

CHRISTIANITY

FOR BEGINNERS

MIKE MAZZALONGO

STUDENT WORKBOOK

bibleTalk^{TV}



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Christianity for Beginners

Mike Mazzalongo

This series explains basic topics such as belief in God, the history and writing of the Bible, the person of Jesus, the nature of salvation and more. All presented in an easy-to-understand approach suitable for those less familiar with the Bible or the Christian religion



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1. Belief in God

This first lesson in the series reviews the reasons why Christians believe in a Supreme Being. This idea is looked at from both a philosophical and theological perspective.

Intro – This is a seven-lesson course for new Christians:

Lesson #1 – Belief in God _____

Lesson #2 – The Christian Religion _____

Lesson #3 – The Bible _____

Lesson #4 – Jesus Christ _____

Lesson #5 – Salvation _____

Lesson #6 – The Church _____

Lesson #7 – Christian Living _____



Belief in God

The beginning point of any religion is belief in God. _____

Some believe in:

- No God _____

- Many gods _____

- One God _____

What Christianity Believes About God

1. Human Reasoning

First Cause Argument _____

The Complexity Argument _____

The Moral / Spiritual Argument _____

2. The Bible

The Bible contains information about who God is, not just that He is. _____

Some of the things the Bible says about God:

A. He created the world – Genesis 1:1;27 and human life. _____

B. God loves His creation – John 3:16 _____

C. God will judge the world – I Peter 1:17 _____

3. Jesus Christ

The basic information about Jesus Christ comes from the Bible. _____

The Bible teaches that God took on a human form. _____

Jesus teaches us about God:

A. God has compassion for those who are weak. _____

B. God wants people to have eternal life with Him - John 6:40

“Father’s Will” _____

“Believe in Him” _____

“Should have eternal life” _____

“I will resurrect him” _____

Summary

We come to belief in three ways:

a. Human reasoning _____

b. The Bible records _____

c. Jesus Christ _____

The Bible and Jesus Christ are the best source.



Discussion Questions

1. Why has mankind generally believed in a “higher power”?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of relying on human reasoning to understand the existence of God?

3. What is the primary weakness of the “First Cause Argument” in trying to explain the existence of God?

4. How is the “Complexity Argument” and the “Human Reasoning Argument” related as explanations for the existence of God?

5. Summarize the “Moral/Spiritual Argument” to explain the existence of God.



6. How does the Bible aid our understanding of God?

7. Which characteristic of Jesus best demonstrates the existence of God? Why?

8. Comment on the following statement: We do not have to understand the existence of God, but we do need to believe in the existence of God.

9. How can you as a student use this information to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

2. The Christian Religion

In this lesson, we will examine the Christian religion and see how it compares to the other major religions in the world.

Intro: This lesson compares Christianity to other religions and helps in three ways:

1. Historical Context _____
2. Understanding _____
3. Appreciation _____

Major Religions of the World

There are only about 12 major religions.

1. Religion

Definition “...man’s expression of his acknowledgement of the Divine”.

Many philosophies and thought systems that are not necessarily religious (New Age Movement).

2. Organized Religion

Organized religions have certain features:

- History of Origins _____
- Concept of Deity _____
- Concept of Mankind _____
- Salvation _____
- Worship _____
- Scriptures _____
- Geography _____

Primitive Religions

Features of primitive religions:

Magic _____

No individual god _____

Various practices:

Animism _____

Dynamism _____

Fetishism _____

Totemism _____

History of Primitive Religions:

4000 BC _____

Egypt _____

Babylonians _____

Greeks _____

Romans _____

** Primitive religions are not part of organized world religions.*



Major Religions

A. Far Eastern Religions (China/Japan)

1. Taoism (China) _____

2. Confucianism (China) _____

3. Shinto (Japan) _____

4. Buddhism (India/China/world) _____

B. Eastern Religions (India)

1. Hinduism (India) _____

2. Jainism (India) _____

3. Sikhism (Pakistan) _____

C. Near Eastern Religions (Middle East)

1. Zoroastrianism (Iran) _____

2. Islam (Saudi Arabia/world) _____

3. Judaism (Israel/world) _____

4. Christianity (Israel/world) _____

The Supremacy of the Christian Religion

Three reasons why Christianity is the foremost religion:

