CG 203 – Worldviews in Comparison

Certificate and Diploma Levels

Leader Handbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region
Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene – Africa Region

CG 203 – Worldviews in Comparison

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course compares the Biblical worldview and the worldview prominent within the ministry context of Africa with a concentration upon Christ the victor over sin, Satan, and other powers that try to influence the individual and society.

COURSE RATIONALE

Each society and culture has a certain understanding of how the elements of the universe influence human beings. Many cultures link this understanding to stories of creation and agricultural myths, and other legends. The Nazarene pastor has the privilege of helping those within their context understand the worldview found in the Bible and how it compares with and challenges their contemporary context. To help with this work, this course looks at basic examples from many African cultures and compares them with the Biblical story of creation and redemption. This course suggests that Jesus Christ is the victor over all other spiritual forces either at the personal level as well as within all creation.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

CN 4  Appreciation of theological foundations of the Christian faith from a Biblical and Wesleyan viewpoint.
CN 8  Appreciation of the position and teaching of the Church of the Nazarene concerning religious phenomenon.
CN 9  Acknowledge the differences between the teaching of evangelical doctrines and the teaching of cults, in particular the cults in Africa.
CN 12 Consider the application of Christian morality to daily life.
CP 1  Ability to communicate verbally and visually according to culturally given norms.
CP 3  Ability to defend the doctrines and positions of the Church of the Nazarene.
CP 15 Ability to prepare church members for exercising their ministry.
CA 5  Ability to express humility and interdependence in all of one’s personal relationships.
CA 6  Ability to give value to relationships through openness, righteousness, and honesty.

CX 2  Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity.
CX 3  Understand the principles of intercultural ministry.
CX 4  Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the Western world, those of Africa, and those of the Bible.
CX 5  Interpret with Biblical and scientific bases the Christian positions toward magic, spiritism, medicine and healing.

COURSE OUTCOMES FOR THIS MODULE

In order to achieve the competencies listed above, this module organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course:

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:
1. Understand the role of stories and religious practices in the maintenance of social order (CN 12, CX 1, CX 4).
2. Understand the various points of view on the role of sacred words on spiritual forces (CP 3, CX 2).
3. Understand religious phenomena from the perspective of a society’s worldview (CN 8, CP 3, CX 8).
4. Explain the Gospel in terms of how God prepares the human heart to be reconciled to Him. (CN 9, CP 3, CX 3).
5. Compare various perspectives on the universe and things both spiritual and material (CN 9, CN 12, CP 3, CX 2, CX 4).
6. Note poor attitudes toward non-believers and correct them (CA 6).
7. Note the importance of the Christian position that permits believers to directly access God through Jesus Christ. (CA 5, CX 2).
8. Rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ is the conqueror of all spiritual forces. (CN 9, CN 12, CA 5).
9. Investigate how these other religions tend to distort the gospel of Jesus Christ (CN 4, CN 9, CP 3, CA 5, CX 2, CX 3).
10. Express the felt needs of those who follow these other religions through a study of their backgrounds and spiritual leaders (CN 9, CA 6, CX 1, CX 2, CX 5).
11. Reach out to those who are victims of these religious groups and sects in order to win them to Christ (CN 8, CN 12, CP 1, CP 15, CA 5, CX 3, CX 5).
12. Defend the articles of faith using Biblical truth as an antidote to the opposing beliefs of other religions (CN 4, CN 8, CN 9, CP 15, CA 6, CX 3, CX 4).
13. Be directly involved in witnessing to people of other faiths by using personal evangelism strategies, incorporate new believers into fellowship and nurture them towards maturity (CN 4, CN 9, CP 1, CP 15, CX 2, CX 3).

The lessons and exercises of this course contribute the following percentages to the fulfillment of the “Four Cs”s:

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
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COURSE RESOURCES

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Regular attendance at all course lessons and preparation of all assignments prior to their deadlines is required. A student’s mark will be reduced by 25% for absences that exceed eight hours of class time. If the student misses two full days of class, he or she will not be able to pass the course.
2. Reading of assigned texts and a report given at the end of the course (course outcomes 1, 2, 5).
3. Complete a study that compares Biblical stories of creation (Genesis 1:1–2.4a and Genesis 2.4b-25) with the stories of creation from one’s birth culture and from the context of one’s ministry, in particular those stories which deal with the political and social order (course outcomes 1, 3, 5).
4. An oral group presentation on the theology found in the student’s birth culture, including original relationship between the high god and human beings, the cause(s) of the failure of this relationship (its source, origin of evil, origin of death, etc.), the role of intermediaries, and the plan of salvation that regulates daily life and relations between God and humanity (course outcomes 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).
5. A study on the importance of the Christian position that believers have direct access to God thanks to His initiating grace (course outcome 7).
6. A written report on strategies for witnessing to people of other faiths. Initially, the student will develop a list of ideas, drawing on small group discussions as well as his or her own understanding of the Bible, theology and culture. The final report will be a presentation of these ideas and how the student can apply them in ministry (course outcomes 11, 12, 13).
7. Final exam (course outcomes 1-5) (Optional).

COURSE EVALUATION
1. Course readings and class participation  20%
2. Creation comparison study  20%
3. Group presentation on theology of home culture  30%
4. Access to God study  10%
5. Strategies for Witnessing  20%

COURSE SCHEDULE
This course can be offered in several formats: intensive, semi-intensive, night sessions, weekends, weekly meetings, etc. For intensives, it would be helpful to make the course materials available to the students prior to the beginning of the first session. The teacher should offer a break between morning and afternoon session to give students time to prepare for the next lesson.
Lesson 1: Creation of the Universe
Lesson 2: Myth and the Development of a Worldview
Lesson 3: Human Beings and Creation

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Lesson 4: Humanity in Relationship to the High God  
Lesson 5: Intermediaries between Humans and God  
Lesson 6: Biblical and Inter-testamental Stories  
Lesson 7: Demons and Exorcism  
Lesson 8: Religion and Feasts  
Lesson 9: Jesus Christ as Victor over All Spiritual Forces  

STUDENT’S ABILITY TO COMPLETE COURSE WORK  

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

INSTRUCTOR’S QUALITIES AND AVAILABILITY  

The instructor has committed to preparing the content and being familiar with the objectives of the course. The instructor’s life and attitude inside and outside of the course should reflect the lifestyle of Jesus Christ—the main subject of the New Testament story. Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.
Small Group Activity Guidelines

Educational research demonstrates that shared-learning activities, such as small group projects and discussion groups, raise the student’s ability to gain and retain knowledge for practice outside the teaching environment. Students are able to develop critical thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis as they work in small group. Assigning small group projects help students to:

1. Learn how to work together in a team environment through positive interdependence.
2. Understand group processes, including process management, conflict management, synergism, collaboration, resource utilization, individual accountability, shared knowledge, cooperation, planning and problem solving.
3. Effectively and efficiently develop oral and written presentation skills.
4. Be better prepared for social interaction at work.
5. Explore and integrate a broader range of ideas and expertise.
6. Respond to different learning styles.
7. Supplement the knowledge of the facilitator/teacher.
8. Develop a sensitivity to and awareness of cultural and gender diversity.

When engaged in small group activities, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. When considering the formation of groups, take into account that it is desirable to balance the small groups by gender, age, geographical origin, local language, and experience. Try to bring as much diversity as possible to the group.
2. Select a spokesperson(s)/Leader(s) for the group to keep the team on task and for reporting back to the rest of the class about the small group’s findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The spokesperson(s) should also serve as the recorder(s) for the group.
3. Select a timekeeper for the group. Most small group activities should not exceed twenty minutes. The timekeeper’s task is to keep the group moving forward and on task to complete the assignment within the allotted time frame.
4. During the course, students are encouraged to try to participate in as many small group roles as possible—spokesperson, recorder, timekeeper.
5. Solicit the facilitator/teacher’s assistance at any time the small group is unable to stay on task.
Foreword


In certain parts of Black Africa, religion penetrates all aspects of life and the Black can be defined as an incurably religious being. Traditionally, he lives in close communion with the invisible and the sacred. If indeed Islam and Christianity are invariably and irreversibly replacing ancestral beliefs, it does not seem, at least in the immediate [time], that atheism has any chance of success there.

No single word manages to explain fully the content and form of the African religious sentiment. Rather, it [African religious thought] is, in the words of Griaule, a “a system of relationships between the visible world of humans and the invisible world governed by a creator and by powers that, under various names and all being manifestations of this one God, are specialized in all sorts of functions.” Religion is a language, “a means of expression that allows a person to grasp the most intimate relationships with the universe.”

African religions are as diverse as the people who comprise the continent. In the broadest terms, however, we find the following six religious systems:

**Animism** describes a belief system where all natural objects as well as the universe itself have “souls.” This does not mean that all things are “living beings” but that all things have some sort of “life force.” Generally, in animism there is the understanding that all beings and objects are interconnected, and that they interact with each other. In these systems, there are all sort of spirits (genies, demons ancestors, deities, etc.) as well as physical creatures (humans, animals, plants, objects). Often there are elaborate and ever changing pantheons.

**Totemism** links humans and animals (or other natural objects) in a sort of kinship relationship. Usually a tribe or clan is represented by an animal, that has special significance to its history and culture. In some cultures, for example, it is a violation of the society’s rules to hunt or kill a special type of animal, or to harvest a certain type of plant. Usually a shaman acts as an intermediary between the people and the spirit world. There is usually a strong concern with rituals that promote fertility and the continuation of the family line. Often these rituals are overtly sexual in nature.

**Ancestorism** (sometimes called Ancestor Worship) is a belief system where those who have died continue to exert influence on the living, usually to maintain social order or to protect the religion itself. Ancestors generally

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1 In Ancient times a Pantheon was a temple to all the gods. In contemporary terms, it stands for all the gods of a religion.
help the faithful or discipline and correct those who stray from the norms of society. They are not the only spirit beings. Other gods exist, but the ancestors act as intermediaries between the living, physical world and the spiritual world. The living must perform various rituals or offer different sacrifices in order to keep the memory of the individual ancestors alive and to assure their continued benevolence.

**Pantheism** (sometimes called Naturalism) is a belief system that views all of creation as an expression of God. The phrase “God is all; all is God” is often used as a way of describing this religious system. However, pantheism does not boil down to the worship of nature. Instead it views the universe as a set of symbols, a sort of living language. Specialists are able to interpret the divine messages by communicating with nature. Spirits and gods may exist, but they are also part of the “natural” universe.

**Fetishism** is a religious system that revolves around the supernatural powers that are hidden in certain natural objects. Usually these powers are inert, but adherents are able to make magical objects (fetishes, amulets, charms, etc.) that tap into the power of the objects. Sometimes the objects are seen as the dwelling places of spirits, and their power comes from the spirit within the fetish. Adherents do not necessarily worship the fetishes, rather they use them for their own benefit by manipulating the spiritual forces behind the objects.

**Paganism** in its broadest sense simply means any polytheistic or animistic religious system. However, in a more technical sense, it is the worship of a local god or gods associated with local geography. For agricultural societies, it may mean the worship of an earth goddess who insures the fertility of the fields. In fishing societies it would involve the worship of a water deity who provides the fish and protects the boats. Many variations are possible: hunters, shepherds, traders, etc. all having their own god or gods whom they worship.

It is important to note that these are general categories. Many African tribal cultures will not fit neatly into any one category, but may have elements of several. The students may or may not come from a culture marked by one of the above-mentioned religious forms. Additionally, they may be ministering in a different culture from that of their birth. Understanding one’s own culture is just as important as understanding the culture of others. This course will help your students understand their own culture and worldview, and, hopefully, they will be better able to minister to those who share that worldview as well as those who do not.
LESSON 1
Creation of the Universe

LESSON PLAN

(Items marked with an arrow symbol ➔ appear in the student workbook.)

1. Administrative Issues
2. Devotions
3. Presentation of the Syllabus
4. Introduction to the Course
5. Traditional African Religions (Discussion of the FOREWORD)
6. Presentation of READING 1
7. READING 1: Are Faith and Science Compatible?
8. Group Activity

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

At the beginning of a course, it is necessary to deal with the administrative tasks first. Forms are included at the end of this handbook. You should have an assistant to help take attendance and collect course fees.

DEVOTIONS

It is suggested that the teacher choose a biblical text outside of Genesis that deals with the topic of creation, such as Psalms 8, 19, or 104. One could also look at the creation poem found in Proverbs 8:22-31 or John 1:1-4, 14 or Colossians 1:15-20.

At the start of each lesson, the teacher should choose a passage related to the topic of the day, or, the teacher may assign a student or students to prepare a devotional thought.

If the course is taught as an intensive, it is suggested that you only have the devotional thought at the beginning of the first session of the day.

PRESENTATION OF THE SYLLABUS

Take time to discuss the syllabus, especially the outcomes and how they are related to the student’s ministry. It is sometimes difficult for students to grasp the concept of worldview if they have not been exposed to a different culture. These outcomes are an important part of their ministerial preparation.

1. Read aloud the course rationale while the students follow along in their workbook. Allow the students to make comments based on their experience.

2. Explain that the course will touch on certain aspects of the program outcomes assigned to the course, though it may not meet all that the outcome covers. This course concentrates on the three program outcomes...
designated as CX 2, CX 4, and CX 5. Other program outcomes will also be covered to some extent through the course requirements.

3. Present slowly and clearly all of the course outcomes offering explanations when necessary.

4. Note the student’s responsibilities in relation to the course outcomes.
   a. All of the assigned reading must be done before the class session.
   b. The report on creation is a written assignment that the students must start during the first session. The group discussion will help get students started on this project.
   c. The oral presentation (Course Requirement 4) will need to be started between lessons 4 and 5 and will be presented beginning with Lesson 7.
   d. Course requirement 5 will be written as a Sunday School lesson and will be submitted at the beginning of lesson 9.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

*Present the following information or incorporate into the class discussion. Information in italics is included in the student handbook.*

This course has one key goal: to discover one’s worldview—the perception of the world we live in—and compare it to the worldview of the ancient world of the biblical writers. We will also compare our worldviews to that of the Western world which provides a large number of the textbooks, literature, and resources we use to study theology and the Bible. These resources will often reflect the worldview of their authors whether they know it or not. For example, an author that lives in a culture that does not often experience evil spirits will find it more difficult to interpret biblical passages about evil spirits than those who live in a culture where such conflict is common. *It is the job of the preachers and the teachers in the Church to present the message of the Bible, which was written in a cultural and historical context different from our own, and interpret it in a way that is understandable today. It is even more difficult to do this when we the cultural context of one’s study resources come from a culture different from your own or the Bible’s. Many Africans cultures have been exposed to Christianity for more than a century, yet they still appeal to traditional religious practitioners in times of family crises, because their worldview has not changed significantly, despite all the years of Christian influence. That is why we must understand as many different worldviews as possible.*

Each culture has its own worldview. This worldview evolves along with the other elements of cultural development, sometimes slowly and sometimes rapidly. For example, a so-called “primitive” culture may have existed for decades with very little outside influence. However, when Western culture arrived for the first time, the indigenous culture probably began to incorporate some of the technological advances available from the West into its own system. However, that does not mean that they gave up their own
view of the spiritual world just because they were exposed to the Western secular worldview. Most African societies have been exposed to Western culture and Christianity for more than a century. However, in their daily lives, many Africans will still first seek the practitioners of traditional religions when they face a family crisis or health problem, because their exposure to the Western worldview did not completely change their own.

This course will examine several themes and issues that may arise when working among a people where worldviews are in conflict. It is the work of the teacher to help the students find and understand the different worldviews represented in their place of ministry. The assignments and readings of this course will be useful in exploring these issues.

The first lesson will touch on the cultural understandings of how the universe began: the stories of creation, the relationship between the material world and the spiritual world, the role of God or gods in the act of creation and their later involvement with creation. Do not be afraid to allow students to discuss their insights from their own experiences or past understanding of these topics. Encourage them to share any insights or issues that may have come from their relationship with church members or others members of the community in which they minister.

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGIONS

The foreword of this course handbook gives several ways of understanding the relationship between the spiritual and material world of creation. There are several different systems for understanding this relationship. Ask students to take turns reading the different definitions for the following terms: Animism, Totemism, Ancestorism, Pantheism, Fetishism, and Paganism. After someone reads a definition, give all of the students some time to ask questions and compare the definition with the preceding one. Also, discuss how the definition might relate to their local cultures or Africa in general. The following information is from the student handbook:

*The teacher will help you understand each of these types of religious sentiments. Note that these religious systems are those found in Black Africa. There are other religious systems outside of Africa that are different. From time to time during the course several religious sentiments will be presented to you. But our ministry is taking place in Africa, so we need to master these African ideas. When you meet in groups for the first time, make every effort to understand and explain the difference between these six ideas.*

Note that classic polytheism is not found on this list. Polytheism corresponds to paganism, where nature is conceived of in terms of particular gods in place of natural forces. This is what was at work during the period of the Hebrew prophets writing in the 8th century BCE².

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² BCE stands for “Before the Common Era.” It is being used more and more instead of BC to indicate the years before Christ’s birth: starting at 1 and counting backwards.
In the Bible, the Baal religion is a combination of totemism and fetishism. The priests of Baal tried to manipulate the spiritual forces by performing special rituals and using magic. The people practiced the rituals of totemism to guarantee the fertility of the land and animals through sexual relations with “sacred” prostitutes, either male or female. In fact, it is this religion that God wanted Israel to destroy during the years of conquest in Canaan (see the Book of Joshua, in particular). The Baal religion was a trap for Israel until Elisa’s ministry after the death of Jezebel (2 Kings 9). In the New Testament, there is pure monotheism in Palestine, except for those villages heavily influenced by the Roman Empire. However, most of the surrounding cultures of the Mediterranean Sea were saturated with a syncretistic polytheism. For example, the city of Ephesus, during the ministry of the apostle Paul, was the world’s capital for spiritual magic (fetishism). In the Book of Acts (chapter 19), Luke tells of a large ceremony in Ephesus where these fetishes and books of magic were destroyed, despite their monetary value.

The “modern” period of Western philosophy attempts to deny the importance of the spiritual world. For them, the spiritual world with its angels (spiritual beings that are faithful servants of God) and demons (rebellious spiritual beings and servants of Satan) do not figure into the daily lives of people, even believers. Colonialists had this mentality, and through their system of education tried to change the African sensitivity to the spiritual realm. This transformation was not widespread because of the relatively small number of Africans educated in their system.

