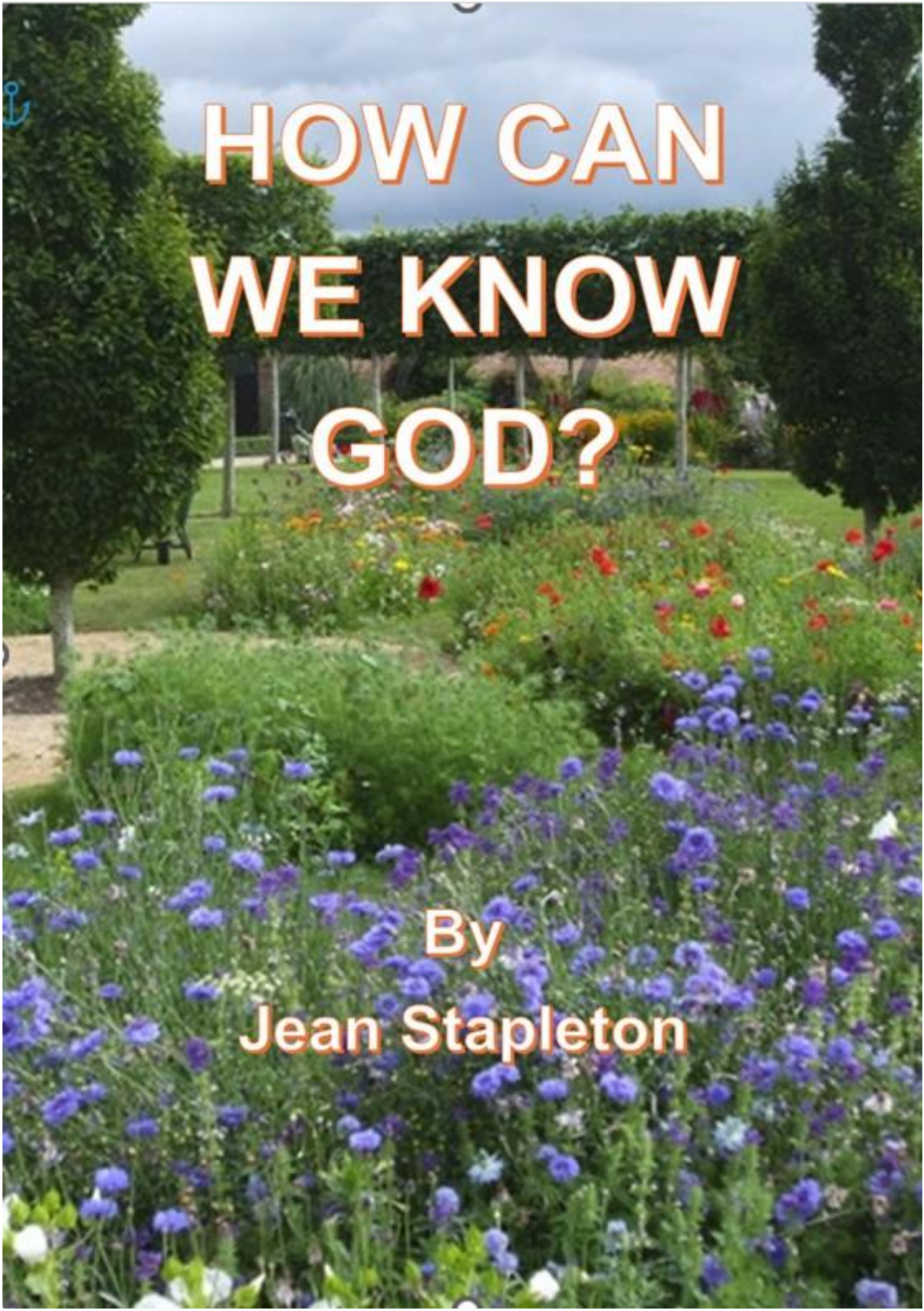




HOW CAN WE KNOW GOD?

By
Jean Stapleton

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INTRODUCTION

As we look at the variety of living things in the world around us, we know that someone must have designed and made all these things. Then as we look up at sun, moon and stars, we are amazed at the vastness of space around us.

The Bible tells us that God is our Creator and the Creator of all these wonderful things we see. This book is to help young people (about 11-14 years old) to find answers to some questions about God. One question that must be important to us, is whether such a great God could really care about us: the answer is there for you to find. All you will need to get started is a Bible, a pen and a notebook.

A List of the books of the Bible

Old Testament		New Testament	
Genesis	Ecclesiastes	Matthew	1 Timothy
Exodus	Song of Solomon	Mark	2 Timothy
Leviticus	Isaiah	Luke	Titus
Numbers	Jeremiah	John	Philemon
Deuteronomy	Lamentations	Acts	Hebrews
Joshua	Ezekiel	Romans	James
Judges	Daniel	1 Corinthians	1 Peter
Ruth	Hosea	2 Corinthians	2 Peter
1 Samuel	Joel	Galatians	1 John
2 Samuel	Amos	Ephesians	2 John
1 Kings	Obadiah	Philippians	3 John
2 Kings	Jonah	Colossians	Jude
1 Chronicles	Micah	1 Thessalonians	Revelation
2 Chronicles	Nahum	2 Thessalonians	
Ezra	Habakkuk		
Nehemiah	Zephaniah		
Ester	Haggai		
Job	Zechariah		
Psalms	Malachi		
Proverbs			

Section 1: The Bible

Chapter 1: How we learn about God

Learning about God apart from the Bible

Most of our learning about God comes from the Bible, where God tells us about Himself. However, the Bible tells us that there are some things we can know about God even without the Bible.

Read:

Job 12: 7-10

Psalm 19:1

Both these writers say that there is evidence that there is a God.

Where does Job, in a poetic way, say we can see the evidence?

What does the writer of Psalm 19 say shows the work of God?

Now read Romans 1:18-21.

These verses tell us that God's eternal power can be seen in all that He has created. Sadly, people suppress the truth about God (verse 18). This means that there is a deliberate refusal to accept the evidence. Why do you think this is?

Many people choose to believe that all the wonderful variety of life we see around us has come about by chance (even though many scientists admit that they have no idea how life could have begun.).

Without the Bible we can understand that there is a powerful, eternal God. It is quite obvious that this God must be much wiser and more powerful than we are. There is no way that we can know Him unless He tells us about Himself. This He has done in the Bible and in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world.

Learning about God from the Bible

The Bible tells us that there is one God (Deuteronomy 6: 4) who is Spirit (John 4: 24). This means that God is invisible, He does not have a physical body. This one God exists in three persons (2 Corinthians 13: 14). If all this seems very difficult to understand, that is because God is so great that we cannot 'explain' Him. We use the word 'Godhead' or 'Trinity' to speak of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Read:

Luke 3: 21-22

John 10: 30

John 14: 16-18

John 15: 26

1. When the Lord Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist, we read about the three persons of the Godhead (Luke 3: 21-22). What do we read about the Holy Spirit? What do read about God the Father?
2. What did the Lord Jesus say about the relationship between Him and God the Father? (John 10: 30).
3. Who did the Lord Jesus say would send the Holy Spirit to the disciples? (John 14: 16-18 and John 15: 26).

The verses we have looked at show us the unity of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit acting together.