1. Superior Revelation of God _____

2. Superior Leader _____

3. Superior Solutions _____

A. Identifies the problem _____

B. Solves the problem _____

C. Offers a better hope _____

Even more reasons to argue for Christianity's place _____



Discussion Questions

1. What are some religions you've heard about or are familiar with?


2. Why do you think that there are so many religions in the world?

3. How do you define religion?

4. What elements of primitive religions can we see in certain forms of Christianity?

5. What elements of organized religions can we see in Christianity?

6. Why does God permit so many religions to exist and grow?



7. What one thing, in your opinion, makes Christianity superior to other religions? Why?

8. What are some views people hold of God?

9. What is the underlying problem that causes human suffering?

10. What solution did God provide for our problem with sin?

11. Read Ephesians 2:8-10. What does Paul state is the basis of our salvation?

12. What are some expectations we have as Christians in this life?

13. How can you as a student use this to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

3. The Bible

This lesson examines the history of Bible authorship, how the Bible was organized into its present form, and some key reasons why Christians believe that it is inspired by God.

Intro: The source for the history and teachings of Christianity is the Bible.

Bible Content and History

Origin of the Bible

1. Old Testament Origin _____

Moses credited with writing and editing the first 5 books of the Bible (Pentateuch)

2. Old Testament Organization _____

The Jews had the same material but arranged it differently.

Law _____

The Prophets:

1) Former _____

2) Latter _____

3) Holy Writings _____

Jewish	
Pentateuch	- 5 books
Prophets	- 8 books
Writings	- 11 books
<hr/>	
24 books	

Modern	
Pentateuch	- 5 books
History	- 12 books
Poetry	- 5 books
Major Prophets	- 5 books
Minor Prophets	- 12 books
<hr/>	
39 books	

3. Old Testament Story _____

4. New Testament Origin _____

The New Testament is about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. _____

New Testament Division:

Gospels - 4 books _____

History - 1 book _____

Pauline Epistles - 13 books _____

General Epistles - 8 books _____

Prophecy - 1 book _____

5. New Testament Canon _____

“Canon” = Measuring Rod _____

Three main factors led to Canon:

1. Apostles _____

2. Written material _____

3. Jesus’ return _____

Key events that forced its production:

Canon of Marcion - 140 AD _____

Persecution _____

Codex Form _____

The main question was, “Which are the inspired books?” _____

Early church guided by three principles in forming the Canon.

1. Authorship _____

2. Value of Book _____

3. Circulation _____

New Testament Translations _____

Bible Claims

The Bible claims that it is inspired:

II Timothy 3:16 _____

II Peter 1:20-21 _____

Three reasons why Christians believe the Bible is inspired:

1. Ability to Survive _____

2. Uniqueness _____

3. Fulfilled Prophecy _____

- Mark 10:32-34 _____

* Only a book that had Divine authorship would have these types of features.

Discussion Questions

1. What is meant by, "God's revealed will"?

2. Why would man need a document such as the Bible?

3. What is the main story of the Old Testament and why is it important?

4. What is the main story of the New Testament and why is it important?

5. Read Matthew 16:13-20 and answer the following questions:

How was apostolic authority given?

What did Jesus mean by loosing and binding on earth and in heaven?

What were the three principle elements underscoring why content was contained in the New Testament and how does this relate to apostolic authority?

6. Why is it necessary to have various translations of scripture?

7. Read Matthew 24:35 and answer the following questions:

What three reasons point to the inspiration of scripture?

Concerning scripture's ability to survive, what attacks have been made on scripture that you may be aware of?

Concerning scripture's uniqueness, how does scripture differ from other literary works over the centuries?

Concerning scripture's fulfillment of prophecy, how do they point to the inspiration of scripture?

8. How can you as a student use this to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

4. Jesus Christ

The Christian faith is based on the person of Jesus Christ. In this lesson we will look closely at this person in order to more clearly define His true nature and character.

Intro - Jesus is the reason for the Bible, Faith, and the Christian religion. There are many theories about Jesus: _____

The Bible's Central Theme

Jesus is the central theme of the Bible _____

1. Old Testament _____

2. The 4 Gospels _____

3. Rest of New Testament _____

The Bible speaks concerning Jesus:

Promise _____

Preparation _____

Circumstances _____

Content _____

Details _____

People _____

Who is Jesus?

