

BIBLE TRUTHS ABOUT GOD

TEACHING GUIDE

David Strawn

A BAPTIST DOCTRINE AND HERITAGE STUDY FOR LIFE TODAY

For Leading a Study of *Bible Truths About God*
by James Semple

BAPTISTWAYPRESS®

Dallas, Texas

Bible Truths About God—Teaching Guide

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About This Teaching Guide

The teaching plans in this teaching guide are designed for leading a study of the book *Bible Truths About God* by James Semple. The book *Bible Truths About God* is one of a series of studies on Baptist beliefs that BAPTISTWAY PRESS®, the publishing arm of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, is producing.

The Writer

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Steps to Studying Bible Truths About God in Your Church

1. Decide to have the study.
2. Decide the best schedule for your church. For example:
 - Sunday night worship service for ten weeks
 - Wednesday night prayer service for ten weeks
 - A combination of Sunday and Wednesday nights for ten sessions in five weeks
 - Study period prior to Sunday night worship for ten weeks
 - Adult Vacation Bible School
 - Church, department, or class retreat
 - Deacons' retreat
 - Senior adult gatherings
 - Other short-term training opportunities
3. Identify the best teacher (or teachers). Good possibilities are your pastor, minister of education, minister of adults, other staff member, or adult Sunday School teachers. If you're reviewing this *Teaching Guide*, most likely it's you!
4. Order a copy of *Bible Truths About God* for each participant. Mail in the order form in the book, or call 1-866-249-1799, or see www.baptistwaypress.org, or e-mail baptistway@bgct.org, or fax your order to 214-828-5376.
5. Get the needed teaching resources. (In addition to *Bible Truths About God* by Dr. Semple and this *Teaching Guide* by David Strawn, get the *PowerPoint*® CD, also by Dr. Strawn.)
6. Conduct the study in your church.
7. Rejoice in the growth and fellowship that occur!

How to Use This Teaching Guide

This teaching guide is designed to assist leaders in guiding the study of the book *Bible Truths About God* by James Semple. The suggestions in this guide assume that every participant will have a copy of the book to use in preparation and during the sessions. Participants will gain the most if they will study the assigned chapter prior to each session.

In addition to use in the current study, this book and the others in this series of studies are designed so that participants can accumulate for their personal libraries helpful resources on Baptist beliefs and Christian beliefs in general.¹ Each church library needs a copy of this book and the other books in this series.

Study Options

Ten study sessions are provided in *Bible Truths About God—Teaching Guide*. Decide the best schedule for your church situation. (See number 2 in “Steps to Studying *Bible Truths About God* in Your Church.”)

The basic sessions are designed for thirty-five minute periods but can be expanded by using the additional suggestions. Thirty-five minutes seems most appropriate for use during Sunday and Wednesday nights. Lecture is the primary teaching method used in the basic plan, but other large-group methods are used as needed. The additional suggestions can be used when the schedule allows fifty-five to sixty minutes or when the learning group is small enough to use other teaching methods.

Session Design

Each session (except session eight) is divided into the following four major parts with numbered steps:

- *Introduce the Study*—A three- to four-minute idea to help participants relate to the material to be studied.
- *Guide the Study*—A thirty-minute procedure that leads learners to investigate and summarize the significant content to be studied.
- *Prepare for the Next Study*—A one- to two-minute assignment that encourages participants to read and study the chapters to be considered during the next study.
- *Additional Ideas*—Teaching ideas that can be used to expand the basic teaching plan.

Session Preparation

Read the entire book prior to the study. Knowing the direction and content of the book helps the leader (you) avoid dealing with material that will be studied in a subsequent session. Preview this teaching guide to allow enough time to prepare materials for each session.

Prepare visuals as suggested for each session. PowerPoint® presentations could be developed if you have the equipment, but overhead cels, marker boards, posters, and other visuals can be used as well.² Remember that learners retain more when they both see and hear information. Reading and underlining material in a book also create visual impressions and cause people to think about the content.

Although the steps in the session plans suggest actions you will take, effective learning always is from the perspective of what the participants will be doing. That is why your actions instruct learners to engage in learning activities such as listening, reading, looking, writing, thinking, answering questions, etc.

No teaching plan will fit every leader and every situation. Take the ideas given in this guide and use them to develop your own teaching plans. These ideas are provided to make your planning easier.

Notes

1. See the order form at the end of this book.
2. A PowerPoint® presentation is available on a CD. See the order form at the end of this book or access the BAPTISTWAY PRESS website—www.baptistwaypress.org. Handouts, scripts, and similar items described in this *Teaching Guide* for use in the class session are also available on the PowerPoint® CD.

SESSION *One*

Chapter One *Is There a God?*

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:* If you have the companion PowerPoint® CD, enlist someone to help you project the slides so they will be visible to all participants. If you do not plan to use the PowerPoint, prepare in advance a poster with these headings:

Belief in God Is Normal

Belief in God Is Natural

Belief in God Is Reasonable

Loosely cover each heading with a strip of paper that you can remove as you teach.

2. Provide copies of the study book, *Bible Truths About God*, to every participant. Refer to the Table of Contents on page 5 of the book and review the chapter titles to preview the study. To introduce the chapter, share the information about Antony Flew on page 9 of *Bible Truths About God*.

