

**Some Good News...for a Change**  
**Leader's Notes**  
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**STUDY 1: What is God Like?**

**A. Isaiah 45:18**

**1. God Himself**

**2. God created the heavens and the earth and intended for the earth to be inhabited. This creator-God of the Bible is the only God there is. For additional emphasis you may want to look at vv. 5,6,21 and 22; all of which repeat the idea that there is no God but this one. Hebrew writers frequently repeated important ideas for emphasis. Guess this idea was pretty important!**

**B. Exodus 34:6**

**1. God Himself**

**2. Compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. In this, as in all passages, be sure to define any terms which may be unfamiliar to anyone present**

**C. Psalm 97**

- He reigns and is thus King of the earth
- He is awesome and hidden ("clouds and thick darkness")
- He is righteous and just
- He is powerful (vv. 3-5)
- He guards the lives of the faithful

**D. Psalm 139:1-6 and 7-12**

- 1. (vv.1-6) The Lord knows everything about us; i.e. He's omniscient.**

2. (vv. 7-12) He is everywhere; i.e. omnipresent.

## **STUDY 2: God's Game Plan for Us and for Our World**

### **A. Genesis 1:1-2:3**

1. It is orderly, beautiful, diverse, bountiful and good. The word good is used throughout and the phrase very good ("good good" in the Hebrew) appears as the final description of completed creation in v.31. Remember what we said about Hebrew repetition!

2. God must also be orderly, beautiful (or aesthetic), creative, bountiful and very good. He must also be extremely powerful to have created everything out of nothing, just by speaking the word.

3. They are the most prized and special of all of God's creatures, the "crown of creation".

4. Many people have sought to identify one or several aspects of our humanness as the "image-bearing" part of us, e.g. our intellect, spirituality, or moral capacity. But really it's everything we are and do as humans—apart from our sin! In particular you may want to note that we were given the task of ruling God's creation and in that way are very much like Him. Also, in the beginning we reflected God's image by being very good like Him.

5. We didn't start out evil, broken, messed up, or disoriented; we started out good. And God has a very high opinion of us!

### **B. Genesis 2:4-17**

1. We are to rule, fill, develop and take care of God's creation. We were to do that job in submission to God as the true King of creation. Our role was to be more like that of "assistant kings".

2. Eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

3. Perfectly harmonious, very good.

4. Some examples might include no pollution or war or divorce or child abuse. Instead good, fair governments, "functional" families, businesses that produce quality, needed goods and services at a fair price and treat their employees fairly. Have fun with this; let the discussion go on as long as it seems fruitful to do so.

## **STUDY 3: What in the World Happened?**

### **A. Genesis 2:16-17**

#### **1. Death**

**2. Because God is totally good (remember "righteous and just", Ps. 97?) He cannot and does not tolerate evil of any kind. Any rebellion against God constitutes evil because it's rebellion against the good—Him. Therefore God, in His righteousness and justice, promises to wipe out rebellion and rightly so. Imagine the future of our world if God were not committed to wiping out evil!**

### **B. Genesis 3:1-19**

#### **1. The serpent, Satan, the devil**

**2. First he questioned God's command, with a little twist—he states that God's command covered all the trees in the garden, which it did not. He raises doubts about the validity of God's commands. Secondly, after Eve corrects him, the serpent blatantly contradicts God, "You shall not die"; and offers his own explanation of God's motives. The deceptive notion is that somehow people don't need to listen to God's commands and obey them absolutely, we can make our own decisions.**

**3. Sin is making our own decisions, acting autonomously from God. It is disbelieving God and then rebelling against His commands. It is simply choosing to "do our own thing".**

**4. We all "do our own thing" too. We find it all too easy to ignore God's commands and make our own decisions and choices. (See Isaiah 53:6a)**

### **C. Genesis 6:5-6 & 11-12**

**Our wickedness had become "great", our "every ...thought...was only evil all the time", we grieved and pained God, we corrupted our own ways and became violent.**

### **Mark 7:14-23**

**Our "uncleanness", that which makes us unacceptable to God, comes from our own hearts. It comes from inside of us not outside of us.**

### **Romans 3:10-12**

None of us is "righteous" (i.e. good), none of us understands or seeks God, instead we've all turned away from Him.

#### **D. Romans 8:19-22**

1. It was "subjected to frustration" and placed in "bondage to decay", i.e. adversely affected at its core.

2. Some examples might include volcanoes, hurricanes, floods, drought, disease, birth defects, the predator-prey relationship, aging and death.

#### **E. Genesis 3:15**

1. Not at all! Quite the opposite, it is a promise from God.

2. It is a promise that God will send someone to "crush the head of the serpent" (destroy Satan and, thus, evil). This means that the human race has hope that one day all of the mess, which we created by our rebellion, including our own death and destruction, will be put right.

### **STUDY 4: Who is Jesus?**

#### **A. John 10:24-33**

1. He indirectly claims to be the Messiah (Christ) by listing the evidence set plainly before them. He claims to be able to bestow eternal life on His "sheep" (followers) and that He and His Father are "one". In Greek, the word for "one" means more than one in purpose; it means one in substance. In other words, Jesus is claiming that He and the Father are the same substance, the same stuff.

