:11, Revelation 1:7

Hyper-Preterism – Teaches that Christ already returned in A.D. 70, spiritually or symbolically.

Denial: Christ's coming is past, not future. Refuted by: 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8, 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Cults' Claims of Secret or Reincarnated Returns – Some groups (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses, Unification Church) claim Jesus returned invisibly or was reincarnated as someone else.

Denial: Twists Christ's identity and the nature of His return. Refuted by: Matthew 24:26–27, Revelation 19:11–16

Postmodern Skepticism – Dismisses the Second Coming as ancient mythology or scare tactics.

Denial: Denies supernatural history. Refuted by: 2 Peter 3:3–10

Section 3: Application / Case-Studies

Discussion Questions

What hope does the Second Coming give you in the midst of global chaos or personal suffering?

Why must Christ return bodily and visibly for God's justice and promises to be fulfilled?

How should we live differently in light of Christ's return?

Case Study 1: "He Already Returned—Spiritually"

A podcast says Jesus already returned "in spirit" when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70.

How does Acts 1:11 and Revelation 1:7 contradict this view?

Why does it matter that His return is still future?

Case Study 2: "Jesus Is Just a Symbol of Hope"

A friend says, "Jesus won't literally come back—it just means love will win in the end."

Why is this idea attractive, and what truth does it distort?

How does 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 affirm a bodily return?

Case Study 3: “Why Hasn’t He Come Back Yet?”

A skeptic says, “It’s been 2,000 years. If Jesus was going to return, wouldn’t He have done it by now?”

How does 2 Peter 3:8–10 answer this question?

What does the delay reveal about God’s patience and plan?

Conclusion

Christ’s bodily Second Coming is not fiction—it’s the final act of God’s redemptive drama. It is the believer’s hope, the world’s reckoning, and Satan’s defeat. It means justice will be done. Wrongs will be made right. And the King will reign.

As Paul writes in Titus 2:13:

“...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”