Guide the Study

3. Ask members to guess what percent of the nation's population expresses a belief in God. After a few responses, reveal that research suggests that more than 90% of the people in the nation believe in God. Show the first heading, "Belief in God Is Normal," on the PowerPoint slide or on a poster.
4. Show the second heading, "Belief in God Is Natural," and explain it using information from the heading by this name in chapter one of *Bible Truths About God*.
5. Show the third heading, "Belief in God Is Reasonable," and summarize information under that heading in *Bible Truths About God*, especially the comments about Dr. Francis S. Collins, Dr. Emile Caillet, and Dr. John A. McIntyre. (Use the PowerPoint slides.)
6. Invite participants to share their personal evidences for the existence of God. Allow for a few to respond.
7. Comment on the evidences for believing in God given in *Bible Truths About God* under the heading "Evidence of the Existence of God" (chapter one). Use the PowerPoint slides as your outline, if available.
8. Stress the value of the testimonies of the witnesses. Explain that eyewitnesses are valuable sources of information when lawyers are seeking to prove their cases in court.
9. Ask whether anyone present has recently celebrated a birthday. Explain that our birthdays serve to mark the beginning point of our lives, even though our birth occurred some time after our life began in our mother's womb. Although a person may not know the date of his or her birth, everyone's life has a beginning point. Even the universe has a birthday, although identifying that day with certainty is difficult.
10. Lead participants to imagine a sandy beach. Now ask them to imagine that sand becoming a computer chip by itself. Explain

that the basic element of both is silicon, but a great deal of effort and design is required to turn the silicon of sand into a computer chip.

11. Review the examples of the unique qualities of Earth under the heading “The Fine Tuning of All Creation” in *Bible Truths About God*.
12. Refer to the information in “The Origin of Life” and “The Human Body” in chapter one of *Bible Truths About God* to help participants explore the statistical improbability of human life coming into existence without a Creator.
13. Enlist someone to read the quotes from C.S. Lewis on page 22 of *Bible Truths About God* to reinforce the unique moral nature of human beings.
14. Explain that people who do not believe in God may not be convinced by such evidence, but that people who reject God’s existence in the face of strong evidence often do so for personal reasons. Refer to and summarize the information in “Conclusion” in *Bible Truths About God*.

Prepare for the Next Study

15. Remind participants that just because a person believes in a divine being does not assure that person believes in the one true God. Comment that during the height of the Roman Empire people said “all roads lead to Rome.” In a sense, that statement was true. Numerous Roman roads *did* lead to Rome. Some have made similar statements about God, that all roads lead to God. In the next study session, we will see why that statement is not true.

Additional Ideas

Study Groups

Divide the group into smaller groups of six or fewer people each. Prepare these study assignments and give one to each group. Give duplicate assignments if more than twelve people are in attendance. (A copy of these instructions is available on the CD for this study in “Teaching Resource Items.”)

Group 1. Read the section “Why This Scientist Believes in God” from chapter one of *Bible Truths About God* and prepare a brief report on the experience of Dr. Collins in coming to faith in God from reading John’s Gospel and *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis.

Group 2. Read the section “Journey Into Light” from chapter one of *Bible Truths About God* and prepare a brief report on Dr. Caillet’s coming to faith in God following his efforts to compile a book of his own beliefs and then reading the Bible.

Ask the groups to make their reports as part of step 5 in the teaching plan.

Special Report

Before the session enlist someone to prepare a special report from “The Fine Tuning of All Creation” (chapter one, *Bible Truths About God*) about the unique qualities of Earth that allows it to support human life. An extra resource could be Dr. Bill Tolar’s sermon “Creation—Chance or Choice” (www.inspirationalnook.com/articles/faith.htm; accessed 12/8/2008). Have the person present the report in place of the activity in step 11.

SESSION *Two*

Chapter Two *Who Is God?*

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:*
 - a. If you are using the PowerPoint® presentation, be sure it is working properly.
 - b. Obtain a highway map and mark two prominent cities a distance apart, such as Dallas and Houston.
 - c. Enlist participants to report on various false gods described in chapter two of *Bible Truths About God*, as follows: (1) The gods of Mesopotamia, page 25, first paragraph under “The ‘Gods’ of Old Testament Times”; (2) The gods of Egypt, page 25, second paragraph under “The ‘Gods’ of Old Testament Times”; (3) The Canaanite gods, page 26, first paragraph; (4) “The ‘Gods’ of the Greek and Roman World,” pages 26–27.
2. Referring to the highway map, invite a person to indicate the correct road that goes between the two cities you marked. Point out a different road and ask why the person did not indicate that road. Discuss the reality that no longer do “all roads lead to Rome” or Houston or some other city.

Guide the Study

3. Comment that in ancient times, many civilizations created their own gods often based on local legends or superstitions. Call on the first person to read the name and explanation of the gods of Mesopotamia. If you are using the PowerPoint®, let it serve as your outline as you briefly review the ancient gods listed. Continue by calling on the second person to report on the gods of Egypt.
4. Remark that according to one source there are more than 4,000 different religions in the world today.
5. Lead participants to list current religions with which they are familiar. As needed, encourage participants to review *Bible Truths About God*, pages 27–32. Using information from these pages in *Bible Truths About God*, comment on the religions either as they are named or after receiving all the names. Be certain to discuss Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism.
6. Ask what New Age religions believe, especially about God. Using the content in *Bible Truths About God*, pages 32–33, describe the diverse beliefs that coalesce under the title “New Age.”
7. Finally move to a discussion of “The God Who Reveals Himself,” beginning on page 34 of *Bible Truths About God*. Emphasize the ways in which God has revealed himself—creation, special revelation, and incarnation. Point out that many world religions have elements of truth in their teaching. Only Christianity, however, believes exclusively in the God who created all and revealed himself in Jesus.

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Ask participants to learn what they can about their given and family names before the next study. For *extra credit* they can

research the name *Edsel* and be prepared to tell why it has become significant in American culture.

Additional Ideas

Special Reports

Before the session, enlist several participants to do research on other ancient gods. They should locate depictions of these gods, identify the people who worshiped these gods, and describing the primary characteristics of the gods and their worship practices. (A copy of this assignment is available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the Power-Point® CD.)

Guest Lecturer

If you can locate in your community a leader from a mosque, a synagogue, a Buddhist temple, or some other religion that is described in chapter two, invite the person to come to your session and make a brief presentation about that religion’s basic tenets. Be careful to use this as a learning experience and not an opportunity to attack that person’s beliefs. Such a gathering could open a door of dialog with that group, by which you might be able to explain your faith as well as learn about theirs.