It is good to remember that the God who is infinitely great in His power and wisdom, makes Himself known to us in the Bible and in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The important thing for us to know is that God the Father loved the world so much that He gave His Son; that God the Son willingly gave His life to save sinful people; and that God the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and enables us to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Chapter 2: What is the Bible?

If you look at the contents page of your Bible, you will find that the Bible consists of sixty-six books bound together in one volume. These books are divided into two parts. The first part is known as the Old Testament and is made up of thirty-nine books. These books tell us about the time before the birth of the Lord Jesus. The second part of the Bible is called the New Testament and contains twenty-seven books. In this part of the Bible, we read about the life of the Lord Jesus and events that followed His return to Heaven.

What is the Bible about?

The Bible is first of all about God. Throughout history people have worshipped gods which they have made for themselves, according to their own imagination. In the Bible we read about the God Who tells us about Himself so that we can know Him. The Bible also tells us about ourselves and why we do things that are wrong. The Old Testament has one great theme: God's promise to send someone into the world who will take the punishment for the sins (wrong doing) of others. The New Testament tells us about the fulfillment of that promise.

The teaching of the Bible is completely different from the teaching of other world religions. Other religions teach that there are things we must do to make ourselves acceptable to the god we worship. These may be prayers, fasting, pilgrimages or other

requirements. The Bible alone tells us that we cannot make ourselves acceptable to God. Only the Bible tells us about the God who sent His Son to be the Saviour of all who believe in Him.

Who wrote the Bible?

The books of the Bible were written over a period of about fifteen hundred years by men from many different backgrounds. The first five books were written about 1400 BC and the last book was written about 90 AD. There is just one book in the Old Testament that may have been written before 1400 BC: the book of Job.

Find the names of: -

1. An Israelite brought up as an Egyptian Prince, who wrote the first five books of the Bible (Exodus 2: 10).
2. A Shepherd who became a King and wrote many of the Psalms (2 Samuel 7: 8).
3. A Doctor who wrote one of the Gospels and the book of Acts (Colossians 4: 14).
4. A man who once persecuted Christians, but wrote at least thirteen of the New Testament letters after becoming a Christian himself (Ephesians 1: 1).
5. A Fisherman who wrote two of the New Testament letters (Acts 2: 14).

6. The writer of the last book of the Bible, who was also a fisherman (Revelation 1: 4).

Read:

2 Timothy 3: 16 ('Scripture' is another word for the Bible).

2 Peter 1: 21

These verses answer the question 'who wrote the Bible?': they make it clear that men wrote words that came from God Himself (the Bible calls this 'inspiration' as in 2 Timothy 3: 16). The Bible had many writers but one Author.

The Old Testament prophets were men chosen by God to give His message to His people. The contents page of your Bible lists seventeen books of the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi.

Read:

Jeremiah 1: 9

How does Jeremiah describe what happened to him?

Find the words in the following verses which tell us that Jeremiah's messages come from God:

Jeremiah 2: 1; 7: 1; 10: 1

These words are found many times not only in the book of Jeremiah, but in many other parts of the Bible as well.



Chapter 3 – How do we know the Bible is true? (part 1)

Those who wrote the books of the Bible claimed to write the words of God. If the Bible is really a message to us from the God Who made us, it must be important. Can we be sure that the Bible is different from all other books: that when we read it, we are reading words that have come from God Himself? We will look at a few of the answers to that question.

Many writers with the same theme.

Although the books of the Bible were written over a period of about 1500 years, the writers agree when they tell us what God is like, what man is like, and what God promises to do. We will look in more detail at what we can know about God in another chapter. Here we will take just one example of several Bible writers telling us something about God that we might not have expected. The wonders of creation point to the fact that God is both wise and powerful. The Bible adds something quite surprising.

Read:

Psalms 23: 1

Isaiah 40:10-11

John 10:11

There is about 1000 years between the first and last of these verses, but they all speak of God as a Shepherd of His people.

Questions for you:

1. What does David say is the result of having God as his Shepherd? (Psalm 23: 1)
2. What words could you use to describe the Shepherd Isaiah writes about? (Isaiah 40: 11)
3. Who is the promised Shepherd and what does He do for His sheep? (John 10: 7 & 11)

A good shepherd cares for His sheep and provides all that they need. We have looked at three parts of the Bible where the great and powerful God is described as a Shepherd who cares for His people. This truth brings great comfort to those who know that they belong to Him.

Many prophecies fulfilled

The messages God sent to the people through the prophets were not always about future events. In the first chapters of the Book of Isaiah, God is telling His people to change their ways: to do right things instead of evil things (Isaiah 1: 16-17).

However, there are many prophecies of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will look at just five examples.

<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Fulfilment</u>
1. Find out from Micah 5: 2 the name of the city where a person would be born who was “from everlasting”.	Read: Luke 1:26-31 and 2:1-7. Who was born in the city Micah had written about 700 years before?
2. Read: Zechariah 9: 9	Read: Matthew 21: 6-11 Describe the scene when Zechariah’s prophecy was fulfilled.
3. Read: Psalm 22: 18 (written about 1000 BC).	Read: Matthew 27: 35 What prophecy was fulfilled at the time of the Crucifixion?
4. Read: Isaiah 53: 9	Read: Matthew 27: 57-60. In what way was Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled?
5. Read: Isaiah 53:12 (a “transgressor” is someone who breaks the law).	Read: Matthew 27: 38 In what way was the Lord Jesus “numbered with the transgressors”?

We have looked at just five of the many prophecies that were fulfilled when the Lord Jesus came. These four writers lived between 1000 BC and

about 500 BC, and they were able to give details of future events. The fact that the events occurred exactly as foretold shows us how true and dependable the Bible is. Only those whose writing was inspired by God could have written in such a way.



Chapter 4 – How do we know the Bible is true? (part 2)

Many painful truths about ourselves

If we are honest, we know that there is something wrong with mankind. Individuals give way to envy, jealousy, pride, selfishness and greed. No parent has to teach their child to do wrong, in fact it is well known that even young children are able to tell lies with no help at all. Nations go to war against each other causing distress to many. The Bible tells us that all this was true of mankind early in our history.

Read:

Genesis 6: 5

How does this verse describe the people alive at the time?

The New Testament gives us a sad picture of men and women's behaviour.

Read:

2 Timothy 3: 2-4

Find three things that the people described here will love.

As we read the Bible, we find that it tells us the truth about ourselves. Whether we read the Old Testament or the New Testament or look around us at the world today, we find that men and women are sinful. Some sins are open and obvious, others like envy and greed may be hidden for a time. This is human nature as God sees us, not as we would like to appear.

Many lives that have been changed

God is our Creator: He made us and He knows us better than we know ourselves. He is also the Author of the Bible, and in reading what He has said, we discover how sinful we are. Many people's lives have been changed because they have believed what God says. The Bible affects our lives when the Holy Spirit Who inspired it helps us to understand it. In the next section we will look at Genesis chapter 3 where we read about sin coming into God's world. In the same chapter we read God's promise to send a Saviour. That promise is found all through the Old Testament and was fulfilled when God's own Son, the Lord Jesus came into the world. The Bible points us to Jesus Christ, Who died in place of all those who trust in Him.

We will look at two very different people whose lives were changed by what they read.