In the Western world today, the post-modern worldview opens the door again to the reality of the spiritual world by means of a new sort of pantheism and paganism. The time is right for well-educated Africans who still have roots in their traditional thinking to add their insights and thoughts to the ongoing conversation that has so long been dominated by the Western world.

It is necessary to note that the rise of syncretistic mixtures of traditional religions and practices with those of Islam and Christianity are found all over Africa. This occurred in areas where these two religions did not adequately teach their imported faith.

This is the context of our work as preachers and teachers in present-day Africa. We find ourselves face-to-face with many cultures: the cultures of our birth, the culture of our countries, the culture of the people to which we minister, as well as the cultures of the people of the different periods of biblical history.

Encourage the students to identify which perspective reflects their birth culture or the culture in which they minister.

**PRESENTATION OF READING 1**

The students will have many different reactions to this reading, depending on their level of education on the one hand and the newness of ideas on the other. Many students read the first two chapters of Genesis as a literal presentation of the events of creation, even if they have studied the poetic
and figurative nature of these chapters in other courses. It will be necessary to prepare the class for the reading of this handout according to your own knowledge of the students. Furthermore, after this reading, you will divide them into groups to begin work on Assignment 3 (syllabus)—a comparison of these biblical accounts with the worldviews in their places of ministry. Therefore, take whatever time is necessary to introduce this reading carefully.

For the most part, the understanding of creation forms the basis of one’s worldview. In almost every culture there is some story of creation. These accounts of creation are often simultaneously theological, sociological and "scientific.” As theological discourse, the accounts of creation present the concept of God or gods, of other beings of the spiritual world and of the relationship between the spiritual world and the physical realm of human beings. As sociological studies, they present the role of men and women in society; the idea of class, if it exists; the type of government and who has the right to govern; the relationship between human beings and animals, and the rest of the material world. As “scientific” documents, the accounts often deal with geology, astronomy, and biology as understood by the thinkers of past generations.

Before reading the story of creation from Genesis 2:4-25., say:

The Bible presents two accounts of creation in the first chapters of Genesis. Of these, this one is the oldest. As we read this passage, listen for examples of theological, sociological and scientific elements.

Read the text, then discuss.

Do the same thing with Genesis 1:1—2:3. First say,

This creation account dates much later in Israel's history than the other (this means that it was probably not edited by Moses). It reflects Israel’s reaction to the creation accounts that confronted the Jews during their Babylonian exile. The Babylonian accounts present the waters, the sun, the moon and the constellations as gods, and as gods organized into levels of importance—castes. One caste of gods rebelled against the others, and lost. They suffered a severe punishment: they had to work hard to produce the necessities of their existence. Human beings, according to these accounts, were created to take over the forced labor of the rebels, in effect causing the humans to bear the punishment due the gods. Thus, the human being, as a member of a low class, had no value in himself. Babylon claimed that it had the right to reign over the entire earth because the god Marduk, patron of the city, was the creator of all things after having conquered all the rebel gods. For the Jews, then, Genesis chapter 1 presents their worldview as a reaction to that of the Babylonians: there is one true God and humans have a special relationship to him.

Read the text, then ask the student to explain how the Jewish worldview found in it was a reaction to that of Babylon. Use the following questions, if necessary:
How many gods are there?
What are the sun, the moon and the stars?
What is the role of the human being?
At a social level, what is the difference between man and woman?
How must a human being arrange his life in order to maintain his relationship with God?

Now, have the students follow along with READING 1.

**READING 1: ARE SCIENCE AND FAITH COMPATIBLE?**

Before modern science established that our universe had a more or less material beginning, human cultures ceaselessly discussed how the universe came to be. Usually the story took the form of some all-powerful being or beings who, at some time in the distant past, created the world and humans. The biblical accounts did not simply accept the stories of the surrounding cultures, rather they made significant changes to them. There was one major correction they needed to make: there is only one, universal God who created all things, not multiple creators or gods, who competed with each other. However, there are similarities among the different accounts. The dominant idea in most of the stories was an instantaneous creation (spontaneous generation) or the result of a divine action (creationism).

*Creationism* reads the first chapters of Genesis as a literal, divinely revealed account of exactly what happened. For centuries, this was the accepted way of understanding Genesis. It is no wonder the evolutionary thinking from Darwin to Mendel caused so many problems with Christian theology. An evolutionary worldview is quite different from a creationist worldview. In response to the challenges of evolution, some thinkers proposed the idea of a progressive creation, where God continually creates things anew, rather than through evolving life forms. Ultimately, creationists accepted the principals of evolution in general as scientific fact, except as it relates to human beings, who are distinct from the other animals. Presently, the majority of Christian churches have abandoned pure creationism. Only the most conservative groups, especially fundamentalists in the United States, still profess it.

This new attitude, however, does not mean that the Church has abandoned the traditional biblical affirmations declaring that the world was created by God and that human beings were made in His image. On the contrary, today there is a refocusing on the deeper meaning of these biblical affirmations. Consider the implications of some of these:

*Human beings did not create themselves.*

*Human beings are caretakers of the environment and not dictators who arbitrarily use its resources.*
The world is permeated by an intelligence greater than human beings. Even though humans are part of the animal kingdom, they possess a dignity that is not reducible simply to physical dominance (walking erect, opposable thumbs) or intellectual superiority (size of the brain, profound language ability, the ability reflect on the world around us).

These statements are not opposed to scientific logic. They require a different type of conversation, one that is not limited to provable scientific facts.

END OF READING 1

GROUP ACTIVITY

Divide the class into groups. Have them respond to the following questions (found in their workbook).

Instructions: As a group, answer the following questions:
1. What would an ideal government or social organization look like?
2. If there is a spiritual world, where is it located according to the Bible accounts?
3. What relationship should the man and his wife maintain with God? How?
4. What is the relationship between humans and animals? What is the relationship between humans and the earth?
5. Choose one or more African accounts of creation, then answer the questions above as it relates to those stories.
6. Be ready to present your findings during the next lesson.
LESSON 2
Myth and the Development of a Worldview

LESSON PLAN
1. Devotions
2. Introduction to the Lesson
3. Group Reports on Creation
4. Instructions for Assignment No. 3 (see syllabus)
   5. Presentation of READING 2
6. READING 2: “What is a Myth?”
7. Class discussion
8. Presentation of READING 3
9. READING 3: “Creation Myths and African Religions”
9. Group Activity
10. Assignment for next lesson

DEVOTIONS
If this lesson is taught as the afternoon session of an intensive, you will not present devotions at the beginning (since you have already started the day with devotions). If, however, this lesson is the first one of the day, you should, again, choose a Biblical text outside of Genesis that deals with the topic of creation, such as Psalms 8, 19, or 104; Proverbs 8:22-31; John 1:1-4, 14; or Colossians 1:15-20.

INTRODUCTION
Begin this lesson by hearing the group reports from the previous lesson. This will help the students review the material.

Since there were several issues to be addressed, it is possible that the reports will be quite long. Because of this, you will choose just two groups to report. Everyone is expected to participate in the discussion that follows. It is important to make sure the students understand what a creation story is, and especially how it reflects the underlying culture of the people among whom the student ministers.

GROUP REPORTS ON CREATION
In the first lesson, we looked at the importance of creation stories as a source of presuppositions about truth: spiritual, physical, social and political. Your groups compared biblical stories with those from their own cultures. Each group should be ready to give a report to the entire class.

The point of this activity is 1) to help us better interpret the biblical accounts of creation, 2) to see how biblical passages might reflect the worldview of the original readers of the Bible. We can then better preach the gospel and assure other believers of the victory they have in Christ.
Ask for a group to volunteer to present its report. Listen well and make sure the report achieves the objectives of the exercise. Do not correct the groups, rather ask others in the class to make a few observations and/or corrections based from their own perspectives. Do the same with another group. Encourage each group to contribute to the discussion.

After the presentations, ask several students “How has this exercise helped you interpret the Word of God to members of your church?”

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSIGNMENT NO. 3 (SYLLABUS)**

Assignment #3: Complete a study that compares biblical stories of creation (Genesis 1:1—2.3 and Genesis 2.4-25) with the stories of creation from one’s birth culture and from the context of one’s ministry, in particular those stories which deal with the political and social order (course outcomes 1, 3, 5). 20% of the final grade.

Assignment No. 3 is a written assignment. This work is so important that we ask students to keep after it in their personal file after it is graded.

From the student workbook:

**INSTRUCTIONS:**
The student should transform the group discussion into a personal essay, adding his or her own personal reflections.

1. Compare the biblical accounts of creation with those from your home or ministry culture. Note the differences and similarities between the two biblical stories, then compare them to the stories of your local culture.

2. Note what aspects of life the various stories try to influence (the role of spiritual beings, the relationship between humans and the spiritual world, the composition of society and the roles of its different members, the role and purpose of work, the origin of evil, natural and/or social evils, etc.).

3. The biblical stories seem to suggest a theodicy (direct government by God himself) as a perfect administrative system. Try to determine which governmental system your local stories present as ideal.

4. Evaluate this system as it relates to the life of the church where everyone should have the freedom to express the gifts that the Spirit gives him or her, and determine if a more Christian system might be possible.

5. Propose an ideal system of administering the affairs of the church, taking into account the system presented in the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene.

Make sure to answer any questions the students might have about the assignment.
PRESENTATION OF READING 2

Normally, the word “myth” includes the idea that the story is a historical fantasy, that it does not represent actual historical events. However, the same word also has a philosophical and social meaning, one that relates to the role of story (narrative) in a culture. This meaning allows for the possibility that a story may contain historical truths. The reading presents the second meaning of the word.

READING 2: WHAT IS A MYTH?

A myth is a story that tells about the origin of universe, or explores the complexity of the world in which humans live. Its function is to explain things that are not easily explainable. As such, it represents one of the means of human reflection. Societies use myths to justify the principles that organize the lives of individuals and groups. They ground and fortify the lives of those who tell it and those who hear it. To do this, the storyteller takes the listeners back to a primeval time, a “once upon a time” of gods and other powerful beings and forces.

A myth is anonymous (it has no precise author) and collective (it is not owned by any one person). During special celebrations or festival, often accompanied by various rituals, a myth is usually retold. This is the case of the Mesopotamian myth of Ishtar and Tammouz. She was the earth goddess, in charge of the fields and vegetation, and he was the shepherd-god. The myth of how together they controlled the seasons was retold during the celebration of a new year as part of a ritual that ensured the fertility of the soil for the upcoming year. Another example is the religion of Baal, which does not have a creation story, but has several myths that deal with the relationships between the gods and the seasons, as well as the fertility of the ground.

Some myths serve to clarify the mysteries of the human condition. There are also myths that do not explain how things began, but how they will end. These eschatological stories speak of the end of the world (or at least the end of humanity) and the hope of a new world. They are usually found in apocalyptic literature.

The rationalism of the 19th century viewed myths very negatively, treating them as nothing but primitive, irrational, and imaginary stories. More recently a much more positive understanding has emerged: myth is a type of “language” used to grasp reality when ordinary language cannot describe it. It is the way to describe invisible or transcendent realities, to explore the secret mysteries of life. Often, myths can convey deeper truths than historical facts. It has been said that the myth was an "effort to know the unknowable" (Buess). By definition, therefore, “myth” in this sense does not mean “fiction.”

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3 Eschatology is the study of last things.
4 Apocalyptic literature is a type of prophetic writing that uses symbolic language to describe the final destruction of the world. “Apocalypse” comes from the Greek word for “revelation.”
Rather, it attempts to recount the truth as understood by a culture, sometimes with historical elements that are not verifiable, at other times with verifiable historical facts.

The Bible is no stranger to the language of myth, especially in the first eleven chapters of Genesis whose roots go back into pre-history. These early chapters are flush with elements of famous myths of the ancient world. Many of the accounts show signs of the influence of ancient myths, including the stories of the patriarchs and the Exodus, even though these stories are more or less historically verifiable. However, it is clear that the Bible favors history over myth. In fact, many times it uses mythological motifs that it has severely demythologized. In general, the Bible uses symbolic language, rather than myth, as a means of expressing realities that go beyond experience.

END OF READING 2

CLASS DISCUSSION ON READING 2

The students will find the following questions in their workbooks. Allow them to answer first before suggesting the answers indicated.

1. How does the story of the Exodus fit the definitions of a myth? (Remember that the word “myth” may refer to true events that have an instructive role for the Christian).
   - The story is repeated during the Passover ceremony, a time of celebration.
   - The story forms the basis of the understanding of who the Jews are as a people in the eyes of God.
   - It organizes the people’s calendar.

2. How many of the events that form the story of Exodus might be considered fictional by those who doubt their historical accuracy (such as the rationalist of the 19th century)?

3. How does the story of the resurrection of Jesus function as a myth?
   - There are several answers to this question, including many of the Apostle Paul’s explanation of the meaning of the resurrection.
   - New life in Christ and the ritual of baptism
   - Our current, though partial, participation in eternal life

Translator’s note: One example is the story of Cain and Abel. It has been used to explain the animosity between farmers and shepherds. The Bible takes the meaning further to explain how sin destroys all relationships, even the bonds of kinship.

Editor’s note: Conservative Bible scholars do not doubt the veracity of the events recorded in Egypt. – G. Crofford

Editor’s note: “Myth” is story injected with deep and often symbolic meaning, and in the Christian usage intended here, is a true story, rooted in history. - G. Crofford
4. Why is it important to tell these stories (the Exodus, the Resurrection) and others as part of the life of the Church? How do they help us understand who we are, the need to deepen our dedication to the Lord, and our role as disciples of Jesus in the world?

5. What are the dangers of using the word “myth” in our teaching? How can a pastor present these ideas without using the word?

PRESENTATION OF READING 3

READING 3 reinforces the work done in the first lesson. The author presents several African creation “myths” that can be used in comparison to the Bible narratives.

READING 3: CREATION MYTHS AND AFRICAN RELIGIONS

Humans generally have a sense that we are at the center of the cosmos. It is interesting that not many African myths speak directly to how humans were created, or for that matter, how the universe was created. One exception is the highly sophisticated creation account from the Bambara of Mali:

The first thing to emerge from Fu, the primordial emptiness, was Gla Gla Zo, the prime force of creation. It uttered a “Voice of Emptiness” from which its twin, Dya, arrived. From Gla Gla Zo and Dya sprang a damp matter like cold rust which hardened into icy, shining objects that filled the primal void. The twin beings caused a wind of fire to melt the icy bodies, and in this melting all things became possible in silence and invisibility.8

The story goes on to tell how the twins froze and remelted the “icy bodies,” and then caused a massive explosion that created solid, vibrating matter. From these vibrations, one by one, the signs and names for everything emerged. Gla Gla Zo produced the “foot of humanity” (human consciousness) first, and that became the “seed” of the universe, which shared its consciousness with everything else. Then, two spirits, Pemba and Faro, began bringing everything into existence. So, according to the Bambara, all things were named before they existed, “but they were not known as such except in the conscience of humankind, the seed or principle of the universe.”

Such myths are rare, and only a few African stories tell about the nature of the universe before the advent of humans. In general, African creation stories begin with the origin of humankind.

According to the Pygmies of Gabon and the Dogon of Mali the first man was molded from clay (or earth) by God. For the Tonga of Mozambique, man came out of a reed (or rock).

For the Venda in the Limpopo province of South Africa, God in the form of Python, vomited creation: he vomited 7 + 2 people. These first spirit-beings traveled the world, but there was no light. When they died, they were placed in the heavens. These spirit-beings are the seven planets plus the sun and moon, which illuminate the world. The king is the sun, his sister-queen is the moon, and the couple produced twins of different genders, who then gave birth to other unique beings, the ancient ones.

Born from a tree for the Herero, man emerged from the earth for the Tswana of southern Africa, and he descended from heaven for the Tutsi.

Tohono Mawu, owner of the sky Eve, created the universe, planting a large calabash whose bottom became the earth and lid became the sky. He then made humans, animals, and plants. He lived with them until one day, disappointed by their behavior, he retired back to heaven.\(^9\)

The first humans are rarely portrayed as divinities. However, they often were equipped with features that no longer exist in humans. For example, they were often described as androgynous, that is to say they were male and female at the same time:

\[\textit{The Dogon claim: “Every human being, from the beginning, was blessed with two souls of different genders, or rather two principles corresponding to two separate persons.” The primordial ancestors were four “males” and four “females”, but they could fertilize themselves, being double and both sexes.” Thus the stories tell of the existence of eight Dogon families.}\]

Generally, in the ancient times, humans were immortal:

\[\textit{According to the Bassa of Cameroon, Lolomb, the god who never slept, required humans to continually stay awake, otherwise death would appear in the world. But they could not resist sleep, and death began to do its work.}\]

\[\textit{The Tonga developed a very interesting myth: God sent word to the humans that he had raised up two messengers from the marshes. The slow one (the chameleon) bore this message: “Humans die but they will rise.” The other, a fast lizard said: “You die and rot in the ground.” The lizard came first and that is why people die.}\]

The first creatures never knew hunger, according to many myths (Bwa and Mossi of Burkina Faso, Dinka and Giziga of Cameroon, for example). Heaven and earth were so close that humans could reach out and cut pieces of clouds to feed themselves. But one day, according the Giziga,

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A girl, who could not do anything right, saw seeds on the ground. She picked them up and began to grind them. But in pounding the grain with the pestle she also struck the sky, and it became angry and withdrew. The story teaches that from then on, humans had to work to feed themselves. It was then that humans began to fight among themselves because God no longer came down to earth to talk with them and solve their problems.

We see, then, that these stories explain the inexplicable: how a perfect creation produced an imperfect humanity. They do this by means of simple and concrete words. The simplicity allows for individuals to mediate on the meaning of the stories, but because they are so esoteric, their “true” meaning can remain hidden. Myths use elements common to everyone, the world of the senses: earth, sky, water, fire. The stories are always exciting, and they educate society about their cultural worldview. Most stories are well known to everyone, but usually their hidden meaning is only revealed to certain individuals.

END OF READING 3

GROUP ACTIVITY

Share your own culture’s myths, especially those that deal with the creation of the universe, or the creation of humans. Then answer the following questions.