SESSION *Three*

Chapter Three *What Is God's Name?*

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:* If you are using PowerPoint®, be sure it is working properly.
2. Begin by sharing some information about your surname and its origin. Explain if your given name has any significance.
3. Ask whether anyone did the extra credit assignment from the previous session on the name *Edsel*. Be sure to include the information that *Edsel* was the name of Henry Ford's son and that the name was given to a Ford automobile that proved to be a total failure in the late 1950s. Point out that the name is now frequently used to describe something that did not live up to its *hype*.

Guide the Study

4. Call attention to Exodus 20:7. Have someone read the verse. Explain that the commandment is not just a prohibition against profanity. Point out that the Jews took, and still take,

the command so seriously that they will not write or speak the name of God.

5. Call attention to the word *Elohim* by referring to page 38 of *Bible Truths About God*. Point out the Hebrew plural *im* ending on the word. Explain that this ending does not suggest multiple Gods but is the Hebrew way of expressing the majestic nature of God that could not be expressed in a singular form.
6. Remind participants of their homework assignment (see step 8 in the teaching plan for session 2). Invite two or three people to comment. Emphasize that a name is more than just a title used to distinguish one person from another. A name carries something of the person whose it is. Ask whether the names *Adolph Hitler* or *Osama Bin Laden* carry any special significance. Then mention *Billy Graham* and *Mother Teresa*. Ask, *Do these names conjure different responses?* Use this exercise to illustrate how a person's name and character are linked
7. Write on a markerboard or newsprint the letters *L C K* or project the PowerPoint slide of these letters. Ask what these letters spell. *Lock? Luck? Lick? Lack?* Point out how important the missing vowel is to understanding the word. Then suggest that if you had written "the door" after those letters people would be much more likely to know that the word should be *LOCK*.
8. Explain that the Hebrews first wrote their language with only consonants. They depended on the context of the sentence and the knowledge of spoken Hebrew to provide the vowel information. Later, vowel markings were added to written Hebrew. However, when the writers came to the name for God, they were not sure what vowel markings to put because God's name was never spoken. Instead of speaking God's name, they would sometimes substitute the word for *Lord* when they were reading God's written name. To explain further, refer to *Bible Truths About God*, page 41, paragraph four, which begins with the words "This name of God, *YHWH*."

9. Call on a person to read Exodus 3:6, 13–15. Explain the passage using information in *Bible Truths About God*, pages 40–41, under the heading “YHWH (*Jehovah*).”
10. Refer to pages 42–46 of *Bible Truths About God* and review two or three of the YHWH compound names. For each name, provide an explanation of the name and review one or two of the Scripture passages. Ask different participants to read the verses and comment on the aspect of God’s name revealed in the passage.
11. Point out that on occasion the *El* form of God’s name is combined with other attributes as with the YHWH combinations. Refer to pages 47–49 of *Bible Truths About God*, and follow the same method as in step 10 to review two or more of the names.
12. Enlist someone to read Philippians 2:8–11. Point out that there Paul elevated the name of Jesus to the highest place in human expression. Summarize information from “Conclusion” on pages 49–50 as seems helpful.

Prepare for the Next Study

13. Tell participants that the homework for next week is to compile a list of things that make them who they are.

Additional Ideas

“El Shaddai”

Obtain a recording of “El Shaddai” by Amy Grant. Review the Hebrew words that are used in the song using the information in *Bible Truths About God* and other information you may find. (Perhaps do a Google search for the translation. You may wish to enlist someone else to prepare and lead all or part of this activity.) Play the song, asking participants to listen for the names of God that are used in the song.

Invite comments. Share the information you prepared. Encourage participants to worship God's name as you play the song again.

Scripture Search

Form three small groups from your large group. Assign each group one of the following passages: Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; and 2 Corinthians 4:5. Ask each group to read their assigned verse and discuss what emphasis Paul was trying to make about Jesus. Call for a report from each group, explaining what point they believe they discovered. Be sure the whole group grasps that Paul was applying to Christ the word "Lord" as a synonym for God's personal name. Therefore, in each of these passages Paul was reinforcing the truth of Jesus' divine nature.

SESSION *Four*

Chapter Four *What Is God Like?*

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:*
 - a. Be sure the PowerPoint[®] is ready if you are using it. If you are not using the PowerPoint, prepare a poster with the following statements: God's Essential Qualities; God's Moral and Spiritual Perfection; God's Compassionate Heart.
 - b. Locate a drawing of plans for something a person would build, such as a building or a craft project.
 - c. Obtain a small rubber balloon.
2. As you begin, refer to the instruction in "Prepare for the Next Study" in session three. Give the class a few moments to complete the assignment if they have not already done so. After about two minutes, ask for people to share the lists they prepared describing the things that make them who they are.
3. Point out that this session on chapter four will look at the things that make God who God is. Explain that many people have tried to project their attributes onto God. However, to really know and understand God we must look at how God has revealed himself to us. Show the poster or PowerPoint slide listing the attributes of God.

Guide the Study

4. Call on someone to read Psalm 90:1–2. Ask what point the psalmist was trying to stress in these lines. Receive with appreciation whatever responses are offered, but help people see that one important truth the psalmist was affirming was the eternal nature of God. Refer to “1. God is eternal” under “Attributes Essential to God” on page 52 of *Bible Truths About God*.
5. Ask how many present have on a watch or have some other time-keeping device (cell phone, etc.) with them. Ask why they carry it. Help participants see how time-conscious our society has become. Point out that we often plan our lives around television schedules, soccer games, and meetings. Emphasize that God created the time by which we try to control our lives, but God is not bound by time.
6. State that since God stands above time, God has no reason for change. He is changeless. Some Scriptures seem to indicate that God changed his mind. Ask, *How can we understand both of these ideas—that God is changeless but also changes his mind?* Suggest that because of God’s eternal nature and our time-constrained nature, God’s actions may *appear* to suggest that God changed his mind, as we might when we gain new information. Such a description is just an accommodation to human understanding and language, however. Explain further using information on page 54 of *Bible Truths About God*.
7. Draw an infinity sign— ∞ —on a marker board or chalkboard (or use the PowerPoint slide). Ask what the figure represents (infinity). Comment that God’s eternal nature also suggests that God is infinite. Likewise God alone is infinite, for God alone is Creator and is not created like everything else that exists.
8. Blow up a balloon. Hold it before the group and ask what is inside (air; your breath). Release the balloon and let it fly around. Ask what happened to the air or breath. Comment that when the air or breath was contained inside the balloon, you could not