Read: Acts 8: 26-35 and Isaiah 53: 7-8 Who was reading? What was he reading? Who helped him to understand?	Read: Acts 8: 36-38. What were two effects in this man's life, one in what he believed and the other in what he did?
Read: 2 Timothy 1: 2 & 5 Name 3 generations who were Christians.	Was Timothy a Christian because he had a Christian family? (Look carefully at the verses in 2 Timothy chapter 3.) What was it that made Timothy understand the way of Salvation?
Read: 2 Timothy 3: 14-15. What had Timothy known since he was a child?	

The Bible tells us that we are all sinners who need a Saviour. Whatever our background may be, we need forgiveness and a changed life.

Questions for you

- 1) How many books are there in the Bible?
- 2) What do we call the two parts of the Bible?

- 3) What word is used to tell us how God gave us the Bible? (2 Timothy 3: 16)
- 4) Which Old Testament book tells us where the Lord Jesus would be born?
- 5) Which Psalm tells us about the death of the Lord Jesus?
- 6) Does sin really matter? (Romans 6: 23)



Section 2: What is wrong with the world?

Chapter 5: Disobedience

God created a perfect world and placed the first man, Adam, in a garden He had prepared for him. In this garden God provided everything that Adam needed.

Read:

Genesis 2: 15-19 and 21 – 25

1. What was to be Adam's work? (2:15)
2. What was the one thing Adam was not to do? (2: 16-17)
3. What would be the consequences of disobedience? (2: 17)

The one command that God gave to Adam was a test of Adam's loving obedience to the God who had given him life.

Read:

Genesis chapter 3

1. Who tempted the woman to disobey God? (3: 1 & 4-5)
2. Who was this? (Revelation 20: 2)

3. Find the first lie in Genesis 3: 4.

The devil used the serpent to tempt the woman to sin, but Adam shared in her disobedience (3: 6).

1. What was the first result of Adam and Eve's sin? (3: 7).
2. What was the second result? (3: 8)
3. Did Adam 'own up' to his sin or did he blame someone else? (3: 12)
4. Who did the woman blame? (3: 13)

When Adam and Eve sinned, they rebelled against the One Who had created them and listened to the one who is the enemy of God. Pain, illness and death all resulted from man's sin, as did hatred and strife as more people were born into the world. Life itself became a struggle against many difficulties.

1. How did Adam's work change from when he was first created? (3: 17-19)
2. God made clothing for Adam and Eve from animal skins. What must have happened to the animal whose skin was used? (3: 21)

God had warned Adam that the consequence of disobedience would be death, but here we have the first indication that God would provide a substitute: the death of another in place of the sinner. Genesis 3: 15 contains the first promise of a Saviour: one who would save men and women from the terrible effects of sin. Until the coming of the Saviour, God accepted

those who came to Him in the way that He taught them to: through the sacrifice of an animal. Instructions for how this was to be done are found in the book of Leviticus.

You may remember from Genesis 2: 17 that God had said death would come to Adam on the day he disobeyed and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, neither Adam nor Eve died physically on that day, although their bodies began to grow older and physical death would come. The truth is that that part of Adam and Eve that could know God did die, that day. That is why they hid from God instead of being able to talk with Him. Sin was like a big wall between them and God. So it has remained for everyone born into the world since, except the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 6: A Rebellious world

The whole human race was affected by the sin of our first parents. In Genesis chapter 4 we read of anger, murder and lying (see verses 5-9). From Genesis chapter 5 we learn that people lived longer than they do now, but, with one exception, each life ended in death. (If you want to know who the exception was, read Genesis 5: 21-24 and Hebrews 11: 5. The Bible tells us of just two men who did not die because God chose to take them out of this world.) In Genesis chapter 6 we read about the state of the world at the time Noah lived.

No doubt the population increased quite quickly, as people lived for many years and had many children. Sadly, as numbers increased, wickedness increased. God saw His world filled with violence and He knew that even people's thoughts were evil.

God is patient, but He does not allow evil to go on unchecked. God said that He would destroy mankind with a great flood. However, there was one man who did trust God and whose life was different from those around him: his name was Noah.

God gave Noah instructions for an ark that he was to make. This would be a very large vessel about 136 metres long and 22 metres wide. Noah and his wife and three sons and their wives would be kept safe in the ark. God also said that two of every kind of animals and birds would come to Noah and they also were to be kept safe in the ark.

It took Noah a very long time to build the ark. He warned people of what was going to happen, but no-

one believed him. They had no experience of a flood that could destroy them. How Noah must have been mocked while construction of the ark went on. All the time Noah was building the ark, the people had time to repent: to give up their evil ways and listen to what God was saying. God gave them time to change.

Read:

Genesis 6: 9-22 and 7: 1-16

1. What filled the earth at the time Noah lived? (6: 11 & 13).
2. How did Noah react to God's instructions? (6: 22).
3. How many people were saved from the flood? (7:13).
4. How do we know that Noah warned the people of what was going to happen? (2 Peter 2: 5).
5. What promises did God make when the flood was over? (Genesis 8: 22 & 9: 11).

Still Rebellious

God had told Adam and Eve that as more people were born into the world, they should spread over the earth and take charge of all living things that He had made (Genesis 1: 28). After the flood, God repeated that instruction to Noah and His sons (Genesis 9: 1).

As time went by, men and women did not want to move away from each other to populate different

parts of the world. In Genesis chapter 11 we read of their plan to maintain a centralised civilization. This shows clearly that human nature had remained rebellious: there was no desire to live in obedience to the Creator, and yet the attempt to build a great city with an imposing tower was halted.

Read:

Genesis 11: 1-9

What did God do that caused the people to be divided into different nations?

The first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis not only tell us of mankind's earliest days but also explain why the world is as it is today. None of Adam's descendants has ever needed to be taught to do wrong: we have inherited a sinful nature from our first parents. The only perfect life ever lived on earth was when the Son of God came into the world. That perfect life became a perfect sacrifice for the sins of all who trust in Him.

Section 3: What can we know about God?

Chapter 7: God is holy

The Character of God

Think about people you know and how you could describe their character. One person might be described as kind, loving and gentle, another as hard-working, reliable and honest. A third person might be spoken of as dishonest, bad-tempered and lazy. We need to know what the Bible teaches about the character of God. Is God good? Does He care about us? Does He mind when we do wrong? The way we answer questions like these will affect the way we live our lives.

Many verses in the Bible tell us that God is holy: perfectly pure and separate from all sin. Look up just three verses that tell us this. Leviticus 19: 2; Isaiah 43: 15; Revelation 4: 8.

Now here are three verses that describe each of the three persons of the Godhead as holy.

God the Father (John 17: 11).

God the Son (Luke 1: 35).

God the Holy Spirit (John 14: 26).

How the fact that God is Holy affects us

The Bible teaches us that our sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59: 2 – iniquity is another word for

sin). We cannot put this right by doing 'good deeds' because in the sight of a holy God, our best deeds are like dirty clothes (Isaiah 64: 6).

Our problem

We are cut off from God by our sin. We are not able to put this right.

God's Answer

God has said that sin results in death (Genesis 2: 17, Romans 6: 23). God gives the gift of eternal life to sinful people, by accepting a substitute: someone who dies in the sinner's place.

In Old Testament days God accepted the death of an animal in the sinner's place. This could not take away sin, but the person who sacrificed the animal was looking forward to the Saviour God had promised to send.