1. Choose some of the myths your group discussed and tell how they function as a means of socialization for children and/or adults.
2. Does a myth have to be historically accurate in order for it to perform its function in society.
3. What are the Christian ”myths”?

END OF LESSON

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT LESSON

Read Genesis 1 and 2 again and be prepared to discuss it.

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10 Socialization is the process of giving someone the skills they need to function properly in a society
LESSON 3
Human Beings and Creation

LESSON PLAN

1. Devotions
2. Introduction
3. Group Reports on READING 3
4. Presentation of READING 4
5. READING 4: “Creation Myths”
6. Class discussion of READING 4: “Creation Myths”
7. Group Assignment
8. Assignment for the next lesson

DEVOTIONS

Consider the idea of the worth of the individual in the teachings of Jesus. Note how this worth remains in spite of the sinful nature of humans. The true hope proclaimed by the gospel is that God can cure human beings of the sin problem both in their individual lives and in society if they accept and apply the truth of the gospel their personal and public life. The spiritual condition of human beings neither changes their function in creation nor their responsibility to God as co-rulers over creation.

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will deal with the importance, the role and the function of human beings in the physical and spiritual worlds. We will address several types of human relationships: with God or the gods, with those of different worldviews, with the plant and animal worlds, and with the earth itself. In READING 4 we will be exposed to a number of examples of how myths shape the character of human beings and their role in the universe. We will also see how the Biblical accounts compare with these myths. We will have the opportunity to read for ourselves the Biblical accounts and to determine the function of human beings with respect to the rest of creation.

GROUP REPORTS ON READING 3

1. Ask one or two groups who have not previously shared to present the results of their discussions from the previous lesson.
2. Encourage the class to discuss the reports, whether they agree with the results or not.
3. Help the students draw conclusions relevant to their ministry.

During this discussion, try to point out similarities between local myths and the Bible as well as the points of divergence. The differences that are found might call for further Biblical study in order to better understand what a true Christian response might be.
You will need a good mix of experiences from the students. You should anticipate several of the responses to the questions, and be ready to point out what the Bible has to say. Note also that in certain instances the Old and New Testaments might offer different responses to the same question.

The point of all this discussion is that the listeners in local churches are well aware of these myths, and it may be that these stories still improperly influence some believers’ understanding of what is true. The pastor needs to guide them how to 1) understand the Biblical truths and 2) trust the Bible first rather than their own local myths.

**PRESENTATION OF READING 4**

When presenting this reading, make sure the students see the space in their workbook where the myths are located. They should write down a little bit about each one of them. Students will need to know this in order to do well on the final exam.

Also, take note of the questions asked in the first paragraph of the reading. You will work on these during the discussion period at the end of this presentation.

**READING 4: CREATION MYTHS**

Long before the Bible was written, the great cultures of the ancient Near East had formulated their own accounts of creation. These creation myths attempted to respond to questions that preoccupy all of humanity: Who are we? Why do we exist? What relationships unite humanity with the divine? Why do people work?

When we compare the Biblical accounts to these documents, we can gauge how much the Biblical authors borrowed from the cultures surrounding them. We will also see how the Biblical writers profoundly reinterpreted this material in light of a very different understanding of God and human beings.

The Babylonian poem “Enuma Elish,” probably composed in the middle of the 12th century BCE, is one of those sources. It opens with these words:

*When on high, heaven was not named,*  
*And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,*  
*The primeval Apsu, who begat them,*  
*And chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both,*  
*Their waters were mingled together.*

It continues by referring to the formation of the world as emerging from a gigantic struggle raging between the god Marduk and the aquatic chaos formed by Apsu and Tiamat. Having triumphed over Tiamat, Marduk splits open the body of the monster, and from it creates the universe. Then Marduk creates humankind from the blood of Kingu, a rebel god whom he has also conquered. Humans were created because Kingu and the other rebel gods could not bear the punishment that the council of gods had imposed upon them. Thus, the reason for human existence is to suffer the punishment that the rebel gods deserved, and by doing so, redeem them. Chapter 1 of
Genesis, written at the time of the Babylonian exile, is an allusion to as well as a critique of this myth. While it retains certain images, it rejects the idea of a primordial battle and that human beings were created from the body of a defeated god. Furthermore, according to Genesis, humans are the pièce de résistance\(^\text{11}\) of the creator, created intentionally to have an intimate relationship with him.

The Bible also intersects with the “Epic of Atrahasis”, composed in the 17\(^{\text{th}}\) century BCE, which also tells how humans were created. In the beginning, the gods had to work with their own hands to meet their needs. The high gods, the Anunaki, unloaded these tasks on the lesser gods, the Igigi, who finally rebelled. Enki suggests creating humans to serve the gods: “Let man assume the drudgery of the god.” They asked the goddess Mami, who was the midwife of the gods, to make a human being. She agreed to it, though one of the gods would have to be killed to provide flesh and blood to mix with clay. From this mixture of divine and clay, she created the first man. In Genesis, man is also made from the ground (similar to clay), but he is not a by-product of a slain god. Instead God breathes life into him. Also, in Genesis, humans were not created as slaves to God, but were placed in a garden, and freely benefited from their care of it.

The image of a serpent that deceives humans, presented in chapter 3 of Genesis, is also found in many other mythologies. This is most clearly seen in the “Epic of Gilgamesh.” Gilgamesh learns one of the gods' secrets: the existence of a thorny plant that grows beneath the waves called How-the-Old-Man-Once-Again-Becomes-a-Young-Man. Gilgamesh ties stone weights to his feet and dives into the sea. When he finds the plant he cuts the stones from his feet, and is carried by the current and waves to the surface, and then thrown onto the shore. He decides to share the plant with the elders of Uruk (his city), but will keep a portion for himself, so that he can become young again too. One night, while on his way to Uruk, Gilgamesh sees a spring of fresh water and decides to take a swim. A serpent smells the plant and steals it. As it slithers away, it sheds its skin. Now the serpent is young again, but Gilgamesh will never be. Heartbroken, Gilgamesh sits beside the pool and weeps.

These are just a few examples of how the Bible references other sources. Many of the sources are Egyptian, but there are others including images from Indo-European sources that find their way into the Biblical text. It seems that the writers of the Biblical texts meticulously investigated the matter of origins, drawing greatly from the traditions that were accessible to them and from there developed their own account.

END OF READING

\(^{11}\) a French phrase meaning an outstanding accomplishment, or the prized piece of a collection.
CLASS DISCUSSION OF READING 4

In this reading, we see that Biblical writers, under inspiration, used material from other cultures’ myths. Sometimes the Biblical stories seem to be crafted as a refutation of these other myths.

First, allow the students to respond to this reading. In some cases, it presents completely new material to them to think about. Some of these myths may be similar to their own culture’s stories. See if any of your students found in similarities to these myths and their own. Then ask:

- Do the people of your culture believe in these myths as a source of truth?
- What do the stories of your culture teach about the roles of men and women?

Later on, the class will read what the Bible has to say about this, and we will wait until that time to discuss how to present the Gospel to those whose worldviews are different from our own or from the Biblical culture as it relates to the understanding of human nature.

One aspect of the Western worldview is that profit is the prime motivation for life. This often leads to the exploitation of workers as some sort of machine, to be used to make money. Such a culture also sees the earth as merely one more resource to be exploited for the profit and the comfort of human beings. Other cultures, while not calling it slavery, have systems where certain individuals are forced to serve others without any significant compensation for their labor.

Other cultures reduce women to the level of animals or slaves who exist only to serve men. Every society assigns roles to men and women. Some societies are more flexible than other concerning these roles.

What is the Christian response to these situations? The Church has the responsibility, in all cultures, to serve as a public witness of God’s acceptance and love of all people. To show the world the he values highly human beings regardless of gender. This is not always a simple task. It is necessary then for Christian love and wisdom to guide the local church in dealing with cultural presumptions. Normally, it is better not to upset cultural standards as long as they do not diminish the God-ordained value of people.

GROUP ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: This assignment is more difficult than it seems, as most people are tempted to answer based on their own understanding of the passage, or their interpretation of what it means. After each question below, you will find possible answers that might be suggested. For the most part, they are not provable from the text of Genesis. Gently correct student responses that stray from the text itself. What follows is from the student workbook:
Read the two accounts of creation found in Genesis: 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b-25. Instruct the students to listen carefully to the words of the text.

IMPORTANT: Based ONLY what is found in the text, answer the following questions.

1. Other than physical differences of gender, do these accounts indicate any differences in the role of the men and women in everyday life?
   (Who should work the soil? Who prepares the food? Who does the housework?)

2. Do these accounts indicate a difference in the role of men and women in society?
   (Men decide everything, women must be silent, or the opposite, etc.)

3. Does the text indicate that one is more intelligent or more gifted than the other? If so, which one? If not, how could we interpret this?
   Allow the students to give their initial response, then have them consider this: the word “helper” in verses 18 and 20 means an equal or a superior who is able to do that which the other cannot do. It is this the same word the Bible uses when it says “God is my helper” (Exodus 18:4; Psalm 10:14; etc.). The expression that modifies this, translated as “suitable” or “comparable,” indicates someone equal, “the complement” of the other. The special being that God prepared for the man is not simply another animal, and she is not an inferior type of human being. She is not his servant, she is his “complement.”

4. What relationship should human beings have with God?

5. According to Genesis, what kind of respect should human beings have toward the rest of creation?

Now, based on your discoveries in investigating the questions above, answer these:

6. What does the word “helper,” in its true Hebrew sense, add to our understanding of the relationship between a man and his wife?

7. In what ways can we as a church support the value of women accorded them in Genesis without shocking our local cultures too much?

8. What relationship should humans have with God?

9. According to Genesis, how should humans view the rest of creation?

ASSIGNMENT FOR THE NEXT LESSON


2. Answer these questions:

   According to this passage, what is the fundamental problem behind human suffering and what can be done to resolve it?
   How might your culture respond to the first question?
LESSON 4
Humanity in Relationship to the High God

LESSON PLAN

1. Devotions
2. Introduction to the lesson
3. Presentation of READING 5
4. READING 5: "The Creator in Relation to Human Beings"
   5. Grade student workbook
6. Class discussion of READING 5
7. Presentation of READING 6
8. READING 6: "Human mortality and Reconciliation with God"
9. Group assignment
10. Assignment for the next lesson

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will continue our study of myths to see how different cultures in Africa and elsewhere view 1) creation, 2) the original relationship between God or gods and humans, 3) how this relationship was broken and what it takes to restore that relationship, if there is the possibility of doing so. In this context, we will also look at the concept of "the sacred." Groups will work on the how to present the Gospel in an effective manner in their places of ministry.

You will need to address issues that arose from the homework assignment. To do this effectively, you will need to follow the progression of the lesson as suggested in this book in order to present properly the broader context of this subject.

DEVOTIONS

Suggested passages: Romans 1:16-17; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 3:19-20

PRESENTATION OF READING 5

The student workbook has special instructions regarding this assignment. Make sure that all students understand that they should answer the questions during the reading. Point out that you will verify their answers afterwards. From the student workbook:

This reading is much longer than the others we have read. To help you understand the material better, you will answer some questions about the ideas presented. At the end of the reading, the teacher will check your answers.

You may write your answers in the margins of the document, on your own paper, or in the space provided below.
READING 5:
THE CREATOR IN RELATION TO HUMAN BEINGS


In certain parts of Black Africa, religion penetrates all aspects of life and the Black can be defined as an incurably religious being. Traditionally, he lives in close communion with the invisible and the sacred. If indeed Islam and Christianity are invariably and irreversibly replacing ancestral beliefs, it does not seem, at least in the immediate, that atheism has any chance of success there.

No single word manages to explain fully the content and form of the African religious sentiment. Rather, it appears, in the words of Griaule, as “a system of relationships between the visible world of humans and the invisible world governed by a creator and by powers that, under various names and all being manifestations of this one God, are specialized in all sorts of functions.” Religion is defined as a language, “a means of expression that allows a man to grasp the most intimate relationships with the universe.”

As you can imagine, there is a wide range of ideas on the subject of the relationship between the creator god and human beings. The variety includes different ideas on who created the universe (if anyone did) and how humans first appeared here. Both Biblical accounts of creation emphasize the fact that only God existed before creation, and that God created human beings with three main goals: 1) to have an intimate relationship with them, 2) to be stewards over the rest of creation, and 3) to form a society based on godly morals that stays in regular contact with him. We believe that these two stories are part of the divine revelation about human beings and their relationship with God.

We saw in previous lessons that this worldview is only one among many others. The Bible mentions many different peoples and cultures, and we have outside information on only some of them, including the Egyptians, the Canaanites and the Babylonians. Understanding these cultures will help us better interpret the Bible. But those ancient worldviews are not the only ones we need to understand. The places where we minister are examples of only a few of the many cultures of Africa. While there are many similarities among different African groups, there are many differences. Not only do we see the influence of traditional African culture on our worldview, but Africans also are affected by Western worldviews, a process that began centuries ago with the arrival of the colonialists, but continues today as technology changes how Africa interacts with the rest of the world. Therefore, we will also look at how

12 In the Church of the Nazarene, “stewards” can refer to a type of church leader. However, the regular meaning of this word is “one who manages something on behalf of someone else.”
these other worldviews, including modernism and post-modernism, view creation as well as the nature of humankind.

Egypt as it is known in the Bible, was a powerful unified nation. However, we know from archeology that this is not the complete story. Egypt for many centuries was nothing more than a collection of small independent towns, each with their own local god or gods. After Egypt was unified as a single nation, it was still characterized by its polytheism, with many different gods each of which controlled different parts of daily life. The powerful Pharaoh ruled over the entire nation, and he was considered the son of a god (in some cases it was Osiris, the god of the afterlife, in other cases it was Horus, Osiris’ son who defeated the god of death). Egyptian mythology deals mainly with the various aspects of daily life. There are not many Egyptian myths that deal specifically with creation.

We find the same phenomenon among the Canaanites. In the available literature from that time, there is no creation myth, only a guarantee of the preservation of life thanks to the victory of a goddess (Astarte) over the god of death (Mot), which brought Baal back to live. Baal was the storm god. Though he provided water for crops, his storms could also be devastatingly strong, so the people feared him. Because of that fear, they worshipped him. Note that their worship was not out of love for Baal (or from him). Humans worshipped Baal in order to manipulate him into sending rain, and restrain him from sending destructive storms.

As we saw earlier, for the Babylonians, the peaceful relationship between the gods was broken when the lesser gods rebelled. Human beings were not created to have a harmonious relationship with the gods. Rather, they were created to withstand the worst of the punishment assigned to the lesser gods who rebelled, which allowed the gods to be reconciled to each other and restore peace in the spiritual world. These stories explain the reason for human suffering and the source of peace in the world, and have little to do with the original nature humankind.

Likewise, very few African myths tell of the creation of the universe. By contrast, though, we find a whole range of ideas about the origins of humankind. These stories answer the question of how humankind arrived on earth, though the original location of the first humans differs. Some stories say humankind was created in heaven (or the sky), others say humans were created in the underworld, and still others say they were created on earth. Some stories tell of humans arriving on earth as part of God’s plan, others as punishment. In some cases, the first people arrived on earth through a hole in the ground, or a crack in the rock.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, science proposed new ideas about how the universe and humans came to exist. These theories suggested that humans evolved from lower life forms across several millennia of time, a process called biological evolution. They do not speak of divine action in the creation of the universe, but they also do not answer the question of how the original matter came to be. In their point of view, the basic material of the universe is eternal.
The original state of human beings

We have seen that the Biblical writings present various understandings of humankind’s original condition. It shows that the first man was very intelligent and morally pure. Adam gave names to each animal (a symbol of his mastery over them). The man and woman were able to have a love relationship, in holiness, at all levels: speech, work and sexual intimacy. God did not have to teach them how to work; they knew what to do. The work they did was creative (tending the garden) and it exercised both their bodies and minds. Every day, they had a personal appointment with God, and enjoyed his company.

Likewise, most African myths describe humanity as being in a good relationship with God in the beginning. Some myths suggest that humans were not very intelligent and that God had to provide everything for them. They did nothing in return (one wonders if the current dependency mindset came from such myths well before the arrival of foreign missionaries and colonizers). Other myths suggest that human beings had to learn how to transform what God provided them into things they could use. Still others suggest that man was placed on earth as punishment. Having broken some rule, he could not stay in heaven where he was created and where he had an intimate relationship with God.

Those who believe in biological evolution, assume that human beings developed their uniquely human traits and characteristics over time. Emerging from lower forms of life, humans had no connection with the divine.

The loss of the original state

Some worldviews do not conceive of a time when humans and God existed in an ideal world of harmony. This is true not only of those who believe in biological evolution, but other myths as well. For them, human pain and struggles are either the reason for human origins or a mere consequence of their behavior toward each other. There is no moral system, instituted at the beginning of human life, to serve as a pattern for life. While humans may feel guilt and estrangement in their relations with each other, it is not blamed on a broken relationship with God.

For those who hold the view that in the beginning humans and God (or the gods) existed peacefully, there must be some explanation of how that situation changed. In other words, they must explain the current human condition, where the right relationship between God and man has been broken. In the Biblical account, humans disobeyed of God’s commands, and the entire race suffered the consequences.

In African accounts, there is a great variety of descriptions of how this separation happened. We saw some of these in READING 4. In equatorial Africa there is the story of how men burned the savannah, and God had to leave earth to protect the sky from the smell and smoke. The story of Gilgamesh, which comes from the eastern world, tells more or less the same
story—humans upset the gods, and one of the gods tried to destroy the humans with a flood. In these accounts, it was not so much man’s guilt that caused the current situation (separation from the divine), but the impatience and selfishness of the gods.

In the stories of animals-messengers that we saw in the previous lesson, God is the originator of death, and humans are not guilty of causing it. If we think about this, it would seem that God, not humans, should be responsible for correcting the situation. Other myths clearly blame the first humans for bringing death (disobedience, eating something forbidden, fighting with each other, etc.).

Most of these myths speak of a period when there was an ideal relationship between the gods (or a god) and humans, a relationship that was later broken. God continues to provide the necessities of life, but human beings must work hard to benefit from God’s provision. Originally, humans may have been immortal, but that eternal life was replaced by having children and grandchildren who would bear within them the lives of their parents. Even then, humans do not simply disappear after they die. Instead, these “ancestors,” become spiritual beings that continue to exert influence on the earthly life of their descendents. It is interesting to note that we rarely find a story of sin and redemption where the original relationship with God can be restored, as we do in the Bible.