- see it, but its presence was demonstrated by the size and shape of the balloon. Explain that both the Hebrew and Greek words for *spirit* are the same word for *wind* or *breath*. Refer to “2. God is spirit” on page 55 of *Bible Truths About God*. Enlist someone to read John 3:8. State that Jesus was trying to help Nicodemus have a better grasp of God’s spiritual nature. Lead the group to suggest activities, behaviors, abilities, etc., that God’s spiritual nature allow him to do that he might otherwise be prevented from doing if he were not spirit.
9. Divide the group into thirds. Ask one third to scan “3. God is omniscient” on page 56; a second third to scan “4. God is omnipotent” on page 57; and the remaining third to scan “5. God is omnipresent” on page 58. After about three minutes, lead each group to name at least one biblical example that supports the heading. After reports, point out that the five items just studied are “Attributes Essential to God” (pages 52–58 of *Bible Truths About God*).
 10. Call attention to the second heading—“God’s Moral and Spiritual Perfection.” From *Bible Truths About God*, pages 59–62, list some of the attributes of God that are included in this area (God is truth; God is righteous; God is holy; and God manifests his glory). Suggest that these attributes not only help us know what God is like, but they also help us understand the actual nature of truth, righteousness, and so on. That is, for example, as we see God at work we see what truth really is. Explain these attributes as time permits, using the information on these pages in *Bible Truths About God*.
 11. Finally point out the third heading—“God’s Compassionate Heart.” Refer to page 64 in *Bible Truths About God*. Explain that by discovering the heart of God we discover God’s love, mercy, and grace. Enlist someone to read John 17:23–26. Point out that in these verses Jesus helped his disciples understand that love is at the very core of the Trinity, and love is to be the binding force in Christians’ relationships with one another. Invite someone to

read aloud the first paragraph on page 66 to help participants see the reciprocal relationship between God’s mercy and grace.

12. Refer to and summarize “Conclusion” on pages 66–67 in *Bible Truths About God*.

Prepare for the Next Study

13. Display a set of plans. Ask participants to identify what they are used for. Comment that in the next session we will explore God’s plans as we see them in God’s word.

Additional Ideas

Small Groups

Prepare four study sheets titled as follows: “God is truth”; “God is righteous”; “God is holy”; “God manifests his glory” (available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the PowerPoint CD). Divide your group into four small groups. Give each group one of the sheets. Instruct them to review the content in *Bible Truths About God* that relates to the topic they have been assigned, particularly noting the Scripture passages that support that concept. Have them record on their sheet *how* the Scripture passages teach us about that aspect of God’s moral and spiritual perfection.

Hymn, “The Love of God”

Obtain a recording of the hymn “The Love of God.” Refer the group to the words to the hymn on pages 64–65 of *Bible Truths About God* (or in a hymnal). Ask them to follow carefully as you play the recording. (Alternative: have participants sing as the hymn is played.) Ask them to identify the aspects of God’s love that are described in the song.

SESSION *Five*

Chapter Five *What Is God Doing?*

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:* Be sure the PowerPoint® is ready if you are using it.
2. Enlist someone to read Jeremiah 29:11. Point out that in this passage God was speaking to the people of Israel when they were in a particularly difficult situation. Although the specific context to the verse is not the same for Christians living in the twenty-first century, the reality of God's perfect plan for his people has not changed. Disciples can be confident that even in hard times God has planned good things for those who follow him.
3. Call attention to the plans you used in session four in "Preparing for the Next Study." Call for participants to comment on the nature of the plans, what they are like (drawn on paper, graphic symbols, etc.). Hold up your Bible and affirm that the basic truths of God's plan for his people are found in Scripture. While individual disciples may wish for more specific details about God's plan, we can be confident that whatever God's plan is for us will always be in accordance with God's written word.

Guide the Study

4. Enlist someone to read Genesis 12:1–2 while the group listens for God’s message to Abraham. Comment that while God’s plan for the salvation of humankind is eternal, God chose a particular man at a particular time to be the instrument through whom he would work to accomplish his plan of redemption. Ask participants to look at Matthew 1 to see the genealogy of Jesus that traces back to Abraham. Emphasize that Matthew was helping his readers visualize this aspect of God’s plan.
5. Point out that God’s plan for humankind did not end with Jesus’ earthly sojourn. The complete fulfillment of God’s plan awaits Jesus’ return. Read Acts 1:10–11. Explain that we are now living in what we might call the middle of God’s plan of redemption, awaiting its consummation when Jesus returns to usher in the new age of God’s perfect kingdom.
6. Use the information beginning on page 71 of *Bible Truths About God* under “God’s Creation,” “God’s Preservation of Creation,” “God’s Providence,” “God’s Work of Salvation,” and “God’s Judgment” to outline these topics. As you lead the group to scan the information, call for volunteers to read at least one of the Scripture passages under each topic. Summarize each topic (see the PowerPoint slides).
7. Refer to the heading “God’s Eternal Work” on page 79 of *Bible Truths About God* (see the PowerPoint slide). Explain that while there is coming a time when our earthly existence will end, God’s work does not end. Whether disciples move into God’s presence in death, or remain alive until Jesus returns, our lives in the realm of time will cease. Jesus, however, promised his disciples that he will return and “receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also” (John 14:3). Point out that our service to Jesus begins in time and space and will extend into eternity when we are ushered into his heavenly presence.

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Invite participants to join you in singing the first stanza of the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Point out that at the end of the stanza is a simple affirmation of the nature of God—“God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.”¹ That is our topic for the next session.

