

College and Career 1Q 2017 Online Activities

Lesson 1

CREATION

The first two chapters of Genesis explore God's creating of the universe and the world with a special focus on human beings. Everything that God created He called "good"—not perfect, not complete, but good. People who were created in the first days in God's own image and continue to be created in His image today were called "very good"—again, not perfect or complete but well on their way to fulfillment in God. When He created the world, there was no sin in it so everything He had created through His words was healthy and inclined to Him and toward the goodness of their own natures. This same creation, even after sin had entered, praises the Lord and points to His goodness, even in times of grave trouble. People are also inclined to worship, though we do not always know that the Creator is the only being we should worship—not another god, not ourselves, not the creation.

Lesson 2

THE GLORY OF GOD

The glory of God is oftentimes described as a brightness that is seen in His presence. This brightness is awe-inspiring and leaves the viewer with no doubt that he or she has been in the presence of the Lord. This glory, though overwhelming, is not fatal for a person to see unlike God Himself. One cannot expect to see God face-to-face and live to tell the tale. His glory is unchanging, and for the sake of His glory God chooses to bless His people and reveal Himself to us. His glory demands that we honor Him with the words we speak and the patterns of our lives.

Lesson 3

THE HARVEST SEASON IN ISRAEL

The times of harvest in Israel were times marked by celebration and thanks to God for His continued provision for His people. In the midst of the Feast of Booths, for instance, the people would live in tents for a week to make the ingathering of the harvest easier and to remember the days of their desert wanderings. The harvest was also a time to remember those who needed extra help. The corners and edges of the fields were to be left for the poor to glean themselves for food. The very rhythms of farming provided Israel with the rhythms necessary to remember the Lord and His provision and to thank Him through sacrifice and caring for the widows and orphans, the foreigners, and the other poor who lived in their land.

Lesson 4

THE GRACE OF GOD

Though Christians often think of God's grace primarily or even only in terms of the grace we experience when our sins are forgiven, there are many other examples of God's grace, which are evident throughout creation. On a broad scale, God's grace is seen in the continued existence of His creation. Without His constant care, creation would fall to the powers of sin and evil that threaten it every day or would even cease to exist at all. God's grace is revealed in the changing of the seasons so that plants and animals can flourish in their times. In dealing with people, God's grace can be seen in how He continues to give us opportunity to seek Him or not. His great patience with His creation reveals His graciousness to all that He has made and loves.

Lesson 5

THE HALLEL PSALMS

The Hallel psalms include 113–118, 136, and 146–150. These psalms are “a litany of praise psalms used in Jewish festivals or morning services. Heb. *hallēl* is derived from the verb ‘to praise,’ which occurs as a command (‘praise thou’) in various Psalms” (Gerald M. Bilkes, “Hallel” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000], 542).

Lesson 6

BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

As the waters of baptism wash one’s sins away, that person becomes new. Who rises from the waters? Paul asserted that the person who had been baptized in Christ was no longer primarily to be seen in the Church as one who had Jewish or Greek background, was a slave or free, or even as male or female. Those who are in Christ are to modify the ways that Christ exemplified and to represent Him throughout their life. This is the highest calling available to people. Christ was perfect and calls us to be perfect with Him. However, when we fall short of that calling, we know that our new identity as forgiven people persists. He does not forgive us once and then expect us to be free from every sin and never again fall to vices. Instead, as forgiven people we continually recognize His forgiveness and strive to live worthy of His calling on our lives.

Lesson 7

GALATIA

Located in modern-day Turkey, the Gauls came to Galatia in the 3rd century B.C. They continued to govern themselves until they became a client state to Rome in 64 B.C. and then a province in 25 B.C. Paul’s letter addressed to the Galatians could have been written either to cities in the south of Galatia if he was writing to the current occupants of the land referred to as Galatia or the north of Galatia if he wrote to ethnic Galatians.

Lesson 8

CHRSTIAN FREEDOM

Though freedom is often thought of as the absence of any restrictions, true Christian freedom does include certain restraints. The laws that govern Christian freedom enable that freedom; after all, obeying sin leads to slavery to sin and eventually to death while obeying the Lord leads to slavery to righteousness which alone can yield true life. Thus Christian freedom is not primarily freedom from rules or restrictions but rather the freedom to live a righteous life. Only by following Jesus and allowing Him to govern our freedom can we learn what true human thriving is. It includes many sacrifices, but in sacrificing we find that the Lord continues to provide and changes our hearts so that we experience greater freedom in Him to do the good we desire instead of the evil we abhor.

Lesson 9

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Though Israel did not realize it for many generations, Yahweh has always been the Trinity. In the beginning with both the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit acted in the world. In the Church, we know that the Holy Spirit chooses to live within all those people who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives. Following this commitment, the Holy Spirit works in the individual lives of Christians and in the corporate life of congregations and the Church at large to change each of us into the people God intends for us to be. Though each person will show Christ differently in the world based on our personalities, our vocations and other roles that we have, and the settings of our lives, several key characteristics arise that show the Holy Spirit is still working within His people. Paul called these the fruits of the Spirit. Though we do not always feel His presence, we can look at our lives and the lives of fellow Christians for the evidence that the Holy Spirit is still active in the Church.

Lesson 10

THE APOSTLE JOHN

John, the brother of James and son of Zebedee, was one of Jesus' inner circle of three disciples. He was described in the Gospel of John as "the one whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23, NRSV). A leader in the Jerusalem church, he helped shape the early church not only through his leadership but also through his writing. Though scholars question whether the Gospel of John, the three letters attributed to John, and Revelation were all written by the same man, there can be no doubt that the Apostle John loved His Lord and sought to lead the Church in increasing faithfulness to Christ through both his life and writings.

Lesson 11

THE GRACE OF GOD

The grace of God is not seen more clearly anywhere than in Jesus' sacrifice for all people. God's favor for people and desire to be reconciled to us led to Jesus' living among us, teaching us through His words and actions, and dying and being resurrected from the dead in order to restore hope that all things can be made new, even sinful people. In His grace, God has made provision to deliver us from our sins and create in us new hearts that are inclined to Him rather than to sin.

Lesson 12

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Traditionally authorship of this gospel is attributed to the Apostle John though this book does not explicitly state its author. It was likely written sometime between 70–90 A.D. This fourth gospel does not share sources with the other three gospels. Thus while the Synoptic Gospels often share material and seem to have close relationships to one another, John stands more on its own. Like the others, however, John's gospel celebrates the Savior who had finally come into the world and work that He did in bringing life to the creation He had loved from the beginning.

Lesson 13

THE PROPHET JOEL

Very little is known about the prophet Joel. The beginning of the book of Joel says only that he was “son of Pethuel” (1:1, NRSV). Did he live in the 9th century or the 3rd century B.C. or somewhere in between? Did he live in Judah or in exile somewhere? Joel did not find it necessary for his readers to know the details of his life. He chose instead to simply speak the words the Lord revealed to him for the people of God in their hour of need.