END OF READING 5

GRADE STUDENT WORKBOOK

Together as a class, answer the questions in the student workbook. At first ask for volunteers, and then choose students to answer. Make sure that all students participate. If a response is not correct, acknowledge what might be good about the response, and then ask if anyone else has a different answer that he or she thinks might be more accurate.

Questions from the student books with answers in italics

1. What does the author mean when he says, “The Black is incurably religious”?
   
   He lives in close communion with the invisible and the sacred.

2. According to the Bible, what were the main reasons God created humans?
   
   To have a relationship with God.
   To serve as steward of creation
   To form a society based on a godly morals

3. According to the reading, Egypt was as an extremely polytheistic nation. How did this happen?
   
   The nation emerged as many, small towns were unified under the political system of the Pharaoh. Each town had its own local god or gods.
4. What do the Egyptian and Canaanite mythologies have in common?

Neither has a creation myth.

5. According to the Babylonians, why were humans created?

In order to restore peace among the gods, humans were created to bear the brunt of the punishment assigned to the lesser, rebellious gods.

6. How do the African accounts describe the initial relationship between human beings and God?

Most African myths describe humanity as being in a good relationship with God in the beginning.

7. Where might the African habit of dependency come from?

In some of the accounts of the creation of humankind, God provided everything for humans without requiring them to work.

8. What is lacking in many worldviews as it relates to the separation that happened between humans and God?

There is no sense of guilt, or real consequences for immoral behavior.

9. Where did the idea of the continuing influence ancestors (or spirits) come from?

Humans lost their original immortality. Now, they live on in some way, and try to influence their descendants.

CLASS DISCUSSION

What differences do you find between the material in READING 5 and the first three chapters of the letter to the Romans?

PRESENTATION OF READING 6

This is an important reading. Emphasize the need for the students to understand the five systems of salvation presented. Once again, the students should take notes on the reading, using the questions presented in their workbooks. From the student workbook:

The questions below relate to the first part of READING 6. You should take notes and answer these questions during the reading. For the second half, it is very important that you understand the five systems of salvation mentioned. Note: these systems are not just found in Africa, they are part of religious systems around the world.

READING 6:
HUMAN MORTALITY AND RECONCILIATION WITH GOD

What is at the highest level of divinity: one, unique High God, or a pantheon of gods? Different worldviews have different answers to this question. In general, African myths speak of a unique creator God, who is
above all other beings, and in general is detached and inaccessible from the world.

For the Bambara, God operates by “the Word”: The Yo (an internal word, a visible spirit, and an inaudible voice) and contains all the possibilities of creation in himself. “He comes from himself, he is known by himself, and proceeds from himself.”

For the Krou of Côte d’Ivoire, God first sent down from the sky to earth all the rivers, vegetation, and animals of every kind. After that, using a long vine, he sent down the first human: two adult white men and one black woman.

The Akwa, pygmies\(^\text{13}\) from Gabon, tell the story of the creator, Bembe, who took a bit of earth and, using his saliva, kneaded it. With the red, white, and black earth, he made many small statues. He then ordered the statues to walk, then grow, then live. The last statue was small, very small, but God, who gave strength to the giant, compensated by giving the gift of shrewdness to the one who would be the ancestor of the Akwa. After creation, Bembe retired.

In Gabon, the High God is praised and glorified. At the start of the bolo dance (the initiation dance for females), the young women sing, “It is the Lord God who created the world, the world and all that it is.” Yet, even though they sing about the High God, everyone knows he is inaccessible.

The idea of the sacred

Why is God inaccessible? As we saw in the previous reading, human cultures generally understand that there was a break in the relationship between human beings and the creator god at some point after creation. Usually, religion is a human attempt to maintain or restore contact with God. However, according to both Christian and Jewish faiths, God himself does everything to restore the relationship. In this sense, we speak of revelation instead of just religion.

For Christians, there are two types of revelation. First, there is general revelation. That is to say, we all have some idea about the working and nature of God as witnessed in nature, in the tiny miracles of daily life, in the movements of human history. However, this type of revelation is not very clear or specific. The problem is that the broken relationship between God and humans prevents humans from properly interpreting general revelation, because human beings are deprived of the presence of God. According to Biblical faith, sin affected human intelligence. Without the presence of God, we cannot understand the revelation that is all around him, even though they may grasp a few things.

The second type is what theologians call special revelation. This revelation is more direct, and comes from God through two primary intermediaries: the written word of God (The Bible), and the living word of God (Jesus Christ).

\(^{13}\) Pygmies is a word used to describe any human group where the average adult height is less than 150 cm.
We will discuss special revelation later. However, it is important to note at this point, that until special revelation arrives, people only have general revelation and prevenient grace\(^{14}\) to help them to try to establish a relationship with God. That is why God seems so unattainable.

Most Africans share certain ideas about the nature of this inaccessible high God. 1) He knows everything about us and what happens in our lives. We might be able to trick the ancestors, but no one can fool God. 2) We can pray to him anywhere, even though there are some places that are more sacred than others. 3) Even though he hears prayers, he rarely intervenes in human affairs. 4) He is kind and merciful. Most bad things that happen are caused by evil spirits or witchcraft. Rarely is God at fault when something bad happens.

Those who have such a worldview are not afraid of God. Acknowledging him as the high god is no big deal, because he does not interfere in the day-to-day life of humans. So worshipping this God does not cause fear. In contrast, though, these same people are afraid of other spiritual beings (genies, lesser gods, and ancestors, for example) because they do interfere in the daily affairs of humans. Therefore, while people generally ignore the high god, they take special care to correctly worship or acknowledge these other lesser spirits.

According to the Exodus story, at Sinai God taught his people, the Jews, to fear him. The volcanic eruption, the earthquake, the noise, and the bright light, all created fear in the people of God. They dared not approach the mountain. Instead, they asked Moses to represent them before God. From this fear they experienced and learned the concept of sacredness. The mountain was sacred: one does not go near it. It was a **sacred place**. One tribe was appointed and set apart to handle the sacred objects of the religion. Later in their history, when a young man touched the Ark of the Covenant and immediately fell dead, they learned the fear of God as it relates to a **sacred object**. One does not touch it without risking death. This sense of the sacred seems almost universal. Even communism, which does not accept the idea of any god, holds its ideology as a sacred object. Whoever does not obey the regulations risks punishment.

Most Africans have some idea of sacredness. They believe that certain rituals, places, or objects are sacred or holy. Humans should respect and fear them, because they belong to (or are managed) by the ancestors, spirits or gods. If someone violates the holiness of a sacred object or place, the whole community suffers the consequences. The offender must rectify the situation. This is what it means to worship out of fear. When humans violate the sacred, they must do whatever is necessary to recreate the balance between the physical and the spiritual world. Unfortunately, they never know if the spirits, ancestors or the gods are appeased or not. Thus the fear continues, and they have very little assurance of peace.

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\(^{14}\) Prevenient grace is a theological phrase that describes God’s activity in a person’s life before they come to a full knowledge of him.
In the New Testament, we find that perfect love chases away such fear. We do not fear God in the same way any more. We worship him in love. While this is proper, we also run the risk of losing the idea of the sacred. We do not treat our places of worship as we should. We arrive at the service late for no good reason, as if participating in it is nothing important. We stop being careful about our behavior because we no longer feel that we are continually in the presence of God. From time to time, we need to take stock of what the Bible says about living in the presence of God, and keep a strong sense of the sacred.

Death

Nearly all human cultures believe that human mortality is fundamentally unfair. Our conscience, intelligence, and experiences all agree that human beings should live forever. Even if other creatures have limited life spans, human beings feel they have the right to live forever. Every culture has an explanation of death and the hope of some sort of eternal life. Usually death is a temporary interruption of eternal life. Again, there is a wide range of ideas about how this happens, with many variations. In some cultures, death is a god and the creator tries to protect humans from him, without success. In others, we see death as a messenger, like the animal-spirits in READING 4. Others reinforce the Biblical idea that death comes because of separation from the creator, and this separation affects human life even before death.

The origin of death in general is one thing, but the causes of an individual’s death raise other questions. For most Africans, a person’s death is due to both physical and mystical causes. When someone is dying, finding the mystical causes is as important as finding the physical causes. Rarely, does someone simply die of old age. Usually it is the result of witchcraft, spirits or a curse (the result of breaking a taboo, for example).

Eternal life includes both this physical, earthly life as well as the concept of the afterlife. The Christian position is that after death a future life awaits everyone, some in heaven with God and others in hell with Satan and the other fallen angels. Both are forms of eternal life. In Hinduism earthly life continues through reincarnation until an individual is released from this world, a world of suffering (see below). For many Africans, life continues after death when the dead person joins the ancestors. They exist for several generations, until none of the living remembers them. Then they continue to live as spirits who no longer influence earthly affairs. Sam Olek makes an interesting observation: “Even though all the myths in African cultures present the origin of death, none of them shows how death will be defeated and removed from the world.” (Issues in African Christian Theology, p. 117).

Morality, Deliverance and Redemption

The question of good and bad behavior is often connected to creation, but not all the time. Even if God is considered the guardian of human morality, most African cultures believe that he does not punish those who act
immorally. It is the role of the society itself to address acts of immorality through various means. Sometimes we use rituals to find the guilty one and to restore the balance between the physical and the spiritual worlds. All cultures have certain people who act as the conscience of the society—priests or shamans for example. In most cases, punishment only affects the earthly life of the offender. Only the real criminals, banished as outcasts of society, are denied access to the spirit world after death.

The fact that every one is guilty of breaking the moral law at one time or another and that everyone suffers (whether because of other people’s immorality, natural disasters, political troubles, economic upheavals, or other reasons) indicates that human life is always on the brink of ruin. The universal sense of justice requires the possibility of deliverance from guilt and suffering. Salvation can be seen as deliverance from many things: injustice, unhealthy desires, sin, enemies (real or potential), or even economic troubles. In Christianity, though, the whole of its theology focuses on the salvation offered by God, without which there is no other true deliverance.

Around the world, there are five different ways of understanding how salvation works: salvation through ritual, salvation through humanism; salvation through the annihilation of desires; salvation by right living, and salvation through submission (collaboration).

**Salvation through ritual.** Sacrifices and other rituals are means of controlling access to the gods or God. If done properly, they force the gods to respond to human desires. This is the most common system found in African traditional religions, Hinduism and other religions including Islam. We find the same concept in Judaism from the 8th to 6th century BCE and Catholicism in the period before the Reformation. Such rituals give the community limited assurance of salvation, but uncertainty is common, since one can never be sure that the gods will respond accordingly.

**Salvation through humanism.** In this system, the human being takes the place of God, becoming his own god and savior. Salvation, then, becomes deliverance from all forms of injustice under the leadership of those who have enough influence to create a social revolution. This form of salvation can be either theistic or atheistic. For example, some would say that the Christian God supports a revolution because he himself relied on violence (the death of his own son). The communist revolutions are the most famous examples of the atheistic form. For them, the point is no longer restoring the relationship between humanity and God, but changing the horizontal relationship between members of the same society.

The great error of this type of system (atheistic or not) is that it does not recognize original sin, which drives humans to thinking they can control everything, and become their own gods. The result of these revolutions will always be a society where injustice reigns because it does not deal with original sin.

**Salvation through the destruction of human desires.** This form of salvation is rooted in the fact that human beings have strong desires that are often in
conflict with what it takes to live in justice and peace in a society: desires to be someone important, to consume or possess more than is necessary, to exercise power, to abuse others for our own benefit. Contrary to humanism, in this form the individual must renounce human desires for the good of society. The goal is an eternal deliverance from all suffering thanks to right living on all levels: moral, spiritual, and intellectual. We find this form of salvation in Buddhism where there are no gods (atheistic), and as well as in the medieval monastic system (theistic).

This system claims that humans can get rid of original sin by means of religious or mental exercises.

**Salvation through right living (or good works).** Behind this idea is the belief that bad actions are punished and good deeds are rewarded. According to this system, the divine plan of salvation is only for the individual, and not society. The burden lies on the shoulders of the individual. His or her actions are what counts. There is little concern for the interior disposition of the person (thoughts, beliefs, emotions), but on what the person does (right living) Here, as in the two previous systems, the ultimate sin is committed—the individual tries to be his or her own savior. This is the type of religion condemned by the book of Job.

**Salvation through submission (collaboration).** The basis of this system is the action of God, who offers salvation to humans. God calls them to live moral lives, and most of the time their right actions are required in order for this grace to be applied. This form of salvation is often called works-righteousness. After the Exile, Judaism adopted this system and became even more deeply devoted to it after the destruction of the Temple in the year 70. Jesus preached against this practice. This system is seen today Islam, in Roman Catholicism, and in some branches of fundamentalist evangelical churches. Under this system, one must obey certain regulations, do certain things, dress in a specific way, etc., in order to maintain access to the grace of God. In these cases, the grace of God is effective, but it is not sufficient.

In all these systems of salvation, except maybe the last one, what is missing is the recognition of guilt (the negative result of disobeying God) and the need for forgiveness (the new situation created by and act of God who removes all the obstacles to full deliverance).

**Sources used in the development of this document:**


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15 Monasticism was popular in the 4th and 5th centuries. Individuals would remove themselves from society and join closed monastic societies (they were usually called monks or nuns). They would give away all their possessions before joining, and would live lives marked by poverty, renouncing most human comforts.


**END OF DOCUMENT**

Questions from the first half of this document:

1. Why is interpreting general revelation problematic?
   
   *The human being is deprived of the Spirit of God; he or she cannot understand it.*

2. What four concepts do Africans seem share in their understanding of the high God?
   
   *He knows everything.*
   
   *We can pray to him anywhere.*
   
   *He may intervene in our lives, if wants to, but rarely does.*
   
   *He is not the cause of most problems or evil.*

3. What were the episodes in the history of Jews that taught them the fear of the Lord?
   
   *The events at Sinai*
   
   *The death of the one who touched the Ark of the Covenant.*

4. What are the possible explanations for the origin of human death?
   
   *Death is a god.*
   
   *Death is a messenger from God (like the animal-messengers from previous reading).*
   
   *Separation from God*

5. What are some of the mystical causes of death, according to the African worldviews?
   
   *Witchcraft, spirits, a curse.*

6. Reflection question. How does the fact that most Africans do not believe that God punishes the guilty affects their attitudes on the subjects of sexual behavior? What examples of this do you see even among Christians?
   
   *There are many possible answers to this question. Some important ones are:*
   
   *Being sexually active before marriage (or) committing adultery after marriage.*
   
   *Cheating*
   
   *Withholding tithes and offerings*
   
   *Spirit of dependency*
**GROUP ASSIGNMENT**

Have the students break up into groups.
1. Have them check the answers to the questions on READING 6.
2. Prepare a group report on the following:
   a) Identify at least one good thing about each of the systems of salvation
   b) Define original sin. Why must it be taken into account when discussing various systems of salvation?
   c) Following up on the question above, why does the Church of the Nazarene insist on preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification?
   d) How might we prepare a sermon to better respond to the very real needs presented in the section on *Salvation by the annihilation of desires*?

   *Hopefully the students will identify that these same desires are found in the believer who is not yet sanctified. Only god can purify people.*

   e) How can we add a healthy sense of the fear of the Lord (or sacredness) to our worship services and lives?

**ASSIGNMENT FOR THE NEXT LESSON**

*From the student workbook:*

1. Be prepared to present your group report.
2. Read Hebrews 8-10 and Galatians 3.

**END OF LESSON**
LESSON 5
The intermediaries between humans and God

LESSON PLAN

- 1. Devotions
- 2. Introduction
- 3. Discussion of PREVIOUS Lesson’s HOMEWORK
- 4. Presentation of READING 7
- 5. READING 7a: "Intermediaries"
- 6. Class Discussion on READING 7
- 7. Memorization Work (Galatians 3:26-28)
- 8. READING 7b: “Intermediaries and Idolatry”
- 9. Group Assignment
- 10. Assignment for next lesson

INTRODUCTION

In the fourth lesson, we briefly examined the concept of the sacred and the fear of God (or gods). In this lesson, we will expand on the concept of intermediaries\(^\text{16}\) between human beings and God. The primary reading for this lesson offers several specific examples taken from different cultures/religions in Africa. We will also look at these examples in the light of Scripture.

DEVOTIONS

John 1:14-18. This passage deals in a Biblical way with the difference between the ministry of a mediator and direct contact with God himself—the law given by Moses versus the grace and truth that come from Jesus Christ, who, John makes clear, is God himself.

Of course, feel free to substitute any devotional material you feel appropriate, based on your particular situation.

DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS LESSON’S HOMEWORK: HEBREWS CHAPTERS 8-10; GALATIANS 3

The three chapters of Hebrew 8–10 speak about Jewish worship in the Old Testament, which is usually listed as an intermediary religion (one that requires an intermediary between people and their god or gods). Only the priests could stand in the presence of God in the Holy Place and only the High Priest could enter into the Most Holy Place (the “Holy of Holies”). A key to this passage, which opens the discussion of an intermediary, is found in 9:8-10.

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\(^{16}\) An intermediary, in its religious sense, is someone who acts as a negotiator between the divine (God or gods) and humans. This can be a divine person, a human person, or a semi-divine person.
Here are questions you can ask to help lead the discussion of the passages. The students may give various answers. If those answers do not include the material following the question, make sure that you present it.

**What kind of intermediary does the Old Testament priest represent?**

As a mediator, the priest was not a second-class deity whom the people of Israel should worship. He simply was their representative to God. He was still human. In fact, he ran the risk of dying if his preparation was not done according to God's requirements.

These same chapters also speak of two other secondary intermediaries: the Old Testament law and of the tabernacle (which would also include Herod's temple, a marvel of the ancient world). The law was a means of pleasing God in daily life, and the temple was the place where he was worshipped.

**What does it mean to say that Old Testament worship represents a secondary level of worship?**

1) It is constructed by human hands; it is of this world (9:1, 24)
2) They are but images of heavenly things (8:5 and 9:23)
3) The law is a shadow, it cannot lead to perfection, impossible for the blood of animals to take away sins, etc (10:1-4)

This passage talks about Jesus as the new mediator. But he, according to the New Testament, is not simply an intermediary; he is God himself—God the Son. The end of Galatians chapter 3 reinforces these ideas by showing that believers themselves are also sons of God, and that we therefore have direct access to God by faith in Jesus Christ.