According to the Bible _____

Witness of the Apostles

1. Peter

- Matthew 16:16 _____

- Acts 3:14-15 _____

What Peter concluded about Jesus:

A. Messiah _____

B. Divine _____

C. Resurrection _____

2. Thomas

- John 20:24-28 _____

Thomas' experience:

A. Resurrection _____

B. Divinity _____

C. Worship _____

D. Authority _____

3. Paul

- Acts 22:1-16

- Colossians 1:15-18

What Paul says about Jesus:

A. Visible God

B. Existence

C. Supreme

D. Agent

E. Eternal

F. Head

G. Resurrected

Testimony of Jesus

What Jesus says about Himself:

1. To Samaritan woman – John 4:25-26

2. To Peter – Matthew 16:15-17 _____

3. To Apostles – Matthew 28:18-20 _____

Among other things the Bible teaches that Jesus is:

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____
- H. _____
- I. _____

Faced with a mountain of information about Jesus, John simply summarizes:

John 20:30-31 _____

John 21:25 _____



Discussion Questions

1. Read Matthew 16:13 and answer yourself, “Who do you say Jesus is”?

2. In what ways has your view of Jesus changed from what you knew of Him to what you’ve learned of Him?

3. Although the Old Testament does not mention the name of Jesus specifically, how is it about Jesus?

4. What is the value of the four gospel accounts to us regarding Jesus?

5. In addition to the four gospels, what is the value of the rest of the New Testament regarding Jesus?

6. What is the value to us of having the apostles write about Jesus?



7. Why is the apostle Thomas referred to as the “doubting” apostle?

Do you agree or disagree with this title?

8. What about Paul makes him a credible and effective witness for Jesus?

9. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7. What is the treasure Paul speaks of?

10. What is the consistency between the encounter with Jesus by the Samaritan Woman in John 4:25-26, Peter’s confession of who Jesus was in Matthew 16:15-17, and the final words of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 and John 14:6?

11. How can you as a student use this to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

5. Salvation

This lesson lays out the simple yet powerful plan that God has initiated to save mankind from eternal condemnation due to personal sin and how Jesus Christ fits into this plan of salvation.

Intro: This lesson deals with the most important subject spoken of in the Bible by Jesus – salvation.

General Idea of Salvation

Improved or altered state _____

All religions, except Christianity, demand some form of moral or religious law keeping in order to become worthy of salvation. _____

Basic Premise:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Christianity and Salvation

A. The Problem

- Romans 3:23 _____

- Romans 6:23 _____

- I John 3:4 _____

To summarize these passages: _____

Plant example _____

Real life scenario _____

Other religions believe that _____

Christianity is unique _____



B. The Solution

God pays the moral debt we owe Him

- Romans 5:6-11

Features of Christianity:

A. The “human” form of Jesus

B. The “necessity” of His death

- Hebrews 9:22

C. How the sacrifice of one pays for all?

- I Peter 3:18

D. What was the role of the Jewish people?

E. What is the role of the Bible? _____

- II Timothy 3:15 _____


Christianity presents a unique way of dealing with human weakness and moral failure.

Salvation is offered to man based on faith not human effort. _____

- Romans 5:1 _____

- John 3:16 _____

The “plant” example explained _____



- Romans 3:21-22 _____

More Questions:

A. What is faith and what are we to believe? _____

- Matthew 16:16 _____

B. What about repentance and baptism?

- Acts 2:38 _____

- Acts 22:16 _____

- To summarize _____

C. Who can become a Christian and when can a person be baptized?

- Mark 16:15-16 _____

Summary

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? _____

Have you repented and been baptized? _____



Discussion Questions

1. Why do we feel salvation is necessary?

2. What do major religions of the world teach regarding salvation?

3. What is meant by the concept that humans are flawed?

4. Read Romans 5:6-11. Summarize in your own words what this passage says as to the solution to human's sinful condition?

5. What is meant by "reconciled to God"?

6. How does God offer salvation to humans?

7. Scripture outlines mankind's response of faith to God's offer of salvation. What are these and list at least one scripture associated with the individual elements.

Hear _____

Believe _____

Confess _____

Repent _____

Be baptized _____

Life according to the teachings of Jesus _____

8. Why is it not necessary to become extensively knowledgeable about the Bible before a person can become a Christian?

9. How can you as a student use this to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

6. The Church

The church is the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the world today. In this lesson we will examine the New Testament in order to determine what the inspired text says the church should be like and how it should function.

Intro: This lesson will discuss what the Bible says about the church.