Additional Idea

Agree/Disagree Activity

Prepare three signs on sheets of paper, as follows: “Agree”; “Disagree”; “Undecided” (available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the Power-Point CD). Post the signs on walls of your meeting room. Put “Agree” on one side, “Disagree” on the opposite wall, and “Undecided” somewhere in the middle.

Instruct members as follows: (1) stand and listen to the statements you will read; (2) decide whether you agree, disagree, or are undecided; and (3) then move to stand near the sign that represents their decision. After you read each statement and everyone has moved to one of the signs, call on two or three people to explain why they agree, disagree, or are undecided.

Avoid the temptation to comment on their answers. After you have read all the statements and the people have responded, have them return to their seats. Then guide them in exploring why people may agree or disagree with the statements. This activity can help people think about complex issues and formulate a reason for their decision.

Here are the statements (formulate additional or replacement statements if you wish in light of the needs of your group):

1. God used the process called evolution to create the world.

2. Between the time God created the world and the time Jesus came into the world, and now in the time since Jesus returned to heaven, Jesus was largely uninvolved with the world.
3. The emphasis on protecting the earth's environment is strictly humanistic and God has no part in it.
4. God sends tragedies such as floods, tornados, hurricanes, and earthquakes to punish evil people.
5. God's work of salvation requires that people who believe in Jesus demonstrate their faith with their works.

Notes

1. Words, Reginald Heber; music, John B. Dykes.

SESSION

Six

Chapter Six

What Is the Trinity?

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:*
 - a. Be sure the PowerPoint® is ready if you are using it.
 - b. Prepare slips of paper with the following Scripture references: Deuteronomy 6:4; Exodus 20:2–3; Isaiah 44:6; Mark 12:29–31; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Ephesians 4:6. Distribute them to different participants before the session. (A copy of these assignments is available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the PowerPoint® CD.)
2. Begin by calling on the assigned person to read Deuteronomy 6:4. Explain that this verse is at the core of Hebrew belief. In a world that acknowledged and worshiped a host of gods, the Hebrews stood out because of their unshakable conviction that there is only one God. This tenet of Jewish faith was one of the stumbling blocks that kept many of the Jews in Jesus’ day from faith in him. They could not accept that Yahweh, the one God, could also be experienced in Jesus.

Guide the Study

3. Point out that the term *Trinity* does not appear in the Bible but came from one of the early church fathers, Tertullian, about 200 years after Jesus. The word was coined in an effort to describe the threefold nature of God as revealed in Scripture.
4. Refer to the list of misunderstandings about the Trinity on page 82 of *Bible Truths About God*. Review the misunderstandings and the statements that correct them. Then refer to and emphasize the comments in the last paragraph on page 82. Affirm that human minds cannot comprehend fully the nature of the triune God, but our inability to completely understand or explain the Trinity does not negate its truth since it is taught in the Bible.
5. Invite the person to read Deuteronomy 6:4 again. Stress that when God first began to reveal himself to his people, God made it clear that he is one. The unity of the Trinity is indisputable. Ask those to whom you have given the other Scriptures to read the assigned verses. Help your students see that in both the Old and New Testaments, the unity of God is stressed. You may wish to invite others to read the Scriptures listed (1)-(2) and (4)-(11) on pages 83–84 of *Bible Truths About God*.
6. Comment that although the Hebrews stressed the singular nature of God, they also acknowledged God’s unique multiple expressions. Refer to page 85 of *Bible Truths About God*, paragraphs four and five, which begins “Another evidence for the triune God . . .” and concludes with the discussion of God’s appearance to Moses at the burning bush.
7. Call on someone to read Isaiah 63:10–11. Point out that here God’s prophet described God’s presence among God’s people as his Holy Spirit.
8. Explain that in the New Testament God’s triune nature is even more clearly demonstrated. Enlist someone to read Matthew 3:16–17. Point out that in this passage all three Persons of

the Trinity are present—Jesus, the Son being baptized; the Spirit “descending as a dove”; and the voice of the Father from heaven.

9. Call attention to Jesus’ words in his final discourse recorded in John 14. Beginning in verse 9 Jesus acknowledged that he and the Father are one. Then beginning in verse 16, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit as a “Helper” to his disciples. Explain that these verses show the equality and mutuality among the Persons of the Godhead. Explain further using the comments under the heading “The Equality of the Trinity” on page 91 of *Bible Truths About God*.
10. Refer to and review with the group the summary statements about the doctrine of the triune God on page 92 under “Conclusion” in *Bible Truths About God*. Invite comments or questions on one or more these statements.

Prepare for the Next Study

11. Comment that when we introduce ourselves to someone new we often identify ourselves with what we do. For instance: *Hello, I’m (insert your name), and I (tell what you do)*. Point out that much of what we know about God comes from our observation of what God has done and continues to do. In the next session, we will examine “What God the Father is Doing” in more detail.

Additional Idea

Matching Activity

Reproduce the following matching activity based on Isaiah’s affirmations of the unity of God (available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the PowerPoint CD).

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| a. No God before me | Isaiah 45:18 |
| b. First and last God | Isaiah 45:21 |
| c. From eternity | Isaiah 45:5 |
| d. No other rock | Isaiah 43:10 |
| e. Beside me there is no God | Isaiah 44:6 |
| f. There is none else | Isaiah 43:13 |
| g. No other God besides Me | Isaiah 44:8 |

Hand out copies to participants. Ask them to locate the Bible verses with the most similar wording and meaning and then draw a line connecting each verse with the affirmation that Isaiah made about God. (Participants could work together in pairs or threes.) A good place to use this activity is at the conclusion of step 5. (Answers: a. Isaiah 43:10; b. Isaiah 44:6; c. Isaiah 43:13; d. Isaiah 44:8; e. Isaiah 45:5; f. Isaiah 45:18; g. Isaiah 45:21.)

SESSION *Seven*

Chapter Seven

What Is God the Father Doing?