**What is the best way to use our direct access to God and how can we reinforce this idea during our Sunday worship?**

Anticipate answers based on personal reflection.

**What is the role of the pastoral prayer during Sunday worship? Does it have a priestly function in our services?**

Anticipate answers based on personal reflection.

**PRESENTATION OF READING 7a**

In READING 5, we looked at the pagan notion of the High God as creator but mostly inaccessible to humanity. This produces a situation in which humans neither fear him nor love him. In the Bible, the clearest example of this phenomenon is the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon, El. El may have been the supreme god, but he is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, because people did not worship him. He did not affect everyday life. We know from other sources that the goddess Astarte occasionally pleaded with El to
give her partner Baal a home in heaven, where Baal might bring the rain necessary to life. However, El had no contact with humans.

Many people groups, cultures, and religions have found it necessary to invent or propose intermediary deities between the most high god and human beings. READING 7a offers several examples of such intermediaries found in different African cultures.

Make sure the students are aware of the three discussion questions that will be used at the end. From the student workbook:

BEFORE starting READING 7a, read the following questions, that will form the basis of the class discussion later:

1. What are the important points of this document?
2. Are intermediaries humans or spirit-beings? Are they gods?
3. Why do worshipers call on their God or gods? What is the motivation behind religious rituals?

READING 7a: INTERMEDIARIES

In most traditional religions of Africa, the supreme being (High God) remains at a distance from the world. In fact, some religions (both in Africa and elsewhere) believe that the High God did not actually create the world. Instead, he used other divine agents (sometimes called demiurges) to finish things for him. In some cases, the High God had to use these spiritual beings to repair mistakes that were made during the creation. These are examples of intermediaries. There are different kids of spiritual beings that act as intermediaries in African religions.

Spiritual intermediaries

Demiurges. The Dogon of Mali believe that Nommo was the first living creature created by the sky god, Amma. Nommo was gifted with the life force of water, and it was he who gave clothing, language, and the capacity for social life to humanity.

For the Senufo of Mali and Côte d’Ivoire, Maleeo (“Ancient Mother”) finished and perfected the work of her twin Kolotyolo (“Creator God”) who had withdrawn to heaven after starting the work of creation. Kolotyolo is not approachable and can only be reached through intermediaries.

Lesser deities. For the Ewe, Mawu is the High God who is the “mother/father” of all the trowo (powerful spirits or secondary deities) who help humans. To survive, the trowo need offerings and sacrifices of which Mawu has no need. The trowo are depicted in Ewe art, but Mawu never is.

Spirits. Spirits are non-physical beings who perform various functions. The spirits associated with the Sara people of southern Chad include the Kuru (the spirit of the village), the Doba (the spirit that governs fertility) and the Zara (who give strength against lions, fairies, genies, or other spirits/gods).
Ancestors are always ready to help their descendants, in many African religions. The earliest Dogon were immortal. When they became very old, rather than dying, they went up to heaven and from there they watched the living. The ancestor-blacksmith made an ark shaped like a basket and gathered up all the plants, animals and equipment that could help humans. Then he threw it all along with fire and the heavenly forge, to earth down a rainbow. Fire from heaven is a very common element in myths. Usually humans received fire from someone who stole it from heaven. The identity of a people group is often tied directly to these stories. For example, thanks to the fire they received, the pygmies became stronger than animals, because now they could cook their food. This allowed them to avoid slavery or subordination to nature.

Often, the stars (which are usually viewed as a type of spirits) determine the dates of important rituals. The stars are often related to each other, as husband and wife, for example. Among the Lamba of Zimbabwe two stars were described as a maternal uncle and nephew. For the Venda of South Africa’s Limpopo province, the king is the Sun and the moon is his queen-sister—the stars are their descendents.

While spiritual intermediaries are usually associated with specific tasks or functions (like creating the world, overseeing a village, or solving problems), most people cannot communicate directly with them. Instead, one must use a “seer of God,” a human intermediary.

Human intermediaries

These human mediators are relays for lesser gods, spirits or ancestors, and their words are seen as divine. Often this communication happens when a powerful spirit being possesses the seer. During a trance, he or she prophesies and these divine words surpass all other authorities. Usually the possessing spirit wants to communicate with the community about some social problem, and give instructions about how to heal or solve it. Another type of human intermediary is a priest, who invokes supernatural powers to transmit the requests and offerings of the faithful to the gods.

Most of African religions use masks in their major ceremonies. They hide the identity of the dancers, allowing them to make into contact with the transcendent (spirit world). Even if they do not wear masks, ritual dancers usually have their faces and bodies painted and wear special clothes and adornments. This, like the masks, serve to depersonalize the person and help establish a link with the invisible. That is to say, by hiding the identity of the dancer (or one performing a ritual) it is easier to make contact with the spirit world.

At the same time the ones wearing the masks or make-up, maintain a certain distance between the two realms: the dancer does not claim to be an ancestor himself, nor does the spirit or god invoked confuse himself with the messenger. Instead, the two are bound together. The dancer is both the voice of the gods to the people, and the voice of the people to the gods.
In order to be recognized universally, the mask uses elements found in nature. The meaning associated with these natural elements may change from culture to culture. Each element corresponds to the impression it wants to communicate. They come from both plants (wood, fibers, leaves, dyes, etc.) and animals (horns, shells, teeth, fossils, etc.). Humans identify, combine, and manipulate all these elements, some of which have symbolic value for the culture, such as colors and names. The mask designates the natural symbols that are important to the particular culture, though the mask does not necessarily carry religious or spiritual meaning, which would make it idolatrous. It is not an idol or fetish.

END OF READING 7A

CLASS DISCUSSION ON READING 7a

There are several objectives associated with READING 7.

First, the students need to understand what an intermediary is, and how they function as a mediator between humans and the divine, as well as how intermediaries might function in rituals.

Secondly, the students should be able to distinguish the difference between “spiritual” intermediaries (ancestors, gods, spirits, or other superhuman beings) and humans (such as priests, shamans, or even worship leaders).

Thirdly, they should understand the reason for worship. Normally, rituals have a self-centered, tribal-centered or village-centered goal; that is to say, people ask deities for help to improve their situation in life rather than worshipping them because they are worthy of it. The question could be asked: Does a certain culture want to serve the gods or do they want the gods to serve it?

Lead an open discussion, making sure to include these three issues.

MEMORIZATION WORK (GALATIANS 3:26-28)

Work with the students to make sure that each one can quote Galatians 3:26-28. They will have to write it out as part of the final exam.

PRESENTATION OF READING 7b

The Bible seems to present Jesus, the God-man, as an intermediary between human beings and God, the Father. This reading compares and contrasts the pagan understanding of intermediaries with the roles of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

You may not have time for a class discussion following this second half of READING 7. However, the students are required to answer three questions in their workbook, even if you do not discuss them in class:

1. Why does God require that his followers only worship Him? What is wrong with worshipping other spiritual beings (gods, ancestors, saints, etc.)?
2. How does God use the various elements of a culture to reveal himself to those who have not yet been reached by the Gospel?

3. REFLECTION QUESTION. What is prevenient grace, and why do we call it that?

READING 7b: INTERMEDIARIES AND IDOLATRY

Among most African people, there is no direct worship of the High God. Sacred places devoted to him are very rare. Instead, organized worship is usually directed toward deities (gods of a lower rank than the High God), spirits, and/or ancestors, acknowledged as intermediaries or representative through which the Supreme Being is manifested. Usually prayers are offered to these intermediaries rather than directly to the High God. This practice is not just for non-Christians. It is practiced by the Roman Catholic Church, where God the Father is considered too distant or too busy with other things so believers pray to the saints, especially Mary.

The intention of this type of worship is to find access to the Supreme God through some indirect means, since direct access is not usually a possibility. The problem is that the intermediary spiritual forces (whether they are called “gods” or “spirits” or other names) are nothing other than the spiritual forces of evil. Jesus called Satan a liar, who has done nothing but lie since his fall from grace. Satan deceives people by convincing them that they are praying to God or a god. He lies to everyone: to pagans, to those who seek God in spirit and in truth, and even to believers. Therefore, the sacrifices and prayers offered up to the so-called “gods” are often really offered up to demons—agents of Satan who, as the master of deception and destruction, desires our worship. Any form of worship of other spiritual forces is idolatry, whether we know it or not, and it is detested by God. He alone is to be worshipped; otherwise, we are giving to someone or something else, the honor and praise that belong to God himself.

However, God wants to restore—to all human beings of every race and every culture—the relationship that was broken when Adam and Eve fell. In those places where the gospel has not yet arrived, He uses the means available within the culture itself (see “general revelation” in READING 6). At the beginning of the 21st century, God is in the process of producing more amazing missionaries than ever. Thanks primarily to the prayers of believers for unreached people groups, He is preparing both the people and the messengers.

In one example of this, a tribal chief left his village and headed for the border. When he got there, he waited. Finally, a missionary also arrived at the border. The chief introduced himself, and the missionary was surprised when the chief asked him why he had taken so long to arrive. The missionary had

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18 Idolatry takes many forms, but usually involves the worship of an image or object. In some cases it can also mean the worship of another being as if they were a god.
not arranged to meet anyone, and as far as he knew no one even knew who he was, or that he was coming to the village. Yet, the chief had a vision of the missionary coming to announce the good news. When the missionary arrived, the people were ready to hear the message of Jesus.

Among the Muslims today, God uses the Islamic system of a spiritual guide. Through dreams, faithful Muslims receive the image of someone, their spiritual guide. They believe they must seek that person with their whole heart, and sometimes the image they receive is the portrait of Christ.

The worship of intermediaries is idolatry, but God knows people’s hearts. He takes advantage of whatever resources they have in order to meet the desires of their hearts. Often he goes ahead of the gospel to prepare hearts, an action we Wesleyans call “prevenient grace.”

Jesus and the Holy Spirit

In the Gospel of John we find the Biblical teaching on the true nature of intermediaries, especially as it relates to Jesus. In John 5:43, Jesus says, “I have come in my Father’s name.” This sentence emphasizes Jesus’ role as intermediary between God and humans, even his chosen people. Jesus repeats this same idea in his teaching to his disciples towards the end of his ministry when he says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me” (14:6). Here again is intermediary language; if we want to approach the Father, we must go through the Son. So far, we have clear, distinct Biblical support for Jesus as intermediary between the Father and humans.

Just as important as the passages above, are those where John presents Jesus as God, not simply a divine, spiritual being. “The word became flesh” (1:14); “I and the Father are one” (10:30); Thomas called Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (20:28). All of these references support the Biblical idea of the divinity of Jesus.

So then, John uses intermediary language when speaking of Jesus but, ultimately, Jesus is cannot be an intermediary, at least not in the normal sense of the word. Jesus is, after all, God. The God who seemed inaccessible to many people has now become accessible to all. Jesus is the Most High God among us (Emmanuel), now finally accessible. No longer do humans need to find someone to speak to God on their behalf; they have direct access.

Chapters 13–16 of John’s Gospel offers the most detailed New Testament teaching about the Holy Spirit. It was Jesus himself who sent the Holy Spirit to the Church at Pentecost. It was also Jesus who sends the Spirit into the life of every believer as proof that we are children of God, and as a deposit guaranteeing our future with Him. Again, though, the Spirit does not act as an intermediary between God and humans. The Holy Spirit is not simply a translator between the human and the divine. Instead, he transforms us so that we have direct access to the Father, without needing an intermediary. Because of the Holy Spirit, believers take the role of intermediaries for the non-believing world through their prayers of intercession. The important
distinction is that we, as believers, cannot be “prayed to” by others. Instead, we intercede on their behalf, and encourage them to pray directly to God. This concept is clearly shown in 1 Peter 2:5-9, where believers are called “a holy priesthood.” We do not offer sacrifices in order to make the Lord become part of our lives, instead we offer ourselves (Romans 12:1-2), so that we can be a testimony to His grace in our actions as well as our words.

END OF READING

GROUP ACTIVITY

Present ASSIGNMENT 5 of the Course Requirements (syllabus), a study on direct access to God. Groups may work together on this project, but each student must turn in his or her own copy. The assignment given as part of READING 7 should be included in the student’s final report. From the student workbook:

The New Testament is careful to present Jesus as something other than simply an intermediary, even though it often uses this type of language to describe him. In your groups, create an “Article of Faith” on the role of Jesus and how he connects non-believers to God the Father. Formulate this article in terms that someone whose worldview already accepts spiritual intermediaries would understand.

ASSIGNMENT FOR THE NEXT LESSON

Continue to work on Assignment 5 of the syllabus.
LESSON 6
Biblical and Intertestamental Stories

LESSON FLOW

1. Introduction
2. Devotion
3. Group Reports
4. Presentation of READING 8
5. READING 8: “Dreams in the Bible”
6. Brief discussion of READING 8
7. Introduction to the Jewish idea of Wisdom and presentation of READING 9
8. READING 9: “Joseph the Wise Man”
9. Brief discussion of READING 9
10. Introduction to READINGS 10, 11, 12
11. READING 10: “The Pseudepigrapha”
12. READING 11: “The Date of Jesus Birth”
13. READING 12: “John’s Baptism and Christian baptism”
14. Discussion on READINGS 10, 11, 12

INTRODUCTION

This lesson contains five important readings. They deal with sensitive issues and may cause some debate. Because there are so many readings, there will not be much time to work in groups. Instead, there will be more large group discussion. This teacher’s guide will help you answer some of the typical, tough questions that will no doubt arise when discussing these subjects.

READINGS 8 & 9 deal with the dreams and interpreters of dreams found in the Bible. This is an important subject to study, because dreams as a means of divine revelation (from God, gods, spirits, ancestors, etc.) are easily misunderstood. The readings limit the discussion of dreams to the Biblical accounts, even though there is an abundance of stories from the many African cultures who value dreams.

READINGS 10, 11 and 12 deal with issues a bit outside the main theme of this course. However, they do have a place in this study, because they relate to the contemporary Western worldview with its emphasis on empirical truth and facts. Many Africans accept that truth comes in several formats, only one of which is the recitation of facts. Truth comes in other literary formats as well as through experience. Many Westerners do not accept anything as true unless it is based on “facts.” Likewise, if scientific experiments can show that something is “false,” they no longer trust it to hold any “truth” whatsoever. In addition, these documents deal with various issues that pastors often face in
their ministry, and it is a good idea to deal with them, even if we can only take a brief look.

**DEVOTIONS**

It would be a good idea to keep the devotional time as short as possible, as there is much material in this lesson.

**GROUP REPORTS**

Groups should report on their progress toward completing ASSIGNMENT 5 (from the syllabus), including their discussion of the previous lesson. Encourage every student to participate.

**PRESENTATION OF READING 8**

No doubt, many students will have their own stories to tell about how a dream influenced their life or the lives of other they know. This reading presents a lot of information about dreams and interpreters found in the Bible. Note the distinction between the Biblical understanding of interpreting dreams compared to a pagan or magical understanding.

**READING 8: DREAMS IN THE BIBLE**

In ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, dreams were interpreted by a specialist, who used various cultic rituals to divine they meant. This is called oneiromancy (the divination of dreams), and for most of the Ancient Near East, it was a form of magic. The Old Testament does not promote this type of activity. Deuteronomy 18:10-11 prohibits divination, and using any sort of ritual to interpret a dream was forbidden.

However, the role of an “interpreter of dreams” is a well-known part of Jewish culture, and was shared among the other ancient cultures of Biblical times. They believed that God could use dreams as a means to speak directly to certain individuals. One of Joel’s oracles says that “dreaming dreams” will be one of the eschatological events of the outpouring of the Spirit (2:28), and Ben Sira* warns against the vanity of dreams (Sirach 34:1-8), except for those that are “specially sent by the Most High” (v. 6). In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Judaism* accepted inspired oneiromancy as a permissible means of gaining knowledge (the story of Joseph is an example). According to the Babylonian Talmud*, there were at least 24 rabbis in Jerusalem who interpreted dreams for free (Berakhot 55a-b).

The Old Testament reports a number of fictitious dreams, that is to say, accounts that are presented as dreams but were never actually dreamed by an individual. Written according to accepted patterns of the time, they fulfill a

* The asterix (*) here and elsewhere indicates references to texts that date to a time after the closing of the Old Testament, that is to say after Malachi, but including the Book of Daniel. Daniel was accepted in to the Old Testament canon while the others mentioned were not.
specific literary function and often serve as the framework for a theological discourse. As with other literature of the Ancient Near East, it is possible to classify these stories into different categories, defined by their literary forms, but also reflecting the diversity of their dreamlike experiences (imagined or actually dreamed).  

The dream stories fall into two broad categories: visual and auditory dreams. In visual dreams, the dreamer sees images. These are found in the story of Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11; 40–41), the chapters of Daniel written in Aramaic (2, 4, 7)*, Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Genesis 28:12-15), and the dream of a Soldier of Midian (Judges 7:13-15). Visual dreams can be further classified as premonitory dreams (dreams that tell of future events—Joseph; the Midianite Soldier); symbolic dreams (dreams that use obscure, symbolic language—the Egyptians in Genesis 40–41, and Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2 and 4) and visionary dreams (dreams involving angels or messengers—Jacob at Bethel).

Symbolic dreams require interpretation by a third party, because the dreamer does not understand the message contained in the images they saw. The accounts of these dreams have two phases: the presentation of the dream itself, followed by its interpretation after the dreamer wakes up. Each time a symbolic dream is interpreted in the Bible, it shows the difference between the impotence of the pagan soothsayers and the divine gift of the Jewish wise man who is directly inspired by God. This pattern is found in the stories of Joseph in Egypt as well as in the books of Daniel (1–2, 4–5). What makes these stories special is that they emphasize the divine inspiration of the Jewish interpreters, Joseph and Daniel and not the magical arts of the other practitioners of divination (Genesis 48:8; 41:8, 15-16; Daniel 2:4-12, 19-28; 4:5–6.15). That is to say, the ”specialist” tries in vain to use their rituals and cultic practices to understand the dreams while the men of God receive the interpretation directly from God, with no magic involved.