2. For the crime of blasphemy, He claimed to be God. On one hand they certainly did have a case in that Jesus claimed to be the same substance as the Father. On the other hand, their case is based on the assumption that He is only a man. They believe that His claims are outrageous and false. But what if His claim is true? What if He is God? Well, then, no case!

#### **B. John 14:5-11**

1. He claims to be the way (to live life and to get to God), the truth (in a world of confusing beliefs), and the life (in a world of death). In other words, there are not many ways to live, many sources of truth or life, and there are not many paths

to God. He's the only one. He claims that if you've seen Him you've seen the Father because the Father is in Him and He is in the Father.

2. Jesus doesn't leave room for other paths to God. He claims there are none but Him. See also Acts 4:12.

### **C. John 10:14-18**

1. He claims to lay down His life (and to take it up again) of His own accord. No one takes His life from Him.

2. He is laying down His life for His "sheep". He plans to add "other sheep" to His flock.

### **D. Mark 10:45**

1. To serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

2. The curse of sin and death and all of their subsequent effects. Remember Romans 6:23.

3. Because He Himself was completely free of sin, the curse didn't rest on Him. He needn't ever experience death. He could have lived forever, but instead chose to substitute His life for ours, a life for a life. He paid the death penalty for us. He took our "rap".

## **STUDY 5: What Did Jesus Do?**

### **A. Matthew 4:17, 23-25**

1. He preaches, teaches, heals and casts out demons.

2. All of these activities show His authority as the Son of God, His power over the natural and supernatural worlds, His obedience to His Father and they brought real help to hurting people.

### **B. Matthew 26:57-68 & 27:11-56**

1. He was falsely accused, spat upon, struck with fists, exchanged for a common criminal, flogged, had a crown of thorns pressed onto His head, was stripped, beaten repeatedly on the head with a staff, forced to carry His own cross, had His

clothes stolen, was crucified, insulted, taunted, given only drugged wine and vinegar to drink and ultimately killed.

2. It means that He didn't simply feel forsaken, His Father actually forsook him. This is because He was bearing the sins of all of us in His body on the cross. His Father cannot look on evil (Habakkuk 1:13a) and so turned His back on His Son completely. Jesus thus experienced hell, i.e. complete separation from God and all of the horrors associated with that, for us at that moment on the cross. He did this so that we don't ever need to experience hell for ourselves.

### **C. Matthew 28:1-10**

1. Yes.

2. It is a testimony to His Godhood. It shows that He has power over death. Death is now defeated. It holds no sway over Jesus or anyone who belongs to Him.

### **D. Acts 1:11 & 1 Corinthians 15:3-8**

1. Very public. Very significant. The very large number of eyewitnesses makes it far less likely that this event was manufactured in the minds of a few wishful thinkers. This is not a made-up fairy tale.

2. Back to heaven to take up His rightful throne once again. It's meaningful because it shows us once again His power, His kingship and His Godhood.

3. That He will return to us in the same way that He left.

### **E. Revelation 21:1-8**

1. A place with no more death, mourning, crying or pain.

2. Jesus' salvation extends to the created order as well as to people; the earth itself is redeemed!

3. Here on earth with us!

4. "He who overcomes" and that is "only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God".

5. The cowardly, unbelieving, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, idolaters and liars. They are consigned to the lake of fire, hell.

## **STUDY 6: Responding to Jesus**

### **A. James 2:19**

**1. Believing in the existence of God is not necessarily a noble thing, in and of itself. Even demons can manage it!**

**2. No.**

### **B. "Good" people**

#### **1. Matthew 5:48**

**a. That we be as perfect as He is.**

**b. No.**

**c. Because God's holiness can accept nothing less. Even though we are born sinners with a natural proclivity to sin, God is not willing to say that that's O.K. An analogy might be someone with a brain injury that gives him or her a natural proclivity toward violence, even murder. Even though we might understand the origin of the proclivity most of us would not be able to wink at such behavior and call it O.K. We'd insist on such a person controlling his impulses or paying the consequences.**

**Romans 3:10-12 and 23**

**No.**

### **C. Acts 3:19**

**1. Repent and turn to God.**

**2. Our sins will be wiped out and refreshing will come.**

**D. Because it's a way to admit that we're not "good people" and that we're sorry for that, that we are rightly under the judgement of God and that only through His mercy and the death of Jesus on the cross can we ever be made "good enough" for God.**

#### **1. John 3:16 & 36**

**a. Receiving eternal life.**

**b. Not receiving eternal life and remaining under the wrath of God.**

## **2. Romans 10:9-10**

**a. salvation**

**b. By confessing with our mouths that "Jesus is Lord" and believing in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead.**

**c. It is to acknowledge His total control over our lives. It is to stop being autonomous (remember Study 3?) and to freely give our whole selves over to Jesus, acknowledging that He rightfully "owns" us because He made us and "paid" for us on the cross. It is simply to let Jesus run your life.**