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:*
 - a. Be sure the PowerPoint® is ready if you are using it.
 - b. Prepare slips of paper with the following Bible passages written on them: Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:14 (available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the PowerPoint® CD). Distribute the slips to participants before the session begins.
2. Share with participants any special name you use(d) when addressing your earthly father such as *dad, daddy, pop, poppa*, etc. Ask whether anyone had a unique way of addressing his or her father. Suggest that the word *father* is sometimes viewed as a formal title and consequently many people have a more intimate way to address their father. Point out that last session during the study of the Trinity, we learned that one of the Persons of the Godhead is identified as God the Father. Comment that in the New Testament, the disciples were encouraged to develop such a personal relationship with God the Father that they could address him with the most intimate form of address they might use with their own earthly father. Refer to Galatians 4:6,

and explain “Abba” using information on pages 93–94 of *Bible Truths About God*.

Guide the Study

3. Ask who can quote John 3:16. Allow at least one person to do so. Ask what attitude or motivation God the Father is described as having (love). Then ask toward whom this love is directed (the world). Finally ask what God the Father did to show this love (sent his Son). Using information from “The Father Loves the World” on page 94 of *Bible Truths About God*, help participants differentiate between “the world” as it is used in John 3 and as it is used in 1 John 5:19. Stress the personal nature of the Father’s love. He loves people, not the world system that is corrupt.
4. Call for someone to read Genesis 1:31 while the group listens for how God’s creation is described. Receive reports after the reading. Explain that the Father who created the world loves his creation in spite of its fallen condition. Because the Father loves his creation, he is actively involved in providing for it. Summarize “The Father Provides for Creation” on page 95 of *Bible Truths About God*.
5. Point out that we have already quoted John 3:16, which highlights the Father’s role in giving his Son to provide salvation for the world. Call on the people who have the slips of paper with the Bible passages to read them at this time. Ask participants to listen for the common themes in these passages. Help students see that the Father took initiative in sending his Son, Jesus, and his purpose was to provide salvation for humankind.
6. Lead participants to look again to John 3. Remind them that John 3:16 comes in the context of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. Earlier in the conversation Jesus told Nicodemus that Nicodemus had to be “born again” (John 3:3) in order to be a part of God’s kingdom. The Father desires that people become

his children, not by physical birth but by his Spirit. A part of the work of God the Father is bringing new children into his family by faith and providing for their needs. Summarize “The Father Draws People to Christ” and “The Father Begets His Children” on pages 98–99 of *Bible Truths About God*.

7. Call on someone to read Hebrews 12:7–8. Ask what fatherly role this passage suggests God the Father plays (discipline). Remind participants that God is Father in perfection. Earthly fathers are pale copies of God’s perfect fatherhood. Sometimes earthly fathers perform their role of father so poorly that others get a distorted image of fatherhood. God the Father is always the perfect father to his children. As seems helpful and time permits, summarize “The Father Disciplines His Children” on pages 100–101 of *Bible Truths About God*.
8. Point out that one role most fathers take seriously is providing a home for their families. State that God the Father has provided a home for his children. Enlist someone to read John 14:2–3. Point out that the Book of Revelation suggests that God’s home for his children will not be complete until the end of time. Even so, Jesus promised the repentant thief on the cross “today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul suggested that to be “absent from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord.” The Bible teaches that our Heavenly Father has a home for his children when their lives on earth have ended.

Prepare for the Next Study

9. Lead members to think about the characteristics of their earthly fathers. Ask them whether they can see in themselves some of the things they recognize in their fathers. Suggest that the next session will explore the special relationship between God the Father and God the Son, Jesus.

Additional Ideas

Scripture Study

Make copies of the following worksheet (available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the PowerPoint® CD), and distribute one to everyone present. Instruct participants to read Jesus’ prayer in John 17, identifying answers to the questions on the worksheet. You may wish to use this activity in concluding step 5 or step 6.

The Prayer of the Son to the Father

1. According to Jesus’ words in verse 2, why did the Father grant authority to the Son?
2. In verse 4 Jesus says he has brought the Father glory on earth by doing what?
3. What did Jesus say he had “manifested” or revealed in verse 6?
4. In verse 8, what did Jesus say he had given, and what was done with them?
5. In verse 11, what did Jesus ask the Father to do for his disciples?
6. In verse 14, Jesus noted that “the world” hated his disciples because they were “not of the world.” From whom did Jesus ask protection for the disciples?
7. In verse 20 Jesus prayed for future disciples. What did Jesus ask of the Father for his future disciples in verses 21 and 23?

SESSION

Eight

Chapter 8

Who Is Jesus?

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:*
 - a. Confirm that the PowerPoint® is ready, if you are using it.
 - b. Prepare slips of paper with the following verse references written on them: Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Hosea 11:1; Isaiah 40:3–5; Zechariah 9:9; Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 16:10. (A copy is available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the PowerPoint CD.) Distribute slips to participants and ask them to prepare to read the verses aloud when called on.
2. Call on someone to read Matthew 16:16, Peter’s confession about Jesus. Point out that immediately following Peter’s words, Jesus commended him and pointed to the only accurate source of his information, God the Father. Here as in a number of other places in the Gospels Jesus affirmed his relationship as the Son of the Heavenly Father.

Guide the Study

3. Direct members to look up John 1:1. Ask what point John was trying to make in this verse. In the discussion, emphasize how completely John was stressing the equality of the Word (Jesus) with God the Father. The Word was present in beginning, was with God, and was on an eye-to-eye basis with God. He *was* God.
4. Now have participants consider John 1:3. Ask how many things came into being without the Word—Jesus. Emphasize that according to Scripture, nothing exists that he did not create. Summarize “He Is the Agent of Creation” on page 107 of *Bible Truths About God*.
5. Instruct members to consider John 1:14. Point out that John had spent the first thirteen verses of his Gospel stressing the divine nature of God’s Word, equating him to the Yahweh God of the Old Testament. In this verse John dropped a bombshell into conventional understandings of God. Suggest that somehow God, who has always been, who brought everything into existence, moved out of his totally spiritual realm and became human. John gave no explanation other than his eyewitness testimony to the reality of the Word’s human expression—Jesus Christ. Comment that many attempts have been made to explain the incarnation so as to define Jesus as either somehow less than fully God or less than fully human. The mystery of the incarnation—Jesus fully God *and* fully human—can never be completely explained in ways that human beings can understand it. As seems helpful, add further insights from “He Was Fully Human” on pages 107–108 of *Bible Truths About God*.
6. Comment that the Son’s coming, life, death, and resurrection were promised in the Old Testament. Call for those who were given the Old Testament Bible references to read them at this time. Call on them in the order listed in step 1b. Help partici-

pants understand that Jesus' ministry on earth was an integral part of God's plan for the redemption of humankind.