God speaking directly to the dreamer characterizes the second category of auditory dreams. In these dreams, God comes or appears in person to the dreamer who “stands in his presence.” In most cases, we find a standard introduction: “God came to [name of the person] in a dream at night.” (Genesis 20:3; 31:24; Numbers 22:8-9, 20; a variation is also found 1 Samuel 3:1-4). The message delivered by God is unambiguous and the dreamer does not need the services of an interpreter when he wakes up. It would seem that patriarchs, kings and prophets were the only ones who ever received these dreams. However, this is probably due to the nature of the Biblical texts,  

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19 Because the Jewish people were forbidden to create statues, they did not develop the art of sculpture. However, this allowed them to develop the literary arts. They used all sorts of literary forms to present truth: parables, fictional histories, etc. If occasionally the account of a dream does not reflect someone’s actual dream, the text still presents the theological truth inspired by the Holy Spirit. Note also that this document tries to limit its discussion of dreams to a fixed period in history. It could be that this literary form was just one way of expressing theological truths during that time.
which emphasize the stories of people of such high rank. It does not mean that ordinary people did not have auditory dreams.

Solomon’s dream at Gibeon (1 Kings 3) is a typical example of an auditory dream. It is written in the literary style of a royal dream, containing elements of royal ideology. In its current edited form, it illustrates well the manner in which dreams formed a literary framework for a theological discourse. The same can be said of the dream of Jacob at Bethel (Genesis 28), which has the peculiar element of combining auditory and visual elements in the same dream: he sees a ladder (or staircase) reaching from the earth to the sky with Angels going up and down it. At the top, he sees God and hears Him speak. This story’s first function is to show the holiness of the spot where Jacob was lying, the intersection of heaven and earth. The story’s other function is to renew the covenant between God and the patriarchs.

Abimelech’s dream is our final example. It follows the regular introductory formula: “God came to Abimelech in a dream one night.” In reality, it is a nightmare, because God reveals that the woman he has taken, Sarah, is Abraham’s wife. God warns the king that unless he gives Sarah back, he will die. The dream comes in the form of a trial, with God as the judge, and the king pleading his case. Again, the auditory message is unambiguous, and when the king wakes up, he does not need an interpretation of the message. This is not the only time that God uses a dream to “visit” a sinner and hold a trial against him. We see the same thing happen in other later writings. God explains to Elihu the theological function of some dreams: sometimes God speaks in dreams to accuse and reprimand sinners so that they can correct their ways, a “judgment dream” (Job 33:14-18). In the Wisdom of Solomon*, the concept of a “dream trial” is revived at the end of the 1st century BCE, but this time the judgment comes down with no forgiveness: before the first-born in Egypt were killed in their sleep (the tenth plague prior to the Exodus), they all had vivid and gruesome dreams “so that they should not perish without knowing why” (Wisdom 18:17-19). The peculiarity of these dream trials is that they do not announce some future event; instead, they recall and illuminate some aspect of the dreamer’s life. In these situations, we see the beginnings of a more psychological understanding of dreams.

END OF READING

BRIEF DISCUSSION OF READING 8

Many African cultures rely on dreams as a means of knowing what will happen in the future or as a source of information. However, in considering whether or not a dream is indeed a message from God (whether it be a prophecy or any thing else), we should remember that all such messages must be confirmed by the written word of God, the Bible. Even then, we must be careful, since it is very easy to twist the meaning of a Biblical passage to make it agree with a dream.
This reading opens the door for all sorts of discussion on the role of dreams today. Demonstrate and encourage wisdom as you discuss these issues.

The student workbook has these questions for the students to answer:

1. What does oneiromancy mean?
2. What is the relationship between God and dreams?
3. Describe the development of oneiromancy in Jewish history.
4. According to this reading, what are the categories of dreams? Describe them.
5. How would you describe a “judgment dream?”

**PRESENTATION OF READING 9 AND INTRODUCTION TO WISDOM LITERATURE**

The concept of wisdom according to the ancient Jewish worldview has three aspects: 1) a high level of training in a subject (Solomon was a world famous expert in botany, the study of plants); 2) understanding how to live in community with a strong sense of justice and hospitality (an example of this would be Boaz in the story of Ruth) and 3) a life dedicated to God, which forms the basis for discussing and assessing the daily situations that occur in the life of the community (the choice of Joseph and Mary as Jesus’ parents).

Wisdom did not necessarily equal wealth, but it was assumed that God gave his economic blessings to the wise person. It was the parents’ job to teach wisdom to all their children, which included disciplining them so that they would have self-control as adults. The father taught his craft to his sons, and the mother taught the daughters how to live as an ideal woman in the community. Parents were responsible for the spiritual formation of their children, even after the synagogues began to hold classes for children.

In READING 9, we will examine Joseph as an example of the Jewish understanding of “wisdom” or “wise man.” As an adolescent, he did not seem to possess wisdom. Fortunately, for him, because of the consequences and circumstances of his life, he developed wisdom as an adult, and it served him well in prison in Egypt. If indeed Joseph lacked wisdom as a child and later gained it as an adult, READING 9 explores possible reasons why this may have been so.

**READING 9: JOSEPH THE SAGE**

We find many traits of the Jewish understanding of wisdom in the stories of Joseph. When Joseph resists the advances of Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39:7-12), he exemplifies the wisdom teaching of Proverbs, warning young men about “foreign women” who will lead them to their destruction (Proverbs 1–9, especially 7) Also, political wisdom is illustrated when Joseph is raised to lead Pharaoh’s kingdom because of his outstanding qualities (especially
intelligence and wisdom). Pharaoh says, “can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God? ... Since God has made all this known to you [Joseph], there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you” (Genesis 41:38-40). From this point on, Joseph is as the perfect senior official, who masters the art of governance to the highest degree, which makes him a wise man par excellence (see Genesis 47:13-26).

It would be an exaggeration, however, to say the story of Joseph is an exact example of the wisdom of which Proverbs speaks. Many features of the story forbid it: as a youth, Joseph appears naive, and he did not know how to control his tongue, which is a skill the wise man must master. The plot of the whole story is built upon failed family relations (the father shows his preference for Joseph; the brothers are jealous of one of their own) which does not compare at all to the ideal of wisdom. Finally, the story attaches a great deal of importance to the fact that Joseph is associated with the art of interpreting dreams, yet again something that is not consistent with the ancient ideal of wisdom.

In fact, Joseph, like Daniel, becomes a member of a royal court, a particular type of wise man that existed during the Persian and Hellenistic period. In addition to traditional wisdom (the result of long, formal education such as is mentioned in Daniel 1:3-5–5:17-21), these Jewish wise men enjoyed the assistance of God due to their loyalty to the Torah20 (Daniel 1:17). Because of this relationship, they had the ability to interpret dreams and mysterious stories, a type of inspired wisdom (Daniel 2:19; 4:5–6:15; 5:11-12). Ironically, this same claim is made by some of the characters in the Book of Job (Job 4:12-16; 11:5-6; 15:8; 32:8).

In conclusion, like other engaging stories designed to fortify moral behavior (Daniel, Esther, Judith, and Tobit21) the story of Joseph offers its readers a model of wisdom and generosity. Joseph is the heir of an ancient wisdom informed by spiritual and moral discipline.

**END OF READING**

**BRIEF DISCUSSION OF READING 9**

If you have time, discuss briefly how Joseph and Daniel exemplified the Jewish concept of wisdom. How were they different? Also note the questions in the student workbook:

1. The life of Joseph illustrates what type of wisdom? How is this wisdom described?

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20 Torah is a word that stands for all Jewish sacred writings and oral traditions. It is more than simply what we would call the Old Testament.

21 The books of Judith and Tobit are part of the body of literature from the time between the Old and New testaments known as the Apocrypha. This same group of writings add extra chapters to Esther and Daniel, and are not included in the protestant canon of scripture. They were, however, part of the Greek Septuagint.
2. How is wisdom found in the life of Joseph different from the wisdom described in the book of Proverbs?

3. According to the reading, the wisdom of Joseph and Daniel is the result of what kind of faithfulness?

**PRESENTATION OF READINGS 10, 11, 12**

The next three documents treat different minor points concerning the worldview of ancient Biblical cultures. READING 10 discusses the pseudepigrapha (texts written by someone other than the person named as the author). This discussion will touch on the concept of how truth is defined in various cultures. Can we use such a text as a source of truth and teach it to others? Some cultures would have no trouble saying “yes” while others would hesitate. Can such a text be inspired? The committees who worked on choosing which texts should be included in the canon decided that “no” is the correct answer. The problem is that today we have some very convincing proofs that suggest certain texts—considered inspired for centuries—may be pseudepigraphic.

READING 11 deals with the dating of Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The church has never claimed that December 25th is the exact day he was born. The fact is that centuries ago the pagan world had its own holidays. Early Christians looked for a Christian event to celebrate at the same time that their neighbors celebrate the winter solstice. The Jews have done the same thing with Hanukkah, which was a minor celebration originally but today is a major holiday.

READING 12 addresses the question of the difference between the baptism offered by John and Christian baptism. Acts, at the beginning of chapter 19, shows that Paul (and therefore Luke) saw a difference between the two. It becomes a question then about what anthropologists call “rites of passage.” These rites determine the relationships between a child and society, between adolescents and adults, or what rights the initiated can exercise based on his position in society. It does not appear that the baptism of John had such a cultural significance. However, Christian baptism is such a rite, and has been such since the beginning of its practice. Some say that it took the place of circumcision as the rite of entry into the faith. This is not the main course in the curriculum where the students will study the meaning of baptism. “Orientation to Ministry” and “Christian theology” will treat it in a more profound way.

Note these questions from the student workbook:

1. What is the pseudepigrapha?
2. Describe how the repressive regime of Syria contributed to the rise of pseudepigraphy.
3. How might pseudepigraphy have helped the Church at the end of the first century?


**READING 10: THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA**

Pseudepigraphy is the process of writing and publishing a text under the name of a prestigious author, usually from the past. These texts, taken together, are called the pseudepigrapha.

Pseudepigraphy occurred early in the Greco-Roman world: the disciples of philosophers and famous speakers continued to publish works under the name of their deceased master as a faithful expression of his thought and teaching. *The Letters of Plato* and *The Epinomis* are examples of this. Both are included in the complete works of Plato, even though scholars are almost unanimous that Plato himself did not write them.

We have often said that the idea of authorship did not have the same importance at earlier times as it does now. Authorship gained importance during the classical period Greek history (480–323 BCE), and was characterized by an explosion of creativity in art, architecture, as well as literature. This was well before the time the Jews began to determine their official list of sacred books. The Jews insisted that a text could be traced back to the life and/or the work of a prophet. For example, after the death of Alexander, Egypt and Syria went to war to determine who would rule Palestine. When Syria finally won the war, it governed the area and its people in a very repressive way. It was in this period that the apocalyptic type of literature developed. A common characteristic of all these “revelations” was that they were presented as though they were ancient texts, a prophecy from far back in Israel’s history. It became common for writers to use the name of historical characters from Israel’s past as the “author” of their writings.

In the last third of the 1st Century, the Christian church encountered a dilemma. The apostles and other eyewitnesses of Jesus and his ministry began to die, and Jesus had not yet returned. The church was growing, and new churches needed guidance. The successors of the apostles and community leaders felt the need to safeguard the integrity of the apostolic messages, while at the same time applying their understanding of new situations facing the church. They wanted to echo the dynamic words of the apostles, giving direction and instruction that the apostles would have given if they were still alive. It is possible that some followers of Paul were inspired by his letters to write new ones (2 Thessalonians, the Pastoral Epistles, and perhaps others).* The early communities were not tricked into believing that Paul actually wrote the letters. The question was not the authenticity of the authorship but the authenticity of the message—the “deposit” of which the Pastorals speak, which should continue to resonate for generations.

During the second and third centuries, the leaders of the Christian Church needed to establish which texts were canonical. They created a test of authenticity: they must be sincerely attributed to eyewitnesses or apostles, but they added a higher criteria that the text most conform to “the rule of faith” and the tradition of the Church.

All the books that were accepted into the canon of the New Testament, were accepted as authentic from the point of view of their authorship,
whether or not they really were written by those authors or not. Some of the arguments used by scholars from the 18\textsuperscript{th} century forward to disprove the authenticity of certain texts seem to be correct, even though other arguments are nothing but speculation. The Pseudepigraphy of certain letters that the author of this reading cites is certainly possible, though not probable.

**END OF READING**

**READING 11: THE DATE OF JESUS’ BIRTH**

Some argue that the year 2000 was not really the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus. Instead, he was born between 4 and 6 BCE. Is that correct? Where did we get the date of December 25\textsuperscript{th}? Does it matter when Jesus was born?

It was not until the 6\textsuperscript{th} Century that we began using a calendar based on Jesus’ birth. A monk named Dionysius Exiguus (Dennis the Little) calculated the year of Jesus birth as taking place in the 754\textsuperscript{th} year of the Roman era, counting the years from the founding of Rome. We know that Herod died in the spring of the year 750 of the Roman era, four years into the Christian era as established by the calculations of Dionysius. However, Matthew and Luke both attest that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod. So, he must have been born sometime before 750, probably between 4 and 6 BC.

The date of December 25\textsuperscript{th} for Christmas, is a tradition that goes back to the reign of Constantine in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century. It replaced the pagan sun festival, which happened every year at the winter solstice, celebrating the rebirth of the Sun. The winter solstice marks the point in the year where the days stop growing shorter, bringing more sunlight with each new day.\footnote{The winter solstice is notable in the areas further north or south of the equator, where the angle of the Earth’s axis causes days to be noticeably longer in the summer and shorter in the winter. The winter solstice marks the day in winter when the days cease getting shorter, and start to once again become longer.} It seemed a fitting symbol for the birth of Christ, the Light of the World. It is interesting to note that the traditional date of the birth of John the Baptist is June 24\textsuperscript{th}, the summer solstice, when the days start becoming shorter. In the same way that John had to decrease so that Jesus could manifest himself.

It is historically impossible to establish the exact date or even year of Jesus’ birth. The tradition of celebrating it on December 25\textsuperscript{th}, is just that: a tradition. The only meaning the day has is what we attach to it.

**END OF READING**

**READING 12: JOHN’S BAPTISM AND CHRISTIAN BAPTISM**

Is the baptism that John offered the same thing as Christian baptism?

There is still some question of the exact nature of John’s baptism. Was it only a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” as Mark says (1:4)? Or was it something more, a ritual that was not so much about absolving a person of the sins they committed, but about purifying the body after the soul...
had been thoroughly purified by God’s righteousness (as taught by Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:2)? Was John’s baptism a one-time event, or was it supposed to be repeated?

The New Testament texts about Christian baptism (that is to say, baptism not related to John the Baptist) tie it explicitly to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul says, “don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 eloquently presents the resurrection of Jesus as the inauguration of a new era. Thus, baptism is sign of one’s faith in that resurrection: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38). Through the years, baptism became a visible sign of becoming part of the church, as it is today. Though certain aspects of the baptism that John gave are the same as Christian baptism, for example the forgiveness of sins, the two rituals are not the same.

END OF DOCUMENT

**DISCUSSION ON READINGS 10, 11 & 12**

Guide the discussion of these readings so that students see how worldviews affect our understanding of a topic. Specifically, deal with the issue of how students themselves (and perhaps their home cultures) define how we define “true.” You can also discuss how cultures assign dates to events, and what rituals are used to become a full member of a society. It is important that you not use all of the discussion time on the question of authenticity of certain texts.

READING 10 may shock some students, even if they have studied this topic in other courses. We have already talked about the apocalyptic genre in the course on Biblical interpretation. The other ideas have also been treated in the course on the New Testament, which normally would be taught before this course. Encourage the students to review their notes from those courses.

Save some time to discuss the “rites of passage” and how Christianity can respond to a culture’s need for them. We only have two sacraments in the Protestant Church: baptism and Holy Communion. Discuss how other rituals might be added, remembering that they cannot be contrary to the Gospel or to the life of holiness.

*Remind the students to continue working on Assignments 3 & 5 from the syllabus.*
LESSON 7
Demons and exorcism

LESSON PLAN

1. Devotions
2. Introduction
3. Lecture: Illness and Spiritual Causes
4. READING 13: Demons and Exorcisms
5. Class discussion on READING 13
7. Group activity
8. Lecture: Jesus, victor over the malevolent powers

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will deal more deeply with the phenomena of harmful spiritual acts, whether caused by demons or by other means. Many Westerners hold a scientific worldview, and assume that evil spirits, demons, or other manifestations of the devil do not exist. Yet, the Bible speaks about these evil forces, and millions of people experience them in one way or another. In places where the worldview is almost 100% scientific, Satan is rarely seen using such means to influence people to turn away from God. This does not mean that he is not at work, only that he uses other methods. In contrast, in other cultures people are accustomed to such phenomena, and the devil uses them to keep people in slavery and fear.

In this lesson, you will rely on your own experiences, as well as those of the students, to enrich the content presented. This lesson’s reading gives definitions, relates some experiences, discusses the worldview of today’s church, and provides a Biblical perspective on the subject. However, it is important for the students to understand that the experience of local church members will determine how the pastor addresses the issues of demons and exorcisms. It will not be the same for everyone. Ultimately, the message of the gospel is a message of total freedom, even from these phenomena in the life of a believer. Hopefully, your students will be able to encourage believers to no longer open doors that might allow Satan or his harmful angels to enter their lives.

DEVOtIONS

Draw your devotional time from Luke 4:31-44, where Luke clearly distinguishes between known illnesses and demonic activity. Consider that sometimes when Luke spoke about demons they were actually present. Other times, he may have used similar language to discuss an unknown illness, since at the time there was no other way to talk about the phenomena.
LECTURE: ILLNESS AND SPIRITUAL CAUSES

As we saw earlier, for many Africans it is more important to know the mystical cause of someone’s death more than knowing its physical cause. That is to say that people may seek medical treatment from a doctor, but along with taking whatever medicine is prescribed, they will also try to find out the mystical reasons for an illness. This is especially true if someone is sick from an unknown illness. For cultures that do not believe in a spirit world, they do not use magic or sorcery when someone gets sick. Rather they focus only on the physical aspect of an illness, and seek an appropriate physical treatment. If a doctor does not know what illness is affecting his patient, he does research until he discovers it. Around the world, doctors and drug companies spend many hours researching the causes and treatments of illnesses. These people do not search for causes beyond the physical, and they spend their money only on medical treatments. This route is sufficient in many of the cases.