Read:

Hebrews 10: 1-4

Hebrews 9: 24-26

John 14: 6

1. Could animal sacrifices take away sin? (Hebrews 10: 4)
2. Whose coming was pictured in the Old Testament? (Hebrews 9: 26)
3. How can we come to God now? (John 14: 6)

What a holy God requires

God requires His people to be holy (1 Peter 1: 15-16). When someone becomes a Christian by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, they do not immediately become perfect. Becoming a Christian is the beginning of a new life. God's Holy Spirit comes into the life of a Christian. This is what makes it possible for a Christian to say 'no' to sin and begin to live a life that pleases God.

Read:

Galatians 5: 22-23

The fruit of the Spirit means the evidence we see in a person's life that God's Holy Spirit is at work. Make a list of the evidence described in Galatians chapter 5 in your notebook, and also list what the opposite would be for each one of these good things.

The fact that the Bible tells us about a God who is holy, and who wants His people to be holy, also shows us the truth of the Bible. Sinful people would never want to "invent" a god like that.

Chapter 8 – God knows everything

God has perfect knowledge of the past, the present and the future: He is omniscient – a word which means “knowing everything.” As we read the New Testament, we see this knowledge in God the Son: the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus spoke of many things that happened in Old Testament times and of people who lived in those days who looked forward to His coming, such as Abraham who lived about 2000BC (John 8: 56-58). He also showed His knowledge of the people he met with, even knowing their thoughts (Matthew 9: 4 and John 2: 24-25). Jesus knew all that would happen to Him and told His disciples on more than one occasion, so that they would be prepared, although they did not fully understand at the time.

Read:

John 1: 47-49

Matthew 16: 21 and 20: 17-19

1. What two things did Jesus know about Nathaniel before Nathaniel came to see Him? (John 1: 47-48)
2. What events was Jesus preparing His disciples for? (Matthew 16: 21 and 20: 17-19)

We have already seen in chapter 2 that many events prophesied in the Old Testament happened exactly as God had said they would.

God knows the future because He has planned it and He is always able to do what He says He will do. We need never fear that any event takes God by surprise. Whatever may happen to us God will use in His great plan, even though it may be very difficult for us to understand at the time. However, God's knowledge is not just of great events. The Bible teaches that God knows every detail of our lives.

How does knowing that God knows all things affect us?

If we are trusting in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, His knowledge of our lives brings us great comfort. He knows all our needs, all our joys and our sorrows and has promised to be with us in every situation.

Read:

Psalms 139: 1-6

Proverbs 5: 21

Hebrews 4: 13

1. What does the Psalmist say God knows about our thoughts and our words? (Psalm 139: 2 & 4)
2. What does God see and consider (your Bible may use the word 'ponder') (Proverbs 5: 21)
3. What things are open to God? (Hebrews 4: 13)

For those who do not know and trust the Lord Jesus, the fact that He knows their thoughts, words and actions, is cause for fear. If we have refused His

offer of forgiveness, we will one day bear the punishment our sin deserves. When He died on the cross, the Lord Jesus took sin's punishment for everyone who trusts in Him for forgiveness.



Chapter 9 – God is good

The Bible teaches us that God is good, and that all His actions are good (Psalm 119 verse 68). By saying that God is good, we mean that God's character is perfect, without any defect. His goodness is seen in His kindness to us and His care for all His creation.

In Psalm 107 we read about people with all sorts of troubles and difficulties. Those troubles are a picture of what happens when we go our way instead of God's way.

In verses 4 and 5 we read about people who feel they are wandering through a wilderness. Verses 10 to 11 describe people who feel life has become a prison because they rebelled against God. Some people were so foolish and so sinful that they thought they were dying (verses 17-18).

Read:

Psalm 107: 1-22

1. What do the people described in this Psalm do when their troubles are too much for them? (verses 6, 13 and 19)
2. In what way did God answer? (verses 7, 14 and 20)
3. Which word in verse 1 describes the goodness of God to those who call on Him for help?

4. What should be our response to God's goodness when we have sought His help? (verses 8, 15, 21).

How does knowing that God is good affect us?

1. God's goodness in creation.

In Genesis chapter 1 we read about creation. The things that God created are described as 'good' (Genesis 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Knowing this, we will not doubt God's goodness because of the presence of trouble, illness and death in the world. We know that these things are the consequences of man's sin.

2. God's goodness in providing a Saviour.

The angel told the shepherds that the birth of the Lord Jesus was good news for all people (Luke 2: 8-11).

Read:

Romans 5: 6-8

What sort of people did Jesus die for? (Romans 5: 8)

We can see God's goodness is providing a Saviour for those who could not save themselves. If we remember that those who the Lord Jesus came to save had broken God's laws and rebelled against Him, then His goodness is seen even more clearly.

This should cause us to ask Him to forgive us for our sinful ways.

3. God's goodness to those who love Him.

We know that we can trust in the goodness of God even when we face difficulties in life. In the Book of Genesis, we read about Joseph who was hated by his brothers, sold as a slave and put in prison for something he had not done. Eventually we read that he became the most important man in Egypt apart from the Pharaoh. He was able to save many people, including his own family, from starvation.

Read:

Romans 8: 28

Genesis 50: 18-20

1. What can those who love God be sure of? (Romans 8: 28)
2. What did Joseph say to his brothers about all that had happened to him? (Genesis 50: 20)

A warning.

Read:

Romans 2: 4

We often take God's goodness for granted, forgetting to thank Him for the life He has given us and the amazing variety of His creation. We have

just read that God's goodness should lead us to repentance. This means that realising how good God is to us should cause us to have a complete change of heart, especially when we remember His goodness in sending His own Son to die in the place of sinful people. Repentance means real sorrow over sin, and a change of direction, so that we no longer want to live sinful lives, but ask God to help us to live lives that please Him.



Chapter 10 – God is love

We have already learned that God is holy and good: now we learn that God's nature, what He is, is also love (1 John 4: 8).

God's love in salvation

Since the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, rebelled against God, everyone born into this world (except the Lord Jesus) has continued that sinful rebellion (Isaiah 53: 6). How could a holy God who hates sin, love sinful people?

God's standard is perfection and He has given us His law (the ten commandments) that tell us how we ought to live. Sadly, none of us can keep God's law perfectly and a great barrier of sin separates us from God who is holy.

God's wonderful solution was to send a Saviour who would live a perfect life. This Saviour would then take sin's punishment for everyone who would ever trust in Him for forgiveness.

Read:

John 3: 16-18

Romans 5: 8

Romans 6: 23

1. Who did God give to be the Saviour of all who believe in Him? (John 3: 16 and 18)

2. What sort of people did Christ die for? (Romans 5: 8)
3. Can we ever earn eternal life by doing good deeds? (Romans 6: 23)

The Quality of God's love

God's love is everlasting (Jeremiah 31: 3). God's love is great (Ephesians 2: 4-5 and 3: 17-19). God loves us so much that He corrects us, just as a good parent corrects a child who has done wrong.

Read:

Hebrews 12: 5-7

(Where the Bible uses the word 'chastening' we could use the word discipline.)

1. Is it being a good parent to take no notice when a child does wrong?
2. What would a good parent do?
3. Who does God discipline? (verse 6)

How should knowing that God is love affect us?

When we realise how great is God's love to us, we should respond by loving Him (1 John 4: 19). We should also love others: this especially applies to the love Christians have towards one another. As Christians, we know that we have the one Saviour who has brought us into the family of God.

Is it possible for someone who is not a Christian to love God?