7. Comment that Jesus' virgin birth and sinless life set him apart from the rest of humankind. He was fully human, but he was not contaminated with the sin that permeates the rest of humanity. Point out that Jesus' sinless life was lived out in the common working world in which the rest of humankind lives a sinful life. Not only did Jesus not commit sin, but Jesus spent his time in doing good. Invite participants to recall some of the good deeds Jesus did while alive on earth. Allow a few moments for the group to respond. Remind them that Jesus set an example for us to follow in the doing of good deeds. Point out that Jesus did not reserve his good deeds for those who were his close friends, who could repay, or who deserved to be helped. Like Jesus, we must look for ways to do good to all people regardless of whether we deem them worthy. Provide additional insights from "He Went About Doing Good" on pages 111–112 in *Bible Truths About God*.
8. Suggest that many people in the history of the earth have lived good lives and done good things for others. Some people have even been put to death because of their efforts on behalf of others. Others have sacrificed their lives to allow others to live. However, the deaths of none of these good people have been like Jesus' death. His death is not unique in its manner but in its very nature. Jesus' death was a *substitutionary* sacrificial death. His death was not as a result of his sin, but as a payment for the sin of all humankind. Invite someone to read Romans 5:6–8. Explain that in these verses Paul wrote that Jesus died in our place. He took our sin punishment. Even the kindest, most helpful person who ever died, ultimately was paying the price for his own sin. Jesus, however, was not under such penalty because he had no sin.
9. Comment that Jesus' sacrificial death is only part of the story. He was brought back to life in a new resurrection body. Jesus'

resurrection is the promise of the resurrection and a new resurrection body to those who are trusting in him. Explain that Jesus' resurrection body was necessary for him to return to the Father in heaven. Earthly bodies cannot inhabit heaven. Point out that in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul explained the necessity of the resurrection body for life in heaven.

10. Invite someone to read Acts 1:10–11. Ask, *What promise does these verses contain? Why is this promise important?* Comment that Jesus' incarnation, sinless life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension were not just a blip in God's eternal plan. Jesus' return will complete his work of redemption. He is the Sovereign over all the universe, and when he returns he will take his rightful place on the throne ruling over all his creation.

Prepare for the Next Study

11. Ask participants how many would like to have Jesus physically present with them to help them every day. Then ask what disadvantage his physical presence might be. Suggest that if Jesus were physically present with one person or even a group, there would be multiplied millions of people with whom he was not present. Suggest that God has a better plan that will be explored in the next session.

Additional Ideas

Research Assignment

Enlist someone in advance to research evidences of the resurrection of Jesus. Suggest that the person begin with the evidences of the resurrection listed on pages 114–115 of *Bible Truths About God*. The person may want to include other resources such as biblical commentaries on the Gospel accounts of the resurrection, Josh McDowell's *Evidence*

that Demands a Verdict, Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*, and/or similar books on Christian apologetics. Have the person share the report after step 9.

Responsive Reading

Use the statements under the heading “He Shall Reign Forever and Ever” on page 117 in *Bible Truths About God* as a responsive reading. Begin with the second paragraph under this heading, which begins “When Jesus came to the earth. . . .” Read the first sentence of each paragraph, omitting the Scripture reference, and ask the group to read the second sentence. Read the final sentence on page 118 together.

SESSION *Nine*

Chapter 9

What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:*
 - a. Confirm that the PowerPoint® is ready, if you are using it.
 - b. Prepare slips of paper with the following Bible references: (1) Ezekiel 11:5; (2) Ezekiel 36:26–27; (3) Isaiah 63:10; and (4) Psalm 51:11 (available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the CD).
2. To help participants understand that God’s Holy Spirit has been and is an equal member of the Godhead for all eternity, invite someone to read Genesis 1:2. Point out that God’s Holy Spirit was a participant in creation. Now ask someone to read Acts 2:4. Explain that although God’s Spirit has always been, the Holy Spirit became active in the lives of disciples in a unique way following Jesus’ return to heaven. Invite participants to turn to *Bible Truths About God*, chapter nine. Summarize briefly the opening paragraph on page 119 and then the paragraph under the heading “The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.”

Guide the Study

3. Call on the people to whom you gave the slips with Bible references to read the verses aloud, in order, while the group listens for what the passages tell us about the Holy Spirit. After the reading, call for reports about what the group learned. (God’s Spirit had an active role in the lives of the ancient Israelites.) Be sure to stress the role of the Spirit in inspiring the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures. Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16 and Paul’s affirmation that all Scripture—what we would now call the Old Testament—comes from God’s *breath* or *Spirit*.
4. Comment that even in New Testament times disciples had misunderstandings about the role of the Holy Spirit among them. In 1 Corinthians, Paul chastised the Corinthian Christians for their chasing after showy expressions of God’s Spirit such as tongue-speaking. He wanted them to correctly understand the way God’s Spirit helped believers. Enlist someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11. Explain that Paul was eager for the Corinthian disciples to experience the grace-gifts of God’s Holy Spirit. He wanted them to recognize the Spirit’s sovereign role in apportioning gifts as the Spirit sees fit.
5. Refer to “The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament” on page 122 of *Bible Truths About God* and summarize paragraphs 1 and 2 on that page and the first paragraph on page 123. Be sure to explain that in John 14, Jesus described the Holy Spirit with the Greek word *parakletos*. This word means *someone called alongside*. Comment that some have likened this idea to an advocate, one who will stand up beside a person regardless of the consequences that might come. Remind students that the Holy Spirit will come to our defense at our hour of greatest need and will not desert us when the going gets difficult.
6. Refer to “The Ministry of the Holy Spirit Today,” which begins on page 123 in *Bible Truths About God*. Lead the group to scan the subheadings on pages 123–131, which list fourteen ways the

Holy Spirit works in the world today. Select six to eight of the ways listed and plan to use the Scripture passages in them to discuss the work of God's Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. If you are using the PowerPoint CD, all fourteen points are listed. Use as many as you wish and as time permits.