However, in places where the magical arts are practiced, the issue becomes more complicated, especially if it is in an area where well-trained physicians and well-equipped clinics are not available to everyone. Many factors keep medical treatments from being effective. First of all, few diseases and treatments are commonly known by the people. When someone is suffering from an unknown illness, medical treatment is often too expensive. In some cases, a sick person receives medical treatment for a specific illness without running the proper tests or seeing a doctor to verify that they really do have that illness. Sometimes, family members of a sick person will simply copy the treatment received for an earlier illness of someone they know, even if the symptoms are not the same. In cases like this, medical treatment is not very effective, and it is easy to see, how people will eventually turn to mystical or spiritual treatments. Sadly, they will often spend what little money they have left paying traditional healers for their services.

However, most illnesses are just that: an illness, whether the underlying cause is known or not. The sources of these illnesses are often complex: lack of good hygiene, contact with another sick person, impure water, too much or not enough clothing depending on the weather, animal bites, or any number of other reasons that are no fault of the sick person. Again, in most cases a proper analysis and good treatment will take care of almost every illness.

However, even when proper medical treatment is sought, it is still possible that the doctors will not be successful. The sick person’s family begins to think about mystical causes even if there are none. For Christians, such a response to an unknown illness is not acceptable, since seeking these mystical answers usually involve magic, sorcery or other non-Christian rituals. In lesson 9 we will talk about the victory that the believer has in Christ. However, if Christians open themselves to consider assistance from the spirit world, they risk losing their protection in Christ.

We do believe that God can heal any disease, and we should pray to God for divine healing. As with all prayers, though, we do so according to his will.
Remember, unknown illnesses are not necessarily the work of spirits. So do not treat them as if they were.

*Allow for several minutes of discussion.*

**READING 13: DEMONS AND EXORCISMS**

How should we understand the many Biblical stories that feature demons or unclean spirits? Should we take them literally or was it just a way of speaking in that period in history?

Certain illnesses have long been associated with demon possession. Up until the 19th Century, epilepsy was equated with demon possession in most parts of Europe. The Gospel of Mark tells the story of an exorcism performed by Jesus on a child. The father’s description of his son’s problem sounds like an epileptic seizure “He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and become rigid” (Mark 9:14-29). Here and elsewhere, the Biblical texts reflect the cultural worldview of the time as to the cause of certain illnesses.

So what is our response? Must we explain all such cases as either pathological (disease) or paranormal (demon possession)? Christians usually accept that both possibilities exist. For instance, in the Catholic Church a diocese usually has a designated exorcist, a priest who specializes in dealing with demon possession. In most cases, he provides psychological counseling to people who believe they are possessed, or have been convinced by others that they might be possessed. He does, however, practice the rites of exorcism in rare cases. In Protestant and Evangelical churches, exorcism is practiced on a regular basis by some pastors or by a specialist known as a “demonologist” who are part of today’s “deliverance ministries.”

**END OF THE HANDOUT**

**CLASS DISCUSSION ON READING 13**

The reading mentions Evangelical pastors who are part of “deliverance ministries.” It raises the question, “deliverance from what?” What do we make of someone who shakes and falls to the ground during a ceremony, but is told that “often, one must return several times to complete the deliverance.” This phenomenon was probably imported into Africa from the United States. In class, then, you will want to guide a discussion on the difference between a real and fake deliverance, whether it relates to physical, spiritual or mystical healing.

Here are some questions to help you guide the class discussion.

1. What does deliverance mean?
2. From what may Christians be delivered?
3. What is the evidence of one’s deliverance?
4. What is the role of a specialist in this area (someone who truly has a spiritual gift from God)?
LECTURE: SPIRITS, A COMPARISON OF AFRICAN BELIEFS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the traditional African religious worldview, there are two kinds of spirits: those who were born as human beings and those who were created as spirits. According to John Mbiti, the spirits of human beings form two groups: those who have died in the last five generations and those who have long since been forgotten by the living. The word “ancestors” is not adequate to describe them because they also include children and adolescents who died without having children. Mbiti calls the first group the “living dead.” When there is no one left alive who remembers one of them, the process of death is complete, and the “living dead” pass into the other group of impersonal spirits. The previous kings of Dahomey in Benin, for example, are still “living” because their descendants remember them and prepare their daily food, mentioning their names in their rituals.

There is not much agreement on the nature of the second groups: spirits that were created as such. What they all have in common is the belief that these spirits are “close” to human beings, and active in their daily lives. The traditional African, according to Mbiti, would be uncomfortable if he believed that the spirits were departing, because such an action would create an imbalance in the universe.

Attitude toward the spirits

The “living dead” interact with humans in various ways, sometimes disciplining them, sometimes aiding or encouraging them. Because of this, the living treat them with a combination of fear and affection. Other spirits, however, are more malevolent: they attack, molest, destroy and do harm to the living. The only emotion held toward them is fear. Since one cannot predict what they will do, one must stay away from the places where they live. Insanity, illness or epilepsy are considered works of these spirits.

Outside of Africa

The belief in a link between the living and the dead is not unique to Africa. It is found in all continents of the world. Different cultures have different accounts of how the dead influence the lives of the living. In some cases, they desire to communicate with the living, but are unable to do so. While most Westerners no longer believe in the spirit world, these ancient stories and myths live on in their celebrations and literature. In southern Europe and much of Latin America, for example, one of the largest celebrations of the year is the Day of the Dead, when all the graveyards are full of people who bring fresh flowers to graves of their dead family members, reuniting the dead family members with the living ones. In the United States, mediums\textsuperscript{23} are very popular. Some are well known and appear on television shows where

\textsuperscript{23} A medium is someone who acts as an intermediary between a living person and a dead person, allowing them to communicate with each other.
they make contact with their guests’ dead loved ones. The Bible condemns those who speak with the dead, and in one account King Saul drove all the mediums out of Israel. Many cultures do not yet consider the fact that these mediums might be speaking with evil spirits, rather than the dead person.

The spirit world and the Bible:

According to Richard J. Gehman, the belief in the spirit world among traditional religions is exaggerated and degrading. In the typical African worldview, and it is true elsewhere as well, the Creator (or High God), who is powerful and benevolent, does attempt to control the actions of other spirit beings. As a result, these spirits continually cause fear, and the creator does nothing to stop them.

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches about a different type of spirit world, one that is marked by the sovereignty of God. There is only a single example of the African understanding of the “living dead” in Biblical literature: when Saul consulted the medium of Endor. It is always difficult to interpret Biblical passages that have no other parallels, but in this episode, there are two important facts to note: the spirit of Samuel says nothing more than what he had said during his life, and the dead do not want to intervene in the lives of the living. Saul’s action was part of his downfall (1 Chronicles 10:14), and consulting mediums is listed as an abomination (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27, Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

The Biblical worldview includes a spirit world populated by evil spirits and angels. Angels do God’s will, while evil spirits work against Him, trying to destroy his work or diminish his glory. However, God is sovereign, even over these spirits. There is, therefore, no reason to be afraid of them, because they cannot do anything that God does not allow. God has promised to protect those who belong to him, and the only way spirits can harm us believers is if we turn away from our faith in God, and allow them to affect us.

Likewise, the Bible acknowledges the phenomenon of demon possession. During the time of Jesus’ public ministry, there seems to have been a scourge of demon possession, such as has never been seen before or since. So what is demon possession? Gehman identifies these basic characteristics:

1. An alien spirit appears within someone, a distinct personality with abilities apart from what the possessed person has;
2. Superhuman powers are displayed: strength, intelligence, foreign languages, etc;
3. The spirit defies everything that has to do with Christ, either by active opposition or passive resistance;
4. The person displays a split personality: for instance, he runs to Jesus for help, but then cries out in fear.

Most of these characteristics are seen in possessed people even today.
A WORD OF CAUTION. It is very easy to fall into the temptation of calling everything we do not understand “demon possession”—a headache or problems with the liver, for example. Most often, there are natural explanations for what occurs. Sicknesses are caused by disease or microbes, and are simply physical illnesses. Often, members of a culture learn distinctive behaviors in specific circumstance. Others see these behaviors and imitate them, consciously or unconsciously. So, even when we observe something out of the ordinary, or someone acting strangely, it is not necessarily demon possession. Perhaps it is only a learned behavior.

Conclusion:

The Bible recognizes the activities of evil spirits as a reality. However, these activities decrease in places where the gospel is proclaimed and accepted in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord said, “I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18) Therefore, while we believe the Biblical truth that Satan and his fallen angels exist and are active in the world, Jesus Christ is still Lord. Thanks to his death on the cross, the powers of the kingdom of darkness have already been defeated.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Divide into groups. Tell the students that they will work on some case studies. Explain this activity to the class in these terms:

In your groups, you will do work on some case studies. Have several members of each group present what they believe to have been a case of satanic activity in the life of someone either within or outside of the church. The group will then discuss the case, asking questions, etc. in order to determine if it was a real case of demon activity or something else. Remember, there may not be a “right” answer to a case study, but make sure that you consider all possibilities: an undiagnosed illness, a case of temporary insanity, a learned cultural behavior, etc.

Prepare a report on your findings. Make sure to include in your report how the events or discussions relate to the sovereignty of God.

LECTURE: JESUS, VICTOR OVER THE MALEVOLENT POWERS

According to the Gospels, one of Jesus’ ministries was exorcism. Jesus never named another person as the authority of a domain and he did not use the command to bind the demon to another authority. Jesus deliberately drew the attention of the crowd to himself, to his own resources, and to the authority of his own name, even though he acknowledged that it was God who accomplished the exorcism. The disciples, on the other hand, exorcised in the name of Jesus and none other.

The Synoptic Gospels all show the work of Jesus as one who drove out demons. In the synoptics, his work as an exorcist is strongly linked with the
teaching on the Kingdom of God. John does not highlight this aspect of Jesus’ teachings and therefore avoids dealing with the subject of exorcism. Luke contends that the power of Satan is extremely limited in compared to the absolute authority of Jesus. We clearly see this in his prayer for his disciples in Luke 22:31-32.

It is Matthew who teaches us the most about the power of Jesus against Satan and demons. In the parable of the strong man, Matthew tells us that Jesus began to destroy the power of Satan through his work of exorcism (12:29). In his parable of the good seed and the tares (weeds), Matthew shows that Jesus will also be involved in the second and final destruction of Satan (13:24-30, 36-43). Later in Matthew, the demons recognize Jesus and protest saying, “Son of God, did you come here to torment us before the time?” (8:29). The time is coming when the torment will be complete, but Jesus does not wait for that time, he has already begun the work.

John, on the other hand, ties the victory over Satan to the cross of Jesus. We will discuss this concept further in Lesson 9.
LESSON 8
Religion and Feasts

LESSON PLAN
1. Devotions
2. Introduction
   3. Discuss the group reports from Lesson 7
   4. Presentation of READING 14
5. READING 14: “Invitation to a Greek Sacrificial Meal”
6. Discussion of 1 Corinthians 1—8
7. Lecture: “Meals and Religious Festivals”
9. LECTURE: The Lord’s Supper and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb
   8. Group Activity
10. Review student responsibilities
11. Lord’s Supper (optional)

INTRODUCTION
The reading for this lesson treats the practice and function of sacrifices in the Greco-Roman world during the time when Paul was ministering. Specifically, he helps interpret some rather difficult passages from 1 Corinthians. Many cultures and people groups incorporate in their rituals or their cultural life large or special meals that have religious or cultural significance. In this lesson, we will discuss this aspect of religious life. Once again, the student’s contribution is important, especially as they reflect on the meaning of celebrations involving a feast in their own culture. The only feast common to all Christians around the world is Holy Communion, even though it might be practiced in different ways.

DEVOTIONS
Again, if this lesson is the second session for the day, it is not necessary to have a devotional time. Otherwise, read a passage that concerns the Lord’s Supper or the banquet that Jesus prepares for us in heaven. If you are qualified, you can prepare the elements of Holy Communion so that you and your students can celebrate this Christian ritual at the end of the lesson.

PRESENTATION OF READING 14
Many religions use a system of animal sacrifices as a means of worshipping their God or gods. The Judaism of the Old Testament (which was in place during the time of Jesus) is one example of this. There are many others. Judaism stopped offering sacrifices during the Exile when the faithful no longer had access to the altar of the temple. The sacrifices began again
when the temple was rebuilt, but once again stopped when the temple was destroyed in the year 70.

According to Exodus and Leviticus, we find that some sacrifices were totally burned up at the altar. For other sacrifices, only a part of the animal was burned and the rest was prepared as part of religious meal for the family and extended family. The Bible details the meaning of these feasts in each case.

READING 14 looks at the system of sacrifices used in the Greco-Roman world of Paul’s time. It was a polytheistic culture, and everyone who had the means would hold religious celebrations centered on a large feast in honor of one of their gods. These were often hosted by influential or wealthy families, who could afford them. To receive an invitation was a great honor, and to refuse it was an insult to the family holding the feast. The primary concern was not the depth of religious devotion of the family who held the feast. For them, it was as much a display of economic and political power as it was a contribution to the well-being of the community. The Apostle reminded the Corinthians that this type of meal, in the final analysis, was a still a form of pagan worship and idolatry.

READING 14: INVITATION TO A GREEK SACRIFICAL MEAL

The ritual sacrifices of Greeks followed a precise ceremony. After slitting the throat of the animal and cutting up the pieces (beef, lamb, pork or some other animal), the priest offered a part to the gods: the large bones and the thigh meat covered with fat were completely burned up. The gods received their share of the sacrifice by means of the smoke rising from the altar to the sky. Then the entrails were roasted on the altar and eaten immediately by the ones offering the sacrifice. Finally, the rest of the meat was cut into equal parts and distributed, most of it to those attending the ceremony. Inside the temple of Asclepius in Corinth, there were three rooms for these sacred banquets. Usually, the priests received more than they could eat, and the excess was sold to butchers in the marketplace.

In Homer’s Iliad, we have a description of an animal sacrifice to the god, Apollo:

When they had done praying and sprinkling the barley-meal, they drew back the heads of the [animal] victims and killed and flayed them. They cut out the thigh-bones, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, set some pieces of raw meat on the top of them, and then Chrysies [a priest] laid them on the wood fire and poured wine over them, while the young men stood near him with five-pronged spits in their hands. When the thigh-bones were burned and they had tasted the inward meats, they cut the rest up small, put the pieces upon the spits, roasted them till they were done, and drew them off: then, when they had finished their work and the feast was ready, they ate it, and every man had his full share, so that all were satisfied. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, pages filled the mixing-bowl with
wine and water and handed it round, after giving every man his drink-offering. (I, 460-480).

At Corinth, the question arose as to whether or not Christians should participate in these types of feasts in the temples. Paul treats the question in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 8–10). It was common to be invited to these feasts on a regular basis. Here is the text of one such invitation:

Heraios invites you to a banquet at the Serapeum hall in honor of the Lord Serapes, tomorrow, the 11th, at the ninth hour.

These feasts created controversy for believers in the early church because of the type of meat included in the feast, namely, that which had been used for sacrifice at pagan temples. There were strong opinions on whether this meat was appropriate for Christian believers to eat. Paul identified the attitude of the mature believer into the primary concern: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

END OF READING 14

CLASS DISCUSSION

Read together 1 Corinthians 8 and 10:18-33. These two passages treat the way Christians were to act as it related to the Greek system of sacrifices. To help guide the discussion, keep in mind:

1. Almost all meat had been offered to a god before it arrived at the market. The meat was leftover from the sacrifices in the temple. If you wanted to eat meat, this was the only place to buy it.
2. Many family members of the Church at Corinth were part of upper class, who were obligated to attend these community feasts (with their religious elements) or risk losing their family’s standing and honor.
3. According to many scholars of this passage, the phrase in 10:23, “everything is permissible,” was a Corinthian proverb that Paul quoted.

When discussing this passage, try to link it with the student’s culture. Here are some suggested questions, though you should certainly treat any other issues that seem important to fulfilling the objectives of this lesson:

1. What celebrations does your culture have that involve a shared meal, either among family members or that community at large?
2. Is there a religious element to these meals? (The answer may be “yes” for some, and “no” for others. There is no right answer.)
3. What is the importance of inviting or not inviting someone to these meals? What does accepting and invitation or refusing an invitation signify?
LECTURE: MEALS AND RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

In the first lessons of this course we talked about one element of worldviews: myths. Meals and festivals are all aspects of society that could be called “rituals,” another element of someone’s worldview. In many societies, rituals have a religious meaning, and certain rituals are more religious than others. Many rituals are accompanied by large feasts where certain members of the society, or in some cases all, eat together. Other rituals involve fasting, which is yet another way to incorporate food into the meaning of the ritual. Most cultures add a large meal to the marriage ceremony. Marriages usually have both religious and community significance. Often, the same thing is done for funerals. Certain times during one’s life are also marked with a celebration that has religious meaning, and usually include a meal: naming a baby, birthdays, puberty, passing into adulthood, are just some examples.

Other holidays are tied directly to a people’s faith. Judaism has all sorts of feasts and fasts in their religious calendar. Islam has these as well, specifically the feasts and fasts associated with Ramadan. In the Christian year, we see two great holidays: Christmas and Easter, both of which are accompanied by a time of fasting and feasting, even though the practices vary in different countries and cultures of the world. In Italy, for example, there are three days involving large meals at Christmas time. The “Feast of the Seven Fishes” on Christmas Eve, is, religiously, a day of fasting (or abstinence), because the food is limited to greens, pasta with no sauce, and fish, (though one can eat six or seven plates of this food). There is then the large feast on Christmas Day and another large meal on the 26th, celebrating Saint Steven.

Many countries and cultures celebrate the season of harvest, usually in the form of a great feast of thanksgiving to the gods or God for the provisions of the year. In the United States, this is a major two-day holiday where all government offices and most business close. It is part of the American culture to make sure that no one is left out of feasting. Many local churches organize meals for the poor, or distribute baskets full of traditional Thanksgiving foods to distribute to the needy. The holiday celebrates the first harvest meal between European settlers and Native American Indians.