The Bible tells us that until we realise all that the Lord Jesus has done for us, none of us actually love God. We do not thank Him for giving us life and such a wonderful world to live in. We do not want to follow God's instructions even though they are for our good. In fact, the Bible says that we are enemies of God (Romans 5: 10). It also explains why we do not love God (John 3: 19).

Many people who say that they believe in God or love God are actually talking about a god of their own imagination, a sort of Father Christmas in the sky.

The Bible makes it very clear that left to ourselves, we do not love the God who made us. Sinful by nature, we are blind to the love of God towards us. We need to ask God to cure us of this spiritual blindness so that we see His great love in sending His own Son to die in the sinner's place.

For those who do put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, there can be complete confidence in His unchanging love.

Chapter 11 – The Grace of God

Grace means kindness to those who do not deserve it. We cannot earn God's favour as if God should reward us for our good deeds. We learned from Isaiah chapter 64 verse 6, that in God's sight even our best actions are unclean. By His grace alone, God saves sinful, undeserving people from the penalty of sin. The apostle Peter actually calls God 'the God of all grace' (1 Peter 5: 10).

We see grace in the life of the Lord Jesus (John 1: 14 and 17). He left the glory of heaven to live in this world, not even owning a home of His own (2 Corinthians 8: 9).

Read:

Romans 6: 23

1. What is the difference between wages and a gift?
2. What wages have we earned?
3. What is God's gift?

How does knowing about God's grace affect us?

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, reminding them that they had become Christians because of God's grace, not because of anything good that they had done (Ephesians 2: 4-10). Knowing this prevents us being proud or boastful, as if we were better than other people.

Read:

Luke 18: 9-14.

1. In the story that the Lord Jesus told, what was the Pharisee trying to do?
2. Which of the two men experienced the grace of God? (When God “justifies” a person, it means that as the Judge, He declares that person to be righteous: cleared of any wrong doing. God does this for all those who stop trying to prove that they are good enough, and rely only on what the Lord Jesus has done for them.)

Read:

Romans 3: 23-24. (“Redemption” means paying a price to buy something back.)

1. What can we pay to obtain the grace of God?
2. What did the Lord Jesus pay so that we can experience the grace of God?

There are many religions in the world that describe things that people must do so that the god they believe in will be pleased with them. The Bible describes something quite different. From the Bible we learn that we can never please God by our “good deeds” because the problem is not just what we do, but what we are. If we are ever to be accepted by

God, it can only be because of what He has done for those who do not deserve His kindness. The grace of God is for all who depend on what God has done for them and then seek God's help to live for Him.

A warning: it is possible to be mistaken about grace!

There were people who misunderstood the apostle Paul's teaching about grace. They thought that if God is kind to sinful people, then they could go on sinning and God would go on showing His grace to them.

Anyone who has understood that the Lord Jesus died to set us free from sin, will want to live a life of obedience to Him. This does not mean that when someone becomes a Christian, they never again do anything wrong. But it does mean that there is a new desire to please God instead of living to please our sinful selves.

Read:

Romans 6: 1-2 and 11-16

What was Paul's answer to those who thought that they could become Christians without any change in their lives?

Chapter 12 – The Wrath of God

Wrath is a word that means anger, but when we speak of the wrath of God, we mean something very different from our own anger. We become angry when we feel that we have been treated badly. Our anger may be shown in a sudden outburst or in a sullen mood. God's wrath is His unchanging attitude to sin. All our sin has an underlying cause: it is rebellion against the will of our Creator. Because God is good and holy, His will is perfect. He must, therefore, hate the sin which brings disorder and disharmony into His creation.

Read:

Psalm 90

John 3: 36

1. How many times do the words “anger” or “wrath” occur in Psalm 90: 7-12?
2. What causes us to fear the wrath of God? (Psalm 90: 8.)
3. What is the only remedy for our situation so that we can be joyful instead of fearful? (Psalm 90: 13-14)
4. What does John tell us about the situation of someone who believes in the Son of God and someone who does not believe in Him? (John 3: 36)

How should knowing that God is angry with sinful people affect us?

1. If we have not trusted in the Lord Jesus to forgive our sin, it causes us to be afraid of God (Psalm 90: 7). However, the Bible describes a right fear of God. This is the respect and reverence we feel when we think of how great and powerful God is (Psalm 111: 10). This is how we approach God when we know the sin that separated us from Him has been forgiven. It is very different from the terror of a sinful person coming to a God who is holy.
2. We realise that we need someone to save us from God's wrath. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can do this because He has taken sin's punishment for all who trust in Him (Romans 5: 8-9).
3. If we have believed in the Lord Jesus, we realise that we cannot go on living in a way that deserves God's anger. We will ask God to help us to say 'no' to sin and to live in a way that pleases Him (John 14: 15).

Chapter 13 – God is faithful

We meet many examples in life of unfaithfulness. In marriage people are unfaithful when they break their promise to be true to each other throughout the rest of their lives. Governments make promises which they are not able to carry out. Friends can be disloyal and let us down just when we most need help. In contrast to all our human failure, God is absolutely faithful: He is completely trustworthy, constant and dependable.

The Prophet Jeremiah lived at a time when the people of Judah had turned away from the God who had been so good to them. They took no notice of the many warnings God gave them through His prophets. Jeremiah knew that the people deserved to be destroyed, but he had hope because of God's mercy, His compassion and His great faithfulness (Lamentations 3: 22-24).

How should knowing that God is faithful affect us?

1. We realise that many things we have taken for granted are really due to the faithfulness of God.

Read:

Genesis 8: 22

What eight things can we depend on because of God's promise?

2. We understand that God will keep His promise to save all those who believe on the Lord Jesus, and only those who believe. We also know that God will always keep those who trust in Him.

Read:

Acts 4: 10 and 12. (These are the words of the apostle Peter, after the healing of a lame man.)

John 10: 27-29

- a) How do the verses from Acts answer people who say that there are many ways to be saved?
 - b) What does the Lord Jesus give to His people? (John 10: 28)
 - c) What can those who are saved through trusting in the Lord Jesus be absolutely sure of? (John 10: 28-29)
3. We do not need to be anxious when things appear to be going wrong. God will always do what He says He will do, in the way and at the time known only to Him. We find many examples of this in the bible we will look at just one from the Old Testament.

Read:

Genesis 12: 1-2, and 4

Genesis 15: 2-6

Genesis 21: 5-7

- a) How old was Abram when he left Haran?
- b) How can we tell from chapter 12 verse 2 that God was actually promising that Abram would have a son?
- c) Still childless as he grew older, did Abram still believe God's promise? (Genesis 15: 2-6)
- d) How many years did Abraham and Sarah wait for the birth of their son? (Genesis 21: 5) (God had changed Abram's name to Abraham (Genesis 17: 5).

Many people search in vain for a feeling of safety or security. Circumstances can change rapidly in a way that we cannot control. But no change takes God by surprise or prevents Him doing what He has said He will do. God is faithful: every promise He has made He will keep. There are many promises in the Bible for those who trust in God. Our security is not in being in control of our circumstances, but in knowing the God who has promised never to leave His people.

Section 4: The Law that God gave

Chapter 14 – The Nation that received God’s law

Schools have rules, workplaces have conditions of employment, nations have laws. Rules and laws are made so that communities can live together knowing that wrong doing will be punished, and that men and women should respect one another rather than harm one another. Although the intention is good, human laws are not perfect and may change from one generation to another.