7. As you conclude the session, stress the dynamic day-to-day companion role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Be certain participants understand that God has made provision through his Holy Spirit to be with disciples at all times in all circumstances. State that Jesus' promise to the first disciples that he would not leave them to face life alone was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and continues to be fulfilled every day by the Spirit's presence in the lives of believers.

Prepare for the Next Study

8. Lead participants to think about how the worship of pagan gods is often depicted. Suggest that the pagan gods are often angry and must be appeased with a sacrifice. They often are portrayed as distant and aloof from their worshipers. Suggest that in the next session the group will explore the wonderful truth that while the God of creation is separate and holy, he desires personal relationship and fellowship with his people.

Additional Idea

Small Groups

Prepare three assignment sheets—one each for Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:7–11; and Ephesians 4:11–13 (assignments available in “Teaching Resource Items” on the CD). Divide the group into three smaller groups, and instruct each group to do the following: (1) read the passage concerning spiritual gifts on their assignment sheet; (2)

list the gifts the Holy Spirit brings to the church through believers; and (3) provide examples of how one or two of the gifts can be employed by the Holy Spirit in a church.

SESSION *Ten*

Chapter Ten

How Can We Know God Personally?

Introduce the Study

1. *In advance:* Confirm that the PowerPoint® is ready if you are using it.
2. Comment that several years ago a movie was produced titled *Six Degrees of Separation*, based on a popular idea that everyone is connected to everyone else by no more than six connections. According to this idea, I may not know the president of the United States but I know someone, who knows someone, who knows someone, etc., who knows the president or any other person on earth. Suggest that if nothing else, the idea is an attempt to indicate the connectedness among people, including with important people. Suggest that one of the great realities of the Christian faith is that the God of all creation wants to have a direct personal relationship with every person regardless of the person's importance in the estimation of others.

Guide the Study

3. Point out that one great barrier that inhibits humans from having a relationship with God is our sin. God is completely holy, and sinful humanity could never come into God's perfect presence on their own. Invite someone to read 2 Corinthians 5:18–19. Ask, *What did Paul say God did to enable sinful people to have a relationship with him?* (“reconciled us to Himself through Christ”) Summarize the information under “How Can Sinful Humanity Approach Holy God?” on pages 133–135 in *Bible Truths About God*.
4. Call on someone to read aloud Galatians 2:20. Ask, *How could Paul say that Jesus, who had died on the cross, was living in him? What did Paul mean?* To explain the idea of Christ living within us, summarize the information on pages 136–137 of *Bible Truths About God*.
5. Ask participants how people tend to act when they are in the presence of someone who is genuinely important. Receive responses that are given, but focus on the thought that such a person's presence tends to evoke an attitude of respect. Now ask them to think about their attitude and behavior when they come into the presence of the God of all the universe. Enlist someone to read Isaiah 6:5. Comment that this is how Isaiah responded when he realized he was in God's presence. Comment that worship is the natural response of the created to the Creator.

Summarize the information under “Knowing God in Worship,” which begins on page 137 of *Bible Truths About God*. Be certain to stress that worship is not for the benefit of the worshiper. True worship is wholly directed to God and is for God's glory. Genuine worship is not about what we can get but what we are to give. Worship can and should be experienced both in private and in corporate settings. (See PowerPoint slide.) Disciples need to gather with other disciples on a regular basis to spend time worshipping the One who has created and redeemed them. Suggest that as absolutely vital worship with others is, it is not

enough by itself. God expects worship from his people as we encounter him on a regular daily basis. Private worship—such as in a quiet place at home, at work, or outside—is a necessary complement to corporate worship. Likewise, however, private worship experiences are inadequate without coming together with other disciples in worship.

6. Invite someone to read John 5:17 and 19 (see the PowerPoint slide). Explain that Jesus made it clear that the Father was taking an active, working role in his creation. Jesus understood that it was his responsibility to join his Father in the work the Father was doing. Suggest that whenever disciples sense God at work in their world, that is an invitation from God to join in his work and come to know God more fully as they work with him.
7. Remind participants that one important function of knowing God in his work is to share with those who do not know God how they too can come to know God. Doing good works in God's name is vital to the disciple's life. Summarize "Knowing God Through His Work," which begins on page 140 of *Bible Truths About God*. Emphasize that the Bible says we show our faith is genuine by our work for God. Go on, however, to reinforce the fact that just doing good works in God's name will not open the door of salvation to those receiving ministry. Jesus was always eager to help those in physical need, but he also shared with those he was helping their need for repentance and trust in God. Jesus' pattern provides the model for us.

Additional Idea

Dramatic Reading

Enlist someone with good dramatic skills to play the part of the Apostle Paul. Have "Paul" sitting at a table, dressed in a Bible-times costume. When the spotlight comes up on him, have him take up a scroll of paper as if he were reading to himself something already

written on it. After a moment have him pick up a quill, dip it in an inkwell, and then begin to act as if he were writing on the scroll as he quotes (reads) Philippians 3:1–14. At that point have him lay down the quill and begin re-reading to himself the scroll as the light dims.

When the actor has finished and the lights have gone down on him, direct participants to Philippians 3 in their Bibles. Explain that this is probably one of the last letters that Paul wrote; likely he was anticipating his execution. Encourage everyone to read Philippians 3:10–11. Stress that Paul continued to want to “know Christ” and to share in Christ’s sufferings and in Christ’s resurrection.

You may wish to use this activity with steps 2, 4, 6, or 7.

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