Misconceptions Concerning the Christian Church

1. The church is a building _____

2. The church is a human organization _____

3. All churches are the same _____

The Church in the Bible

Clarifying the misconceptions:

1. Church / Building



2. Church / Human Organization

3. Churches are the same

Ekklesia _____

- Matthew 16:18 _____

- Acts 2:36-44 _____

Note how people become members of the church.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____



Imagery of the Church

There are dozens of metaphors in the Bible concerning the church. 20 images of the church:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Kingdom of Heaven – Matthew 3:2 | 11. Dwelling where God Lives – Ephesians 2:22 |
| 2. Kingdom of God – Matthew 6:33 | 12. Household of God – I Timothy 3:15 |
| 3. Church of God – Acts 20:28 | 13. Pillar and Ground of the Truth – I Timothy 3:15 |
| 4. Church of Christ – Romans 16:16 | 14. Mt. Zion – Hebrews 12:22 |
| 5. God’s Field – I Corinthians 3:9 | 15. City of the Living God – Hebrews 12:22 |
| 6. God’s Building – I Corinthians 3:9 | 16. Church of the Firstborn – Hebrews 12:23 |
| 7. Heavenly Jerusalem – Galatians 4:26 | 17. Flock of God – I Peter 5:2 |
| 8. Israel of God – Galatians 6:16 | 18. Golden Lamp stand – Revelation 1:20 |
| 9. Body of Christ – Ephesians 1:22-23 | 19. New Jerusalem – Revelation 21:2 |
| 10. Holy Temple – Ephesians 2:21 | 20. Bride and Wife of the Lamb – Revelation 21:9 |

Church Types

Why so many different church types? _____

1. Unbiblical Foundation _____

Pattern idea _____

2. Disagreement on meaning of the Bible _____

- John 17:11 _____

- Ephesians 4:3-6 _____

The New Testament Church

What kind of church is the “Church of Christ”?

The Church of Christ is a New Testament church.

Three main goals given to the church by Jesus Christ:

1. Matthew 28:18-20 _____

2. Matthew 16:18 _____

3. John 17:11 _____



Discussion Questions

1. What was your perception of the church in the past and how you do you perceive it now? If it changed, why?

2. Why have we developed the misperception that the “church” is a building?

3. Defend this statement. All churches are not the same.

4. What function of the church means the most to you, and why?

5. Read Psalm 122:1 and Hebrews 10:25. What spirit or attitude would a person possess to believe these statements and how can we develop it in ourselves?



6. What makes a church a New Testament church?

7. What is the difference between “non-denominational” and “pre-denominational”?

8. What church did Peter, Paul, and the other apostles and first century Christians belong to?

9. How can you as a student use this to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

7. The Christian Lifestyle

A final lesson describing the new motivation and lifestyle that God has designed for those who are followers of Jesus Christ.

Intro: In our series so far, we've covered some basic ideas concerning the Christian religion.

#1 – Reasons to believe _____

#2 – The difference between Christianity _____

#3 – The history and content _____

#4 – Jesus Christ and _____

#5 – Salvation and how _____

#6 – The church and how the Bible _____

#7 – The Christian Lifestyle _____

Misconceptions about the Christian Lifestyle

1. You're not allowed to have fun. _____

2. All you do is go to church. _____

The True Christian Lifestyle

People who become Christians should expect a change in their style of living because:

1. New circle of influence

- Colossians 1:13 _____

2. New Motivation

- John 15:19 _____

There's no uniform or special dress needed to be a Christian. _____

- Galatians 3:26-27 _____

Life is seen through the vision of Christ, not the vision of man:

Money and Power _____

Conflicts _____

Stress _____

Poverty and Illness _____

Trials and Obstacles _____

Failure and Sinfulness _____

Death _____

3. New Direction

The main activity in the world is consumerism. _____

The Christian lifestyle requires the opposite - to empty oneself. _____

Romans 12:1-2 _____

The two main misconceptions regarding Christianity are explained in this passage:

1. "Christian lifestyle is all about 'rules' and removing the 'fun' out of life."



True joy comes from knowing God's will and doing it. _____

2. Christianity is all about going to church.

Paul explains what true worship is. _____

Christianity is about following Jesus Christ every day.

Discussion Questions

1. Has your perception of the Christian lifestyle changed? If so, why?

2. Why is it important for Christians to pay attention to how they live?

3. All of us are influenced by something as we make decisions each day. What is different about the influences of a Christian as compared to influences of the world?

4. Motivation is the manifestation of our inner drive or desire. What should motivate a Christian as he or she lives the Christian lifestyle?

5. Read Galatians 3:26-27. What does Paul mean by “clothed yourselves with Christ?”



6. Read Romans 12:1-2. What should be the Christian's attitude be towards their view of his or her life as a Christian?

7. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul uses the expression, "good and acceptable, and perfect." What is meant by the word "perfect?"

8. What are some practical ways in which we can live the Christian lifestyle each day?

9. What does this statement mean to you? "There is no such thing as a solo-Christian."

10. How can you as a student use this to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?



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