The law that God has given us is perfect and unchanging, because it comes from God’s holy and unchanging character. God’s law is also good: He is our Creator who knows what is best for us. God gave Adam just one command as we have seen in Genesis chapter 2. By obeying this command, Adam could have shown his loving obedience to the God who had given him life. Sadly, Adam disobeyed God, rebelling against Him.

Since the sin of Adam and his wife Eve, everyone born into the world (except the Lord Jesus Christ) has a sinful nature. However, the Bible teaches us that God’s law is written in our hearts.

Read:

Romans 2: 14 and 15

We learn from these verses that God made man with a knowledge of what is right. God also gave us a conscience that reproaches us when we do wrong. Because we are sinful, our conscience can become hardened, but we still retain some understanding of right and wrong. This is true of all people, but to one nation God gave what we call the moral law: the Ten Commandments. That nation should then have shown to others how good God is to those who obey Him.

The Beginning of the nation

Read:

Genesis 12: 1-3

In these verses:

1. Who was God speaking to?
2. What did God ask him to do?
3. What is the promise in the first part of verse 2?
4. What is the promise in the second part of verse 3?

Abram obeyed God and journeyed to the land of Canaan, which we now know as the land of Israel. God later changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of a multitude" (Genesis 17: 5). The promise in the second part of verse 3, means that

the Saviour for people from all nations, will come from the descendants of Abraham.

From Abraham to the nation of Israel

We have already learned that Abraham and Sarah waited twenty-five years for the birth of their son Isaac (Genesis 21: 3). When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah and after twenty years they had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. God chose Jacob to be the head of this family after Isaac. This meant that Jacob inherited God's promises to his grandfather, Abraham. Jacob was away from the land of Canaan for twenty years (the reason Jacob had to go away is found in Genesis 27: 41 – 28: 5). At the time of his return, God changed his name to Israel. Jacob had twelve sons whose families grew into the twelve tribes that made up the nation of Israel.

Jacob and his sons had travelled to Egypt at a time of famine in the land of Canaan. Four centuries after God's promise to Abraham, at God's direction, Moses led their descendants out of the land of Egypt where they had become slaves. By this time, the people of Israel must have numbered between two and three million. (Exodus 12: 37 gives the number of men as 600,000.)

Before they entered the land promised to Abraham's descendants, God gave them His law.

Read:

Exodus 19:1-2

Exodus 31: 18

While the Israelites were camped near to Mount Sinai, God spoke the words of the ten commandments and He also wrote the words on two tablets of stone.

Although given to the nation of Israel, these commandments teach us what God requires of all people. The first four are concerned with our duty to God; the remainder with our duty to other people.

God's law teaches us about the character of God: that He is holy and wants His people to be holy (1 Peter 1: 15-16). God's law also teaches us that we need a Saviour because we have all broken God's law and deserve to be punished.

Chapter 15 – The only God: no idols

The First commandment: the only God

Read:

Exodus 20:1-3

Psalms 19: 1-4

Romans 1:19-21

The first commandment is found in Exodus 20: 3. It teaches us that the God who spoke these words is the one true God who we should love and worship. The people of Israel knew this God as the One who had brought them out of Egypt.

Psalms 19 was written by King David, who tells us that there is a great God. The word firmament (verse 1) means 'space' – the sky above us, sometimes called 'the heavens'. The sun, moon and stars are the work of God. Writing to the Christians at Rome, the apostle Paul says that the greatness of God is clearly seen in all He has created.

This God who has created the world, has given us life and has provided all that we need. We should believe in Him as the only true, living God and we should obey His wise commands.

The Second commandment: no idols

The second commandment teaches us that we must not make idols and we must not bow down (worship) them.

Idolatry: making an object and then bowing down to it, was very common in the nations around Israel. It always led to sinful behaviour and many times the Israelites copied their neighbours, instead of giving an example of the worship of the true God.

Read:

Exodus 20: 4-6

Psalm 115: 3-8

1. What is God able to do? (Psalm 115: 3)
2. What are idols able to do? (Psalm 115: 5-7)

It is quite possible for those who would never bow down to an idol, to worship a false god of their own imagination.

People may say that they believe in God, but their god is not the God in the Bible. He is more like a sort of Father Christmas in the sky who smiles down on them and 'turns a blind eye' to their sinful ways. This is just like having an idol of their own making. They do not want to hear about the true God who tells us that our sin separates us from Him. Sadly, such people fail to understand the love of God in sending a Saviour to take the punishment our sin deserves.

Some people say that they use images, statues or pictures to help them worship God.

Read:

Deuteronomy 4: 12 and 15-19

1. What did the people hear when God gave them the ten commandments? (verse 12)
2. What did they not see? (verses 12 and 15)

The evidence that there is a Creator-God is all around us: we do not need any images or pictures to help us worship Him. The warnings about idols (Deuteronomy 4: 16-19) remind us that so-called “holy pictures” and statues can easily become objects of worship. Instead of helping us worship the true God, they become false gods giving false comfort.

Read:

John 4: 23-24

These words of the Lord Jesus, help us to understand how we should worship this great God. True worship comes from a heart of love and reverence for our Creator (‘in spirit’ – verse 4). Such worship is only possible when we come to God through the Lord Jesus, who died on Calvary’s cross so that the sin that separates us from God can be forgiven (‘in truth’).

Chapter 16 – God’s name and God’s day

The Third commandment: God’s name

Read:

Exodus chapter 20 verse 7

The third commandment forbids the wrong or irreverent use of God’s name. In the Old Testament, the meaning of names was important, expressing something about a person. For example, the name Jacob meant supplanter or deceitful, but God changed his name to Israel: Prince with God.

God was known to His Old Testament people as Jehovah: This is the name usually translated LORD (using capital letters) in our Bibles. When we read in this commandment “the LORD your God”, this describes the one, supreme God, who makes Himself known to His people. To use God’s name thoughtlessly or irreverently is to show a lack of reverence for God Himself.

There are several ways in which this commandment can be broken. It is quite common to hear God’s name used as a swear word, but this is not the only way that God’s name can be wrongly used: it can be used lightly and thoughtlessly. This happens when we speak or sing about God without really meaning the words we say or sing.

To break this commandment is just as sinful as to break the others. Can you find the words in Exodus 20: 7 that tell us this?

The fourth commandment: God's day

The fourth commandment is about God's day. All our time is given to us by God but He has set apart one day in seven as special.

Read:

Exodus 20: 8-11

Genesis 2: 2-3

Isaiah 40: 28

1. Why does the fourth commandment begin with the word "Remember"? (Genesis 2: 2-3)
2. Which word in Exodus 20: 8, tells us how the Sabbath day should be kept?
3. Did God rest after the work of creation because He was tired? (Isaiah 40:28)

In the New Testament we read the words of the Lord Jesus, that God gave us the Sabbath day for our good (Mark 2: 27). It was to be a day of rest from work, Sadly, the Pharisees had made such a list of do's and don't's that it had become a burden to the people instead of a blessing.

Christians meet to worship God on Sunday, the first day of the week, which is sometimes called the

“Christian Sabbath”. We find reasons for this in the New Testament.

Read:

Luke 24: 1-7

Acts 20: 7

1. What happened on the first day of the week? (Luke 24: 5-7)
2. On what day of the week did the disciples meet together? (Acts 20: 7)

Early Christians tell us in their writings that they met together on the first day of the week, sometimes calling it “the Lord’s day”.