These celebrations provide three things for the development of a people, according to Richley Crapo: 1) they unite the community emotionally, 2) they dramatize important historical aspects of the culture and 3) they influence the spiritual world and the natural world so that human beings can live in peace and maintain the blessing of the gods or God. We should not underestimate the importance of such meals in the life of a community, even in the Church. Many times new converts, believers, and church members must participate in these celebrations, and they must find ways to do so without compromising their testimony. Often the local church may have to schedule their celebrations at certain times of the year. This is the case in Haiti, during the season known as Mardi Gras, or Carnival in other countries, where most of society spends two or three days drinking alcohol and giving in to all sorts of
sexual activity. Groups of churches around the country organize day-long camp meetings as an alternative for believers to attend.

You may want to lead a short discussion of this material

**LECTURE: THE LORD’S SUPPER AND THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB**

Holy Communion, instituted by the Lord himself, has its religious roots in the Old Testament festival of Passover. This is emphasized by the fact that the first Lord’s Supper was celebrated by Jesus and his disciples during the Passover celebration. For early believers the predominant worldview at the time was not Christianity, but the paganism of Europe. Christians understood the Lord’s Supper in a very different way than the rituals of “mystery religions,” most of which incorporated a meal as part of their worship ceremonies. We know little of what went on at these ceremonies (which is one of the reason they are called “mystery religions”). However, it is notable that many churches of the early Christian era practiced the Lord’s Supper in a similar fashion: visitors were asked to leave the room before the ritual began. Even though the content of the ritual was more or less common knowledge, outsiders still accused the early Christians of cannibalism, since the believers were instructed to eat the body of the Lord, and drink his blood.

From the beginning, Christians celebrated the Last Supper with what has been known for centuries as the *agape feast*, because it was a way to proclaim and live out the love that exists between Christians. Paul’s criticized the Corinthians because they were not celebrating the Lord’s Supper in the spirit of mutual love, but in an atmosphere of social and economic distinctions. So initially the Lord’s Supper incorporated a ritual and a meal, both with religious and social meaning. Today, the Lord’s Supper, without a community meal, loses most of its social meaning, apart from the fact that we remind ourselves that we are part of a greater group of Christians, both past and present, who are unified by the ritual. It should be noted, though, that throughout the history of the Church, the Lord’s Supper was never considered as the means of salvation. It is but a symbol of what the word of the Lord has done in the life of the believer by faith in the grace of God.

The other Christian banquet, and one that we are waiting to attend, is called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). This messianic meal find its roots, too, in the Old Testament, specifically in Isaiah 25:6-8 and in Joel 2:24-28. This image is repeated several times in the parables of Jesus, and especially during the inauguration of the Lord’s Supper when Jesus tells his disciples that he would not drink wine again, “until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). A meal also was part of the opening of the messianic era, when Jesus multiplied the bread to feed the multitude. It is interesting that the last chapter of Revelation ends with specific instructions about who can participate in this future banquet, and an invitation to it: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who
hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (22:17).

**GROUP ACTIVITY**

Once again, ask the groups to apply the ideas of the lesson to the daily life of the community in which they serve. This time, they should analyze the religious or cultural aspects associated with the importance of feasting or fasting. These issues should open the discussion, but the goal is to see how the Christian church can accommodate the culture without compromising its spiritual convictions.

Have the groups present a report on their discussion. The student workbook asks the following questions to help the discussion. If they are not answered during the presentation, ask for volunteers.

1. Are there any local holidays that pose a serious threat to the Christians or Christian beliefs?

2. How can you and/or the Church confront these problems, maintaining your role in society while at the same time maintaining your Christian testimony? Is it possible?

3. Can the Church substitute Christian rituals for the celebrations that normally accompany the pagan rites of passage in your culture: naming a baby, puberty, adulthood, etc.? Or funeral rituals that honor the deceased without “worshiping” them as the living-dead?

**REVIEW STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

During the introduction to the course, in Lesson 1, you presented the student’s responsibilities for this course. At this time, clarify the deadlines for each project as well as the date and time of the final exam. Since there is no homework for the next lesson, remind the students to use the time to work on their projects and prepare for the final exam.

**LORD’S SUPPER (OPTIONAL)**

You may close this session by offering Holy Communion to the class, using the ritual prescribed in the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*. 
LESSON 9
Jesus Christ as Victor over All Spiritual Forces

LESSON PLAN

1. Devotions
2. Introduction
4. READING 15: “Christus Victor, Jesus: Victor Over All Spiritual Forces”
5. Group Assignment
6. Final Preparations

INTRODUCTION

The first half of this lesson will deal with new content. However, the final half will be used to review and prepare for the final exam.

So far, we have looked at the universal concept that the initial relationship between creator and humans has been lost. We have also seen the different points of view concerning the spirit world created by God and their influence, for good or for evil, in the world of humans. We looked at how different people understand evil spirits within the African context. This demonic influence is probably exaggerated, and the influence of these spirits is most likely determined more by the perception of them by the members of different societies.

The purpose of this lesson is to help the students better proclaim the Gospel. This will be done so that the preacher can convince his listeners of the total victory in Christ over the two major issues mentioned in this course. Nevertheless, victory does not come automatically to believers simply because they accept Christ as Savior. Victory comes only with total consecration to Christ and total abandonment of everything that belongs to the life of sin, selfishness, loyalty to the spirits, and so on. Every aspect of human life must be surrendered to the Lordship of Christ both in the public life of the Church and in the private life of the believer.

DEVOTIONS

For today’s devotions, we suggest dealing with a text that speaks of Christ’s victory or of total consecration to Christ. Here are several suggestions: Matthew 11:27-30; Luke 1:68-75; Luke 10:17-20; Acts 19:13-20; Romans 12:1-2; Col. 2:8-15.

REVIEW GALATIANS 3:26-28

Since the students will be required to write out these verses as part of the final exam, spend some time helping them memorize it.
READING 15
CHRISTUS VICTOR, JESUS: VICTOR OVER ALL SPIRITUAL FORCES

In Christian Theology 2, students study the theories of the atonement, including one called “Christus Victor” proposed by the German theologian Gustaf Aulen. At the first theological conference of the Church of the Nazarene in the Africa region, William Greathouse presented his keynote address based on the work of Aulen. A copy of this speech is found in this notebook at the end of this lesson. Aulen calls on the world of Christian theology to consider again what the Church discovered during the first centuries of existence, that Jesus, through his death in obedience to the Father, won total victory over Satan, sin and death. He calls this view “the classical idea” of the atonement. Both the Bible and the Church emphasize that the victory Christ won once and for all continues in the work of the Holy Spirit and in his fruits, reaped in our lives.

Jesus: Lord and Victor

Jesus, being “true God from true God” is still the sovereign over all creation, where he reigns with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9). Since the dawn of creation, he has been sovereign, because everything was created by him, both visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16). All things are subject to him, but because of free will, everyone has not yet surrendered to him. The powers of the world of humans and of Satan and his demons continue their hostile rebellion against his Lordship of Christ even while remaining under his authority. The promise of Revelation (11:15) “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” still awaits its completion, at the end of time.

We currently live in the period between the resurrection and the return of Jesus. He is sovereign, but his sovereignty remains hidden. His return will mark the final conquest over the powers of evil. He is still Lord of all, though. The more important issue for this lesson, however, is that of his victory. According to Donald Bloesch, there are two sides of his victory: 1) the cross and the resurrection triumph over the evil and destructive spiritual forces, and 2) the Holy Spirit applies this triumph to the Church and the world. The powers of darkness have truly been defeated even if though they continue to fight, believing the lie that they still possess real power. We must never under-estimate the important role of faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. We also must not obscure the reality of the universal victory de Christ over sin, death and the devil.

The believer “in Christ” and spiritual forces

The Church, and therefore believers, exists in an interim period of history. The reign of Christ is fully established in the Church by the redemption of believers, but for the rest of creation he conquers more and more territory,
until eventually he will exert his redemption over all. Those who place their entire confidence in the redemption of Christ, not looking elsewhere for help, are ”in Christ” according to the often repeated words of the apostle Paul. Thus, they benefit even now from the power of his victory.

The role of the believers at this point in time is to involve themselves in the ministry of the Lord, in the expansion of his reign and his victory. We do this by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Satan, even though Christ is victorious over him, is still alive and not yet bound in the “lake of fire.” His aim is to destroy the work of Christ. The only way he can do this is to attack those who are ”in Christ.” These attacks are designed to either make the believers turn away from faith in Christ, or discourage them enough so that they stop ministering for Christ. He is very dangerous, and he may block the progress of our work or tempt us to relax. His power is still limited. He cannot possess a believer against his will and without some kind of invitation (see John 12:31, 16:11; Revelation 20:1-3; Colossians 1:13, 2:14-15; Hebrews 2:14-15). Believers who maintain ties with the pagan traditions of their culture or who continue to treat the ancestors as ”living dead” give an invitation to Satan to do what he wants.

If someone casts a “spell” on a believer, it will be much less effective than normal, because he or she is ”in Christ.” This type of victory comes by the prayer of the saints who, by their faith, reclaim victory in Christ. Such trials might seem to slow the progress of the Kingdom of Christ, but this too is a lie. Instead, these trials should reinforce the believer and the community of believers, and because of the testimonies of those who have seen Christ’s victory, these trials make the Kingdom grow more rapidly than ever. In Africa, we are witnesses to this as the Church experiences rampant grown because Christ is victorious in the lives of those who are ”in Him.”

The need for entire consecration to Christ

Joshua and Caleb put their complete trust in the God of promises and of the Exodus; we too must entrust ourselves completely to Him who conquered death, sin and the devil on the cross. He will lead us to victory. Our task is to submit ourselves to God and to resist the devil. Submitting ourselves to God means that we cannot hold on to anything of the world, or play around with some sin or trust in anything that the devil provides (political power, economic security, etc). We must unite against the devil and his rebellion. Our job is to depend on nothing but our Lord, despite the difficulty of the battle, confessing our weaknesses and our doubts, continually consecrating everything to him, and obeying his commandments until the war is over.

END OF READING 15

GROUP ASSIGNMENT

The student workbook has these instructions:

In order to continue building a foundation for understanding the material presented in READING 15, the students will read and study

Prepare a report on your discussion based on your answers to the following questions:

1. How can we reassure believers that they cannot be possessed by demons as long as they remain faithful to the Lord?

2. How can we help the Holy Spirit change church members’ understanding of the spirit world?

3. Why is the believers’ entire consecration to the Lord important with regard to the spirits? How can we encourage such a consecration?

Allow the groups to present their findings. Not all groups will be able to present.

**FINAL PREPARATIONS**

Finish the lesson by carefully reviewing the syllabus, the assignments, the deadlines, and the material that will be on the final exam.
Appendix A

Excerpts from
SANCTIFICATION AND THE CHRISTUS VICTOR MOTIF IN WESLEYAN THEOLOGY

by William M. Greathouse, Ph. D.

The excerpts below are from an article that appeared in the Bulletin of the Wesleyan Theological Society, volume 7, number 1, Spring, 1972. The entire text of the article and bibliographic references can be found at http://wesley.nmu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/06-10/07-5.htm

I. INTRODUCTION

Gustaf Aulen’s Christus Victor¹ is one of the most influential treatments of the atonement to appear in our time. Aulen calls for a thorough revision of the traditional account of the history of the idea of the atonement to give fresh emphasis to a view of Christ’s work which he describes as the “dramatic.” Its central theme is the idea of the atonement as a divine conflict and victory in which Christ, Christus Victor, enlists and vanquishes Satan, sin and death.² He insists that this dramatic understanding of Christ’s work is a true doctrine of atonement because in this act God reconciles the world to himself.³ Although Christ’s death is at the heart of this view, the Cross presupposes the incarnation; for it was the Son of God in flesh who met and defeated evil.⁴ It also embraces the resurrection and ascension, for by raising His Son from the dead and to His own right hand God fulfilled the conditions of the promised gift of the Spirit by which Christ’s historic victory is mediated to believers.⁵ The Cross also envisions the consummation of our salvation when God shall send His Son a second time to raise and glorify us with Him.⁶

II. CHRIST’S VICTORY FOR US

The atonement has several facets. Viewed from the standpoint of man’s guilt and his deep need for pardon and acceptance, “Christ crucified” is God’s perfect oblation making possible our justification before him (Romans 3:2-26). Seen from the perspective of man’s enmity toward God and his profound yearning for restored fellowship, Christ provides reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 2:11-22). Again, perceived from the angle of man’s bondage to evil, Christ crucified is the conqueror of Satan, sin and death. It is this third point of view Christus Victor which Aulen sees as dominant until Anselm, and it is this understanding of Christ’s work which furnishes the most solid basis for a dynamic Biblical doctrine of sanctification.
This view presupposes that it was only by meeting the forces of evil on their own ground, only, that is, by getting into history where they were entrenched, that Christ could break their power. He partook of flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, i.e. the devil (Hebrews 2:13-14). In his final effort to destroy the Prince of Life (Jesus Christ) the devil overextended and thus defeated himself (John 12:31; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:8). God the Father “disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him (Christ)” (Colossians 2:15, RSV).

Christus Victor, however, not only defeated Satan; He destroyed sin itself. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8, RSV). John means Christ came to destroy the principle of lawlessness (anomia 1 John 3:4), which was the devil’s chief work in man.

Paul gives the fullest treatment of sanctification within this context in Romans 5:12-8:39. Particularly critical to this idea are Romans 6:6 and 8:3. First, Romans 6:6-“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Knowing what? This, that in and with the death of Jesus on Calvary we were provisionally crucified also, so that we might be set free from sin for a life of love service to God. Paul puts the same idea slightly differently in 2 Corinthians “For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised” (5:14-15, RSV).

Romans 8:3 relates this to the incarnation. Christ’s victory could be won only in the flesh. But there, where sin had established its rule, Christus Victor routed it decisively. “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (sarkos hamartias “sin’s flesh” or “sin-dominated flesh”) and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” “Condemned” means more than to register disapproval; the law does that. Christ “pronounced the doom of sin.’ Sin was hence forth deposed from its autocratic power.” In the flesh-and-blood body of a man, on the very territory where it had established its reign, God doomed sin. “By His life of perfect obedience, and His victorious death and resurrection,” C. H. Dodd comments, “the reign of sin over human nature has been broken.”

III. CHRIST’S VICTORY IN US

Christ’s victory for us in the atonement becomes Christ’s victory in us by the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8). Christ’s victory is reproduced in us. In the Holy Spirit, Christ for us becomes Christ in us, recapitulating in our history His triumph over sin. This is the meaning of Christus Victor for sanctification.

Every demon we meet is foredoomed in Christ. Sin itself has lost its power for the believer in whom Christ lives. “Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in the world. ... And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. ... We know that any one born of God.
does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch” (1 John 4:4; 5:4, 18, RSV).

This victory is given to us in three stages: in conversion, in entire sanctification, and in glorification.

This victory begins in conversion. This is the clear meaning of Romans 6:1-11. This is our knowledge of the gospel that we ourselves have been crucified in the person of Christ crucified. And Paul insists we grasp the truth that this has already happened to us “in principle” in our justification and regeneration. “For he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:7, RSV). But in order to reap the full benefits of God’s provision we must furnish “moral cooperation.” “The believer understands that the final object which God has in view in crucifying the old man (v. 6) is to realize the life of the Risen One (vv. 8, 9), and he enters actively into the divine thought.”

To “enter actively into the divine thought” and thereby realize true sanctification involves:

1) A faith-knowledge that God has actually accomplished the destruction of sin in Christ crucified and resurrected and that in my conversion I have died with Him and have been raised with Him to newness of life in which I am no longer sin’s slave, and 2) A complete break with sin (Romans 6:12-13a) and a putting of myself absolutely at God’s disposal in a critical act of consecration (Romans 6:13a, 19–aorist tense both places), so that I may begin to realize the full life of Christus Victor in me.

We have already died provisionally with Christ through our participation in Christ crucified; now we must permit that death to reach to the very depths of our being as we cease from self and begin to live wholly to God. The death of the “old man” is thus a process initiated by conversion and realized in sanctification. “In principle” we die with Christ in justification; in full reality we die with Him when we yield up ourselves to God as Jesus gave up His spirit to the Father on the Cross. Here Wesley has a guiding word:

A man may be dying for some time; yet he does not, properly speaking, die, till the soul is separated from the body; and in that instant, he lives the life of eternity. In like manner, he may be dying to sin for some time; yet he is not dead to sin till sin is separated from his soul; and in that instant, he lives the full life of love. ... So the change wrought when the soul died to sin is of a different kind and infinitely greater than any be fore, and than any he can conceive, till he experiences it. Yet he still grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God; and will do so, not only till death, but to all eternity.

Christ’s victory thus becomes blessed reality in entire sanctification. This separation of the soul from sin to God is “the final object God has in mind in crucifying the old man” (Romans 6). Viewed positively, this act of God is life in the Spirit (Romans 8). Christ reenacts in us the sanctification He accomplished in the atonement. By His perfect obedience and victorious death and resurrection He provisionally expelled sin from human experience; now He comes by the spirit to dwell and reign in us and thus work in us that
loving obedience which fulfills the law. Thus Christ himself becomes our sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30). “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him” (Colossians 2:9-10, RSV). This fullness, however, is not a private, mystical, quietistic union with Christ. It is social; it is life in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:21—2:7; 4:4-16; Colossians 3:14; cf. Hebrews 2:10-13) In the Body of Christ—the koinonia of the Spirit—we discover the full meaning of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:21-29). To put the matter in fullest perspective we must add one further word. Christ’s victory is complete but not final. We have been “saved by hope”—the hope of resurrection and glorification with Christ (Romans 8: 17-25; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28; Philemon 3:12-21; etc.). Meanwhile our sanctification has the character of a spiritual warfare in which our victory over sin is assured as we permit Christ to live moment by moment in us (John 15:16; Ephesians 6:10-18; Philemon 1:6; Colossians 1:18-23; Romans 8:12-13, 26-39; Romans 13:11-14; Hebrews 7:25). This is the practical meaning of Christus Victor for a theology of holiness. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” over the dominion of sin in conversion, over sin itself in sanctification, over the racial consequences of sin in glorification.
## Nazarene Theological Institute Attendance Sheet

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## Course Report

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<td>Creation comparison study</td>
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<td>Group presentation on theology of home culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to God Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies for Witnessing</td>
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Final Mark out of 20  
Signed ___________________________  
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