In Old Testament days, the sabbath day reminded people of God’s completed work of creation. Since New Testament times, the first day of the week reminds us of Christ’s resurrection when His work as His people’s sin-bearer was complete. God has given us one day in seven to rest from our ordinary occupation so that we have time to worship Him and learn more about Him. However there are some things that may need to be done on Sundays.

Read:

Matthew 12: 9-13

The Lord Jesus said that it was right to “do good” on the Sabbath day, which means that we should

show kindness to those who need our help. Think about the sort of things that this would include.

Whether the seventh day Sabbath of Old Testament days or the first day of the week now, God means this day to be a blessing to His people (Isaiah 58: 13-14).



Chapter 17 – Respect for parents and respect for life

The fifth commandment: about families

Read:

Exodus: 20: 12

Ephesians 6: 1-3

This commandment teaches us to respect and obey our parents. God has placed us in families and we see His special concern for families in the fact that a promise is given with this commandment.

When Paul wrote to the Christians at Ephesus, he altered the wording of the promise. No doubt he was guided by the Holy Spirit just as other Bible writers were. His words remind us that the commandments are for all people, not just for those living in the land which God had promised His people in Old Testament days. God is our Creator and He planned that parents should care for their children and that children should learn to be obedient to their parents.

We are all sinful people and we are not able to keep God's law perfectly (Romans 3: 23). Parents do not always care for their children as they should and children do not always obey their parents as they should. God's pattern for the family is found in many verses in the New Testament. If our own situation is difficult, we will need to ask God to help us.

Read:

Colossians 3: 18-21

Luke 2: 40-52

The verses in Paul's letter to the Christians at Colosse show us God's way for members of a family to live happily with one another. The husband is to love his wife, wanting what is best for her. The wife willingly recognises that God has given her husband responsibility for the family. Children are to respect and obey their parents, who they know will always do what they believe is best for them.

Learning to live with other people is learned within the family in our early years. It is in a loving home that we learn to be unselfish and to respect other people. The Lord Jesus was the Son of God and yet He took His place in the family in complete obedience to God's law.

1. Why was Jesus taken to Jerusalem by Mary and Joseph? (Luke 2: 41)
2. When they returned to search for Him, where did they find Him? (Luke 2: 46)
3. Who did Jesus call Father? (Luke 2: 49)
4. When they returned to Nazareth was Jesus obedient to Mary and Joseph? (Luke 2: 51)

The sixth commandment: respect for life

Read:

Exodus 20: 13

Genesis 9: 6

The sixth commandment forbids murder and so teaches us to respect life.

After the great flood, God spoke to Noah about the taking of life. He put a difference between the killing of animals for food and the killing of a person. This is because man is not just 'top animal'. He was created 'in the image of God' (Genesis 9: 6) meaning that he could think and reason and love and obey His Creator.

What about accidents?

Read:

Exodus 21: 1-14

Joshua 20: 1-6

These verses make a difference between murder and accidental killing. They teach us that the punishment for murder is death: no other punishment is equal to the taking of life. This reminds us that God is the giver of life and He alone decides when a life is over.

1. What did God say should be provided in the land of Canaan for anyone who killed a person accidentally? (Joshua 20:2-3)
2. What would this allow time for? (The “avenger of blood” would be a relative of the victim.)(Joshua 20:6)

What about attitudes?

The wrong things we do come from the way we think and our attitudes to other people. The 6th to the 10th commandments are all summed up in the words ‘you shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Matthew 22: 37-40). To hate someone is to break God’s law and in God’s sight is equal to murder (1 John 3: 15).

Read the words of the Lord Jesus about this in Matthew 5: 21-22.

Chapter 18 – Respect for marriage and respect for property

The seventh commandment: respect for marriage

As we come to the seventh commandment we need to remind ourselves that the God who gave these commandments is our loving Creator, who knows what is best for us.

Read:

Exodus 20: 14

This commandment teaches us to be faithful in marriage and to respect the marriage of others. Marriage is a covenant (an agreement) between a man and a woman, that they will stay together until the end of their lives. This commandment is broken when a married man takes someone else as his wife, or when a married woman takes someone else as her husband. (Of course a man is free to marry again if his wife dies and a woman is free to marry again if her husband dies.)

Read:

Genesis 2: 18 and 21-24

Matthew 19: 3-6

Malachi 2 : 14-16

1. What was the original reason for marriage? (Genesis 2: 18)
2. Who joins a man and wife together in marriage? (Matthew 19: 6)
3. What does God hate? (Malachi 21: 10)

The apostle Paul teaches in his letter to the Christians at Rome, that the sixth to the tenth Commandments are all summed up in loving our neighbour as ourselves (Romans 13: 8-10). As far as marriage is concerned, this means not coming between two people who have promised to be faithful to each other.

Read:

Proverbs 31: 10-31 which tells us about a very happy marriage.

1. How does this husband feel about his wife? (verse 11)
2. What is her attitude to him? (verse 12)
3. Does this wife think of anyone outside her own family? (verse 20)
4. What is the reward for this hard-working wife? (verse 28)
5. What makes her the woman she is? (verse 30)

Because we are sinful people, we see many homes which are not at all like the one we have just read about. In your notebook make a list of reasons why a lasting marriage is good for the husband and wife, their children and their community.

The eighth commandment: respect for property

Read:

Exodus 20: 15

This commandment teaches us to respect other peoples' property and not to take for ourselves what belongs to someone else. A person who broke this commandment had to make 'restitution'. This meant not only giving back what had been stolen, but adding something to it. We find examples in Exodus 22: 1 and 5. A thief who stole an ox must give back five oxen. A thief who stole a sheep must give back four sheep (Exodus 22: 1). Even allowing animals to graze in someone else's field was a form of stealing (Exodus 22: 5) and the same type of punishment must apply. These examples were given at a time when the people had their own land to farm. The same rules would apply to the stealing of other things.

If you think about this, surely this type of punishment would teach people that stealing is wrong and paying back with extra was right because of all the upset that the victim had suffered.

When we break God's law, we not only damage other people, but we actually sin against God. In Old Testament times, those seeking God's forgiveness brought an offering: an animal was sacrificed in place of the sinner.

Read:

Leviticus 6: 1-7

When someone had stolen something he would bring an offering to the Priest. What else had to be done on the same day?

Read:

Ephesians 4: 28

1. When someone who used to steal becomes a Christian, what will they stop doing and what will they do instead?
2. Instead of stealing from other people, what should we be doing?

Think about other ways of stealing besides taking someone else's property. If someone is paid to work a number of hours, but uses some of that time to do something else, they are stealing from the person who employs them. Also it is possible to steal someone's good reputation by telling lies about them.

Chapter 19 – Be truthful and be content

The ninth commandment: be truthful

Read:

Exodus 20: 16.

This commandment teaches us to be truthful and particularly forbids telling lies about other people.

Read:

Proverbs 6: 16-19

Ephesians 4: 25

Zechariah 8: 16-17

1. What is God's attitude to lying? (Proverbs 6: 16-17)
2. What sin is mentioned twice in this list? (Proverbs 6: 17 and 19)
3. The apostle Paul wrote to people in Ephesus who had become Christians. What change did he expect to see in their lives? (Ephesians 4: 25)
4. What do you think comes before speaking evil about someone? Who knows when we do this? (Zechariah 8: 16-17)

Sometimes we hear gossip: talk about other people and all too often part or all of the gossip is false. The Bible tells us that we must not be a 'talebearer' which means we should never enter into such gossip (Leviticus 19: 16). The Lord Jesus said that we should treat others as we would like to be treated (Luke 6: 31). How should we act when unkind or wrong things are being said about someone who is not there to defend themselves? Maybe we could try to turn the conversation in another direction or politely make it clear that we will not listen to what is being said.

The tenth commandment: be content

Read:

Exodus 20: 17

This commandment teaches us to be content with what we have and not to want for ourselves anything belonging to others. Covetousness is a hidden sin: a sin of thought, but it can lead to other sins. We have an example of this in the book of Joshua, where a man named Achan brought trouble to Israel. God's instructions had been clear: no-one must take anything from Jericho after the city had been destroyed.

Read Achan's words in Joshua 7: 20-21.

We may sometimes feel that other people have things that are better than our own possessions.

Read:

Hebrews 13: 5

Philippians 4: 11-13

1. What is the opposite to being covetous? (Hebrews 13: 5)
2. What reason does the writer give for Christian contentment? (Hebrews 13: 5)
3. In what circumstances was the apostle Paul contented? (Philippians 4: 11- 12)

The Lord Jesus reminds us that life is about more than what we possess (Luke 12: 15 and 23). In any case, many of the things we want so much, have no lasting value. Much better to set our minds on pleasing God in this life and looking forward to lasting treasure in heaven (Matthew 6: 19-21).

The whole law

Read:

Matthew 22: 35-40

Galatians 2: 16

The Lord Jesus answered the lawyer's question with words from the Old Testament books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

1. Which of the ten commandments are summed up in Matthew 22: 37?
2. Which of the ten commandments are summed up in Matthew 22: 39?
3. Has anyone ever kept the command to love God with all their heart, soul and mind?
4. Has anyone ever kept the command to love others as we love ourself?
5. If we cannot put ourselves right with God (be justified by keeping His law), how can we be accepted by Him? (Galatians 2: 16)

The law shows us what we should do, but has no power to help us to do it. In fact, the law of God convinces us that we are sinners who cannot reach God's standard. In this way, God's law shows us that we need a Saviour. The apostle Paul tells us that the law is our tutor, or school teacher, that brings us to the Lord Jesus (Galatians 3: 24). For all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ there is forgiveness, because He has taken the punishment their sin deserves. Those who are too proud to admit that they are sinners who need a Saviour, will face God as their Judge and will have to take the punishment their sin deserves.

Section 5: The way of forgiveness

Chapter 20 - Facing the problem

God is Holy and our sin is hateful to Him. God is our Judge and His law condemns us to death (Ezekiel 18: 20 and Romans 6: 23). This means banishment for ever to a place where there is no love, no goodness, no hope – a place the Bible calls Hell.

BUT

Read:

Ezekiel 33:11

1. What gives God no pleasure?
2. What does God call on wicked (sinful) people to do?

Some people think they can continue to do wrong because God seems slow to take any action against them. They have not understood that God is very patient, allowing time for people to repent from their sinful ways (2 Peter 3: 8-9).

The Heart of the Problem: How can the justice of God be satisfied so that those who have broken His law can be forgiven? Only God could provide an answer to this question.

The Place where sin was forgiven in Old Testament days

When God gave His law to the people of Israel, He also provided a way for them to be forgiven when they broke that law.

While the Israelites were still camped near to Mount Sinai, God gave Moses instructions for the people to make the tabernacle (a word that means a tent). This was to be a special tent where God would be among His people (Exodus 25: 8). God chose Moses' brother Aaron and his sons to be priests at the Tabernacle. One of the main duties of the priests was to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people.

The Book of Leviticus tells us what sacrifices the people were to bring and how they were to be offered. The place where God chose to meet with His people was the place where sin had to be dealt with. The people of Israel were being taught that they could only come to God in the way He said they could come. Each animal that was sacrificed, died instead of the person who had sinned.

Read:

Hebrews 5: 1-4

Leviticus 5: 10, 13, 16, 18 and 6: 7

What was the result for those who believed what God said about their sin and obeyed Him by bringing their offerings?

God's desire was to be with His people but He could not overlook the sin that separated them from Him. For those who acknowledged their sin and approached God through sacrifice, there was forgiveness and fellowship with God was restored. Each animal that died in the place of a sinner was a picture of the Saviour God would send into the world.



Chapter 21 – The way of forgiveness now

In the book of Hebrews 10: 4 we read that the Old Testament sacrifices could never take sin away. Those who offered those sacrifices not only showed their obedience but also showed that they were trusting in the Saviour who God had promised.

Read:

John 1: 29

Hebrews 10: 11-14 (in verse 12 'this Man' is the Lord Jesus.)

1. Why did John call Jesus "the Lamb of God"?
2. Why do we no longer need to offer sacrifices for our sin?

Read:

Isaiah 53: 1-6

Matthew 1: 20-21

Isaiah wrote about the suffering of the promised Saviour.

1. Would the Saviour be welcomed? (Isaiah 53: 3)
2. Why would the Saviour suffer? (Isaiah 53: 5)
3. What have we all done? (Isaiah 53: 6)

4. The name 'Jesus' means 'Saviour'. Why was He given that name? (Matthew 1: 21)

Read:

Luke 5: 29-32

When people looked down on as being 'sinners' came to the Lord Jesus, He did not send them away. (The religious leaders at that time would have nothing to do with such people.) Jesus called on sinners to repent. Repentance means a change of direction or a change of mind. This is shown by being truly sorry for our sin and turning to God with a real desire to be obedient to Him. Paul's letter to the Christians at Thessalonica gives us an example of people turning from a life of idolatry to the true God (1 Thessalonians 1: 9).

There is another important word we need to know: the word "faith". This means believing what the Bible says about the Lord Jesus: that He will save all those who trust in Him, so that if I trust in Him, He will save me. Becoming a Christian involves both repentance and faith. In the Bible, God's law shows us that we are sinners who need to repent. We also learn that God has provided a way for us to be forgiven. The punishment for sin is death, but God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, has taken that punishment for all who have faith in Him.

If you are concerned about how to become a Christian, keep reading your Bible, keep meeting with people who are Christians and ask God to

forgive all your sins and accept you because of His own Son, who died so that sinful people could know Him as their Lord and Saviour.

You have already read the verse that says that Jesus came to save us from our sins (Matthew 1: 21). When someone becomes a Christian, they do not become perfect all at once. They will ask God to help them to say 'no' to sin and to live a life that pleases Him.

Jesus comes into our lives as both Lord and Saviour: He is the One we now obey because of all that He has done for us (John 14: 15), and because we know His commandments are good.

Some verses from the Bible to help you:

1. **Isaiah 53: 6**
2. **John 10: 27-29**
3. **John 20: 30-31**
4. **Acts 16: 30-31**
5. **2 Corinthians 5: 17**
6. **1 John 5: 11-13**

FURTHER INFORMATION

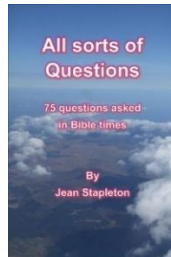
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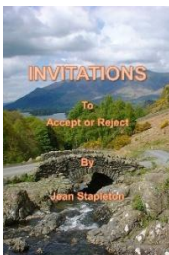
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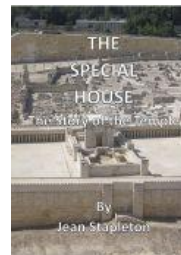
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